

# INDONESIAN MYTHOLOGY ENABLING 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS STUDENTS TO BALANCE STRATEGIC AND RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the rationale and impact of collaboration between a UK University and a People and Leadership Development Consultancy in the Netherlands. The collaboration involved the pedagogical use of Pengaruh, a traditional Indonesian board game, to support students in their learning of the Trust/Leadership Equation and skill acquisition of working collaboratively in cross cultural teams.

According to Tompson and Dass (2000) business games are effective alternatives to traditional teaching. Games have a unique potential to engage students in collaborative activities, and the nature of Pengaruh required collaborative thinking by students in order to maximise the "team's utility" (Zagal et al 2006). However, collaborative games are rare and extraordinarily difficult to design (Zagal et al 2006). Development of quality games for business education needs content expertise, hence the collaboration.

Given the importance of trust in social relations in organisations, we elected to use Pengaruh in order to demonstrate to students how trust is situational. This enabled them to learn about what makes them trust others, and the behaviours they engage in which makes others trust them. For decades, trust has been identified as a key factor in social relations. Apart from its intrinsic value, it is said to improve efficiency and cooperation in organizations by encouraging information sharing, increasing openness and reducing the need for detailed contractual and monitoring devices. According to Zeffane, Tipu and Ryan (2011), there is a significant correlation between the level of trust as experienced by respondents and the perceived quality of communication with their superiors. Trust is also seen as a key contributor to organizational success in contexts of high ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity. According to the Center for Creative Leadership (2011), "we are living in a VUCA world, one characterized by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity, and will be for years to come." It is this environment which current business students will graduate into, thus demonstrating the importance of possessing skills which enable them to operate effectively in such an environment.

We therefore believe that when it comes to learning about trust, it makes sense not to immediately focus on training some of the skills related to these factors, but to focus on first understanding which factors in a particular situation, related to a particular task, help to increase trust or lead to the decrease of trust. In particular when participants in a learning group come from different cultural backgrounds, identifying what is important to the individual matters the most. However, when people are new to the concept of trust, an introductory widely accepted model to breakdown the general concept of trust, is helpful. With regard to the boardgame, Pengarah, we developed to learn about leadership and trust; we choose to work with the Trust Equation, developed by Maister, Green and Galford, because it has proven to be sustainable since its initial development in 2000.

In the paper we detail how we used Pengaruh with students of International Business at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. We explore the benefits of this intervention from our perspective and from our students' point of view, and we offer guidelines for others who may wish to use games in higher education based on our experience.

Keywords: Educational Games, Cross-cultural competencies, Leadership trust equation.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the current environment, it is increasingly an expectation from employers that graduates will not only leave university in possession of subject-specific knowledge, but that they will also have gained interpersonal skills which are required in order to be effective when working in teams.

In this paper, we discuss the use of a "serious game" in two modules for international business students which enabled them to develop their team working skills in a cross-cultural context. The use of games is becoming increasingly popular in higher education pedagogy, as they can be considered as a form of situated practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in which students are able to perform their knowledge in context.

The game discussed in this paper was used with two groups of students at Sheffield Hallam University, (SHU) an undergraduate cohort on the module Cross-Cultural Management, consisting primarily of UK and European students, and a postgraduate cohort on the module International Management Competencies which mainly comprised international students. The game in question is "Pengaruh," which was developed by Imason, a Dutch people and leadership development consultancy, and is based on traditional Indonesian mythology. This collaboration with industry specialists was viewed as particularly important by SHU, as we believe that any pedagogic innovation should not be used for its own sake, but in order to specifically meet the learning outcomes of the modules, and the collaboration with industry experts enabled us to do this in a way which would not have been possible if the game development had been done in house at the university.

We begin by discussing the literature on gaming as a pedagogical tool, and the need for leadership and multicultural team working skills amongst graduates, before moving to a discussion of our own experiences and student comments on the game. We conclude by offering some guidelines for others who would wish to incorporate gaming into their own pedagogical practice.

## **2 EDUCATIONAL GAMES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **2.1 Why Games**

In the 1970s, based on the pedagogical ideas of Piaget (1973) and Vygotskii (1978), games as tools for learning were introduced into Higher Education. The research by Malone (1981) into why people found computer games fun and motivating led to a resurgence of the use of games and gaming for learning. Most recently The Horizon Report: 2014 Higher Education Edition (Johnson et al., 2015) listed games and gamification as likely to impact Higher Education within the next few years. An educational game is defined as an instructional method that requires the learner to participate in a competitive activity with preset rules (Fitzgerald K 1997). Gaming usually refers to computer games, but we concur with Apperley T. H. (2006) that card and board games are a category of Gaming.

The value of Play is acknowledged in business management education (Meyer, 2010; Kolb and Kolb, 2010; Mainemelis and Altman, 2010; Kark, 2001). Gaming supports learning in ways that are situation-based, problem-centered, require interactive decision making, all features of effective learning design.(Boyle et al 2011; Wrzesien M et al 2010).In addition Board games improve communication skills and promote active learning through interaction with other players. (Neame and Powis 1981). These are the key pedagogical goals that underpin the learning, teaching, and assessment strategy of our two modules. Game Based Learning (GBL) is recognised as a way to teach and assess twenty-first century skills (Miller 2012) and therefore highly appropriate in supporting the modules learning outcomes to equip our students with skills and competencies necessary for graduate employment in the 21st Century global environment.

### **2.2 Reflection on Learning**

Educational literature has discussed "reflection" in developing students' skills and competencies and fostering deeper learning. Moon (2002) suggests that reflection facilitates the diagnosis of core strengths and weaknesses, and the acquisition of a questioning approach. Boud (2000) and Rushton (2005) argue that self-evaluation is pivotal to developing lifelong learning. The authors support these views and the rationale to our pedagogical approach, of embedding reflection and feedback into the game, was the expectation that by engaging in self-reflection of their attitudes and behaviours throughout the game, the students would recognise the need to develop their cross-cultural competencies. As McGonigal (2011) notes, a key element of any educational game is the feedback system. Tutor feedback is an integral part of Pengaruh, which was valued by students - in the pilot 65% of students rated the feedback/debriefing stage of the game as having the most added value and 100% rated it as having as much added value as the game itself. *"My tutor commented that I placed a lot of trust in the other members which encouraged autonomy thereby increasing motivation which could be a key consideration in international assignments, of which I had not reflected upon."* (Undergraduate (UG) Zimbabwean student). *"By playing the Pengaruh leadership game, I feel I learnt*

*that I was a good leader and a student that can motivate others in a positive way by the comments made by my peers” (UG UK student). “I learned more about impressions other team members have when they work together with me” (Postgraduate (PG) Chinese student).*

### **3 THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION IN GAME DEVELOPMENT**

#### **3.1 Development of the Pengaruh Management Game**

Development of quality games for Business Education needs content expertise. One of the recognised problems is the inadequate integration of educational and game design principles (Kiili K 2007). Therefore the collaboration between Imason and the academics from the two universities was crucial in ensuring that the Pengaruh Management Game was designed for distinct aims and not for pure entertainment (Kapp, 2012). Collaborative games are rare and extraordinarily difficult to design. (Zagal J. P. et al 2006). Therefore, agreeing with Sweetser and Wyeth (2005) that a good game should include clear goals, levels of skill, feedback, challenges, engagements, enjoyment and rewards, these principles were incorporated into the game design.

The Pengaruh Management Game was developed in early 2014 with the objective to teach young and future leaders about the importance of being perceived as trustworthy by their team members with respect to the strategic part as well as the people leadership part of their role. The management game has been developed on the basis of a Southeast Asian strategy board game that uses mythological figures that originate in the Sundanese (West Javanese) mythology.

Related to the personal development of future leaders, learning about the nature of trust requires a cognitive understanding of the concept as well as personal experience with giving and receiving trust. However the focus should be on reflective learning, based on a concrete experience. With the absence of an academic consensus regarding a model about trustworthiness that is conclusive about the components as well as the behaviours related to trustworthiness, we had to choose a model based on several criteria:

- 1 The model needed to fit with intuitive connotations;
- 2 The model could be easily explained;
- 3 It could be applied in an international context without too much debate about the meaning of the components;
- 4 It had to have a proven sustainability since its initial development.

Given these criteria, we choose to work with the Trust Equation, developed by Maister, Green and Galford (2000), because it has proven to be sustainable since its initial development in 2000 and has been used in many international leadership development contexts. The components that make up this model are Credibility, Reliability, Intimacy and Self-Orientation.

Based upon our experience in Leadership Development programmes the game was developed according to the following principles:

- 1 A clear competitive element;
- 2 Enabling cooperative behaviour;
- 3 Naturally engaging, large fun-factor;
- 4 No artificial interventions that would require 'acting', focus needed to be on natural behaviour;
- 5 Simple game rules;
- 6 Enabling all participants to learn in a leadership role.

The initial development of the game took 4 months. The aim was to have it tested at higher education institutes before the end of 2014. In the fall of 2014, Imason collaborated with two universities to test the management game: one large university of applied sciences in the Netherlands with regard to the Dutch version of the game, and Sheffield Hallam University with regard to the international version. At Sheffield Hallam University two groups of international business students participated in the autumn of 2014. This led to some key adjustments in the design of the feedback forms, the initial presentation, and the preparation assignment.

## **4 CURRENT AND EXPECTED RELEVANCE OF TRUSTWORTHY LEADERSHIP FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF BUSINESS LEADERS**

### **4.1 Sustainable Elements of Leadership Effectiveness Models**

#### *4.1.1 General aspects of leadership effectiveness*

During the last four decades many theories and models regarding leadership effectiveness have become available, focusing on either tasks, style, characteristics, competencies or a combination of these factors. Most of them have been developed in the Anglo Saxon world, but with globalization, cultural differences in the adoption of leadership models seem to be diminishing. In an article based on 646 studies King and Zhang (2014) argue that Western leadership principles and management theory have traditionally focused on profit generation and on leadership models based on programmatic and analytical thought processes, but in the last two decades the focus has shifted towards the humanistic aspects of successful leadership. At the same time, Chinese leadership has adopted many rational Western management tools in addition to the focus on ethical behaviour and integrity. However, whereas authoritarian leadership is still widely accepted in China, this has generally been recognized as counterproductive in Western leadership literature (King, 2014). Whether cultural differences in leadership practices will eventually disappear or not still needs to be seen. As a result of continuing globalization and enabled by the rapid development in digital communication, additional management behaviours will emerge which will influence existing models. Whereas fifteen years ago it would be unthinkable that leaders would rarely or even never meet with their direct reports face to face, this has become normal practice in many international organisations. Also, new generations will bring other expectations to the workplace that impact leadership effectiveness.

Today's leaders are assessed and evaluated on a number of competencies. Obviously when we compare the different models and lists, these competencies overlap and are clustered in different ways, but a common denominator is that they either deal with 'leading people', or with 'leading strategy and decision making'. These two elements of leadership were already mentioned in models that originated in the 1960s, and are still meaningful in today's leadership models. Sometimes competencies related to 'leading yourself' are included, like 'resilience' or 'initiative', but these do not exclusively relate to leadership roles. Whatever the leadership philosophy an organisation adopts, it is usually a blend between a focus on data and results and a focus on people and relationships in service of short-term and long-term objectives.

Although the way in which these two major aspects of leadership are linked and dealt with has changed over the years and continues to change, both aspects are still relevant in today's leadership theory and practice and we believe will still be relevant in the years to come. It therefore is crucial that students who will assume key roles in international businesses become familiar with these aspects and learn about the behaviours associated with them.

#### *4.1.2 The growing importance of working in multicultural teams*

Until recently, leadership could not exist without followers, or in the context of formal organisations, without people reporting to the leader. In most cases these reports were organized in a more or less static team that worked together to achieve certain organisational objectives until the next reorganization was initiated. One of the major jobs of the leader was to maximize team effectiveness. Whereas this situation still exists, in most organisations the nature of teams has changed significantly. Employees may be members of several teams with different objectives and teams are far more fluid, sometimes even ad hoc. Though static intact teams may be less important in the near future, the importance of working in teams has increased and will continue to increase, as it is essential to an organization's ability to respond to opportunities and improve internal processes (Edmondson, 2011). Edmondson calls this 'teaming': teamwork on the fly, coordinating and collaborating in complex, adaptive work environments. The consequences for leadership are that leaders need to learn to develop their (temporary) team members as problem solvers and experimenters instead of as rule followers. This requires awareness, trust, cooperation and a willingness to reflect (Edmondson, 2011). We believe future leaders clearly benefit from experimenting with the behaviours associated with these aspects early in their careers in order to become familiar with them.

Increasingly, teams are becoming both multicultural and virtual, which requires an additional set of skills compared to working in domestic teams which have more traditionally been the focus on management education.

As such, employees need to understand how to effectively cross both linguistic and cultural boundaries when interacting with diverse teams who may be co-located or geographically dispersed. Research suggests that traditional pedagogic methods such as lectures or case studies alone may be insufficient in order to develop cultural intelligence (CQ) amongst the students who will need these skills in the future.

There is a growing body of evidence (e.g. Tenzer et al, 2014; Hinds et al, 2014; Klitmøller and Luring, 2014) to suggest that multilingual teams may face additional challenges, and find trusting relationships more difficult to establish than monolingual or monocultural teams. This can be partly explained by social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), which suggests that individuals are more likely to be motivated to work with those who they view as being similar to them in some way, (language and culture are often visible indicators of identity), but also by the fact that language diversity can lead to misunderstandings and anxiety amongst team members, resulting in a lack of trust that other members will perform the actions with which they have been entrusted (Tenzer et al, 2014). Such concerns are particularly prevalent amongst student groups (Strauss et al, 2011), and it is therefore imperative that they develop the skills to work in such groups whilst at university so that they are able to become high performing team members when they are in the workplace.

Furthermore, virtual communication has become more important as both multinationals and small to medium enterprises have relationships which are dispersed around the globe, therefore in addition to the ability to work effectively in multicultural co-located teams; graduates need to be able to work virtually. This is especially challenging across cultural and linguistic boundaries, as certain communication media may not facilitate the transmission of all the information required in a communicative exchange. For example, the use of lean media such as email, which are text based, may present challenges for those from high-context cultures (Hall, 1989) where information is not only presented by explicit, verbal means, but relies much more on other signals such as context and body language, which may not be present when using lean media.

## **4.2 Interpersonal trust as a key component of future business**

Leadership trust<sup>1</sup> [1] is said to improve efficiency and cooperation in organizations by encouraging information sharing, increasing openness and reducing the need for detailed contractual and monitoring devices. These claims have been confirmed in recent studies. For instance, Zeffane, Tipu and Ryan (2011) conducted an organizational study that demonstrated a significant correlation between the level of trust as experienced by respondents and the perceived quality of communication with their superiors. Related to change, trust is considered to be even more important. Trustworthy leadership is found to be a critical dimension of organizational capacity for change (Judge, 2011). Trust is also seen as a key contributor to organizational success in contexts of high ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity, which describes the environment we currently live in and will continue to live in according to many authors. In 2011 the Center for Creative Leadership claimed that "we are living in a VUCA world, one characterized by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity, and will be for years to come."

As the economy is moving in directions that require peer trust instead of institutional trust, for instance with regard to network organisations and the sharing economy (Botsman, 2015), interpersonal trust can be expected to become even more relevant, although it is difficult to say how this will be expressed given the digitalization of communication. Also, as said earlier, future business leaders will need to learn how to lead effective teaming processes that require a quick establishment of trust in their leadership. Actually, learning how to contribute to trust in a team without the luxury of already being familiar with the other members will be a challenge for everyone working in organizations. It is therefore key that students and young leaders start becoming aware of the importance of trust in working relationships early in their careers, and learn to understand how trust works for them in interaction with others.

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<sup>1</sup> Trust refers to an expectation or belief related to future behaviour of a person or institution. We adopted a definition of trust that relates to interpersonal trust: "A psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability to the actions of another party based upon the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to you." (Six, 2007).

Authors in the field of management literature have identified several key components of interpersonal trust as well as behavioural contributors to building trust. Whereas there is no one universally accepted model of interpersonal trust, it is commonly accepted that trust is a situational phenomenon as well as subject to cultural and individual personality differences. However, most models include a dimension related to perceived competence (like ability or professional credibility) and a dimension related to the perceived quality of the relationship (for instance connection, loyalty, or intimacy) (Six, 2007) (Blanchard, 2010) (Evans, 2015). Also integrity and reliability form part of most models, but whereas some authors consider reliability to be a component of integrity (Evans, 2015), others clearly separate the two (Blanchard, 2010). We therefore believe that when business students first learn about trust, the focus should be more on creating awareness by linking their individual experiences with a theoretical framework instead of trying to understand how the theoretical models about trust compare.

## 5 REFLECTIONS ON OUR EXPERIENCE AND STUDENTS EXPERIENCE

As Ledwith and Seymour (2001) suggest, country-specific knowledge is not a guarantee of intercultural competence. Jones (2003) concludes that cultural awareness has been found to be most effectively learned through direct, experiential exposure to intercultural situations where students are affectively as well as cognitively engaged. Concurring with this and with Tompson and Dass (2000) that business games are effective alternatives to traditional teaching and given the multicultural dimension of our students and their aspirations to be global managers, the use of Pengaruh to support the understanding of trustworthy leadership and the acquisition of cross-cultural team work skills was appropriate. Games have a unique potential to engage students in collaborative activities and the collaborative nature of Pengaruh requires collaborative thinking by students to maximise the “teams utility” (Zagal et al 2006).

Pengaruh complemented and reinforced taught material as students were engaged in an interactive, enjoyable and motivational learning environment. *“I was extremely engaged as it was fun working with different people, exciting”* (PG French/Algerian Student) *“Yes, I was engaged with the game because I felt like I want to be part of the team and want to help them win the game”* (PG Thai student). Our aim had been to provide students with an authentic learning experience of cross-cultural teamwork and leadership. Written feedback from the students, with regards to their learning from the game, indicate that self-awareness in relation to these cross-cultural skills had occurred. *“In order to be a good leader I should listen to others opinions”* (PG Chinese student). *“You have to trust your team in order to reach the goal.”* (PG Indonesian student). *“I can be very controlling at times-sometimes because I do not have faith in others”* (UG UK student).

## 6 GUIDELINES

From our experience in the use of the educational game, Pengaruh Management Game, we offer some practical guidelines:

- Do not underestimate the time needed to develop and trial an educational game.
- Embed the game into the curriculum.
- Ensure students do the pre-game preparation for deeper learning.
- Tutor facilitators must be competent in supporting self-reflection and giving feedback on students competencies.
- Ensure there is an adequate budget. Pengaruh is resource heavy both in terms of tutors and rooms. Five rooms and five tutors are needed for 16 students (the maximum that can play the game) for four hours.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The academics and the developers believe that by collaborating in the development of Pengaruh Management Game an effective educational game has been created. This is supported by our observations and reflections of playing the game with undergraduates and postgraduates between 2014-2016. Post game feedback questionnaires gave positive responses to the value of the game in the students' self-development. In addition the majority of the students make reference to the impact of

the game on their learning and understanding of cross-cultural leadership and teamwork in their written reflective assessments.

Our initial aim was to enable students to understand the need to develop their cross-cultural competencies. By adopting an active and reflective learning approach, with the use of Pengaruh, we believe that students have been enabled to be more effective learners and graduates. This is corroborated by students feedback "*I realised as the game went on that it was an insight to discovering our leadership skills.*" (PG Nigerian student).

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