

Experiential Learning Activities in an IT Course

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Author Biography

ChongWooPark is an Associate Professor of Management Information Systems in the Hull College of Business at Augusta University. His research work has been published in quality journals including Decision Sciences, Journal of the Association for Information Systems, IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, Journal of Computer Information Systems, Computers in Human Behaviors, and Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education. He has received Augusta University Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Award (2019), Hull College Faculty Research Award for Excellence (2019), AU Education Innovation Award (2018), AU Scholarly Activity Award (2017, 20172018), and IACIS Best Research Paper Award (2013).

Augusta University has initiated experiential learning programs to implement the quality enhancement plan (QEP) Learning by Doing since 2015. As part of the QEP, the education innovation fund was established to support teaching faculty who wish to pursue experiential learning opportunities in the classroom. I was assigned to teach a database management systems (DBMS) course for Information Technology (IT) and Management Information Systems (MIS) majors, I was looking for how to bring the most state-of-the-art IT and database experiences into the classroom. Augusta University's education innovation fund gave my students experiential learning opportunities to have hands-on experience in cloud computing technology and the enterprise DBMS used in the IT industry and large businesses.

Goal of Activities

While educators have had broad discussions on experiential learning activities and applications such as study abroad, service learning, project-based learning, and internships (Kuh, 2008), there has been less discussion on specific experiential learning activities that can be plugged into the curriculum of an IT course of interest (e.g., experiential learning activities in a database course or a programming course). Thus, I had to develop such activities from scratch when planning to implement experiential learning in a DBMS course. The goal of the experiential learning activities I developed was to allow students to have experiential learning in the IT course and to understand the impact of experiential learning on student learning outcomes in the IT curriculum.

Description of Activities

I first defined the five areas of experiential learning in the IT course: communication, leadership, professionalism, problem solving, and teamwork. Based on Augusta University's QEP (Augusta University, 2016). In order to implement the five areas of experiential learning, I developed two major experiential learning activities in the database management systems course. One was the group project of database design and development based on real-world business problems. The other was to use enterprise database systems such as MS SQL Server through the cloud computing environment. By engaging in these two experiential learning activities, students were expected to have experiential learning in the five areas.

For the communication, teamwork, and leadership areas, students were asked to 1) form a team of three or four for the group project, 2) review real-world business problems with different data management cases of a bookstore, consulting firm, and dining club as a team, and 3) compare and choose one as their group project case. In order to form teams, students were first categorized by the instructor into one of three groups based on previously demonstrated strengths in different skill sets. The students were unaware of the criteria that had them assigned to each group. Students then formed teams by including at least one member from each different group in order to balance the skills of each team.

