Integrate Experiential Learning to Simulate a Website Design Project Process

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Abstract

The current literature suggests that experiential learning is a necessary component of formal instruction in higher education. Experiential learning as a formal part of college and university curricula extends across the range of subject areas and disciplines. The purpose of this project is to detail research how to blend experiential learning principles with project management into a real case of website design practice for the new age of electronic learning. Based on the conceptualization in experiential learning and Internet technology development, a teaching and learning project flows in the practice of web design development is designed to facilitate students in this process. A cohort group of students in Web Design class join this experimental scenario to implement the assigned project of creating a new website design. Within the terms of the learning process, students simulate three basic steps of learning models: Experience, Reflect, and Apply. A total of six learning objectives were initiated, evaluated, and interpreted: creativity, skill sets, productivity, team work, deadlines, and client skills.

1 Introduction

David Simm (2005) stated “reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation are used to derive concrete experience.” John Dewey (1938) was an early proponent of the idea of learning through direct experience, by action and reflection. This type of learning differs from much traditional education in that teachers first immerse students in action and then ask them to reflect on the experience (Stevens & Richards, 1992). The use of David Kolb’s experiential learning models to examine the process of creating knowledge acquisition through the transformation of experience has been adopted in an increasing number of areas (Lai, 2007). In light of approaching theory into practice in a real world situation, corporate learning professionals have begun to achieve a better understanding of the relationship between education, work, and technology. The new type of learning model is taking hold in the business world by blending technology and experience-based learning together (Adkins, 2004). Art and design faculty are no strangers to experiential learning. One cannot learn the complexities of the design discipline without extensive design studio projects. Where experiential learning is well integrated, students demonstrate a greater understanding of the complexity of real-world problems than those without field experiences (Sterling, 2007).

2 Design Methodologies and Approach

The case study approach is utilized to proceed through a university service-learning project. Following the project, students keep tracking qualitative journals based on their weekly learning and execution experiences; a number of semi-structured interviews are conducted with students and faculty in order to get an insight into their perceptions and experiences of the learning exercise. Students experience phases of different stages during the process including design plan, project management, site architecture design, interface mock up layout design, file management, and the completion of the whole site design.

3 Summary

This result of study benefits the academic community with an understanding of the theory to practice between education, work, and technology. The finding also brings positive impact for program design and development and operation in web learning community. It provides rich dialogues about the students’ experiences which lead to enhance their collegiate experience, and assists them in building a foundation for life leading toward real world practice. Research on experiential learning on website design development and management is minimal. With this approach the ‘process’ is viewed as important as the ‘product’, this study hopes to stimulate further work in this area.

Reference


