

**MEASUREMENT OF ADMINISTRATOR ROLE
FOR FEEDBACK ON STRUCTURE AND GOALS**

James W. Schreier
Marquette University

In experiential learning materials and simulations, the administrator of the program can be considered to play a role throughout the activity. An examination of previous research and a collection of personal experiences reveal that these roles can be appropriately labeled: the ADMINISTRATOR, the CONSULTANT, the EVALUATOR, the PARTICIPANT, the FACILITATOR, the PRESIDENT, the OBSERVER and the PRESIDENT. In any given experiential exercise or simulation the instructor may play several of these roles, creating a composite with one or more of the roles having a significant impact on the results of the experience. At the 1977 ABSEL meeting, the identification of these roles was proposed and discussed in a lively session on simulations and experiential learning which featured related presentations by Burns, Gentry and Keys. In that session ABSEL members clearly demonstrated their willingness to encourage new ways of looking at our educational activities and continued to discuss and challenge each others ideas in a free speaking, positive discussion of the different ideas that were presented.

The role descriptions identified in the discussion last year serve as a basis for the development of an instrument which can be used by participants in an experiential exercise to evaluate the role of the administrator. From this instrument a profile can then use this information in assessing congruence with his or her own goals for the particular experience. This paper will present the development of the administrator role instrument and demonstrate its application to a variety of structured experiences.

BACKGROUND

In the paper presented last year, reference to administrative roles in previous ABSEL papers and other writings were identified (1, pp. 117-186). This included a discussion of the goals of experiential exercises and simulations and an examination of existing research in administrative roles. From this information it was concluded that there were several different ideas on the possible roles which administrators can and do play in the use of simulations and experiential learning exercises. If serious users of these kinds of materials want to justify and evaluate the experiential form of learning, research needs to be undertaken along the lines suggested by the authors cited in last year's paper.

To accomplish this, a model was proposed for administrative role behavior. It is hoped that the creation of such a model would allow agreement of terminology and create a basis from which research can be conducted. If the role model suggested in that

Exploring Experiential Learning: Simulations and Experiential Exercises, Volume 5, 1978

paper is to be useful in the selection, application and evaluation of simulations and experiential learning materials, there is a need to evaluate and critique, improve and research the model itself.

ADMINISTRATOR ROLES

The roles presented are an attempt to initially outline the different roles that the instructor may assume in a simulation or experiential learning exercise. The discussion generated at last year's meeting indicates that there is basic agreement on the eight roles identified and that very little refinement is needed to use these in business education.

Each role identified was given a descriptive title that summarized the behavior of the person conducting the experiential exercise or simulation. It was also stated that an instructor in any given simulation could play more than one role, creating perhaps a composite where each of the roles identified is present to some extent. Various combinations of these roles can be determined. It would be possible to show that certain roles are appropriate for certain simulations depending on the goals of the materials. The eight roles identified are:

Administrator: The ADMINISTRATOR is concerned with the "clerical" operations of the simulation or experiential exercise. He or she is active describing the nature of the game, the format of the input data, the times at which data must be submitted and when the result will be returned to the teams. The participants of the experience view the ADMINISTRATOR primarily as the person who makes the computer work. The ADMINISTRATOR is the person "to whom we give our data." He or she is not concerned with the learning that is taking place as much as the fact that the team number is entered on every sheet. In non-computer based games, the ADMINISTRATOR comes to class prepared with stacks of paper containing background information, scoring sheets, role play descriptions, and name tags. The primary concern expressed is collecting all materials after the game is over, the ADMINISTRATOR is knowledgeable about how the exercise works, knows all the rules, and enforces them throughout play.

Consultant: The CONSULTANT is knowledgeable about various phases of the game or exercise, seems to know all about the market, the competition, and the proper strategy for success. The CONSULTANT either gives the information out to assure that certain things will happen in the game or charges the teams for advice to give the game more realism. The CONSULTANT performs the functions of the actual management consultant, assisting the teams in the performance of their roles and attempting to guide them without making their decisions for them. While the CONSULTANT gives advice, and often charges for it, the information is not given in an evaluative sense. In very few cases is there a cost other than a financial price.

Exploring Experiential Learning: Simulations and Experiential Exercises, Volume 5, 1978

Evaluator: The EVALUATOR is “the teacher”, looking over the output with the appropriate “too bad” or assorted “ah’s”. If the team is making decisions in class, the EVALUATOR walks around critically from group to group attempting to catch the teams making errors, trying to obtain bits of information for later class sessions devoted to critiquing the game and the decision-making processes involved. The return of the results often includes a lecture of some form of management thinking appropriate (or not appropriate) to the particular phase of the game being considered. The extent to which a person acts as an EVALUATOR casts a shadow over the entire group involved in the exercise. Their concern may become more of one involved with concern for the correct answer than for properly managing a company, or experiencing a leadership problem, etc.

Participant: The PARTICIPANT is sometimes more eager to play the game than to assure that the other participants are allowed to play. He or she rushes through rules and the introductory information because of the role he or she can take in the exercise. The players sometimes take secondary roles in role play while the instructor takes the starring role. On the other hand, the teacher may become the participant of only one or two teams, seemingly in the role of the CONSULTANT, but more as a member of one or two particular teams. The PARTICIPANT helps the winning team win by a greater margin, he sides with certain students (possibly the superior students before the game), or he helps some teams with information not available through the regular management of the team. Somewhere between these extremes is the PARTICIPANT who plays a meaningful role in the simulation by providing critical information or demonstrating a character that cannot be easily played by the students.

Facilitator: The FACILITATOR takes a non-participating role in attempting to assure that every part of the game occurs according to the objectives. The FACILITATOR “helps the game along” by assisting individuals or teams when they are in trouble or unsure of the roles they are playing (the FACILITATOR often performs the role of the CONSULTANT). The FACILITATOR “keeps things going” by asking non-directive questions, by attempting to lead without showing the exact way.

President: The PRESIDENT acts just like the operating chief executive of the simulation or role play. He or she is completely knowledgeable about the company, its goals and the fact that he or she has the power to evaluate the performance of all employees. The PRESIDENT wants to add a piece of realism to the simulation or experiential exercise by getting into character as much as the students. The PRESIDENT participates to some extent, can move from group to group, performing many of the other roles in an attempt to assure the success of the game.

Observer: The OBSERVER serves an important role in many structured experiences and simulations when he or she collects information about the experience that will be used later in the de-

Exploring Experiential Learning: Simulations and Experiential Exercises, Volume 5, 1978

briefing or summary session. Some difficulty is present when the OBSERVER almost must perform duties of the ADMINISTRATOR or the EVALUATOR. The OBSERVER should be able to strictly observe what happens and not interfere with the process. The OBSERVER often moves about the room from group to group, making notes on what is happening, completing a process questionnaire provided with the exercise, and getting ready to report on the results of the exercise. The OBSERVER may sometimes become more concerned with the need to report on his or her observations later than with the actual process of the game itself. OBSERVERS are often other participants in the class.

Presence: The PRESENCE is the instructor whose actions and behavior during class sessions other than those of the simulation or experiential exercise prevent him or her from taking any other role during the exercise. The PRESENCE is usually always an EVALUATOR and an ADMINISTRATOR. The PRESENCE is simply “there”--affecting what a student will say, how they will say it, and the resulting value of the exercise. In a role play exercise, the students become more concerned with where the teacher is in the room than with their role and what they should be trying to accomplish. The PRESENCE dominates the entire situation in any game.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

In the presentation last year, it was proposed that research be conducted along several paths to validate the administrative role model proposed. Part of that was the open discussion held after the presentation of the model which yielded comments from ABSEL members on various aspects of the different roles. It was also proposed that a survey would be conducted among ABSEL members asking them to report on their administrative styles. This survey was not conducted because it was felt that it would be beneficial to the development of the model to work in the area of role identification and to determine if information on the role of the administrator could be obtained from participants.

The evaluation form shown on the following page was developed in order to measure the participant's perception of the staff role played by the exercise or course administrator. Each student was provided with a two page summary of the eight different roles where the roles were coded and not identified by their descriptive title. The participants were then asked to identify which single role description best fit the person specified and, for each of the eight role descriptions, to rate the staff member on a scale of one to seven, indicating the degree to which the person played the role as described.

The instrument was pre-tested on three different experiential exercises conducted in a Management of Human Resources class. The first was the RAISE II project, which encompasses the entire class. In this activity, the administrator must fulfill several of the roles identified and the student feedback on a small

SIMULATION AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
STAFF ROLE EVALUATION

SIMULATION/EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE: _____

Staff Member: _____

1. For this simulation/exercise, which single role description best fits the person specified?

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ A (ADMINISTRATOR) | _____ F (FACILITATOR) |
| _____ C (CONSULTANT) | _____ P (PRESIDENT) |
| _____ E (EVALUATOR) | _____ O (OBSERVER) |
| _____ P (PARTICIPANT) | _____ P (PRESENCE) |

2. For each of the eight role descriptions, rate the staff member as to what degree you feel they performed the role. Use a scale of 1-7 with 1 indicating the person did not perform the role at all and 7 indicating that the role was a major force in the exercise.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ADMINISTRATOR--A	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
CONSULTANT--C	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
EVALUATOR--E	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
PARTICIPANT--P ₁	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
FACILITATOR--F	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
PRESIDENT--P ₂	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
OBSERVER-- O	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
PRESENCE--P ₃	___	___	___	___	___	___	___

Exploring Experiential Learning: Simulations and Experiential Exercises, Volume 5, 1978

sample of forms indicated that their perception was that of multiple roles. Secondly, the form was used on an Equal Employment role play towards the end of the class sessions, where the administrator was functioning in two roles: one as the facilitator who presented the materials and then in a later stage of the role play, as a participant. The feedback obtained from the small sample for a pre-test indicated that this dual role was not perceived by the participants and in fact, the instructor was perceived to have filled several of the other roles identified.

In a third pre-test of the form, students were involved in a role play involving the determination of people to be laid off. As a second part of the role play, a participant in each group was instructed to fire one of the group members based on their performance in the first part. In this exercise, the instructor was attempting to function primarily as the facilitator, providing the materials, and as an observer. The information provided from the sample forms, however, indicated that again this was not perceived by the participants and they in fact, saw the instructor functioning in a number of different roles.

The information provided in the pre-test of the form indicates that further development of the model and the research instrument is necessary for research of this type, and more time needs to be spent in defining the purposes of the instrument to the students who complete the form.

At the time of this writing, it was impossible to reconstruct some of the evaluation necessary to present further research on the instrument for presentation. However, additional information will be available and further refinements of the evaluation forms and the research model can be presented.

IMPLICATIONS

The importance of administrator role, as defined last year and again in this paper, is clear. The role that the instructor plays in a simulation or experiential exercise can clearly affect the outcome of that exercise, particularly if students do not accept the behavior of their instructor as important or helpful to what they are trying to accomplish in the exercise. Knowledge of the student perception, therefore, fulfills the traditional function of evaluative feedback to the instructor in the classroom. This has been useful even in the preliminary stage as in the pre-test defined above.

However, meaningful feedback on the role model of the administrator in simulations and experiential learnings as defined here will be more meaningful if a clear profile of behavior can be obtained. Further research is necessary to obtain this information and the continuing spirit of ABSEL to encourage and support such research will ensure that a continuing effort will be made to make this model useful and meaningful to the field of business simulation and experiential learning.

REFERENCES

1. Nielsen, Carl C., Editor, "New Horizons in Simulation Games and Experiential Learning," 1977 ABSEL Proceedings, pp. 177-186.