Instruction game: How is it possible that these students fail?

Take the step towards well-founded educational development

Acceleration plan
Educational innovation with ICT

Facilitating professional development of lecturers

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Purpose of the game

The purpose of the game is to create awareness among the participants about why evidence should be used when developing educational innovations (with IT). This evidence consists of scientific literature, practical experience, and study data. Confirmation bias can be prevented by using evidence. This means that people select information according to their own gut feeling, preferences, or ideas.

Preparation of the game

There are six pieces of evidence associated with this game:

- Attendance list
- Agenda Feline van den Berg
- Gradelist Feline van den Berg
- Scientific source/article
- OWE for Introduction to Dutch Institutional Law (INIR)
- Course evaluation

Print out the number of pieces of evidence equal to the number of participants in the game. When the number of participants is less than six, you round it up. So, for example, with fifteen participants you have 18 pieces of evidence.

Put the six different pieces of evidence in an envelope so that the participants cannot see them yet. Divide the envelopes over tables that can seat up to six participants.

Go through the accompanying PowerPoint and the speaker's text yourself.

Explanation of the game

You start the game by introducing the case. After this, the participants formulate a hypothesis for the problem for each step. You can start a conversation with the participants to see what different views people have.

In the first step, the participants individually formulate a hypothesis based on their gut feeling or own ideas. Evidence is not used here. In step two, the participants are allowed to take one piece of evidence from the envelope, which they are not allowed to share with the other participants. The participants reformulate their hypothesis individually. In the third step, two participants (e.g. neighbours) combine their evidence and adjust their hypothesis accordingly. In the last step, all pieces of evidence are combined, and a joint hypothesis (when possible) is formulated.

After the last step, the thinking process is evaluated. It examines how the gut feeling hypothesis differs from the hypothesis based on the combination of the different types of evidence.

Speaker's text

Slide 2: Introducing the game

We're playing a game today. The following question is central to this game: How is it possible that these students fail the subject? Through this game you are also challenged to experience one of the core principles of our field labs: the step-by-step (grounded) approach. We do this by means of the case study of a group of students who fail a subject. Let's delve into this case!

Slide 3: Delve into the case

You are a teacher of first year Bachelor's students of Law. It is striking that many 'good active' students fail the presentation. This was also the case last year. What could this be about?
Disclaimer: we are now zooming in on one student. To get a well-founded picture of this group of students, one needs a representative sample. This is purely for example!

Slide 4: Step 1: Initial judgment based on gut feeling

You have not yet received any documentary evidence, but only a general idea of the case. Formulate your first hypothesis based on your own gut feeling. This hypothesis describes why you think the students failed this subject.

Hypothesis 1

(asking around the audience what people's own gut feelings are)

Slide 5: Step 2: First evidence-based adjustment

You have now received 1 piece of 'evidence'. Examine this piece of evidence. Don't share your evidence with your neighbors. Does this evidence provide additional insights into the case? Formulate your second hypothesis based on the information on your evidence sheet. This hypothesis describes why you think the students failed this subject.

Hypothesis 2

(asking around the room what people's hypothesis is)

Slide 6: Step 3: Second adjustment based on combined evidence

You form a duo with the person sitting next to you. Compare your evidence. If necessary, formulate a new hypothesis based on the information on your evidence sheets. This hypothesis describes why the students failed this subject.
(asking around the room what people's hypothesis is)

Slide 7: Step 4: Third adjustment based on combined evidence

Share your evidence and hypotheses with everyone at the table.

Based on everything you've learned about the case:
1. What do you think happened?
2. To what extent did your hypothesis change as you received/combined more evidence?
3. Was your professional judgment consistent with your gut feeling?

Final hypothesis

Slide 8: Reflection on the game

Today, by playing this game, we have taken a step towards well-founded educational development. Developing good education with ICT and measuring its effectiveness is complicated and demands a lot from teachers. Yet, there are several challenges in education that require innovation or change. In our opinion you can approach this in an evidence-informed step-by-step manner, which we have described in our field labs. By innovating step by step based on evidence (evidence = scientific research, practical experiences, and study data), confirmation bias can be prevented. Confirmation bias means that people tend to confirm their own preferences, which often leads them to select information in such a way that it fits their existing beliefs. You can prevent this by systematically collecting those different types of evidence and comparing them with each other.

The Acceleration Plan for Educational Innovation with ICT is a four-year programme focused on bringing initiatives, knowledge, and experiences for digitalisation together. The programme is an initiative of SURF, the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, and the Association of Universities, and is organised in eight acceleration zones. In the zone Facilitating professional development for lecturers, 16 institutions are working on improving the professional development of lecturers in Dutch higher education.

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