

Case Study: Use of Group Projects to Increase Student Interaction and Satisfaction

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Online Group Projects, Student Interaction, Satisfaction

Abstract

Demand for online learning has been increasing in higher education (Allen & Seaman, 2013). Research shows that nontraditional learners fuel much of the growth in online learning (Layne, Boston & Ice, 2013). The flexibility and convenience of online learning are seen as the major benefit by adult learners (Maki, Maki, Patterson& Whittaker, 2000)as they are coming back to school for professional and personal growth (Lee & Pang, 2013). However, a lack of social interaction in an online learning environment often poses a significant barrier to online learning; a strong correlation has been noted between learning satisfaction and social interaction (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005). Woods (2002) reported that interaction is even more crucial for student satisfaction and successful learning outcomes in an online environment. With a lack of interaction, students are often left with feelings of isolation that result in attrition (Yuan & Kim, 2014). Goold, Craig, and Coldwell (2008) have found that online group work can be used to enhance and facilitate student learning experiences. Prior research conducted by Lee, Ngampornchai, Trail-Constant, Abril, and Srinivasan (2016) using case-based online group projects to increase students' satisfaction with interaction in online courses reported mixed finding on the effect of online group projects on interaction. This presentation discusses the current ongoing case study that focuses on using online group projects as an effective tool for promoting interaction in online learning environments for nontraditional adult learners. The study explores the challenges of online group projects, online collaboration, and factor hindering interaction such as other personal and professional time constraints, prior group experiences and personal attitudes. The study addresses the students' actual and perceived interaction from online group projects and the effect it has on the level of student satisfaction.

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