

Evaluating Student Engagement Through Online Discussion Forums and Its Impact on Graduate Education

Dr. Linda Collins

Southeastern Louisiana University, the United States

Abstract

Academic engagement through online discussion forums has provided healthcare students with critical reasoning skills to challenge health concepts, analytically discuss objective perspectives and embrace interactive peer learning. Interactive teaching and learning tools such as online discussion forums have facilitated the development of higher level critical reasoning and healthcare students are becoming proficient independent learners. The aim of this project was to evaluate the effectiveness of an interactive discussion forum exploring confidentiality and telehealth among graduate students, for intelligent interactions, the appropriateness of the learning environment and active online learning. We conducted a retrospective evaluation on the effectiveness of an online discussion forum, which was used as a teaching and learning tool to explore and debate the concept of confidentiality and telehealth. Data analysis was carried out through rigorous, systematic reading of the discussion forums, evaluating the frequency and depth of student interaction and manual coding of the discussion forum performance. The evaluation highlighted that intelligent interactions were heightened by critical discussions. The spontaneous act of uploading current peer reviewed literature for the purpose of defending academic discussions and providing evidence-based perspectives on confidentiality and telehealth, demonstrated increased interaction and active online learning. The online discussion forum created a learning environment that was student-led. This evaluation highlighted the effectiveness of an interactive discussion forum when exploring confidentiality and telehealth among graduate healthcare students and the numerous factors that contribute to the success of online interactive learning.

Keywords: Critical; Healthcare; Interactive; Learning; Thinking.