ETEC 541 Reaction Paper 1

Eman Alzoghbieh

California State University, San Bernardino

**Article Summary**

The paper "How do online course design features influence student performance?" written by Shanna Smith Jaggars, and Di Xu discussed the impact of course designing factors of the online courses on students' success within higher education. Participants were recruited from twenty-three online courses at two community colleges. The authors mentioned that there is an association between students' outcomes and the features of the designed course (Jaggars & Xu, 2016). The authors suggested a new online designing assessment rubric that includes four areas of testing. First, the presentation and organization, second is assessments and learning objectives, third is the interpersonal interaction, and finally, the technology usage component (Jaggars & Xu, 2016). The paper presented results of relationship examination between the students' grades in the course and the four features of the online course's design, and mentioned that there is a positive relationship between the practices and outcomes of the high interpersonal interaction courses compared to the low ones (Jaggars & Xu, 2016). Finally, some strategies were suggested to improve the outcomes of online learning. Though, the authors mentioned that the interpersonal interaction - especially the instructor-student interaction- had the most effect on students' grades (Jaggars & Xu, 2016).

**Reaction**

I found this paper very interesting in terms of the topic and the results. To know that a good quality of interpersonal interaction has a higher positive impact on students' grades more than any other component of the online course was interesting to me as a graduate student as well as a teaching associate. However, I believe that having the proper communication is not enough as it is also important for the instructor to be knowledgeable of the educational material in order to have not just an efficient but also and effective communication as well (Wegmann & McCauley, 2007).

Also, when it comes to the online learning assessment, the technological component should be highlighted and studied from different aspects, not only how it supported the delivery, of course. For example, the investigators in the paper did not examine the way that technology can be used to motivate the students' learning, and they only focused on whether the technological aspect helped in addressing and facilitating the course objectives (Jaggars & Xu, 2016). According to an article from the "eLearning Industry" website, the technological component should also help in encouraging and modeling the participation within any online course (McCallum, 2014), which is a fact that I strongly support, and believe that Smith Jaggars and Di Xu under-examined it.

Quantitative and qualitative data analysis was conducted in this study; however, I feel that the results were still subjective, and to be able to get more objective results, further validation for the testing tools should be conducted.

Overall, I believe that the topic of this paper is interesting as well as important, and that the authors discussed key elements about online learning which impacted the students' experience and overall outcomes. I always supported the idea of proper communication for any course. Still, the authors of this paper convinced me that the interpersonal interaction, especially the learner- instructor form, has a higher impact on the students rather than any other component.

**Suggestions**

Although Smith Jaggars and Di Xu included literature of previous studies about the effect of design factors of online courses on students' success, I believe that further in-depth studies should be conducted. I would recommend a prospective cohort study design to be conducted for the same course over multiple terms in order to have further, more valid, and reliable results about how an online course designing factors can really affect the students’ outcomes and success.

Also, I would suggest including further testing criteria for testing the technological component, as well as the interpersonal interaction, especially to test the learner-learner and learner- content communicationforms.

**Conclusion**

The learning industry will never return as it used to be before due to the current situation worldwide. COVID-19 changed the face of the educational methods and will have a huge impact on future educational visions. Online learning, distance learning, e-learning, and the different forms of virtual learning is becoming an essential component within all levels of education, especially higher education. This study indicated the value of the living interpersonal interaction on students' success, which is interesting and important. However, I believe that after the COVID- 19 pandemic, this study might only be considered as a spark for more comprehensive and new study scopes.

**References:**

Jaggars, Shanna Smith, and Di Xu. "How Do Online Course Design Features Influence Student Performance?" *Computers & Education* 95 (April 1, 2016): 270–84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2016.01.014>.

McCallum, Deborah. eLearning Industry. "6 Important Components Of A Successful Online Learning Environment," December 18, 2014. <https://elearningindustry.com/6-important-components-successful-online-learning-environment>.

Wegmann, S. & McCauley, J. Harmony in Community: Analyzing Interactions of Students in Online Courses. In R. Carlsen, K. McFerrin, J. Price, R. Weber & D. Willis (Eds.), Proceedings of SITE 2007--Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference (pp. 2869-2875). San Antonio, Texas, USA: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE). Retrieved May 4, 2020 from <https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/25039/>.