A Descriptive Study of Student Motivation in Online Distance Learning Environments

Abstract

The immense growth of Internet related technologies have allowed possibilities; students have new technology at their fingertips. Technology has made it possible to merge online teaching and learning into the routine of college and university studies. Online classes are also becoming increasingly more popular with on campus college students because of times constraints of traditional courses. Distance learning is beneficial for eliminating time and money spent related to student travel and allowed Outreach College students access to adept instructors regardless of physical locale. Online courses have also given students a chance to collaborate with professionals worldwide.

There is a variety of factors that are responsible for the success of online learning. Motivation is a key factor of student accomplishment with online courses, just as it is in learning and attainment in a face-to–face setting (Jones & Issroff, 2007). High dropout rates in online courses at the college level have been associated with poor motivation (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005). Motivation impacts how, what, and when individuals learn. Motivation is dynamic and multifaceted with underlying aspects that impact students’ motivation to learn and, therefore, success and in turn affect retention (Brophy, 2010).

The high attrition rate in distance education courses at the college level, have been associated with poor motivation. Low retention rate in distance learning has raised skepticism about the underlying assumption that online learners are as independent, self-directed, and intrinsically motivated as recent studies have lead researchers to believe. This research begs the question, what is the determined stimulation for college student motivation in an online distance-learning
The researcher utilizes descriptive or survey research to attain research objectives. The instrument used was based off of the Situational Intrinsic Motivational Scale (SIMS). This attitude scale is designed to describe participant’s motivational level. The motivational scale moves from Extrinsic Motivation to Intrinsic Regulation on a continuum. Level of student motivation and characteristics are statistically compared to show correlations.