ONLINE STUDENTS WANT MORE... TEACHERS?

1 INTRODUCTION

Online education has experienced exponential growth in recent years, and this trend is expected to continue. As schools compete in an increasingly worldwide market, student satisfaction is a key concern as students who are satisfied with their online learning experiences are more likely to re-enroll with the same institutional providers and recommend courses they have enjoyed to others.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how students perceive their online educational experiences, to identify factors that contribute to student satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and to make recommendations to improve student satisfaction in future online courses.

3 METHODS

Data were gathered from 34 courses and were coded for dominant and recurring themes.

4 RESULTS

Absence of teachers was often cited as the main disadvantage of online education.

Findings from this investigation revealed that there were several factors that contributed to student satisfaction and dissatisfaction identified by students in their online education and by what students liked and disliked about their courses. These categories included teacher presence—students stated most of all it. Absence of teachers was often cited as the main disadvantage of online education.

When teachers were not present, students learning online tended to feel anxious and frustrated and were often less satisfied with their online learning experiences. If these feelings were experienced at the beginning of a course, they persisted throughout the course. Teacher presence seemed to be directly connected to the learning process and improved student engagement. When teachers were absent, students often felt as though they were being left out, enabling LESS RIGOROUS, LESS VALUABLE, and MORE SUPERFICIAL. Student comments from a number of studies indicated that teachers facilitate the learning process by STIMULATING AND DIRECTING ONLINE DISCUSSIONS, ASKING PROBING QUESTIONS, CLARIFYING MISCONCEPTIONS, and EMPHASIZING KEY CONCEPTS.

WHAT STUDENTS LIKED ABOUT ONLINE COURSES

- Access and flexibility
- Convenience and flexibility
- Not commuting to class

WHAT STUDENTS DISLIKED ABOUT ONLINE COURSES

- Technical difficulties with learning management systems, the internet, or devices used to access courses
- Inconsistencies in how online courses were presented, including courses posted in the same learning management system
- Difficulty with and time wasted on locating assignments, discussions, or course materials needed to complete assignments
- Amount of reading and writing required to complete online courses
- Reading digitized text
- Confusing assignments and poorly articulated course expectations
- Deliberate teacher responses to student inquiries
- Deliberate teacher feedback on submitted assignments
- Inadequate explanations from teachers for grades students earned

5 CONCLUSION

Student satisfaction is one of the first pillars of quality online education. A better understanding of how students perceive their online learning experiences and identification of what they like and dislike will help improve future online courses through student-informed decisions. When students were satisfied with their learning experiences, dropout rates decreased, and students stated that they were more likely to re-enroll in future online courses.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- PROVIDE MORE STUDENT SUPPORT WITH TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES
- IMPROVE AND STANDARDIZE ONLINE COURSE DESIGN
- OFFER MORE INSTRUCTIONAL VARIETY
- EVALUATE MATERIALS SUCH AS SYLLABI THAT ARE NEEDED BY STUDENTS TO COMPLETE ONLINE COURSES TO ENSURE THESE MATERIALS ARE UNDERSTOOD BY STUDENTS OF DIVERSE CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUNDS
- RESPOND TO STUDENT INQUIRIES WITHIN 24 HOURS OF SUBMISSION
- PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON ALL ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPLANATIONS ON HOW INDIVIDUAL GRADES WERE DETERMINED

REFERENCES

- American Massage Therapy Association. (2016). Massage schools offered online courses in their entry-level programs during 2015. If

ONLINE EDUCATION ENROLLMENT 2002 - 2012

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