Games in the Classroom for Emotional Release

Ishita Ghoshal

Games address a broad range of issues including fear, honesty, patience, love, dismantling stereotypes, learning and earning respect and developing self confidence. They address the social challenges that children approaching adolescence face nowadays and provide them with the relevant skills they can apply in these situations.

What goes into forming a student's character cannot be provided with textbooks, lectures or audio visuals alone. Until a child experiences and differentiates his feelings, his understanding cannot be shaped about the appropriate attitude and values. The most effective way to live with the right attitude, values and inner life skills is amidst one's peer group each day of the school rather than attend a moral science class or sit through a life skill visual. Things which need to become an integral part of the child must be internalized as much naturally and playfully as possible.

A teacher's readiness to conduct life skill trainings in the classroom, rather than just defining each skill can be interestingly met with self-created games. Games help students experience values as well as the skills holistically, letting a child reflect and internalize life skills joyfully. Most of the time, assessment of skills and values become imperative for a teacher than helping students imbibe them. This is where activities and games act as effective reinforcements.

Children who have problems in the classroom have a tendency to cause problems for others, too. These children need models for developing social and problem-solving skills. In a structured group, they can experience and try out social behaviour. They can learn through daily practice and contact with other children, as make-belief situations can help children find security. With the games, while having fun, children can deal with a current conflict in the classroom or with a make-believe problem that will help prepare them for serious real-life situations in the future.

Inner life-skill games can also work at the group level, so that group members can develop problem-solving competence as a close-knit unit working together, and learn to face future problems with confidence. A child who feels safe in a strong group will also be better at facing problems outside the group, on his own.

Children explore themselves and express what they observe in their own unique ways. Of course, children listen to what others have to say, and group reflection about what has been said helps children develop constructive feedback, accept other's point of views and reflect on one's team actions.

Games also majorly focus on how children perceive a partner. They try to learn more about their partner through observing, questioning, responding, commenting and mirroring. By doing this, they learn a bit more about themselves but also get closer to another person, and gradually, to more and more members of the group, resulting in strong bond formations.

Games emphasize the goals of learning to orient oneself in a group, knowing one's position within the group, and recognizing and using the strengths and weaknesses of group members and of the group itself. Children might also learn that if and when a group changes, the characteristics of a group also fluctuates. Positions, relationships, moods, and potential in a group are partially stable, and therefore, partially dependent on the circumstances. Through games, members of a group learn to recognize differences between their own and other groups, and how to assess and accept other groups.

Such games are more like simulation; participants get a description of a problem or conflict. In addition, each participant gets a detailed description of their roles, which particularly focuses on their attitude towards the given conflict or problem. The role description may also contain sentences or pointers that the participant can use in the game.

Additional written information, pictures, and other illustrative materials may also be provided. The older the children are, the more detailed the information about the given problem can be shared before the actual game starts. Ideally, the players also have enough preparation time. The game often doesn't last longer than an hour, but in case of some projects for fourteen-year olds, the preparation time can last up to a week.

Participants who are well informed generally do better in these games. With younger players, it is more appropriate to play an "improvised simulation game" with brief descriptions of the situation and roles. Preparation time focuses largely on verbal exchanges of information and consultations among the participants. This leads to the generation of a more balanced emotional outlook, a sense of self-worth and an improved ability to focus on learning tasks and developing positive relationships. Such games nurture active imagination and develop inner life skills, which in turn help children recognize their feelings and *'listen'* to their inner being.

Educational research has identified seven main categories of inner-life skills that support emotional healing and personal development.

1. Self-awareness and self-knowledge:

• learning to focus on the body

• becoming more aware of the emotions

• increasing awareness of beliefs about self, both positive and negative

• increasing awareness of energy— flow and stasis

• using relaxation, meditation, imagery, including symbol work

2. Understanding the unconscious:

• working with fantasies and imagination

• using guided reflection to review behaviour and beliefs

• reviewing and awareness of influence that cultural mythology has

• finding inner wisdom— intuition or inner guidance and conscience

3. Self-expression and communication:

• symbols as a source of creativity and self-understanding

• line and colour

• the written word

• the spoken word

• the body as a means of expression

4. Manage emotional and physical release:

• individually

• in pairs

• in groups

5. Relate to others:

• recognizing dynamics of group/classroom/family

• dealing with negative reactions— projections

• dealing with attractions

• considering others' needs

6. Supporting others:

• practising active listening— partner work

• developing group awareness

• exchanging message

7. Understanding self-direction and motivation:

• learning self-evaluation

• working with visualisation

• reflecting

• finding inner wisdom

• using energy creatively

• identifying hopes and directions for the future

To share an example, everyone in the class tries to get elected as president.

Here's how it works: Two at a time, in two-minute campaign speeches, they praise their opponent to the skies. The class votes on each pair of candidates. The candidate who makes the best speech about the other candidate becomes the nominee. Now the nominees have a run-off election, again pairing off. Another vote is taken. This continues until only one candidate is left. H e/She is the *President of Praise*! Through this game, the class gets to reflect on-

- *How does it feel to be praised to the skies?*
- *Would you like to make people feel like that all the time?*

A day spent in verbalizing praises binds the class in a new light of respect for each other, which would be reflected in the positive relationships they go on to form in the future, resulting in societal betterment.

Ishita Ghoshal *is the principal of Orchids International School, Nigdi, Pune. She has been working extensively as an ELT Resource Person with Oxford University Press India, and has also served as an examiner with Trinity College London, India panel.*

Photographs courtesy: The Aryans School, Kolkata

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Lesson Plan on Games in the Classroom

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Objectives of the lesson: Inculcate the value of respecting each individual and experience the very relevant life skill of working in a team.

Method: Interactive game in the classroom

Title: *President of Praise*

Grade: Class 5 (Primary)

Participants: 20 students as candidates

Materials: Two sets of number tags (1 to 10) and safety pins to wear the tags

Time: 1 period of 40-45 minutes

Goals:

- ✓ Debating fairly
- ✓ Avoiding verbal aggressiveness
- ✓ Dealing with competition
- ✓ Training cognitive skills
- ✓ Tackling projects
- ✓ Learning to assert oneself
- ✓ Training rhetorical skills
- ✓ Learning about roles

How to play:

Everyone in the class tries to get elected as president. The class is divided into two groups. All members of Group I gets a number tag and so does all members of Group II. The remaining class can be the audience who ultimately vote and they may get to participate in the next period as candidates. The number 1s of both group pair up and similarly, all numbers pair up from both groups. In one-minute campaign speeches, they praise their opponent to the skies.

The candidate who makes the best speech about the other candidate becomes the nominee. Now the nominees have a run-off election, again pairing off. Another vote is taken. This continues until only one candidate is left. He/she is the *President of Praise*!

Activity that follows the game:

Each child gets a reflection sheet and records their thoughts in it:

	🙂	😐	☹️
I loved it when I was praised.			
I loved it the most since I was praised in front of the class.			
I also felt good to praise my opponent.			
That gave me a reason to look positively at him/her.			
I realized that each one of us has so many good qualities.			

Summing Up:

Divide the class into small groups of 4-5 members and give them 2 minutes to discuss and share questions like:

● *How does it feel to be praised to the skies?*

● *Would you like to make people feel like that all the time?*

Reinforcement: Take a minute to praise the most important people, places or things in your life and note them in your reflection notebook.

Assignments:

Praise the members of your family and ask them to praise each other as well. Honour the one who praises most gloriously.

Taking the game to the next level: *Mood Meters*

Time: 1 period of 40-45 minutes

Goals:

● Communicating emotions

● Responding to the group's mood

How to Play:

All candidates use their bodies to express how they are feeling while the praise sequence is proceeding.

Examples

One candidate feels like running away.
Another turns away from the group with her hands over her ears.
Another one stands with her arms raised over her head. She feels disoriented in the group.
One candidate stretches while sitting in his chair demonstrating his reflections.
Another is pacing the room with hands on his waist showing that he is contemplating everybody's ideas.
Students should try new postures to demonstrate similar feelings.

Reflections:

Who was better informed?

Which players were eloquent?

Which players cooperated well so they could assert themselves?

Who reacted fast and effectively when the game took unexpected turns?

What does your body language tell others?

What would have to change so your body language changes? What would your body then look like?

Does seeing the conflict clearly help to resolve it?

How does each member feel about a conflict?

How have some members avoided a conflict?

Assessment: Observers assess the verbal and tactical behaviour of the players and share their thoughts over the same.

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Words Section

Edutainment (noun)

Meaning

➢ Computer games, television programmes, or other material, intended to be both educational and enjoyable. It includes content that is primarily educational but has incidental entertainment value.

(Oxforddictionaries.com)

Origin (and additional information) ~ The term's first known use was sometime around *1950-1980s*. It is a blend of *education* and *entertainment*.

It can be argued that educational entertainment has existed for millennia in the form of parables and fables that promoted social change. Modern forms include television productions, films, museum exhibits, and computer software which use entertainment to attract and maintain an audience, while incorporating deliberate educational content or messages. Since the 1970s, various groups in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Latin America have used edutainment to address such health and social issues.

The term *edutainment* was supposedly used as early as 1948 by ***The Walt Disney Company*** to describe the *True Life Adventures* series. The noun *edutainment* is a neologistic portmanteau used by **Robert Heyman** in 1973 while producing documentaries for the *National Geographic Society*. The offshoot word *edutainer* has been used by **Craig Sim Webb** since before the turn of the millennium to describe an individual who offers edutainment presentations and performances.

Schoolhouse Rock, Wishbone, Sesame Street, and *Bill Nye the Science Guy* are examples of shows that use music and video to teach topics like mathematics, science and history. Using music to aid memory dates back to the passing of ancient oral traditions, including the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Much of what edutainment can offer through audio and video especially, is accessible over the internet on platforms such as *YouTube*. Edutainment also consists of television programs which can be divided into three main categories: those with primarily educational intentions, those with a high degree of both education and entertainment, and entertainment shows with incidental or occasional educational value.

In edutainment, some games may be explicitly designed with education in mind, while others may have incidental or secondary educational value. All types of games, including board, card and video games may be used in an educational environment. Educational games are designed to teach people about

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certain subjects, expand concepts, enhance understanding of social community, reinforce development, understand a historical event or culture, or assist them in learning a relevant life skill as they play.

Toys are perhaps the earliest edutainment objects a person encounters, as usually they have an educational aspect besides their aesthetic appeal. They can teach children literacy, numerical, conceptual or motor skills. Many toys (e.g. *a miniature piano*) are simply colourful, scaled-down versions of more complex objects, and thus can train children in the skills required for handling these in future. Toys are often employed in the context of mimicry and role-play to partially experience personalities or situations not otherwise possible, which is very akin to simulation in video games.

Usage ~

i. *This <u>edutainment</u> video has a unique blend of comedy and chess instruction, which has never been done before.*
ii. *A variety of fun and interactive displays, exhibits and experiments will turn the venue into an <u>edutainment</u> centre for learners from primary to tertiary levels.*
iii. *Focusing heavily on <u>edutainment</u>, the channel has launched new programmes like 'How Things Work' and 'Things I do'.*