Chapter 82

Factors Influencing International Student Success in a K–12 Blended Learning Program

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ABSTRACT

This research explored the experiences of foreign students enrolled in the Canada eSchool distance learning program. The study included one secondary school in Nigeria and three in Malaysia that had students enrolled in a program based on a blended learning model. A mixed mode data analysis model including qualitative and quantitative data analysis was undertaken. The purpose of the study was to examine factors that influence student success in blended learning programs accessed by foreign students. Results indicated that students in the study were most successful if they were self-disciplined and had access to a variety of local supports including: an effective learning environment with access to quality technology; assistance in the development of English as a second language; and support in navigating pedagogical transitions between educational systems. In theory, the results of this study point to a connection between the local and Canadian support communities for foreign students enrolled in Canadian blended distance education programs, and their academic success.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education is a form of teaching and learning where the participants do not have to be in the same place at the same time. Distance education is quite different from traditional bricks and mortar, face-to-face education (Peregoy, 2000). It is possible for the educator and the students to meet face-to-face on occasions but the majority of the teaching and learning situations are not geographically identi-

cal or synchronous. Traditional distance teaching is usually a type of correspondence that is delivered primarily in text form, either in books or other paper-based materials (Duggleby, 2000). As such, distance education has a large asynchronous component to it while retaining a synchronous component through the potential use of Internet, telephone, and radio. Distance education can remove the need to travel to and from the location of the instruction for both educators and students (Brace-Govan & Clulow, 2000).

The literature presents a number of interpretations of the origins of distance education. They agree upon key aspects such as the timeline in the 1800s, as well as the new-found efficiency and reliability of postal services in that era (Stevens-Long & Crowell, 2002). There is also agreement about the correspondence course nature of distance education. The progression of delivery technologies from mail, radio, television, and finally the computer is also presented.

There are many benefits of distance education for students (Smith, Smith, & Boone, 2000). Distance education students usually desire to improve educational conditions for themselves. These educational conditions include improving their learning situation and often regulates when educational interaction takes place, how long they occur, and its location (Cashion & Palmieri, 2002). From the students' perspective, a key aspect of distance education is the savings made in terms of resources, including time and money. Many potential students do not have the ability or desire to experience the traditional residential university life (Carr-Chellman & Duchastel, 2000). This adjustment in the educational paradigm demonstrates a shift toward the training and professional development of working professionals who are among the people that are not traditional attendees of formalized education beyond a certain point.

Blended learning is a popular term for all manner of current educational endeavors. For the purpose of this article, blended learning will be defined as the thoughtful integration of online and face-to-face instruction (Graham, 2013). Blended learning has been a term used progressively to describe the way distance learning, conducted in online classrooms with the use of learning portals, is being combined with traditional classroom teaching methods to create a new, hybrid teaching method (Mindflash, 2012). According to Archambault (2009), a blended learning course is one that blends online learning and face-to-face delivery with between 30% and 79% of the content delivered online. Although blended learning is occurring across Canada, it is not always considered to be part of distance education. In some Canadian provinces, the meaning of the term "blended learning" is inconsistent with the definition presented by The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL). Therefore, the literature shows no single description of how the term "blended learning" is to be understood and used.

CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH

Canada eSchool is a private distance education high school which is designed for the educational needs of both Canadian and International students. The school is authorized by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Ontario to offer credits towards the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), and is a member of the Ontario Federation of Independent Schools. Canada eSchool uses a blended learning strategy with international students participating in its online program; at the end of the program successful students earn an OSSD.

A case study was conducted with several schools in Malaysia and Nigeria that had students enrolled in the Canada eSchool program. The purpose of the research was to examine factors that influence student success in blended learning programs accessed by students in countries other than Canada. The international schools who participated in the case study locally refer to the Canada eSchool program as

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