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USING THE WORLD GAME TO INTERNATIONALIZE

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an experiential exercise called The World Game. In addition, a number of individuals indicate what they learned from their participation in the game.¹

INTRODUCTION

The decision to use the World Game at Beaver College was driven by the institution's long history of involvement in international education. The College had three learning objectives: (1) increase participants understanding of global issues; (2) raise consciousness for internationalization on campus; and, (3) provide a basis for follow-up activities on the themes introduced in the game.

THE WORLD GAME DESCRIBED

The World Game is an interactive exercise that creates a microcosm of the world and its people (World Game Institute, 1996). It takes place on a 70' x 35' global map named after the individual who inspired the Game - Buckminster Fuller. The game can be played with up to 200 participants.

The participants represent different world regions or organizations such as the World Bank. Each region begins the game with certain conditions and resources (military, monetary and natural). Teams grappled with issues such as conflict resolution, planning, allocation of limited resources, crippling debt, and socio-economic issues. Regions earn Well-Being cards if they solve a problem or are pro-active in the development of policies or projects that improve the quality of life.

At various points throughout the game facilitators

provide information about world population, resource distribution, health, education, the environment, world food and energy supplies. The members of the media and various world organizations reported on outcomes. Three rounds of discussion and negotiations and reporting were undertaken. Following completion of all rounds, a debriefing session took place.

PARTICIPANT REACTIONS

Game Administrator (Finn). The World Game is a multi-dimensional learning tool. Participants were overwhelmed at the Game's conclusion, but weeks afterward, the students were still reflecting on their accomplishments, the personalities of the world leaders, how they valued the interaction among students, faculty and staff, how the negotiations worked or did not work, etc.

At the very least participants increased their knowledge of world geography and their need to better educate themselves about critical global issues. But the Game was also a lesson in human interaction and the dynamics of power. Larger regions needed to formulate strategies to prioritize their problems. Some regions had sufficient players to divide the tasks; others did not. The Game's fluidity is one of its greatest assets. Participants are given broad guidelines and resources, but then it's up to them to decide what problems take priority and how they will creatively try to solve them.

Faculty Member (Biggs). In discussions with students in class and outside of class after the game it was interesting to hear about the learning that took place. First, they reported that they learned about the geography of the planet. Second, they reported that had a better understanding of

¹ The full paper is available from the first author. It provides background concerning Beaver College to provide a context for our use of the game. It also provides more detail concerning the game and expanded participant responses.

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the maldistribution of population and resources on the planet. Third, they reported that negotiations both within the region and outside the region were difficult. Fourth, they reported that they had developed ideas of things that might be done to address world problems. Finally, they learned that there are no simplistic solutions to world economic and political problems.

College Student from the United States (Lombardi). The World Game gradually introduces students to local as well as global concerns confronting different nations. The Game raises awareness among the students by requiring them to reach viable solutions to the problems their particular region face. Through these solutions, students recognize the overwhelming interdependence among states. They also realize that where one region suffers from illiteracy another might lack renewable resources. In the real world, governments can either reach an agreement or take a violent course of action. However, through the World Game students learn that it is compromise and negotiation, not war, that benefits both sides. The World Game also serves as a foundation for many students who wish to explore more specific issues facing a particular region.

The World Game provides students with a new perspective and asks them to view the world with different eyes. It may foster further learning when students travel to different countries and experience the issues first hand. Participants comprehend that they are not only a citizen of their nation, but of the world.

ALA Student from Argentina (Sicorsky). I am an Argentine and an ALA student. I felt excellent joining the World Game. It was good for my English and for my knowledge. I met new people and learned much more about world history than I knew before. I really liked The Game and I believe that it should be done more often in order to teach young people about world issues. I really appreciated the opportunity of being part of this cross-cultural simulation.

College Student Originally from Taiwan (Huang). Prior to game play a time line was presented. I quickly learned about the minute existence of human beings in comparison to the history of the world (earth).

The objective of the Game was to solve various political, environmental, and social problems in the region. The international communities served as helpers and mediators for the various regions

I represented the world's Press in the Game. Our job was to gather information and news from the various regions and prepare a short report between rounds. In many ways, we became the game coordinators or even the voice of the world. Everyone depended on us for information about the rest of the world. During the game, the world began to feel much smaller, and the notion of "international" became less threatening. By organizing countries into regions, the game helped solidify international economic communities.

The World Game has widened my perception of the world. I no longer perceive myself as just an American citizen but also as a citizen of the world. The world is becoming smaller due to the advancement of technology. We can no longer afford to ignore the outside world community and live in isolation. We are a part of something much bigger, we are citizens of a new world.

CONCLUSION

The comments from the participants indicate that a great deal of learning took place. We plan to use the game again and recommend it to others.

REFERENCES

References are available from the first author.