**Curriculum of Role-playing**

I’ve chosen to look at a piece of my own curriculum which is the first lesson of a series designed to help develop mastery in the activity of playing and running role playing games. The textual artifact is one half of the curriculum, composed of a two-page explanation sheet and a one-page worksheet, which are to be used in coordination with the hands-on curriculum of playing a tabletop role-playing game. The particular lesson I chose to analyze was the first lesson in the series, titled ‘Role-playing in Character’, and its purpose is to help players to develop a sensibility about what elements constitute the motivations and personality quirks of a character in a narrative, and how to make use of those details to better tell a story from a character’s particular perspective.

The two-page explanation sheet begins with a paragraph with the subheading ‘What does it mean to role-play *in character*?’ and gives a brief introduction to the idea of ‘playing in character’, or to speak with the voice of your character, and to be motivated by personality traits. After the introduction paragraph, the page continues with a slightly longer section named ‘How does one play *in character*?’ which details four categories of character traits (values, motivations, concerns and quirks) that I decided were useful distinctions to hold when talking about characters and their motivations for actions and beliefs. The second page continues with an explanation of how these four character trait categories work together to determine personality, and finishes with an explanation of what is considered appropriate behavior for a character in any given setting, what it means to ‘break character’, and tips on staying ‘in character’.

The one-page worksheet has lines for a player’s name, the character’s name, and the name of the story (campaign) in which the character appears. Beneath these lines are three spaces each for values, motivations, concerns, and quirks. After reviewing the two-page explanation, the instructions to the students was to fill out the identification lines on the worksheet for their current characters in their ongoing game, and to fill out as completely as desired the following lines, but to include at least one value for each of the category types. It was also indicated at that point, that these sheets would be included for use for all future characters used in our programming.

Intro

* provide a roadmap
* create a ‘hole’ for your argument

Argument: evaluation and education from a learning-centric point of view. Learning is not about the facts you accumulate, but the process and the launching point for further inquiry.

* make clear your lens and the assumptions that drive argument
* What values and ideologies in the readings underlie this curriculum?

Roleplaying games create an environment which is progressive, and where curriculum is co-created between participants as co-learners. As an educator-guide, I am learning about what the learners actually need to learn, using the guideposts of my own experience in the content realm to create objectives.

Playing an RPG creates a complex environment that involves open-ended engagement in a problem-solving modality, and objectives sometimes arise out of what the instructor sees as possible learning edges for the participants.

1 (Eisner)

* Curriculum is more than just what is planned.
* Curriculum is formed between teacher and student.
* Curriculum planning can be plans that are created in process, through ‘reading’ a situation.

3 (Short & Burke)

* Curriculum as a shared process of teachers and students working together through negotiation.
* Learners work together to create curriculum.
* Roleplay serves to direct child consciousness and focuses interest in an overall progressive education.

11 (Tyler)

* Adult lives not interesting to kids – RPGs expose children to concepts in ways that make them interesting.

16 (Horton)

* Educational work, see with two eyes; one eye on where people perceive themselves to be. Other eye on where I’d like to see people moving.
* Educator as gardener.
* Popular education should give people experience in making decisions (like in RPGs)

17 (Doll)

* Classroom management and control – control resides in the interactions existent in the situations as they are.
* Teacher is guide and director.
* Dynamic interplay – child and curriculum are interactive.
* Dissipative control – just the right amount of disquilibrium drives the developmental process.

This curriculum focuses on elements of character, which are important aspects of playing RPGs, but also creates opportunities for reflexive learning and comparing aspects of characters as abstractions of the self, and of others. Self-exploration and empathy result.

11 (Tyler)

* Transfer of skills, similarity of situations – gaming, simulations.

Responsibilities of the ‘teacher’ as guide and game master to keep activities educationally oriented, and appropriate to the specific learners/players in the game.

3 (Short & Burke)

* Classroom teachers have responsibility to particular students in class, decisions based on knowledge and knowing specific students. Students are curricular informants.

Challenges of a progressive educational approach to curriculum development.

3 (Short & Burke)

* Letting curriculum emerge from learners eliminates experience and knowledge of curricular developers.

4 (Bobbitt)

* Any inherited system, good for its time, when held after its day, hampers social progress. Old teaching methodologies should give way to new ones if the old ones don’t’ get the right job done as well.

9 (Bennett)

* Be open to alternatives in delivery of education – one size does not fit all.

16 (Horton)

* Education is what happens to other persons, not what comes out of the mouth of the educator. Posit trust in learner despite appearances.

22 (Pinar)

* Banking concept of education leaves children feeling inadequate.

What is the concern of education? What *should* be the concern of education?

4 (Bobbitt)

* Education must be concerned with directed and undirected training.
* Schools should teach what is in deficit after untrained, undirected experiences.

What sorts of curricular subjects does RPGs deal with?

4 (Bobbitt)

* Study life of adults to build curriculum (this is how to develop game worlds in RPGs)

5 (Bobbitt)

* Examine life of adults to develop curriculum
* (my observation): The complexity of life is why it doesn’t work to scientifically survey the entirety of life for the means of education. However, one can *play* at the roles and define topics of imaginative inquiry.
* Education is about adult life – I disagree, but there is a value in exploring with children the possibilities of adult life in the form of RPGs.
* We can practice subjects of study through role-play that might cause division.

8 (Hutchins)

* Education prepares a youth to understand their experience and reflect upon it to be wiser.
* “manhood, not manpower”
* free the mind, not employment.

10 (Bruner)

* Intellectual substance of what is to be taught – not “getting across”. Mastery of self, discipline tastes, deepen world view.
* Teaching subject of mankind – what, how, how more so? (character development)

What curriculum is taught without plan?

2 (Eisner)

* Discusses the complexity of discovering social values being taught by curriculum.
* Implicit curriculum – values and basis on environment.

What educational experiences are created by RPGs?

2 (Eisner)

* Many of the most productive modes of thought are nonverbal and illogical (visual, auditory, metaphoric, synthetic)
* Dangers of extrinsic rewards – RPGs create intrinsic rewards through play.

7 (Adler)

* “The best way to understand a play is to act in it…” and the best way to understand life and the different possibilities of being is to role-play those lives and modes of being.

11 (Tyler)

* Literature as low-risk exploration (so is RPGs)
* Language and literature – contribute more than knowledge, skill, habits – also modes of thinking, critical interpretation, emotional reactions, interests, etc.

What educational methods are used with RPGs?

7 (Adler)

* RPGs integrate many of the elements in Adler’s three-column list. My use of more transmissive techniques to introduce concepts work to integrate column one and the other two columns.

10 (Bruner)

* Use games to teach social studies.

What can RPGs do well or better than traditional methods of education?

19 (Giroux)

* It’s imperative that educators create conditions in which learning is linked to social change.
* Education is a form of political intervention in the world that is capable of crating the possibilities of social transformation.
* Civic education and utopian thinking.
* Modes of authority that are directive but not imperious – expand range of human possibilities.
* Pedagogy as a mode of witnessing; students make connections with others through social relations that foster a mix of compassion, ethics and hope.

20 (Dewey)

* The only true education comes through the stimulation of the child’s powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself.
* Training a child’s power of imagery, continually forming definite vivid and growing images of the various subjects with which he comes in contact in his experience.

21 (Short & Burke)

* Learning is what the brain does naturally, continually.
* All human experience is ultimately social: it involves contact and communication.
* School is a place where the learning that occurs in the present can give new life to the past and create new possibilities for the future.
* Attention to ambiguity and exploring solutions helps us to expect our own growth.
* Empathy -> creates new choices.
* Interaction with others 🡪 new potentials for ways of thinking.
* Risk-taking as a result of curiosity.
* Exploration leads to choice, which gives us the potential to be wrong.
* Our learning needs to be both connected with and go beyond what is already known to us (zone of proximal development)
* Knowing that we will have the opportunity to make changes in our ideas increases our willingness to take a risk and act as decision makers.
* Boundaries of productive risk-taking are expanded.
* Reflection – view other people’s decisions; try on other perspectives; metacognition; flexibility as problem-solver; generates and supports our sense of authority.
* Collaboration – awareness of others’ intentionality supports reflection; valuing diversity; students move in and out of the role of teacher;
* Learners are in a sense storytellers (rosen, 1984)
* Develop capacity to really listen and talk with others while continuing to speak and listen to ourselves.

Defining educational goals and curriculum planning

11 (Tyler)

* Four fundamental questions of curriculum planning.
* Education is changing behavior
* Goals and standards

12 (Popham)

* Behavioral/performance objectives reduces ambiguity and increases clarity on worth of objective and judging if it has been achieved.
* For evaluation purposes, unmeasurable goals are of little use now. Some objectives may be currently unassessable but are worth the risk of some instructional time.

13 (Eisner)

* Educational objectives can hinder the ends of instruction.
* The dynamic and complex process of instruction yields outcomes far too numerous to be specified in behavioral/content terms in advance.
* The means through which imaginative curriculums can be built is open-ended as the means through which scientific and artistic inventions occur.

14 (Bruner, same as 10)

* Comic books to play at using clues cleverly, general reasoning ability increases, formulate better hypotheses.
* What assumptions about how people learn underlie this curriculum?
* What parts reflect Perennialist/Essentialist assumptions? Which?
* What is the role of the student? Teacher? School?
* What is the implicit curriculum? The null curriculum?
* Who determines curriculum? Where does curriculum originate?
* What knowledge is of most worth?
* What is my opinion about this handout and the curriculum ideologies it reflects?
* How might I restructure this to better reflect my beliefs and values about education (or how might I adjust my values)?
* What is the significance of letters like this one? What ideological stances underlie? Do these ideologies match my view or my approach to teaching?

Main body

* provide signposts/subheadings which relate back to the introduction
* use good transitions between sections of the paper

Conclusion

* review main points of the paper
* tie everything together