

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES OF BUSINESS SIMULATIONS: REALISTIC EXPERIENCE OR CONTRIVED FANTASY?

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ABSTRACT

In an ongoing effort to explore ways to improve the classroom experience, many universities across the country are trying to unearth the most effective methods to reach their students. Several recent studies have looked at the utilization of experiential learning exercises in the classroom setting. This paper sought to (1) evaluate students' perceptions regarding simulation exercises; specifically, our primary intention was to identify whether students felt they performed better or learned more in classes that incorporated simulations as opposed to those that did not; (2) discover which factors students felt contributed to successful performance while participating in a simulation exercise; (3) highlight differences in student perceptions of simulations between those students that have simulation experience and those that do not; and 4) find whether there was a significant difference in opinion regarding simulation exercises (by previous simulation participants) as a function of the characteristics of the individual respondents.

Results indicate that student views regarding simulation exercises, regardless of whether they had previous participation experience, were positive. Students believe that simulation exercises: better enable them to learn course material, improve their self-confidence when job hunting, help prepare them for their professional career, and aid in the development of critical thinking skills. These findings should suggest to educators that the integration of experiential learning techniques into the classroom setting should be strongly considered. Experiential learning through activities like simulation exercises is clearly a valuable teaching methodology that is here to stay. Our thought is that the frequent incorporation of simulation exercises in the

classroom setting may serve as a useful tool to reinforce course material. This study showed that students positively view simulation exercises. The more that students' comfort with this teaching methodology grows, the more personally and academically rewarding the experience will likely become.