The Role of Post-Simulation Activities

OTED 750/850
Lecture 9

A well-designed simulation . . .

- Captures the attention, thoughts and efforts of the participants
- It often involves their feelings as well.
- Participants seldom have an opportunity during the simulation to reflect on either their own actions, assumptions or beliefs or those of others in the exercise.

To be maximally effective . . .

- Participant’s experience should lead to both reflection on the experience and to new patterns of thinking.
- Such learning cannot be left to chance or to a brief post-exercise discussion.
- Therefore, post-simulation activities should be planned as carefully and thoughtfully as the simulation itself.
Models of Experiential Learning

- **Lewinian Model (Group-dynamics)**
  - Kurt Lewin - German-American psychologist
  - Behavior is a function of a person and his/her environment
  - Must understand both the person's group membership and the person's perceptions

- **Piagetian Model (Cognitive-development)**
  - Jean Piaget - Swiss psychologist
  - Intelligence is a living system that must adapt to the environment

Lewinian Model

- Individuals participating in group discussions were more likely to change their behavior than those instructed in a lecture
  - Uses group discussion and joint decision-making
- Jaques describes an adaptation of these concepts in a five-part experiential learning cycle.
  - 1) experience, 2) description, 3) interpretation, 4) generalizing, and 5) application.
- Emphasizes the examination and interpretation of concrete experience by the learner

Jaques Learning Cycle

1. The experience of an event or set of events
2. Describing and sharing events & observation
3. Interpreting events and forming relationships
4. Developing generalizations, relating events to the past and the future
5. Preparing for the next experience, determining how one might act differently
Piagetian Model

- Learner builds cognitive structures through two processes
  - Assimilation
    - new information is integrated into existing structures
  - Accommodation (Two levels)
    - adjusting existing (low level) cognitive structure in order to integrate new information
    - reorganizing one’s intuitive (high level) approaches to problems
- Appropriate for reorganizing beliefs or methods of thinking about both physical situations found in nature and social situations embedded in the cultural settings

Applications

- Lewinian Model
  - appropriate for situations in which participants experience conflict with each other or the group is unable to achieve its goals
  - develop new generalizations
- Piagetian Model
  - appropriate for situations in which an individual holds inaccurate beliefs and/or implements illogical methods of arriving at conclusions challenge accepted beliefs
Planning Post-Simulation Activities

- Typically, the post-simulation activity on which the burden of learning has been placed is the ‘debriefing’, a typical group activity.
- The group processing session can be considered as only one of several post-simulation activities essential to facilitating learning.

Several types of post-simulation activities . . .

- may be combined to build on the processes set in motion by the simulation.
- They are the:
  - Small group or team processing activity
  - Total group sessions
  - Instructor-student conference
  - Other specific homework, pair or small-group activities related to the topic.

Small group or team processing

- In simulations that involve a single team facing a particular problem or issue, they often take roles in the simulation with particular responsibilities; however, individual efforts must also be coordinated to produce the final outcome.
- The post simulation activities may may explore alternative strategies the team might have chosen. Care should be taken so that discussion do not drift into recriminations of individual team members.
In exercises in which there are a number of small teams . . .

- The facilitator may make use of a small group debriefing prior to a total group session. Two advantages:
  - First, it provides the team members an opportunity to consider the goals they established and their strategies prior to interacting in the large group.
  - Second, issues arising from interpersonal actions that may precipitate conflict or anger in members of other teams can be addressed beforehand in the small group.

The disadvantage of the small group interaction is

- That the perceptions of the group members may solidify toward other teams or their participants.

- This potential problem may be countered in at least three ways.
  - First, the team debriefing should be short, for example, limited to 15 minutes.
  - Second, the team debriefing should be conducted for specific goals.
    - For example, team members may be directed to review briefly the objectives they established in the exercise and their strategies.
    - Or they may be asked to consider briefly alternative ways to achieve their goals for any of their strategies that may have generated conflict or anger in others during the simulation.
  - A third suggestion is to arrange the seating in the whole group activity so that members from different teams are interspersed with each other.
Whole Group Processing Session

- Depending on the nature of the simulation, the group processing session may address either of two general purposes.
  - One is the development of generalizations from the interpretation of learner perceptions (the Lewinian model).
  - The other is that of beginning to address the cognitive conflict that has arisen from challenges to the learners' intuitive beliefs or methods of thinking (the Piagetian model).

When implemented with tactical-decision simulations...

- The group processing session addresses the learners' interpretation of their perspectives that led them to select particular goals and/or strategies.
  - They also may examine alternative organizational strategies or decisions that might have been implemented.
- Social-process simulations, however, because they focus on interpersonal activities, are the exercises most likely to generate emotional reactions.

Leading the whole group session

- Three major phases, derived from the Lewinian model, are typically included in the group session for social-process simulations.
- They:
  - Determine the events that occurred
  - Identify participants' thoughts and feelings about the events
  - Develop initial generalizations based on the experience.
Whole Group Session

- Given the multiple concerns to be addressed in the group, it is particularly important that the leader allows adequate time for the session.
  - The time should be sufficient for as much exploration as individuals are able to undertake.
  - At a minimum, the activity should be scheduled for the same amount of time as that allocated to the simulation itself.

The role of the facilitator . . .

- Is to assist the participants to process the events of the simulation, their feelings and to begin to move toward relating of their experience to larger issues.
  - Thus, the leader is not functioning in the role of judge or jury.
  - Instead, he or she must be sensitive to the messages conveyed by participants’ comments in order to raise thoughtful questions for their consideration at the appropriate time.

The instructor-student conference

- The purpose of single participant simulations is to develop students’ problem-solving skills. Students may be diagnosing a particular problem, managing a data set, or interviewing a client, witness or patient.
  - The instructor-student conference is the primary mechanism for analyzing the student’s experience.
- The instructor in this situation is fulfilling a dual role.
  - First, he or she is functioning in part as the holder of expert knowledge.
  - Second, the instructor is a facilitator for the participant in analyzing his or her own performance and particular strengths and weaknesses.
The conference should include at least three major stages.

• The first -- determine the student’s perception of his or her performance during the exercise and some general assessment of strengths and weaknesses.

• The second -- discuss the student’s decisions at each point in the exercise as a way of reconciling the student’s perceptions with the performance data. Minor misconceptions that can be addressed in the conference are also corrected.

• The third phase -- select follow-up activities for the student.

Summary

• Post simulation activities are essential to complete experiential learning
• Lewinian or Piagetian Model
• Whole Group Session
• Team Processing
• Instructor-Student Conference

Assignment

• Read “The role of post-simulation activities” at
  http://www.lions.odu.edu/~d净值/Courses/oted750/Readings/post_sim.pdf

• Begin working on your final simulation, Learning Activity 4