Role Play and Fish-Bowl Observation

Description   In a **role play** the learner portrays a certain role as a way of experiencing that role. In **fish-bowl observation**, while students are portraying the assigned roles, other students observe and analyse the behaviours. These two activities can be separated and combined as shown in the example below.

Example
1. Students are divided into two groups. One group of students, as performers, plays different roles and another group, as observers, watches the role play.
2. Students are provided with a scenario that each of the performers has to describe and portray his/her role in a simulated setting.
3. Students as observers take note of the key findings regarding the behaviours of the performers.
4. At the end, form a discussion about the role play with focus on the behaviours observed and how the role play reflects the learning outcomes.

How Active?   Role play is effective in making the class more interactive as students are given chances to act out their roles, actively respond to each other, and perform a number of tasks which are designed based on human interactions. Therefore, it is widely used in the health sciences and social sciences disciplines.

How Related to Real Life?   Role play creates a particular situation where students experience different roles and view the situation from different perspectives. They can practise techniques required in the professional practice particularly for the clinical and social sciences disciplines. However, in role play, students are not interacting with real practitioners in the real situation.

What Learning Outcomes?   In role play and fish-bowl observation students act out the roles and view the situation from different perspectives so that they build up rapport and empathy for each other. This is important in improving interpersonal skills. They also become more critical when they evaluate the role players' behaviours.