Senior secondary school students' engagement within a blended learning course: An exploratory case study

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education
in
e-learning

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New Zealand

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and beliefs this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Signature: ________________________

Date: 29 January 2016
Abstract

This research presents an exploration of student engagement within a blended learning course at a New Zealand secondary school. Growing numbers of secondary school students are participating in blended learning courses with both face-to-face and online teaching and learning experiences. However, the uptake and use of blended learning is not matched by an understanding of the nature of senior secondary students’ behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement. There are also gaps in understanding about approaches to learning that aid student engagement in a blended learning context.

To address this gap in the research, case study methodology was used over four weeks with seven Year 12 students and the teacher of their blended learning course. A qualitative analysis of observations, online usage, document analysis and interviews was undertaken to determine the nature of engagement within the blended learning activities available in one unit of learning.

The findings suggest that engaging senior secondary students in a blended learning environment involves a carefully considered and complex mix of cognitively and emotionally engaging activities. Three mechanisms that aided engagement with learning in this blended learning context were the fostering of a learning purpose, the use of scaffolds and providing the opportunity for the learner to personalise their activities. This study contributes to the field of secondary school blended learning by supporting and deepening the literature base about how senior secondary students engage with blended learning activities.
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# Table of Contents

DECLARATION

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

iv
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 43
4.2 RESEARCH QUESTION ONE: HOW DO STUDENTS ENGAGE WITH THE LEARNING ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE IN A SENIOR SECONDARY BLENDED LEARNING COURSE? ........................................ 43
4.3 ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES .................................................................................................... 44
  4.3.1 Activities were completed .......................................................................................... 44
  4.3.2 Self-paced online tasks .............................................................................................. 45
  4.3.3 Collaborative online tasks .......................................................................................... 46
  4.3.4 Enjoyment with online tasks ...................................................................................... 48
  4.3.5 Analytical online tasks ............................................................................................... 50
4.4 OFFLINE LEARNING ACTIVITIES .................................................................................. 51
  4.4.1 Offline tasks to promote self-paced learning .......................................................... 52
  4.4.2 Offline tasks to promote collaboration ........................................................................ 52
  4.4.3 Offline tasks to promote enjoyment ............................................................................ 53
  4.4.4 Offline tasks to promote critical thinking ............................................................... 54
4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION TWO: WHAT APPROACHES CAN AID ENGAGEMENT IN A BLENDED LEARNING CONTEXT WITHIN A SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL COURSE? .................................................. 54
4.6 STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVE OF ENGAGEMENT ................................................................. 55
  4.6.1 Personalisation ........................................................................................................... 55
  4.6.2 “Getting into it” ......................................................................................................... 56
  4.6.3 Talking to people ....................................................................................................... 57
  4.6.4 Being challenged to think ....................................................................................... 57
  4.6.5 Scaffolding learning ............................................................................................... 58
4.7 TEACHER’S PERSPECTIVE ON ENGAGEMENT ................................................................. 60
  4.7.1 Engagement through enjoyment ............................................................................... 60
  4.7.2 Engagement through knowing and thinking ......................................................... 61
  4.7.3 Engagement through scaffolding ............................................................................ 61
4.8 SUMMARY .......................................................................................................................... 62

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION .................................................................................................. 64
5.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 64
5.2 STUDENTS’ ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LEARNING ACTIVITIES ..................................... 64
  5.2.1 Behavioural engagement ......................................................................................... 66
  5.2.2 Emotional engagement ............................................................................................ 67
  5.2.3 Cognitive engagement ............................................................................................. 68
5.3 APPROACHES THAT AID ENGAGEMENT ........................................................................ 69
  5.3.1 Purpose aids engagement ....................................................................................... 71
  5.3.2 Scaffolding aids engagement ................................................................................. 72
  5.3.3 Personalisation aids engagement ............................................................................ 73
5.4 SUMMARY .......................................................................................................................... 75
List of Tables and Figures

List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 2.1</td>
<td>A FRAMEWORK FOR CONSIDERING ENGAGEMENT IN A BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, JEFFREY ET AL., 2014</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 4.1</td>
<td>ONLINE ACTIVITIES COMPLETED DURING OBSERVATIONS ONE-SIX</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 4.2</td>
<td>OFFLINE TASKS TO PROMOTE SELF-PACED LEARNING</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE 2.1</td>
<td>COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY FRAMEWORK (GARRISON ET AL., 2001)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>