Good Time Management and Motivation Level Predict Student Academic Success in College On-Line Courses

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ABSTRACT

Student academic success in college on-line courses was examined in relation to motivation, time-management and organization. Participants included 40 students enrolled in college on-line courses. The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire was utilized to identify participants motivation level, time-management skills and organizational skills. A multiple regression analysis was used in order identify whether motivation, time-management and organization were good predictors of success. The results of this analysis indicate that good time-management and lower levels of motivation predict student GPA in their courses. These results suggest that time-management and motivation are important predictors of student academic success in on-line college courses.

Keywords: Motivation, On-Line Learning, Organization, Students Success, Time-Management

INTRODUCTION

There are many factors that play a role in classroom academic performance. A great deal of the research has focused on how different components of motivation, self-efficacy and self-regulated learning contribute to student academic success, with little research focusing on the role of time-management and organization. Most of the research centers on traditional classroom environments but as distance learning expands in the college environment, research is beginning to explore the impact of these factors on success in the on-line environment as well. Although much of the research focuses on the traditional classroom, evidence suggests that many of the contributors that lead to success in traditional classroom environments will also contribute to success in the on-line learning environment as well (Yakselturk & Bulut, 2007).

As on-line education continues to expand, it is important to explore the different factors that contribute to student academic success in these environments. Since most of the research

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on student academic success has focused on the traditional classroom environment, it would be beneficial to use those existing frameworks as a guide to explore which factors influence student success in the on-line environment. According to Pintrich (2003), the role of motivation must be considered by researchers when there is an interest in basic questions about how and why some students seem to learn and thrive in the classroom while other students seem to struggle to learn and develop the cognitive resources necessary for academic success. Additionally, since research has not emphasized the importance of time-management and organization skills on student academic success, it is important to explore the role they play. Students taking on-line college courses are required to work more independently than those in the traditional classroom, due to the format of on-line courses. Since students must work independently and complete work in a timely fashion, in order to meet deadlines, it would be reasonable to expect that good time-management skills and organization skills would be necessary for a student’s success in these on-line courses. Prior research has found that good organization and time-management do positively impact students’ grades in the traditional classroom but has not been a focal point of research. Since both time-management and organization are linked to positive outcomes in the traditional classroom it seems likely that they would be equally, if not more important to success in the on-line classroom environment. Since on-line students are required to work more independently than traditional classroom students, organization and time-management may be even more important for academic success.

Successful Academic Performance in the classroom

Pintrich & De Groot (1990) found that motivational components were linked in important ways to student cognitive engagement and academic performance. Specifically, they found that higher levels of student achievement were associated with higher levels of intrinsic value and self-efficacy. In a recent meta-analysis Duncan & McKeachie’s (2005) findings demonstrated that self-efficacy and achievement motivation had the strongest effect on college grade point average (Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davis, & Langley, 2004). Additionally, Sankaran & Bui (2001) found that motivation to learn is a critical factor for students to be successful in on-line education.

Motivation

Motivation has been conceptualized in varied ways, including inner forces, enduring traits, behavioral responses to stimuli and sets of beliefs and affects (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece, 2008). Pintrich (2003) discussed motivation as having a reciprocal relation to performance and learning. He states that motivation influences performance on learning and what students learn and do influences their motivation. When students are motivated to learn about a topic they are apt to engage in activities they believe will help them learn, such as attend carefully to the instructions, mentally organize and re-
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