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## SELF-STUDY IN PREPARING A ROLE-PLAY AS A MEANS OF TRAINING FUTURE TEACHERS TO WORK WITH DEVIANT STUDENTS

**Abstract.** The article presents role-play as an important tool to prepare future teachers to work at school since role-playing can give insights into a future profession and show particular issues from working life. The author explains the necessity of role-playing while training teachers to work with difficult, deviant children as well as points out the positive outcome of self-study while preparing the role-play performance. The experiment of the role-play “How to behave in the classroom when you have a problem child” conducted among 4th-year students, training to be future teachers of English, in Saratov State University is described in detail.

**Keywords:** role-play, self-study, deviant students, training, university students

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## САМОСТОЯТЕЛЬНАЯ РАБОТА В ПОДГОТОВКЕ РОЛЕВОЙ ИГРЫ КАК СПОСОБА ПОДГОТОВКИ БУДУЩИХ УЧИТЕЛЕЙ К РАБОТЕ С ДЕВИАНТНЫМИ ОБУЧАЮЩИМИСЯ

**Аннотация.** Статья представляет ролевую игру как важный инструмент в подготовке будущих учителей к работе в школе, поскольку ролевая игра может дать понимание будущей профессии и показать особенности рабочих будней. Автор объясняет необходимость ролевой игры в процессе подготовки учителей к работе с трудными, девиантными детьми, а также подчеркивает позитивное влияние самостоятельной работы студентов в рамках подготовки выступления в ролевой игре. Детально описывается опыт проведения ролевой игры «Как вести себя в классе, где есть проблемный ребенок», со студентами 4 курса, будущими учителями английского языка, в Саратовском государственном университете.

**Ключевые слова:** ролевая игра, самостоятельная работа, девиантные обучающиеся, подготовка, студенты университета

Modern pedagogy has evolved to a stage where there exists an urgent necessity to devise and actively implement pedagogical technologies that promote the holistic development of each student's personality while enhancing their engagement. There is an increasing demand to create learning environments that inspire students to seek new outcomes in their work and subsequently apply these results effectively in practical contexts. One pedagogical tool with significant potential is the role-play. This method enhances students' readiness for their future professional endeavours. Students engage with the fundamental issues at hand, thereby improving their comprehension and retention of the material, as well as developing the capability to critically evaluate reality.

Role-playing can be defined as the involvement of participants in a real problem situation along with the desire for solution. Some academic disciplines use role-play to incorporate active learning into teaching, e. g. psychology, law, history, medicine and business. A lot of studies have reported that role-play is positive for students' learning since it provides the opportunity to get a deeper understanding of

an issue and stimulates further interest in the subject. For example, the study by Crow prove that role-play provides a high degree of student participation. Moreover, role-playing can give insights into a future profession, and particular issues from working life [1]. It also allows students to gain confidence in the real working world.

While studying the features of role-playing it is important to highlight that, according to Seaton, Dell'Angelo, Spencer, and Youngblood [2], role-play is a good helper in the development of self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-monitoring. Moreover, we agree with Dell'Olio and Donk [3] that role-playing helps students make responsible autonomous choices since it provides a chance to explore multiple ways of acting and reacting in a given situation.

No doubt, role-play is aimed at the formation of consciousness, learning new things, mutual assistance, and the development of professional abilities. That is why we strongly believe that role-play plays an important role in training future teachers. This method would allow them to prepare for unusual situations, struggles and possible problems that may appear at school.

The use of role-playing should begin from the first year of studies. In this matter we support the ideas of I. M. Shadrina, who stresses that this method can be applied at seminars, final conferences on pedagogical practice, in various organisational forms of education. It can be held both spontaneously in the process of training and education, or be specially prepared [4]. Students take on the role of a scientist, a thinker, trying to find the way out of the problems given. The roles performed by students in the process of role-playing let future teachers master the knowledge of how to behave in the classroom.

Nevertheless, role-playing seems to be especially valuable when analysing training future teachers to work with difficult children, deviant students since the number of this category of students is currently increasing. Yet, according to our early research in 2024 devoted to the level of readiness of students of Saratov State University majoring in teaching to work with teenagers with deviant behaviour, future teachers express doubt in their ability to manage working with difficult pupils [5]. That is why universities need to seek for new ways of preparing students to work and act in unexpected situations. We believe that role-playing may be one of the most useful tools to apply while training future teachers to interact with a difficult child.

To prove this point of view we conducted a role-play "How to behave in the classroom when you have a problem child" among 4th-year students (17 students) training to be teachers of English at the Faculty of Humanities, Russian and Foreign Languages at Saratov State University, Russia. The role-play was implemented as a part of the course "Written and oral practice of the English language" while working on the topic "Difficult Children" in March 2024. The goal of the role-play was to give students the opportunity to realise and explain their own teaching values while testing them against the views of others.

So, the students were tasked 2 weeks prior the role-play event to prepare a scene revealing challenging situations at school with different roles implying various types of behaviours, goals and arguing. Self-study played a crucial role in this performance since neither defined roles nor the set and the script were provided in the instructions. The only rule of the task was to prepare a play that would uncover the

problem of a difficult child at school. However, they were given a list of references with the names of the authors and their books dedicated to the problem of deviant children either in families or at schools. This way the students had to insert their theoretical knowledge into real-life situations. Since they were supposed to make the performances by themselves, future teachers were forced to actively engage in its preparation.

In the step of self-preparation students were separated into five groups (3-4 people). Then within the groups, they discussed the set and the topic, assigned the roles and prepared the script. All five groups had the roles of a teacher, a difficult child and their parents. In some groups, an additional role of a head teacher was added. In most plays (4 groups) the setting was parent-teacher meeting discussing the problematic behaviour of a pupil. However, one group prepared a play as a news report where the presenter highlights the influence of family members on a child and his behaviour in the classroom – so, the performance included three settings – the TV studio, the classroom and separate interviews with the participants. Self-preparation also required several rehearsals. It is important to emphasise the positive outcome of the group self-preparation since it helped them improve not only individual professional traits but also such important skills as organisational skills (e.g. scheduling, roles distribution, etc.) and communicative skills (e.g. learn how to argue in favour of something or support their own ideas).

Then the performances were shown in the classroom. The students were asked to discuss and share their impressions of each other's plays. So, the conversations between the students were an integral part of the role-play. The participants talked before, during, and after the performances. The role-playing stimulated continuous social interactions between the students. They asked questions on the reasons of the behaviour of all of the participants of the play trying to analyse the possibility of the situation in real-life conditions. Furthermore, the students also wondered on the correctness of the teacher's actions and attitude. Therefore, the role-play discussions focused on finding pedagogical ways to solve a particular issue from several different perspectives. This helped the students to realise that there are no set answers to any problem.

After the performances, the students reflected on the task and their preparation. Thus, the students stressed that self-study step was necessary to prepare a role-play since it gave them an opportunity to create a performance that had shown their own point of view and let them improve their personal traits such as leadership, time management, critical thinking, collaboration, etc. as well as hard and soft skills essential for teachers (e. g. assessment, problem solving, adaptability, conflict resolution and so on). However, some students noticed that there had been some problems with creating the script and the setting that would have looked new and unique. Moreover, two students pointed out the difficulties in rehearsing the play without the supervisor. Nevertheless, the participant admitted that this format helped them to increase their confidence and 'get rid of the fear to meet a difficult child in the class room and not know what to do'.

All in all, the conducted prepared role-play showed the effectiveness in training future teachers to work with deviant students highlighting the positive outcome of including self-study step while preparing the performance.

So, even though every day there is a new challenge that educators must face, and it takes time and experience to learn how to handle situations appropriately, using role-play techniques to guide future educators may be applied as an effective way to construct a platform for the exploration of issues, provide practical mentorship, and inspire reflection about best practices.

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