Abstract

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Self-Determination theory and the motivations of learners and instructors towards blended learning

New and emerging technologies are beginning to be used extensively in supporting the provision of higher education courses in the developed world. Various types of Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), including Distance Education (DE), e-Learning (EL) and Blended Learning (BL), are becoming commonplace but the motivations underpinning the uptake of these developments by both learners and instructors have not been properly investigated in less developed and emerging nations. The aim of this study is to investigate how Self-Determination Theory (SDT) can be applied to understand the motivations of both learners and instructors to use BL in higher education. A case study methodology is employed whereby survey participants were drawn from the three Colleges of International Transport and Logistics at the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport (AAST&MT), in Cairo, Alexandria and Port Said, Egypt. Focus groups were initially used to identify the main motivations underlying the motivations faced by both learners and instructors in using a BL approach to their courses. These features were investigated further through a questionnaire survey of 616 learners and one-to-one interviews with 61 instructors. For the instructors, content analysis of the interviews through the use of Nvivo10 software showed that instructors are both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated toward BL, but that intrinsic motivation (IM) is more prominent. They also displayed sub-themes of amotivation (AM) and a degree of interest in overcoming this. The questionnaire survey of the learners identified the existing relationships between autonomy, competence and relatedness on the effect of IM, extrinsic motivation (EM) and AM. AMOS was used to undertake a Confirmatory Factor Analysis which revealed that autonomy and relatedness have an effect on IM, EM and AM, while competence showed no effect on IM, EM and AM. This contribution contradicts previous research, which indicated that if autonomy had an effect on intrinsic motivation, there should be a similar effect on competence as well. The most important contribution, however, is that the study identified the most influential sub-dimensions of IM, EM and AM for learners and instructors in a developing country, namely Egypt, and ranked these accordingly. Two different models for instructors' and learners' motivations to show their acceptance of BL were also created. Finally, the overall analysis of data findings indicated that instructors and learners were keen to embrace, adapt to, and accept the BL concept, as it increases their levels of motivation. It was found that intrinsic motivation, as well as AM, plays an important role for both instructors and learners. Extrinsic motivation was found to be related to tangible rewards, such as higher grades, wages, incentives and positions. A number of recommendations for future work and implications were made in terms of instructors and learners in order to create a stronger competitive strategic position for AAST&MT.