From Book Learning to Competitive Performance: Academic Performance, Team Diversity, and Team Outcomes in a Course Business Macro-Simulation

Olimpia C. Racela
Mahidol University International College, Mahidol University, Thailand

Abstract:

Academic performance is often treated as a reasonable proxy for students' future decision quality. In higher education, this expectation rests on the assumption that students who have mastered the routines of academic success such as careful reading, sustained studying, memorization of concepts, and disciplined self-regulation, will also be better prepared to diagnose problems, evaluate alternatives, and make sound judgments in applied settings. This expectation is not entirely unfounded. Research on self-regulated learning shows that metacognitive monitoring, effort regulation, and time management are positively associated with academic achievement, and recent higher-education evidence continues to link such learning behaviors to stronger grade outcomes (Pucillo & Perez, 2023; Xu et al., 2023). From a human capital perspective, academic success signals accumulated knowledge and learning discipline; from a pedagogical perspective, it suggests that students have developed the cognitive structures needed to process information effectively. Consequently, it is common for educators and employers alike to infer that stronger classroom performers should also be stronger practical decision makers.

At the same time, theory and research suggest that this inference may be too strong. Knowing concepts is not the same as deploying them under conditions of ambiguity, time pressure, interdependence, and competition. The training-transfer literature has long warned that learning acquired in one setting does not automatically carry over to another. Baldwin and Ford's (1988) classic model argued that transfer depends not only on what is learned, but also on training design, learner characteristics, and the conditions of application. Later reviews reached a similar conclusion: even well-designed instruction frequently encounters a "transfer problem," whereby knowledge and skills acquired in formal learning environments fail to appear in subsequent performance contexts (Blume et al., 2010, Cheng & Hampson, 2008).

Recent work in learning and development has extended this concern to soft skills and workplace learning, emphasizing that application requires more than content mastery; it also depends on motivation, contextual support, and opportunities for enactment. In other words, academic success may reflect proficiency in learning about practice without necessarily demonstrating proficiency in practicing under realistic conditions.

This distinction helps explain the growing pedagogical importance of experiential learning. Rooted in Dewey's (1938) view that education must be grounded in experience and elaborated by Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, experiential learning treats knowledge as something constructed through