

LEARNING THROUGH SIMULATED TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

Simulation is as old as human beings on earth. Not only human beings but even animals use the technique of simulation to train their young ones to teach them to adjust in their physical environment. The use of simulation in teaching is comparatively very recent. We can say that simulation is emerging as a strong and an effective technique of teaching, it is gaining steady but slow ground in schools and other training institutions in the advanced countries of the world. In our country also a beginning has been made in military, industry, education, and management with very encouraging results. The world of teaching being traditional and conservative had not made much headway in the introduction of this innovation so far.

Keywords: Game-specific language, communication technologies, hypotheses, self-monitoring

ORIGIN

The use of the technique has been made in the last decade in education with great success. The potential of the technique has been recognized all over the world by educationists. The importance of the technique is evident from the fact that the national games council was established in 1961 in USA. In 1970, the International "Simulation and Games association" was formed in Germany. There is one professional journal, "Simulation and Games" which is quarterly published since March 1976 and reports the important research studies being conducted all over the world. Thus, we find the simulation gaming is becoming an effective means of communication throughout the world.

Much of the children play is simulation play with participants acting out situations in which they assume the role of somebody else; and this extends to simple make-believe of the Wendy-house to the carefully organized lawyer's mock trial.

The elements of simulation can be very conveniently transferred or adopted from their existing contests and used consciously as an approach to learning. The style of activity which simulations and games represent should become an accepted mode of teaching.

MECHANISMS OF SIMULATION

Simulation /gaming operate on certain principles which are given below:

1. Players take on roles which are representatives of the real world and then make decisions in response to their assessment of the setting in which they find themselves.
2. The experiences simulated the consequences which relate to their decisions and their general performance.
3. The 'monitor' the result of their actions are brought to reflect upon the relationship between their own decisions and the resultant consequence.

STEPS IN SIMULATION

There is no hierarchy of following rigid steps in simulated techniques in class room learning. Some educationists prescribe definite steps in simulation. Ned Flanders has recommended the following procedural steps in simulated teaching.

Step One

When a teacher uses simulation in his class, first of all he must assign letter (A,B,C) designations to all the members of the group and develop a system of rotating the role assignment by letters so that each individual has the opportunity to participate and has a chance to be actor, foil and observer.

Step Two

The second step involves planning, preparation and deciding the topic of the skill to be practiced through simulated technique. The teacher should carefully and intelligently select an appropriate topic for each actor according to his knowledge and interest in the subject.

Step Three

The teacher should decide in advance as regards the name of the member of the group who will start conversation. A detailed schedule for actor interaction should be drawn. The teacher should also decide who will stop the interaction and when will it be stopped.

Step Four

The teacher should decide the procedure of evaluation and decide on what kind of data the observers are to record and how their data and opinions can best be presented to the actor when the interaction stops.

Step Five

Conduct the first practice session on a topic or skill you decide. Provide the actor with feedback on his performance and be prepared, if necessary, to alter the procedure for the second session in order to improve the training procedure. As soon as the practice sessions are working smoothly and each person has had an opportunity to be actor, increase the difficulty of the task by privately instructing the foils or restricting the instructor's role.

Step Six

This is the last step in simulation. Now the teacher should be prepared to alter the procedure, change topic and move on the next skill so as to present a significant challenge to each actor and to keep interest as high as possible. The task should be neither high nor too easy for the participant.

ADVANTAGES OF INSTRUCTIONAL SIMULATION

The use of simulation in teaching is very recent. The use of simulation techniques in instruction at different levels has some advantages which may be described as below;

Motivational Advantages

It has been reported by all researchers that following simulation exercise, learner show heightened interest and excitement in learning activities in the class room. This is one of the most distinctive features of simulation which makes it acceptable at all levels of teaching-learning because if any technique succeeds in creating motivation in learners then all other problems are automatically solved.

The second motivational advantage of simulation is that the activities involved in simulation divorce from conventional routing of the class room learning and thus introduce an element of novelty in the whole learning process. The level of freshness and novelty is, generally, maintained throughout the learning session.

Removal of Student-Teacher Polarizations

Traditionally, our class rooms are dominated by teacher's authority. His activities predominate in the class room teaching. Studies on Teaching show that it is the teacher who in more than 60 percent cases asserts his authority. Teacher stands on a Dias, pointing to board or map with a stick or sometimes delivering information verbally in the class. Children sit passively in rows either on mats or chairs. There is hardly any activity on the part of children except, occasionally, when asked to answer a question.

But recently a change has occurred in the traditional set-up of class room. The teacher's function has become more to inspire, stimulate and motivate, rather than to direct, to order and judge. The teacher

has been adapting to accept a less dominant and less intrusive role in the learning process.

Simulations are self-monitoring. Participants recognize their own progress by various feedback methods. Students are involved in decision-making. They observe their own evaluation of these consequences which influence their future actions.

Personal tensions in the teaching situation are likely to be reduced by the process of self-monitoring. The teacher's role may be as interpreter of the simulation and even as a guide but he does not have to pose as an expert or as a judge.

Simulation as a Universal Behavioral Mode

Children, all over the world, are familiar with various types of role-playing game from early age but they are not able to distinguish clearly the worlds of reality and make-believe. They are not able to readily apply consciously insights from one situation to another, particularly, in the area of cognitive learning.

It has been found that simulation is usable in the upper part of the primary school to some good effect, and certainly with children of eleven and above. The world of play and free drama has close relationship with the more structured use of simulation for learning. Simulation should be used carefully in case of small children.

Simulations are useful not for winning with praiseworthy performances, but for playing and experiencing problem situations. The aim of simulation work must clearly not be to produce self-satisfied winners in the way that a casual monopoly might do.

Gains Related to Relevance and Learning

Very few studies have been conducted to assess the gains of simulation in class room teaching in our country but in USA a number of studies have been conducted to assess the gains of simulation as a class room technique of teaching. Three important studies are cited below:

The most important study has been conducted in John Hopkins University, Baltimore. The study confirms that simulation not only influences the school achievement but it also influences the attitude of the learners.

The second important study by J. Burner suggests that simulation helps in the understanding of structure and process of learning at a deep level in the mind. Learners get insight into the operations of teaching-learning process.

Gordon, 1968, conducted a study and proved that simulations are useful with both gifted and slow learners in higher learning. Highly gifted are motivated to progress to even greater heights without

adverse effects on the less gifted who, in turn, learn from their peers and pursue their own course as fits their inclinations. Thus simulation as a technique of learning is applicable and useful for all types of learners at all levels of teaching-learning.

Decision-Making

The group process of simulation deepens the understanding of decision-making process in children. Simulation operation, gradually, introduces the elements of complexity which is sequentially more challenging and so calls decision-making skills into action. It develops various skills in children in increasing difficulty order.

Role Awareness

Some educationists are of the opinion that in simulation increasing role awareness is involved. The individual when he plays the role of others becomes conscious of that role.

An Interdisciplinary View

Simulation technique provides an integrated view as well as a vehicle for free interdisciplinary communication. Human, economic, aesthetic, moral factors may all impinge in unfamiliar surroundings. The fact that participants are required to see the world at least partially through eyes other than their own often helps them to be more explicit and less guarded about what they see.

Dynamic Framework

Simulation is one of the few techniques which come to grip with time past, present and future. A large number of time perspectives are possible within a single simulation and greater the compression of time, the sooner the participants are forced to continually acknowledge the dynamics of change. Thus, we see that simulation is a broad based technique which circumvents the weaknesses of other teaching techniques which only emphasizes the partial treatment to a problem.

Bridging the Gap to Reality

In our class room, most of the teaching is divorced from the real world in which students are anxious to time. Simulation with its concrete approach to situations, works to bridge the gap between unreal and real. Students enact real situation and learning becomes more interesting and lively than purely theoretical.

The participant may have a chance to sample the real world in the simulation and yet he can be observed taking real world type decisions in a risk-free environment. He is no danger to himself, to others to expensive resources. He can make mistakes and learn from them and perhaps later apply their insights in similar or in relevant real world contexts.

Gestalt Communication

Simulation/gaming provides the gestalt approach to learning. It is holistic in nature. It permits the learner a greater flexibility in addressing facets of complexity. It conveys gestalt of complex reality as well as specification of various details.

CONCLUSION / LIMITATIONS

No doubt, there has been dramatic increase in the use of simulation/ gaming in the last decade all over the world. It has been successfully used in all walks of human life. Continuous researches are being conducted to perfect the technique and to extend its use in more areas of human life but critics point out some limitations of the technique which are given below:

- a. The use of simulation cannot be made in all subjects of the curriculum.
- b. Simulation cannot be conveniently used in case of small children because mechanism is too difficult for them to follow.
- c. It requires a lot of preparation on the part of teachers. Very few teachers are prepared to take up the extra work which is required to make the use of the technique a success.
- d. In advance countries highly sophisticated audio-visual aids and computers are used for simulation. We cannot afford these of costly audio-visual at present in our schools.
- e. The last limitation that learning is a serious activity which is highly individualized needs concentration on the part of the learner. Simulation is a play which reduces the seriousness of learning. Critics doubt if any worthwhile learning takes place through simulation.

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