ROLE-PLAYING INTEGRATION ASPECTS INTO STUDENT OFFICERS’ TRAINING OF LEADERSHIP OR TEAMWORK ACTIVITIES

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Summary. Game learning technology is an ideal solution when student officers need to master new activities and to develop interpersonal communication skills in matters related to group dynamics and decision-making. The article analyzes the main groups of role-playing advantages.

Keywords: game learning technology, role-playing, leadership, teamwork.

The main interest that arises when choosing a particular training technique is focused on the advantages it gives in a particular case, how significant are the disadvantages of this technique and how they can be compensated. The key point is its compatibility with the overall educational process. This process requires a spectrum of activities and pre-planned resources that will be used in a certain sequence to achieve a set of goals, and these goals should determine the choice of appropriate teaching methods [1, 2].

Although traditional teaching and learning methods such as lectures, workshops, group exercises, and written tasks can successfully help learners to gain knowledge of factual material and basic theoretical principles that can fit future
experience, these methods are deficient for at least two reasons.

Firstly, they are difficult to be applied in order to help the student to change his/her attitude or behavior. Reading or listening as an activity does not mean experiencing whereas ability to make changes and to understand comes only through practice. After having read or listened to the material, the learner can answer a question or comment on a specific case but after having practiced this case he or she could gain exceptionally valuable experience. Role-playing is one of those unique techniques of innovative learning that helps the student to cope with uncertain and difficult professional situations. Role-playing immerses the listener into the environment with the same limits, motivation and coercion that the listener will face in the future professional activity.

Secondly, there is a domain in education where traditional methods need to be supplemented; it is the domain of interpersonal communication skills. No matter how much the student reads and observes, these skills can be fully developed only by applying them in real-life interpersonal contacts. Because the interaction of verbal and nonverbal behavior is too complex to be reduced to a few simple rules, and even if it were possible, the students would not be able to move forward without receiving constant feedback on their line of behavior. Interpretation of the corresponding signals received from other people, and reaction to these signals are keys to effective interpersonal communication.

To help students develop interpersonal skills, teachers resort to practical experience using a variety of situations. And the role-playing is ideal when experience is needed [3].

The role-playing benefits can be combined into three main groups.

The first group helps the student to express hidden feelings, discuss personal issues and problems, to absorb the feelings of others and understand their motivation. It gives the opportunity to practice exercises on different types of behavior since it covers general social problems and dynamics of group interaction. It also allows conceiving the descriptive material both vividly and directly. It is motivating and effective because it involves action, provides quick feedback to both the student and the teacher. It bridges the gap between learning and real professional situations, it changes settings as well as trains to control feelings and emotions.

The second group of role-playing advantages – compared to methods that are more traditional – deals with the ability to stay in close contact with the outside world. The role-playing reflects the behavioral lines that the student may really need at the end of the course when communicating with others and the game will allow him/her to experience and practice skills that will be useful in the future. It enables not only to test one's efficacy, but also to recur this experience, by increasingly improving one's abilities. The practice of role-playing focuses students' attention on the fact that some aspects of professional tasks require special skills and abilities. Moreover, it shows that these skills are not inherent, but they need to be acquired. Role-playing requires students' action not just theoretical inferences.

The third group of role-playing advantages is immanent to all the gaming and modeling exercises: it motivates students and provides them with direct and quick feedback on the consequences of their actions.

The disadvantages of role-playing can also be combined into three groups.

The first one is the influence that the role-playing practice can have on the environment and course of actions. The students could regard the role-playing as a dominating activity in the educational process, pushing the theory and facts into the
background. There should be also considered a fact of an initial depth of knowledge of the students.

The second point is related to the accuracy and appropriateness of the contents as well as the degree to which the teacher or supervisor should control it.

The third disadvantage is the problem of resources. Role-playing takes a lot of time, space, and sometimes participants to be involved. You cannot start without a warm-up and accustoming participants to the very idea of role-playing. This is especially true for beginners, but even an experienced practitioner usually prefers to do some preliminary exercises and only after that to move on to role-playing as such. Also, the development process itself takes time; and finally, it is necessary to afford time to discuss what happened and provide an after-action review. Therefore, if a teacher wants to use a role-play as part of a learning strategy, it is necessary to ensure sufficient time for it.

Many role-playing exercises are easy to do alone. The role of the audience can be assigned to students, they can be tasked to play supporting roles. However, it happens that the complexity of the game or the special conditions of its running, which require specific knowledge, enforce to involve additional staff and to resort to outside help.

Thus, role-playing is ideal in situations where students need to acquire new knowledge and new activity, to deeper conceive their own posture and to better understand the others [4-7]. This technique is very useful in skills training not only because it increases students’ flexibility and sensitivity, but also because the script can include direct information on how to act under specific or non-standard crisis situations.

In training, the role-play can also be used to develop interpersonal communication skills related to group dynamics and decision-making. There are many professional situations that require participants to make decisions or achieve a goal with the help of proven skills in the leadership role. Additionally, these group development exercises can be used in situations where people need to learn a teamwork. For instance, this environment could be presented by research and analytical groups, as well as units that perform various complex tasks in rapidly changing circumstances.

References: