Simulation Game

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Simulation Game:
"Development of a regional project and network to push basic skills like literacy and numeracy"

OR

Let them know about Basic Skills

Setting up a network and developing a communication/PR strategy to inform people about

General introduction on Simulation Games

A Simulation Game is a method which simulates and simplifies a complex real-life situation and its processes in a role play. The aim of a simulation game is to give the participants an insight into the problems and relations of a real-life situation. They should be encouraged to take different points of view and to reflect their own decisions and actions. Furthermore, simulation games provide a secure setting for participants to try out how to act or react in a new role and to reflect the consequences of their behavior. Simulations are often used in business education and training and as well in political education.

Objectives and possible effects of Simulation Games

By playing a simulation game, participants learn to deal with internal and external factors that influence the success of a project. They train holistic and integrated thinking and acting. Theoretical knowledge can be expanded and enriched by practical application. Thus, simulation games offer a high level transfer of learning by experience.

Participants receive a profile of their role, information on the process of the simulation game and information on specific interests and positions concerning the situation. They are asked to represent the interests of their role and to assume responsibility for the virtual institution, network or project during the game. This means that they need to make decisions, take leadership positions, lead teams, cooperate with project or network partners or compete with other institutions. Thus, the participants determine the results of the simulation game themselves. Simulation games are open, creative and self-regulated processes of learning.

According to Ute Warm (1981)[1], role games and simulation games can particularly affect the following points:

- By free improvising during the simulation game, flexibility and creativity are promoted.
- Already existing knowledge comes to the surface or can be increased.
- Problem solving abilities can be increased.

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[1] Source: Ute Warm (1981), quoted by Kersten Reich (2012): Planspiel. In: Unterrichtsmethoden im konstruktiven und systemischen Methodenpool. Lehren, Lernen, Methoden für alle Bereiche didaktischen Handelns. URL: http://methodenpool.uni-koeln.de/rollenspiel/frameset_rollenspiel.html [2016-08-02].

- Language abilities can be increased.
- The motivation and the interest in the topic of the simulation game can be increased.
- Opinions can change during the course of the simulation game.
- Attitudes can change during the course of the simulation game.
- Self-confident behavior can be developed or increased.

Organization and typical process of the Simulation Game

To perform the simulation game successfully, the trainer should prepare it carefully, be consistent during the game itself and analyze the game precisely after it's played. When planning a simulation game, it is important to consider the participants' personal backgrounds as well as their experience and prior knowledge of the topic. It is helpful if the trainer already has experience with simulation games as a player or a participant. In general, he or she should be a supporter of playful approaches in order to motivate the participants.

Preparation phase

To be able to work on the situation of the simulation game, it is necessary to get some general information about the game's starting point. The trainer describes the initial situation and sketches the specific positions, functions and roles of the different groups that belong to the situation.

Then, the participants become familiar with their role and institution they represent. Which is the starting position, which functions and positions are taken, which competences exist among the group and what is the task? Then, they try to identify themselves with their role, to develop a point of view and to find possible solution strategies.

Acting phase

The heart of the simulation game is the performance of the game itself. Now, different groups get together and interests might collide. They analyze the situation and make decisions what is to do and how they want to act. They interact with each other and meet decisions to reach their objective.

During the game, the trainer can use different pre-arranged tasks to stimulate the discussions. Some of them are urgent und force the participants to come to a decision immediately, others change the setting (e.g. some persons are asked to take part in the discussion while others are appointed as observers). Furthermore, the trainer should answer questions of the players, observe the group dynamics, and ensure a trouble-free process. If individual feelings are hurt, people are disparaged or conflicts arise between groups, the trainer should intervene and try to balance the situation. At critical points he or she can lead/facilitate through asking questions. Furthermore, he or she should make sure that the roles are taken seriously as well as with a sense of humor, in a playful manner.

Evaluation phase

An important phase of a simulation game is the evaluation and reflection of the game itself. First, participants talk about their individual experiences and new findings throughout the game. This is followed by an evaluation with regards to the content of the simulation game, which can be connected to theoretical knowledge. Then, participants discuss how the situation and the actions, conflicts and solutions of the simulation game can be transferred to reality and what are the probable conditions of success, barriers and stumbling blocks.

Framework of the LEK Basic Skills Simulation

Use: for a highly intense and practical training, in addition to the seminar according to the curriculum

Requirements: participation in the seminar (at least some modules)

Duration: adaptable from 3 hours up to 1 day

Participants: up to 20

Setting up the simulation

This simulation has been designed as an add-on to a seminar following the LEK-Curriculum. Still its use is not limited to this context. A group of experienced adult educators, communication officers, PR-agents , journalists etc. may use it as well to get deeper insights into the planning of a communication campaign in Adult Education and learn from each other.

The simulation itself can be done as a sequence of three hours as well as a training of one or even two days. The more time you have, the higher you may set your goals.

Decide for objectives and choose a set of roles

- Basic level: Participants play a limited set of roles they can easily identify with. They plan for writing an article or press release on basic skills.
- Advanced level: Participants play a set of well known roles and add some of relevant stakeholders they are not used to work with. Together they talk about the necessity of a campaign on fostering bacis skills trainings, involving stakeholders that are not from the AE sector
- Pro level: Participants take over a variety of roles and develop of a network of stakeholders of basic skills training, that are intending to plan for a conference and several communication activities

Define the task

- Read the task description further down in this document and adapt the task to the objectives that you have chosen to work on. We give no specific advice for this as it is necessary to reflext on the specific situation and framework in which you are going to apply the simulation. Consider time, experience and competences of participants etc.

Plan for the evaluation/debriefing

- A lot of learnings can evolve from performing this simulation. Safe enough spare time for a debriefing and evaluation.
- Help everyone involved to switch from the role they played back to the person they are. This is especially necessary in cases when conflicts did occure during the simulation.
- Ask questions that are helping everyone to reflect on the experience that was just being made: How was it? What kind of progress did we make? Were there new aspects that occurred? What can we learn from this (e.g. ideas we can use in practice or habits we would better avoid)? Etc.

- Think of using a "back-home" method to foster transfer

Player groups and roles of individuals

Below you can find a set of roles: there are different institutions, each consisting of different persons with a different area of responsibility. By using many or even all of them, you may create a simulation with multi-level complexity.

Which of the roles are chosen, depends on the number of participants and the specific task of the game. Roles of single persons/positions as well as complete institutions with their different positions can be left out. We suggest you to not create a too complex situation and roleplay, as this can cause a situation, where the playful character might take over the professional objective of working on a communication campaign for literacy.

institution	position/person	personality[2], competencies, tasks and attitudes
adult education center	literacy/numeracy/basic education trainer	- loves his/her work, is communicative and heedful - knows the learners very well (the competencies they have and often are not seen; the shame they feel in a world in which the written word is so important; the difficulties in finding a job; not being respected because of literacy deficits...) - works under precarious conditions (low wage, preparation time is not paid...) - has a good network with other trainers
	educational manager/planner of the education program	- is well structured and a bit reserved - literacy/numeracy/basic education is part of the program since many years (funded by the employment service) - is responsible for the educational program of the education center - designs the educational program with the aim to be fully booked
	quality manager	- is inspirable and a bit impulsive - checks and increases the quality of the educational offers - develops quality standards - wants to have satisfied customers - wants to have satisfied staff members who make an effort for high quality - wants the education center to have a good reputation

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[2] There is as well the opportunity to work with the participants' real personalities, but for sake of a game, for some player it might be easier to dive into the game if they have additional instruction on their personality to follow. Furthermore, during the evaluation phase, those who behave rudely or somehow feel embarrassed, they can "blame" it on their character personality, and feel more safe if confronted with criticism e.g. "I know, but I did it because of my character…".

	controller		- is rational and very focussed - takes care of the relation between costs and earnings - wants the education center to run profitably - sees the education center as an economic company
	staff member of public relations department		- is easily distracted - supports the good image of the education center - wants to increase the popularity of the education center - is an expert in Public Relations - has good writing skills
enterprise	recruiter/human resources		- takes things easy - writes the job advertisements - screens application documents - conducts job interviews - evaluates competencies, skills, qualities of applicants
	department head		- is very busy and a bit pressing - leads the department - conducts job interviews together with the recruiter - knows exactly which competencies are necessary for free jobs in the department
	manager		- is a free thinker and a bit chaotic - works at the highest level of management - is responsible for the image, the guiding principles and the mission statement of the enterprise - wants to give the enterprise the image of an enterprise that cares about social topics
	controller		- is clear and a bit cool - is responsible for the development, management, and financial/budget control of the enterprise - draws up and monitors the budget, draws up forecasts, and calculations of efficiency - analyzes the processes of the enterprise, analyzes its strengths and weaknesses, - develops measures for process optimizing
	staff member of public relations department		- is creative and spirited - supports the good image of the enterprise - wants to increase the publicity of the enterprise - is an expert in Public Relations - has good writing skills
municipality	mayor		- is power-conscious and a bit old-fashioned - focuses on the development of the whole town/region - is not an expert in literacy/numeracy/basic education, but is aware of the difficulties of integrating people with lower basic skills into the labor market - makes final decisions of current priorities of the town (and appropriate budgetary allocation)
	head of social services department		- is a bit overloaded - organizes lots of social projects - has to raise funds for the social projects - is an expert when it comes to the multilayer problem of literacy/numeracy/basic education

	staff member of public relations department	• is cheeky and a bit chaotic • promotes the town in general • is an expert in Public Relations • has good writing skills
local press	editor-in-chief	• is a bit authoritarian and not keen to debate • is responsible for the composition of the journal • has to observe the development of the readership
	journalist	• is adventurous and cheerful • works as a freelancer for the journal • is very interested in social problems and solutions • has experience with educational topics • has good writing skills and experience as a journalist
(migrants) self-organization	volunteer	• is politically active and motivated • has an immigration background • is unemployed at the moment • has quite good oral language competencies in the language of the country, but has problems with reading and writing in this language • has good language competencies in first language • is sometimes ashamed if e.g. a ticket machine cannot be operated because the instructions cannot be read
	coordinator of the organization	• is balancing and keeps the oversight • wants to help all members of the self-organization • wants to sensitize the public for the competencies and the problems of people with basic education needs • keeps the organization running (heading for funding...) • has an immigration background • has lived in the country for many years • has good language skills in the language of the country
	staff member responsible for public relations	• is keen to debate and extrovert • promotes the self-organization and the topic • has high language competences • is not personally affected by the topic • is employed by the self-organization • is a native speaker
Funding authority (federal ministry of education and/or social affairs)	staff member responsible for literacy/numeracy/basic education	• is appreciative and responsible • has a broad overview over all the projects funded by the federal ministry • knows the field of literacy/numeracy/basic education • knows the relevant stakeholders in the field
	staff member responsible for funding in general	• is responsible, bureaucratic and introvert • is responsible for the framework for funding conditions in general • wants to prevent misuse of subsidies • is a link to co-funding institutions
University	professor	• is thoughtful and acts considered • coordinates different research projects • coordinates a project by the university concerning literacy/numeracy/basic education
	postgraduate	• is curious and spontaneous

		• writes his/her dissertation within the research project of the professor • literacy/numeracy/basic education is the topic of the dissertation • conducts an empirical study on basic education in the region • is used to write in a scientific language

Tasks for the game

After the participants have been introduced to their institution and position/person, the game can start. In general, every institution of the game is interested in promoting literacy/basic education and wants to promote this topic.

> Idea 1: Conference

The **first task** for the participants is to plan for a conference on adult literacy. The participants should agree on the aim of the conference, the target groups and the specific topics.

The **second taks** is writing press releases or articles to announce the conference.

The **third task** is that every institution has to present a concept at the conference. This can be done in forms of e.g. a speech, a poster presentation, a press release or an article.

> Idea 2: Campaign

The task for the participants is to organize a communication campaign on basic education/literacy for adults. The aim is to make the topic more visible in public and to call attention to politicians. Therefore, participants are asked to think about how they could reach the goal by publishing different kind of media and making PR.

Each institution reacts on the presentations of the others and looks for **opportunities to cooperate** with the others. But the interests of different individuals within the institution can diverge a bit from each other, because the perspectives are different. Also, the specific perspectives of the individual institutions differ from each other. Nevertheless, the aim is to promote the topic, not to assert the "own" interests.

Random unexpected events

If the moderator of the game sees that the game is stuck, an intervention caused by "random unexpected events" might help to boost the game dynamics and keep the simulation going. These events can be written on cards and be distributed by the moderator during the simulation. This method is a back-up tool for moderators. If the group is active and drive dynamics on its own, there is no need to use them

Events can be:

- The new PIAAC-survey on the competences of adults will be published tomorrow. Experts expect a higher number of persons with literacy needs than last time.
- A new national policy paper on economy and education is published, which contains benchmarks for the employment rate: the rate should increase 5[3] percentage points until 20XX.
- The story of Anne or a sequence of a film about adult persons[4], who are not able to read and comprehend texts: a woman, who attended a special needs school as a child, because her parents did not care about her…
- A member of the government posted on Twitter about a press information he/she had released, saying that analphabetism was a problem that has to be tackled at school. Due to necessary budget cuts the funding for campaigns and education for illiterate adults are going to be cut half by next year.
- It seems that two or more actors in the role play (named by moderator) recently had a conflict on an issue that is relevant for the simulation. The moderator comes up to each of them and informs them that "When it comes to this topic, X/Y (opponent) is thinking totally opposite to your opinion. Feel free to discuss this with him/her".

Questions for the evaluation phase

Role plays can be very intense, because players might really get into their role and actually feel like the person they are representing. All the conflicts that appear during the game, and even insults might feel real for them. Therefore, it is important to help participants to step out of their role after the game is over. They need to change their perspective and take a look on what happened in the game from a meta level. Rituals or movements are helpful for this. E.g. participants can use another room or at least another part of the room for the evaluation of the game. The setting should be changed, too, e.g. the arrangement of tables and chairs. Then, the participants should be asked about their immediate impressions, feelings, experiences and new findings by the game. How do they feel now? What was easy and nice? What was difficult and just felt bad?

This game simulated a realistic situation that could actually happen in real life. Therefore, it is important to transfer the learnings to reality. In what ways could a real situation be similar? What would not work in reality like it did in the game, what would? Could there be any other external factors that play a role in planning such a campaign? How could one deal with them? What are probable conditions of success of such a campaign in reality? What are barriers and stumbling blocks?

Moderators' tasks and behaviour

It is important to prepare the framework of the game very well. This includes preparing the rooms where the game is played, the material which is needed (e.g. the role descriptions) etc. The roles that are described in the curriculum should be specified according to regional particularities. Furthermore, the moderator should prepare background information on the topic with local references, that helps participants to understand the situation in their country. Some of the roles can be left out if there are fewer participants. It is also possible to form groups first, whereby each group plays an institution, and

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[3] The number depends on the current national employment or rather unemployment rate and should be adapted.
[4] E.g. the film in German language: „Rosi, Kurt und Koni" by Hanne Lassl (2014): http://stadtkinowien.at/film/805

the institutions assign their different tasks within the group. So, e.g. if there is a group of three persons that plays an institution with 5 described roles, one person can play more than one role.

At the very beginning of the simulation game, the moderator should instruct the game very clearly and precisely. As participants work in groups all over the game, substantial interaction processes take place in groups. Thus, all instructions that help groups to get capable of acting quickly and to deal with processes of group dynamics are helpful. E.g. the moderator can encourage the groups to choose persons for specific tasks of groups: a group speaker, a minute keeper, etc.

After the instruction, the moderator withdraws from the game as far as possible, so that the participants can tune in to their roles and act autonomously without interruptions. But it is helpful if the moderator moves from group to group, observes the group dynamics and gives some advice if necessary.

Material

- description of the different roles (in this document)
- background information about the town/region (structure, statistics, needs... – to be researched by the moderator/trainer)
- background information about basic skills and basic education in the country and if available in the town/region (needs to be researched by the moderator/trainer)
- if you find this helpful: "real" interviews with experts on basics skills (e.g. online videos, available on YouTube) (needs to be researched by the moderator/trainer)