

## Chapter 17

# GAMESTAR(T): An ARSGAMES Project

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### ABSTRACT

*There is a distinct tendency to integrate technology into the classroom, but in practice the introduction of the ICT in education is not producing the expected effects. We are confronted with the second digital divide, which consists in the dissociation of the students from the technologies introduced in the educational sphere that do not match their actual technological environment. GAMESTAR(T) has been developed in this context as an ARSGAMES project, which, taking into account the potentialities of video games for education and socialization, proposes a series of weekly meetings that include assembly meetings for decision-making about the club's rules, activities, and materials, thematic courses related to specific domains of knowledge, and the club's sessions, in which children play, assisted by monitors, in an atmosphere of critical and collective reflection. In the following, the authors examine how the club developed, which methodology was used, what problems were encountered, and the solutions applied.*

### INTRODUCTION

Some of the measures most firmly adopted in view of the need of a digital literacy have been the introduction of digital technologies into the classroom (computers, digital interactive whiteboards, projectors, etc.) and the increasing pressure put

on the teaching community to use them, a usage that must be included in the didactic planning of the different subjects, as well as among the objectives of the annual center planning of each educational center. In the main text of the current Spanish educational legislation, the *Ley Orgánica de Educación* (hereafter LOE), the competency in the ICT usage is included as a part of the cur-

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## GAMESTAR(T)

riculum in different educational stages. These measures seem to demonstrate that the educational advantages of technology have been internalized, especially in a technologically mediated society like ours.

Although it is evident that the introduction of the ICT can have a positive effect on education, the way it is being carried out practically is, in most cases, insufficient and even counterproductive. As pointed out by David Buckingham (2008), we are confronted with a second digital divide which consists in a dissociation of the students from the technologies introduced so far in the educational sphere, for they differ greatly from those they are familiar with and do not match their actual technological environment. Outside of the educational environment, students have generally an extensive access to different resources: they use technology for communicating through social networks, chats, text messages, etc. They play video games, surf through the Internet searching information of their interest, they download and edit multimedia contents, etc. Compared to the amount of resources available outside of the classroom, the technologies used in educational contexts lack all interest for the students, insofar as they are regarded as alien to them, boring and tedious, as well as limited.

In ARSGAMES we both acknowledge the benefits of the technologically mediated education and understand the importance of bridging the second digital divide by making the educational technology, as well as the contents, more attractive to the students.

Although ARSGAMES has always aimed its activity concerning the “serious” research on video games at an adult audience, for a certain while it had been considered to create a link to a younger audience so that it would be able to stimulate a critical and creative spirit among children and teenagers and try to use video games experimentally in different areas of the educational field. This aspiration could materialize thanks to the financial aid “Ayuda a la Creación” of Inter-

mediae Matadero, Madrid, which made possible the GAMESTAR(T) project. ARSGAMES is a Cultural Association composed of professionals, artists, researchers, and students that work on video game research in all of its facets (educational, cultural, economic, artistic, etc.). ARSGAMES organizes events and develops projects related to the world of video games, such as *OpenArsgames*, *PlayLab*, or *Gamestart*. Even if its range of activities is quite wide, ARSGAMES is specially focused on education with the GAMESTAR(T) project. GAMESTAR(T) is a project that explores the possibilities of video games as a resource for education, socialization and entertainment. Its three main lines of action are:

- **GAMESTAR(T) Club:** A video game club that meets weekly at Intermediae, whose aim is to define how to configure a new, collective space for video gaming that encourages associationism and self-management among its members.
- **GAMESTAR(T) Gamoteca:** The “library” containing board games, video games and other resources, located in the Cúpula de Estación Futuro at Intermediae.
- **GAMESTAR(T) School:** Out-of-school workshops focused on learning with video games, which deal with diverse topics such as history, gender questions, health, or how to create video games.

At the outset of the club its objectives were:

- Familiarize the participants with the video games language so as they can think critically about themselves, develop their analytical capacities, and provide them with tools that allow them to modify or even create their own video games.
- Create and stimulate team activities around video games.
- Keep alive the critical spirit towards video games that had been generated by

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