

Law Enforcement UrbanGo: Mysterious Budapest – The Experiences of a Citybound Game in Law Enforcement Higher Education

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Law enforcement higher education faces several challenges in the past couple of years (new generation requirements, competence-based learning) that calls for the trial and incorporation of new methods into our courses. Experiential education, gamification and project pedagogy are methods used more and more often in modern pedagogy, even in higher education. The integration of new methods into the teaching process, the power and possible outcome of these is covered in several scientific articles focusing on teaching methodology³ (Csikósné, 2019; Mezeiová – Bencsik, 2019).

This present study is about our take on experiential education and gamification at the Department of Behavioural Sciences and Law Enforcement at UPS: a citybound detective game which we called „Mysterious Budapest”, and planned for our 1st-year police students.

Students were strolling around Budapest in 4-6-member groups looking for locations where significant crimes took place. The crimes were thematized so there were locations connected to organized crime, homicide, the dangers of police work, etc. Students not only had to find these places but, on their way, they had to solve different tasks to earn points. Group work started with the planning process as the groups had to collectively decide the itinerary and the tasks to be done. At the end of the day presentations were held on the collected information and challenges faced and solved.

First-year students come to our courses following a 6-week-long basic training⁴, where their physical endurance and their willingness to accept the rules of law enforcement (adhering to a strict daily schedule, obeying commands, accepting hierarchy) are on trial. After the rigid framework of the previous weeks, it is always exciting to see how students function in relative freedom.

In the following pages we are summing up the experiences of this citybound game, reflecting on the ways of improvement and the possible positive outcomes of it in law enforcement higher education.

Keywords: competence-based learning, gamification, experiential education, project pedagogy, good practice

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³ see: Kyriakova, Gabriela – Angelova, Nelina – Yordanova, Lina (2014): *Gamification in Education*. Proceedings of 9th International Balkan Education and Science Conference. Trakya University, Edirne, Turkey.; ³ Zhylykbay, Gulimzhan – Magzhan, Saule – Suinzhanova, Zhanar – Balaubekov, Myrzakhmet - Adiyeva, Pakizat (2014): The Effectiveness of Using the Project Method in the Teaching Process. *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences* 143, 621-624.; Mezeiová, Adriana – Bencsik, Andrea (2019): A játékosított tudásátadás igénye a felsőoktatásban. *11th International Conference of J. Selye University. Pedagogical Section*, 233-243.; ³ Csikósné Maczó, Edit (2019): A gamifikáció felsőoktatási alkalmazásának lehetőségei. *Képzés és Gyakorlat*, 17/3-4., 23-32.

⁴ Erdős, Ákos (2019): A rendészeti tisztté válás első nehézségei. A gyermeki elképzelések találkozása a realitással. *Új Pedagógiai Szemle*, 2019 1-2, 76-99.; ⁴ Erdős, Ákos – Magasvári, Adrienn – Szabó, Andrea (2019): Új generáció a rendészeti felsőoktatásban. In: Gaál, Gy. - Hautzinger, Z. (szerk.): *Gondolatok a rendészettudományról. Írások a Magyar Rendészettudományi Társaság megalapításának 15. évfordulója alkalmából*. Budapest: Magyar Rendészettudományi Társaság, 89-102.

I. Challenges in Higher Education. New Generations.

It is beyond question, whether we subscribe to the generational theories and approaches or not, that new generations arrived in universities, and it does not only influence law enforcement higher education but presents a specific challenge in all areas and fields of higher education. New generations also come with altered motivation. Teachers are dealing with a diverse group of students (and here we are talking about diversity in gender, ethnicity, religion, and social background)⁵, parts of whom are non-traditional students. Being non-traditional means that they are often first-generation university students, so their parents do not possess college or university degree – and it implies that, in a way, universities lost their ‘elite’ status by becoming more open to the ‘masses’.⁶⁷ By being first-generation students their motivation to learn a specific field of science may be different, as well. Their status as university students may not be embedded and rooted in a deep desire of knowledge and – according to the student integration theory⁸ – their commitment to a certain institution is disputable and more shakeable (which, in the long run, may become a financial-economic question, which this present study does not wish to address).⁹¹⁰

We cannot go on without referring to the specifics of generation Z (or zoomers), which is characterized by short-term attention span, a hunger for more visual and entertaining content in the classroom. For Gen-Z, frontal education is often less fulfilling, so teachers must consciously move towards more interactive methods, rather than using frontal education methodology. The role of the teacher is changing, as well: they turn into facilitators more than omniscient entities in the classroom, their task becomes to inspire creative ideas, to let students use their experiences to construct collective knowledge, and, if needed, frame this knowledge into a theoretical context. The methodology used should be various, such as group works, project works, discourses and disputes, just to list a few.¹¹¹² It also means that the need for gamification and gamified knowledge-transfer appears.¹³

II. New Tools in Higher Education

Below, we are going to list a couple of these new methodologies that may be helpful when facing new challenges in education. The list is not exhaustive, it serves only to give an overview of the available tools, but the approach of all of them can be found in the good practice that we introduce later in the study.

⁵ Hu, Shouping – Kuh, George D. (2003): Diversity Experiences in College Student Learning and Personal Development. *Journal of College Student Development*, 44. 3: 320-334.

⁶ Pusztai, Gabriella (2013): Kapcsolatok a felsőoktatási intézményben. In: Pusztai, G. (szerk.): *Láthatatlan kéztől a baráti kezéig*. Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 105-129.

⁷ Hrubos, Ildikó (2006): A 21. század egyeteme. Egy új társadalmi szerződés felé. *Educatio* 15/4, 683-685.

⁸ Tinto, Vincent (1993): *Leaving College. Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*. Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press

⁹ Harper, Shaun R. – Quaye, Stephen J. [eds] (2009): *Student Engagement in Higher Education*. New York-London: Routledge

¹⁰ Volkwein, J. Fredericks – King, Margaret C. – Terenzini, Patrick T. (1986): Student Faculty Relationships and Intellectual Growth among Transfer Students. *Journal of Higher Education*, 57. 4: 413-430.

¹¹ Knowles, Malcolm S. (1980): *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy. Revised and Updated*. New York: Association Press

¹² Hegedűs, Judit (2019): Szemléletformálás a rendészeti képzésben. In: Hegedűs, J. (szerk.): *A magatartástudomány helye és szerepe a rendészeti képzésben*. Budapest: Nemzeti Közszolgálati Egyetem, 2019. 5-18. o

¹³ Mezeiová – Bencsik (2019): A játékosított tudásátadás igénye a felsőoktatásban.

A Gamification

The inspiring nature of games – whether it is a board game, an adventure game, an escape room game – is another axiom that does not need to be justified.¹⁴ However, the role of games in education is something that should be talked about as it only goes back to a couple of years that they appeared in the discourse as possible means of education (especially in the sphere of higher education). Games in education will enhance students' motivation by building upon their curiosity, their need for constant challenges, their fantasy, their competitiveness, and their (self)regulatory behaviour.¹⁵ Knowledge acquired through games will be more smoothly anchored due to the psychological processes in the participants that accompany the positive sensations during playing a certain game, thus making it possible for the material to be digested more effectively.¹⁶ There are certain requirements, though, that have to be met: the game should have a fixed pedagogical aim, it is beneficial if it is embedded in a story and if points and rewards are assigned to the competition at the end.

B The Benefits of Experiential Education

When we talk about experiential education, we basically talk about applied knowledge that is gained by experiencing a certain incident, one's own faults, boundaries, by being able to accomplish – as simplified as it sounds. Experiential education builds on the students' independence, which is a strange requirement when we talk about law enforcement higher education. The to-be-introduced good practice that the authors of this study developed is designed for our 1st year students, and it is practiced the very first day after they finish their intensive basic training that serves as a means of socializing into law enforcement culture. After experiencing a very strict, very rigid system, we ask them to work with their creativity and independence. Students are often not sure what to do with their suddenly earned freedom¹⁷ and they need some time to ease into the new learning environment. The prerequisite of the method is that the theme we use should be close to the theme of the course within which we try it, and it always has to have an evaluation and reflexion, the best, if we do it together with the students and allow them to reflect on themselves, each other, the processes.¹⁸ The outcome of such methodology may be the improvement of reflection and evaluation, the strengthening of social skills by social/group experience, problem solving skills and cooperation will be enhanced as well as creativity and diverse thinking. Validation of the students' own skills is also more available through the means of experiential education.¹⁹

C The Relevance of Project Pedagogy in Education

Project pedagogy may be summing up all the methods above as it is an opportunity for the students to learn independently, to use their knowledge in a practical way, so enhance their social skills and their self-regulatory behaviour. Project pedagogy is also a means to awaken competitiveness in students. Which, when we think about it, are the requirements of modern society. From a more philosophical and behavioural science point of view, we may conclude,

¹⁴ Csikósné Maczó (2019): A gamifikáció felsőoktatási alkalmazásának lehetőségei.

¹⁵ Malone, Thomas W. – Lepper, Mark R. (1987): Making Learning Fun: A Taxonomy of Intrinsic Motivation for Learning. In: R.E. Snow – M.J. Farr (Eds.): *Aptitude, Learning and Instruction: III. Cognitive and Affective Process Analyses*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 223-253.

¹⁶ Fromann, Richard (2017): *Játékoslét. A gamifikáció világa*. Budapest: Typotex

¹⁷ Erdős – Magasvári – Szabó (2019): Új generáció a rendészeti felsőoktatásban.

¹⁸ Kolb, David A. (1984): *Experiential Learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall

¹⁹ Eyler, Janet (2009): The Power of Experiential Education. *Liberal Education*, Fall, 24-31.

that project pedagogy helps the development of one's personality by allowing the students to explore the possibilities and boundaries of their own knowledge and competence.²⁰

III. Competence-based Education in Law Enforcement

We have been talking about the need for competence-based teaching and learning in law enforcement higher education since the 2010s²¹, however, it was only realized in year 2019 when, ordered by the Ministry of Interior, a research started to outline the basic competences that are (1) required, and (2) to be acquired by everybody willing to work in the law enforcement system (any branches). Malét-Szabó and her colleagues defined 12 basic competences in their research. These are the following:

- **decision making**
- **cooperation**
- emotional intelligence
- **responsibility taking**
- **firmness and confidence**
- **effectiveness**
- **communication**
- conflict resolving skills
- **independence**
- **problem solving skills**
- psychological durability
- compliance and discipline.²²

Students are measured for their own level of competences before they enter Ludovika University of Public Service and at the end of their university years, just before they start their service as law enforcement officials. The competences highlighted in the above list are addressed in the good practice introduced later in the paper, as we designed the game so that students will be able to specifically experience and reflect on the areas most needed and/or to be developed.

IV. UrbanGo Designs in General and Mysterious Budapest

UrbanGo games are originally designed to be like escape room games or treasure hunts and one may find many UrbanGo designs. There is usually a mystery to be solved or a story to be unravelled, but the setting is – unlike escape room games, not a room or apartment but – always the city itself. Players will travel from one stop to the other, solving puzzles and facing challenges in the meantime.

The most popular UrbanGo is when a small team is roaming around a walkable area of the city and when they reach an assigned stop, they will have to solve a puzzle or a challenge to receive the location of the next stage. This game type is called the linear-structured-game. Stages follow each other in a given order, the number of people in a group is usually 4-6, and there is only one team on the field at a certain time.

²⁰ Zhylykybay – Magzhan – Suinzhanova – Balaubekov - Adiyeva (2014): The Effectiveness of Using the Project Method in the Teaching Process

²¹ Krémer, Ferenc – Molnár, Katalin (2010): A szociális kompetenciák szerepe a mester szintű rendészeti képzésben. *Rendvédelmi Füzetek*, 2010/2, 21-32. o.

²² Malét-Szabó, E. – Hegyi, H. – Hegedűs, J. – Szeles, E. – Ivaskevics, K. (2018): Rendőri alapkompentenciák az egységes közszolgálati alapkompentenciák tükrében. *Rendőrségi Tanulmányok* 2018/1, 24.

The hours sacrificed for solving the mysteries are usually spent with creativity, joy, excitement and laughter and it requires participants to think outside the box or to try to broaden their comfort zone. When planning *Mysterious Budapest*, we kept in mind that our theme needs to be something attractive enough for future police officers (ie.: related to crime or police work) as well as based on universal knowledge (this is a main difference from average UrbanGos as they usually do not require such [often lexical] knowledge). We also wanted to highlight, throughout the tasks added in the game, the law enforcement competences discussed above.

A Planning the Game

Considering the original game design outlined above, we had quite a few challenges to face when starting to develop our own game. We wanted to create a game which can be played by 60-80 people at one time – in synchronicity with the number of students we teach –, which means about 12-20 groups being out in the city at the same time. We already knew at the beginning that it requires quite a solid basis and background, organization of the game, and good leadership from the designers and teachers, who will use the method. We had diverse players, and our aim was to create a game that can be enjoyable for all our students at the Faculty of Law Enforcement – regardless of their major. We also needed to find a way to partially monitor the movement and actions of the teams on the field (so that we can be of assistance when needed). Teams left the Campus at 9 and arrived back at around 12 o'clock, so we needed a good tool to keep in touch with them during these hours. Not to mention, that we were quite afraid of the reception: if our students are not motivated enough by what we created, they will only stray or fool around without achieving much.

According to the original game design, when a team arrives at a stage, they solve a puzzle there and the solution unfolds the location of the next stop. So, in this game design, there is always a task waiting for the group at the given stop. The task can be anything: participants may count, may recite, may solve a riddle, may walk around to find cues – the rule is that the location of the next stop is only given to them at that stage after working for the answers. When thinking about the tasks we bore in mind that we wanted to improve their problem solving- and strategic thinking skills, as well as their ability to cooperate with each other and with the city.

B Mysterious Budapest

After we managed to answer all our queries listed above, we started to mould our game into its final form. Our *Mysterious Budapest* game covers 32 different scenes, more than 20 of them being the scene of a well-known crime, divided into six different topics. Our aim was to enlist as many types of famous crimes as possible, not only recent ones but across decades, trying to address the fields of the different police majors at our university so that everyone's needs and interests are met. Our topics were the following: (1) crimes related to organized crime, (2) crimes committed at local pubs, (3) crimes against police officers, (4) murders, (5) robberies, (6) crimes related to prejudice. We needed to select the locations in the same topics in a way that they are close enough to each other so that the game can be finished within the 3-hour-long time frame. As the theme of the game was partially given – major crime scenes of the capital – we worked with fixed locations, 4-6 locations for each topic. The topics were given to the teams in envelopes in a random draw.

Before leaving the Campus, the teams had to find a name by which they went during the game, and they also had to sit down and design their route (addressing the competences of cooperation, communication, and effectiveness).

We finally decided to choose Facebook's Messenger to keep in touch with the students. We created chat groups, and the leaders of the groups could send the groups' assignments via Messenger to the dedicated teacher.

C The structure of the game

The way Mysterious Budapest turned out is not easy to explain as it is quite complex among the UrbanGo designs. We realized that if we build the game into a competition (between small groups) it may make it more interesting for our students. So, we assigned points to each task and this way the teams could collect points by accomplishing the assignments. Students not only had to follow the steps of different crimes from the same topic to unfold mysterious stories, but they also had to face challenges during their trip. We grouped the challenges into 3 groups: (1) mandatory crime scenes that the team needs to visit, (2) optional crime scenes for extra points, (3) simple tasks that can be solved at any time the team chooses. Naturally, the more scenes the team visits, the more tasks the participants solve, the more points they earn. This was our idea of transforming the game into a competition, hoping that being involved in a contest will make the students more motivated towards the game.

We established a protocol for how the communication should go: when the team arrives at the scene, they send their teacher a selfie. The teacher gives them 3 questions connected to the crime that took place there. Students can use their phones to look up the answers and when they have them, they will send them to the teacher. By giving them questions concerning the crimes we wanted to make our students to dig deeper into the history and context of the given crimes (ie.: Skála murder, the assassination of János Fenyő at Margit boulevard, the explosion at Aranykéz street, Elza Mágnás's murder, murder and robbery at Fő street, the escape of "Viszkis", the death of Dusán Radovic, the list is non-exhaustive), and, to experience the richness of our mysterious capital. This way, we might be able to awaken our Gen-Z students' curiosity to Hungarian criminalistics and the depths and mysteries of police work, while, at the same time, making them improve their group work techniques, communication, and problem-solving skills.

After answering the questions, students will choose a mandatory task to complete from the task list (ie.: interview with a passer-by about the crime that took place there; "live" crime scene report; photo reconstruction), the proof of which will also be sent to the teacher. When they finish, they run off to the next scene (and may choose to do an extra, optional, challenge while getting there).

D Outcome and Experiences

No matter how exciting it is to stroll around the city trying to look into the most notable crimes in Hungarian criminalistics, the game should always have an outcome/purpose. The purpose of a game in education is never solely entertainment but always the improvement of soft skills. First of all, even though we are talking about a game, it is still created based on a strict set of rules. For example, when a group arrives to a location, the members have to follow fixed orders in order to receive the questions with the help of which the crime committed at that location can be more thoroughly explored.

Earlier in this paper the authors referred to law enforcement competences and the need for competence-based learning (see section III). According to our own experiences, as well as the feedback of the students, Mysterious Budapest develops several of these competences. First of all, the ability of following such rules, builds heavily on discipline.

The hardest task, based on these feedbacks, was to talk to a passer-by, as people in big cities tend to be less friendly and more distrustful towards young people coming up to them. So solving this challenge requires a great deal of confidence and communication (which is, at the end of the day, a basic tool of a police officer). When planning – or sometimes re-planning – the itinerary, students come across the need for cooperation (the game itself is a cooperation with the city, people living in the city and the members of the group walking around the city) and they make good use of their problem-solving skills as well. However, we may state that strategic thinking is not the strongest point of our Gen-Z students: even though they are given

at least 30-40 minutes to plan their route, they tend to neglect the planning stage and they prefer storming out of the classroom to start the challenge as soon as possible. This deficiency later calls for re-planning and self-reflection.

We asked our students to create a presentation about the crimes they were “investigating”, in each and every case reflecting to the challenges faced or the occurrences when they had to overstep their limits and boundaries. Thinking carefully about these difficulties allows them to dive deep into the areas that need to be improved and it also lets us, teachers, to get an idea of the students we are working with throughout the term. Creating a presentation is also a great opportunity to work in a group, to learn how to collaborate with each other – as these two are very important abilities in the field of (police) work. It also lets students effectively filter data and focus only on the most important pieces of information during the 10-minute-presentations, which is a basic communication skill. The overall aim of the presentations is that the students reflect on their (the team and themselves as individuals) strengths, weaknesses, the greatest challenges faced and solved, so it relies heavily on the soft skill of self-reflection.

Through the game, students will face independence the first day after their intensive basic training, which they have to use wisely and it requires a great deal of self-regulation, as well. Sometimes us teachers realize, that though it is not always easy for students to articulate (or even spot) these soft skills that are “in action” during the game, these are being improved nonetheless.

V. Closing Words and the Way Forward

Mysterious Budapest is a game we designed and piloted in 2022. We believe that the designers’ work does not end with the last brushstrokes but we constantly have to monitor the game’s reception year after year, digest our students’ feedbacks, reflect on our feelings towards our product and plough all these experiences back in the game in order for it to be an ever-living, ever-breathing creature. If we want to have a dialogue with our students in this challenging era of higher education, we need to persistently revise our methods. We believe that interactive games like Mysterious Budapest give us the opportunity to meet our students half-way: to offer them an exciting and different tool without losing the opportunity of developing skills and – most importantly – without betraying scientific thinking, which, after all, is born at universities.

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