IJAE
International Journal of Asian Education

Vol. 2, No. 4, December 2021
p-ISSN: 2723-746X
e-ISSN: 2722-8592

Learning Motivation: Strategies to Increase Students' Engagement in Online Learning at San Sebastian College-Recoletos, Manila

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Article Information
Received: July 09, 2021
Revised: September 16, 2021
Accepted: October 17, 2021
Online: November 15, 2021

Keywords
Motivational activities, Student-Engagement, Pandemic, Online learning, Lifelong learning

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to be able to find ways or the best strategies in teaching that will motivate students to exert effort in their studies, considering the present conditions in this pandemic period. A quantitative method was used to define the study's objective, where two sections of Psychology students who took up Science 101 and Science 104 were chosen as respondents to answer the survey questionnaire through google forms. The purposive sampling technique was also employed since these students can appropriately answer the queries sent to them. The Likert scale method was used to measure the students' level of agreement, with the 5-point range, where the results were collated and analyzed. The research result finds several strategic activities such as report enhancement, online debates, virtual experiments, discussion and updating of recent findings, and the creation of infomercials that truly captured their interest and attention. This study made use of several references and tables in order to support the results obtained. The researcher recommends that there should be effective and efficient motivational activities to sustain student engagement. The researchers, who are also educators, have agreed to continuously upgrade the newfound motivational activities to encourage more students to study well even in an online setting, thus giving more opportunities for better achievement in education.

INTRODUCTION

Lalani & Li (2020) expressed that educational activity can be defined as educating or instructing activities that impart knowledge or skill. Thus, this should always be the reference point of educators or teachers on how they can help their students learn well and reach their goals in the future. Some learning activities are passive but designed to present important information to students in an efficient way. Common examples would include lecture-discussion, watching videos and demonstrations, and having some readings. These are the most traditional teaching methods that have truly been a part of the students' lives while educating themselves in the classroom. In addition, during the face-to-face encounter, added classroom activities were present, like performing laboratory experiments in science classes, group performances in related topics, informal discussions outside the campus, and even some role-playing. These activities have truly added fun and excitement to the lessons learned, which allowed the students to enjoy their studies more. However, the pandemic now came, which made learning

https://doi.org/10.46966/ijae.v2i4.217

confined in the new normal, with the onset of online classes. With this sudden shift away from the classroom in many parts of the globe, some wonder whether the adoption of online learning will continue to persist post-pandemic and how such a shift would impact the worldwide education market. In the study of Meenakshi (2020), it was mentioned that Dowson Tong, Senior Executive Vice- President of Tencent and President of its Cloud and Smart Industries Group, highlighted that to get the full benefit of online learning. There should be a concerted effort to provide a structured environment and go beyond replicating a physical class/lecture through video capabilities; instead, using a range of collaboration tools and engagement methods that promote "inclusion, personalization, and intelligence." According to Schock (2020), if online learning technology can play a role, it is incumbent among all of us to explore its full potential, and there will always be a need to keep students motivated and on the path to success - especially as uncertainty surrounds upcoming terms and the likelihood of returning to normal campus life.

Literature review

The online format allows a dynamic interaction between the instructor and students and among the students themselves. Resources and ideas are shared, and continuous synergy will be generated through the learning process. Each individual can contribute to the course discussions and comments on the work of others. The synergy in the student-centered virtual classroom is one of the most unique and vital traits that the online learning format possesses. Within an online discussion, the individual student responds to the course material (lectures and course books, for example) and comments from other students. Students usually respond to those topics within the broader conversation that most speak to their concerns. These situations result in smaller conversations taking place simultaneously within the group. While students should read all of their classmates' contributions, they actively engage in only those parts of the dialog most relevant to their interests. In this way, students control their own learning experience and tailor the class discussions to meet their own specific needs. Ideally, students make their contributions to the course while at the same time taking away a unique mix of relevant information. The interactive learning environment, as seen in adult education, contributes to self-direction and critical thinking. Some educators have made great strides in applying these concepts to their ground teaching. However, many classes still exist which are based on lectures and rote memorization of material. The world of the virtual classroom makes innovative and creative approaches to instruction even more important. The facilitator and student collaborate to create a dynamic learning experience in the online environment, as published in the University of Illinois Springfield (2021).

According to Toimitus (2017), online learning requires more self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and independence from the learner than traditional classroom education. Keller's ARCS (attention, relevance, confidence, satisfaction) Model of Motivation is a framework for learners to become and remain motivated. In line with this, Wong (2020) wrote: "10 online learning activities that keep students motivated and engaged". These activities include developing fun and engaging online activities that will keep home-bound students excited to learn. They are as follows: Real-world case studies, online debates, whiteboard teaching, classroom newspaper, trivia competitions, comic strip, video newscast, Google Earth scavenger hunt, interview a family member or friend, and write and perform a song or poem.

Meanwhile, Hyatt (2017) stressed that to motivate students to choose science for their future, the following ways can be incorporated to improve the image of science, wherein many people perceive science to be something tough and negative. Be a positive role model, Make it fun, Connect it to everyday life, Give the students opportunities, and Bring it to life. These are then considered to be the possible ways on how science can best be appreciated by students and would feel motivated to study the subject further and to feel more enthusiastic about it. One of the most effective ways to help motivate students online involves connecting the "real world," so to speak, to the subject matter at hand. It could mean something as simple as beginning each day with an online class discussion, like relating something relevant in the news to the current lesson at hand. Alternately, you may choose to engage in role-playing by having students apply current reading concepts to future careers or hypothetical situations. Finally, dialogic interaction is a valuable part of the learning process, as the act of engaging in dialectic with others reinforces concepts by helping students to solidify and elaborate upon key concepts from the subject matter or reading material. Either of these applications could be carried out in online chat rooms via student discussion, thus ensuring engagement with both the subject material and each other.

On the other hand, Saeed, Sitwat, & Zynger (2012) emphasized that motivation is seen as a prerequisite of and a necessary element for student engagement in learning, where this type of learning is not only an end in itself, but it is also a means to the end of students achieving good academic outcomes. An instructor also noted that motivation is a state that energizes, directs, and sustains behavior. Motivation involves goals and requires activity. Goals provide the impetus for and the direction of action, while action entails effort: persistence to sustain an activity for a long time. Situational motivation is a phenomenon in which aspects of the immediate environment enhance motivation to learn particular things or behave in particular ways. Educators can do many things to create a classroom environment that motivates students to learn and behave to promote their long-term success.

Teachers would always be glad to motivate students to become achievers; however, it was pointed out by Elliott, A. J. & Murayama, K. (2012) that competition prompts performance-approach goals, which facilitates performance, and competition also prompt performance-avoidance goals, which undermines performance. It would depend then on what type of goal the student would set for himself to attain or achieve something for himself. Furthermore, a research article was gathered through the help of Ascheff, A.L., Denessen, E., et al. (2019), which says that as many teachers will recognize, students vary considerably in their engagement during lessons. For example, some students are highly engaged in paying attention or putting effort into assignments, while others do not engage in learning activities. Considering the importance of student engagement for students' current and future success, fostering student engagement is essential, and how teachers interact with students on a day-to-day basis could be of influence. Engaging students, however, while simultaneously teaching a subject and maintaining classroom management is a complex and challenging task.

Finally, it was clearly emphasized by Bolliger, D. & Martin, F. (2018) that engagement is crucial to student learning and satisfaction in online courses. The definition of engagement has been extensively explored in the distance and online learning literature for decades. Student engagement is defined as "the student's psychological investment in an effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote.

METHODS

Research Design

This research employed a quantitative method in defining the objectives of this study, which is to know the type of motivational activities that will increase engagement among selected students of San Sebastian College- Recoletos, Manila. Therefore, the researcher made use of the survey questionnaire as the main source for the data collection.

Sample

The respondents of this study are Psychology students of two different sections, who took up Earth Science (Science 101), and Zoology (Science 104), who are all studying in San Sebastian College-Recoletos, Manila Philippines. They all attend online classes at present.

Sampling technique

The purposive sampling technique was used for the respondents since they have the major course that can respond well to most inquiries about the appropriate motivational activities to help the students be engaged in science subjects.

Data Collection and Data Analysis techniques

Two sections of Psychology classes were chosen as respondents in this study. These were the students enrolled during the first semester of 2020-2021. The 1st class comprises the 3rd year students who took up Zoology subject. They were only 12 in the class. The other section is composed of 32 students who took up Earth Science subject. Both of these classes were asked to answer the survey questionnaire, sent to them online, using google forms. Among the 32 students of Earth Science, only 18 students sent back their answers, whereas, in the Zoology class, all the 12 students responded to the survey questionnaire. Since we are still in a pandemic situation, it would be quite understandable if not all selected students could reply to the given questionnaire. It can be brought about by the anxieties

created by this pandemic, plus the common understanding of weak connection, no available laptops, and mobile phones. Other factors could be power disruptions and the presence of inclement weather, which can cause weak signals that disrupt the use of online technology. Their responses were collated and analyzed as to what statistical treatment should be applied to develop the correct results, leading to an effective discussion, conclusion, and recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the study exhibits the data accumulated by the researcher. In addition, the results of the data gathering procedure were organized, presented, analyzed, and interpreted by the researcher to arrive at a better understanding of the information gathered.

Table 1. 1 to 5-point Likert Rating Interpretation of Range

	Value	Range
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00-1.80
Disagree	2	1.81-2.60
Neither / Nor Agree	3	2.62-3.40
Agree	4	3.41-4.20
Strongly Agree	5	4.21-5.00

Source: Sozen & Guven (2019)

The Likert Scale is a type of Psychometric Response Scale in which Respondents specify their level of agreement to a statement given in a questionnaire, which is usually evaluated in 5 points.

Table 2. Mean Analysis for Science 101 with Questions 1-10 (Sci 101)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
N Valid	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.8333	3.7222	4.2222	4.1111	4.2222	3.8889	2.4444	2.2778	4.2222	4.6667
Std. Deviation	.61835	.89479	.73208	.75840	.73208	1.07861	.85559	1.12749	.80845	.59409

The table showed the lowest mean in Q7 and Q8, with an average of 2.4 and 2.27, respectively. The question in number 7 stated, "Did you feel any limitations while studying in an online class?" and the question in number 8 stated, "Did the traditional way of teaching in online classes make you feel less excited to attend your classes?". Most respondents disagreed with the questions since they did not feel any imitations in online classes because they observed that their teachers were trying their best to teach effectively. Likewise, the traditional way of teaching in online classes was still accepted by the students.

Table 3. Mean Analysis for Science 101 with Questions 11-20

	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
N Valid	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	4.3889	3.9444	4.5000	4.2222	4.3889	4.0556	4.2778	5.0000	5.0000	4.1111
Std. Deviation	.77754	.99836	.78591	.73208	.77754	1.39209	1.07406	.00000	.00000	1.07861

Q18 and Q19 got the highest mean average of 5.0 (Sci 101). The question asked in number 18: "Did you find fun and excitement in the new online activities?" Whereas, in question 19, "What were some of these new online activities that you enjoyed most?". The majority of the students found fun and excitement in the new online activities, especially science trivia and games. The newfound activities that

they liked best were picture analysis, group advocacy, recent findings, report enhancement, class debates, and infomercials.

Table 4. Mean Analysis for Science 104 with Questions 1-10

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
N Valid	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	4.5833	4.1667	5.0000	4.5833	5.0000	4.1667	4.0000	4.4167	4.6667	5.0000
Std. Deviation	.66856	.71774	.00000	.51493	.00000	.83485	.00000	.66856	.77850	.00000

Questions 3, 5, and 10 got the highest mean average of 5.0. The questions are given in numbers 3, 5, and 10, respectively, were, "Did you learn and appreciate the virtual laboratory experiments?", "Did the frog parts serve their purpose in the experiments?" and "Would you like to make use of other laboratory species for future experiments?". Their resounding answer of 5.0 (strongly agree) to the following questions prove that they are very much willing to learn more about the dissection process in a frog or any other future species, even in a virtual laboratory, as long as it can enhance their knowledge and learning.

Table 5. Mean Analysis for Science 104 with Questions 11 to 20

	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
N Valid	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	4.1667	5.0000	5.0000	4.5000	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000	4.4167
Std. Deviation	.83485	.00000	.00000	.79772	.00000	.00000	.00000	.00000	.00000	.79296

The average highest mean of 5.0 was observed on Q12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. The following were the questions asked:

Q12: "Would you like to have additional activities to develop critical thinking?"
Q13: "Can you appreciate the incorporation of class debates and the making of some advocacies?"
Q15: "Can recent findings be of help to the daily occurrences in life?"
Q16: "Do you see the making of infomercials as a promising device in your course?"
Q17: "Did you find enhancement in your reports?"
Q18: "Did the incorporation of trivia give some fun and excitement to your studies?"
Q19: "Would you like to become future doctors someday?"

All of these questions were given a 5.0 rating, where it could be summarized that these students were able to appreciate the new set of online activities, where most of them have benefited well enough, to the point of enhancing their critical thinking, coupled with some fun and excitement to be able to enjoy the subject matter.

DISCUSSION

The results serve as valid proof for the few remaining parts of this research work. It was able to give us an understanding and evaluation on how our students were able to learn their lessons well with the traditional teaching strategies of teachers during the online classes, until such time that several activities or new teaching methods were introduced to students, and this mode of learning truly enhanced their engagement to learn and achieve more. To motivate them more to do good in their studies, while at the same time having some fun and enjoyment in involving themselves in the newfound motivational activities, wherein these motivated students can be engaged with quizzes and interactive

features that offer instant feedback. It is also a well-known fact that the web offers tremendous possibilities for flexibility, interactivity, and creativity. It then can hold their attention longer and better.

This study was interpreted well with the help of the Likert Rating, where each number in the survey questionnaire was given the corresponding interpretations to determine the students' level of engagement. In figure 2- the mean results for questions 1-10 for earth science students were determined, where question 7 got 2.44, and question 8 got 2.27. Both questions got the lowest mean in this class, which was interpreted as disagreeing with the questions given. Question 7 stated, Did you feel limitations in learning well during online classes? Furthermore, question 8 says, Did the traditional way of teaching make you less excited to join the online classes? Their response was indicative that they still have the initiative to attend the online classes, despite the traditional way of teaching. At the same time, they did not feel much of the limitations while attending online classes since most of these students probably felt and observed that their teacher was slowly trying to add and revise some teaching strategies to cope well with their subject. Figure 3 showed the mean results for questions 11-20, where questions 18 and 19 got the highest score of 5.0 for the same subject. These students unanimously signified that the new online activities gave them fun and excitement, which included the incorporation of trivia, class debates, discussion of recent findings, enhancement of reports, picture analysis, group advocacy, and the making of infomercials, which according to them gave them enough motivation and enthusiasm in their studies.

On the other hand, figures 4 and 5 showed the mean results for the zoology class, where questions 3,5,10,12,13,15,16,17,18,19 gave a high result of 5.0, which indicated that they appreciated much the laboratory-experiment part where they were able to expound their analysis and critical thinking, coupled with their skills in the dissection of a frog, through video presentations. Likewise, their answers to the next questions was an affirmation of their appreciation of the different motivational activities taught and shared to them by their teachers, such as the introduction of science trivia, discussion of recent findings, picture analysis, class debate, report enhancement, and the incorporation of science online games. They have truly agreed then that they felt motivated to study more in an online class with these new class activities that held their attention and gave them fun and excitement while learning in class. On the other hand, the lowest mean for this section was seen at 4.0 for question 7 alone, where most of them signified that they felt some limitations in learning while attending their online class. This result proved then that these students were truly looking for additional motivational activities that could perk their imagination, make them think more logically, become critical thinkers, share valuable insights in class, and become well-rounded individuals.

As supported by the figures or tables, these general findings indicate that there should still be continuous motivational activities that should sustain student engagement. Research shows that students engage when they act as their learning agents to achieve goals important to them. Therefore, allowing students to work autonomously and with others, helping them develop their sense of competence, increases motivation. Having to motivate students is one of the major challenges teachers face daily. It is conceptualized as students' energy and drive to engage, learn, work effectively, and achieve their potential at school. Motivation and engagement play a vital role in the students' interest and enjoyment of school. Understandably, both also play huge roles in academic achievement. Consequently, those students who are motivated and engaged in learning tend to perform academically well and are better behaved than unmotivated and unengaged peers.

There are ways on how to keep learners motivated and engaged while attending classes online. These are building a sense of community, helping the students feel that they can succeed, establishing ways to monitor progress, giving incentives or rewards, and relating class to students' lives. There are still other ways on how to engage our students to keep track of online classes. One of which is to motivate with goal setting by letting students know exactly what they need to do for learning to occur. It can be done effectively by completing assigned activities each week, accessing all posted lesson content, and summarizing understanding. Teachers can also motivate with rewards and praise. In line with this, they can create a virtual reward system that can truly inspire the students. They can also give positive feedback messages by using fun videos, GIFs, and images. These rewards and praises should be given to students who communicate maturely and respectfully online, show new personal bests, but additional effort to complete additional activities, and show significant signs of improvement. In this way, the students will feel that they are always connected in class.

CONCLUSION

The students' morale can be boosted well with the positive and meaningful feedback coming from their teachers. In this way, the students will be more inspired to study more and help other students, nurturing their value system in attaining their goals in their studies.

Students enrolled in online classes should try their very best to remember significant lessons learned, coupled with their application to daily life, as it will lead them and guide them for future endeavors. Thus, continuous and upgraded usage of motivational activities can truly enlighten and inspire our students to do better in their respective courses.

Student engagement has been defined by how involved students are in their learning experience and how connected they feel to their classes, peers, and institutions. Given the positive associations between student engagement, course satisfaction, persistence, and academic success, initiatives to foster student engagement in classrooms have become a primary focus for a higher education institution. This research accomplished the significance of student engagement, even though not all students on the list could answer the survey questionnaire due to the pandemic period. It is also noteworthy that as more and more technology becomes integrated into the student learning experience, educators have begun to explore technology-based initiatives to enhance student engagement through facilitating active learning activities. With this at hand, we can truly say that enhanced motivation by the teachers to their students is an essential element to achieve student engagement in learning.

RECOMMENDATION

Students should stay connected as a class and motivate each other. It is to build a sense of community in the students' online learning environment to combat isolation. It can be done effectively by coordinating online group activities, taking the time to chat off-topic, where you can discuss how everyone is keeping busy and staying healthy at home. Teachers can also make the communication personal and better by calling the students' first names with a warm and engaging tone. There should also be a conscious and consistent effort among the students and teachers to monitor the liveliness of a regular classroom environment. Thus, with all these tips and strategies to keep students be motivated and engaged in online classes, they can become effective and efficient students geared toward attaining something big for their future, which can be of utmost help not only for themselves but also for their community and country as well.

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