Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

Using Games as a Method for Learning Multicultural Competence in Teacher Education

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Introduction

› The Gamestorming for Innovative Teaching (GameIT) project aims at giving the students relevant skills and competences needed for working in our diverse world and incorporates the New Skills Agenda for Europe.

› These skills and competences include; communicating in a foreign language, creative thinking, adaptability, **ability to work in a multicultural environment, and cultural awareness**.

› The target group of the game is students at higher educational level from different subject areas where the learning of the goals mentioned are important.

› Ten students from Philological School of Higher Education, Poland, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, the University of Bacau, Romania and nine students from Western Norway University of Applied Science participated in the testing of the Hex game. Eight observers also participated; the observers are teachers from the different institutions, some of them also doubled as a gamemaster.

› We will look at what skills relating to multicultural competence students report can be developed while playing Planet Hexagon.

Developing different civilizations based on intercultural theories

› As mentioned, multicultural competence has been one of the expected learning outcomes for the GameIT project and in the process of developing the Planet Hexagon game we developed 12 different civilizations based on intercultural theories (Dahl, 2016, Bergersen, 2017, Giddens, 1991).

› We described key values, norms and rewards for each civilization inspired by ideal typical societies on earth. To limit the options we ended up with four civilizations.

› The four civilisations are the *Urbanides*, the *Arboretans,* the *Lupidians* and the *Harvesters*.
  › The civilisation of the **Urbinades** can be described as based on values and norms from high modern societies.
  › The civilisation of the **Arboretans** can be described with values from indigenous cultures like Indians, San, Sami and Aboriginals.
  › The civilisation of the **Lupidians** is more imperialistic in their attitude and values.
  › The last civilisation, the **Harvesters** can be described as a typical traditional society with farming and hard physical work as a daily routine.

Multicultural competence

› Multicultural competence can be defined as dealing with cross-cultural contact in general (Bennett, 2012; 2009). Bergersen (2017) defines cross-cultural competence with three aspects;

  › intercultural consciousness (awareness of worldview)

  › cross-cultural understanding (willingness and knowledge), and

  › intercultural communication (verbal/nonverbal).

› Multicultural competence necessitate a change in the way we see ourselves, and the world we live in. Critical consciousness, reflections and reframing of our perspectives are key factors to achieve multicultural competence.

› In encounters with people who challenge what we take for granted, we can reframe our perspectives by listen to the others point of view and open our mind.

› In all kind of encounters, including playing board games, the ability to reflect on why you think something is wrong or right, to experience different communication styles, collaborate in mixed groups and dialogue about assumptions, can increase your intercultural communication competence.

Learning through the team-based board game of Planet Hexagon

Development of skills:

› *Cultural awareness* (understanding other cultures, working in intercultural teams, representing different civilisations in the game etc.),

› *Communication* (expressing opinions and presenting arguments and discussing while playing, negotiating regarding next move etc.),

› *Collaboration* (working together with all team members while making next move, deciding on where to put the tile, what to observe while looking at other team boards etc.),

› *Strategic thinking* (building strategy during the game, thinking about where to put the nest tile and why, when to use special skill etc.),

› *Decision making* (deciding where to put the tile under pressure etc.) and *Fluency in English*.

Reseach result

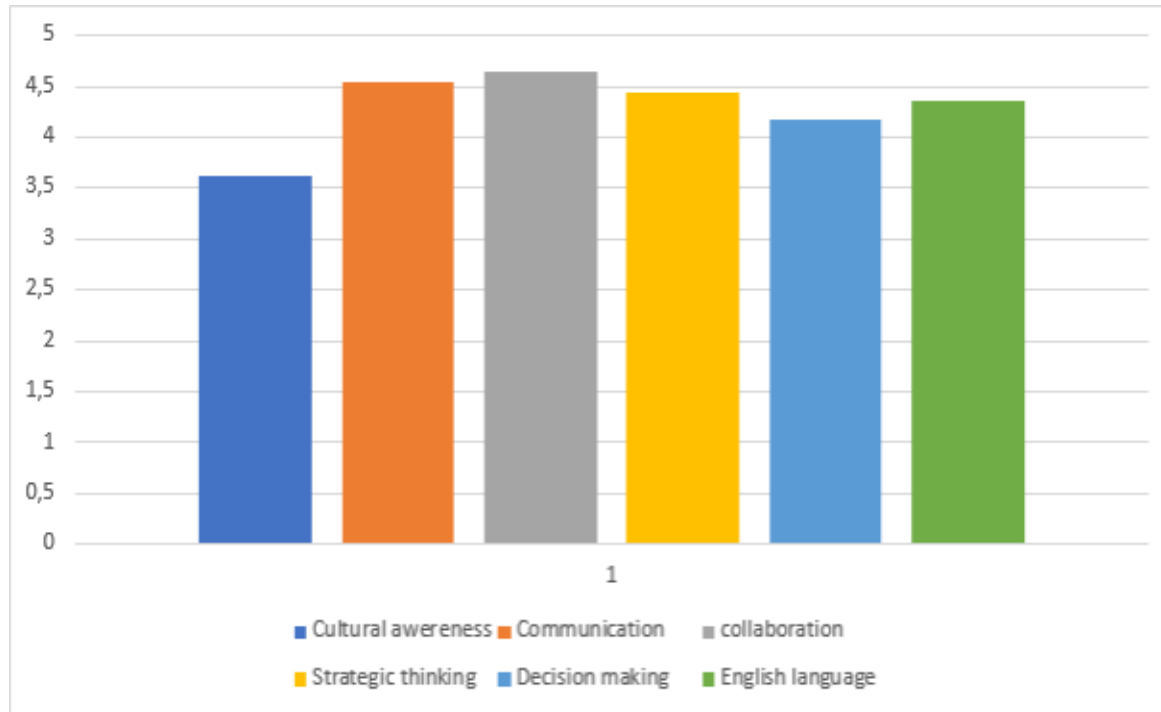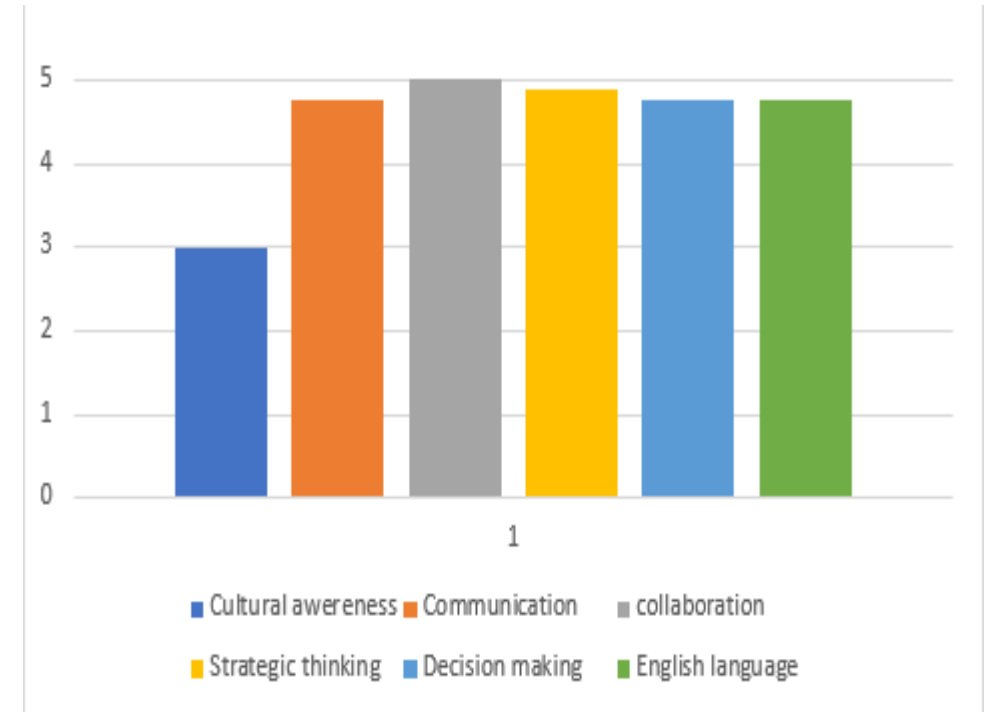Fig.1: Students replies to the question of the development of skills

Fig.2 Observers replies to the question of the development of skills

Discussion and concluding remarks

›   Multicultural competence is complex and most likely demands continuous work over a period of time.

›   This game might not be the best developed for developing cultural awareness, and from our results, both students and observers, find the game a good environment for developing skills relating to the other goals; communication, collaboration, strategic thinking, decision making and English language.

›   By using a game for developing skills relating to multicultural competence, will most likely require that one play the game several times as learning to play the game well, demands time.

›   The game needs to be put into context.

›   Planning and preparation for the game will therefore be of high importance as to make sure the players are aware of the learning content of the game.

›   This will also make the students more disposed to reflection upon one's own learning

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Thank you very much!

Any Questions?

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Thank you!