Simulated Development Project

Fall 2007

Introduction

- *Purpose:* To give you some experience in engaging in participatory research and development
- *You will be given:*
  - o The broad outline of a problem
  - o A development partner
  - o A faculty advisor
  - o A team of classmates to work with
- *It is up to you to:*
  - o Find out what the full context and needs are
  - o Negotiate a proposal with the development partner
  - o React flexibly to unforeseen events
  - o Build capacity with the partnering organization and community
  - o Evaluate outcomes and plan for sustainability
  - o Provide interim and final reports

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Your development partner

- Your partner has an idea of what the organization wants, and what the needs of the community are. This idea may be well founded or not.

- Your task is to:
    - o Understand their perspective
    - o Consider all viable solutions
    - o Then either validate their original idea of a solution, and make it real *or* persuasively recommend an alternative solution

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Simulation details

- We are basing the simulated participatory research and development on actual experience.

- You don't know what the *project* is on day one.

- Information will be incomplete.

- Situations will change.

- It is up to you to:
  - Manage relationships
  - Manage the project
  - Manage change

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Simulation details contd.

- Each week, you should be communicating with your development partner.

- Your partner will provide feedback.

- In some instances, you will provide your partner and faculty advisor with a plan (e.g. needs assessment and capacity-building plan).

- We will provide simulated outcomes of that assessment or plan.

- The simulated outcome will only be as good as your plan, so you must be *meticulous about details in your plan.*

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Technical solution

- The technical soundness of your proposed solution is fundamental to the project success
  - o Human, social, and institutional issues are important, but equally important is the technology solution.
  - o An excellent participative assessment and inspired capacity building are for naught if the technical solution is not functional and robust.
  - o Know the domain
    - ICT/Computing
    - Human needs by domain (healthcare, agriculture, etc.)
  - o Know the limits of the technology

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Challenge #1

- Understand the problem
    - o   Do background research on the partner organization and the community in which your project will be implemented.
    - o   Learn to ask the right questions and to collect information in a professional manner.

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Assignment #1

- Meet with your team and discuss a strategy for addressing the problem. Make sure you distribute the work effectively according to the strengths of your teammates.

- Prepare a list of questions to ask your partner.

- Get feedback on your strategic plan and list of questions from your faculty advisor.

- Set up a meeting with your partner and assess the problem using your list of questions as a guide (this can be remote, as reqd.)

- Produce your first report (*due Monday October 22 via BlackBoard*) describing the following:
  - o The community and partner organization you are working with
  - o A clear articulation of problem you propose to solve (your partner should agree with you on this)
  - o The challenges you expect to face
  - o Any other details relevant to understanding the problem

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Challenge #2

- Propose a solution
    - o Make sure the solution serves the needs of your partner and the community.
    - o Make sure your partner understands the strengths, weaknesses, and costs of your proposed solution.
    - o Think carefully about the sustainability of your proposed solution.

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Assignment #2

- Meet with your team and design a solution to the problem you proposed to solve. Make sure you get frequent feedback from your faculty advisor and from your partner.

- Make sure you think about milestones, timeline, budget, and observable outcomes, that you design a set of capacity-building measures to implement with your partner to create sustainable change in the community you are working with, and that you include an evaluation plan to assess the project.

- Produce your second report (*due Monday November 5 via BlackBoard*) describing the following:
  - o   An executive summary of your report
  - o   An updated understanding of the problem and the challenges you faced
  - o   Your proposed complete solution (including evaluation plan etc.)

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Etc.

- Additional directions will be forthcoming later in the semester
- The project will culminate in a final report and final presentation due during finals week.
- Included in your final presentation will be a demonstration of your working system.

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