

Lab Learning Experiences from Simulation and Discovery Learning Seminar 1979

Sharing What You Have Found

Preparation: Each group member is to select and bring in one good example of an instructional simulation (game, role play or other) that has particular promise for the participants in the lab group. Be sure to have enough copies, samples or material artifacts to let others touch and look at as needed for good effective "hands on" experience.

Leadership: Select a chairperson, whose major duty will be time-keeping and reporting. Be sure to allow each person to demonstrate at least one instructional material.

Discussion: For each item demonstrated, discuss its strengths, and also suggest how it could be made more useful if changed in certain ways.

Report: The chairperson is to make a list of the participants and the name, author and source of each material shared.

Playing With Role Plays

Preparation: Each participant offers one or more specific role play ideas that could be developed into useful educational experiences for people of the sort on which the lab group is focused (e.g., adult education, teacher education, elementary social studies).

Leadership: Leadership is to be rotated around three sub-groups (3 persons in each). Each sub-group, in turn, is to serve as a leader-demonstrator group, using one other group as the "role players," and the third group as discussion commentators.

Discussion: Consider the clarity, specificity, open-endedness, playability and the educational worth of the role plays.

Activity: Divide the group arbitrarily into three sub-groups. Allow 20 minutes for designing a 5-minute role play that will serve some educational purpose. Then allow 5 minutes to play plus 10 minutes to critique. The three groups should rotate responsibilities during the playing sessions: 1) designer-facilitators, 2) role players, and 3) commentators. Be particularly concerned about simplicity of instructions, and keep the role play "on target" with your educational objectives.

Report: Select one of your new role plays to demonstrate in the seminar. (Plan to use subjects not from your lab group.) The written report should list the participants in the lab and indicate the working title (descriptive title) of the three resulting role-plays.

Developing a Dilemma

Preparation: Each person writes one sample situational dilemma dealing with a matter of judgment. The dilemma should be related to a training task of interest to the particular lab group.

Leadership: Select a “design consultant group” comprised of two people. These two will raise questions and focus the discussion.

Discussion:

1. Examine the sample situational dilemmas as prepared in advance. Find any that could be used or adapted for use in the exercise being designed by the lab group.
2. What decision does each situation deal with? What would the learners be asked to do individually? in small groups? What would be the intended outcome? Most important: what two values-in-tension is the dilemma to simulate?

Activity: Develop the new dilemma exercise and prepare it for use or demonstration in the seminar. The “design consultants” will be particularly concerned for simplicity of format, clarity of task instructions and simplicity of wording of the situations. The mode of feedback or sharing is to be specified in a brief leader's guide. Brief, terse, concise writing is important. A true dilemma allows no stereotypic “right versus wrong” decision. A dilemma has no “easy out” –it is a matter of deciding which of two values will be given precedence. The feedback and/or discussion in the exercise might be focused on the “why” of the decision.

Report: The “design consultants” are to prepare the resulting learning exercise for use (or demonstration) in the seminar. If multiple copies are needed, please allow three work-days in our office. Inform the instructor so that seminar time can be scheduled.

Environmental Simulation

Preparation: Each participant should bring to the laboratory session at least one idea (in writing) to offer as an illustration of the following:

- 1) A learning experience related to an important learning outcome;
- 2) Usually provided in the classroom, but
- 3) Would be more likely to lead to good transfer to the real situation if it were experienced in a simulation of the real environment;
- 4) Could be provided by alterations or additions to the classroom or special equipment that would cost less than \$200.

Leadership: Select a chairperson and later, (after dividing into the two sub-groups) two recorders – one for each sub-group. The chairperson will need to keep an eye on the clock so as to assure time for each step of the activity.

Activity: Briefly review each idea. Select the two most interesting and workable ideas for further refinement. Break into two sub-groups to refine each simulation; discuss and develop a precise plan for the environmental simulation. Allow about 35 minutes for this designing and refining activity.

Then recombine and allow at least 20 minutes for each group to present its plan as revised. Keep it simple! Remember the \$200 limit. Consider the matter of time-worthiness: will it be worth the time it takes the learner? Be sure the design includes a feedback-to-the-learner feature and make it optimally realistic in terms of the important dynamics that would exist in the real application of the learning. Environmental simulations are usually designed to teach skills or sequential processes and the decision-making involved. Discussion should be encouraged.

Report: Each of the developed ideas are prepared for distribution to the seminar. Recorders: be sure to list all the participants in the refinement of your simulation design (include the names on the hand- out to be prepared).

Sharing What You Have Designed

Preparation: Three or four of the participants present a “walk-through” of an instructional simulation (game, role play or other) that they have designed. Ask for volunteers in advance.

Leadership: Select a facilitator for this session, preferably not one of those who will be sharing their new materials. The facilitator’s major task will be to monitor time on the demonstrations and to lead the discussions (probably the group will need to decide how much time to give to each. Be sure to allot time for discussing each demonstration.)

Discussion: The coordinator should help each demonstrator by assisting in the discussion of the values of each. Keep emphasis on strengths and creative suggestions for extending the idea—not on talking about why it won't work!

Activity: Three or four demonstrations of instructional materials (games, simulations, role plays) being developed by members of the lab group. Keep it positive. Look for strengths. Demonstrators: be realistic about your use of time. If you can't “play it through” in the time available, just play enough to “get the feel” then “talk it through.”

Report: The facilitator lists all participants and indicates the titles and designers of the materials demonstrated.