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Does Blended Learning Always Favors Students' Self-direction?

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Abstract¹

This work reports the results of an empirical research investigating undergraduate students' readiness to self-directed learning. This aspect is explored through the point of view of the teaching and the instructional design approaches. The sample involves lecturers who teach at undergraduate level in diverse subjects and their students. The main objective of this work is to suggest a teaching strategy which can enhance students' self-direction in blended learning contexts.

A multiple case study is conducted to investigate various strategies adopted and to identify one or several fruitful strategies to enhance students' self-direction in learning. Through the pre and the post-test questionnaire [1], as well as the observations managed, it is known that the fruitful strategy to enhance students' self-direction in a teacher-centered blended learning environment is through an implementation of the flipped classroom. The majority of the studied blended learning courses are student-centered, but it turns out that the most successful ones to develop students' self-direction are those which integrate learning activities through an electronic discussion forum.

In order to validate this finding, the student-centered blended learning successful strategy is reviewed under another learning context. It is hypothesized that the implementation of an electronic forum has a positive impact on students' self-direction if a high level of interaction is promoted and the collaboration as well as the development of critical thinking are supported. For this validation experiment, two different scenarios are compared. A pre and post-test questionnaire [1] is managed to analyze students' self-direction in both observed cases. The results have shown that only students of the experimental groups have developed their self-direction. This latter is represented by a significant improvement of students' level of readiness to a self-directed learning at the end of the course period.

¹ The final experiment of this finding partly reproduces a paper published under the title: Adinda, D., Marquet, P. and Ntihiyuzwa, T. (in Press). EFL Blended learning course: Implementing a discussion forum to enhance students' self-direction, *18th European Conference on e-Learning*, Academic Conferences and Publishing International, Copenhagen – Denmark, 7-8 November 2019

Based on the sense of self-efficacy [2], self-direction is also recognized as a personal skill related to the motivation. While motivation is correlated to students' performance [3], this study also demonstrates a correlation between the development of students' self-direction and their course achievements.

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