An Action Learning Model to Increase Critical Thinking Skills in an ALN Masters Information Systems Capstone Course

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Abstract

Critical thinking and problem solving skills are essential for Information Systems (IS) graduate students, but these skills can be difficult to teach, particular in asynchronous learning network (ALN) environments. Emphasis to teach or reinforce these skills is usually concentrated in an IS capstone course. The capstone is commonly taught with the case method using interactive, argumentative case discussions in class to develop critical thinking skills. However, at one university a new challenge is introduced: how to offer the capstone course in an asynchronous delivery mode, where interactivity is difficult to achieve. This paper details efforts to deliver the capstone via an alternative approach drawing on principles from action learning theory. The course emphasizes analysis and research to integrate theoretical IS concepts with practice. Preliminary data on student perception of learning is presented comparing the method delivered in synchronous and asynchronous modes.

Keywords: action learning, asynchronous learning networks, distance learning, information systems, IS capstone course

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