The ‘Cord Game’: An Experiential Game to Teach Change

In this proposal, the presenter is providing an experiential game to learning and applying concepts relating to change and managing change.

Abstract

Managing change is an important topic in the business curriculum. However, the discussion of numerous concepts and theories relating to change and managing change dulls interaction with students, often leading to the instructor losing the enthusiasm to teach. This proposal presents the use of an innovative experiential learning activity called as the ‘cord game’. This fun-filled activity/game takes 15-20 minutes of class time enabling students to gain a greater appreciation of the application of the meaning of change and how change can be managed in relation to their personal and work life.

Presentation Outcomes

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Appreciate how undergraduate business students would value experiential learning as an alternative to reading and rote learning of change and managing change.
2. Synthesize the study of concepts and theories relating to managing change using an as an innovative experiential learning methodology.
3. Gain insights to enable students achieve a higher learning experience of the study of change and managing change.

Session Description

The use of experiential learning activities and simulation games has been widespread in the teaching of business and management courses (Buil et al., 2018; Costin et al., 2018; Wilson, 2018). Experiential learning provides the benefit of bringing in the ‘fun’ and the ‘hands-on’ component that affords students to gain a rich personal experience of a real-life exposure to an organizational or simulated setting. This proposal adopts an innovative teaching approach to encourage students to better appreciate and gain a deeper understanding of the concept of change and how the process of change can be managed. Managing change is an abstract and theoretical topic of discussion that students often find difficulty in relating to their personal and professional life. The experiential learning activity is referred to as the ‘cord game’ and can be administered easily by the instructor in the classroom.

The resources needed for this ‘cord game’ activity include: 10-15 minutes of time, preferably outside the classroom on level ground such as on a lawn or concrete floor; one 25-foot-long plastic cord and instructions for the faculty member to read out. No additional equipment or resources are needed. The class is first divided in two groups of 10-15 students each. Group One serves as change agents while Group Two serves as facilitators. The faculty member first instructs the change agent group to stand in a circle, each group member holding the cord in each hand at waist level. The facilitator group stands outside the circle in a larger circle. The two edges of the cord are held by two different people standing adjacent to one another, one end on the left hand and the other on the right. All change agent group members will then be asked to close their eyes. Once all eyes have been closed, a new instruction is announced: You will now form the letter ‘Z’. You may talk to your group members and solicit help in the form of verbal instructions only from the facilitator group. After a few minutes of interaction and with much help from the facilitators, Z-shape slowly emerges with all eyes still closed. Once the facilitator group is satisfied with the Z-shape, they may ask the change agents group to open their eyes and see their results. The activity can be repeated with the two teams interchanging their roles.

Once the activity has been completed, the class debrief enables students to discuss and share their thoughts using these questions: (1) What was the change? (2) What was the process of change? (3) What resources were lost? (4) What new resources were made available? (5) What was the most important factor that helped implement the change in process? (6) What were the major challenges in managing this change process? and (7) What lessons did you learn? The presenter believes that the ‘cord game’ is innovative experiential learning approach that enables students to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of change and how change can be managed.

References

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