

# Instructional Games and Simulations in Relation to Teacher Education: A Summary<sup>1</sup> Ted Ward

Instructional games, role-plays, and simulations are closely related instructional resources. Each contains elements of the others. Neat distinctions among the three are unnecessary if not impossible.

## Basic definitions of instructional games, role playing and simulations:

*Role playing:* Performing the behavior perceived to be significant, characteristic or problematic in an assigned or assumed special role.

*Game playing:* Participating in a rule-structured activity in which both skill and chance affect the outcome, and wherein the sense of winning or losing is communicated to the player.

*Working through a simulation:* Performing part or all of the behaviors demanded by a given real-life task or problem in a learning situation representing some but not all of the stimuli, constraints, and transactional characteristics of the real task or problem.

## Arguments and claims supporting use of . . .

. . . *Role playing:* Increased involvement; development of empathy, self-awareness, self-understanding and values; increased motivation; increased transfer of learning; in contrast with real life, lower threat, lower entry skills, can be scheduled, shared common experience for groups.

. . . *Game playing:* Increased motivation and participation; development of problem-solving skills; increased awareness of worth and uses of cooperation and competition.

. . . *Simulation:* Increased transfer of learning; increased motivation, involvement, participation, and awareness of results or consequences of behavior; development of self-awareness self-understanding and values; in contrast with real-life equivalents, lower hazard and trauma potentiality, can be scheduled, lower costs, shared common experience for groups.

## For pre-service and in-service teacher education:

The apparent value for teacher education is in the providing of relatively compact (short, intense) illustrative and skill-building experiences in order to give substance and immediacy to learning that must otherwise be abstract.

## Evaluating games, role plays, and simulations:

Evaluation of games, role plays, and simulations should be concerned, at least, with three sets of factors:

1. Content gain—What has been learned? (of what was intended to be learned? of what was *not* intended to be learned?)
2. Motivation—What is the drawing and holding power of the exercise or activity? for whom? in what particulars?
3. Transfer—What is the evidence that the learning (content gain) will or does apply appropriately to life situations?

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<sup>1</sup>Ted Ward. Instructional Games and Simulations in Relation to Teacher Education: A Summary. Prepared for the Society of Professors of Education, Chicago, Feb. 23, 1973