

**USING GAMIFICATION ELEMENTS TO INCREASE PRIMARY SCHOOL
STUDENTS' INTEREST IN READING**

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Abstract: This article is devoted to an in-depth analysis of the scientific-theoretical foundations and pedagogical potential of gamification elements in enhancing primary school students' interest in reading activities. The psychological and motivational dimensions of gamification mechanisms are thoroughly examined, along with the core theoretical concepts (self-determination theory, flow theory, positive reinforcement, goal-setting theory, and others). Particular emphasis is placed on the relationship with the psychophysiological and age-related characteristics of primary school children, as well as the relevance of implementing innovative technologies within the education system of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: gamification, reading motivation, primary education, game elements, intrinsic motivation, self-determination theory, flow theory, positive reinforcement, pedagogical technologies

Introduction In the modern education system, the issue of developing primary school students' interest in reading and reading literacy has become one of the most important strategic directions of state policy. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" (2020 edition), the "Concept for the Development of the Public Education System until 2030", and the "Digital Uzbekistan – 2030" strategy have established at the state level the need for digitalization of the educational process, enhancement of students' intrinsic motivation, and the introduction of innovative pedagogical technologies.

Primary school students (aged 6–10 years) are at the most critical stage of forming reading skills. At this age, children perceive reading not only as a technical skill but also as an emotional and motivational experience. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children at this stage are in the concrete operational period, making it difficult for them to grasp abstract concepts. At the same time, Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development confirms that collaborative activity with teachers, peers, and playful environments significantly enhances motivation.

Traditional teaching methods (teacher monologue, repetitive exercises, grade-oriented assessment) often shape reading as an obligation or boring task in children's minds. As a result, interest in reading declines, academic performance decreases, and avoidance behaviors increase.

Gamification is a contemporary pedagogical approach that involves incorporating game mechanics and elements (points, levels, badges, narrative arcs, quests, virtual rewards, progress bars, time limits, etc.) into the educational process to increase students' activity, intrinsic interest, and self-regulation skills. This method is not merely "adding games" but represents an innovative technology grounded in deep psychological, motivational, and pedagogical principles.

The purpose of the article is to systematically and comprehensively analyze the scientific-theoretical foundations of gamification elements in increasing primary school students' interest in reading, as well as to outline practical principles for its implementation in the Uzbekistan education system.

Methods (Theoretical Foundations) The effectiveness of gamification is based on several fundamental psychological and pedagogical theories. Their detailed description is provided below:

1. **Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan)** Human intrinsic motivation depends on three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. In gamification, these needs are satisfied through levels and badges (competence), choice-based quests (autonomy), and group tasks (relatedness).

2. **Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi)** The state of optimal experience ("flow") occurs when task difficulty and personal ability are in balance, clear goals are present, and immediate feedback is provided. In gamification, progressively increasing difficulty, progress visualization, and narrative elements help create this balance.

3. **Positive Reinforcement and Operant Conditioning (Skinner)** Immediate positive feedback (stickers, virtual coins, praise) strengthens desired behavior. Small, frequent rewards are particularly effective for primary school children.

4. **Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham)** Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals significantly enhance motivation. Daily/weekly quests and level systems implement this principle in gamification.

5. **Octalysis Framework – 8 Core Drives (Yu-kai Chou)** Gamification operates through eight primary motivational drivers, of which development & accomplishment, ownership, social influence, and curiosity are especially relevant in primary education.

Pedagogical Principles:

- Age-appropriateness (play period, concrete thinking)
- Visual-aesthetic richness
- Immediate and clear feedback
- Visualization of progress
- Priority of cooperation and group activities
- Preservation of reading content meaning
- Individualization
- Creation of positive emotional environment

Results (Theoretical Conclusions) Theoretical analysis shows that gamification can increase interest in reading through the following mechanisms:

1. Strengthening intrinsic motivation
2. Creating flow state
3. Shaping behavior through immediate reinforcement
4. Directing motivation via clear and achievable goals
5. Providing continuous sense of progress and achievement
6. Developing social connectedness and cooperation
7. Transforming reading into an emotionally rich "adventure"
8. Forming self-assessment and independent reader identity
9. Establishing long-term reading habits

Discussion Gamification is one of the most effective modern methods for organically integrating play activities with educational objectives in primary education. However, the following risks exist from a theoretical perspective:

- Excessive extrinsic rewards may undermine intrinsic motivation (overjustification effect)

- Competition-based systems may cause stress and self-doubt in low-achieving students
- Risk of game mechanics overshadowing reading content
- Ineffectiveness of a uniform system for all children due to individual and cultural differences

Therefore, effective gamification should be based on the following principles:

- Meaningful gamification
- Priority of cooperation and collaborative activities
- Balance between game mechanics and content
- Continuous teacher reflection and adaptation
- Integration of national cultural elements (Alpomish, Gorogly, fairy-tale characters, traditional games)

Conclusion Gamification elements represent a scientifically grounded, modern, and highly effective pedagogical technology for increasing primary school students' interest in reading. The theoretical foundations presented above (self-determination theory, flow theory, positive reinforcement, goal-setting theory) explain its mechanisms and confirm its effectiveness.

Widespread implementation of gamification in the Uzbekistan education system requires:

- Special training of teachers
- Development of appropriate digital and analog platforms
- Creation of gamified content based on national cultural values and folklore
- Regular experimental pilot projects

Gamification not only increases interest in reading but also contributes to the long-term formation of an independent, self-regulated, and reading-loving personality.

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