

## **Gamified Narratives in Film Education: Experience from CineGame Ukraine**

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In recent years, gamification has emerged as a powerful pedagogical strategy for increasing student engagement, particularly in creative disciplines where motivation, imagination, and narrative construction are essential. This paper presents the conceptual framework, design methodology, and preliminary outcomes of CineGame Ukraine – a research-based educational virtual game to enhance storytelling and storyboarding skills among emerging filmmakers in Ukraine.

The CineGame Ukraine project was developed within the framework of a Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral fellowship and is hosted by Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences. The project addresses a growing need in film and media education for learner-centered, interactive, and modular environments that combine traditional narrative theory with hands-on, experiential learning. It also responds to the challenges imposed by the war in Ukraine, which has disrupted traditional educational infrastructures and limited access to creative resources.

The core pedagogical concept of CineGame Ukraine is to integrate elements of nonlinear narrative construction, character development, and cinematic worldbuilding into a digital simulation where students progress through stages of a creative production pipeline. The game architecture is structured around key educational objectives derived from screenwriting theory, audiovisual storytelling techniques, and visual planning practices. The learning process is segmented into quests, challenges, and narrative puzzles that reflect real-world dilemmas faced by filmmakers, from defining protagonists and conflicts to designing scenes and visual metaphors.

Methodologically, the game's development followed a design-based research approach, involving multiple iterations of prototyping, expert consultations, and student feedback loops. Playtesting with Ukrainian film and media students revealed a high level of immersion and skill development, particularly in plot structuring, pacing, and visual composition. Preliminary results indicate that students who engaged with the gamified modules demonstrated greater narrative coherence and creativity in their final storyboard projects than those who followed a traditional seminar-based curriculum.

The presentation will explore the theoretical underpinnings of the project, including concepts from educational psychology, cognitive narratology, and game-based learning. It will also examine the game's user interface, feedback systems, and adaptability to different learning styles and skill levels. Special attention will be paid to how the game's structure supports formative assessment, peer review, and reflective practice in audiovisual education.

Importantly, CineGame Ukraine is also a resilience-building tool in crisis-affected educational contexts. The project has shown that gamification can provide continuity, motivation, and a sense of agency to students learning under duress. It helps establish a safe space for experimentation, emotional expression, and collaborative ideation – essential for cultivating creative thinking in uncertain times.

By presenting the design logic and implementation experience of CineGame Ukraine, this paper contributes to broader discussions on the role of digital innovation in the future of media education. It argues for the systematic integration of gamified environments into film

schools, particularly in post-Soviet and post-crisis regions, where traditional academic models are being redefined by digital culture, mobility, and socio-political transformation.

**Keywords**

gamification, audiovisual education, digital storytelling, storyboard, media literacy