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Transforming Software Project Management Course: An Active Learning Approach

Problem: In order for software project management courses to be effective, they should be appropriately aligned to the learning outcomes. Common misalignments are caused by using an incorrect degree of realism or inappropriate support.

Course Layout: We have created an integrated active learning approach, using a legacy game and a development task that address the software development process. The course consists of three modules: i) Lectures to cover theoretical background; ii) Legacy Games to reinforce the project management knowledge. The students are playing a serious game to simulate the conditions and challenges of managing a software project; and iii) Development Task to promote on-hands learning on project management and experience the relatively realistic challenges of software development in the industry. The students are required to plan and manage a software project according to its specification provided by the teachers.

Methodology: To evaluate our approach, we collected the student's perception through inquiry using surveys. Furthermore, we analyzed the students' reflections collected from assignments during the course.

Results: The results so far suggest that the integrated approach promotes knowledge acquisition through practical learning. This approach allows the students to have a first-hand experience of the problems they will face when it comes to applying what they have learned in the course.

Conclusion: Using our approach, we are able to engage students as active participants within software project management (Programvaruutveckling) course to provide a relatively realistic experience to help students to get familiar with the challenges to the ones they will face in real-world software projects.