Global e-Sim

ABSTRACT

The Global e-Sim provides an avenue for the implementation of a hands-on educational activity designed to enhance graduate attributes. The experience is intended to be as realistic as possible and to give participants a representation of decision-making processes operating in the real world.

KEYWORDS

Globalisation; geography

CONTACT

Professor Philip Hirsch
School of Geosciences, University of Sydney
philip.hirsch@usyd.edu.au

DESCRIPTION

The Global e-Sim is an electronically supported role play-simulation set in context of globalisation debates, processes, protests and struggles. Participants assume the role of a stakeholder in the globalisation arena. Students are divided into groups and a role is assigned to each group. From here, students interact with other groups in a role play situation concerning globalisation in order to further their cause.

AUDIENCE/GROUP SIZE

- The Global e-Sim is an experiential learning approach designed as part of a senior Geography unit of study on Globalisation and Regions in Transition.
- It involved 50 students in a six-week exercise that ran parallel to a regular lecture and tutorial program.
- Students were grouped into 20 roles based around debates on globalisation.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The focal point of the e-Sim is a real-time set of public forums that are related to real-world events, at which students make submissions and interact both cooperatively and competitively to achieve goals defined in terms of their roles. A debriefing phase allows for reflection to complete the learning cycle. The e-Sim was designed to give students:

- an experiential knowledge of globalisation
- the capacity to develop a range of relevant skills
- the opportunity to consider the concepts of learning cycles and experiential learning.

TIME AND SETTING

Originally it was intended that a period of six weeks be allowed for the role play including an introductory session and debrief. However, in retrospect, some students felt that a longer window was needed to allow for the more detailed research of roles as well as online dialogue with other parties.

The setting is conceptual, empirical and political:

- It is conceptual in that a good deal of the interaction will have to do with bringing in ideas and arguments based on contested claims about the nature and impacts of globalisation.
- It is empirical in that a number of the events and issues will be grounded in real places and real disputes.
- It is political in the sense that responses are partly value driven and reflect competing material interests between different stakeholders, as well as different world views.

RESOURCES

The setting for the e-Sim is the contested terrain of globalisation. However, it is also more regionally specific in that a number of actors are drawn from the Asia-Pacific region. It is important to note that the "scale referents" of each Global e-Sim actor will be different. The major categories of the roles involved in the e-Sim are:

- Inter-governmental organisations
  Multi-lateral development banks including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank; multi-lateral institutions such as various branches of the United Nations; and more specialist organisations such as the World Trade Organisation or the Mekong River Commission
- Governmental organisations
  Key government departments either involved specifically with international affairs, or with managing aspects of globalisation that have regional impacts
- Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)
  Organisations whose main standpoint is critical of globalisation; organisations that are concerned about the way in which globalisation impacts on the poor and the environment; and organisations that are in many ways part of the globalisation process - these three are not mutually exclusive
- People's organisation
  Trade unions, people's organisations and citizen groups whose interests overlap with responses to globalisation
- Media groups including print, broadcast and other electronic media that are spectators of, & participants in, globalisation

- Corporate players, including multinational corporations
- Farmers, workers, and ordinary people whose lives are affected by globalisation through cultural and economic means

ASSESSMENT

Each participant was required to post a role profile (15%) on the e-Sim site so that all the other participants could familiarise themselves with each others' roles. In addition each individual was required to submit a one-page group strategy statement (10%), demonstrate active participation in their group (10%), post a submission to the public forum (20%) and write a debriefing report (30%).
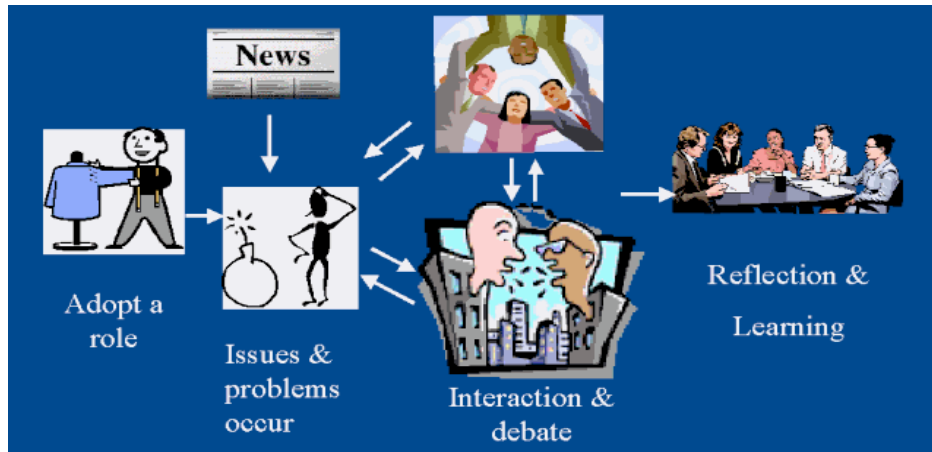
STUDENTS ENGAGE IN THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES

Briefing phase
- familiarisation with e-Sim structure, geographical context, requirements & technology

Students identify roles
- adopting their roles
- identifying values, principles & policies that govern their adopted persona & acting according to them

Stimulus
- news items initiate thoughts & discussions on issues relevant to adopted roles
- in response personae identify their courses of action

Interaction & decision-making phase
- formation of alliances & discussion groups
- information dissemination
- posting to public forums

Debrief
- reflect on the learning outcomes
- value of the simulation

FACILITATOR ISSUES

The e-simulation required careful development initially with the dissemination of a detailed handbook for all participants. This resource provided an essential scaffold to the activity with detailed advice re processes, content and methodology for the simulation. Essentially the approach was driven by the participants themselves although this did produce some difficulties. For example, asynchronous contributions meant that the immediacy of the online dialogue was lost, often led to time delays and, in some cases, rushed and poorly researched contributions. In the event of the initiative being repeated, it was felt that more synchronous communication was required to achieve a critical mass of real time dynamic contributions.

REUSABILITY

Yes – in fact, the Global e-Sim was modelled on a similar, but more complex, exercise called Mekong e-Sim (http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/geography/staff/phirsch/ExperientialLearning.JPG). The Mekong e-Sim was recognised as an effective means of meeting a variety of learning objectives by bringing together students with different backgrounds and points of view.

REFERENCES AND LINKS
Global e-Sim Student handbook 2003
Suggestions for improvement of e-sim from debriefing essays (unpublished)