

Pedagogical Note

Simulation of a meeting with the manager: preparation of information and analysis on governmental program

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Simulation Dynamics

1. Training by the event management / facilitator

The early preparation required for the workshop managers involves the selection of a program complex enough, with different government level actors willing to share their opinions, visions and experience through interviews with the students. It is crucial to have access to information about the program to provide a small text for the students and yield indications of the managers/actors to be interviewed.

2. Research on the selected program

The students receive a few basic information about the selected program and should search for complementary information in order to gain knowledge about actions, resources, problems, challenges, bottlenecks etc. The students must identify what issues are the key ones for being problematized during the interviews and which ones are relevant for the decision making.

3. Interviews with key-actors

It consists of interviewing specialists, social actors and true politicians from different spheres of activity (municipal, state, federal, public policy councils etc.) involved with the program, in order to identify their views about the program itself, about problems, results, risks etc. Those interviewed should be brought to the workshop location on a date and time specified.

The dynamics consists of separating the students into discussion groups, each group with a guest that will expose his view about his work scope in the program and, especially, answer questions elaborated by the students (groups phase A). After this first discussion, the students will be divided in groups again (groups phase B), in such way that listeners from different actors gather in a same group.

4. Suggestions for the Interview Script

The first few times that the workshop was offered, it was associated to the ongoing development of public policies. The purpose was to secure the learned knowledge through a workshop. The script below can come in handy for certain profiles of groups that have little contact with the reference of public policies and need detailed guidance.

Background and history of the program

- What is the problem / demand in which the program intervenes?
- How and by whom the problem was identified?
- What happened since its identification?
- Who, when and how was formulated the current proposition?
- Which significant changes occurred since the original design?
- What were the phases of implementation?

Political Dimension

- What were the issues involved? (causes, nature and reach of the problem, characteristics of the groups/concerned and potentially affected parts etc.)
 - Who are the main actors involved and what are their demands?
 - How the program has been affected by conflicts of interest at the local, state and federal spheres (among parties, among politicians and bureaucrats, among the different spheres of government, between state and society etc.).

Program current status

- Currently, what are the main problems identified at the implementation?

How do they have been overcome and/or solved ?

- What are the studied alternatives to address them permanently?
 - How do these alternatives divide the opinions of several actors involved?

- What are the main limitations noticed (or not) by the main actors?
- Do risks and opportunities exist in these alternatives?
- On who relies the decision?
- What would be the most favorable framework for the adoption of each of the considered alternatives?

5. Systematization of the information obtained in the interviews

After the interviews, every student will have a partial view of every interviewed actor, that should be shared with the others in the group (phase B) in order to build a synthesis. These groups (phase B) will have to debate, discuss and reach some consensus on the information gathered and identify relevant issues considering the various positions of managers and their own research.

6. Development of a Technical Note and preparation of the meeting with the manager

After the systematization, the group will have the task of building a technical note that expresses the fundamental points that a leader needs to know to take over the program.

Guidelines for Preparation of Technical Note

The expression “Technical Note” should be understood as indicative of an objective analysis document on public policy or government program, written for the purpose of evaluating its operation, and to propose alternatives to overcome any bottlenecks or choke points identified.

The full Technical Note shall not exceed eight (8) pages given the format established in the following items:

- The text must be formatted for A-4 page size, with the top, bottom, left and right margins of 2.5 cm. The pages must be numbered accordingly. The font must be Times New Roman, size 12. The space between lines must be 1 A.
- After the title, the names of the authors must be listed.
- The body of work should be organized in a logical sequence, with the subtitle “Object”, “Introduction”, “Program Evaluation”, “Recommendations”. In writing, must not be used the first person and the style to be adopted must be objective and sober, compatible with official documents.
- It should be avoided subdividing the text in a large number of items or subtitles.
- The correct spelling and grammar is essential.

7. Process simulation to support decision making

The final step of the activity is the simulation of the actual meeting. If the class is large, not everyone may attend this stage. At Enap, where we apply the training courses, the former happened, but without jeopardizing the participation of all other students. At the meeting they can send information on notes or any other electronic means to the advisor (representative of the group) present at the meeting.

Students are invited to attend the meeting as if it were real. The trainer of the workshop should create in advance a profile of a leader he will assume and present it to the students at the beginning. For example, the leader was secretary of education in medium-sized city in a certain region, and she is member of the ruling party or not etc.

In addition, the trainer should select the position (Director, the Secretary, Minister, Executive Secretary etc.) and create a leadership style and personality to conduct the meeting, as close as possible to reality, becoming an element of surprise for the students. Draw a personality and a style and make unexpected questions is an essential part of the simulation.

8. Feedback, comments and evaluation.

After the simulation, the trainer makes comments evaluating the participation in relation to the assumed postures and attitudes, skills and content. Pointing failures in diagnosis or in proposals, evaluates the relationship between the people in the meeting etc. Students also provide feedback on the workshop and the trainer's job.