Prototyping Strategies: Role Play It!

Purpose of the Tool

PILOT-TESTING

Role playing can help the "actors" involved in an innovation project better understand how a tool might be used, how a new process might play out, or even how it might feel to be a participant in a particular scenario. This experience can surface questions or areas for further refinement during the development of an innovation project.

Suggested Time Commitment

60 min   6 steps

You will probably need at least an hour to engage in this activity, and you will likely return to this activity throughout your innovation process.

When & How

This role playing tool can be used either before you implement an innovation in your teaching and learning context, or any time during the implementation phase of your work as you experiment with new practices. The tool prompts you to step into the shoes (as best you can) of those who will be the direct participants in the innovation you seek to implement in your teaching and learning context. Role playing an innovation experience will give you the opportunity to try out your innovation for the first time in a low-stakes environment. Role playing an innovation experience will also challenge you to consider your innovation from another person's point of view, such as a colleague or a student.

Steps

1. Articulate your goals
Articulate what it is you want to prototype, and what you want to learn by engaging in this prototyping experience.

2. Determine group roles
Articulate who are the different people (the roles) involved in the experience (e.g., the teacher and the students), and determine which members of your study group will play which roles. At the same time, elect one person in the group to be an observer who will be on the lookout for aspects of the experience that connect with what you want to learn.

3. Role-play!
Try out your role play by acting out a teaching and learning scenario that incorporates the innovation you are interested in implementing.

4. Debrief your role play
Discuss how it went by first hearing from the observer, then the people engaged in the role play experience.

5. Try it again

Decide as a group how you might alter the experience in a way that may yield a more optimal result, then try it again!

6. Reflect and look ahead

After you've role played your experience a few times, compare the outcomes of each iteration, document what you have learned, and consider how you might implement your innovation in your teaching and learning context.