ROLE PLAY

AN INTRODUCTION AND A READY-MADE TEACHING UNIT ON THE TOPIC

You can find the handout for the role-play directly under the following link:	Sie finden die Handreichung für das Rollenspiel direkt unter dem folgenden Link:

https://www.trocaire.org/sites/default/files/resources/edu/creating-futures-lesson-8.pdf

For an introduction to the method, please read the following pages (p.2-3)	Für eine Einführung in die Methode lesen Sie bitte die folgenden Seiten (S.4-5).

ROLE PLAY: A COMPACT METHOD GUIDE   ENGLISH

Role plays promote social skills, empathy and reflection - and bring subject content to life. With clear objectives, good planning and professional reflection, they strengthen both subject-specific and interdisciplinary skills in the long term. The method is versatile: it combines cognitive and emotional learning objectives and is suitable from primary school to adult education.

1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE METHOD

Role-playing is a scenic method in which the participants slip into predetermined or self-developed roles and act out a situation from real life or a fictional scene. In doing so, they learn to change perspectives, put themselves in other people's shoes and try out options for action (cf. Hofbauer, 2025)

Historical origin (brief): Educational role-playing can be traced back to traditions of theatre, theatre pedagogy and reform pedagogical approaches. As early as the 1920s, drama pedagogical elements were used to deepen learning processes (cf. Bolton, 1984).

2. BASIC PRINCIPLE

The basic principle of role play is based on experience through action: Participants actively experience a situation instead of just reading about it or discussing it. This contextualises knowledge and enables both cognitive and emotional learning (cf. Neelands, 2009).

3. TARGET GROUP

- **School** (all levels): Can be used in both primary and secondary schools (see workshop approaches in Hofbauer, 2025).
- **Adult education/university**: Role plays are particularly effective in teacher training and personnel development, for example to practise conflict resolution (see Dirisamer, 2025).
- **Extracurricular** contexts: team training, coaching, intercultural training, etc.

4. COMPETENCES THAT ARE PROMOTED

1. **Social competences**: Empathy, perspective-taking, communication skills.
2. **Creativity and expressiveness**: creative potential is unleashed by developing and performing one's own roles.
3. **Ability to reflect**: Own and other people's behaviour is questioned and evaluated in a differentiated way.
4. **Understanding**: Role-playing can make real-life specialist topics (history, politics, science, etc.) more tangible.

REALISATION STEPS

1. **Determine the topic and objective**
   Clarify the learning objective you are pursuing with the role play (e.g. conflict resolution, deepening a historical topic).
2. **Prepare roles and scenario**
   Create a scenario (e.g. a historical event or an everyday conflict).
   Define roles that are relevant to the scenario.
3. **Introduction and role allocation**
   Introduce the situation and give the participants short role descriptions or cards.
   Optional: For younger groups, the roles can be distributed in a playful way (drawing lots, costumes, props).

4. **Warm-up exercises**

   Short theatre pedagogical exercises prepare the group for the scenic play (see Hofbauer, 2025).

5. **Realisation of the role play**

   Keep the scene short and ensure a clear time limit.

   Depending on the objective: intervene and control or let the action unfold freely.

6. **Reflection (evaluation)**

   Accompany the evaluation with impulse questions:

   - How did you feel in the roles?
   - What new perspectives did you discover?
   - How can the findings be transferred to everyday life?

7. **Further deepening**

   Link the results to the learning material or topic covered.

   Possible follow-up tasks

6. CRITICISM (PROS, CONS & TIPS)

Pro

- High motivation factor through active experience.
- Promotes team spirit, empathy and the ability to express oneself.
- Intensive and sustainable learning, as emotional and cognitive levels are combined.

Contra

- Can trigger initial inhibitions in shy participants.
- Requires careful moderation to deal constructively with conflicts in the game.
- Time-consuming to prepare and implement.

Tips for better implementation

- Introduce the game gently with small role plays or improvisation exercises.
- Make the room and stage appealing so that the group feels comfortable.
- Adapt roles flexibly to avoid over- or underchallenging the group.
- Agree a "stop" signal so that the leader can intervene if situations escalate.

7. LITERATURE TIPS

- **Bolton, G. (1984):** *Drama as Education.* Longman.
  (basics of educational role play.)

- **Neelands, J. (2009):** *Theatre & Education.* Palgrave Macmillan.
  (Inspiring ideas for using theatre methods in the classroom.)

- **Hofbauer, R. (2025):** *Theatermethoden und Kreativität in der Volksschule.*
  In: *Symposium Art & Science*, Workshop 2. ⟦cite⟧turn0file0⟧

- **Dirisamer, N. (2025):** *ARTinScience: Innovation im Hochschulunterricht.*
  In: *Symposium Art & Science*, Workshop 3. ⟦cite⟧turn0file0⟧
  (Role Play in University context.)

- https://www.trocaire.org/sites/default/files/resources/edu/creating-futures-lesson-8.pdf