

Title of paper

Motivation to use Online Learning Communities

Authors

Niven, J with Harris, R and Williams, D

Institution

The Robert Gordon University

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Name and Address of contact person

Jennifer Niven

Centre for Open and Distance Learning

The Robert Gordon University

Schoolhill

Aberdeen

AB10 1FR

Telephone

(01224) 262241

E-mail

j.niven@rgu.ac.uk

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Proposal:

Motivation to use Online Learning Communities

Niven, Jennifer with Harris, Rachel and Williams, Dorothy

This paper will outline the methodology used in a pilot case study, examining the motivation to use online learning communities. It relates to an e-learning course delivered over The Robert Gordon University's Virtual Campus and research carried out for an MPhil/PhD entitled 'Motivation to use Online Learning Communities: a study of the theory and practice'.

Objectives of the research include:

- ∴ To determine the motivational and de-motivational factors used and experienced by both students and tutors.
- ∴ Ascertain whether or not the motivational states (apathy, boredom, anxiety and flow) are apparent in the online setting and how they are illustrated.
- ∴ Finalise the methodological approach for further case studies, to expand the motivational framework and ascertain whether or not motivational states show similarities across those case studies.

This paper examines recent discussions from the e-learning course used as a pilot case study, and discusses communication via asynchronous discussion forums and e-mails passed between students and staff. Monitoring of queries and apparent confidence or anxiety shown by students will likely prove vital as will the response shown by tutors.

Proposed methodology:

In order for the analysis to occur, a coding scheme is being established. The coding scheme used within the discourse analysis is developed from a theoretical standpoint and based on a section focussing on the motivational states of apathy, boredom, anxiety and flow, as established by Keller's ARCS model. In addition work from an extensive literature review is being fed into the scheme.

Both staff and students are offered the opportunity to provide feedback on the analysis and assumptions made. It is at this stage also that either party can request that comments included can be attributed to the author rather than remain anonymous. This feedback will likely take the form of stimulated recall. By showing text samples to an individual before the research assumptions are revealed it is hoped to gain further insight into both the methodology used and the e-learning process.

Issues associated with the methodology:

The use of retrospective discourse analysis reduces the chance of researcher bias being introduced to the group. Points to be noted throughout the methodological process include the growth patterns of the community, individual participation, group interaction and community attitudes to new or troublesome community members. Group interactions and how they develop will be of particular interest to this study.

Conclusions:

The importance of motivation in driving and developing an online community is at the core of this study. Methodological approaches in this area are still in development and by using a variety of methods this study aims to create a sound research strategy in analysing e-learning. Results will ultimately be illustrated through the creation of a motivational framework to aid in the creation of future communities.