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Expanding Your Traditional QuickBooks Course with Labyrinth Learning Digital Tools in an Online Environment: Faculty-led Course Redesign in an Undergraduate Accounting Discipline at a Private University

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Abstract: -

This Study focuses on processes and outcomes associated with an accounting faculty initiative to reform teaching and learning in the undergraduate accounting curriculum at a private university. The purpose of this study is fourfold. First, the study examines the preparation for students in the workplace. Second, retention and completion of students. Third, the study examines learning outcomes to improve undergraduate teaching. Lastly, the study aims to develop an understanding of how outcomes of digital tools technology-enhanced reform can serve to alleviate time constraints on accounting faculty and address challenges of faculty in an online environment.

Keywords: - *Action Research, Labyrinth Learning, Online, QuickBooks, Undergraduate Accounting*

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of digital tools in a faculty-led course redesign of a traditional QuickBooks course in an undergraduate accounting discipline. Labyrinth Learning QuickBooks Pro 2015: Comprehensive covers basic and advanced concepts. It includes e-lab license key for students and contains 12 full lessons integrating small business case studies. This interactive, media-based course management system was used to explore this research. An action-research design was used to collect the quantitative and qualitative data from the private university where the students' engaged in the online learning environment.

Hypothesis

There is no difference in learning outcomes, retention, and learning design between students' learning QuickBooks with the use of digital tools in an undergraduate accounting program.

Discussion

This study was prompted by the need to redesign the outdated QuickBooks course and the accelerated growth rates among online students in higher education (de Freitas, Morgan & Gibson, 2015). Additionally, the goal of this study is to add knowledge to the field about designing effective, a customizable online instruction that prepares students for the real world, give students an edge with certifications, and make the connection to accounting principles.

Students in the controlled group, previously taught in the traditional classroom environment, were challenged with the materials in class used by the same publisher. As a result, their performance suffered, and their confidence level decreased. The perpetuated lack of confidence fostered in this traditional classroom setting created a challenge for students to understand the concepts.

The benefits of digital tools in an e-lab environment for an online QuickBooks course

Labyrinth Learning QuickBooks Pro 2015 digital tool platform is the most robust, reliable and user-friendly product the instructor found on the market. For the students challenged with the concepts and applications in my class, the digital tool platform loaded with resources provided a clear path for mastery learning accounting terms and practical application of the basics of accounting using the QuickBooks Pro 2015 software.

The importance of connecting accounting software to the real world

A 2005 national survey from the Higher Education Research Institute revealed students attend college to prepare for the workplace and to become financial stable (Mantooth, 2010). QuickBooks technology with the use of digital tools in the accounting online classroom offered exciting opportunities for students to make meaningful connections with the outside

world. E-lab exercises incorporated real-world connections into the lesson plan that help students to understand why what they are learning at is important beyond the university environment. Mantooth (2010) believes this approach increases student engagement as students twenty-first-century skills were enhanced.

The QuickBooks accounting class observed for this research follows the following undergraduate accounting sequence: Accounting 1, Accounting 2, and Cost Accounting. Making the connection to the accounting principles learned in the previous accounting courses helped students grasp why QuickBooks works the way it does. Behind the scenes, features related to QuickBooks actions enhanced the students' learning experience. After successfully completing the online course, students gained the confidence necessary to master materials that have been approved for QuickBooks Certified User Program.

QuickBooks e-lab encourages critical thinking

In the e-lab platform, students organized and entered data into the software, such as invoices, purchase orders, and bank statements. As students process the information into the e-lab platform, the students' gained valuable insights into workplace scenarios.

A project was assigned to students to be their own boss and create their own company file, for a company they would like to have. Students pulled together key learning concepts from each chapter capstone activity with real-world scenarios.

Challenges with e-lab activities

Students encountered issues with the e-lab platform. Each solution incorrectly posted resulted in a zero for the entire project. Multiple tech support calls were made, the instructor spent a lot of time mediating between the students and tech support and students' frustration increased rapidly. Some of the issues included but not limited to minor number round offs, spreadsheets formulas and students' beginning technical skills with Excel.

Engagement

According to Mantooth (2010) student learning, education, and retention all depend upon their level of engagement. Increasing student engagement through QuickBooks interactive technology in the online environment, encouraged students to become better learners and spend time on the online platform. Based on analytics noted in the Canvas learning management system (LMS), students averaged 87% On-Time submissions of their work and only averaged 4% late assignments submitted. This was a significant increase in comparison to the controlled group in the traditional classroom environment.

The QuickBooks technology provided a transformative impact on student learning and success. According to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology (2017), technology in higher education must have a

foundation that includes “specific goals, needs, and interests of the student themselves”. In fact, technology offers the opportunity to significantly reform accounting courses, structures, and practices in undergraduate accounting programs.

Retention and Results

The treatment group in the fall 2017 online QuickBooks classed was not exempt from students withdrawing from the course. Based on records retrieved from the Canvas (LMS), five students withdrew from the class, one freshman, one sophomore, two juniors, and a senior. Based on student interviews, the freshman student was serving in the US military, in Afghanistan, and could not keep pace with the class. After the first two weeks of the semester, the sophomore felt he did not have the discipline to complete the assignments while playing on the school’s baseball team. The two juniors felt overwhelmed, based on their course load of six classes each and determined each would take the online class in the future. The senior did not provide any reason for the withdrawal. None of the students in the control group withdrew from the course. Meyer (2014) asserts students’ personal commitments limits their ability to successfully engage in an online environment when they have family demands or employment. Furthermore, Meyer believes students need to develop certain behaviors and motivation to succeed (Meyer, 2014).

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative data was retrieved from the fall 2016 controlled group in a traditional classroom environment. This group met twice a week. Also, quantitative and qualitative data were retrieved from fall 2017 online treatment group. The data retrieved from both groups included course grades, tests, and assignment scores as well as student interviews. The data were analyzed and compared using the t-Test in excel. There were twenty-seven students taught in the control group. There were twenty-one students taught in the treatment group. The same instructor taught both courses.

Research Limitations/Implications

First, from a pedagogy standpoint encouraging students to complete online assignments, quizzes, tests, and projects generally promote learning, engagement, and higher grades (Strang, 2016). Second, from an accounting student’s perspective, the online activities increased the accounting principles and software knowledge which better prepares students for the real world. A clear link was established between course learning objectives and student learning performances based on quantitative data retrieved from the control and treatment groups. Due to the absence of a student survey, the researcher believes data/results were limited.

Future research

Further investigation of implementing digital tools in QuickBooks online undergraduate accounting courses should be compared and contrast with one or more digital tool resources from other publishers. Additional research may include comparing the same publisher's digital tool in various private institutions by multiple instructors using the same course assignments, quizzes, and tests.

Summary

For this generation of students in higher education pursuing an accounting degree and other professional certifications, guidance is the key to student retention (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, 2017). Additionally, confidence, enhanced twenty-first-century skills, and engagement are essential. Labyrinth Learning QuickBooks Pro 2015: Comprehensive inspires faculty to craft unique learning experiences that capture student's attention and prepares them for the real world. It saves prep time, grading and frees faculty to spend more time directly engaging students.

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