

Chapter 9

Teachers' Role in Enhancing Adult Learners' Sense of Autonomy, Competence, and Involvement in Online Higher Education: Learning From an Australian Transnational Higher Education Provider

Mamun Ala

Australian Institute of Business, Australia

Saadia Mahmud

Australian Institute of Business, Australia

Sehrish Shahid

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7021-5152>

Australian Institute of Business, Australia

Kuldeep Kaur

Australian Institute of Business, Australia

Syed Mohyuddin

Australian Institute of Business, Australia

ABSTRACT

This chapter draws from the learning from an Australian transnational higher education provider in enhancing adult students' sense of belonging, engagement, and interactions. The literature suggests that student engagement and motivation could be enabled by fulfilling certain needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness or involvement. The chapter also explores some strategies that could be adopted by teachers to promote behavioural, cognitive, emotional, and agentic engagement in online adult learners. It is argued that regular customized communication by online teachers using email and learning management systems can promote teaching presence, as well as student engagement and motivation. This approach is in line with the notion of community of enquiry, a social constructivist model of learning process that suggests that educational experience takes place at the intersection of social, cognitive, and teaching presences. Other strategies, namely the effective use of breakout rooms during an online class, the emphasis on reflective learning, and the use of stories in an online classroom, are also discussed.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-5226-4.ch009

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is generally understood as a process that involves the active involvement of students in effective educational practices that are linked to desired outcomes such as acquiring knowledge, academic achievement (e.g., completion of a course, achieving higher grades, etc.), and cognitive development (Koh, 2009; Christenson et al., 2012; Meyer, 2014; Stone et al., 2014; Banna et al., 2015; Britt, 2015). The literature suggests that student engagement is a multidimensional concept consisting of four dimensions: 1) behavioural 2) cognitive 3) emotional and 4) agentic. Behavioural engagement refers to students' involvement through activities such as attention, participation, effort, intensity, or persistence (Reeve, 2013; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Cognitive engagement involves using mental effort to complete educational and learning tasks. Emotional engagement refers to a sense of belonging and attachment with teachers, peers, school experience, and learning activities, while agentic engagement entails taking initiative that contributes to learning and teaching (Reeve, 2013; Reeve & Tseng, 2011).

Since student engagement is mostly seen as a motivational process, nurturing different aspects of motivation is useful for students to be involved and absorbed in learning activities (Reeve, 2013). Therefore, it makes sense to explain student engagement through the lens of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020). The theory defines sources of motivation as intrinsic and extrinsic and focuses on how external factors such as social and cultural could be conducive to an individual's well-being and performance. It is a theory of human emotion, growth, motivation and development where internal and external factors play a huge role in facilitating the growth of people. This theory is of much use in the area of education and possibly educators can tap on the student's natural inclination to learn.

The theory suggests four types of motivation namely 1) external regulation 2) introjected regulation (outside of personal control) 3) identified regulation and 4) integrated regulation (which are autonomous). It could be argued that students' engagement or motivational orientation to move through these motivation types could be enabled by fulfilling certain needs such as *autonomy* (the need for being in control of goals), *competence* (being competent and challenged), and *involvement or relatedness*, in other words, the feeling of being connected and involves interaction and care for others (Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020).

When the educational pedagogy addresses the psychological needs of students, they are more engaged in the learning activities (Hsu et al., 2019). The class sessions that address the psychological needs of students, they are more engaged in the learning (Reeve, 2013). Hence this theory can help us understand the influence of the fulfilment of needs on students' engagement, motivation and learning. Accordingly, this study draws from the learning from the Australian Institute of Business (AIB), a leading Australian transnational online higher education provider, to examine the teachers' role in enhancing adult learners' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (involvement).

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses the context of the study (the higher education provider) which highlights the key teaching and learning principles of the institute. Section 3 discusses the dimensions of effective teaching practices in online higher education. Section 4 presents different examples of strategies to enhance online learners' sense of autonomy, competence and involvement, namely the use of customized communication using email and learning management system, the effective use of breakout rooms during an online class, the emphasis on reflective learning, the importance of inclusion, and the use of stories in an online classroom. Section 5 concludes this paper.

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/teachers-role-in-enhancing-adult-learners-sense-of-autonomy-competence-and-involvement-in-online-higher-education/316912

Related Content

Writing Self-Efficacy and Performance Among Students in an Online Doctoral Program

Erin Breitenbach, Katherine Adler and Vanessa Pazdernik (2022). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-14).

www.irma-international.org/article/writing-self-efficacy-performance-among/304080

The Effect of Psychological Safety on the Performance of Students in Graduate-Level Online Courses

George Hanshaw and Jacob Hanshaw (2023). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-21).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-effect-of-psychological-safety-on-the-performance-of-students-in-graduate-level-online-courses/333864

Ranking World Universities: A Decade of Refinement, and the Road Ahead

Ben Sowter, Shadi Hijazi and David Reggio (2017). *World University Rankings and the Future of Higher Education* (pp. 1-24).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/ranking-world-universities/168177

Learning Design Thinking Through a Hands-On Learning Model

Norman Gwangwava (2021). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 1-19).

www.irma-international.org/article/learning-design-thinking-through-hands/274939

Formative Evaluations of Teaching: Involving Students in the Assessment Process

Gina Mariano, Frank Hammonds, Sheridan Chambers and Gracie Spear (2017). *Innovative Practices for Higher Education Assessment and Measurement* (pp. 101-118).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/formative-evaluations-of-teaching/159969