Shakin' the classroom
Spreading alternative knowledge sharing methods

Please briefly explain the knowledge sharing method/approach/tool.
What are the main processes? What are the expected outcomes?

Role-play is an instructional method based on experiential learning theory, which posits that learning by experience and reflection are best ways for adults to learn. It is a method "in which key ideas and skills are illustrated or practiced by learners assuming roles and contexts in which the ideas and skills would typically be applied" (Reigeluth and Keller, 2009, p. 37). In role play, learners act out specific roles in a real-world scenario, to experience and exercise how to act in real-life situations, to develop and test

specific skills required to handle a particular situation or problem, as well as to put themselves in positions or identities other than their own. This all happens in a controlled and safe environment and requires preparation as well as reflection and feedback on experience. The method should be based on previous knowledge, skills, and experiences by learners. In it, learners involve both cognitive and affective domains, as they think, feel and act in particular experience. It is good to use it especially in case of sensitive situations which could not be tested by practicing in the real-life relations and situations, and as such enables first-person experience in a safe and supportive environment. The research on role-plays in tertiary education suggests that students think of it as a good method to challenge preconceived ideas, encourage creative thinking, assist students in applying theory to practice, make lessons fun and provide active learning experiences that increase student learning and engagement (Kilgour et al. 2015).

In what ways does that method bring change or represent an alternative to existing or dominant knowledge sharing settings and methods?

Role play is an alternative to different traditional (and still dominant) ideas about learning:
1. Learning is not objective and disengaged practice, but a process dependent on the context, positionality and learners' previous experiences.
2. Learning is not just rational but also affective endeavour. One can learn through compassion, empathy and care by putting oneself in another person's identity, situation, or position.
3. Learning is not about memorising information but about actively using information in real-life situations.
4. Learning is not a solitary process but is effective when it takes place in groups building on group dynamics and group creativity.
5. Learning can be fun, imaginative and playful.

If possible, please briefly explain the context in which the method has been developed.
Who were the main actors? What were the main reasons/motivations/inspirations behind the creation? Which previous developments have influenced it? If relevant, in what ways did the method/tool develop or change over time or in different locations/contexts?

Dr Jacob. L. Moreno (1889–1974) is believed to have designed the first role playing techniques in Vienna in 1910s and developed them further in the US in the 1930ies, in the context of psychology and psychiatry training. He was a psychologist and is also the founder of psychodrama and sociodrama, thus role-play can be seen as a method within these broader fields aimed at serving therapeutical purposes. Important for the method was that learners, trainees or patients engage in an existing or imaginary life situation in a secure setting, and by enacting a role engage in learning both cognitively and emotionally. Role-playing in psychodrama was focused on an individual within a group to contribute to psychological health and transformation, while in sociodrama it acts to explore social events, collective ideologies and community patterns, in order to transform group dynamics for the better. As a learning method role-play has been modified and applied in diverse context since then. Howard Barrows has developed in 1960ies role-play simulation for purposes of medical training, which engages both

professional actors and learners. The method has been taken later in military setting, as well as in employers training environments in companies to learn by experiencing, conflicting and reflecting on possible real-life situations. Today it is extensively used in diverse learning contexts, including in universities.

In your opinion, what kind of settings and participants is the method best suited for?

E.g. age, educational level, cultural and professional background, etc.

The method can be used in diverse learning settings and with diverse background of participants. It is easier to use it when participants are adults and can better distinguish play and real-life situations and understand what it means to act a particular role means. The method is better suited as a part of a wider training and learning process then as a one off, because it can be used to experiment with, synthetize and reflect upon previous learning. Also, it can be useful in kicking off the learning process, as well as in the follow-up as a good evaluation method through which participants can enact good and bad sides of overall learning process.

Are there any limitations?

Are there any requirements or limits in terms of location, number/profile of participants, tools and devices, time constraints and other? Are there certain skills, sensitivities or relations that need to be developed or assumed for the method to be successfully applied? Are there any contexts for which this method is not best suited?

The role-play can take place in diverse physical locations as long as they are understood and felt as a safe space by all participants as learning is both cognitive and affective. The crucial requirement is learners consent and willingness to participate, as the process and outcomes depend heavily on their participation.
Role-play is among time-consuming method to design and implement. This method requires preparation from the facilitator/teacher and from learners. The facilitator should draft a scenario/situation and possible roles and provide necessary background information. The learners should have time to prepare their roles, which depending on the exercise can be in-classroom exercise or homework. Also, it is required to allocate time for reflection and discussion on the experience and learning outcomes among learners. Importantly, the method can be adapted to online learning situations.

What are your experiences with the method?

In case you have tested or experienced the method beyond its primary environment, what are your experiences? Would you change anything or suggest further development?

Critical cultural management classes with students from Lyon2 master, in which after lectures and discussions on critical feminist, decolonial, Marxist, ecological approaches in cultural management we role-played a particular case to see how students would act in real-life situation. The aim was to exercise and apply abstract ideas, engaged scholarship and critical theory encountered during lectures on a particular real-life case. This allowed for experiencing complexities of different positions, finding argumentation that would not necessarily be in line with one's initial political and ideological position, and applying complex ideas in ethically complex situations.

Students were focusing on a particular case of a Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in Tervuren, Belgium and attempt to decolonize it. The scenario says the new director is employed to deal with this landmark project and as a part of preparatory activities, he/she has invited key stakeholders. They range from professional to amateur, and from progressive to conservative - some are for the project, many against it; while some see it as too conservative, others see it as too progressive. The role-play situation is a stakeholder meeting in which director tries to smooth-out differences and ensure that everyone is on board. Besides the role of the newly appointed director, students in groups of two to three acted as groups of stakeholders – researchers and activist from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi conservative Friends of Museum; progressive ICOM professionals; biologist, geologist and environmentalists; immigrants from Central Africa; team of museum curators; representatives of the

Embassy of DR Congo in Belgium. The students had half an hour to research the case and prepare for their roles, and another hour for enacting the meeting. Feedback, follow-up discussion and reflection have been essential parts of the learning process.

The experience has been very positive, as it offered ground for applying certain ideas, but moreover it offered ground for putting oneself in others shoes, finding ways to arguments such a position and model it according to the context of other conflicting views and positions. Also, the exercise highlighted how certain dominant underlying ontologies, such as anthropocentrism, affect the ways in which positions and desirable outcomes are argumented.

Could you provide any relevant testimonies?

If possible, please provide testimonies, reflections and statements about the method from its authors and/or users.

Kilgour, P., Hinze, J., Petrie, K., Long, W., & deBerg, K. (2015). Role-playing: A smorgasbord of learning types. International Journal of Innovative Interdisciplinary Research, 3(1), 11-24. Retrieved from http://www.auamii.com/jiir/Vol-03/Issue%201/2Kilgour.pdf

Acharya, H., Reddy, R., Hussein, A., Bagga, J. and Pettit, T. (2019), "The effectiveness of applied learning: an empirical evaluation using role playing in the classroom", *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 295-310. https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIT-06-2018-0013

Additional references

If possible, please provide additional links, materials, instructions and other relevant content.

https://roleplayasaninstructionalmethodforadultlearners.weebly.com/index.html