

Chapter 10

The Conduct of a Simulation Game

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ABSTRACT

The chapter describes the phases of the simulation games presenting the role and functions of the game leader in each phase. The chapter also provides helpful advice on the different ways of conducting the simulation games and discusses the main difficulties that can arise in each phase and how to overcome them.

INTRODUCTION

Simulation games are educational contexts of social interaction, insofar as they satisfy a series of conditions which determine different exchanges and relationships between the pupils and the teacher who share an experience in which a deliberate process of construction of knowledge and abilities takes place.

Both while the simulation game is being carried out and in the final discussion, all participants are involved in an experiential dialogue which offers support for sharing the meaning of what has been learnt. The participants' involvement in the

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game, the sharing of their experience and the acquisition process require careful planning by the teacher. In fact, in the absence of adequate direction much of the game's educational potential risks being lost.

The successful managing of simulation games requires appropriate and detailed preparation, based on knowledge of the games, which can only be gained through hands-on experience.

With the aim of providing a guide which may help to build a successful experience, it is useful to highlight the individual phases of the simulation and the role of the leader in each. What follows is an ensemble of suggestions for those who intend to take part in the project and direct their pupils in simulation games.

The direction of a simulation game often presents some difficulties that may be overcome by experimenting and systematically reflecting upon the objectives of the experience. In any case, it is advisable to start with the more structured games as they possess a pre-established structure, and although this implies less flexibility, they require less ad hoc decision making on the part of the leader during the game itself.

The present chapter will, after a careful description of the phases of the simulation game itself, outline the functions and the role of the director in each of the phases the game and provide some useful guidance for the reader.

THE PHASES OF A SIMULATION GAME

Although there are many ways to organize and direct simulation games, their procedural architecture is made up of four fundamental and indispensable phases: opening, briefing, running and debriefing.

Phase 1. Opening. This initial phase is necessary for creating the relations, conditions and procedures of the game. During the opening phase, the desired aims are specified to the pupils, and the type of activity in which they will take part is carefully described, explained and questions answered.

In this way, attention is focused on the rationale of the game and on the aims and roles assumed in the interaction. This phase is intended to stimulate pupils' motivation also, where possible, by encouraging them to describe previous experiences of participation in games or similar activities.

These first pieces of information allow the participants to become familiar with the simulation game, and the leader to clarify the rules. In other words, this is a phase in which a real educational contract takes place between the leader and the

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