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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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Manawatu
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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