

A photograph of the Sporttable Box game components laid out on a grassy surface. The components include a blue box with the title 'SPORTTABLE BOX' and illustrations of two cartoon characters, a green checkered board with a soccer field layout, a blue ball, a brown ball, a stack of cards, and a small cylindrical container. A large, semi-transparent yellow number '9' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

SPORTTABLE BOX

What if a board game could push you off the couch? Sporttable Box will do more than that. It will cure you of your laziness and make you want to move. Really!

Sporttable Box is the result of an amazing fusion between board games and physical activity...It is a vintage “technology” in the service of a new concept!

As the formula indicates [(sport + table = (s) portable) + box], Sporttable box is a board game with a Sports theme that combines strategy with fun physical activity challenges.

You can have a good time based on cooperative and oppositional interactions between players in a box that you can take everywhere. In addition, it is a valuable and effective professional and educational tool in various types of contexts as in situations of team-building, physical education classes or in leisure time animation.

Sporttable Box stimulates the development of motor skills, coordination, balance, placement and spatial orientation, visual perception and memory as well as logical thinking, communication, interpersonal growth and the values of fair-play.

We talked with the author and creator of this game, Gil Carpalhoso, a Portuguese Physical Education teacher who tried to overcome the fact that, during the rainy days of winter, his classes faced space limitations as the school’s gym was not always available to all teachers at the same time. So, the only space left wherein to teach his subject was the normal classroom.

As a consequence, his colleagues and himself had to find different teaching strategies (such as presenting videos or organising debates) because students simply did not have enough room to do physical exercise. So, the idea arose from the need to surpass these limitations and started growing with time.

Although it is a personal project, at a given moment Gil needed help from other people such as Eduardo Porto, Daniel Souto and Patrícia Figueiredo who illustrated the game. Furthermore, the creator established contact with Pythagoras, a Portuguese board game company represented by David Mendes, who creates and develops educational games, and who provided him with the necessary mentoring and motivation to realize his dream (<http://www.pythagoras.pt/>).

The author also got inspired by one of his colleague teachers – a Music teacher who had already developed some games for her teaching practice. So, Gil created a prototype and started the product testing phase with his friends.

Meanwhile, seeking to improve his English and to find different job opportunities, he accompanied his girlfriend to Scotland where she was studying at the university. As he was living in Scotland at that time, he could not test the game immediately after with students.

The next phase was the production phase. The game was produced in a factory in Germany but it was a long process until the end result was finally reached. In fact, more than two years passed between the idea for the product and the materials' testing phase. Every time there was a delay Gil took the chance to improve or to fine tune some aspects of the game until he was certain he would obtain his vision. Furthermore, the whole process was possible thanks to one of Gil's relatives who believed in him and gave him financial support.

Nowadays, the game is starting to be used by other teachers and Gil is 100% committed to his project, thus, not being able to teach for the time being. He created a new job opportunity for himself with the design and development of this new game although the world of business has its challenges, particularly for a newcomer.

In the end of our interview, we talked about the future of education and the pedagogical role of games in learning. Gil believes "people learn by playing" and that games will become an intrinsic part of educational methods in the near future since not only do they have a very strong social component but they also promote other important skills.

Written by: SG and Gil Carpalhoso

