

Instructional Simulation: Definitions

Ted Ward, 1982

Instructional Simulation: The broadest of the key terms. An instructional simulation is an experience representing a small-scale replica of a life-like task, problem, or situation followed by the appropriate debriefing.

Instructional Game: A learning experience drawing upon the game-playing motive. An instructional game usually involves some concept of “winning”. Almost all instructional simulations involve at least a hint of game-playing.

Role Play: A learning experience in which an open-ended moment of relationship and task performance is based on the participants’ assuming specified roles (usually roles other than their own familiar roles).

Environmental Simulation: A learning experience in which a selected set of environmental tasks are presented in a similar-to-life format to allow manipulation by the learner (or team of learners). Emphasis is on task performance in a given environment, as in an aircraft simulator.

Social System: A complex array of roles in relation or response to some particular situation or function of human group behavior. At the “general” end of a continuum, for example, a family is a social system; at the other end is a special but predictable function such as a social change system in which a change agent’s role is played.

Social System Simulation: A learning experience in which a combination of role playing techniques and instructional game elements are combined to create an interactive episode or series of social experiences in miniature. The social system simulation is one of the more complex forms of instructional simulation.

Inductive Analysis: A learning experience in which a valid generalization can be discovered through an exercise or encounter with a problem-solving task. In simulations of the inductive analysis process the exercise usually is open-ended; the debriefing is carefully structured to lead the learners through a reflection on the meanings of an action, decision, or process.

Facilitator: The term of “leader” denoting a less directive and more co-learner posture and role.

Debriefing: A “talk through” of the meanings and feelings of an experience. Usually a group discussion planned to follow the simulation.

Leader’s Guide: A manual describing directions for the instructional simulation and giving specific advice for its most effective use. Debriefing questions should be included.

Package: A completely ready-to-give-the-facilitator set of materials, leader’s guide, and so on.

Production Ready: A package that all specifications ready for final artwork and layout.

Laboratory: A structured learning experience, led by one or more of the participants.