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# Learning Guide 1.9 Interaction- Practice Dilemmas

## **Objectives**

* Learners will be able to identify a practice dilemma related to interacting with young children with and without disabilities.
* Learners will be able to provide powerful and open-ended questions and/or solutions to other learners’ practice dilemmas.

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| **Related Content:** [Module 1: Interaction](https://rpm.fpg.unc.edu/module-1-interaction)  **Instructional Method:** Problem-solving  **Level:** Expert  **Estimated Time Needed:** 5 min. instructor preparation; 90 min. learner activity |

## **Description**

## This learning guide is intended for practicing teachers and can be used in advanced university courses or professional development. Each learner will come to the class session prepared with a dilemma of practice related to interactions and then in small groups learners will use a consultancy protocol to help solve the problem of practice.

## **Materials/Resources**

* Handout 1.13a Consultancy Protocol
* Handout 1.13b Consultancy Protocol – Note-Taking Tool
* Optional: Handout 1.13c Sample practice dilemmas

## **Facilitator Instructions**

1. NOTE: Instruct learners to think of a practice dilemma for interactions **prior** to the class/session time. Here are sample instructions you might provide:

*February 27 – Come to class with a description of a significant challenge (dilemma) you are currently facing in interacting with children in your class and making sure that these interactions are effective in impacting child outcomes. Consider the following:*

* *Describe your challenges*
* *Explore the dilemma*
* *Frame a focus question for your classmates/peers*
* *Critique your question*

1. Divide learners into groups of 4. Ask each group to identify a facilitator who will manage the time and ensure that group members are staying on task. (When it is the facilitator’s turn to share his or her dilemma of practice, the facilitator may choose an alternate).
2. Hand each group member a copy of Handout 1.13a Consultancy Protocol and Handout 1.13b Consultancy Protocol – Note-Taking Tool.
3. Instruct groups to follow the consultancy protocol. Provide 20-25 minutes per group member to discuss practice dilemmas following the Consultancy Protocol. Make sure there is sufficient time for each group member to have a chance to share his or her practice dilemma.
4. Debrief with the whole group.

## **Suggested Assessment**

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| **If the learner…** | **Then provide feedback…** |
| Cannot identify a practice dilemma related to the content area – interactions. | Allow the learner to use a sample practice dilemma from Handout 1.13c Sample practice dilemmas. |
| Does not provide powerful and open-ended questions and/or solutions to other learners’ practice dilemmas. | Refer the learner back to Handout 1.13a and review the sample questions. |

## **Distance Learning Tips**

* Synchronous class: If possible, divide learners into groups and put each group in separate chat rooms that you can still monitor. If not, call on small groups of learners to complete the protocol while the rest of the class observes. Note that in this model not all learners will have the opportunity to have their practice dilemma heard unless it is a small class or you reduce the amount of time given to each dilemma.
* Asynchronous class: Have each class member post in a forum their practice dilemma by a certain date. Then, have other learners post clarifying questions, probing questions along with responses to others to simulate a consultancy group discussion by a second date. Lastly, have each class member post a final reflection in his or her original forum post.

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| Example:   * March 12 – Post your practice dilemma in the Forum. * March 15 – Each learner must comment on at least two other practice dilemmas and respond to at least two other comments. String discussion is encouraged! (If a practice dilemma already has 2 comments/responses please try to find a practice dilemma that has not received comments yet). * March 16 – Post your final reflection on your practice dilemma based on the comments of your peers. |

**Handout 1.13a – Consultancy Protocol**

**Directions:** The consultancy protocol is a structured process for solving a problem of practice. In this process, a presenter describes a dilemma and invites a consulting group to explore the problem through structured questions. A facilitator manages the process.

**Step 1: Presenter Overview (3 minutes)**

The presenter gives an overview of the problem of practice along with a focus question.

**Step 2: Clarifying Questions (3 minutes)**

Consultancy group asks clarifying questions of the presenter (clarifying questions are questions that can be answered with facts such as who, what, when, where, and how).

**Step 3: Probing Questions (5 minutes)**

The consultancy group asks probing questions that help the presenter think more deeply about the dilemma. They are powerful and open ended. They help the presenter begin to analyze the dilemma. The consultancy group does not give advice. A good probing question avoids yes/no responses, stimulates reflective thinking, and challenges assumptions.

*Examples of probing questions:*

* *What would have to change in order to…?*
* *What was your intention when…?*
* *What is the connection between… and …?*

**Step 4: Consultancy Group Discussion (10 minutes)**

The presenter *withdraws* from the group, taking notes on the discussion (IMPORTANT – the presenter may not make comments or answer questions during this time). The consultancy group might describe possible actions that the presenter might take, but they should not decide on a solution. Their job is simply to refine the issues for the presenter. Suggested questions to get the discussion going:

* What did we hear?
* What didn’t we hear that we think might be relevant?
* What assumptions seem to be operating?
* What questions does the dilemma raise for us?
* What might we do or try if faced with a similar dilemma?
* What have we done in similar situations?

**Step 5: Presenter Reflection (3 minutes)**

Referring to notes taken during the consultancy group discussion, the presenter reflects on what the participants said and how their comments have affected his or her thinking. It is particularly important for the presenter to share new insights that the discussion has provided.

***Adapted from the National School Reform Faculty***

**Handout 1.13b Consultancy Protocol – Note-Taking Tool**

**Directions:** This tool is to be used by the practice dilemma presenter. During step 4 of the consultancy protocol, the presenter will take notes on the consultancy group’s discussion. The presenter may **NOT** comment or answer questions during this time. The presenter will then use these notes to guide reflection.

NAME:

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE:

MY CLARIFYING QUESTIONS:

MY PROBING QUESTIONS:

OTHER THOUGHTS:

**Handout 1.13c – Sample Practice Dilemmas**

**Directions:** Use these practice dilemmas for any learners who do not have their own dilemma of practice or for a “practice” round prior to completing the consultancy protocol in small groups.

**Interaction Dilemma #1**

*I teach a blended class of three and four-year olds where most of the classmates are typically developing children and there are a few with disabilities. Braden is a new three-year-old with limited communicative ability. He is eager to participate in the activities and routines of the classroom but I find that it is hard to effectively communicate with him when there is a change in the routine (e.g., it’s picture day and we will be having outside time later in the day instead of the usual time).*

FOCUS QUESTION: *What tools or strategies can I use to make our interactions and communications more effective when the routine has changed?*

**Interaction Dilemma #2**

*I am an early intervention provider and coach parents and other caregivers on doing best practices to promote optimal outcomes for children on my caseload. My practice dilemma is that many parents and caregivers I work with are very quick to do things for the child with a disability rather than allow the child to struggle a bit to solve the problem on their own. Often the adults mention how they want to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of the child as a justification for this behavior.*

FOCUS QUESTION: *How can I differentiate for caregivers when to be sensitive and responsive and when to step back and allow children to problem solve on their own at the same time?*

**Interaction Dilemma #3**

*I am an itinerant special education teacher for a small county in the rural South. I travel to many care centers to work with young children with a wide range of disabilities. Recently, I have been trying to improve my practice in observing, interpreting, and responding to children’s play without imposing my own agenda. For example, I might have a goal of increasing a child’s comprehension of stories so I want to do book reading with the child, but instead the child wants to play in the block area.*

FOCUS QUESTION: *How can I become more responsive to children’s interactions while still maintaining progress toward specific IEP goals?*