ARTICLES

The (lack of) Presence of Games
in Human Rights Education

Ewa Jurczyk-Romanowska / email: ewa.jurczyk@uni.wroc.pl
Institut of Pedagogy, Uniwersity of Wrocław, Poland

> *All men, regardless of which part of the world they live in, have the right to benefit from the inalienable and indivisible human rights. This message is the greatest challenge of the 21st century.*
> Terry Davis
> Secretary General of the Council of Europe

On the basis of the conducted analysis of course books it can be concluded that games are in fact absent therein. In the broad spectrum of the methods that stimulate the intellect and the emotions the authors have chosen not to include this method. Games, however, relate to the primordial instincts, to competition, to the will to achieve a goal, which makes education more instinctive and, at the same time, more interesting. Human rights education leads to the challenging of stereotypes, it makes students confront the otherness that has a number of aspects: culture, race, religion, belonging, worldviews, etc. In the education in this area it is not enough to concentrate on knowledge acquisition. Undoubtedly the course books proposed by the authors relate to the emotional aspect and they do it on a high, professional level. Nevertheless, the introduction of games into human rights education could produce positive effects in the internalization of new values.

Key words: *Games; Didactic Methods; Human Rights Education; Intercultural Education*

Introduction to Human Rights education

The speed of social changes has been increasing over the recent decades. Intercultural interactions can be considered one of the factors, as well as an effect of these changes. It is not a new phenomenon caused by dynamic technological development of the 20th or the 21st century – it has been going on for many centuries. So is the case with the breaching

of the rights of small, minority groups. In concordance with the T. Davis' statement quoted as the motto, securing the observing of human rights of all individuals becomes a challenge of the 21st century. The educational work in this field is of particular importance.

In its teleological understanding human rights education is an activity aimed to "develop a type of culture in which human rights are understood, protected, and respected"[1]. This culture comprises of the following elements:

- increasing the respect for human rights and basic freedoms;
- developing a sense of self-respect as well as respect for others and for human dignity;
- developing attitudes and behaviours that should lead to respecting the rights of others;
- securing an actual gender equality and the equal chances of women in all the aspects of life;
- promotion of an actual gender equality and the equal chances of women in all the aspects of life;
- promotion, respect, understanding, and appreciation of cultural diversity, especially that of national, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and other minorities;
- encouraging a pro-active citizen attitude;
- promotion of democracy, development, social justice, harmonious coexistence, solidarity, and friendship between people and nations;
- supporting the work of international institutions aiming to create a culture of peace based upon the universal value of human rights, as well as mutual understanding, tolerance, and refraining from violence.[2]

What can be concluded from the above enumeration is that human rights education encompasses a broad range of diverse problems, however, this diversity is rooted in fundamental documents and legal acts regulating the discussed issues. These include the following: Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 10, 1948 (General Assembly of the UN, Resolution 271/III A), European Convention on Human Rights, which went into effect on September 3, 1953 (CETS No.: 005), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of December 16, 1966

---

[1]   Brander, P. – Gomes, R. – Ken, E. – Lemineur, M. L. – Oliveira, B. – Ondrackova, J. – Surian, A. – Suslowa, O. (2005). *Kompas: Edukacja o prawach człowieka w pracy z młodzieżą*. Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie dla Dzieci i Młodzieży SZANSA & Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli, p. 17.

[2]   Ibidem, p. 18.

(General Assembly of the UN, Resolution 2200 A XXI). In national legal systems these regulations are typically found in constitutions.

In the present paper (Brander et al.) emphasis is placed upon issues pertaining to intercultural education, which deals with establishing contacts with other cultures, societies, and social groups.[3] It is "a process of social upbringing which makes people more aware of their own culture and the interdependencies between cultures, combining respect for differences, regardless of whether the differences are connected with culture, religion, ethnic background, sexual orientation, nationality, social status, ability or disability. That is how people come to respect their own culture in a broader perspective, and in a way that allows them to empathise and value others who are different, and to cooperate with them in building a better, more equal world".[4] Contemporary societies are increasingly more intercultural and interculturally diversified, which is why the importance of minority rights is rising. One cannot but notice that the lack of respect for other cultures, the inability to establish mutual relations, and failure to find compromise that could substitute the pretensions to dominate result in severe cultural conflicts. The significance of the topic is underlined by the events that have now taken place in some European countries, especially France, and which cannot be conceived as merely history.

Games as Educational Methods

Intercultural education implies the work with different aspects of the human nature, such as attitudes, emotions, perceptions, values, and experiences.[5] According to the author (Brander et al.), the effects in this area can be achieved through multiple means, using the typical lesson/classroom method, or alternative contemporary approaches. One of the ways of achieving the above aim is the use of the educational potential of games. Departing from traditional ways of teaching or even making this process more attractive and adapted to the reality of human life makes it possible to introduce elements of gamification. Gamification "is a conscious and purposeful use of the mechanisms and techniques employed in designing games in order to increase dedication and loyalty, as well as

---

[3]   Ibidem, p. 30.
[4]   Ibidem, p. 47.
[5]   Brander, P. – Carderas, C. – Crosnier de Bellaistre, P. – Dhalech, M. – Gomes, R. – Kovacs, E. – Taylor, M. – de Vince Abad, J. (2003). *Każdy inny, wszyscy równi…*, Warszawa: Europejski Ruch młodzieży przeciwko Rasizmowi, Ksenofobii, Przejawom Antysemityzmu i Nietolerancji, p. 47.

modification of behaviours and habits (...). The assumption in gamification is to direct the activities to achieve an aim that is in concordance with the expectations of the author of a project, and their motivation to perform the expected actions, even if they are thought to be boring and run-of-the-mill" (http://grywalizacja24.pl/definicje/). P. Tkaczyk adds that in 2010 99% of young Americans declared that they played computer games. Such a high level of involvement creates "a system of education parallel to schools".[6] In light of these figures the introduction of the element of gamification into education is not merely a diversification of classes, but a way of change that appears inevitable in the longer perspective. Introduction of gamification into the process of education can contribute to discovering inexhaustible "resources of inner motivation and readiness for sacrifice that are observed in gamers on the daily basis, and which are often lacking in the system of education".[7] That is because gamification transfers the mechanisms of games to the field of education and in this way allows one to reach "an emotional state that can be defined as concentrated motivation".[8] It is expressed through complete dedication to a task with the concurrent emotional involvement, which makes it possible to get satisfaction from performing even repetitive activities. However, to achieve this state the individual that learns needs to be presented with clear aims and instructions, they have to be certain that the task can be completed, and they need to be given immediate feedback on the achieved results".[9] What else is important in using gamification in education? First and foremost – fun – because it produces positive emotions. As J. Huizinga, who in 1938 coined the well-known term *homo ludens* – the playing man – states, "playing is an action performed out free will or an activity performed within certain limits of time and space which are accepted free willingly and non-negotiable, it is an aim in and of itself, and it is accompanied by the feelings of suspense, joy, and the awareness of its "otherness" from everyday life"[10] When looking at games from a biological perspective one

---

6   Tkaczyk P. (2012). *Grywalizacja: Jak stosować mechanizmy gier w działaniach marketingowych*. Gliwice: HELION, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 10, 1948*. General Assembly of the UN, Resolution 271/III A, p. 52.

7   Sobociński M. (2013), *Grywalizacja w praktyce: reguły, problemy, zalety i technologia. Wstępna analiza rocznych kursów przeprowadzonych na UKW,* Retrieved August 14, 2014 from http://repozytorium.ukw.edu.pl/handle/item/199.

8   Tkaczyk P. (2012). *Grywalizacja: Jak stosować mechanizmy gier w działaniach marketingowych*. Gliwice: HELION, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 10, 1948*. General Assembly of the UN, Resolution 271/III A, p. 52.

9   Ibidem, p. 52–53.

10 Huizinga, J. (1985). *Homo ludens. Zabawa jako źródło kultury*. Warszawa: PWN, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on*

ought to bear in mind that "influenced by positive emotions the amygdala sends a proper signal to the frontal lobes[11], which facilities the remembering of an experience. Interaction with colleagues that introduces the element of competition is also significant.

In references there is no clear distinction between game and play, which are both the designates of yet another crucial term. The term ludology applies to two notions: *ludus* (Latin) – stands for "game", "play", as well as "a place for exercise", "school", and *logos* (Greek) – "word". In the context of research on games in general and video games in particular the term has most probably been used first by Gonzalo Frasca in *Simulation versus Narrative: Introduction to Ludology*[12] and Espen Aarseth *Playing Research: Methodological approaches to game analysis*[13]. What is important in this context is the research on the structure of games. E. Aarseth defined the following elements of a game: (1) gameplay, including the actions, strategies, and motives of players, (2) game structure – rules of the game and simulation, and (3) game world – elements of fictions, texture, design of levels' typology. Jespen Juul, in turn, enumerated such elements as: player, game, world[14].

As it has been mentioned before, the planned transfer of rules and structures of games to other areas of social life is called gamification. The examples of such use are the point systems, skills levels, and feedback in schools, as well as employing elements of role playing games to achieve a greater involvement of students, making their achievements greater than their insecurities, so that their choices are closely connected with results, which leads to increased sense of control and self-education. Games also serve to introduce the feelings of mystery, cooperation, and communication into education, along with a combinations of knowledge and skills, and education within a context[15]. In references on education

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of December 16, 1966. General Assembly of the UN, Resolution 2200 A XXI, p. 51.

[11] Van den Bergh, J. – Behrer, M. (2012), Jak kreować marki, które pokocha pokolenie Y? Warszawa: Edgard, Warszawa, p. 30.

[12] Frasca, G. (2003). *Simulation versus Narrative: Introduction to Ludology.* [w:] M. J. P. Wolf and B. Perron (red.), *Video/Game/Theory.* New York: Routledge.

[13] Aarseth, E. (2003). *Playing Research: Methodological approaches to game analysis*. Pobrano 21 marca 2014, z: http://www.bendevane.com/VTA2012/herrstubbz/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/02.GameApproaches2.pdf.

[14] Juul, J. (2003). *The Game, the Player, the World: Looking for a Heart of Gameness.* Pobrano z: http://www.jesperjuul.net/text/gameplayerworld/.

[15] Mochocki, M., (2011). Reality is broken: why games make us better and how they can change the World. Jane McGonigal. 2011: New York: Penguin Press, ss. 388. *Homo Ludens, 1/(3),* p. 242.

emphasis is placed on game structure. It can be defined as a set of features that an activity needs to have in order to become a game. They are:

(1) the winning condition – that is, when do players know that they have won – it pertains to the formal aspect. It ought to be underlined that in every game someone has to win, and someone has to lose. Activity in which "everyone is a winner" is only fun, a pastime, but it cannot be called a game.
(2) aim – that is, what the players need to achieve to win – pertains to the factual aspect,
(3) action – the actions of the players defined by the game plot,
(4) obstacles, difficulties, that the players encounter on their way to achieve the aim,
(5) rules – that is, the limitations that one has to take into account when playing, rules of functioning in the game.[16]

Study Assumptions

This paper presents the conclusions drawn from an analysis of references on human rights education that are recommended by: Amnesty International, European Foundation of Human Rights, Anti-discrimination Education Association, that is, some important organisations working in this field, as well as the "Nikt nie rodzi się z uprzedzeniami" ["Nobody is born prejudiced"] programme. Altogether the study material was comprised of 46 course books which, in turn, included ca. 400 plans of lessons on human rights, with emphasis on intercultural education.

The main aim of the conducted study was the analysis of games as a didactic method in human rights education with emphasis on intercultural education.

In the course of the explorations two research questions were formulated:

(1) What methods are presented as advisable in the course books to be used in human rights education?
(2) How can games be used as a didactic method in human rights education?

---

[16] Tkaczyk P. (2012). *Grywalizacja: Jak stosować mechanizmy gier w działaniach marketingowych.* Gliwice: HELION, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 10, 1948.* General Assembly of the UN, Resolution 271/III A, p. 74.

The Methods Presented as Advisable in the Course Books to be used in Human Rights Education

In the analysed course books the authors present a number of typologies of the methods used in human rights education. Their selection is typically grounded in the aims of the particular lessons. The selection of a proper teaching method is one of the conditions of the implementation of intercultural education. The selection is to a large extent dependent on the school context, that is, the aim of the lessons, age of the students, aims of the teachers and the school, the curriculum, forms of student assessment, and organisation of the didactic process[17]. Because of the substantial differences between the course books in the present paper the typology of methods is not discussed, and neither do I attempt to define the boundary between educational methods and techniques. That is because these very notions were differently classified by the authors of the analysed texts. Such discussion would greatly exceed the desirable length of this paper, and one ought to bear in mind that it is not the aim of the analysis.

In the analysed course books including plans of lessons on human rights with emphasis on intercultural education the following didactic methods have been employed: working with a source text, team work, discussion, mind map, simulation, case study, working with a computer, elements of drama, mini lecture, presentation, individual work with a text, working in small teams, working in teams with the jigsaw puzzle technique, team work on a poster, brainstorming, decision tree, debate, meta-plan, SWOT analysis, questions star, ask an expert, triangle ranking, crossword, continuum collapse, planning from the future, take a position, the snowball method, working in task teams, mentoring, teaching lectures, conversations, teaching conversations, using the internet, chronological method, circles method, paths of culture methods, map of contacts method, compass rose method, decision paths, decision table, negotiations, conflict map, six steps in problem-solving, education project, constructing scenarios, think hat method, buzz groups, ranking, role-play, images (photos, comics, drawings, collages), taking pictures and filming, storytelling, rounds, still frame, dance, "empty chair" method, visualisation, didactic conversation, document analysis, guided work, art, field trip, and poem analysis. One ought to bear in mind that the course

---

17 Sielatycki M. (2004). *Metody nauczania w edukacji międzykulturowej*. In: J. Gospodarczyk *Edukacja międzykulturowa*. Warszawa: Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli, p. 31.

book authors freely define the didactic methods used in human rights education. Some of the methods are typically employed in schools: lecture, debate, SWOT analysis – as a result, they are easy to define. In other cases the authors would present the name of the method along with its description, which allowed the educator to learn how to run the classes. However, one cannot but notice that in some cases the names appear to have been coined *ad hoc*, and only after a detailed analysis of the lesson plan was it possible for the reader to understand what the author is actually proposing, and it was often not enough.

Among the methods listed in the course book one could also find games, sometimes called didactic or simulative.

Using Games as Didactic Methods in Human Rights Education

There are numerous social, educational, and scientific communities involved in human rights education. One cannot overestimate the work of non-gevernmant organizations who by implementing their statutory aims have created a database of course books to be used in this area. As introduction to the discussion of games one should notice that the majority of the course books have been very well prepared; they are clear, and the methods included in the lesson plans are interesting, well-developed, diverse, and professional. The aim of the present analysis is not to show mistakes or shortcomings, but to investigate to what extent games have been introduced to human rights lesson plans. I have assumed the definition of a game by P. Tkaczyk, which is also widely accepted by creators and researchers of games. Therefore, regardless of whether a lesson plan is classified as a game or not, it does not alter its value.

As A. Klimowicz claims, "didactic games and projects that allow teachers to achieve the assumed educational aims by authentic dedication and emotions of students are a perfect tool in shaping tolerance and openness to others"[18]. At the same time, only in two of the course books: *Edukacja międzykulturowa* [Intercultural education][19] and *Antydyskryminacja. Pakiet edukacyjny* [Anti-discrimination. Educational package][20] the method has been briefly discussed. After the analysis of 46 course books including over 400 lesson plans it can be concluded that

---

[18] Klimowicz A. (2004). *Gry dydaktyczne i projekty w edukacji międzykulturowej.* In: J. Gospodarczyk *Edukacja międzykulturowa.* Warszawa: Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli, p. 35.

[19] Ibidem, p. 35–37.

[20] Gospodarczyk J. (Ed.) (2005). *Antydyskryminacja. Pakiet edukacyjny.* Warszawa: Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli, pp. 29–30.

the use of games has only been proposed 21 times. Typically the term "game" is used to relate to simulative exercises making students more active. In the case of 6 lesson plans the game with all its defining elements has in fact been employed – the aims and the winning conditions have been clearly defined, there was a plot in which the players would function, there were planned, random obstacles, as well as a set of rules for all the players.[21] Below I present a brief analysis of the exercises that the authors classified as games.

An example of the use of a game in human rights education is *A tale of two cities*[22], which meets all the criteria. The participants of the educational process play a board game in which the person who manages to collect the most money wins. Thus, the aim and the winning condition have been clearly defined. The world is also clearly defined: there are two cities, Egoland and Equoland, and the participants are randomly assigned to one of them, but they can move to a different city during the game. The game also has educational aims that include the acquisition of knowledge of such rights as: the right to social security, to freedom, to life in a healthy natural environment.

The games *Do you know your rights?* and *Moksha-Patamu (Snakes and ladders)*[23] based on the same board are also typical games. In both the cases the player who first makes it to the finish line wins. However, on the way the players need to fulfil a number of tasks aimed at human rights education, especially on children's rights.

Yet another plan that combines human rights education with games is *Red alert*[24], and its aim is to find missing children's rights. These are represented by special game cards. The players need to locate all the parts of the cards. Each of the compiled cards contains a message pertaining to children's rights. The winning condition is to collect more cards than the opposing team.

---

[21] Tkaczyk P. (2012). *Grywalizacja: Jak stosować mechanizmy gier w działaniach marketingowych*. Gliwice: HELION, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 10, 1948*. General Assembly of the UN, Resolution 271/III A, p. 74.

[22] Brander, P. – Gomes, R. – Ken, E. – Lemineur, M. L. – Oliveira, B. – Ondrackova, J. – Surian, A. – Suslova, O. (2005). *Kompas: Edukacja o prawach człowieka w pracy z młodzieżą*. Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie dla Dzieci i Młodzieży SZANSA & Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli, p. 178–187.

[23] Brederode-Santos, M. E. – Claeys, J. – Fazah, R. – Schneider, A. – Szelenyi, Z. (2007). *Kompasik: Edukacja na rzecz praw człowieka w pracy z dziećmi*. Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie dla Dzieci i Młodzieży SZANSA & Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli. *European Convention on Human Rights*. September 3, 1953. CETS No.: 005, pp. 86–97.

[24] Ibidem, pp. 177–181.

The game *Capture the castle*[25] defines its didactic aims as evoking empathy between two sides of a conflict, initiating cooperation, becoming aware of the emotions within a conflict, and inspiring strategic thinking and planning. The winning condition is – depending on the side – to defend or to capture a castle. In the case of this game the relation to human rights lies only in the evaluation, while the quests during the game are not connected with this topic.

Games are used as an integrating tool in human rights education. The course books propose starting the workshops with classes which are fun, and their aim is to let the participants get to know each other. However, it is difficult to propose that games are an integral element of human rights education. The integrating games named in the *Package against discrimination* course book: *What's your name?, Concentrating circles, Picasso portraits, Who is like me, The queue, Human bingo, The smart chair* are not, in fact, games, but only exercises that promote being active in class. While it cannot be denied that they serve an integrating role, they cannot be termed "games".

So is the case with the game *Fight for wealth and power*,[26] which actually contains certain elements of simulation, but due to the lack of a winning condition it cannot be classified as a game. *Come and play*,[27] in turn, is a simulation exercise based on a card game. However, in this case the condition of setting up and abiding rules has not been met – the game scenario includes defining people who will not play fair.

The *Political systems, or, looking for political system solutions* lesson plan[28] indicates that an educational, didactic game is used as one of the methods. The game is named *What political system is this?* Its participants are divided into groups and they compete by placing states on a contour map and assigning political systems to them. "Having finished their work they hang up their maps and subsequently the group/groups that is the most successful in fulfilling the task receives the title of the "Experts on European states"[29]. In the proposed method there

---

[25] Ibidem, pp. 197–199.

[26] Brander, P. – Gomes, R. – Ken, E. – Lemineur, M. L. – Oliveira, B. – Ondrackova, J. – Surian, A. – Suslowa, O. (2005). *Kompas: Edukacja o prawach człowieka w pracy z młodzieżą*. Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie dla Dzieci i Młodzieży SZANSA & Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli, pp. 261–265.

[27] Ibidem, pp. 285.

[28] Skrzypczak, P. – Klimowicz, A. – Małek, U. – Czajkowska, J. – Polus, A. – Pawlęga, M. (2008). *Akademi@ demokracji*. Lublin: Europejski Dom Spotkań & Fundacja Nowy Staw, pp. 87–90.

[29] Ibidem, p. 89.

is no clear winning condition, which is why there is a chance that all the groups will "win". That is why not all the game criteria are met.

In the same course book the authors propose the game *Collect the points*, however, in this case the authors have decided to use the term "game" because the exercise uses playing cards. There are no rules – to the contrary, not knowing the rules is the basis of the exercise.

In the course book *Everyone different, everyone equal...* the authors name games as didactic methods in human rights education six times. The educational aim of the game *Limit 20*[30] is investigating the phenomenon of discrimination and isolation. The winning condition is clearly defined (getting 20 points), the division into groups is a source of competition. Nevertheless, the basis of the game is to manipulate the rules, and the players only learn of this after the exercise is finished. That is why in this case the condition of clear rules known to all the players has not been met.

News editing[31] is a simulation in which there is no competition between the participants, and neither are there any losers or winners. The *Media bias* scenario is defined by the authors as "a fascinating and multifaceted game", while in fact it is a field activity consisting in collecting information that is to be analysed later. *Island*, in turn,[32] is an interesting simulation rooted in a detailed world. It is not possible to win, therefore one of the game criteria is not met. However, the educational aims are certainly achieved. *Guess who's coming to dinner* is also a simulation exercise.[33]

Development path is a good example of an educational game. It is a board game that meets all the criteria. Here one can find a clear winning condition, an aim, as well as unchangeable rules that have not been manipulated. The game is located in a world that has been described in detail, and the tasks that are found on the cards belong to a defined plot. The random obstacles are also typical of a game. The educational content is comprised of elements of the tasks, which is why the game gets the participants involved in an interesting way. The players discover new knowledge about the co-dependencies between world states, as well as solidarity, equality, world history, and economic relations as elements contributing to the spreading of racism and xenophobia.

---

[30] Brander, P. – Carderas, C. – Crosnier de Bellaistre, P. – Dhalech, M. – Gomes, R. – Kovacs, E. – Taylor, M. –de Vince Abad, J. (2003). *Każdy inny, wszyscy równi...*, Warszawa: Europejski Ruch młodzieży przeciwko Rasizmowi, Ksenofobii, Przejawom Antysemityzmu i Nietolerancji, p. 103.

[31] Ibidem, p. 130.

[32] Ibidem, p. 171–173.

[33] Ibidem, p. 177.