Fictitious island can be used as a learning tool

Singapore

Project name:
The Rise of Li' Ttledot

Teacher:
Matthew Ong

School:
Anglo-Chinese School (Junior),
Singapore

Learning areas:
Social Studies, English, Science and
Health Education

Objectives:
Promoting application of inter-
disciplinary skills in an authentic
learning environment

Outcomes:
Moving students away from mindless
absorbing of information to proper
application of ideas and strategies

"I really wanted to come up with a lesson that would be fun and interesting for the students, bringing it on their level."

— Matthew Ong, Anglo-Chinese School

'The Rise of Li' Ttledot' is an exciting game which promotes an application of inter-disciplinary skills in an authentic learning environment. Students are transported to the mysterious Island of Li' Ttledot, where they devise various attack or defense plans based on the provided 'secret' information. The scenarios can be constantly updated by teachers, based on their learning objectives, making the competition between students always interesting and fresh.

Situation

Students are sometimes bored by a particular teaching concept and have already formed preconceived notions about it. Thus, it is difficult for an educator to use the same approach to teach that concept, as the moment it is mentioned the student 'switches off'. While a fresh approach is needed, it needs to reflect the same conditions as that in the real world. A mirrored scenario-based approach would allow an educator to create a fictitious event to reflect the actual events, but in a completely new and exciting perspective. The potential of this approach is infinite and limited only by one's imagination.

The Anglo-Chinese School based in Singapore is dedicated in providing a well-rounded education and develops each boy to attain high academic standards of performance, physical fitness, sportsmanship, leadership and team spirit, as well as aesthetic appreciation and moral and social values, with a sense of social obligation.

> " I think that developing thinking skills is crucial for young students."
>
> — Matthew Ong, Anglo-Chinese School

Objectives

In the case of 'The Rise of Li' Ttledot', a fictitious island called Li' Ttledot is created, with statistics which are very closely related to that of Singapore. Problems and constraints are then inserted into the scenario and students need to solve them creatively. As the scenario is fictitious, the teacher is able to insert speeches, exciting video files and create 'Top Secret' files. This adds to the excitement and thrill of the whole lesson, as it becomes a lot more interesting.

"The most useful part of a mirrored scenario-based lesson like 'The Rise of Li' Ttledot' is that I am able to insert scenarios that reflect current events. For example, Indonesia recently imposed a sand ban on Singapore. This increased the cost of construction projects exponentially. I created a scenario in Li' Ttledot where the island experienced similar problems with its neighbors", says Matthew Ong, teacher from Anglo-Chinese School who created this highly innovative approach of task assignment. At the end of the lesson, the teacher draws a parallel between the island and Singapore, giving the children additional perspective on daily issues. This activity encourages pupils to approach a problem from different angles.

After receiving the update on the current situation on Li'Ttledot, students need to gather information to devise an attack or defense plan. Clicking on the file 'Information for Operation' pupils receive this data in both softcopy (on a CD-ROM) and hardcopy (in a 'Secret file'). They are required to understand their role as either an 'attacker' or 'defender', so they collect and use relevant information to devise a plan to either attack or defend Li' Ttledot. To help them collect evidence more effectively, two Microsoft Excel worksheets are developed: one for an attacker and another for a defender team.

Outcomes

At the end of the lesson, students are able to list the constraints and challenges of the island of Li' Ttledot, devise at least 3 ways of attacking/defending Li' Ttledot and develop survival skills and attitudes to meet challenges. This project has made a curriculum topic more interesting and appealing for students, bringing more room for imagination and creativity. Students were challenged to think 'out of the box' and 'out of our shores', moving them away from mindless absorbing of information to proper application of ideas.

Matthew Ong names the adaptiveness of this way of teaching as the main advantage: "This communicates with the different learning styles of my students. Some of them are visual learners, some are auditory, and some are kinesthetic learners. Using ICT really helps me to reach all of these children with various learning styles."