Role-playing games and education in Brazil: how we do it

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EDUCATION

SCENE

RESEARCH

While still a minor phenomenon, role-playing game techniques have increasingly found a use in education in Brazil. In this article we will present a brief historical survey, focusing especially on teaching materials such as adventure books, tabletop books and some of the larp techniques used by educators inside and outside of classrooms. But we also aim at presenting some examples of how these techniques work in practice, including our own experience of them, and we will argue the importance of having a strong basis in educational theory to guide such interventions.

A short history of RPGs in Brazil

In Brazil, the term "RPG" usually refers not just to tabletop role-playing games like *Dungeons and Dragons*, *GURPS* or *Vampire,* but also to solo adventure books, like those of the *Fighting Fantasy* series; to larp, called "live action" or simply "live" (few people would recognize the "larp" term here); to single-player computer/videogame RPGs such as *Final Fantasy;* and to multiplayer computer/videogame RPGs such as *World of Warcraft*.

Most larps in Brazil take place in the old *World of Darkness* from White Wolf, published here by Devir. There are also occasional larps in genres such as medieval fantasy, science fiction, super hero, horror and others as well. Some characteristics common to Brazilian larps are: dramatic portrayal of a character, simplified rules systems and a mixture of conversation in in-character and out-of-character modes, with a slight emphasis on the latter.

Despite increasing research on the subject, there is no authoritative text on the beginning of this hobby in Brazil. It is agreed upon by older players that the appearance of RPGs in Brazil took place at the end of the 80's, through exchange students and English teachers who brought games from the USA. Given the high cost of games, books and modules, the instructions were often distributed via photocopies, which makes it harder to determine the history of this kind of game in Brazil.

The first RPGs to be released in Brazil were *Aventuras Fantásticas* (Fighting Fantasy), published by Marques Saraiva, and *GURPS,* released by Devir – both in 1991. The first RPG created by Brazilians was *Tagmar,* published by GSA later that year. In 1992 this same publisher lauched the first RPG with a complete Brazilian setting, *Desafio dos Bandeirantes*, which mixes historic content from the colonization times with Brazilian legends. Also in 1992, GROW lauched a simplified Portuguese edition of *D&D*, called *Dragon Quest,* and in 1993 released the full translated version of *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*. At this time, in São Paulo, the *Encontro Internacional de RPG (International RPG Gathering)*, the first event of this

kind in Brazil, was held with a lecture by the creator of GURPS, Steve Jackson.

By 1994, RPGs had expanded their reach in big centers, like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, receiving a great boost by the release of the Portuguese version of the Storyteller system, with its primary title *Vampiro: A Máscara (Vampire: The Masquerade)* by Devir. It was with this release that larp was popularized among the players of tabletop RPG.

The release of *Vampire* and the spread of *AD&D* in super hero comic books by Abril Jovem helped to promote RPGs in Brazil; the average Brazilian consumer, however, has a low purchasing power and is not in the habit of reading (usually a basic RPG book has close to 300 pages, and several books are needed in order to play), which contributed to drive big toy companies like GROW and Estrela, and big publishers such as Abril Jovem, away from the market.

The national scene changed a lot with the arrival of *D&D* 3rd edition and its open d20 system in 2001. Slowly there appeared other small publishers, sometimes with a short life span, which translated or created content for the d20 system. The national games such as *Daemon, 3D&T* and *Tormenta* also saw an increase in popularity, especially among beginners.

Despite the development of RPGs in Brazil – led mainly by publishers and toy companies – the reach of RPGs in the field of education has been limited. We can suggest three main reasons for this:

- The ignorance of educators on the possibilities of RPGs as a teaching/learning tool.
- The lack of systematic research on the applicability of RPGs in the school context (there is little research published on the relationships education/RPG and school/RPG).
- With this lack of research, it is hard to have a theoretical discussion (with methodological and epistemological implications) which can promote the insertion of RPGs in the educational context.

In game conventions, some old gamers here say that RPGs and education were related from the beginning in Brazil, because role-playing games were used by English professors in the mid-eighties, but this discussion did not enter academia until 1997, when Doctor Sonia Rodrigues finished her thesis about tabletop RPGs and their application in education.

The academic production and discussion through events like the *Simpósio de RPG e Educação* (Symposium of RPG and Education) began to increase from 2000. The last Symposium (the fourth one) was held in 2006. While activity on, discussion lists on RPGs and education has been a bit low, the academic production is increasing continuously and we now have over thirty dissertations and theses. But the production of role-playing material with educational purposes has stopped, while accessing the academic material (like papers, dissertations, theses, monographies) is very difficult. That is: research is being conducted, but the results are not widely disseminated. They are not published in book form, and accessing it in the research libraries is complicated or even impossible. Generally, the easiest way to obtain a dissertation or thesis on the subject is through the author himself, but even in this case only a few will contribute printed or eletronic material.

In the commercial sphere, some companies have produced RPGs directed at the educational field. These publications represent a small initiative by some Brazilian publishers to produce material to enable the use of RPGs in the educational field. They also represent the independent initiative of some authors who have invested in the articulation of RPGs with educational purposes.

In the symposiums previously mentioned – *Simpósio de RPG e Educação* – many reports of experience referring to the application of RPGs in the school context were presented. These conferences are opportunities for people who use RPGs in schools to present new material, in most cases created by the players themselves, and the result of their experiences with the available material. However, there has not been more profound discussion on the educational basis that may endorse these practices.
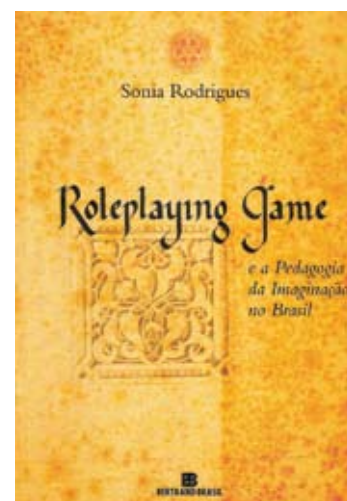
In the next chapter, we will describe some of the materials – books, character sheets, etc. – used by educators that try to use RPGs in school. We have selected the better known titles and will present their main characteristics. Our presentation will be followed by a quick evaluation of the quality of the material available and its possible uses in the school context. In some cases, we have direct personal experience with the use of the material, and present this. In others, the description is limited to a summary and assessment of the methodology in the material.

Descriptions of materials and techniques

Out of the Blackboard (Saindo do Quadro)

The book was used as a basis for the study of RPGs and education since it was the first one to be released (1996) and it presents a basic methodology for the use of RPGs in school. In sequence, it:

- Points out the qualities of RPGs for use in school
- Provides a series of tips for conducting a game and its pedagogic use;
- Discusses questions like violence and addiction;
- Brings a series of ready-made adventures that can be used as an intervention model.

However, this book lacks theoretical references in education, and the validation of its affirmations through research. It resembles a group dynamics manual for corporate training, which is the probable source of inspiration for the author.

Methodology: the teacher chooses a subject, applies a series of questions about this subject to make it closer to a real use and transforms this

information into an adventure to be used for an entire class. Each student can represent a simple character (which can be himself) or the class can be split into groups. The rules may be improvised by the game master or they can be an adaptation from a commercial title. The teacher may use ready-made characters or create them himself. The adventure can be also ready-made or created by the teacher (the latter is recommended by the author).

FLER – Ferramenta Lúdica de Ensino por Representação

This was one of the first texts to explicitly explain how to apply the table-top RPG method in a classroom, and may have influenced some interventions in schools. It is a text that was made available on the internet by the author for a while. It is a short and simple text; nevertheless it contains several typing and design mistakes. It is not a text for educators, but for experienced game masters that may want to take RPGs into the classrooms. In this case the teacher is a co-star if he is not a game master himself. The author states in the text that FLER is the result of months of research, but does not present the results of this research, neither in the text itself nor in any accompanying paper.

A summary of the FLER technique: So that everybody in the class may take part in an adaptation of the tabletop RPG for the classroom, the participants must be divided into four categories: (1) The game master (who must know how to play RPGs and be familiar with the educational content of the class), (2) players (students who will role-play the game characters), helpers (who help the players in making decisions), (3) consultants (the teacher, who may roleplay a character, an NPC – non player character – or provide information to the players), and (4) the actors (students that roleplay previously rehearsed NPCs and that help in the flow of narrative, possibly using costumes). There are two or more game tables in the classroom at the same time. The structure of tabletop RPGs is also presented in a simple form.

■ Players playing SIMPLES, a system for live and tabletop role-playing with educational purposes.

Photo
Marcos Tanaka

SIMPLES

SIMPLES is proposed as a manual for first-time users of tabletop RPGs and larp with educational purposes, but its rules system is vague and unclear, which can be a problem for an educator who is a beginner with RPGs.

It is a very good book, however, for those who have a little experience with such games, mainly with larp. If those interested can get their hands on other materials for beginners, such as the first Mini-GURPS, or find a local group to experience a larp, the book becomes much more interesting.

We did not follow the book's recommendations for tabletop RPGs, which appear to be based on FLER. The strong point of the book, and the part we used the most and with great results, was the larp part.

The book offers examples, results, a detailed methodology and several suggestions. Besides, the larp itself involves a bigger number of players than the tabletop RPG, which makes it easier to use with a whole classroom, as we will see in the larp methodology.

Larp and SIMPLES

The notion of larp proposed by Risys (2004) is directly related to the possibility of developing cooperative activities in the learning process. Usually the students are directed to a mission and they, in group, must acquire a series of weapons, artifacts, potions or information that are in the possession of an NPC (also role-played live by monitors/teachers/facilitators or students trained for this function).

This interaction between students/players and NPCs may occur in a small "class" on some subject that the teacher wants to work on, as long as it is related to the game, as well as tests – usually group dynamics adapted to the game – to obtain the weapons (or information, artefacts, etc), that are also connected to the theme of the game/class.

After the intergroup interactions, the teams discover that they possess only one part of the information needed to complete the mission, and

to solve this problem they have to join forces with the other teams sharing their respective weapons, artifacts, information etc. "Without union there is no solution", is the common message of these larps. The cooperative side of these larps is clear – without the cooperation between the teams there is no possible way to win the game. Individual victory is not possible.

Also, during the game, each member of the group (that is, each character) is essential in some moment or in some interaction with a NPC, pointing out his importance for the team, and especially the importance of every person to the group, which is fundamental when working on self-esteem and "seeing the other" in cooperative games and/or in an educational process" (Riyis, 2004, p 36).

Riyis (2004) presents us with a series of topics that point to very positive results of the use of RPG in the school context. On the subject of recognizing the cooperation and motivation, the results indicate that:

"100% of the students considered the game great or good, indicating an elevated degree of satisfaction. The answers that related to the question of cooperation were correctly answered by 85% of the students. Finally regarding the content, 75% of the students got at least 75% of the questions and more than 90% of the students got at least 50% of the questions, indicating also the learning of the content." (Riyis 2004, p. 41).

The teachers involved with the proposition of using SIMPLES in the school context related:

"... a significant increase in interest [on the part of the students] for the themes seen, as well as a significant difference between the groups that participated in the games and the groups that had only regular classes. There was also an increase in results on the simulated tests to enter an university made by the students that were trained for the role of NPCs. In places were there were played tradicional RPG, questionaires indicated

that there was also the acquision of the content, with 100% of the students answering correctly at least 50% of the questions (against 67% of the students that didn't take part in the game) and an average of 80% correct answers (against 72.5% in the control group)" (Riyis 2004, p. 47).

The author of SIMPLES states that the success of RPGs as a teaching strategy for education is related to the playfulness of the activity (without losing content), the development of verbal skills, and the possibility of development of abilities such as cooperation, respecting others, problem-solving, imagination, creativity and use of concepts in practical situations, among others. To him, using larp is preferrable to using tabletop RPGs due to the fact that with larp we have the possibility of increased playfulness and more movement, the activity is visually more attractive, it has a bigger possibility for corporeal expression and development, and the cooperation is more evident. (Riyis 2004, p. 35).

It is important to note that, to Riyis, both "live" and traditional RPGs can be important tools for the educational process in schools, since they promote the solution of problem situations, the aplication of concepts to pratical situations of day-to-day activities, interdisciplinarity, oral expression (specially in the traditional game) (...) and corporal expression (especially in Live Action). Besides that, these modalities, in the sense that they are based in subjective relations, also promote concern and mutual respect, cooperation and group work, and cooperative learning.

The idea of mixing larp with cooperative games in a festive mood is very good and really works, but it is an activity that demands previous preparation and is very tiresome. It also needs a few support personnel (who can be students or other educators, between three to four for a group of forty students).

When we applied this methodology to work on the concept of ethnic-race diversity with students grade school students, we divided the class in four groups. The premise was that a space creature was transforming

everyone on planet Earth into zombies, that is, people were losing their cultural identities. The groups discovered that the spirit of the earth could banish the space creature and bring everyone back to normal, but they needed to find out how to summon this spirit. The groups were informed that the elemental spirits of nature knew how to accomplish this. The elementals were NPCs (educators from a course that we were conducting on the use of RPG in education), and each of them could give part of the incantation to a specific team after talking for a while about Indian culture, Afro culture, European colonization etc; they questioned the group on the subject and received the correct answers (the questions were elaborations on previously used material given in class); subsequently, the group passed a "test", a group dynamic activity with cooperative characteristics. In the beginning the groups started competing to see who would banish the creature first, but they soon realized that alone they could not complete the goal by themselves. A real negotiation then started among the groups, where some students tried to convince their classmates that they could all "win". In the end, all groups united performed the incantation and celebrated the result. This activity was well received by the teachers of the school, and the students learned the importance of respecting those who are different. With each student-group the total time of the activity was close to two hours, but several days were needed for the preparation of the activity.

Tabletop RPG in SIMPLES

SIMPLES provides a series of tips for tabletop role-playing to be used in classrooms. In Brazil, since classes have many students (generally between 30 and 45, but sometimes reaching 150), it is the suggestion of the author that students be divided into groups and that each group represents one character (each student in the group could represent one heroic characteristic of the character).

Another option suggested by the author is that each member of the group assumes one function, which can be variable during the game. These functions may be: speaker (declares the actions of the character),

player (rolls the dice when needed), senses (receives information in private to relay to the group), note-taker (writes down information on the character and game), researcher (searches in the material for the solutions of the game), and other possible functions.

Another solution to the problem of the great number of students in classes proposed by Riyis is that a small group of students be trained and assume the position of helpers in the game. In this sense they would be game masters for a small group of students (4-6), and the teacher would be the coordinator of the activity. The class would have several small game groups, each with a previously trained game master (GM). This helper GM, due to the training and the responsibility of conducting the game for his classmates, would take upon himself to study more on the subject of the game, improving his own learning. In time, the teacher allocates this position of helper GM to different people, so that several students can experience it. Of course, this solution requires a lot of work in preparation, but it has the advantage of being easier in the application phase. If the teacher chooses this option, he/she must make it clear to the helper game masters that they are not playing against the characters.

According to Riyis (2004), the RPG game usually has the following phases:

> "1) The teacher prepares the setting, the adventure and the characters (the teacher may allow the students to prepare their own character, which is in itself an interesting activity with an enormous pedagogic potential). 2) The teacher distributes the characters among the students, one for each student, arranging them into a group or designating functions for each member. We advise the teacher to design the groups, at least in the beginning, so that the teaching-learning process occurs in the best possible way. 3) The teacher explains the rules and flow of the game to the students. 4) The teacher, "wearing the hat" of the game-master, introduces to the students the world prepared by him, calling them to take part in the story,

and to tell it in group. 5) During the adventure, the teacher introduces elements of the content that he plans to work on, in a situation-problem way, inside the context of the game-story. 6) The ending of the adventure is made in a way that it leaves the students wanting more, at the same time as it allows the teacher to use the concepts worked on in a learning situation." (p. 21)
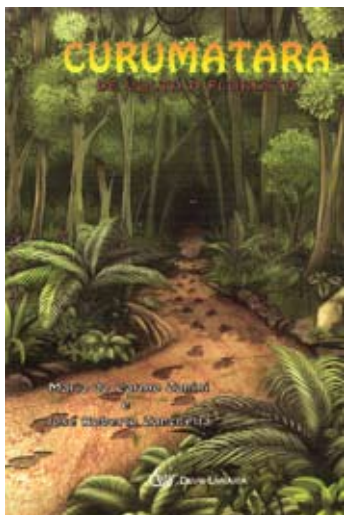
Curamatara

Curumatara is a solo adventure where the reader is a boy who meets a Curupira (mythical figure from the folklore of the Brazialian Indians, which takes the form of a red-headed boy with feet turned backwards to confuse hunters) in the middle of a city and can help him to return to the Forest. The story has many narrative lines and several possible endings. During the story the reader is faced with questions about topics such as the Indian language, disease transmission, fractions, environmental impact of the construction of hydroelectric power plants, aluminium recycling, use of maps and some information of the legend of the Curupira. The book comes with a small insert with a guide and a rule system that enables the reader to become the narrator in a tabletop session. The acronym "RPG" is not mentioned anywhere.

While the book itself doesn't mention the use of RPGs for education, the following information is available about the book:

> **Curumatara, de Volta à Floresta** is a solo adventure, an interactive book with numbered paragraphs, in which the reader decides the order that these paragraphs are read, deciding what the character should do in each point of the story. In this book the reader must help Curumatara to save the animals of the woods near Frederico das Emas, where a hydroelectric power plant is being built. **The book passes through several cross-subjects in the curriculum of the basic teaching**. (DEVIR, 2008) (bold-face ours)

Portuguese in other words (Português em outras palavras)

This is a Portuguese text book which comes with solo adventures as a "bonus". There is no pedagogic proposal for the use of solo adventures by the professor on the insert of the pedagogic advisory body or on the insert of the adventures themselves. In this manner the adventures seem out of place, out of context. In the opening of the solo adventures insert, called "RPG game" in the book, the possibility of playing in group is mentioned, but how this can be done is left unexplained.

Even so, this has inspired some Brazilian teachers. Pavão (2000) mentions in his book that one of the reasons for his research about reading and writing among RPG game masters was the fact that children said they would take a "game-book" (another name for a solo adventure) to a desert island. In our town we were called by a private school to work with RPGs since the children loved the inserts of this collection of Portuguese text books and were already conducting game sessions for each other, even modifying the stories. Nevertheless, teachers and educationalists did not really know what to do with the material nor with the children. We prepared an action plan with RPG workshops in the library and gave a lecture on RPGs to parents and teachers. Everyone was excited by the game and the proposals, yet the project was aborted by the principal because, according to him, this game would not help the school students to pass the *vestibular* – a test that Brazilian students take in order to gain access to the University.

During the first "Simpósio de RPG e Educação" in 2002, the author Rosana Rios said that one of her objectives with the inserts was to improve the taste for reading and the production of fantastic literature. Besides that, she made it clear that

> "(…) since we were dealing with 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades, I included elements of History, Geography and Science that were connected to these grades, so that there was also an
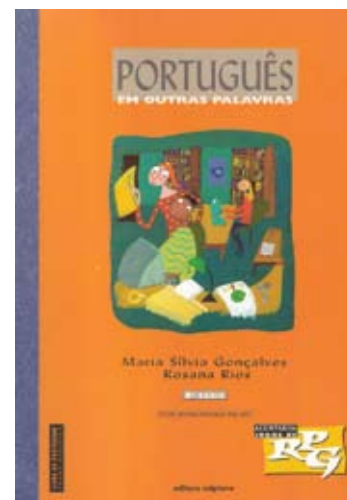
interest for the school, and so that the adventures made the reader interested in continuing later and to be aware of situations which suddenly could prompt them to say to their History teacher something like: "look at this, I can make an adventure out of this...".". (Rios, 2004, p. 225)

Mini GURPS series (Série Mini GURPS)

The Mini GURPS series is composed of five tabletop RPG books for beginners, in which the first three have a setting based on Brazil's history, the fourth on the European crusades and the fifth is a police investigation adventure that depicts the life and work of the artist Cândido Portinari.

Each of the first three books in the series consists of a brief, but clear, explanation of role-playing, a brief explanation of the rule system and a solo adventure that was designed to demonstrate the game dynamics and the way in which the rules are applied; the character creation system for this setting is also explained, along with a description of the game world, an adventure with tips and instructions so that the beginning game master can conduct the game session, an explanation on how the game master can create his own adventures in this scenery and some ready-made characters.

Even though it is not a thick book, only some forty pages long, we had good experiences with its application to first-time players. Its cost was low and it is a relatively self-contained book: the use of the GURPS Lite (Generic Universal Role Playing System – a tabletop rules system from Steve Jackson games) is optional since all the rules needed to play are already contained in the supplement. We are planning to possibly create material with the same structure as the first books, yet with an "open" rule system, under an open license like Creative Commons. This appears to be a viable alternative to help creating game groups in libraries and cultural centers, and to help teachers that wish to do extra class activities.

The problem of the Mini GURPS series' educational use is that, with the exception of the last book, they were not designed for this specific

purpose, since the material was made for use by one person (solo adventure) or a small group (we would risk saying no more than six players). Therefore, using it in a class with forty or more students (a common situation in Brazilian schools) is quite impracticable, yet the material can still be used as support material or in activities outside the classroom like game groups in the library.

The last book was made specifically for educational purposes, as we can see in this excerpt:

> "This publication is the final product of a long construction process of an RPG adventure capable of transmitting pedagogic content. (...) We thought of the three neurolinguistic types, in a way that can capture and maintain the attention of the persons that may come to play this adventure: visuals, kinestesics and hearing. (...) above all, it is important that the adventure is presented in a spirit of entertainment and relaxation, so as to let the learning take place in a subtle manner to avoid rejection of the activity by the students. Participants should only care about the present objective in the adventure, which is to find the painting. This way, they will unconsciously achieve the greater purpose of this activity, which is to learn a little about Portinari." (Lourenço, 2003, p. 37)

The book has been recommended for teachers and educators in events, discussion lists and web sites. The book is a tabletop adventure created as a tool, a technique to be applied by an educator with the objective of teaching some aspects of the life of Candido Portinari (a well-know Brazilian artist). Each scene of the adventure presents a series of materials and contents to be "learned unconsciously" (Lourenço, 2003, p. 37) by the students. There are a series of implications in this: among other arguments, made in the session about the relationship between RPG and technical pedagogy, that the role of the teacher becomes less important,
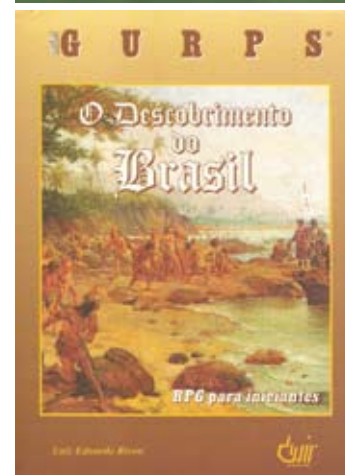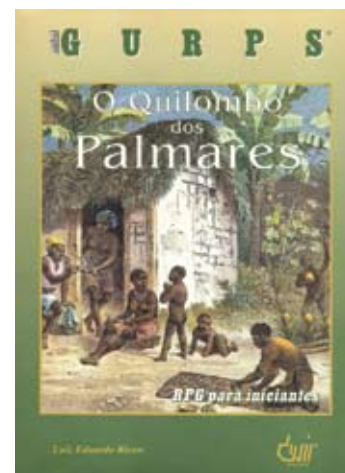
and that the usual teaching process does not work and must be disguised as entertainment.

Although we did not use this particular book we are aware that it contains several characteristics that we consider important to present the game for a group of first-time players: The rules are simple, the adventure is well-written, has many tips for the game-master and it comes with six ready-to-use characters with adventure hooks.

A few considerations regarding the use of RPGs for educational purposes

From the educational point of view, we understand that the practice of RPGs in the school context cannot exist without a theoretical reflection that describes this activity as a methodology of teaching or learning. We do not believe that it is sufficient to just create material and techniques inspired by RPGs and apply them with educational purposes; there is a need for some reflections on the why and how to do this – "educational" here is to be understood in the wider sense, i.e. not just in schools.

To illustrate this point, we'll recount the experiences of one of the authors (Wagner Luiz Schmit), which took place while developing a RPG project for an institution that hosted low-income teenagers in the city of Londrina (Brazil).

This experience was connected to a cultural project of the Secretaria de Cultura da Prefeitura do Município de Londrina, called Rede Cidadania, which had the purpose of introducing cheap entertainment forms that increased the access to and the production of culture. One of the locations where this project was implemented was the Guarda Mirim de Londrina, an institution that gave support to the school and offered several activities during the students' leisure time (if the students went to school in the morning, they spent the afternoon in the institution, and vice versa).

The initial objective of the intervention was to teach teens to play tabletop RPGs and to develop their own rule system and scenarios. The activities took place through workshops that happened once a week in three-hour sessions.

During the course of the work, we observed that some participants were unable to get involved with the story and develop their character, which led us to question the reasons for these difficulties.

It was necessary to change the strategies of RPG development. Based on the development theories from Vigotski, an experiment was conducted: Instead of narrating an adventure as usual (describing situations, asking players to roleplay their characters, occasionally drawing on a sheet and having the support of complex character sheets) we used a kind of "proto" tabletop RPG – the game *Hero Quest* – a board game where players are heroes with the mission of exploring dungeons, killing monsters and finding treasures. This game format put the participants in more concrete situations and the answers that were needed to solve problems presented during the game were made more realistic with the game pieces.

We could perceive that this change led the participants to get involved in a different way with the proposed activities, taking part in the game and interacting in a more effective way to solve the problems faced in the adventure.

We could conclude that the initial difficulty in making abstractions was related to the difficulties in reading and writing, and that these were also interfering with the school work as well as with the participation of the teens in the proposed activities.

In this sense, the activity realized with the game *Hero Quest* served as a diagnostic tool: through it we could see what the students were able to do, what were the difficulties and the potential they had with solving problems. Based on these initial observations, once more drawn on Vigotski's theories, an intervention plan was elaborated to help develop abstract reasoning, reading and writing.

The plan consisted in using RPG games with increasing complexity, which would require more and more development of the social, emotional

and cognitive abilities. In this light, the organization of the activities was done based on Vigotski's concept of the zone of proximal development[1].

Thus, starting with board games such as *Hero Quest* – in which the participation of players is not so intense – little by little, the players were presented with the characteristics of more complex RPGs, which implied a deeper characterization and representation of the characters and a greater freedom for the players in the game world. At a certain point, as the players mastered the rule system and the game flow, the board was removed. From this point on, the use of more complex rules was introduced (like those in GURPS) and the players had great freedom of action with their characters. Together with the RPG workshops, several meetings took place, in which music was discussed, movies were shown and solo adventures were presented, as well as books with themes that were related to the proposed adventure. This way the participants had the possibility to improve their capacity (as the knowledge regarding the social reality in which the adventure took place) to create their characters and own adventures.

In the course of the activity, significant changes could be perceived in the development and learning process of the participants of the workshops. One year into the project, the participants who had shown great difficulty in reading and writing were asking to borrow reading material and were preparing their own games. When parents were asked about possible changes, we were informed of significant improvement in school activities.

What can we learn from this? First of all, role-playing – and the experience conducted by Wagner confirms this hypothesis – is a powerful instrument in the promotion of the integral development of people. That means that this game not only applies to cognitive abilities used to solve the proposed tasks, but also involves aspects related to the social development of the participants: it requires cooperative solutions, as well as a certain degree of affection. The players must develop a pro-active attitude towards solving problems, which requires a participation in the collective

[1] "[...] we call actual development level the level that the child achieved in the process development and that is determined with the help of tasks that the child herself solves alone (...) the proximal development zone is the distance between the current development level and the level of possible development, determined with the help of tasks solved with the orientation from adults and in cooperation with smarter colleagues (VIGOTSKI, 2004, p.501).

of the game in which the activities are realized, leading participants to a more complex perception of the social reality in which they are part.

Such experiences also illustrates that RPGs must be presented in the educational context with very explicit objectives. The proposers must have a clear idea of the motives that support the use of this activity, which implies a clear theoretical position with an educational vision as the basis for the activity – that is, this game cannot be thought of as just another technique to be used with students, but as a tool that has a meaning for both the people who propose it and for the people who take part in the workshops.

Final considerations

We see that in Brazil, the practice of role-playing games is still sees very little use in the educational context. Even though we find several game proposals in the market that are directed towards the educational context (some with content developed with a basis in the school curriculum), these games are are still very far from most Brazilian students.

This division between the RPG market and the use of such games in the school process can be related to the lack of research on the topic, as well as to the difficulties in accessing the research regarding RPGs in the educational field. This means that the country still does not have an educational culture that sees the RPG as a useful instrument for the integral development of the students, or even as an educational tool that promotes teaching and learning. Such difficulty has led educators to use RPGs in class for the entertainment that it promotes – as an "out of the ordinary class" – which results in a practice that is without any theoretical reflection.

Another difficulty derives from the intense debate involving theorists and players regarding what an RPG is and what its main characteristics are. On the one hand, this discussion is very interesting, in the sense that it can show new possibilities and directions for using RPGs in an

educational context; on the other hand it can create more confusion, since such arguments are not based on or oriented towards research regarding the interaction between RPG and education.

We believe that the intersection of RPGs and education is still a field to be developed in our country. The research involving such games, as well as their applications in the educational context (in spite of the material available in the market), are still not consolidated. We consider it a matter of fact that role-playing games, in general, are very useful tools for education. This situation leads us to seek the further development of a theoretical background and solid, useful practices.

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