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Learning by Competing

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Abstract: Every semester faculty are faced with determining how to present course material so that students not only grasp the material being taught, but also become self-motivated and independent learners who develop problem-solving skills they can apply in their degree program and in their future careers. We have seen that blended learning is replacing the traditional face-to-face education and that the learning process is being redesigned to support flipped classroom or gamification strategies. This is transpiring both in online and in face-to-face courses.

Worldwide, universities have opted to have its students participate in various competitions depending upon their major. One can frequently find programming, investment, analytical, cyber, business plan, innovation competitions among many others being held yearly. There is project-based learning for business schools (Stinson & Milter, 1996), problem-based learning for medical schools (Norman & Schmidt, 1992; Albanese & Mitchell, 1993; Major & Palmer, 2001), puzzle-based learning for engineering and computer sciences (Parhami, 2009; Falkner, Sooriamurthi, Michalewicz, 2010). All of the above examples have something in common; they all involve realistic problems and situations based on educational goals, are appealing and motivating, and improve students' learning, research and critical thinking skills and their ability to work in teams. Universities are driven by peer, community and donor recognition they gather, and ought a student team win one or more of the many prestigious competitions available this can certainly help the university gain additional recognition.

One of the stress-free means to engage college students in friendly competitive learning is through the use of review exercises in a form of game prior to a class exam or the end of a module being taught. Competitions can help students too better grasp the concepts and relate to the subject in an interesting way. Competitions undeniable inspire student engagement in the classroom and ways to evaluate and improve student engagement have been a universal task in higher education (Trowler, 2010; Zepke, 2015).

However, taking it one step further to actually compete against other universities can drive the students to give the little extra and perhaps develop a found interest for the subject. In this study the author will assess the effectiveness of the use of a competitive learning on the academic achievement and satisfaction of IT students. A total of 48 undergraduate computer science students were asked to compete, whereof 41 of them were male and 7 female students. The students age ranged from 21-43 years of age with an average age of 25. From this group 7 of the students worked full-time, 11 part-time and 30 did not work. The time the students devoted differed, however the attitude towards competing changed to the more positive as the weeks passed. In the real world, practical education (learning by doing) is not only important, but it is also in high demand by employers (Russell et al., 2008). Competitive learning prepares our students to become global future leaders.

Keywords: Competitive learning, IT education, teaching mode, enlightenments.

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