Chapter 13
The Role of Strategic Management Simulation as a Tool for Teamwork KSA Learning

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of strategic management simulations as a tool so that university students can learn to work in a team, that is, they can enhance their Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA) for effective teamwork. The authors carry out an analysis of the effect of strategic management simulation on the teamwork KSA with a group of undergraduates studying in the School of Business. The results show that teamwork KSA can improve and that the initial knowledge of that teamwork KSA, at the individual level, is the only factor that conditions their learning. Initial knowledge of the teamwork KSA and the spread of this knowledge within the team are not determinant influences on the learning-by-doing of the individual. Surprisingly, neither are features such as intelligence, personality, attitude to teamwork, and teamwork self-efficacy, both of the individual and the team.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4611-7.ch013
1. INTRODUCTION

Educational settings and organizational workplace has changed over the last decades focusing on team-based work systems, where two or more individuals interact interdependently toward a common and valued goal or objective, and who have each been assigned specific roles or functions to perform (e.g., Ilgen, Major, Hollenbeck, & Sego, 1993). Teams can be more effective than individuals because team members can share the workload, monitor the behavior of their teammates, and combine their different areas of expertise (Mathieu, Heffner, Goodwin, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 2000). The importance of teams is increasing, as work requires greater cooperation and coordination than ever—both within and between work units (Ilgen & Pulakos, 1999).

Strategic decisions are a good example of decisions that frequently need to be made by a team (e.g., Patzelt, Knyphausen-Aufseß, & Fischer, 2009). In so doing, students’ training requires not only the transmission of knowledge of strategy, but also an emphasis on teaching team decision making. Teams are often unsuccessful due to a lack of teamwork knowledge and skill on the part of the members who are usually chosen for their functional technical skills (Marks, Sabella, Burke, & Zaccaro, 2002). It is important to know how to coordinate with a team for a specific task and, it is also necessary for each student to have the knowledge, skills and abilities (hereafter KSA) which favor or facilitate the making of strategic team decisions in any situation (Mohammed, Mathieu & Bartlett, 2002; Stevens & Campion, 1994; 1999) because without such knowledge and skill, team members can be unprepared to work as an interdependent unit (Hollenbeck, DeRue & Guzzo, 2004; Mohrman, Cohen, & Mohrman, 1995). In spite of the fact that for many years the effectiveness of a team has been associated with the learning of a task (Cannon-Bowers, Tannenbaum, Salas & Volpe, 1995; Liang, Moreland, & Argote, 1995; Marks et al., 2002; Marks, Zaccaro & Mathieu, 2000), nowadays the necessity for individuals to be able to work in teams has been clearly shown, independently of the task to be performed and of the firm in which it is developed (Cannon & Edmonson, 2001; Chen, Donahue & Klimoski, 2004). Stevens and Campion (1994), after a far-reaching revision of the characteristics necessary for teamwork, identify the knowledge, skills and abilities (teamwork KSA) which convert a student into an effective member for working in any team. This teamwork KSA is denominated generalizable and transportable (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1995), and refer, exclusively, to teamwork. The teamwork KSA identified by Stevens and Campion (1994) have a double nature: they are interpersonal and self-manageable.

The former refer to the knowledge, skills and abilities for: ‘(1) Conflict Resolution KSA (i.e., the ability to recognize and encourage desirable, but discourage undesirable team conflict; to recognize the type and source of conflict and implement an appropriate resolution strategy; and to use integrative, rather than distributive, approaches to negotiation); (2) Collaborative Problem Solving KSA (i.e., the ability to match the proper degree of participation to the problem; and to recognize obstacles to collaborative problem solving and implement appropriate corrective actions); and (3) Communication KSA (i.e., the ability to recognize and utilize decentralized networks to enhance communication; to communicate openly and supportively; to listen nonevaluatively and use active listening techniques; to match one’s own nonverbal and verbal messages and to recognize and interpret the nonverbal messages of others; and to engage in small talk and ritual greetings). The latter refer to the knowledge, skills and abilities for: (4) Goal Setting and Performance Management KSA (i.e., the ability to help establish specific, challenging, and accepted team goals; and to monitor, evaluate, and provide feedback on performance); and (5) Planning and Task Coordination KSA –i.e., the ability to coordinate and synchronize activities, information, and tasks between team members;