Track: Innovative Pedagogical Approaches

Title: ‘Ribbon Game’: An Experiential Activity to Teach Creativity and Innovation

Summary

This proposal is a presentation of an experiential activity to engage students to appreciate the concepts of creativity and innovation as an organizational reality.

Abstract

Creativity and innovation are important topics in the business curriculum. The teaching and learning of these concepts can be enriched using experiential learning games. This proposal involves the demonstration of a classroom activity referred to as the ‘ribbon game’. This fun-filled activity/game takes 25-30 minutes of class time and 15-20 minutes of discussion time enabling students to gain a greater appreciation of the application and significance of creativity and innovation in addition to how these can be managed in an organization.

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 the concept of creativity and innovation.
2. Synthesize the study of concepts and theories relating to creativity and innovation using the experiential learning methodology.
3. Gain insights to enable students achieve a higher learning experience of creativity and innovation.

Session Description

The use of experiential learning activities and simulation games have been widespread in the teaching of business management courses (Buil et al., 2018; Costin et al., 2018; Wilson, 2018). Experiential learning benefits by incorporating the ‘fun’ and ‘hands-on’ component that affords students to gain a rich personal experience. This proposal, the ‘ribbon game’, involves a demonstration enabling students to appreciate the concepts of creativity and innovation. The resources needed for this activity include strips of half-inch ribbon, 4-5 feet in length to each student and thirty minutes of activity time and fifteen minutes to debrief and discuss. Students need to be seated inside the classroom at a table or desk with adequate space on their sides. No additional equipment or resources are needed.

Once the ribbon is distributed, the instructor makes the first announcement: “Let us tie a knot in the middle of the ribbon using both your hands.” The students will easily complete this task in a few seconds. The second announcement follows: “Here is the challenge: Now, your customer requires you to tie the same knot, with the following conditions: (1) You can only touch two points of the ribbon with each of your hands and (2) Once you hold on to the ribbon at any of the two points, you cannot move the points. (3) You can however move your hands and tie the knot”. Students work diligently.

After several attempts, students realize the challenge. The instructor introduces the first intervention: “Cross your arms and see if that works.” Students follow the instruction, but the solution is not immediately in sight. The instructor introduces the second intervention: “Try bending your arms and also moving both your shoulders.” Students move to the next stage and almost solve the problem, but it is not perfect. The instructor questions: “Is it at all possible to solve this problem or not?” Students responses vary with “yes”, “may be” or “not at all”. The instructor introduces the third intervention: “Tuck one hand under the elbow of your other hand and grab the ribbon with your index and middle fingers. Bend your shoulder towards the side of activity. Do the same for the opposite side using your hands and shoulder. Once you hold the ribbon, pull both hands out with a perfect knot”. A few students will solve the problem with a perfect knot and fulfilling all the requirements and share how they did it with others. The whole class works together and ties a knot of very high quality and precision.

The instructor will then wrap up the session using the following discussion questions: (1) What was the customer requirement/business problem? (2) Was it possible to fulfil this requirement? (3) What were the challenges with this requirement? (4) How did you apply the concept of creativity and innovation? (5) What two lessons did you learn? The presenter believes that the ‘ribbon game’ enables students to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and significance of creativity and innovation.

Buil, I., Catalán, S., & Martínez, E. (2018). Exploring Students’ Flow Experiences in Business Simulation Games. Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 34(2), 183–192.

Costin, Y., O’Brien, M. P., & Slattery, D. M. (2018). Using Simulation to Develop Entrepreneurial Skills and Mind-Set: An Exploratory Case Study. International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 30(1), 136–145.

Wilson, S. (2018). Understanding Bottlenecks: An Operations Management Experiential Learning Exercise. Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education, 16(3), 166–184.