

Chapter 1

Impact of Student Engagement in Online Learning Environments

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ABSTRACT

Online learning is a fast-growing technology in an educational field which uses internet as a media to deliver the educational contents to the students. The main research area in online learning is to identify the disengaged learners and motivate them. The success of online learning systems depends on how quickly it identifies the disengaged learners and techniques used to reengage them. Through this chapter, we are going to discuss briefly about the online learning, advantages and disadvantages of online learning, importance of motivation in online learning, types of motivation, the motivational theories related to student engagement and finally discuss about various disengagement detection techniques in online learning.

INTRODUCTION

Online learning is one of the fastest growing and promising field in the education industry. Those systems deliver the educational content through internet technology in which the participants connected in the system are physically miles apart. Such online programs can access through computers, laptops, tablets and smart-phones.

Online learning systems are a collection of learning materials by the various professionals, who are actively updating the new technology and concepts (Taylor, 2001). According to Kaur and Abas (2004) online learning is an ability of the individuals to utilize e-learning resources and multimedia technologies to improve the quality of learning.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3634-5.ch001

Online learning simply does not mean distance learning, from which the students would be offered a few packages of educational material and few seminars as well as home based assignments. It is certainly help learners with an association of technology such as educational video conferences, instant messaging, discussion board and forums.

The online learning mechanism is more efficient compared to the traditional settings. The learning packages will also make difference that a set of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) will be hard fast providing educational materials, which may be delivered in style with the help of technology.

According to Bonk (2002), Online learning allows learners flexible place and time to learn, the course materials can be accessible anywhere in the universe, it has a great control over the quality of the learning materials, the tailoring of instruction to individual needs, automatic creation of student activity records and completion logs and the potential for greater interactivity.

According to Moore et.,al (2011), Online learning leads to a universal explosion of interest and activity in distance education with new organizational structures; combined constructivist learning methods; and the combination of text, audio and video on a single platform. Kozma (2001) claims that it is not the computer that makes students learn, but the design of the real-life models and simulations, and the students' interaction with those models and simulations.

(Clark, 2001; Parker et., al, 2008) claims that technologies are just a way to deliver instruction and it doesn't influence student achievement. Online learning allows participants to minimize time and space for learning (Cole, 2000); however, to engage the learner for better learning experiences, the learning materials must be designed properly. (White et., al, 2014) states that there may be no guarantee that all learners who join the online course can complete the whole course. Many learners may only be interested in part of the course, or have time constraints of which they were when they started and thus 'intended' not to complete. Furthermore, most of the online courses are free and there is no penalty for failure to complete, many learners can drop in (and out) of courses at their own convenience.

E-Learning Approaches

(Ghirardini, 2011) states that there are two general approaches to e-learning: self-paced and instructor-led. Self-paced learners are entirely independent learners, whereas the instructor-led learners; e-learning course providers offers various levels of support from instructors and they allow collaboration among the learners.

Self-Paced E-Learning

Through this method, Learners are offered online based training. The learning content is developed according to a set of learning objectives and is implemented using different multimedia elements, such as text, graphics, audio and video. Usually, those course materials are hosted on a Web server, and learners can access it from an online learning platform. Learners can learn the course material at their own schedule and to define personal learning paths based on their individual needs and interests. Through this method of learning, learning providers does not maintain any schedule. When self-paced e-learning is offered through an Internet connection, there is the chance to track learners' actions in a central database.

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