MSc Research Project

Project Proposal

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MSc Computing: Project Proposal

Table of Contents

Title

How Can Technology Be Used To Motivate Learners In Higher Education?

Abstract

As a current advanced teaching practitioner in the IT arena, this paper will be looking at the use of technology in teaching and learning from both the learner and teacher perspectives. The specific area of interest is the motivation of learners, from a motivational research perspective and how technology can be used in the teaching process. This paper will also explore how technology can be used to reinforce prior learning both in classroom and remote learning scenarios, be that distance learning or additional studies, aka 'homework'.

This paper will look at the ways technology can be used by the two main stakeholders in the education process, namely the teacher perspective and the learner perspective.

Teachers can use technology to add to and aid their teaching, and learners can use technology in their day to day learning, often improving their learning experience as well as reinforcing further additional learning outside the classroom environment. However there can also be negative connotations to the use of technology, which also need to be researched and critiqued.

As Armitage et al (2003) write:

> *"Recent years have witnessed a dramatic increase in the impact of IT both in the production of teaching and learning resources and on the nature of those resources themselves. This is no doubt partly because of the potential IT possesses for improving the quality and effectiveness of learning resources as well as the obvious virtues of automation, capacity, interactivity and 'provisionality' (the relative ease of changing a learning resource). However, there must surely also be a case for IT being seen as a means of delivering learning to yet greater numbers of students, in a*

> *more flexible and cost-efficient manner. Preliminary research (e.g., the 'TILT' (Teaching with Independent Learning Technologies) project) indicates that IT can be a valuable learning resource in particular subject areas rather than all aspects of the curriculum."*

Much of the motivation theory available today comes from a very business centred stand point with the likes of Maslow, McGregor, Mayo and Herzberg all working with motivational theory in practice in the workplace. Additional to this a lot of the works previously carried out have come from a transatlantic (American) standpoint. However, this paper will work on the premise that 'people are people' and students have the same substantive needs for motivation that workers do in business environs; at least in the western world.

The education specific theorists, such as Reece and Walker, Armitage et al, Rebolledo-Mendez et al and Petty, believe that all of these business founded motivational theories (in conjunction with each other) can also apply to the motivation of learners. However the critically reflective teacher must seek to constantly learn how best to use existing theory on motivation, classroom management and learning styles for the specific needs of the learners being taught on a day-to-day basis. This is now more and more including the use of technology to support learners and learning.

Aims and Objectives

This research project and subsequent paper will look to address the following aim and objectives.

Aim

The aim of this project is to research and critically compare specific areas where technology can be used to improve the motivation and retention of students within a Higher Education setting.

Objectives

The objectives of the project are to:

- Review the current academic literature pertaining to the motivation of students
- Identify areas of the learner journey where technology can play an active and important role in motivation and retention of learners
- Identify technologies that can be utilised to support and enhance the learner journey
- Develop primary research tools to ascertain where and how technology can be used to support and enhance the learner journey
- Undertake primary research and evaluate the results of said research
- Make further substantive recommendations for where and how technology can be best used to support and enhance the learner journey

Project Philosophy

The rational and philosophy behind this project is that of a practicing Higher Education lecturer. This report will look specifically at the uses of technology to support and motivate learners in a Higher Education setting with a view to implementing findings to aid greater participation and/or successful progression from Higher Education courses into sustainable and meaningful employment. There is a potential current issue of motivation and participation of learners in Higher Education in the UK, and in particular those from more deprived educational and socio-economic groups.

Research Methodology, including any resources required

This research will look at existing writings on the subjects of motivation and participation within the Higher Education sector, along with primary research undertaken at a new Higher Education establishment.

The Primary Research will consist of survey questions to be responded to by students currently learning in a Higher Education establishment, enrolled on both Foundation (Level 3) and First Year Undergraduate (Level 4) degree programmes.

The Primary research is also expected to include face-to-face interviews with several lecturers currently employed in the Higher Education sector.

Research Questions

The primary research question to be answered is;

- How can technology be used to motivate learners in higher education?

In order to explore this question, secondary questions will be asked including;

1. In which areas of the learner journey can technology be used?
2. At what points during the learner journey can and should technology be used?

3. What are the feelings of current students and teachers to the use of technology to support learning?
4. What issues are there around the use and accessibility of technology during the learner journey?

It is also expected that as this research project progresses these questions are likely to change and/or be added to.

Keywords

Keywords: Motivation, Motivational Theory, Technology Supporting Learning (TSL), Learner Journey, e-Learning, Online Learning, Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs).

Ethical Consideration, showing how the Research will adhere to the university Research Ethics requirements

Primary research will be undertaken on a voluntary participation basis, and all names and personal information will be removed before publishing any research findings. However identifiers pertaining to socio-economic groupings will remain where relevant.

All care and attention will be considered at all times so as to not bring any establishment or persons into disrepute. Any conflicts of interest will be avoided and nullified.

Supervision

This Masters' Project is to be supervised by Dr. Thomas Lancaster

Time plan with key deliverables identified

Project Start	Monday 14 January 2013 at 2pm
Literature Review Reading and Drafting	From week commencing 14 January 2013
Project Selection Deadline	Thursday 17 January 2013 at 2pm
Creation of Primary Research Questions	Week commencing 28 January 2013
Project Proposal Deadline	Thursday 31 January 2013 at 2pm
Release of Primary Research Questions	Week commencing 11 February 2013
Collect Research Answers	22 February 2013
Collate Research Answers	Week commencing 25 February 2013
Draft Of Project Report (*optional*)	Thursday 25 April 2013 at 2pm
Project Report Deadline	Thursday 16 May 2013 at 2pm
Viva Examination	To be arranged during week starting Monday 20 May 2013

Support Required

This project will be done with the support of both supervising staff from BCU along with the staff and students at Coventry University College, in responding to research questions.

Support materials and MSc project training from **Professional Skills and Research Methods** along with previous research projects undertaken during the writer's PG Cert Ed and PG Cert Adult Literacy will also be utilised.

Skills Audit

Skill	Evidence
Technical competencies in education and technology	Report writer has 9 years' experience in teaching and learning in Post Compulsory Education. Along with being a certified e-Guide, and previous teaching teachers, Technology to Support Learning (TSL).
Secondary academic research	Previous Post Graduate research projects during PG Cert Ed (PCD) and PG Cert Ed (Adult Literacy), identifying and critically reviewing sources.
Primary academic research skills	These need to be learnt and honed during the process of undertaking this project. Seminars on this subject will be attended during first two months.
Academic writing	Extensive academic writing skills gained during first degree, two previous Post Graduate degrees and current Masters' degree.
Interpersonal and communication skills	Gained during first degree and honed during working life as a sales manager before nearly ten years of teaching practice and experience.
Team working skill	Many years' experience in team working through gainful employment, in both the Post Compulsory Education sector and private sector Sales Management (Telecommunications).
Statistical analysis	A-level Mathematics, along with experience of managing in education dealing with statistical analysis on a regular basis (i.e. Achievement, success, retention, attendance, progression data).
Academic referencing	Report writer has taught academic skills, including Harvard Referencing and Plagiarism.
Time-keeping skills	Excellent skills in working to project deadlines, reinforced with Prince2^{TM} certification.

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Appendices

Appendices will contain collated primary research data.