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Importance of Management Games in Classroom learning - A perspective

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Preamble:

Management is an art or science is debatable.

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But one thing which is sure is that importance of management functions, learning basic management concepts and its application in day to day activity of corporate world has achieved tremendous acceptance in recent years.

Today every graduate aspires to have MBA tagged to his name. And to train these graduates there are several schools and institutions that offer full time, part time or even distance learning education in Management. But can just classroom teaching or study material provide enough knowledge to a candidate who can use this classroom knowledge in unpardonable corporate world? The answer is an emphatic no. Learning theory and practicing it is altogether different ball game, especially when applying management concepts. So to train these graduates a different approach is required where learning becomes interesting.

Learning Management:

Classroom teaching is one of the methods that are widely used to expose candidates to various theories and concepts of management. Classroom teaching is more of preaching and no practice. So this method is less preferred by the people who are interested in having more practical approach to learning. Though classroom learning is important and cannot be neglected practicing management concepts is very much important than studying from books. It is vital that students are given practical feel of theories that they have studied. Various techniques and pedagogy is adopted in various management schools that makes help candidate have more practical approach to what he is going to encounter in the corporate world. We will discuss some of these techniques and what management skills are learnt with the help of these techniques.

Techniques used in classrooms to learn management concepts:

Case Study:

Case studies are widely used tool to learn management concepts. Case studies can be hypothetical identifying a problem that is faced by the company or an organization or it can be real case studies that have happened in the industry or corporate. These case studies highlight a problem that a company encountered and seeks feasible solution to the problem. Management schools, generally, tend to

have more emphasis on solving case studies. These case studies assist in developing a candidates' reasoning, logical and analytical ability. It is one of the good learning tools that helps develop a candidate in all spheres of analytical capability.

Group Discussions:

Group discussion helps to identify an issue and helps candidates learn and augment their communication, logical, reasoning and convincing abilities. This exercises brings to the fore the capabilities a candidate posses and also points out the area of improvement (AOI) for a candidate. It helps to improve planning abilities of a candidate. Further it also helps to enhance listening skills and instills a feeling of team work among the candidates. This exercise also brings to the fore certain traits such as facilitator, communicator, moderator etc.

Debate

Debate helps to address a specific issue and cultivate communication skills and reasoning ability. It also brings to the fore various perspectives on a specific issues. It also keeps oneself updated of various current issues so as once the topic is assigned a candidate is able to confidently participate in the debate. Else one would fumble in the debate as is not updated with the latest happening in the area of his interest. A candidate has to speak about the issue in specific time allotted, thus it helps to learn the time management skills and sorting of relevant information that could be presented in allotted time. Candidate can decide and prioritize the points to be discussed according to its importance.

Brainstorming:

Oxford Dictionary defines brainstorming as "a group discussion to produce ideas". Brainstorming is a kind of an exercise where group members tend to gather as many ideas as possible to solve the problem. This is especially useful as many ideas are available from group members to solve problem. If any one person tries to address or solve the problem, he may fall short of ideas and many solutions that may exist are overlooked. So brainstorming is useful to imbibe the culture of working in a group i.e. team work. It also broadens one's perspective to look at a problem form various angles. It also enhances problem solving capability of a candidate.

Simulation / Role Play:

Simulation exercises can be a good learning tool. Simulation exercises tend to provide a candidate with situations that are encountered or are likely to be encountered and how to overcome

those situations. This thoroughly prepares a candidate to tackle situation when it arises. Simulation exercises can represent processes or principles of a market or some market trends. It orients a candidate to develop means to overcome hurdles that are likely to be encountered. For example during a training session of medical representatives in a pharmaceutical companies, companies can replicate market situation where trainee is medical representative and trainer assumes role of a doctor and likely to ask certain doubts regarding the product. This helps candidate prepare for answers to the doubts if asked by a doctor when he is working in the field.

Management Games - New learning

methodology:

We have seen in the above discussion some of the traditional techniques commonly used in management schools to teach and learn management concepts. But rendering knowledge through management games could be an alternative to traditional learning and teaching methodologies, which in turn may be more acceptable to candidates and the instructors alike.

Why Management Games?

All the above listed techniques are important and helps candidate orient himself to various aspects of management. But these techniques may at times tend to become monotonous. Where as if candidates are made to learn these management concepts with the help of some games and play, it becomes learning with fun and becomes easy for a candidate to understand management concepts.

Advantages of Management games:

When a candidate has played game the concepts that are learnt are inscribed in a better fashion than what is learnt in the class as the candidate has practical experience of the concept. At the end of the play or game a candidate may be asked what management concepts he has learnt from the game. Properly designed games help to ingrain thinking habits, analytical, logical and reasoning capabilities, importance of team work, time management, communication and leadership capabilities. Use of management games can encourage novel, innovative mechanisms for coping with stress.

Further, management games orient a candidate with practical applicability of the subject. Rather teaching about concepts from the books, which sometimes may be difficult for a candidate to understand, these games help to appreciate management concepts

in a practical way. So that in case if such situation arises in future where a candidate is working, if the technique to apply practical skills of management is learnt, it becomes easier to cope up with such situations and find acceptable solutions. For a management candidate these games help to develop his imagination while playing, tests the understanding the concepts studies and gives insight to what corrective actions are required and provides with Area(s) of Improvement (AOI).

Though Management games could be identical to simulation techniques, in management games candidates are confronted with a business situation where they are asked to strategically think and come up with a viable and feasible solution which, fosters the decision making process, planning ability, team work, time management, leadership qualities of a candidate and gives first hand experience to the situations occurring daily in the corporate world that in turn boosts the confidence of candidates.

Conclusion:

Use of management games could be a better complement to regular classroom teaching. Though classroom learning cannot be overlooked, whatever management concepts are studied could be grasped more easily with the help of a game pertaining to the topic studied. And sometimes a single game could help to learn all the management concepts that are studied.

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