

VOLITION SUPPORT DESIGN MODEL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to introduce a design model for supporting student volition. First, the construct of volition is explained and the importance of volition is further described in the context of goal attainment. Next, the theoretical basis of the model is described. Last, implications of the model are discussed for the design of learning environments as well as teacher education.

KEYWORDS

Volition, emotion regulation, action control, motivation, design

1. WHAT IS VOLITION?

Volition refers to a psychological power that allows people to persist during the process of goal striving (Heckhausen, 2007; Kim & Bennekin, In press). Students with volition are persistent in working on learning tasks even when encountering difficulties, challenges, distractions or temptations.

2. IS VOLITION DIFFERENT FROM MOTIVATION?

Motivation is only desire. When difficulties, challenges, distractions or temptations arise, desire may be insufficient to enable students to persist (Gollwitzer, 1999). Desire simply initiates the process of attaining a goal and volition helps follow through to actually attain the goal (Heckhausen, 2007).

3. WHY IS VOLITION IMPORTANT IN LEARNING?

Volition can help students (a) take actions toward goals, (b) sustain motivation, and (c) control emotions (Kim & Bennekin, In press). First, as stated earlier, students with volition follow through because their intentions are implemented (Gollwitzer, 1999). Second, when motivation withers, volition can reconcile insufficient motivation (Kehr, 2004). For example, when a student's motivation to study for an exam weakens because of his newer desire to be with his friends partying, volition would allow him to be in a physically distant place and compensate for his weakened motivation. Last, students with volition can manage unwanted emotions (Corno, 1993). Emotion control is part of volitional strategies (Kuhl, 1987) and crucial in learning processes and outcomes because emotions can alter not only motivation but also memory, decision making, and use of cognitive strategies (Pekrun, 2006).

4. VOLITION SUPPORT (VOS) DESIGN MODEL

Not every student is volitional but volition can be cultivated (Byman & Kansanen, 2008). This paper proposes a model for designing support for student volition (e.g., creating volition support into existing instruction, designing external tools).

The model is built on theories and research not only on volition but also on motivation and emotion regulation (e.g., Corno, 1993; Gollwitzer, 1999; Gross, 2008; Keller, 2008; Kuhl, 1987). The model consists of the four stages: (1) goal initiation: “Want it”, (2) goal formation: “Plan for it”, (3) action control: “Do it”, and (4) emotion control: “Finish it”.

First, the goal initiation stage is to help students see the value of learning tasks and desire to set goals. As discussed earlier, a desire is necessary to initiate the goal pursuit process that requires also volition. Second, the goal formation stage is to help students formulate goals and plan what to do, with two emphases. One emphasis is on guiding the content of students’ goals to be specific than general and proximal than distal as well as to promote positive outcomes than negative outcomes and mastery than performance (Gollwitzer, 1999). The other emphasis is on specific planning for implementation intentions such as writing down a list of tasks to do as well as a list of plans in the “if” and “then” form (Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006). Third, the action control stage was to help students to actually do what they said they would do by asking them to manage resources and monitor their implementation intentions. This stage involves reminding students of their goals, tasks, and plans, showing them strategies to manage resources, and having them reflect and monitor their progress in terms of task completion and goal achievement. Last, the emotion control stage is to help students finish what they said they would do for study while regulating their emotions. Strategies offered in this stage are about how to modify surroundings, select different environments, shift attentions, conduct cognitive reevaluation of situations, and suppress activated emotions (Gross, 2008).

5. DISCUSSION

The VoS design model provides a synthesis of the literature on volition as well as motivation and emotion regulation. The model also provides directions to the researchers and practitioners who are interested in how to help students persist in their learning processes. The model can be applied not only to create learning environments but also to teacher education that helps teachers recognize the importance of their role in cultivating student volition and learn how to do so. Theoretical foundations for the model, strategies for each stage of the model, and practical applications of the model in design will be presented in detail at the conference.

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