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Students' View on the Use of Business Gaming in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with students feedback on the usage of business gaming in Hong Kong. It is intended to see how students viewed business gaming as a learning tool. Over 70 percent of 93 students regarded business gaming to be "critical" and "important" for accomplishing the course objectives "developing decision making skills"; "learning concepts related to business", "general problem identification and analytical skills", "developing planning skills"; and "using financial data to make management decision". A total of 52.7 percent of students thought they benefited from "understanding consequences of decision taken" while 22.6 percent felt "long waiting time after sign on" is a disadvantage in the use of computer simulation. Over 50 percent of students found the simulation package "easy to use", "fun and interesting", and "minimizing student frustration".

INTRODUCTION

A survey questionnaire was administered to 2 groups of final year degree students who enrolled in the subject of strategic management in 1995 and 1996. Participants in this survey received business gaming in their tutorial sessions. A total of 215 survey questionnaires were distributed and 93 usable questionnaires were received.

Students' Views on Usefulness of Computer Simulations to Meet the Course Objectives

Respondents gave very high ratings (combining critical and important) to the following: 86% for "developing decision making skills", 78.9% for "learning concepts related to business", 78.8% for "general problem identification and analytical

skills"; 75.3% for "developing planning skills", 70.8% for "using financial data to make management decisions"; 67.4% for "understanding general management perspectives"; and 66.3% for "improving group process skills".

Perceived Benefits of Business Gaming by Students

Students were asked what benefits they gained from participation in business gaming. A total of 52.7 percent of students (49 out of 93) chose "understanding consequences of decision taken". Another 49.5 percent (46 out of 93) chose "better understanding of market mechanism". 47.3 percent (44 out of 93) picked "integration of knowledge from a range of subjects".

Perceived Disadvantages of Business Gaming by Students

The top three scores of perceived disadvantages were "long waiting time after sign on" with 22.6 percent, "decisions unrealistic" with 19.4 percent, and "preparation time very demanding -- understanding manual" with 15.1 percent.

Students' Evaluation on Business Gaming

The result showed the highest three combined scores of excellent and above average went to "easy to use", 65.8%; "fun/interesting", 52.7%, and "minimizing student frustration", 50.6%. A combined 40.3% of respondents indicated business gaming was below average and poor on "error free programming".

Using Business Gaming to test Students' Understanding of Business Enterprise

Students were asked if it had been helpful towards testing their understanding in terms of their total experience with business gaming. Results indicated that business gaming has helped students to understand "what is my business" 71.1%, "bargaining & negotiation in strategic management" 70.0%. "managing finance, survival, growth, etc" 67.8%; analytical thinking in decision making" 64.4%, "conflict of stakeholders' interests" 63.3%, and "how information & communication affect competitive position" 63.3%.

Students' View on Grade Weights Assigned to Subjects

Respondents were asked to give their views on grade weights assigned to four major activities: examination, computer simulation, case study, and student participation. The modal response on grade weights for simulation was 1-10% (39.6% of respondents); for simulation report, 1-10% (47.0% of respondents) for discussion/participation. 11-20% (52.1% of respondents); for case study, 11-20% (36.8% of respondents), for test, 21-30% (23.6% of respondents). for examination, 41-60% (39.3% of respondents).

Previous Participation in Business Gaming

A total of 66 students (71%) indicated they had previously been involved in business gaming. 27 students (29%) claimed they had not participated in any computer simulation activities. Sixty respondents claimed they had been involved in production and operation management simulation. Five participants indicated they had participated in simulation related to strategic management, and another participant simply wrote general management subject.

CONCLUSION

This exploratory study reflected the favorable attitude of Hong Kong students towards the use of business gaming as a teaching tool. 85 out of 93 participants indicated they would recommend business gaming to the next group of students in the forthcoming year. Students confirmed that they learned concepts related to business and developed important skills such as problem identification, planning and decision making. In a limited way, they made use of relevant environmental information to help them analyze the stream of decision situations that confronted them. Gaming thus served to give students a taste of strategic management and generally enhanced their understanding of the complexity of managing a business enterprise. Good practice in teaching can generally be maintained by making planning an iterative process and justifies initiating this study which covers 2 groups of students in Hong Kong. The richness of the information generated from this survey helps us to understand what students think and feel about the gaming experience and highlighted a few unmet expectations and areas for future improvement in Hong Kong. Further study can be done on the nature of student resistance to such teaching pedagogy in a cross-cultural comparison context between Hong Kong and USA.

REFERENCE

References are available upon request.