

Using Simulation Games and Case Studies in Teaching Performance Measurement and Management

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Simulation games and case studies are used extensively in teaching in business administration. However, few studies investigate the relationship between using simulation games in tandem with case studies and student learning. This study showed only a positive direct relationship between the benefits gained from case studies and student learning. There was no apparent direct relationship between the benefits gained from simulation and student learning. The study also showed a relationship between benefits gained from simulation games and benefits gained from case studies. It can be concluded that simulation games affect student learning only when accompanied by case studies¹.

INTRODUCTION

Performance measurement and management (PMM) is on most business agendas, as it helps managers know the outcome of the decisions that have been made and also guides them in the formulation of the most appropriate strategies in today's rapidly changing business environment. PMM is also useful for the translation of strategy into action. Measurements of the success of a strategy helps a manager become aware of the importance of strategy and enables good alignment of all actions with the objectives of the organization.

Given the importance of PMM, many organizations have begun to train their people to understand this concept more. Many institutes of higher education provide courses relating to PMM to enable students to better understand the concept and henceforth use this knowledge to help the organization they are connected with.

As lecturers help students understand the concept of PMM, they add to the traditional lectures using slides and handouts by offering the students the opportunity for hands-on experience in PMM. This can be done by asking real organizations to allow students to work in real situations. However this option is limited as an organization may find it too risky to let students engage in this since they have no way of knowing whether or not a particular student is ready. This brings up other options – the use of simulation games and case studies. Simulation games allow students to make decisions under various constraints in simulated situations, while case studies allow students to make decisions based on information from real stories from organizations. Discussion of the case studies in a classroom situation also encourages students to exchange ideas and opinions.

Although simulation games and case studies seem to be an effective tool for student learning, in many cases they are not as effective as desired. Students sometimes complain that though simulation games and case studies are interesting, they gain little new knowledge. Although there are some studies attempting to prove the effectiveness of these two tools [see for example; Anderson (2005); Fowler (2006) for the