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The Benefits and Challenges of Implementing Service-learning in an Advanced Instructional Design and Technology Curricula: Implications for Teaching Professional Courses

Abstract

This paper reports on the benefits and challenges of integrating service-learning pedagogy into a professional course taught at a US Midwestern university. Data were collected via observations, interviews and analyses of students' online discussions, written reflections, and project work. Findings revealed that the service-learning approach improves academic learning, increases motivation to learn and serve, escalates civic values and develops a sense of concern over broader social issues. Most importantly, it prepares students to be civic-minded professionals who are concerned with the betterment of society. Additionally, the authentic and open nature of service-learning was found to contribute to intense group conflicts. Suggestions to eliminate such challenges are also discussed.

Keywords: *service learning; social responsibility; social issues; higher education; professional education; civic-minded professional*

Introduction

Over the past several years, there has seemed to be a growing interest in conducting research to discover the best pedagogical practices in educating future professionals in higher education institutions. Many scholars recommend application of community-based approaches (Wilson & Schwier, 2009) due to their benefits of