Exploring Student Self-Regulation in the Online Environment

Strategies for Faculty and Instructional Designers
Goals

Goal #1
Overview of research project context and study design

Goal #2
Identify design and teaching strategies to promote self-directed learning skills
Overview

- Research Context
- Study Design & Methods
- Analysis & Results
- Takeaways, strategies for promoting student self-regulation
Scientific advances in a number of fields have established that **the most critical factor in student achievement and wellbeing is self-regulation.**

—Dr. Stuart Shanker  
Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Psychology
motivation

An individual’s desire to pursue a goal or task, manifested by the choice of goals and effort in pursuing the goal.

Keller (2007)
Alderman (2008)
self-regulation

The degree to which the learner is metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process.

Zimmerman (2001)
First, let’s hear from you...

When are your students *motivated*?
When are your students at their *best*?
Research Questions

Question #1
What is the experience of students in an online course who possess and/or lack self-regulation strategies?

Question #2
What are the perceived actions of students in an online course who possess and/or lack self-regulation strategies?

Question #3
What instructional methods or LMS environmental factors help students develop self-regulation skills to succeed in an online course?
Explanatory Mixed Methods Design

Quantitative Phase
- MSLQ Survey
- Trace Log Data
- Analysis

Interim Phase
- Case Selection
- Interview Protocol Development

Qualitative Phase
- Interviews
- Observation
- Analysis

Mixed Method Analysis
- Triangulation
- Cross Case Analysis
- Interpretation
Three Individual Cases

Jess
Female
Graduating Senior
HR & Industrial Relations
>5 previous online classes

Emily
Female
Graduating Senior
Human Resource Dev.
2 previous online classes

Daniel
Male
Graduating Senior
Business & Marketing
No previous online classes
Themes

Emergent themes from interviews and observations
Theme #1

While students value the flexibility of online courses, it also creates challenges and is viewed as both a benefit and hardship.

“Online classes can be great because they can be really flexible, but it’s also easy to forget about... For some people it just doesn’t fit their personality and their learning style.”

“I really like the flexibility, especially with 21 credits it’s nice to be able to work around and fill in the gaps with an online class.”

“Occasionally I miss those deadlines”
Theme #2

While students’ study habits vary, they still recognize the importance of certain strategies.

“I do try and carve out specific time for [this class], it's really easy to make that time, and stay on top of things.”

“It feels more formal if I’m sitting at a table; sometimes I sit at my desk. I’ll close out of Facebook”

“I really like writing out lists and checking things off, so that’s a big motivator”

“So in classic procrastination fashion, I would login sometime Wednesday or Thursday.”
Theme #3

Students often compare the face-to-face environment to the online environment, especially regarding study habits and group dynamics.

“I act as if I were actually going to a classroom, because that is like making it a habit.”

“I would probably write down [the class] in my schedule, just because it feels more structured and you give it the time that it needs, just like for a normal class.”

“On a personal level, I don’t think it comes close to the in-class experience, like interacting with people and really flushing out the personalities to that end.”

“I wouldn’t say the online experience is anything like the classroom the experience. I think the rules are even different.”
Theme #4

Online group work presents both benefits and challenges to the learner, resulting in mixed feelings about the task.

“It was the first time that I had ever really seen these people face to face. All of my prior online discussions have happened via text, so, it was a unique experience.”

“Having to work around someone else’s schedule is a little bit difficult, and perhaps not why I signed up for an online course.”

“More than once in our text-based discussions I was unable to complete a discussion because a group member had forgotten to post.”
Theme #5

Learners reported practices by both the instructor, and LMS elements which were helpful for their task management and motivation.

“Just allowing us to get to know one another... that was nice.”

“He kind of made it a point to bring [the checkboxes] to our attention at the beginning of the course, which was really nice.”

“I think it’s helped me a lot to visually see the instructor, I mean I never understood a “teaching style” before for an online instructor, but I have a perceived teaching style for him as an instructor.”

“He’s very ‘present’ I guess, for lack of a better word. I think that he’s ‘in there’, in the trenches”
So What?

Takeaways and strategies for practical use
Key Takeaways

We can’t assume all students have the same prior experience or skills to succeed online. It takes time to learn!

● “Trial by fire” is what some students experience online. Let’s be patient, understanding, and amicable.
  ○ Informal spaces to “struggle”/reach out for help
  ○ Opportunities for flexibility in assessments, deadlines
  ○ Encourage “failure”
Key Takeaways

We can’t assume all students have the same prior experience or skills to succeed online. It takes time to learn!

- Communication is key!
  - Consistent, clear communication
  - Kind, understanding, non-stringent. Set the tone.
  - Share your experiences
Key Takeaways

Learners recognize there's something different about their study habits for succeeding online - let's help them understand what that is.

- Provide guidance: Small steps can students make in everyday habits
  - “Before you Start” module with suggestions, tips and tricks, etc.
  - Tip of the Week announcement
Learners recognize there’s something different about their study habits for succeeding online - let’s help them understand what that is.

• Modeling
  ○ Sharing what your experience was as a student, or as an online instructor
  ○ Tips on how you manage your work online each week
Learners recognize there’s something different about their study habits for succeeding online - let’s help them understand what that is.

- Allow time and space for catching their “stride”
  - More scaffolding early on
  - Just-in-time teaching
Yes, we can play a role in guiding students towards self-directed strategies, and increased motivation!

- Provide “best practices” for online learning tips and strategies
- Be present!
  - Emails, personal videos, checking in
Key Takeaways

Yes, we can play a role in guiding students towards self-directed strategies, and increased motivation!

- Encourage intrinsic motivation
  - Choices, relevant assessments, authenticity
  - Carefully designed online group work
Thank You!

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Session Evaluations & Drawing

• Download and open OLC Conferences mobile app
• Navigate to specific session to evaluate
• Select “Evaluate Session” on session details screen (located under session type and track)
• Complete session evaluation*

*Each session evaluation completed (limited to one per session) = one contest entry

**Five (5) $25 gift cards** will be awarded to five (5) individuals
Must submit evals using the OLC Conferences mobile app or website