

SECOND EDITION

**BEYOND LECTURES:
INSIGHTS FROM BUSINESS
DISCIPLINES
(REFLECTIONS,
TRANSFORMATIONS, AND
THE HUMAN SIDE OF TEACHING)**

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UiTM CAWANGAN JOHOR**

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Beyond Lectures: **Insights from Business Discipline-** *(Reflections, Transformations, and the Human* *Side of Teaching)*

Chief Editor
Dr. Azila Jaini



UNIVERSITI
TEKNOLOGI
MARA

Cawangan Johor
Kampus Segamat

Second Edition 2026

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Universiti Teknologi MARA
Cawangan Johor
Malaysia

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National Library of Malaysia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Beyond Lectures: Insights from Business Disciplines

(Reflections, Transformations, and the Human Side of Teaching)

ISBN: 978-629-7647-09-8

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Published by:

Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Johor
Faculty of Business and Management
Research and Publication Unit,
Jalan Universiti, Off KM12 Jalan Muar,
85000 Segamat, Johor, Malaysia
Tel: (60)079352000
Fax: (60) 079352277

<http://johor.uitm.edu.my>

Printed in Malaysia

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GAMIFICATION IN BLENDED LEARNING: A REFLECTIVE CASE FROM INV537

Nurulashikin Romli, Tan Yan Ling, Jannah Munirah Mohd Noor

Introduction

Higher education in Malaysia is undergoing structural transformation driven by national reform agendas and global educational commitments. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education) emphasizes pedagogical innovation, digital integration, and the cultivation of self-directed learners capable of functioning within complex economic environments (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Globally, Sustainable Development Goal 4 and subsequent policy discourse reinforce the need for inclusive, quality education supported by responsible digital governance (UNESCO, 2021).

Despite these ambitions, digital transformation in higher education frequently remains technological rather than structural. Institutions adopt platforms and online tools without recalibrating motivational systems, assessment logic, or governance mechanisms that shape engagement. In blended learning environments, autonomy is often presumed rather than engineered. Without structured accountability, such autonomy may result in uneven participation and superficial engagement.

This challenge is particularly salient in capital market education, where students must integrate ethics and professionalism within regulatory frameworks. Professional conduct in regulated financial environments requires compliance discipline, transparency, and accountable decision-making. Pedagogy in this domain must therefore simulate structured accountability rather than rely solely on conceptual instruction.

As the appointed resource person for INV537, a blended capital market course, the objective was not merely digital delivery but the construction of a motivational architecture aligned with regulatory logic. This chapter presents a reflective case study of a gamified incentive system designed to engineer structured digital autonomy. The intervention positions gamification not as entertainment, but as a performance economy governed by ethical safeguards and professional discipline.

Theoretical Framework

The gamified incentive architecture implemented in INV537 was conceptually anchored in Self-Determination Theory and principles of incentive alignment within ethically governed systems. These theoretical foundations structured the transformation of blended learning autonomy into a calibrated and accountable performance system within a capital market education context. The conceptual integration between theoretical foundations, gamified mechanisms, governance constraints, and intended professional outcomes is illustrated in Figure 1.

Self-Determination Theory posits that sustained and internalized motivation develops when three fundamental psychological needs are supported within structured environments, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Empirical syntheses of gamified learning environments demonstrate that motivational gains are most durable when these psychological needs are embedded within coherent system architecture rather than layered superficially onto digital platforms (Sailer & Homner, 2020).

Within INV537, autonomy was operationalized as a regulated agency rather than unrestricted independence. Students were granted structured discretion through early submission opportunities, calibrated redemption decisions, and bounded revision mechanisms. These features allowed the exercise of judgment within clearly defined academic parameters. As conceptualized in Figure 1, autonomy support was embedded within governance boundaries,

reflecting the regulated discretion characteristic of capital market environments in which professional decision-making operates within statutory and supervisory constraints.

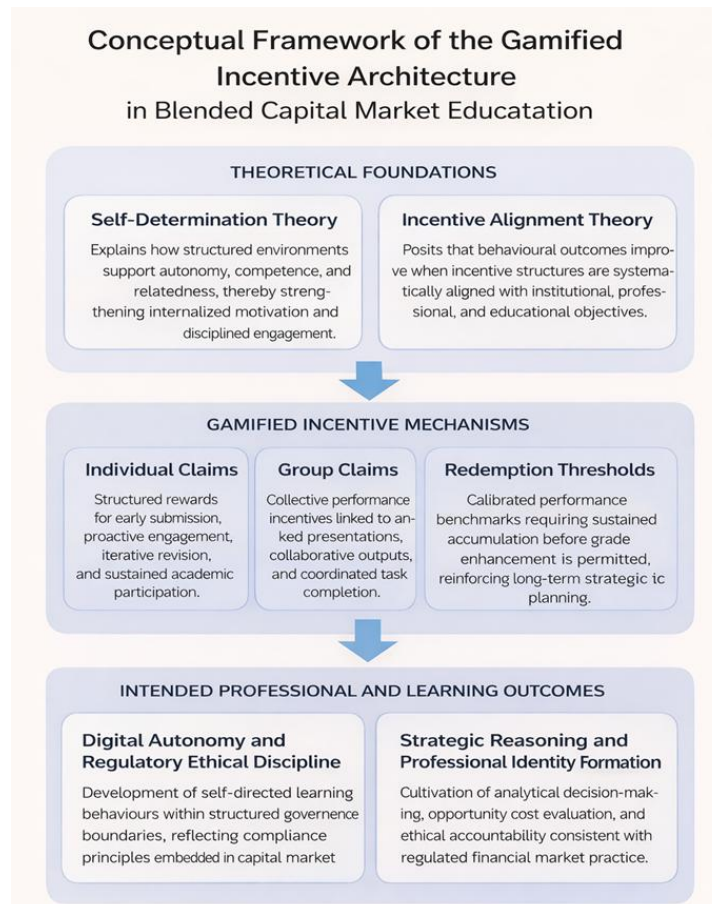


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Gamified Incentive Architecture in Blended Regulatory Framework in Capital Market Education

Source: Authors' illustration

Competence was cultivated through distributed formative assessments implemented consistently from Week 2 through Week 11. Weekly digital tasks, including scenario-based quizzes, infographic construction, mind mapping exercises, podcast production, simulations, and structured discussions, functioned as continuous feedback mechanisms. Visible point accumulation and iterative performance monitoring strengthened students' perception of progress while bounded revision preserved academic integrity. In line with motivational theory, competence was reinforced not through competition alone but through structured opportunities for incremental improvement (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sailer & Homner, 2020).

Relatedness was operationalized through collaborative performance structures embedded within group claims. Ranked presentations, pooled point accumulation, and collective redemption thresholds required coordinated effort and shared accountability. Self-Determination Theory maintains that relatedness strengthens internal motivation when individuals experience meaningful participation within structured communities (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Within capital market education, such collective accountability mirrors professional realities in regulated financial institutions, where compliance responsibilities are embedded in team-based governance systems.

Beyond motivational psychology, the architecture incorporated governance safeguards consistent with contemporary discussions on ethical digital systems (Awasthi, 2023). Incentive alignment within educational environments, like regulated financial markets, requires bounded reward structures to prevent opportunistic behaviour and preserve integrity. Accordingly, the gamified reward economy in INV537 incorporated a governance cap limiting its contribution to a fixed proportion of coursework allocation. Redemption thresholds required sustained accumulation rather than episodic participation, and revision mechanisms were structured within predefined limits. As illustrated in Figure 1, these constraints ensured that motivational incentives reinforced academic rigor rather than distort grading standards.

Gamification in this intervention was therefore conceptualized as behavioural alignment within an ethically governed performance economy rather than as entertainment enhancement. When embedded within structured governance systems, gamified mechanisms can cultivate disciplined autonomy and strategic reasoning aligned with professional accountability (Sailer & Homner, 2020; Awasthi, 2023). Through the interaction of theoretical foundations, gamified mechanisms, and governance constraints, as presented in Figure 1, the architecture operationalized regulated autonomy and ethical discipline consistent with compliance principles in capital market education.

Methodology / Approach

This study employed a reflective case study design examining a structured gamified intervention implemented within a blended capital market course (INV537). The intervention was conducted in Semester 20254 across two cohorts, JBA2513A ($n = 28$) and JBA2513B ($n = 32$), yielding a total of sixty students. The inclusion of two independently administered classes enabled internal pattern replication, strengthening structural validity beyond single-cohort observation.

The gamified architecture operated longitudinally from Week 2 to Week 12, with distributed tasks implemented weekly. This duration was intentionally designed to observe sustained behavioural engagement beyond short-term novelty effects. All weekly scores, cumulative point accumulation, submission timing, revision claims, and redemption decisions were systematically recorded in centralized spreadsheets that functioned as transparent performance ledgers accessible to students throughout the semester.

Digital learning activities were centralized through Padlet, which functioned as a unified learning hub integrating instructional materials, task instructions, submission links, and cumulative performance updates (see Figure 2). This centralized structure minimized platform fragmentation and reinforced coherence between learning outcomes and assessment architecture.

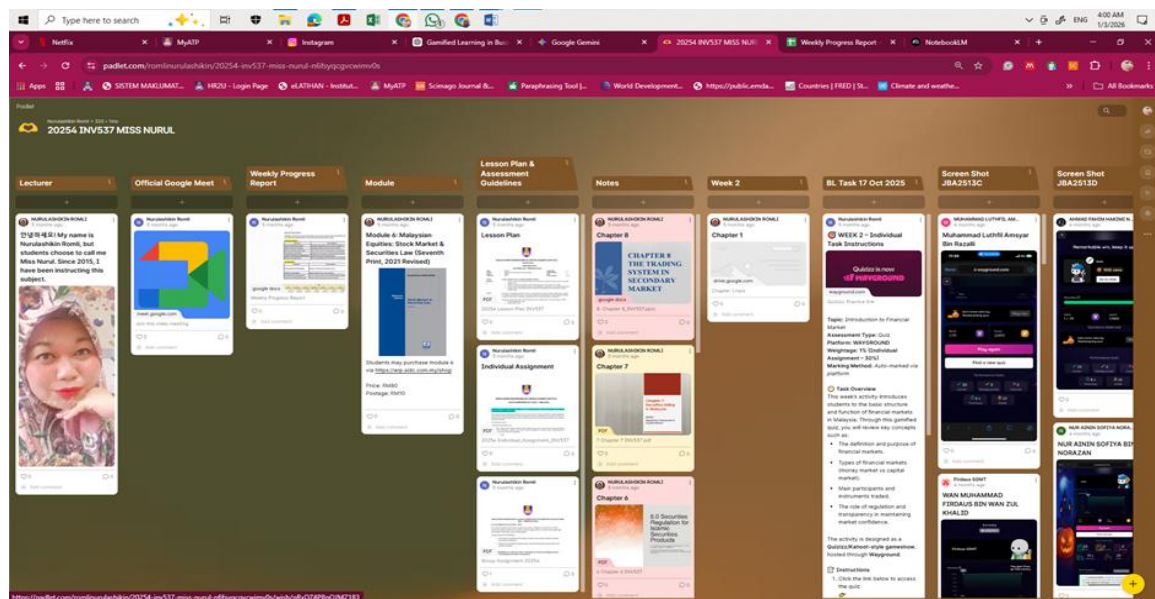


Figure 2: Centralized Digital Learning Hub for INV537

Source: Authors' personal collection

Students completed distributed activities from Week 2 to Week 12, including scenario-based analytical quizzes, infographic development, mind mapping exercises, GameShow simulations, structured discussions, and podcast production. These activities collectively accounted for thirty percent of the overall course grade, with a maximum cumulative allocation of 1100 performance points. The structural configuration of the incentive system, consisting of individual claims, group claims, redemption thresholds, and governance limits, is presented in Figure 3.

Individual Claim			Group Claim		
Reward	Description	Points	Reward	Description	Points
Early Submission Bonus	Submit assignments earlier than deadline (1–7 days).	900	Turn-Based Presentation	Bonus for group presentation turn.	1st = 1200
Early Access to Content	Complete optional early-access activity.	700			2nd = 1000
Homework Extension Pass	Get 2 extra days for submission (no penalty).	700			3rd = 900
Re-game Assignment	Re-do a gamified quiz/Wordwall and resubmit.	700	Video Presentation	High-quality group video project.	4900
Pop-Up Reward Boxes	Hidden/secret task revealed during semester.	700	Re-do Report Assignment	Re-do a group report and resubmit.	5000
Small Grade Bump (Individual)	Redeem for grade improvement.	1000 = +1%	Small Grade Bump (Group)	Redeem for group grade improvement.	5100 = +2%

Figure 3: Structure of the Gamified Incentive Architecture in INV537

Source: Authors' personal collection

Each task was explicitly aligned with course learning outcomes, particularly the integration of ethics and professionalism within capital market regulatory frameworks. For podcast assignments, students submitted audio outputs through Podbean links to ensure traceable and auditable documentation. Figure 4 presents a representative example of the Week 8 rubric-based assessment applied to class JBA2513A, demonstrating criterion-referenced evaluation of conceptual accuracy, ethical reasoning, professional articulation, and technical clarity.

To strengthen analytical interpretation, cumulative point accumulation was operationalised as a behavioural proxy for sustained engagement. Performance exceeding ninety percent of the 1100-point allocation was interpreted as evidence of consistent weekly participation, as high accumulation required distributed task completion rather than reliance on isolated high-stakes performance. Submission timing patterns were also monitored to assess temporal discipline, with progressive redistribution toward earlier submissions interpreted as responsiveness to incentive calibration.

and Services Act 2007 and the Financial Services Act 2013. By situating incentive maximization within clearly defined compliance boundaries, the methodological design integrated behavioural architecture, longitudinal documentation, and governance discipline, positioning gamification as structured professional conditioning rather than superficial motivational enhancement.

Results / Findings

The quantitative performance patterns across both cohorts demonstrate sustained and structured engagement throughout the intervention period from Week 2 to Week 12. As presented in Table 1, more than eighty percent of students in each cohort accumulated above ninety percent of the available coursework points allocated to the gamified component. In class JBA2513A, comprising twenty-eight students, the highest recorded score reached the full 1100-point allocation, while the lowest score was 840 points. In class JBA2513B, consisting of thirty-two students, the highest recorded score was 1098 points and the lowest 802 points. The distribution summarized in Table 1 indicates that the majority of students consistently achieved near-maximum accumulation within the thirty percent coursework component. No significant performance polarization was observed between high and mid-range performers, suggesting reduced disengagement risk among moderate achievers. The replication of this pattern across two independently administered blended classes strengthens the inference that the observed outcomes were structurally embedded within the incentive architecture rather than attributable to cohort-specific dynamics or isolated high-performing individuals.

Class	Total Students	% Above 90%	Highest Score	Lowest Score
JBA2513A	28	>80%	1100	840
JBA2513B	32	>80%	1098	802

Table 1: Summary of Performance Distribution Across Classes

Beyond cumulative score distribution, observable behavioural shifts were evident across the instructional period. Early submission incentives reduced deadline clustering, with an increasing proportion of submissions occurring several days prior to official deadlines. This redistribution of effort reflects enhanced temporal discipline and proactive engagement rather than reactive compliance.

The structured revision mechanism further influenced engagement patterns. Weekly assessments were increasingly approached as iterative performance opportunities rather than terminal evaluations. Revision claims were strategically utilized to strengthen cumulative standing, indicating forward-planning behaviour embedded within the incentive structure.

Strategic reasoning also became visible in classroom discourse. Students discussed redemption thresholds, cumulative accumulation strategies, and opportunity costs associated with early versus delayed point redemption. Such exchanges demonstrate engagement not only with course content but also with the internal logic of the performance system itself.

Collectively, the quantitative distribution patterns and behavioural observations indicate that the gamified incentive architecture contributed to performance consistency, reduced disengagement risk, and strengthened behavioural alignment within the blended learning environment.

Conclusion

This reflective case demonstrates that gamification in blended learning can function as a structured performance architecture rather than a superficial motivational overlay. When incentive mechanisms are deliberately calibrated and embedded within governance boundaries, digital autonomy becomes regulated agency rather than unmonitored independence. Across two cohorts comprising sixty students, the architecture produced

sustained engagement, reduced performance polarization, improved temporal discipline, and observable strategic reasoning aligned with professional accountability.

The findings suggest that gamified systems in higher education should be designed around three core principles. First, incentive structures must be longitudinal rather than episodic, requiring sustained accumulation to prevent short-term gaming behaviour. Second, reward mechanisms must operate within clearly defined governance caps to preserve assessment integrity and avoid grade distortion. Third, revision and redemption pathways should be bounded but strategic, encouraging iterative improvement while maintaining academic rigor. For professional disciplines, particularly those operating within regulatory environments, pedagogical design should simulate compliance-based decision contexts. Embedding motivational systems within transparent and rule-based architectures enables students to internalize disciplined autonomy consistent with industry expectations. Gamification, therefore, should not be framed as entertainment enhancement but as behavioural alignment within an ethically governed learning economy.

Future implementations may extend this governance-informed model to other professional programs where accountability, ethical reasoning, and performance calibration must coexist. By prioritizing structural design over technological novelty, institutions can transform blended learning environments into sustainable systems of disciplined engagement rather than fragmented digital experiences.

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