Nine Lessons For Teaching Negotiation Skills

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Objectives

• To reflect on the challenges of negotiation skills training and drawbacks of the basic training model commonly used
• To identify new and innovative methods that can be used to teach negotiation skills
• To offer practical advice for class activities
Negotiation Skills Training

A Teachable Skill
The Basic Model for Training

- Theoretical introduction
- Role play
- Debrief
- Theoretical extension
Disadvantages Of Basic Model

- May confuse experience with training
- Tends towards over-reliance on theory
- Role plays often ignore real world context
- Does not feature rich review of experience
- Tends to use only single examples to illustrate a principle
- Does not usually involve observation
- May not have time to address emotional intelligence and communication “micro skills”
Innovative Approaches

• Studies on the effectiveness of negotiation training were reviewed, including classroom and lab-based studies on:
  – Emotional intelligence
  – Analogical reasoning
  – Expert observation
  – Placements and service learning
  – Computer-assisted learning
Nine Lessons For Teaching Negotiations Skills

The Lessons of Innovation
1. Students Won’t Learn Just From Experience

- **Learning:**
  Experience is the least effective way to teach negotiation

- **Suggestions:**
  - Use role plays to consolidate learning
  - Incorporate theoretical material before and after role plays
  - Leave at least as long for debrief of role plays as for the role play itself.
When the trainer asks the student about their negotiation experience...

http://www.xtranormal.com/watch?e=20090519211647765
Instead I will...

- Ask students to reflect on their negotiation experiences while we do another activity
- Provide students with role play facts
- Facilitate and structured preparation for a role play
- Ask students to negotiate (providing a new experience of negotiation)
- Facilitate a structured de-brief (referring back to the structured preparation)
- Use the de-brief lessons to plan for the next negotiation experience (plan, act, review cycle)
2. Students Won’t Learn Just From Theory

- **Learning:**
  Principled based learning requires other teaching techniques to facilitate transfer of principles

- **Suggestions:**
  - Present theory in context using examples similar to students’ own real-life situations
  - Incorporate theoretical material before and after role plays
  - Use theoretical material to enhance student understanding of preparing for negotiation
3. Role Plays Need To Be Credible, Relevant And Contextual

• **Learning:**
  Role plays need to replicate real life negotiations

• **Suggestions:**
  – Give role plays realistic contexts and include personalities and circumstances outside students’ likely experiences
  – Include at least one relationship-based and one transactional role play
  – Give adequate facts and figures to avoid gaps which may distract students
  – Include cross cultural issues in negotiations
  – Allow adequate preparation time before negotiations
The Asian Context

• What are some of the issues which might arise in cross cultural negotiations or in negotiations taking place entirely in other non-similar cultures?
• How might these issues be addressed by providing role plays that are credible, relevant and contextual?
• What are the specific aspects which might be included for the Asian context?
4. Students Need A Rich Review Of Negotiation Experience

- **Learning:**
  Rich review facilitates students learning from their own experience

- **Suggestions:**
  - Explicitly mention deep learning as one of the aims of negotiation training
  - Incorporate at least one deep learning question in debriefing
  - Explicitly promote self-reflection as a key skill of experienced negotiators
  - Use journals and video for self-reflection
  - Consider how assessment tasks can promote self-reflection and deep learning
Deep learning questions

• Examining new facts and ideas critically, and tying them into existing cognitive structures and making numerous links between ideas. ((Compiled from Biggs (1999), Entwistle (1988) and Ramsden (1992))

• How did that experience effect what you already know about negotiation?

• How did that experience compare to real life negotiations you have had?
5. Students Learn Best Through Analogical Reasoning

- **Learning:**
  Comparing multiple examples facilitates similarity-mapping and illustrates underlying principles

- **Suggestions:**
  - Ask students to compare and contrast two or more negotiation cases
  - Explicitly ask students to access negotiation skills from past cases and apply them to novel situations
  - Provide/elicit multiple examples to illustrate a single principle
6. Observation Is One Of The Best Learning Techniques

• **Learning:**
  Observation enables students to absorb beneath the conscious level and then apply by analogy to new situations

• **Suggestions:**
  • Invite expert guests to negotiate “live” in front of students
  • Create a video-tape of expert negotiators negotiating students’ role play
  • Use video extracts from movies to illustrate good negotiation techniques
  • Use group role plays eg “rotating fishbowl” exercises, where students can observe each others’ behaviour

Effect of Learning Condition On Final Joint Outcome

Joint Score

- Control
- Didactic
- Information Revelation
- Observational
- Analogical

Learning Conditions
7. Real World Placements Can Be An Effective Training Tool

- **Learning:**
  Learning through placements provides the opportunity to teach about the variables that affect negotiations in the real world

- **Suggestions:**
  - Select placements that offer contextual complexity and a variety of planned and unplanned negotiations
  - Be aware of the need to resource placements (e.g. placement contracts, insurance and support)
  - Use placements in combination with other instructive methods of teaching
8. Emotional Intelligence And Interpersonal Skills Assist Learning

- **Learning:**
  Effective relationships are more likely to be built if one first gains a fundamental understanding of human emotion

- **Suggestions:**
  - Explicitly mention the interpersonal skills that enhance negotiation performance
  - Ask students to work on interpersonal skills which they find challenging
  - Provide opportunities for self reflection after negotiation activities
  - Use role plays which explicitly detail emotion and sensitivities – ask students to imagine how various parties “feel” whilst role playing
9. Technology Can Enhance Negotiation Learning

- **Learning:**
  Technology allows analysis and retrieval of raw data on negotiation experience, minimising students’ defensiveness and resistance to improvement

- **Suggestions:**
  - Use videotaping to assist review, reflection and assessment
  - Use discussion boards and other techniques to assist reflection and class discussion
  - Conduct one or more negotiation simulations online
Implications For Trainers

Ideas for Action
What I Am Going To Change...

- Incorporate theory and detailed de-briefing into role plays/real world placements
- Use multiple examples to demonstrate each principle
- Use observation as a teaching method
- Give role plays adequate context, including real life difficulties, different personalities, interpersonal skills, emotional and transactional aspects
- Incorporate some deep learning questions into every role play de-briefs
- Use technology where possible
Further Reading

- Reilly, Teaching a law student how to feel (2005) *Negotiation Journal*
- Kolb, Constructing a Theoretical Framework for Teaching about Gender in Negotiation (2000) *Negotiation Journal*
- R B McKersie and N O Fonstad, Teaching Negotiation Theory and Skills Over the Internet (1997) *Negotiation Journal*
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