Chapter 25
The Effects of i²Flex Learning on Students' Holistic Well-Being and Academic Success

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ABSTRACT

With rapid changes taking place in today's society, individuals need more than ever to be equipped with tools that will assist them to cope with the changes they are faced with within multitude domains of their lives: school, work and social environments. As learning is a life- long process that touches and interacts with many domains of one's individual life and overall functioning, individuals must be flexible and able to adapt to the everyday changes around them. More specifically in education, students over the last decade with increased technological advances, have opportunities that extend beyond the brick -and- mortar traditional learning environment, thus indicated as "blending learning"; a combination of web-based teaching and learning experiences along with structured individual and collaborative interaction among students and their teachers. The i²Flex model, piloted at the American Community Schools of Athens, Greece will be examined and illustrate how learning within this framework, assists students in being flexible, adaptive and skilled 21ˢᵗ century learners.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will explore the effects of i²Flex learning and the overall well-being of students' holistic health and academic success via the exploration of the teacher-learner, face-to face relationship (and online communication among teachers and students, students and students). Holistic health, social and emotional competencies and emotional intelligence will also be described. Furthermore, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework designed by Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000; 2001) will be discussed and how the social domain of this model contributes to students' overall academic achievements. Some questions that will be examined are the following: How do the different components of thei² Flex model and the Aristeia leadership model of Gialamas (2009) facilitate the face-to-face relationship between

the teacher and learner? How does the face-to-face relationship foster social-emotional well-being and academic success? Based on CoI survey. How are students rating the social domain of the CoI model with their teachers through i[2]Flex learning? By emphasizing the face-to-face relationship as described above, student learning may be enhanced and social-emotional competencies can be further developed, as students continue to progress in advancing technological and globalized environments.

BACKGROUND

In the following discussion some of the above mentioned interrelated facets that coincide with the i[2]Flex model and holistic well-being will be examined in further detail.

School Climate and Culture/The Global Morfosis Paradigm

Over the years, ACS-Athens has developed an educational framework referred to as the *Global Morfosis Paradigm.* This paradigm encapsulates three fundamental elements that are systemically related:

1. Morfosis, from the Greek word Μορφωση (ethical, intellectual and social individual characteristics),
2. The educational philosophy, the i[2]Flex delivery, methodology, and
3. Aristeia (from the Greek word Αριστεία/pursuing excellence under the guidance of ethos) leadership framework (Gialamas & Pelonis, 2009).

The *Morfosis* educational framework envelopes holistic, meaningful and harmonious educational experiences that are guided by ethos (Avgerinou, 2014). One way in which this framework has been implemented at ACS-Athens, is via the i[2]Flex Model of blended learning. This non-traditional learning methodology has been initially developed by the ACS- Athens community of learners and thus follows the principals and values of the Aristeia Leadership (Avgerinou, 2014) (to be described later in this discussion).

Avgerinou (2013) further described that the educational experience must be *meaningful* for the learner in that he/she views the experiences as an essential part of his/her life and in relation to individual strengths,hopes and aspirations. Additionally, such educational experiences are *harmonious* in that they highlight all facets of learning and behaving and are in line with one's principles, values and choices that are driven by etho*s* (Avgerinou, 2013).

The i[2]Flex Model

Avgerinou, Gialamas & Tsoukia (2014) suggested that the i[2]FlexModel integrates the independent student learning, the learning guided by a faculty mentor and the face-to-face learning between mentor and student learner. The i[2]Flex model includes the integration of face-to face learning as well as technology-based teaching and learning which entails two elements of the online component: 1) individual and collaborative interaction (guided by the teacher) and 2) independent online learning (student driven) (Avgerinou, Gialamas & Tsoukia, 2014). This approach is flexible in terms of where the learning takes place, the pace and timing of the educational experience and in which format, exchange of information

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