

THE TRAINER'S ROLE IN ORGANIZING EXERCISES DURING EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS.

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Annotation

The article examines the multifaceted role of the trainer in organizing exercises during educational sessions and argues that exercises constitute the core space where active, meaningful learning takes place. The trainer is considered not only as a transmitter of knowledge, but as a designer of learning experiences, facilitator of interaction, diagnostician of learners' needs, motivator, and evaluator. The paper shows how the trainer translates general learning objectives into concrete tasks, selects and sequences different types of exercises, and adapts them to the specific characteristics and diversity of the group.

Keywords

trainer's role, educational sessions, exercises, active learning, facilitation, feedback, reflection, inclusive learning environment, experiential learning, competence development, learning outcomes, instructional design, group dynamics, psychological safety, digital learning tools

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается многогранная роль тренера в организации упражнений в ходе учебных занятий и обосновывается тезис о том, что именно упражнения являются центральным пространством, в котором реализуется активное и осмысленное обучение. Тренер выступает не только в качестве носителя и передатчика знаний, но и как проектировщик образовательного опыта, фасилитатор взаимодействия, диагност потребностей обучающихся, мотиватор и оценщик результатов.

Ключевые слова

роль тренера, учебные занятия, упражнения, активное обучение, фасилитация, обратная связь, рефлексия, инклюзивная образовательная среда, опытное обучение, развитие компетенций, результаты обучения, проектирование обучения, групповая динамика, психологическая безопасность, цифровые образовательные инструменты

The organization of exercises during educational sessions is a key factor determining whether learning remains superficial or becomes genuinely transformative. Within this process, the trainer's role is both central and multifaceted. The trainer is not only a conveyor of information, but a designer of learning experiences, a facilitator of interaction, a diagnostician of learners' needs, a motivator, and an evaluator. Understanding this complex role is crucial for improving the effectiveness of training programs in formal education, corporate learning, and non-formal educational contexts.

In contemporary educational theory, learning is increasingly interpreted as an active, constructive, and social process. Knowledge is not simply transmitted from the trainer to learners but co-constructed through participation, dialogue and reflection. Exercises occupy a special place in this paradigm because they are the primary means through which learners engage actively with content, test their understanding, and practice new skills. The trainer's role in organizing these exercises is therefore not limited to choosing a few activities from a handbook. Instead, it involves aligning tasks with learning objectives, sequencing them in a pedagogically meaningful way, adapting them to the group's characteristics, and guiding learners through performance and reflection. This requires the trainer to integrate pedagogical, psychological, organizational and communication competences.[1]

The starting point for the trainer is a clear understanding of the educational aims and intended learning outcomes of the session or course. Before selecting or designing any exercise, the trainer must define what learners should know, understand, or be able to do at the end of the session. These outcomes may be cognitive (knowledge and understanding), affective (attitudes, values, motivation), or behavioral (skills, strategies, habits of action). The trainer's role is to translate abstract objectives into concrete learning tasks. For instance, an objective such as "improve teamwork skills" cannot be achieved by a lecture alone; it requires exercises that demand collaboration, negotiation, and joint problem solving. In this early phase, the trainer also conducts a diagnostic analysis of the learners' prior knowledge, experience, and expectations. This diagnosis informs the choice, complexity and pacing of exercises, ensuring that they are neither too easy nor too difficult, and that they connect with learners' realities.[2]

Designing exercises is both a scientific and creative activity. From a scientific perspective, the trainer draws on evidence-based principles of learning. Exercises should promote active engagement, require meaningful processing of content, provide opportunities for spaced practice, and include feedback. They should gradually move learners from more guided and structured tasks to more open and

complex ones, in line with the idea of scaffolding. From a creative perspective, the trainer uses imagination to create tasks that are relevant, authentic, and stimulating. Role plays, case studies, simulations, small group projects, reflective writing, peer teaching and problem-based scenarios are only a few examples of exercise formats. The trainer decides which format fits best with the target outcomes and the characteristics of the group. For example, role plays may be particularly effective for developing communication skills and empathy, while case studies may be more suitable for analytical decision making.

The trainer's role also includes structuring the sequence and timing of exercises within the session. An effective session typically begins with a warm-up or icebreaker that reduces anxiety, stimulates interest, and prepares learners for more demanding tasks. The trainer selects or designs opening exercises that relate to the theme of the session, encourage initial participation, and allow learners to express their expectations. As the session progresses, exercises become more complex and cognitively demanding, requiring deeper engagement with content. Toward the end, the trainer introduces consolidation exercises that help learners synthesize what they have learned, connect it to prior knowledge, and plan how to apply it in practice. This macro-level organization ensures that exercises mutually reinforce each other and collectively support the achievement of learning outcomes.[3]

Within each individual exercise, the trainer plays a crucial role in clarifying instructions and objectives. Many exercises fail not because the design is poor, but because learners do not fully understand what is expected of them. The trainer therefore takes time to explain the purpose of the exercise, the procedures, the roles of participants, the time limits, and the criteria for success. Clarity reduces confusion, saves time, and creates a sense of safety. The trainer may also demonstrate the task, model the desired behavior, or provide an example before learners start working. During this briefing phase, the trainer checks understanding by inviting questions and asking participants to restate the instructions in their own words. This interactive clarification supports more focused and confident engagement during the exercise itself.

Once the exercise begins, the trainer shifts into the role of facilitator and observer. Instead of dominating the process, the trainer monitors group dynamics, provides subtle guidance, and intervenes strategically when needed. This may involve encouraging quieter participants to contribute, helping groups overcome deadlocks, redirecting off-task behavior, or offering hints when learners are stuck but should not yet be given the full solution. The trainer must carefully balance support and autonomy, avoiding both excessive control and complete

disengagement. In more advanced or experiential exercises, the trainer may deliberately step back, allowing learners to navigate challenges and conflicts independently, because struggling productively is part of the learning process. At the same time, the trainer remains responsible for maintaining psychological safety and ensuring that interactions remain respectful and inclusive. [4]

The trainer also plays a diagnostic role during exercises by continuously collecting information about learners' progress. Through observation, listening to group discussions, and reviewing intermediate products (such as notes, drafts or partial solutions), the trainer identifies misconceptions, skill gaps, and emotional reactions. This diagnostic information is used in real time to adjust the exercise, for example by extending or shortening the time, modifying group composition, adding an additional step, or simplifying the task. In this way, exercises become flexible and responsive rather than rigid and predetermined. At a broader level, insights gained from one session inform the design of future sessions, as the trainer refines exercises to better match learners' needs.

Feedback is another core dimension of the trainer's role in exercises. Effective exercises provide multiple feedback loops: from the trainer to learners, from learners to the trainer, and among learners themselves. The trainer gives formative feedback that is specific, constructive and focused on behavior and strategies rather than personal traits. During and after exercises, the trainer helps learners notice what they did well, where they struggled, and what alternative approaches they might try. In addition, the trainer structures opportunities for peer feedback, such as group debriefings, feedback circles or structured peer review sheets. By guiding learners in how to give and receive feedback respectfully and analytically, the trainer develops their metacognitive and interpersonal skills. Feedback from learners, for example through questions, comments and reflective statements, helps the trainer evaluate the appropriateness of the exercises and make improvements. [5]

An often underestimated aspect of the trainer's role is the creation of a supportive learning climate in which exercises can unfold productively. Exercises frequently involve some degree of risk for learners: speaking in front of others, showing partial understanding, admitting mistakes, or negotiating disagreements. If the climate is threatening or highly competitive, learners may avoid active participation or only engage superficially. The trainer therefore cultivates a psychologically safe environment characterized by respect, empathy, and openness. This involves using inclusive language, validating different perspectives, moderating conflicts, and modeling behaviors such as active listening and constructive disagreement. When learners perceive that the trainer is fair,

trustworthy and genuinely interested in their development, they are more willing to participate fully in exercises and to experiment with new behaviors.

The trainer's role in organizing exercises is also closely linked to the management of diversity and inclusion. Groups are rarely homogeneous; participants differ in prior knowledge, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, language proficiency, motivation, and needs. The trainer must design and facilitate exercises that respect and harness this diversity instead of ignoring it. This may involve offering differentiated tasks with varying levels of complexity, allowing multiple modes of participation (oral, written, visual, practical), forming heterogeneous groups to promote peer learning, or providing additional scaffolding for learners who need more support. The trainer also pays attention to culturally sensitive content and interaction patterns, avoiding exercises that might marginalize or stereotype certain participants. By acting as a mediator of diversity, the trainer turns exercises into spaces where learners can learn from one another's experiences and perspectives. [6]

In many contemporary learning environments, the trainer's role in organizing exercises extends into digital and blended contexts. Digital tools such as learning management systems, collaborative documents, polling applications, discussion forums and simulation software provide new possibilities for interactive exercises. The trainer selects appropriate technologies not for their novelty, but for their pedagogical added value. For example, online quizzes can be used for immediate formative assessment; collaborative documents can support group problem solving and co-creation; discussion forums can extend reflection beyond the physical classroom. The trainer designs exercises that integrate face-to-face and online components coherently, ensuring that digital activities are clearly connected to the overall learning objectives. Additionally, the trainer guides learners in using these tools effectively and ethically, paying attention to accessibility, data privacy, and digital etiquette.

Reflection and debriefing represent a crucial phase of any exercise, and the trainer plays an indispensable role in structuring and facilitating this phase. After an exercise, learners may have had intense experiences or generated complex ideas, but without guided reflection, much of the learning potential remains unused. The trainer leads debriefing discussions that help participants reconstruct what happened, interpret it, and derive generalizable lessons. Questions such as "What did we do?", "What did we notice?", "Why did it happen this way?", and "What can we do differently next time?" invite learners to connect action and theory. The trainer helps them link specific experiences to broader concepts, models or principles, thus consolidating learning. In addition, the trainer encourages

individual written reflection, such as learning journals or self-assessment forms, which deepen awareness of personal learning processes. Through these reflective structures, exercises become more than isolated activities; they become integral components of an ongoing developmental trajectory. [7]

Another important aspect of the trainer's role concerns the ethical dimension of exercises. Many exercises, especially experiential and role-based ones, can evoke strong emotions, reveal personal information, or influence attitudes and values. The trainer must anticipate potential ethical issues and design exercises in ways that minimize harm and respect participants' autonomy. This includes obtaining informed consent for more sensitive activities, allowing participants the possibility to opt out or modify their participation, and handling confidential information responsibly. The trainer also reflects on the power dynamics inherent in the trainer-learner relationship and avoids using exercises to manipulate or pressure learners. Instead, exercises are used to empower learners, strengthen their critical thinking, and enhance their capacity for autonomous decision making. Ethical sensitivity is therefore an integral component of professional competence in organizing educational exercises.

The trainer's role is further characterized by continuous professional development. Designing and facilitating effective exercises is not a static skill but a competence that grows through practice, reflection and learning from others. Trainers regularly evaluate their exercises by collecting feedback from learners, observing outcomes, and comparing them with the intended objectives. They may also engage in peer observation, co-facilitation, or communities of practice where exercises are shared, discussed and refined. Through this process, trainers update their repertoire of methods, adapt to emerging educational technologies, and refine their ability to respond flexibly to diverse groups and contexts. In this sense, the trainer is both a teacher and a learner, using every session as an opportunity to test hypotheses about learning and to adjust their practice.

From a systems perspective, the trainer's role in organizing exercises is also influenced by institutional frameworks, curricula, and assessment structures. Trainers often work under constraints such as limited time, fixed syllabi, large group sizes, or high-stakes examinations. These constraints can discourage the use of interactive exercises and reinforce traditional lecture-based approaches. Nevertheless, skilled trainers find ways to integrate exercises even within constrained settings, for example by using brief pair discussions, micro-simulations, or short reflective tasks. At the same time, they advocate within their institutions for recognition of the value of active learning and for the redesign of curricula to allow more space for meaningful exercises. Thus, the trainer's role is

not only operational but also strategic, contributing to broader educational innovation.

In competency-based education, the importance of the trainer's role in organizing exercises becomes even more pronounced. Competencies are demonstrated through performance, not merely through verbal recall. Exercises are therefore the primary means by which learners practice and show their competencies in authentic or simulated situations. The trainer designs performance-based tasks that mirror real-world challenges, integrates multiple competencies within single exercises, and uses performance criteria and rubrics to assess outcomes. This requires the trainer to have a deep understanding of the professional or societal context for which learners are being prepared, so that exercises are not abstract or artificial but meaningful and transferable. In this way, the trainer acts as a bridge between the learning environment and the real world, making exercises a rehearsal space for future practice. [8]

Finally, the emotional and motivational dimension of the trainer's role should not be underestimated. Exercises often determine whether learners perceive a session as engaging, relevant and enjoyable or as monotonous and alienating. By selecting varied, appropriately challenging and meaningful exercises, the trainer can foster intrinsic motivation, curiosity and a sense of achievement. The trainer's enthusiasm, authenticity and responsiveness further influence how learners experience exercises. When learners see that the trainer values their participation, recognizes their efforts, and celebrates their progress, they are more likely to invest energy and take ownership of their learning. Over time, this positive cycle contributes to the development of self-regulated learners who are capable of designing and engaging in their own learning exercises beyond formal educational settings.

In conclusion, the trainer's role in organizing exercises during educational sessions is complex, dynamic and central to the quality of learning. It encompasses planning, design, facilitation, observation, feedback, reflection, ethical care, inclusivity and ongoing professional development. Exercises are not marginal additions to "real teaching" but the very spaces where learning becomes concrete, active and personally meaningful. When trainers skillfully organize exercises that are aligned with clear objectives, responsive to learner diversity, grounded in sound pedagogical principles and supported by a safe and motivating climate, educational sessions can move beyond the transmission of information and become laboratories of transformation. Recognizing and supporting this multifaceted role of the trainer is therefore a key priority for educational institutions committed to effective and human-centered learning.

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