THE ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND SIMULATIONS

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In experiential learning materials and in simulations, the nature of the materials, the objectives of the administrator, and the personality of all the characters involved force the administrator to play a role throughout the experience. 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 "PRESENCE". In any given experiential exercise or simulation, the instructor may play several of these roles, creating a composite role with one or more of the roles having a significant impact on the results of the experience. This, however, is the important point: that the role of the instructor, while originally affected by the simulation or experience and the nature and goals of the material, in turn affects the outcomes.

The study of administration has concentrated on steps which the game administrator can take to minimize his or her "clerical effort" and not on the impact of the administrator's role on the outcome and goals of the exercise. This paper examines the current information of the role of the administrator, speculates on the possible roles the administrator can take, and formulates some questions which might be studied on how the roles might affect the outcomes. From this, it is hoped that a better understanding of the entire administration process can be achieved.

At the 1974 ABSEL meeting, the importance of the administrator was best summarized by Ralph Day. He commented particularly on the question of instructor involvement:

> It was also pointed out by several participants that student involvement is unlikely to achieve a desirable level unless the instructor is highly involved in the game. It was agreed that the best game in the world is very likely to flop unless the instructor is highly knowledgeable about the game and is excited by it himself.[1]

GOALS OF EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISES AND SIMULATIONS

Several ABSEL members and other authors have attempted to clarify the goals of experiential learning. In the 1975 ABSEL Proceedings, Ken Goosen surveyed previous ABSEL materials and developed a list of possible game objectives:

1. Provide an opportunity to hone decision making and

    improve human relations skills through cooperative and competitive interaction with a student's peers.

2.   Motivate the student to learn techniques.
3.   Demonstrate the value of careful planning and analysis.
4.   Provide future managers with practice of, insight into, and improvement of their main function--decision making.
5.   Expose students to operations in a competitive and realistic environment.
6.   Place students in a managerial role without providing an actual business venture to operate.
7.   Integrate material from various functional areas in a business curriculum.
8.   Provide an environment in which students have the opportunity to experiment with the application of a number of models as aids to decision making.
9.   Encourage better understanding of the interrelation among various functions of a business.
10.   Provide the framework for gaining greater knowledge and appreciation of those business functions outside the participant's own study, experience or prior training.
11.   Develop better analytical abilities and improve decision-making skills from a company as well as a personal, departmental and/or functional point of view.[2]

The critical question was then asked by Goosen:

> Are all games regardless of differences in design, scope, and nature capable of achieving all of the above objectives? That is, <u>are there such basic differences in games</u> so that one type of game may be better able to achieve a selected set of objectives than another?[3] (emphasis added)

It is one proposition of this paper that one of these basic differences is the role which the game forces the administrator to take or the role which the administrator brings into the game situation.

J. William Pfeiffer and John E. Jones have categorized the objectives of their materials in three major areas:

<u>Cognitive</u>:   Awareness of content; incorporation and use of the content; generalization; conceptual integration.

<u>Affective</u>:   Self-awareness, ownership of feelings, insight, empathy, awareness of inner life, awareness of personal and interpersonal processes.

<u>Skill Building</u>:   Development, practice, and implementation of interpersonal skills and techniques such as listening, problem solving, and intervening.[4]

The relationship between the goals of the simulation or experiential exercise and the role which the administrator plays is only speculation at this time. Careful examination of the various objectives possible in business games, however, strongly and logically suggests that one variable in the equation of business games would have to be "what the instructor does."

RESEARCH ON ADMINISTRATOR ROLES

In writings which cover various elements of evaluation and administration, there are several examples of the different behaviors which seem to describe "what the instructor does."

One role possibility is described by Anthony J. Faria and Ray 0. Nulsen in an article on internal and external assignments. In the case which they describe, the instructor acts like a management consultant, providing certain key pieces of advice, helping the student teams make certain decisions, often assuring that some errors are avoided, etc. Faria and Nulsen describe their approach as follows:

> Consulting, as its name implies, simply refers to the practice of giving advice to the student participants. When the students have questions or problems they themselves caimot handle, they may visit the instructor (privately) and obtain, for a fee deducted from team income, his assistance... .To this end, consulting adds a desirable touch of realism to the simulated competition.

> The consulting function demands that personal interaction and instruction take place between the instructor and each competitive unit. If handled properly, student- teacher rapport may be enhanced significantly.[5]

Harold Wilson describes another role indirectly when he presents some information on support personnel working with the course.

> To organize this evaluation, I ask all teams to submit written goals and then hold a review session at the end of the first game year. The team makes a report to the "Board of Directors" on past performance and future corrective action and strategy. By holding these sessions after the first year of play, but before the mid point of the game, it is possible to point out erroneous thinking and to guide the team to areas where they can improve their performance. [6]

The 1975 ABSEL Proceedings reported a survey conducted by David Fritzsche which examined a variety of administrative problems faced by game users. Fritzsche's survey of ABSEL members revealed that the game administrator often functions as a "trouble shooter", attempting

to deal with problems concerning the computer, the game itself, the students, and colleagues. The results of the survey seem to suggest that many users of experiential exercises and/or simulations spend most of their time working with "clerical" problems and human relation problems not directly associated with the nature and purposes of the material itself.

Vance A. Etnyre and E. M. Wolf describe a situation where outside personnel performed a role which combines characteristics of the consultant and the evaluator. Their research, testing the results using two different approaches, included the use of outside professionals and other faculty members who played the roles of investment bankers, labor negotiators, bankers, judges, and consultants. The Study found that students having increased interaction with outside personnel exhibited a higher level of involvement in the course activities. These students also had a higher degree of comprehension of the nature of the game environment. [8] An important conclusion for their study and this paper was the closing line.

> How the game is administered may be as important as which game is used. [9]

In an article referred to above, Ken Goosen talks about game administration:

> One of the truly important, if not more important, gaming variables affecting the amount of learning is that of game administration. By game administration is meant the extent to which the instructor directs the activities of game participants. [10]

Goosen goes on to describe the nature of game administration as "highly structured", "where there is a predetermined set of assigned activities involving the use of cases, reports, problems, readings, etc."; or "relatively unstructured", "one in which there is an absence of special assignments, written and oral reports, problems, cases, etc." [11] He concludes that future development of business games and research on their effectiveness should be concerned...

> ...with determining the effect that different types of game administration have on the amount of learning that takes place within a business game experience. [12]

Pfeiffer and Jones make a useful distinction in their reference manual:

> Because it is possible for the facilitator to meet his needs at the participants' expense, it is important that he assess his own motives for intervening into the interaction among members. Useful distinctions may be made between making things happen, letting things happen, and being a part of what is happening. [13] (emphasis added)

At the 1975 NASAGA meeting, Schreier and Komives reported on an Enterprise Assessment Center which used different features of administration, administrative intervention and direct observation of the team's decision making process. The process of observation was an important variable in the assessment:

> Throughout the entire planning and decision-making sessions, the management team being assessed is observed. This observation takes place while the initial planning is being done, while each period decision is being made, while the team is awaiting the computer results, and during their analysis of the data. The information provided by this observation of the management teams has provided more realistic information about the performance and managerial capability than the results of the simulation itself. [14]

ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES -- A PROPOSED MODEL

The published research studies, statements, and experiences cited above present several 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 materials want to justify and evaluate the experiential form of learning, research must be undertaken along the lines suggested by several of the authors cited here. To do this, it might be helpful to establish a model of administrative role behavior. The creation of such a model would allow agreement in terminology and create a basis from which research can be conducted. The administrative roles suggested here are described on the following page. A research proposal and design will also be suggested.

Multiple Roles

The roles presented here are an attempt to initially outline the different roles, many overlapping, that the instructor may assume in a simulation or experiential learning exercise. It is quite probable that the descriptions presented here need additions, deletions, and refinements to create a clear understanding of the different roles which are important for the selection, use, and evaluation of experiential materials. An instructor in any given simulation will play more than one role, creating perhaps a composite where each of the roles cited above is present to some extent. If various combinations of these roles (and perhaps others) can be determined, it might be possible to show that certain roles are appropriate for certain simulations, depending on the goals of the material.

For example, it might be discovered that a computer-based simulation calls for an instructor role which contains heavy components of the CONSULTANT and ADMINISTRATOR roles. Eor a structured experience, for example a role play, the instructor may choose to play the role of the FACILITATOR and OBSERVER.

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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 rat of the input data. tie time; of which data must be submitted and when the w I be returned to the teams. - The participants of the experience view he ADMINISTRATOR primarily as the person who makes the computer work. The ADMINISTRATOR is the person ''to whom we give our data." lie or she is Tot 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.

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 in 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 the" ire in trouble or unsure of the roles they are playing ing (the FACILITATOR often performs role of the CONSULTANT) . The FACILITATOR 'keeps things going" by asking non-ill roe t lye 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 sic 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 t assure the success of the game.

OBSERVER

The OBSERVER servos an important role in many structured experiences and simulations when he or she collects information about the experience that will he used later in the debriefing 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.

It is possible that a role structure could be created to diagram the strength of each role in a particular application. Figure 1 shows how this might look for the basic definitional model and the two examples presented here. Research might make it possible to further define the model, yielding percentage figures for each role. Then it would be possible to express the role profile of a certain simulation or structured experience in greater detail, as shown in Figure 2.

A Research Proposal

If the role model suggested in this paper is to be useful in the selection, application, and evaluation of simulations and experiential learning materials, there is a need to evaluate, critique, improve, and research the model itself. The following research design is presented as a step in evaluating the validity and applicability of the model.

1. The purpose of the study is to validate and research the administrative role model proposed in this paper.
2. Research will be conducted among ABSEL members on their evaluation of the model, including the definition of roles, the number of roles, etc.
3. A survey will be conducted among ABSEL members, asking them to report on their own administrative styles, expressed in various percentages and combinations, for the various simulations and experiential exercises which they use.
4. A report of this survey, with an analysis of different models, will be presented at the next ABSEL meeting,

Conclusion

It is important for all people involved in the use of experiential learning materials, ranging from simulations to role plays and learning instruments, to be concerned with the process involved. The administration of these materials includes the roles which the instructor takes, in planning, explaining, and evaluating the experience. It is important to realize that the instructor affects the results of the experience by his or her attitudes and behaviors. The model and research proposed in this paper, hopefully, contributes to the concerns involved in the experiential learning process.

Figure 1

ADMINISTRATOR	CONSULTANT	EVALUATOR	PARTICIPANT
FACILITATOR	PRESIDENT	OBSERVER	PRESENCE

POSSIBLE ROLES

ADMINISTRATOR	CONSULTANT	EVALUATOR	
			PARTICIPANT
FACILITATOR	PRESIDENT	OBSERVER	PRESENCE

POSSIBLE ROLES IN A COMPUTER-BASED SIMULATION

ADMINISTRATOR	CONSULTANT	EVALUATOR	PARTICIPANT
FACILITATOR	PRESIDENT	OBSERVER	PRESENCE

POSSIBLE ROLES IN A STRUCTURED EXPERIENCE - ROLE PLAY

Figure 2

ADMINISTRATOR 5%	CONSULTANT 10%	EVALUATOR 20%	PARTICIPANT 5%
	PRESIDENT 5%		PRESENCE 5%
FACILITATOR 25%		OBSERVER 25%	

A DETAILED ROLE PROFILE

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