SIMULATION-BASED LEARNING IN EDUCATION AND FURTHER EDUCATION

Educating future managers is more than knowledge transfer. The knowledge has to be aligned with a practical context allowing students to experience the impacts of their decisions on business and stakeholders' interests. Particularly, educating Generation Y calls for appropriate didactic methods (infotainment). Simulation-based learning serves these purposes. It offers the possibility to point out the trade-offs in a realistic way, and forces students to solve dilemmas between economical and ethical impacts. Moreover, integrating practical simulations into the curriculum offers new opportunities for course-organization and more effective and attractive self-study-programs.

For this purpose, the "Center of Strategy and Operations" at the School of Management and Law at ZHAW developed a practical simulation tool in project management together with STS, a private company. The tool confronts the students with trade-offs and dilemmas during the realization of a project. The simulated situations were designed according to real projects, transferred to didactically appropriate software. The tool has been translated into 18 languages and is distributed under the name SimulTrain in more than 50 countries by STS (www.sts.ch). At the School of Management and Law, SimulTrain is deployed in bachelor and further education courses. Other simulation tools are applied with good results in several modules such as Strategic Management, Process Management, Supply Chain Management, etc.

Simulation-based learning is researched and discussed internationally. Steadman et al. (2006) point out that it is superior to problem-based learning for the acquisition of management skills and Bos et al. (2006) propose simulations to teach corporate social responsibility. Therefore it is expected that the importance of simulation-based learning in business education will increase.

References

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