BEST PRACTICES IN ENGAGING ONLINE LEARNERS THROUGH ACTIVE AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

The current review investigates Stephanie Smith Budhai and Ke'Anna Brown Skipwith's second edition of their book Best Practices in Engaging Online Learners Through Active and Experiential Learning Strategies. The book delivers an extensive instructional resource for teachers and curriculum developers along with educational institutional leaders to create compelling interactive approaches for virtual and hybrid and blended learning spaces. Through its exploration the work introduces different experiential and active learning methods which encompass simulations together with gamification and virtual reality-based elements and social media-based actions. Book readers receive concrete suggestions about utilizing modern technologies to create environments that maximize both student participation and critical thinking abilities and skill acquisitions. Through presenting authentic learning examples alongside planning guides and technology tools this book serves as a practical educational resource for new and experienced educators of online courses. The review analyzes how the book supplies vital knowledge for today's e-learning operations also explains its potential to reinforce educator performance in digital learning environments.

Keywords: *Online learning, active learning, experiential learning, student engagement, instructional design.*

INTRODUCTION

The second edition of '*Best Practices in Engaging Online Learners Through Active and Experiential Learning Strategies'* is a helpful manual for all e-learning educators, instructional designers, and administrators who develop, implement, and manage to provide stimulating, interactive, and supportive learning environments for learning courses and programs online, hybrid, and blended. This book examines how active and experiential learning strategies and activities, such as simulations, gamification, and social media integration, can be integrated in a project-based manner, scenario-based learning, and virtual tours, in order to help students, develop practical skills such as communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and skill building.

This updated edition offers examples of how instructors can actively integrate cutting-edge learning technology, like virtual and augmented reality and artificial intelligence, in online courses to engage students in experiential learning. There are instructions for setting up service learning, competency-based learning, field-based learning, clinical experiences, participatory learning, and peer learning possibilities in online classrooms. The writers also include useful study techniques, illustrations, templates, and other materials that link student engagement to evaluation procedures and academic goals across a wide range of subjects.

This book is filled with excellent, crucial, and useful teaching strategies that will improve our students'

learning outcomes in the modern era of online education. This book is a gold mine of innovative, tech-rich teaching ideas that would be helpful to any educator, whether they work in person or online, new or experienced. In order to demonstrate what is possible when teaching with current and new technologies in online environments, the authors skillfully combine research, theory, and practice. There are numerous activity suggestions, references to online tools and resources, and subject-specific examples in every chapter. Any instructor wishing to create creative, student-centered active learning experiences should definitely read this new edition.

Structure and Content
These six chapters make up this book. In Chapter 01, a paradigm shift is highlighted that is transforming the online classroom environment to include experiential and active learning activities and turning online students from passive users of knowledge into active learners. With examples from several topic areas, Chapter 02 examines experiential learning and how to blend active and experiential learning approaches in online classrooms. Emphasis is placed on connections to the outside world, field-based activities (clinical, practicums, student teaching), virtual field excursions, civic engagement, and simulations.

Artificial intelligence, augmented reality, virtual labs, project-based learning, and scenario-based learning are all covered in Chapter 03. Chapter 04 explores gamification and social media with recommendations for adding badges and progress indicators in order to motivate students. How to organize and facilitate peer and participatory learning while also encouraging social presence is discussed in Chapter 05. Chapter 06 focuses on how to assess learner engagement and active learning to ensure that the strategies used are successful in improving the learning environment. Each chapter includes examples of active and immersive learning techniques that may be used in a variety of academic fields, as well as matching technology resources and planning templates to get you started.

Overall Impression and Relevance to the Field of Distance Education and E-learning
The second edition has been updated with cutting-edge and modern technology as well as online tools that can be utilized to engage students in online courses. New and upcoming technologies have been added in place of outmoded or less effective technology tools from the past. Additionally, beginning with Chapter 02, there is a list at the end of each chapter that includes all of the technology tools and web resources covered in that chapter, facilitating easier access to the tools referenced throughout each chapter.

Planning templates are provided in Chapters 02 through Chapter 05 to assist readers in organizing and getting ready to implement the active and experiential learning practices outlined in each chapter in their own online courses. A wide range of easily accessible discipline-specific examples throughout each chapter assists readers in better understanding how to apply some of the concepts discussed in this book to their own field of study. In addition, a wide range of cutting-edge subjects is also covered, including augmented and virtual reality, artificial intelligence, micro-credentialing, competency-based learning, simulations, virtual field trips, and virtual labs. As readers involve their online students in active and immersive learning activities, this book is helpful.

The authors have discussed in detail how to assess experiential learning and active learning. In this regard, they have discussed numerous approaches to engage students in online courses using active and experiential learning techniques, including simulations, project-based learning, scenario-based learning, virtual field excursions, and peer and participatory learning, throughout the book. Another good feature of this book is the discussion on the use of social media and gamification. It is discussed at great length that the use of social media and gamification in higher education is altering how courses are created, particularly in light of the growing use of mobile devices.

In the online classroom setting, students now have more opportunities than ever to interact with the course material as well as to create, discuss, and explain their real-world experiences -outside the online classroom environment. In this type of active learning, the teacher and student take on the roles of either learning designers or players and are tasked with deciding how to use the course materials to display their learning in meaningful ways using game-based features and social media.

This book is a must-read for both inexperienced and seasoned online teachers due to its helpful

suggestions on promoting high-quality interactions in online situations, regardless of the discipline or cohort of students. Since it is brimming with strategies for utilizing real-world situations to produce meaningful and engaging activities for students, this book is a rare gem for educators wishing to lift their teaching to a new level of practice and community. In view of the rise of online learning and freshly released learning technology, this updated second volume includes contemporary methods for integrating active and experiential learning practices into online and hybrid courses.

Conclusion

As an educational tool the second edition of *Best Practices in Engaging Online Learners Through Active and Experiential Learning Strategies* delivers important resources for anyone who teaches in hybrid or fully-online course formats. The book uses emerging technology approaches including virtual reality, augmented reality, gamification and social media to deliver tangible methods that create meaningful interactive learning experiences. The resource provides value to new and accomplished instructors through examples from everyday life alongside planning templates together with discipline-relevant implementation methods. Given today's digital learning boom this guide serves as an essential roadmap which helps educators develop meaningful digital education experiences.

REFERENCE:

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