

ABSTRACT

Through a role based case study, learners develop an understanding of multiple perspectives of issues related to development and conflict over the use of resources within the world heritage site of Ha Long Bay, Vietnam.

KEYWORDS

Human Geography; Asia-Pacific Development; Vietnam; Resource conflict; Tourism development; Experiential learning

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DESCRIPTION

The Ha Long Bay e-Sim is a structured role-playing web-based simulation exercise (e-Sim) which builds on the learning framework of the Mekong e-Sim (McLaughlan et al., 2001). The students participate in the e-Sim by taking on a persona within a simulated environment that is framed by a scenario - development and conflict over the use of resources within the world heritage site of Ha Long Bay, Vietnam. Participants interact with other organisations in a role play attempting to achieve an outcome to the conflict that is in keeping with the objectives and responsibilities of their role. The Ha Long Bay e-Sim is designed to develop learners' understanding of multiple perspectives of issues related to the scenario by responding to an inquiry over whether an event should take place.

AUDIENCE/GROUP SIZE

Students are allocated a persona, three to four students share each persona. The role play was originally designed for 6 to 10 persona but if numbers were larger this could be expanded if necessary but would also require more moderators.

FACILITATOR ISSUES

Convenor needs to play an active role in moderating in the early stages to ensure that all students are participating and to set the momentum.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Identify the political, social, and economic dimensions to decision making in development conflicts
- Develop knowledge about organisations in the region
- Identify the responsibilities and appropriate responses for their personas (key stakeholders) in the roleplay/simulation
- Develop communication, research, critical thinking, negotiation and decision-making skills and an appreciation of cultural differences and approaches
- Integrate negotiation, computer literacy, problem-solving, teamwork skills into action
- Utilise Information Communication and Technology skills

TIME AND SETTING

The Ha Long Bay e-Sim forms the major assignment for students enrolled in the unit GEOS311 Asia Pacific Development, in the Department of Human Geography at Macquarie University. This unit deals with processes and consequences of development in the Asia Pacific region. The e-Sim focuses on one specific international problem related to the conflict over resources in the world heritage site of Ha Long Bay, northeast Vietnam. The assignment runs over an 8 week period. On campus students meet in a computer lab once a week and external students meet at two 4 hour on-campus sessions.

RESOURCES

- Online component of the Ha Long Bay e-Sim operates using the WebCT platform which hosts the e-Sim resources and provides communication tools including discussion boards and e-mail. The discussion boards are used for private communication within groups and public communication between different groups. The convenor posts events on the discussion board which guide the e-Sim through its various stages. The issue paper question and terms of reference for the public inquiry and media articles are provided to the students at relevant stages.
- Web site containing various online resources <http://www.es.mq.edu.au/courses/GEOS311/resh12.html>
- GEOS311 unit outline provides a comprehensive step by step guide through the e-Sim stages, assessment and details on how students participate.

PROCESS

Stage 1 e-Sim Familiarisation

Students explore the many aspects of the e-Sim and become familiar with the software, assessment requirement, and begin to learn skills and techniques for working in a group. This stage requires the participants to research the geopolitical setting for the e-Sim as well as understand their persona identity within that context. Three to four students share each persona, some are external students who will never meet their group face to face. Therefore it is important that all group members are able to use a range of communication media (chat rooms, e-mail, WebCT discussion board).

Stage 2 e-Sim Contextualisation – persona

Students are asked to draw on a variety of information sources to develop an understanding about the responsibilities views and strategies of their adopted persona identity. After submitting their persona all groups will read other personas profiles and map out how they fit into the bigger picture.

Stage 3 e-Sim Contextualisation – issue paper

Students write an issue paper which aims to help them develop a deeper understanding of some specific issues relevant to their persona. This understanding as well as the more general understandings developed from the role profile allow effective participation through the various communication channels in the e-Sim (e.g. email, news, public inquiry).

Stage 4 e-Sim Interaction – the public enquiry

Students use the understanding of their persona and the Ha Long Bay area gained during stages 1 - 3. An event, which will affect all stakeholders, is announced and all persona are invited to respond to the event by participating in a public enquiry. The purpose of a public enquiry is to allow all stakeholders a say in what they think about the event and how it will affect them. Personas will be required to post submissions to the public enquiry in response to the specific terms of reference and then respond to other submissions. Personas try to influence the views of other personas by: interacting with other groups (sending and receiving postings on the discussion board); forming alliances with other groups; providing information to the media.

Stage 5 e-Sim Debrief

An essential stage where students reflect on what they have learnt as a consequence of participating in the e-Sim. The minutes from meetings are submitted and group dynamics discussed using guided recall, reflection and analysis of the experience. In addition the final exam requires students to reflect on their persona role in the e-Sim and identify specific incidents that took place in the e-Sim which shows how an incident was negotiated and the process that took place.

ASSESSMENT

The e-Sim is a group task comprising 35% of the unit's total mark. Group work is assessed in a number of ways.

- Submission of group profile: comprising description, of policies, strategies, group diversity issues, persona representation
- Submission of the issue paper
- Participation in the public inquiry: assessed through postings on the discussion board
- Group work: assessed through the meeting minutes which all groups are required to submit after their weekly meeting.

Debriefing report: one third of the final exam is allocated for students to reflect on their participation in the e-Sim. This is an individual assessment.

REUSABILITY

- The Ha Long Bay e-Sim builds on the learning framework of the highly successful Mekong e-Sim (McLaughlan et al., 2001). It provides a good example of how best practice learning frameworks can be built on and adapted for effective learning.
- Transferable across Learning Management Systems and may be adapted to utilise other ICT systems.
- Can be used across a wide range of discipline areas, notably Arts, Social Sciences, Politics, International Studies and Business.
- The Ha Long Bay e-Sim can be adapted to suit secondary school level.

REFERENCES AND LINKS

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