

Developments In Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 20,1993

COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION DONE GLOBALLY

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing the concepts of cognitive constructivism and global action learning, we have developed a learning platform using collaborative education enhanced by information technology. This electronic collaboration platform enables culturally diversified teams of students to work together to meet in an action learning format to develop a more realistic understanding of the global business community. The discussion will emphasize the combination of cognitive constructivism and information technology in action learning.

INTRODUCTION

Picture a group of three students working together to complete an assignment they have just received from their instructor in a course on business strategy. The assignment? "Review the present corporate strategy of Digital Equipment Corporation and propose a strategy for the first decade of the 21st Century"

Not an unusual picture, right? It is if you consider the rest of the story, as it is developing in concept at Ohio University.

THE REST OF THE STORY

Each of these students is working in their electronic classroom at their university. One student is at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. Another student is at Janus Pannonius University in Pecs, Hungary. A third student is at the University of Bangkok in Bangkok, Thailand. They will continue to work together intensively for the next ten days to complete the assignment. Their work will culminate in a multi-media presentation demonstrating their findings and recommendations. This presentation will be evaluated by faculty and business executives, including a representative from Digital.

GLOBAL ACTION LEARNING

For the last three years, we at Ohio University have utilized a global action learning format to provide our MBA students the learning experience of actually working collaboratively with people from other cultures. We have taken our MBAs to Pecs, Hungary and Bangkok, Thailand. In each location they worked in teams of six, equally comprised of students from each country. Each team was assigned a business to investigate during the next five days. They were charged with determining 1) what could be done to enhance the competitive potential of the firm, 2) how it could improve productivity, 3) how it could increase market penetration and 4) any other issues requested by the key manager, or owner, of the business. Examples of businesses investigated by the students included: a glove factory, a bakery, a mall development company, a tobacco company, a retail department store, a computer distributor, a fiber manufacturer, and a pharmaceutical firm. Students spent the week investigating and analyzing their target business with a goal of developing a formal presentation, which was made on Friday afternoon to a group of business owners and managers, faculty, and other students. Local press and television news professionals also attended the presentations and interviewed several of the participants.

SUPPORT VIA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

This year we will enhance the learning experience by having the students continue their collaboration electronically after the trip is completed. The scenario described at the top is an example of the way we will complement the student teamwork on location. Part of the electronic collaboration will be a continuation of the industry/business analysis begun on site. Other collaborative work will involve students in action learning projects. The action learning projects are carefully developed, based upon a "cognitive constructivist" approach to learning, and enabled by the latest in information technology.

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, the panel members will:

- describe the learning platform that we have developed and used,
- discuss the concept of cognitive constructivism and explain its use as a theoretical base for action learning, and
- propose a vision of the future of business education, a future that includes a global action learning platform complete with technological links enabling boundary-less collaborative learning.

This 60-minute panel discussion will allow the audience to share in the experiences of several faculty and administrators who have played integral roles in the development and implementation of this unique approach to learning during the past five years.

REFERENCES

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