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**THE BENEFITS OF SIMULATIONS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION:
PRESENTATION OF A START-UP SIMULATION APPROACH
AND EVALUATION RESULTS**

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Principal Topic

It is very common to argue traditional teaching method, e.g. classical lectures, case studies, cannot cover the requirements of an entrepreneurship education, but business simulations can help compensating these deficits. Until now, there is little empirical evidence about the contribution of business simulations to entrepreneurial competencies. On the basis of the prevailing used business simulation in Germany for the start up business - TOPSIM Startup -these issues will be traced by a theory-based evaluation approach. The business simulation TOP-SIM-Startup tries to represent the complexity and the relevant variables in different start-up situations and covers all stages of a start-up business: from collecting information checking the business idea up to transforming the business idea to a successful company in a competitive situation. The modular set-up of the simulations offers a wide variety of uses: Trade (E-Commerce), Service (Fitness-studios), Production (High-Tech-sport goods) and High-tech (Biotech).

Methodology/Key Propositions

Within the scope of the promotion scheme EXIST Transfer of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research to support the entrepreneurial education and orientation in Universities, TOPSIM Startup simulation seminars are carried out in 5 Universities with about 1000 students until the end of fall semester 2005. The evaluation approach focuses the question on how the business simulation TOP-SIM Startup can deliver a contribution to improve the entrepreneurial competencies and entrepreneurial orientations. Entrepreneurship research shows that successfully entrepreneurial activities are based on a specific bundle of competencies and motivations interacting with personality factors.

The evaluation approach analyses the change and the influence of these factors by business simulations.

Results and Implications

First results show a significant increase of knowledge and method competencies as well as social competencies, but also give hints that specific combinations of situative and personal variables have a strong impact on the effectiveness of business simulation seminars. Specific results of the evaluation and conclusions will be presented at the conference.

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