

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Collaborative Learning in Online Asynchronous Courses

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ABSTRACT

Many empirical research has been conducted to investigate the sense of community in online learning environment, and its impact on students' success. In those studies, collaborative learning is often identified as an effective way to foster the sense of community, therefore to improve students' overall learning experience and learning outcome in online classroom. But it remains unclear how online instructors can evaluate the effectiveness of the collaborative learning activity they implemented in their classroom and to revise or improve the activity accordingly. This study sets out to answer this question by looking at an online course taught in a fully online asynchronous MLIS program. The effectiveness of collaborative learning activities implemented in this course was investigated using multiple research methods. First, students in this online course were surveyed about their perception, satisfaction, and expectations of collaborative learning experience and their sense of online learning community. Secondly, the online course discussion board was examined using content analysis to identify the occurrences of knowledge sharing, knowledge creation, and social learning happened during the discussion. Next, self-selected students will be interviewed to get further understanding on what factors contribute to their success or failure in this online course. The ultimate purpose of this case study is to develop a tool set that MLIS online instructors can customize and use to evaluate their courses and to improve their students' overall learning experience and outcome.