

Analysis of Integrating Overseas Business Simulation Training Platform into Practical Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the application and effects of the overseas business simulation training platform in the curriculum of the International Business School of Heilongjiang International University. The school has introduced the HUBRO business simulation training platform under the British SAGE PUBLICATION, aiming to enhance students' international perspectives and high-level abilities. After three years of practical exploration, this paper summarizes the platform's usage, effectiveness, and reflections, providing certain reference value for similar universities to carry out practical teaching activities.

KEYWORDS

Overseas Business Simulation; HUBRO Platform; Curriculum Design; Ability Enhancement; International Resources

1 Introduction

With the continuous deepening of globalization, international business education faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities. To cultivate composite business talents with international perspectives and business thinking abilities, adapting to the rapidly changing international market environment, the International Business School of Heilongjiang International University has continuously explored innovative teaching modes, actively sought high-quality overseas teaching resources, and attempted to integrate the practically imported teaching platforms into the curriculum. This paper introduces the practical exploration process and effectiveness discussion since 2021, when the International Business School of Heilongjiang International University introduced the HUBRO business simulation training platform under the British SAGE PUBLICATION and integrated it into its curriculum.

Since the 1950s, business management simulations have provided a learning approach that poses a significant challenge to traditional methods (Alvarez, Djaouti, and Rampnoux, 2011). As a subset of serious games, these simulations employ entertainment principles and creativity to enhance complex problem-solving skills (Azadegan et al., 2012; Freitas and Liarokapis, 2010). Batko (2016) summarized three valuable insights regarding business simulation learning. Firstly, he highlighted the practices and characteristics utilized by simulation companies that have not been extensively examined in academic research. Secondly, he identified the most effective features, components, and integrations within simulations that effectively promote the achievement of learning goals and enhance user experience. Lastly, he outlined the 'best practices' for teaching a business management course in either a university or company setting, utilizing simulations as a supportive tool. Faisal, N. et al. (2022) proposed the beneficial role of business simulation and developed an evaluation strategy to assess the learning outcomes associated with it. Their work builds on a wealth of previous related research that has provided a solid foundation for this area of

study. However, this paper presents an innovative outcome by considering the introduction of teaching resources from abroad, specifically utilizing a simulation platform to develop language skills. This research topic can also be regarded as a valuable area of research that merits further investigation.

2 Background and Platform Introduction

2.1 Background

In March 2021, five students from the International Business School participated as the only team from Asia in the International Business Week event hosted by Kaiserslautern University of Applied Sciences in Germany. However, they performed poorly due to their first exposure to a fully English-operated business simulation platform. This experience prompted the teacher team to reflect and decide to introduce an overseas training platform. After comparison and selection, the HUBRO business simulation training platform from Norway was finally selected for trial use.

2.2 Introduction to HUBRO Platform

HUBRO Simulations originated as an innovative entrepreneurial project at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) but soon developed into a company dedicated to providing simulation teaching services to educators who wish to engage students through simulations. Its development philosophy is that what to learn and how to learn are both important. It combines subject knowledge, technology, game design, and learning science to create world-class business simulations. It works closely with experts from leading institutions to ensure solid content while steadfastly pursuing its vision of providing engaging and easy-to-use simulation teaching. Currently, educators in more than 20 countries use HUBRO Simulations in their training. Among Norwegian universities, over 60% use HUBRO simulations, and more than 100 secondary schools in Norway have also adopted HUBRO simulations. In June 2023, HUBRO EDUCATION was officially acquired by SAGE, a global academic publisher that publishes books, journals, and library resources and has a growing suite of technologies to facilitate knowledge discovery, access, and engagement.

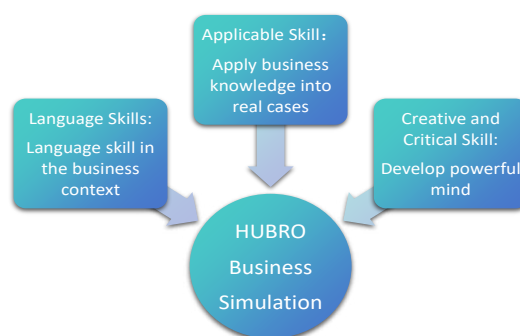


Figure 1 Learning outcomes of Hubro business simulation

In the traditional business class, Students lack initiative in classroom interaction, displaying a passive participation attitude. After conducting research, we found that although students generally hold positive learning attitudes and have a desire for active learning, there are two major obstacles when it comes to participating in classroom discussions and expressing their views. Firstly, the most fundamental issue is a lack of self-confidence, where students are afraid of making mistakes and

therefore hesitate to speak up. Secondly, the issue of competence poses another challenge; students lack personal insights on certain issues in a business context, or even if they have insights, they struggle to express them accurately in a foreign language. Additionally, students' abilities to think actively and tackle challenges also show deficiencies. Many students rely on internet resources to prepare cases, and this "copy-and-paste" approach weakens their independent thinking skills, resulting in shallow problem analysis and a lack of ability to delve deeply into issues. The introduction of Hubro simulation can solve this issues though its practical learning experience.

3 Platform Usage

Since September 2021, the HUBRO platform has been gradually integrated into the "Business Simulation Training" course at the International Business School. Table 1 details the platform's usage, including the time of use, target audience, and content. Additionally, the platform has been used for intra-school business simulation competitions and selection contests for international business simulation competitions, providing students with abundant practical opportunities.

Table 1 HUBRO Platform Usage Table

No.	Time	Target	Content
1	September 2021	Class 1 of International Business (2018 Grade), Class 1 of Hotel Management (2019 Grade), Class 1 of International Business (2019 Grade)	Established the "Business Simulation Training" course and introduced the HUBRO platform for curriculum use Hosted an intra-school business simulation competition and selection trials for international business simulation competitions, providing competition training
2	November 2021	Over 90 students from various majors across the school	
3	September 2022	Classes 1-2 of International Business (English Direction, 2020 Grade), Classes 1-3 of International Business (Russian Direction, 2020 Grade), Class 1 of Hotel Management (2020 Grade), Class 1 of Mongolian (2020 Grade)	Established the "Business Simulation Training" course and introduced the HUBRO platform for curriculum use
4	November 2022	145 students from the International Business School	Hosted the International Business School HUBRO Business Simulation Competition
5	September 2023	Classes 1-2 of International Business (English Direction, 2021 Grade), Classes 1-3 of International Business (Russian Direction, 2021 Grade), Class 1 of Mongolian (2021 Grade)	Established the "Business Simulation Training" course and introduced the HUBRO platform for curriculum use
6	September 2024	Classes 1-3 of International Business (2022 Grade)	Established the "Business Simulation Training" course and introduced the HUBRO platform for curriculum use

4 Platform Usage Effectiveness

4.1 Ability Enhancement

The HUBRO platform, a fully English-operated business simulation platform, serves as a pivotal tool in enhancing various skills among students. By engaging in simulated business operations, students are tasked with maximizing an initial fund of USD 150,000 through strategic decision-making. This process not only requires them to integrate their business expertise but also to apply theoretical knowledge to practical problem analysis and decision-making, thereby fostering critical

thinking and innovation.

Moreover, the platform offers numerous opportunities for students to develop additional competencies. Through teamwork, students learn to collaborate effectively, enhancing their team coordination abilities. The interpretation of data reports helps them hone their financial literacy, as they analyze financial statements and make informed decisions based on the data. Additionally, simulation reporting activities encourage students to communicate their findings and strategies clearly, thereby improving their communication skills.

The platform's design, which emphasizes practical application and problem-solving, aligns well with the goals of higher education in preparing students for the real-world challenges they will face in their careers. By engaging in these simulations, students gain a deeper understanding of business operations, market dynamics, and strategic decision-making, all while developing essential soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and critical thinking.

Furthermore, the platform's fully English-operated interface provides an additional layer of challenge and opportunity for students. It not only enhances their English language skills but also exposes them to international business practices and terminology, preparing them for a globalized workplace.

In conclusion, the HUBRO platform is a valuable tool in enhancing students' abilities in various domains, including critical thinking, innovation, team coordination, financial literacy, and communication. Its practical, hands-on approach to learning makes it an ideal complement to traditional classroom instruction, helping students bridge the gap between theory and practice

4.2 Competition Participation

The introduction and utilization of the HUBRO Business Simulation Training Platform have indeed established students' confidence in participating in business simulation competitions. Since its introduction in 2021, the platform has played a pivotal role in enhancing the practical skills and international competitiveness of students at the International Business School of Heilongjiang International University.

In the business simulation competition hosted by the International Business School in 2021, the team from the school, albeit making a commendable effort, achieved a ninth-place ranking but unfortunately did not advance to the finals. However, this experience served as a valuable learning opportunity, fueling the students' determination and passion for further improvement.

The following year, in the 2022 International Business School Network Business Simulation Competition, the team from the International Business School demonstrated remarkable progress. Under the expert guidance of teachers, the team navigated through three elimination rounds with flying colors and ultimately secured the championship in the finals. This remarkable achievement was not only a testament to the students' hard work and dedication but also a reflection of the effectiveness of the HUBRO platform in preparing them for such competitions.

Moreover, the platform has had a profound impact on students' personal growth. It has enabled many students to discover their potential and showcase their talents, turning them into "business prodigies" who were previously unnoticed. For instance, a student from the 2019 Hotel Management program, who was once introverted and had potential depressive tendencies, found confidence and showcased his innovative prowess through the HUBRO platform. His participation in two consecutive international business simulation competitions not only honed his research skills but also led his team to victory in the second competition.

In conclusion, the introduction and utilization of the HUBRO Business Simulation Training Platform have significantly contributed to the enhancement of students' confidence, practical skills, and international competitiveness. It has not only prepared them well for business simulation

competitions but also fostered their personal growth and development. As the platform continues to evolve and be integrated into the curriculum, it is anticipated that more students will benefit from this innovative and effective learning tool.

5 Reflections on Platform Usage

5.1 "Absorption, Internalization, Output, and Sharing" of International Resources

To maximize the utilization efficiency of international resources, the International Business School has conducted in-depth reflections and summaries on the use of HUBRO resources. Facing different user groups, the school has thoughtfully designed diversified usage strategies to meet various training objectives. The key lies in teachers' deep understanding of the platform's functionalities and their skillful integration into every aspect of course design.

Absorption:

The school first conducted a comprehensive understanding and assessment before selecting the HUBRO business simulation training platform that aligns with its teaching goals. This step involved in-depth research on the platform's functionalities to ensure it meets the school's needs for business simulation training. Teachers gradually mastered the platform's usage through training, watching tutorial videos, and communicating with the platform provider.

Internalization:

Based on absorption, teachers combined the functionalities of the HUBRO platform with their own teaching experience to form a unique teaching mode. They designed a series of teaching activities according to the characteristics of students from different majors and grades, such as team division of labor, data report interpretation, and simulation presentations, to fully leverage the platform's role in enhancing students' abilities. Through these activities, students not only gain a deeper understanding of business expertise but also hone their critical thinking, innovation, and teamwork skills in practice.

Output:

The school actively utilizes the HUBRO platform to provide students with abundant practical opportunities and competition platforms. By holding intraschool business simulation competitions and selection contests for international business simulation competitions, students have the chance to apply their knowledge in real-life situations and test their learning outcomes. Meanwhile, these competitions provide students with a stage to showcase their talents, enhancing their self-confidence and competitiveness. Furthermore, the school encourages students to participate in international business simulation competitions, exchanging ideas and skills with students from around the world, thereby further broadening their international horizons.

Sharing:

The school emphasizes the sharing and exchange of international resources. On the one hand, it actively establishes partnerships with domestic and foreign universities and educational institutions to share the usage experience and teaching resources of the HUBRO platform. By participating in academic conferences, seminars, and other events, teachers have the opportunity to exchange ideas with other educators and jointly explore how to better utilize international resources to improve teaching quality. On the other hand, the school encourages students to share their learning achievements and experiences on the HUBRO platform with more classmates and alumni, fostering a positive learning atmosphere and a culture of mutual assistance.

In summary, the International Business School has formed a virtuous cycle mechanism of "absorption, internalization, output, and sharing" in the use of HUBRO resources. This mechanism not only enhances resource utilization efficiency but also promotes the common growth and

development of teachers and students.

5.2 Analysis of the Effectiveness of International Resources in Enhancing Foreign Language Abilities

HUBRO's fully English operating interface has played a significant role in improving students' overall English abilities. For non-English majors, the platform offers not only abundant language practice opportunities but is also highly relevant to workplace English, thereby facilitating their swift adaptation to future professional environments.

Through a thoughtfully designed series of teaching activities, students can further enhance their English proficiency. These activities include, but are not limited to, vocabulary learning, sentence-making exercises, and content analysis. For instance, during the product customization phase in the simulation, students are required to tailor products according to consumer demands. By leveraging this interface for language learning, instructors can guide students to:

Identify and Learn New Vocabulary: Encourage students to find and learn new words in the operating interface, enhancing their vocabulary base.

Sentence-Making Practice: Use the newly acquired vocabulary and sentence structures to create sentences, which aids in language application and fluency.

Content Analysis and Reporting: Assign larger tasks where students analyze the content on the interface and present their findings either verbally or in written form. This exercise sharpens their analytical skills and English communication abilities.

Furthermore, the platform's full immersion in English encourages students to actively engage with the language, boosting their confidence and competence in using English in practical, real-world scenarios. The relevance of the language practice to workplace communication ensures that the skills acquired are not only academically beneficial but also directly applicable to future careers. In summary, HUBRO's fully English operating interface, coupled with deliberate teaching activities, serves as an effective tool in elevating students' English abilities, particularly for those in non-English majors. It not only enhances their linguistic proficiency but also prepares them better for professional communication in the global market.

6 Conclusion and Outlook

After four years of exploration and reflection, the effectiveness of the HUBRO Business Simulation Training Platform in cultivating talents in the field of "Business + Foreign Languages" has been proven. The platform has not only enhanced students' international perspectives and high-level abilities but also provided them with abundant practical opportunities and competition platforms.

In the future, the International Business School will continue to cultivate more teaching teams to fully leverage the potential of the HUBRO platform. By doing so, an increasing number of students will be able to experience the joys of learning through the HUBRO Business Simulation Training. Additionally, the school plans to conduct more in-depth research projects, delving deeper into the platform's educational resources and integrating them with its own teaching experience to produce higher-quality research outcomes.

Furthermore, the International Business School recognizes the importance of "absorbing, internalizing, outputting, and sharing" international resources. To maximize the utilization of these resources, the school will design tailored usage methods for different audience groups to meet various training objectives. The key lies in teachers' understanding of the platform's functionality and their ability to incorporate it into curriculum design. There are still many features of the platform

that remain to be explored and offer ample opportunities for professional teachers to conduct further research. Moreover, the platform's fully English-language operating interface plays a significant role in enhancing students' overall English competence, particularly for non-English majors, as it is highly relevant to workplace English. Through carefully designed teaching activities, such as vocabulary memorization, sentence-making exercises, and content analysis, students' English proficiency can be effectively improved.

In conclusion, the HUBRO Business Simulation Training Platform has demonstrated its effectiveness in talent cultivation over the past four years. As the platform continues to evolve and gain global recognition, the International Business School remains committed to expanding its teaching force and deepening its research efforts to fully harness the platform's potential, ultimately benefiting more students in their academic and professional development.

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