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Using a Business Simulation as an Integrative Assignment in a Learning Community

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Using a Business Simulation as an Integrative Assignment in a Learning Community

Kathleen Gurley and Dothang Truong
Fayetteville State University
HBCU Summit on Retention, March, 2009

Learning Communities

- Washington Center Summer Institute
 - Early emphasis on retention & engagement
 - Deeper learning (Lardner & Malmarich, 2008)
- HBCU Faculty Development Network
 - 13% of HBCUs were using L.C.s (Dawkins, 2006)
- Harvard Interdisciplinary Studies Project
 - Integration of disciplinary knowledge
 - Application in novel situations (Mansilla, 2004)

Business Curriculums

- Gulf Between Academia and Real World
 - Empirical positivism less effective with ambiguous problems (Joseph and George, 2002)

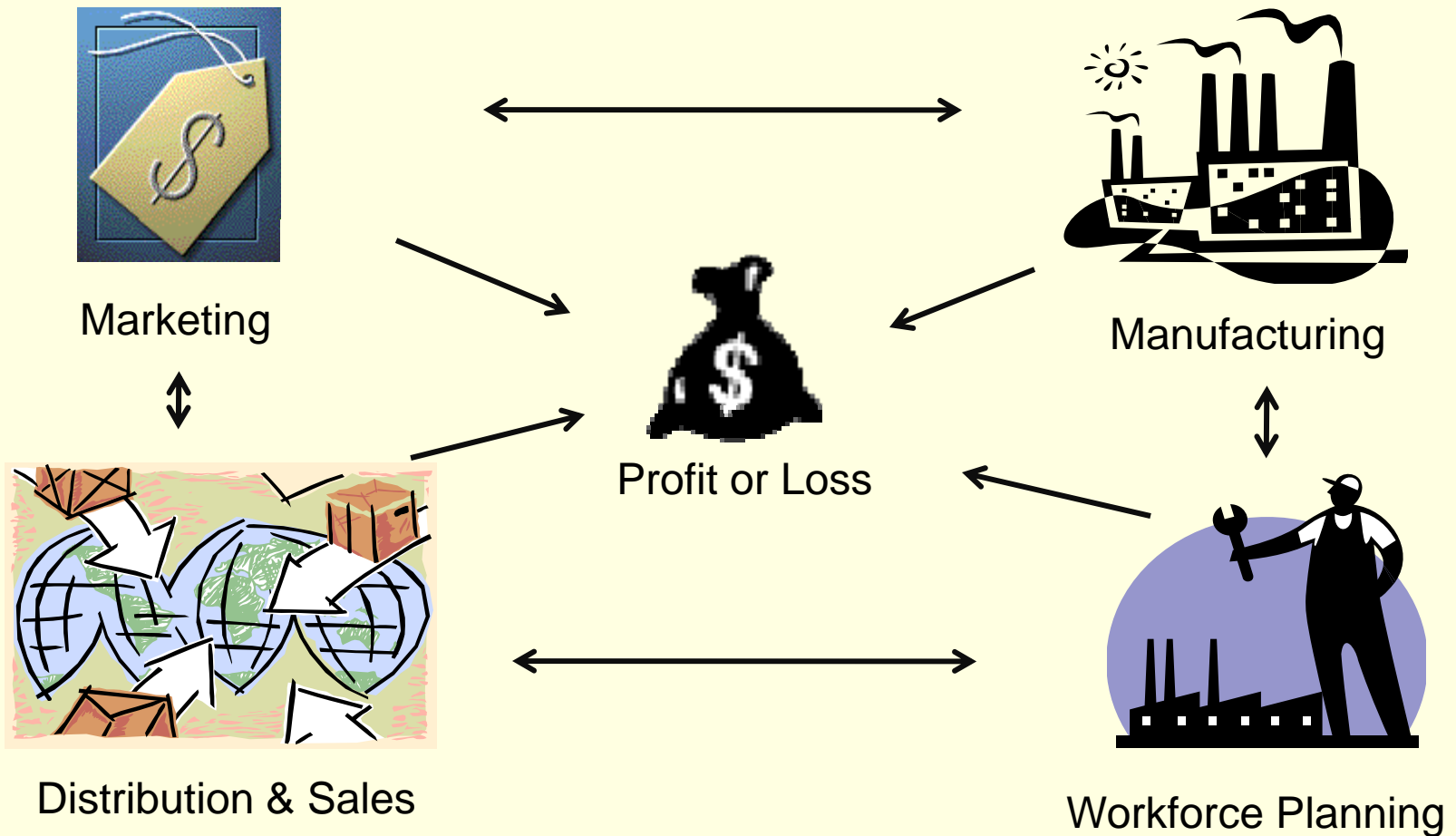
- Experiential Nature of Knowledge
 - Guides business executives in decisions (Homan, 2000)
 - Active versus passive learning (Albrecht, 2000)

- Artificial Disciplinary Boundaries Cause Fragmented Approach (Albrecht & Sacs, 2000)
 - Cross functional problem solving (Hakkarainen et al, 2004)

Purpose and Methodology

- Evaluate the Effectiveness of a Business Simulation as an Integrative Assignment
 - Learning community with Strategic Management and Operations Management
- Improved Learning on Content
 - Questionnaire administered in learning community and traditional sections
- Use of Simulation as an Integrative Assignment
 - Mansilla's integrative assignment rubric

Micromatic Business Simulation



Learning Environment

- Learning community: Back to Back Courses
 - Once a week focused on simulation
- Every Week Decisions Were Processed
 - Reports provided of performance measures for all teams
- Faculty Acted as Banker or Board Member
 - Teams explained their decisions
- Two Practice Rounds to Start

Final Paper

- Business strategy
- Marketing decisions
 - Support strategy
- Production performance
 - Control of manufacturing COGS
 - Workforce productivity
 - Inventory
- Finance decisions
- Learnings

Evaluation of Final Papers

Team	Strat Mgmt Knowledge	Oper Mgmt Knowledge	Degree of Integration	Degree of Reflection
1	Mastery	Mastery	Mastery	Mastery
2	Developing	Introductory	Introductory	Introductory
3	Mastery	Developing	Developing	Developing
4	Mastery	Developing	Mastery	Mastery
5	Introductory	Developing	Introductory	Developing
6	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing

Student Engagement

Dimension	Group	No of Students	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sig.
Time spent on course	Learning Community	19	2.53	.61	.44
	Traditional	29	2.38	.68	
Interaction with instructors	Learning Community	19	2.53	.51	.11
	Traditional	29	2.28	.53	

Content Knowledge

Dimension	Group	No of Students	Mean (% correct)	Std Dev	Sig.
Strat Mgmt Content	Learning Community	19	59.2%	31.4	.04
	Traditional Strat Mgmt	12	37.5%	25.0	
Oper Mgmt Content	Learning Community	19	69.7%	13.4	.00
	Traditional Oper Mgmt	17	38.2%	17.9	

DISCUSSION

- Early Mistakes Decreased Student Effort
 - Greater faculty oversight
- Simulation Did Provide Integration and Reflection
 - Quarterly results and reflection
 - Financial results require integration
- Surprised at Student Engagement Results
- Simulation Created Active Learning
 - Traditional course format more abstract

Conclusion

- Simulation Good Fit With Learning Community
- Improved Learning and Integration
- Time Required for Simulation Justified If Deeper Learning