Building self-regulated learning skills in distance education courses

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Self‐Regulated Learning Model

Literature

• Student satisfaction in distance education courses has a large impact on overall retention and success (Mahle, 2007). Satisfaction is connected to motivation and a predictor of persistence (Levy, 2007) and final grades (Wang, Shannon, & Ross, 2013).

• Poor course design can impact overall satisfaction (Kauffman, 2015).

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Literature

• Instructors can encourage students to use SRL, and often do so in face-to-face courses (Kistner, Rakoczy, Otto, Dignath, Buttner & Klieme, 2010; Leidinger & Perels, 2012).

• All students have the ability to engage in SRL, but they are unlikely to do so independently (Andrade, 2014).

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Quick Overview of My Study...

• Students were invited to participate in a study by an announcement posted in their online courses. They were directed to complete a survey indicating their interest and their preferred contact information.

• Students were contacted and asked to schedule a Zoom session or complete the written alternative.

• 48 students completed sessions – 25 live and 23 written.

• Students enrolled in one of three courses: a fully online course designed using a course design rubric; a fully online course designed using CoI best practices, and a fully online course that does not have either of those qualities. Once enrolled, students were asked to find and review the syllabus, course schedule, course add and drop policies, and instructor information; identify learning outcomes, a reading assignment, and a major assignment; find information about what to do for help, and anticipate how much time the course will take them per week as if it were a course they were going to take.
What Students Said

Re: Time Management

• “I really like when my teachers put things out way ahead... Having the content open at least one or two units ahead of time, you know for those students who want to work ahead.”

• "It’s much easier to schedule things when there’s a course summary of the due dates that are going to be had. So you can schedule your study time ahead of time.”

• "I feel that projects that are very weighted on your grade should be introduced in the syllabus because if they're going to take quite a bit of your time and you have because most people that take online classes are usually full time parents that have jobs and everything else, a mother a wife or a husband or some you have other responsibilities that you have to do, and having those extreme projects and then having it smack dab in a week is not going to work.”
What Students Said

Re: Effort Regulation

• “I don’t have time to read something that I would be interested in [so] I wouldn’t even bother to take the time... because of the subject, absolutely not. I don’t really care about this.”

• “If I was in this class, I would definitely be checking in like, hey, you guys, I found this out today on this [PROJECT] and you guys won’t believe what’s going on.”

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What Students Said

Re: Help Seeking

• "Right now all my professors online have like a Q and A [question and answer] tab for our classes where we can post any questions and either fellow students can answer or the instructor will answer our questions. And that's kind of nice because it's just like it's out there for the whole class to see and maybe somebody else has the same question."

• “Having the parking lots where you're able to post to your classmates makes it helpful because if you're struggling with something you guys can teach you can respond to each other.”
What Students Said

Re: Metacognition

- “[reading] I strongly recommend that you do not wait until the last minute... Although some of us will.”
- “If I start something early then... if I work on it 30 minutes a day or I go a couple of days in between by the time the project is due, it’s pretty much done.”
- “[In the module] I click on everything that’s required and sometimes I click on the things that aren’t required, it all depends on how much free time I have.”

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Recommendations

Course schedule and labelled assignments.

• Participants expressed frustration when trying to find things that were not labelled as reading, assignments, homework, project, etc, while completing the tasks given. Some of these participants give up during the observation, while others did eventually complete the task, but took a larger chunk of time than they expected trying to find what they were being asked to do.

• Participants also expressed feeling like they were missing out on information, as if things were being purposefully hidden from them, and/or that assumptions were made about what they knew and understood about the course content.
Recommendations

Instructor contact and help.

• Participants were split on where they would go for help first – to their instructor or not.
• Either way, participants noted that being able to easily find information for help reduced their anxieties about needing help.
Recommendations

Peer interaction.

- Being able to interact with classmates through discussion and question and answer boards is good. Participants felt they were able to get responses more quickly and without unnecessarily bothering their instructor through their peers.

- Some participants felt like peer interaction was an avenue for expressing identity and finding deeper connection in an online course.
Recommendations

Scaffolded assignments.

- The participants frequently noticed and commented on the major project check-ins included in the mock courses.

- A majority of the participants felt this would be more helpful than not having regular semester check-ins, especially if the check-ins eventually became part of the larger project.

- Procrastination was one negative learning behavior the participants mentioned, and most said that regular check-ins would force them to engage in better learning behaviors.
Recommended Strategies / Reflection

• What strategies seem familiar? Which ones have you not thought of before?
• What strategies seem to be missing?
• What SRL strengths do you believe your students have? Weaknesses?
• How does your course design encourage students to reflect? Ask for help? Create a schedule? Practice skills? Work with peers?
Discussion

Share:
- What strategies do you use?
- What strategies do you want to use?
- What do you still need help with?

Thank You!
Contact me:
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