

Using Industry Projects to Modernize Business Education

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Abstract : Business education in the United Kingdom has seen a number of improvements over the years in moving from delivering traditional chalk and talk lectures to using digital technologies and inviting guest lectures from industry to deliver sessions for students. Engaging topical industry talks to enhance course delivery is generally seen as a positive aspect of enhancing curriculum, however it is acknowledged that perhaps there are better ways in which industry can contribute to the quality of business programmes. Additionally, there is a consensus amongst UK industry managers that a bigger involvement in designing and inputting into business curriculum will have a greater impact on the quality of business ready graduates. Funded by the Disruptive Media Learning Lab at Coventry University in the UK, a project (SOPI - Student Online Projects with Industry) was initiated to enable students to work in project teams to respond and engage with real problems and challenges faced by five managers in various industries including retail, events and manufacturing. Over a semester, approximately 200 students were given the opportunity to develop their management, facilitation, problem solving and reflective skills, whilst having some exposure to real challenges in industry with a focus on supply chain and project management. Face to face seminars were re-designed to enable students to work on live issues in a competitive environment, and were guided to consider the theoretical aspects of their module delivery to underpin the solutions that they were generating. Dialogue between student groups and managers took place using Google+ community; an online social media tool which enables private discussions to take place and can be accessed on mobile devices. Results of the project will be shared in how this development has added value to students experience and understanding of the two subject areas. Student reflections will be analysed and evaluated to assess how the project has contributed to their perception of how the theoretical nature of these two business subjects are applied in practical situations.

Keywords : business, education, industry, projects

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