

Submitted by Eric Juenemann

Description:

Simulations are an instructional strategy which involve the learner experiencing a situation that mirrors reality, but without all aspects of reality. Through a simulation, a learner gets the opportunity to gain skills, competencies, knowledge, or behaviors. Four common simulation activities that are used with adult learners include role-playing, case study, critical incident, and in-basket. Facilitation of a simulation activity that influences a learner's skills, competencies, knowledge, and behaviors includes adequate background information, proper set-up of the environment, appropriate casting of the learners' roles, a relevant problem or situation that requires the learners to use a decision-making process, feedback, and adequate time for the learners to evaluate the experience.

Uses:

Simulations are used with individuals, small groups, or large groups. They're particularly useful in group settings because they allow for everyone to be involved in the process both cognitively and emotionally in the context of a safe environment. Simulations are most effective when the facilitator and learner have some real-life experience in the subject area that is being simulated.

Materials:

The materials used in a simulation will vary. They will reflect whatever is needed to model the type of situation that the learners are expected to perform when they are in a real-life setting.

Instructions:

After a simulation topic has been chosen, the facilitator should communicate the purpose and objectives of the activity to the learners. Secondly, the facilitator should allow the learners to experience the simulation, providing any necessary feedback, encouragement, clarification, or explanations. Finally, adequate time for feedback, discussion, processing, and evaluation of the experience must be incorporated.

Tips:

The facilitator should be prepared to switch between being a disseminator of information and facilitator of learning during the simulation process. Simulations should model real-life scenarios as closely as possible. Additionally, the facilitator should thoroughly prepare the learners for the simulation via a large amount of background information and by not introducing overly complex and/or unfamiliar situations.

References:

Galbraith, Michael W (Ed.) (1998). *Adult Learning Methods: A Guide for Effective Instruction*. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company.

Horn, Robert & David Zuckerman (1976). *The Guide to Simulation/Games for Education and Training*. Information Resources.