THE MAKING OF HISTORICAL ROLE PLAYING GAMES IN SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION: AN EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION BETWEEN HISTORY TEACHERS

A PRODUÇÃO DE ROLE PLAYING GAME HISTÓRICO NA EDUCAÇÃO SECUNDÁRIA E SUPERIOR: UMA EXPERIÊNCIA DE COOPERAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL ENTRE PROFESSORES DE HISTÓRIA

LA PRODUCCIÓN DE JUEGOS DE ROL HISTORICOS EN LA EDUCACIÓN SECUNDARIA Y SUPERIOR: UNA EXPERIENCIA DE COOPERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL ENTRE PROFESORES DE HISTORIA

DOI: 10.56083/RCV4N6-193
Receipt of originals: 05/21/2024
Acceptance for publication: 06/11/2024

Pablo Luiz de Oliveira Lima
PhD in History
Institution: Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
Address: Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil
E-mail: plolima@ufmg.br

Ruggero Marchesi
Master in Literature
Institution: Università del Piemonte Orientale of Vercelli
Address: Biella, Piedmont, Italy
E-mail: rahamasa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: This article presents an analysis of an experience of international cooperation between Italian and Brazilian history teachers in the development of a teaching practice consisting of the production and playing of a type of historical Role Playing Game (RPG) by the students of the history class. After developing an analysis of the theoretical background on games and education, an on task research, with a series of activities, was
undertaken in two different settings: history classes in a public secondary school in Italy; and history teaching classes in a public university in Brazil. The results include challenges and possibilities of the use of historical accurate RPG in History teaching, in different contexts, contributing to practices of participatory education, active learning and peer instruction. The critical use of RPG as a teaching practice can innovate and improve the teaching of History and the development of historical consciousness with adolescent and young adult students.

**KEYWORDS:** role playing games, history teaching, historical consciousness, cooperative education, games.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo apresenta uma análise de uma experiência de cooperação internacional entre professores de história italianos e brasileiros no desenvolvimento de uma prática docente que consiste na produção e execução de uma espécie de Role Playing Game (RPG) histórico pelos alunos da aula de história. Após desenvolver uma análise da base teórica sobre jogos e educação, foi realizada uma pesquisa prática, com uma série de atividades, em dois ambientes distintos: aulas de história em uma escola secundária pública na Itália; e aulas de ensino de história em uma universidade pública no Brasil. Os resultados incluem desafios e possibilidades de utilização do RPG de acurácia histórica no ensino de História, em diferentes contextos, contribuindo para práticas de educação participativa, aprendizagem ativa e instrução entre pares. O uso crítico do RPG como prática de ensino pode inovar e melhorar o ensino de História e o desenvolvimento da consciência histórica com estudantes adolescentes e jovens adultos.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** role playing games, ensino de história, consciência histórica, educação cooperativa, jogos.

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo presenta un análisis de una experiencia de cooperación internacional entre profesores de historia italianos y brasileños en el desarrollo de una práctica docente consistente en la producción y ejecución de un tipo de juego de rol (RPG) histórico por parte de los estudiantes de la clase de historia. Después de desarrollar un análisis de los antecedentes teóricos sobre juegos y educación, se llevó a cabo una investigación puntual, con una serie de actividades, en dos entornos diferentes: clases de historia en una escuela secundaria pública en Italia; e impartir clases de historia en una universidad pública de Brasil. Los resultados incluyen desafíos y posibilidades del uso de RPG históricos precisos en la enseñanza de la Historia, en diferentes contextos, contribuyendo a prácticas de educación participativa, aprendizaje activo e instrucción entre pares. El uso crítico de los RPG como práctica docente
puede innovar y mejorar la enseñanza de la Historia y el desarrollo de la conciencia histórica con estudiantes adolescentes y jóvenes.

PALABRAS CLAVE: juegos de rol, enseñanza de la historia, conciencia histórica, educación cooperativa, juegos.

1. Introduction

Teaching is a complex and dialogical practice, involving a diversity of didactic resources mediating the relation between teachers, students, contexts and contents. A great number of teaching practices are composed of games of different types, with strong pedagogical and cognitive potential. This article analyzes the production use of historical Role Playing Games (RPGs) in History teaching. This kind of game can exercise an essential competence of historical education, which is the capacity of putting oneself in the place of people of other times and contexts, trying to think and see the world with other eyes, as well as being able to confront problems with the tools of other times and places.

In the teaching of History and humanities, games of different kinds are attractive to students and have positive cognitive potentials when used as educational resources. However, schools worldwide tend not to seriously integrate games, such as RPGs, into the core curriculum and activities of secondary and, specially, tertiary education.

In Italian there is a single word defining both ‘history’ and ‘story’: storia. Such fusion of different meanings, as confusing as it may seem, represents one of the key concepts of this article: History can be taught and learned by telling stories. The same happens with the Italian word giocco, which means both ‘toy’ and ‘game’. As a giocco, RPGs can be understood as
a type of game in which the element of competition, although it may be present, is not necessary for a meaningful playing experience.

There are many different kinds of RPGs, such as computer-based games, toy games that use small action figures, as well as live-action games. Regardless of the type, all different RPGs are constituted by three basic elements: characters with defined profiles; specific settings; and a game-master who creates situations and problems to be solved and serves as arbitrator in cases of disputes between players.

Originally, RPGs such as Gary Gygax’s *Dungeons and Dragons*, created in 1974, started as commercial games with fictitious characters in imaginary settings, and became well-known forms of entertainment. “Role-playing” is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “the changing of one’s behavior to fulfill a social role”, and can be generally applied to the playing of roles in different settings, either theatrical, educational or others. Also, it is a well-known practice of simulation, in preparation for future performances: from the training of airplane pilots, with real-like cockpits, to military exercises, up to security training for emergency squads and simple fire alarm exercises. The whole concept of ‘role playing’ can also be loosely defined as ‘pretending’, a practice that reminds us of childhood spontaneous playing in the form of ‘make-believe’ as well as of theatre plays.

Historical RPGs, with real historical characters and settings, have also been created, such as the Brazilian *O Desafio dos Bandeirantes: Aventuras na Terra de Santa Cruz* (1992), and *Terra Incognita* (2001). Historical RPGs have strong potential for use in historical education. In this type of game, the teacher, oriented by accurate historical research, acts as the game-master, conducting teaching-learning activities to stress social and historical aspects of the setting and its characters, allowing the game to feel enthralling for its players, the students. The teacher should always facilitate a peer review of the experience, after the game.
Therefore, RPGs can be effective mediating elements in the improvement of History teaching, the development of historical consciousness and critical thinking by students of all ages, as well as teachers. Nevertheless, like all educational methodologies and artifacts, the use of RPGs carries along diverse concepts, intentions and problems. The possibilities of its use as a successful didactic resource varies according to the teacher’s understanding of its vast diversity and their ability to produce their own RPGs, in dialogue with the school curriculum, to be used in their specific classrooms. This article analyzes an actual experience of historical RPG production and usage as didactic resources in History teaching. In a process of pedagogical collaboration between History teachers from Italy and Brazil, regarding historically accurate RPGs, an innovative educational practice can contribute to the debates concerning RPG and education, specifically, History teaching.

2. Theoretical Framework

There is an academic consensus in recent pedagogical literature about the positive educational potential of games. One of the characteristic of educational practices involving games is the development of “cooperative” and “collaborative learning” experiences (Tanner et al., 2003; Bilgin & Geban, 2006; Hijzen et al., 2007; Giuliodori et al., 2008; Michinov & Michinov, 2009). Through the use of games, teaching-learning relations take place in a more horizontal fashion amongst students and between themselves and teachers, in comparison with other educational practices. Different authors point that while playing games, students engage in a “participatory education” and “active learning” experience, in which they must act to reach their goals and not only react to the stimuli from teachers (Tanner et al., 2003; Nurmi, 2010). Collaborative and participatory educational processes are founded on a basic characteristic of game-playing in education: “peer discussion” (Smith et al.,
2009) and “peer instruction” (Crouch & Mazur, 2001). Some scholars also argue that games in education can stimulate “reasoning” by leading “problem-solving” and cooperative learning experiences (Gillies & Khan, 2008). Carvalho & Randi have specifically evaluated the use of RPGs as “a methodological approach for teaching cellular biology, assessing student satisfaction, learning outcomes, and retention of acquired knowledge” with undergraduate medicine students in Brazilian higher education (2013). Thus, there is a significant number of studies about games and education, and many different approaches have been used within the last century to analyze the didactic uses of games in schools.

When analyzing games, one cannot avoid a reference to Johan Huizinga’s book *Homo Ludens*, from 1938. “Playing”, according to Huizinga, is an ever-present aspect in human society. He defined“ playing”, indeed, as a “free activity standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life as being ‘not serious,’ but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly”. In daily life, a game is usually“ an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it” (Huizinga, 1955). Although it is not necessarily a serious activity, it is tied to many aspects of learning.

But in Huizinga’s work there is an emphasis on games as practices of competition or as challenges between players. In this article, the kind of gaming experiences that is considered is broader. Games, indeed, are not necessarily competitions and, more than only disputes, cooperative traits can also be stimulated. A learning experience can benefit from both competitive and cooperative tryouts. In school education, the mutual construction of a pleasant playing experience, where there are no “losers”, can have the best outcomes for all participants, not only the “winner”. Huizinga (2005) understands that games are social constructions and have significant functions. Games have meanings in themselves, transcending an immediate need. They are played for the pleasure of playing, not for a biological imposition. Thus, playing is a cultural and social act. For this author, games
are present in all cultures from the beginning of human societies. Therefore, games are products and producers of culture. In short, games have their own characteristics, thus summarized by Huizinga (2005):

In an attempt to summarize the formal characteristics of game playing, we could consider it a free activity, consciously taken as non-serious and external to normal life, but at the same time able to absorb the player intensely and completely. It is an activity disconnected from all material interest, with which one can not make a profit, practiced within its own spatial and temporal limits, according to a certain order and certain rules. It promotes the formation of social groups with a tendency to surround themselves in secret and to underline their difference from the rest of the world by means of disguises or other similar means (p.13).

We can see, therefore, that games are representations of reality, in which the player is transposed to the character, seeking to emulate his actions, within the game environment, in the best possible way, or in the way that he considers to be the best possible, and that the player is not alienated from reality (Huizinga, 2005).

Historical RPGs can be applied in the teaching of History. In the West, memorization has been a much criticized aspect of History teaching, but, at the same time, it is still the hegemonic method used for the teaching of History and evaluating its learning (Carrasco & Miralles, 2015). Analyzing History teaching in the Brazilian context, Circe Bittencourt states that, until very recently, “learning History meant knowing by name names and facts with their dates, repeating exactly what was written in the book or copied in the notebook” (2008, p. 67). But, the contents, objectives and the methodology of teaching history, as an integral part of the school history curriculum, underwent profound changes during the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

Currently, the objectives of History teaching are more directed to the formation of identities (national, regional, local, social and political) and the intellectual, critical and humanistic formation of students. At the same time,
the teaching of History has the articulation between methods and contents as basic presupposition, focusing on the relation between teaching and learning. The basic procedures of this new method of teaching History are: problematization, teaching and construction of concepts, causal analysis, temporal context and exploration of historical documents (Schimidt, 2013).

Contemporary scholars on the field of History teaching agree that the main purpose of history teaching should be the development of historical consciousness to provide students with subsidies for their development as active citizens, with independent thoughts and actions. The study of History should contribute for people to "observe and describe, establish present-past-present relationships, make comparisons and indicate similarities and differences between the diversity of events in the present and in the past" (Bittencourt, 2008, p. 122).

Thus, History teaching is not a prepared and controlled activity, in which there is an exact and definitive content to be taught to the students, but a dynamic and participative one. Historical knowledge is not simply delivered or acquired, but built together, collaboratively or cooperatively. Furthermore, there is not a single historical truth, but the constant construction of several possible interpretations of historical facts, based on the constant re-signification of these facts.

Therefore, the construction and transmission of historical knowledge in the classroom demands an intense dialogical relationship between teachers and students. James Gee (2003), analyzing video-games, argues that the active participation of students as well as investment in processes of understanding rather than memorization should be the objectives of the contemporary formal educational model. In RPGs, the plot, the story of the game, develops through the actions of the player. Role playing is inherently interactive, as the player's actions generate immediate, unexpected responses. RPGs are therefore reactive, reflecting the actions of the player. In a same RPG, different actions generate different results. Thus, role playing
games, by constructing narratives, like the craft of the historian, can reconstruct, although not reproduce, the past.

Another aspect of RPGs in the classroom is the ability that game playing has to generate interest, engagement and dedication from players, spontaneously, since the act of playing does not generate material results. This is another of the great educational potentials of RPGs which are complex activities that demand commitment and dedication. The act of playing this type of game, even if unconsciously, requires a coordinated simultaneous articulation between complex cognitive senses and processes (Santaella, 2004). As Palfrey and Gasser (2011) argue, "young people concentrate when they play" (279).

The immersion capacity generated by RPGs is a great source of interest for learning, laying in the the core of another hypothesis guiding this work: by recreating concrete historical spaces, RPGs allow the player to approach the material culture of the historical period or process portrayed in the game. Such a capacity is a powerful tool in the hands of history teachers, since the ability to relate material technologies to their respective historical periods is a strong indicator of the apprehension of historical contents.

3. Methodology

The results presented here are outcomes of a qualitative research constituted by observations of history teaching activities and practices of RPGs in an international cooperation between two history teachers in Italy and Brazil. The Italian one, Ruggero Marchesi, works as a history teacher in a public secondary school in the northern region of Italy. He has been a role playing gamer and game-master since youth and also participates in live-action RPGs as a leisure activity. The Brazilian teacher, Pablo Lima, is a professor at a public university in the southeastern region of Brazil who works with history teacher training. Although he has played the game a few times,
he is not a usual role playing gamer. Both teachers are also friends and, while in college, were colleagues in a student exchange program carried out at Nottingham University, in the United Kingdom, in the year 2000. Since then, both became History teachers with experiences in different schools and teaching levels in Italy and Brazil.

In 2017, Marchesi developed a type of historical Role Playing Game in Italian, which he named as *Giocco di Comitato* (Committee Game) entitled *Arriva Garibaldi!* (Garibaldi is arriving!). It is set in a late 19th century Italian village that is about to receive the presence of the revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi. The characters — the town mayor, police officials, priest, political activists and a rich industry owner — are members of the village and they must decide how to deal with Garibaldi’s imminent arrival.

The game has the following structure: First a context is presented in terms of time and place, and each character is also presented. The teacher selects students to play each character. Each student receives a profile of his or her character with information about 1) Who you are; 2) Your aims; and 3) What you know. The teacher then mediates a debate among the group, proposing problems to be solved and questions to be answered by the players.

Marchesi played it with his students in 2019, achieving success in some points and evaluating problems and possibilities presented by the use of the game. In early 2019, he shared this experience with Lima, who decided to include it in the program of a class he teaches in an undergraduate History teaching class at a Brazilian public university. Lima adapted the game and linked it with a Brazilian theater methodology, developed by dramaturg Augusto Boal, known as *Teatro Fórum* (Forum Theatre), thus renaming the game as *Jogo de Teatro Fórum* (Forum Theater Game).

Instead of translating the game *Arriva Garibaldi!* from Italian to Portuguese, Lima created another game in Portuguese entitled *Santidade* (Holiness), set in the context of indigenous anti-colonial revolts in late 16th
century Brazil. The game was proposed in class and played by undergraduate students of a teacher training course, and the experience was also considered successful. During the game, students became highly concentrated in playing the characters, a level of engagement rarely achieved in regular classes. Along the first semester of 2019, many students developed other games by themselves and presented them as final class projects.

4. Results and Discussions

This experience of international collaboration between History teachers from countries which speak different languages is not common, for many reasons. One of them is the need of translation and another is the fact that, different from the curriculum of other subjects, such as Mathematics, Chemistry, or Biology, the History curriculum is very nationally oriented and rather different from country to country. In spite of these difficulties, both teachers consider that the use of historical RPGs presented many advantages: the configuration of a ‘participatory education’ process, with greater engagement of students in the activity, when compared with other conventional tasks; an “active learning” experience, with a protagonist role by students, who must express themselves as characters of the game, instead of only writing or reading; and the development of “cooperative learning” of historical abilities, such as trying to think and relate with people from other historical contexts, understanding that there is not a single truth in History; and being able to establish a ‘peer-instruction’ activity. Therefore, both teachers decided that it would be interesting to share the experience and stimulate other history teachers to experiment working with this kind of Role Playing Games in their curriculum and didactics, thus the decision to publish this article.

In recent developments of RPGs as a hobby, such as *Ten Candles*, by *Stephen Dewey*, (2015) one concept has become commonplace: a shared
narrative. In this sense, RPG shares the mantle of the narration and creates a story with a highly cooperative involvement. The development of a historical consciousness or even the outright competence of handling historical data can be exercised through role playing in strict sense, as well as by RPGs. The plot of an RPG is developed according to the actions of the players in an interactive process that allows more participation of students.

The learning process, as it has been thoroughly researched, is extremely tied to the presence of an interest from the learner about the subject and is eased by a positive feeling of the environment. Basically, if you like a subject and the place where you learn it, you will learn it better, easier and quicker. There are many experiments and studies based on this methodology, such as Montessori and constructivist schools, with positive results. It can be summarized that different factors are to be considered: personal interests in the subject; presence of positive reinforcements; a protected and cooperative environment that stimulates one’s feeling of being well able to perform an activity. All these elements can be exploited by a “gaming” experience and are compelled to produce a strengthening effect on the learning process. It should be added that the mere feeling of having a good time can significantly reduce the stress and fatigue of a normal studying activity, resulting in a more positive class environment and in a better response even from students with concentration or disciplinary problems.

Playing is, by its raw meaning, a way of having fun or, in its Latin etymology, a way of divertire, ‘going in a different direction’. People actually learn easily how to have fun. Therefore, including fun in the curriculum, by means of games such as RPGs, in day-to-day teaching-learning practices, can help promote an easier way to learn, both in the sense of acquiring and constructing new knowledge and of developing a more complex mindset. It must be stressed at this point that games and fun can be taken seriously — and effectively are — and that serious, grown-up people can actually play and have fun while still being responsible adults. Also, there can be playing
settings of even the most serious themes: with due considerations to the age and class target, as long as respect for the theme and the people involved is maintained, almost anything can be used as a scenario, from a discussion on World Peace, the attacks of 9/11, World War II or Colonial America.

Nevertheless, the goal of using RPGs in History teaching is not only to have fun, but developing skills in a playing environment. This experience can be compared to play-fights and play-hunts of little cubs: for them it is a recreational fiction that carries unto itself the development of very basic skills essential for survival: mimicking an extremely serious situation of life or death.

The following questions have guided this research: what are the aspects of these games that can be positively used for didactic purposes? And how can they be adapted for the education and for the classroom environment? Do RPGs have real applicability as didactic resources in the teaching of History in a classroom of secondary or tertiary education? That is, although these games have educational potential, can this be achieved in a classroom? In addition, what challenges do history teachers who want to use RPGs as didactic resources usually find in their teaching practices?

It is a shared belief by the authors that there can be an improvement in the use of gaming, and of certain kinds of RPGs, more specifically for teaching and learning purposes. The most evident aspects that can be considered are the constructive entertaining values that can contribute to develop a class with a good cooperative atmosphere and the social development of skills that are involved in plays, such as speaking in public, acting and communicating in general. It is also important to develop the skill of sustaining one's thesis with arguments while playing a role, a central practice of educational RPGs. Most of the current commercial games are not designed with school classes in mind and are destined to a different, selected and less numerous audience. But that can be solved and didactic RPGs can
be developed with a few guidelines and a short experience. The very creation of a historical and educational RPG can be a class-work in itself.

The inclusion of gaming in classroom experiences can be fruitful, also, to strengthen the relations and the sense of cooperation between students and teachers in the creation of a pleasant educational experience. The classroom becomes a more dynamic, active and attractive place, felt not only as a place where students listen, read and write, but where they perform and play, while still being a workplace. The approach to historical, ethical, social or economic matters can become easier when it is helped and sustained by gaming and by practical examples if compared to teaching these same subjects only as abstract notions and ideas. Following this line of reasoning, it can be stated that gaming permits to keep the matter of a lesson as less abstract, such that the whole arguments could be materialized in a specific situation and into definable problems.

It is not to be avoided the fact that playing in classes brings various problems: in a situation where the students are kept too loose, or even if they are not trained about what they will be doing, there are many different aspects that might impair the didactic value of the gaming lesson. Wrong data can be learned if, for example, a historical process or event is recreated, but students mistake the historical outcome with the fictional one. More than this, some students might, when exposed to a strong historical subject, lose sensibility due to it being “just a game”. Therefore, it must always be pointed out by the teacher that playing historical RPGs does not make History less serious. Caution must always be enforced in RPGs about strong themes, like the Slave Trade, the Shoah, or A-Bombing.

A matter of less importance, compared to the latter point, but also important to be considered, is the fact that many students will be applying a contemporary mindset to situations of the past. This is what François Hartog calls “presentism”. It can be controlled, but it can also be fruitfully exploited to strengthen the active reconstruction of an historical way of thinking.
related to the studied historical moment. That is an important historical objective in itself (Hartog, 2013).

Another problematic aspect to be considered is regarded to practical problems in classrooms with a large number of students. A ‘gaming lesson’ can be presented as a prize, thus trying to include every student of the class and that, because of its ‘fun’ and ‘materialized’ features, it is a lesson that is usually accepted and remembered, working best on the very students that are usually negative on accepting the ‘average' lessons. It is also important to keep in mind that there are limits in the number of participants in a RPG and that any classroom which is too numerous should be split in various groups. Playing experiences should work well with up to 15 people.

All of the above considerations should be remembered in order for a teacher to exercise caution and control, being ready to explain and to correct at the very moment when he or she feels that something is wrong or getting out of control. It must also be noted that, even in gaming, a school classroom is a social learning place and situations need to be protected and controlled with an ethical attitude.

Many different kinds of historical games can be identified, all of them having their capabilities and their limits. Setting up a game in a historical context is already regularly done: historical RPGs, videogames, table games are already well-known. World War II, for example, is a well-known subject (although with a certain loss of human sensibility) by almost all 12-year old or more male students due to video gaming. Of all these kinds of activities, RPGs are the ones which require most time, and may not be limited to a single session. It is also the activity that relies most on cooperation and helps in the development of a problem-solving activity. Therefore, the aim is to transform roleplaying into an opportunity to learn and enhance one's historical consciousness.

Instruction (K-12) is no longer seen as a privilege, because it has mostly reached everyone in developed and emerging countries. This is a
great development in a social way, but the focus of new teachers has become the effort in finding new ways to interest their pupils, who are in need of an objective different than ‘learning’ by itself. This makes education, and education by gaming, a dangerous place, where teaching by entertaining is no longer a way to develop other precious skills and mindsets, but a way to keep students at school.

There are indeed important issues about RPG and game-helped education in contemporary schools: mainly all of them are related to the cost, in terms of time, of these activities. It is well known to teachers that it is already challenging to complete a year-program within schedule, thus spending five to ten hours into gaming could be a costly sacrifice. RPG activities should be kept for once or twice in a year, or destined to after-school laboratories. Didactical gaming is a powerful device, but it must not substitute regular lessons.

Writing an RPG for a specific class is an exciting task, that can be seen as difficult for who is not used to. It surely requires a bit of work and extra care should be added when proposing it to the target class. Following are some guidelines and examples. Note that many RPGs might change dramatically from decision-making stages to ‘dramatized communication’.

A few examples of RPG-based activities and the main differences between them can be analyzed as follows:

Type 1 - Committee game: players are given a role, to be read and kept hidden, indicating who is who, their objectives, and what they know about the other characters. The game is focused in the interaction between the participants, aiming to convince the others of their aims. After a given time, the play is stopped, the personal aims are read and it is decided who performed better. Scene example: Italy 1859. The participants are people of a town meeting, choosing if they will have Garibaldi as a guest in the town for one night or not. What could be a great interest for someone with the impending war, could also be an hindrance for industry barons tied with the
Austrian market, and other family and fame interests are also at stake. Preparation: It is essential to prepare a rich story with well-categorized characters, whose aims and goals overlap each other. A setting and well-prepared role for each player is required.

Development: the game is performed in live-action, talking each other in a room or two. No other interaction (e.g. physical) is allowed. Duration: the game has a set time, usually 1 to 2 hours. Group: this type of RPG can be adapted for groups of 6 to 12 individuals. Control: there is no need of a proper ‘referee’, but a game-master is always present as a facilitator and to suggest as well as correct background informations.

Type 2 - Decision making committee: half of the class is split in two or more ‘parties’ of a well-defined side and orientation. A theme of discussion is then presented. Each of the parties has to assemble and choose how to support their ideas and criticize the other’s. After a given time (or even a few days) of preparation, a debate is organized between the parties: in the debate all participants can speak and make questions, or each party can elect a speaker. The other half of the class has the role of ‘audience’ and can make questions, and choose one of the competing sides. Then a chat on what happened during the debate and how things have been sorted out is organized. The roles are shifted on a second occasion. Scene example: Brasil, 1894. The politicians are trying to set up a political agenda for the country: oligarchies of coffee farmers are supporting a system of power control and repression, which can turn the country into a dangerous revolt state, or there could be extended the right of voting, that could mean less control on economic policy. Preparation: a discrete effort is put on looking for a debate rich on reflection hints and in the chance of shifting the player’s perspectives to the ones of the setting. Development: The game is performed live-action, in one session of setting and another one of debate and decision. (All can be done in the same day, anyway). Duration: best if a full hour is given for the debate, plus one for setting and one for the decision and ending. Group: this
game is best organized in classes of 15-30 people, but can be easily adapted to smaller groups. Control: the game master acts as moderator during the debate and helper in keeping the assigned roles. He should also help in the ending parts to analyze the debate experience.

Type 3 - Traditional quest: a small group of characters is exploring a place, talking to other people and performing a series of tasks in a given historical scenario. Players have a small script telling them who they are and what are their skills and abilities, as well as their personal goals. A game master is playing all the other characters and describing the scene as it develops.

Scene example: In the 17th century, a few explorers are going deep into Peruvian inland, looking for loot and knowledge. One of them is a missionary, the other a Spanish adventurer, a former convicted murderer given a chance to restore his name, and there is also an indigenous guide, who has chosen to side with the Conquistadors. Preparation: Some hours of preparation must be spent to develop a good storyline, that must be kept open enough for the players to be able to choose their agenda. Development: The game is played around a table, in story-telling sessions, with the optional aid of dices and rules. Players develop their characters and their ideas as long as the story line goes on. Duration: at least one or two hour per session, at least three sessions. Group: a small group is necessary, of 3 to 6 people at most. Control: the writer of the story has to perform as game master, thus being able to play all the non-player characters as well as directing the story.

A Full-RPG example (Based on Type 1) and guidelines to creation of an historical RPG set:

a. Choose an Historical Period and a Place
b. Choose a Theme/Event
c. Choose a Type (depending of the number of players, time and the aim of the activity).
d. Establish the debate’s main question and the contending parties.
e. Write down the names of the main characters, their biographies and aims, how they know the other characters, what they want from them and what they fear from them?

Enlarge the number of characters and relations to the desired size.

5. Conclusion

It can be safely concluded that RPGs, with proper integration to the curriculum, definition of objectives and evaluative methods, can be effective didactic resources in History teaching and learning in formal education. RPGs generate information and seizure of contents, including school knowledge. But without proper monitoring, this information and content are useful only in relation to the universe of the RPG in question. The immersion generated in RPGs can bring the student, in a ludic way, to the academic historical knowledge taught in schools. As it has be seen, gaming and didactic activities can work in parallel and support one another. The method of historical RPG collective production and playing can enhance the teaching of History in secondary and tertiary teacher training education, in different contexts.
References


HIJZEN, Daphne et al. Exploring the links between students' engagement in cooperative learning, their goal preferences and appraisals of instructional conditions in the classroom. Learning and Instruction. 17. 673-687. 2007.


