

STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVES ON TAKING COURSES ONLINE, BLENDED, OR A COMBINATION

Catherine C. Schifter¹, Dirk Ifenthaler² and Daniel White¹

¹*Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, U.S.A.*

²*University of Mannheim, Mannheim, Germany*

ABSTRACT

Online education has a relatively short history in the grand history of education. With options for online delivery modes developed over the last two decades, understanding student motivations for choosing one option over another will be helpful to any institution of higher education planning new offerings. This reflective paper presents the beginning aspects of a study at one university in the United States, using a prior study from Australia as a guide.

KEYWORDS

Online students, motivation, United States.

1. INTRODUCTION

While distance learning has a long history, offering courses through online options goes back to when the Internet was effectively available through Usenets and the like. Only since 1993 with the advent of the World Wide Web that both synchronous and asynchronous interactions between students and between students and instructors became available (Ifenthaler, Bellin-Mularski, & Mah, 2015). Over the last 20 years, studies in the United States have mostly focused on how higher education faculty perceived either teaching through online or blended options or the reputation of online courses in general (Allen & Seaman, 2013, 2006; Schifter, 2005). And while there is a wealth of research on why students choose their institution of higher education (Harkera, Sladea, & Harkera, 2001; Cebula & Lopes, 1982; Chapman, 1981; Booth, 1997), little research has been concerned with what motivates students to study through different modes of delivery, including face-to-face, fully online, blended between online and face-to-face (Bailey, Ifenthaler, Gosper, Kretzschmar, & Ware, 2015).

In a paper presented at CELDA 2014, Bailey and colleagues (2015) presented a study of Australian institutions of higher education and motivation for students to study in different modes of delivery. The survey asked students taking courses through different modes of study about motivation to take courses through online modes. This study attempts to replicate the same study, but at one U.S. institution, Temple University in Philadelphia.

The research questions for this study are, what factors influence a Temple University student to take a course through online modes of delivery/learning? And, what technologies are used currently, and which would these students like to see used within a course delivered by online modes? Ultimately, outcomes would facilitate sound programmatic planning that accounted for reported student circumstance as well as their technological preferences.

2. METHODS

The survey used by Bailey and colleagues (2015) was adapted and used with Temple University online students. The survey was reviewed by the Office of Assessment, a pilot study was completed in August 2015 to clarify items, and the full survey was implemented in last September 2015 to all students identified as taking online courses at Temple University. This poster will present the initial findings of that study.

3. DISCUSSION

While the results of this study are incomplete, we anticipate the opportunity to compare findings at one U.S. institution with that from the Bailey, et al. (2015) study from Australia. This will be the first international comparison of factors influencing students choosing different modes of study. In addition, the findings will be useful by the University in planning and developing future programs to be delivered through online modes.

REFERENCES

- Allen, I.E., & Seaman, J. (2013). Grade change: Tracking online education in the United States. Babson Survey Research Group, Babson College, Babson Park, MA.
- Allen, I.E., & Seaman, J. (2006). Growing by degrees: Online education in the United States. Babson Survey Research Group, Babson College, Babson Park, MA.
- Bailey, M., Ifenthaler, D., Gosper, M., Kretzschmar, M., & Ware, C. (2015). The changing importance of factors influencing students' choice of study mode *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*, 20(2), 169–184. doi: 10.1007/s10758-015-9253-9
- Booth, A. (1997). Listening to students: Experiences and expectations in the transition to a history degree. *Studies in Higher Education*, 22: 205-220.
- Cebula, R.J., & Lopes, J. (1982). Determinants of student choice of undergraduate major field. *American Educational Research Journal*, 19:303-312.
- Chapman, D.W. (1981). A model of student college choice. *Journal of Higher Education*, 52: 490-505.
- Harkera, D., Sladea, P., & Harkera, J. (2001). Exploring the decision process of school leavers and mature students in university choice. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 11:1-20.
- Ifenthaler, D., Bellin-Mularski, N., & Mah, D.-K. (2015). Internet: Its impact and its potential for learning and instruction. In J. M. Spector (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of educational technology* (Vol. 1, pp. 416–422). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schifter, C.C. (2005). Faculty Participation in Distance Education Programs. In Howard, C., Boettcher, J., Justine, L., Schenk, K., Rogers, P.L., & Berg, G.A. (Eds). *Encyclopedia of Distance Learning*. Hershey, PA: IdeaGroup Inc, pp 930-936.