I love coming up with new models and frameworks, I find them really handy and hope that when I share them that others do as well. However, I am also a great believer in not reinventing the wheel!

Recently I happened to see a comment from one of my favourite people on Twitter, Alice Keeler, that mentioned something called the SAMR model. Now, knowing that Alice is an awesome thought leader in the education space, I knew this was probably a model I wanted to look up – and I was right.

What is SAMR?

SAMR stands for Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition. It is a model that is used in education to analyse and validate the potential of new technology in the classroom. They idea is that you put the new technology in question, into one of these four categories.

Generally they are described like this;

- **Substitution:** The technology is a direct replacement for something, e.g. ebook readers vs textbooks.
- **Augmentation:** The technology is a replacement for something with added functionality, e.g. using voice to text or dictionary functions on an ebook reader.
- **Modification:** The technology allows for a significant change, e.g. using cameras to record and reuse material from the classroom.
- **Redefinition:** The technology allows for the creation of completely new ways of working that were previously not possible. e.g. the use of video conferencing to connect classrooms in different countries.

As soon as I saw this, I knew it could be used to help me solve one of the problems I have been having with gamification – analysing its potential or how it is currently being used, in a way that was simple to understand. I mentioned it to Alice, and she agreed totally and here we are now.

SAMR for Games and Gamification (Game Thinking)

First things first, this is work in progress, but we wanted to get it out and see what people thought! However, this is what we have so far. First, the definitions of SAMR in a gamification context.

- **Substitution:** Using games or gamification as a substitute for traditional methods without enhancement.
- **Augmentation:** Using games or gamification as a substitute for traditional methods with added enhancements.
- **Modification:** Using games or gamification to change or redesign previous methods.
- **Redefinition:** Using games or gamification to radically alter methods in a way previously not possible.

Gamification uses a lot of techniques that all work in different ways depending on their context. For instance, using a leaderboard online could be seen as a simple substitution or maybe augmentation of standard practices in sales. However, if you are using the leaderboard as a global tool to enhance social discoverability – that could be modification or even redefinition. So you have to consider context at all times. Below are some examples of where some common game thinking would sit in this model, considering most common usage.

SAMR for Gamification Game Thinking

As you can see, I have also indicated whether things are likely to be transformative or just iterative. Alice gave me a few ideas of how this could look with real world examples in

eduction – I added a few others as well. This should give you a better idea of how important context is when analysing your gamification initiatives.
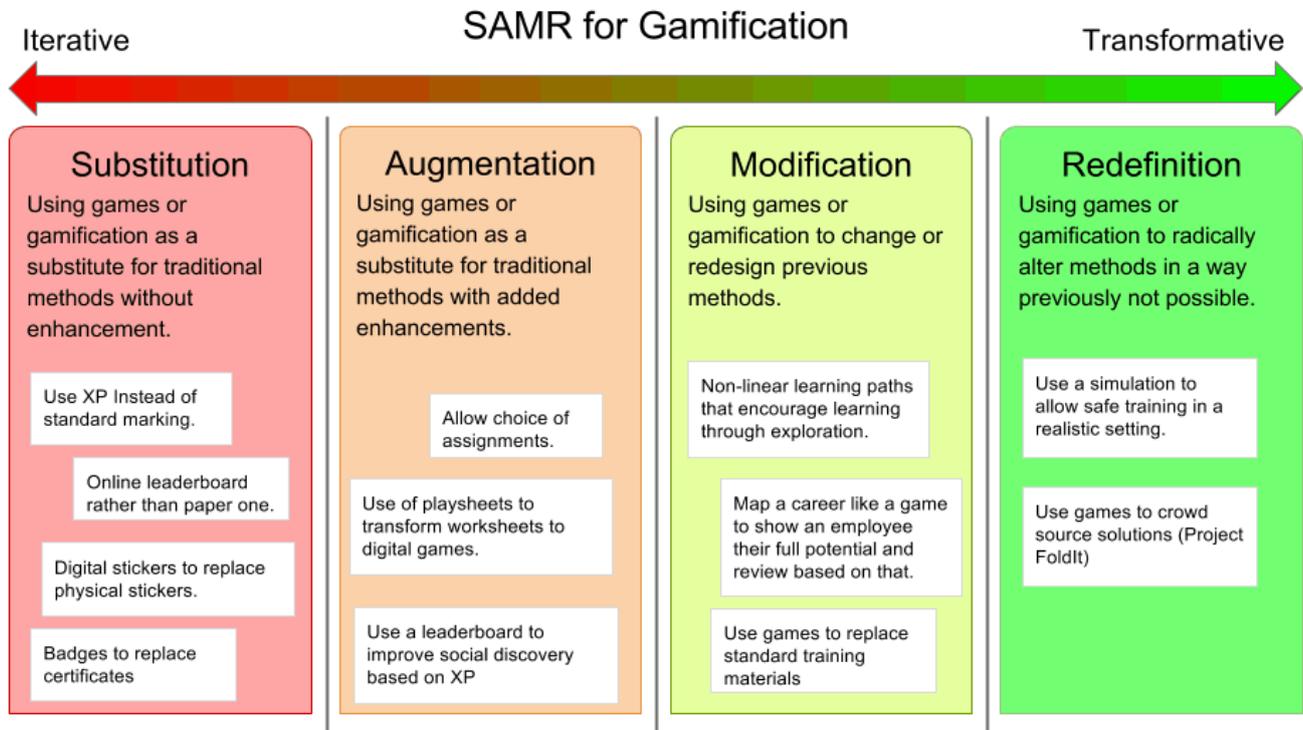
SAMR for Gamification Examples

This model is a really good way to look at gamification and how the methods you are using will actually impact or change what is currently being done. If you are just *substituting*, does that actually add anything of value to the user? If you are *redefining*, have you considered the impact to the user – have you built a good onboarding system for instance?

For you to play with

In honour of Alice, who is a massive advocate of the Google suite of office tools, I am including a link here to a slide deck that has these images and a couple of blank worksheets.

SAMR Model for Gamification on Google Slides

We really want you to go and have a play with this and leave some feedback. We both agree that this could be a really useful tool and want to be sure that what is here truly represents the best use. Be sure that this is just the first post about this, we will revisit soon.

Massive thanks to Alice Keeler – if you don't follow her on twitter- sort it out!

Please wait...