STEAMER IO2.1 - ESCAPE ROOM CREATION GUIDE

Chapter 4. Practical advice

1. **Managing difficulty**
    1.1. **Barriers to educational escape rooms**
        ● *Current educational system* (role of national and school authorities)
        ● *Attitudes* (teachers, students, parents)
        ● *Timing* (Lack of time to plan and implement)
        ● *Support from other teachers* (Various teachers should be involved in the planning and implementation of the escape room. Some of them might consider that there is a lack of balance between entertainment and education.)
    1.2. **Decision on the type of escape room**
        ▪ Small group (traditional) escape room
        ▪ Large group 'escape the room'
        ▪ Small group escape boxes
        ▪ Online single-player escape rooms
        ▪ Digital/hybrid escape rooms
    1.3. **First meeting of the teachers involved in the creation and implementation of the escape room**
        ● Establish the main topic of the educational experience
        ● Integrating escape games within the course of a learning unit - They can be used diagnostically in order to test where students are before starting a new topic or area of study; to introduce new information, concepts, or ideas to students; for consolidating knowledge and applying skills already learned in a previous step; to assess progress and areas that need additional attention; can be used as a test to check that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.

- Determine the learning outcomes

1.4. Next meeting of teachers
- Setting the content and activities with a more detailed description
- Teachers establish difficulty according to their students' level
- Number of assignments depending on length of the escape game
- Ratio between different types of assignments
- Activities in the game should be similar to those carried out in class
- Challenging tasks

1.5. Design the escape room
- Decide on duration, number of groups/players in a group (done after learner analysis)
- Narrative (scenario) and respective puzzles
- Bring puzzles together to form the gameflow (playtest)
- Design physical space and scene-setting
- How to achieve game balance - a range of different types of puzzles; a range of different difficulties of puzzles; lots of different things for people to do; a variety of different types of locks

1.6. Practical considerations when testing the game
- Accessibility to a wide range of people - people with disabilities, allergies, or phobias
- Safety of the game

2. Supporting the players

●.1. Briefing rules of the game
- introduce the players to the escape room format;
- orient them to the narrative;
- health and safety issues;
- acceptable behaviour in the room;
- introduce difficult or unusual locks;
- emergency case

●.2. Communication
- A system for watching what is happening during the game
- Communicating with the players – the teacher can be present in the room at the same time (straightforward communication) or using a telephone, walkie talkie, or texting via a tablet or smartphone.
- Giving hints and clues when necessary to reduce the difficulty – decide on how to give the hints (on request or when you think they are needed); the number of clues; straight or cryptic clues

Supporting group dynamics
- balance between the teacher guidance and the learners' feeling of autonomy during the escape room gameplay
- Ensure active participation within teams
- If learners work in the same room at the same time, create confined learning spaces within the larger room
- Implement various ICT tools to foster teamwork and collaborative learning
- foster immersion

- **Managing the time limit**
  - The amount of time to play an escape room will impact on the practicalities of use.
  - If the time limit is 60 minutes to play there will be 15 minutes briefing at the start, 10 minutes for debriefing at the end, and time to tidy up and reset the room in-between games.
  - All this needs to be considered when thinking about how the game will play in the classroom.
- **Advice on how to verify the fulfillment of learning objectives and the acquisition of knowledge.**
  - Testing the game for playability
  - Consider the degree to which the game is achieving its intended learning outcomes
  - Self-evaluation against the learning outcomes is a useful exercise
  - Self check the escape room before testing
- **The importance of debriefing**
  - Debriefing as a reflection on learning - Throughout the students' participation in the escape room, the debriefing stage is their only opportunity for reflection; without reflection, experience cannot lead to long-term learning.
  - By groups, students will have to assess two aspects - students will have to value the escape room itself and they will have to evaluate themselves as a group.
  - Students must be aware that what a person in a group does might affect the rest of their partners.
  - The power of the escape room experience often lies in the debrief.
  - The teachers should set aside at least 10-15 minutes to allow students to talk about the experience.
  - It is recommended having students explain each of the puzzles, and after discussing what teachers observed.
  - Pointing times when teachers saw communication really fall apart, or when they thought students were on the same page, is a great way of having students understand where their strengths and gaps lie.