Investigating Factors Influencing Online Formal and Informal Learning Satisfaction of College Students

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Abstract : Formal learning and informal learning represent two distinct learning styles: one is systematic and organized, another is causal and unstructured. Although there are many factors influencing online learning satisfaction, including self-regulation, self-efficacy, and interaction, factors influencing online formal learning and informal learning satisfaction may differ from each other. This paper investigated and compared influential factors of online formal and informal learning. Two questionnaires were created based on previous studies to explore factors influencing online formal learning and online informal learning satisfaction, respectively. A sample of 105 college students from different departments in a university located in the eastern part of China was selected to participate in this study. They all had an online learning experience and agreed to fill out questionnaires. Correlation analysis, variance analysis, and regression analysis were employed in this study. In addition, five participants were chosen for interviews. The study found that student-content, interaction, self-regulation, and self-efficacy related positively to both online formal learning and informal learning satisfaction. In addition, compared to online formal learning, student-content interaction in informal learning was the most influential factor for online learning satisfaction, perhaps that online informal learning was more goal-oriented and learners paid attention to the quality of content. In addition, results also revealed that interactions among students or teachers had little impact on online informal learning satisfaction. This study compared influential factors in online formal and informal learning satisfaction helped to add discussions to online learning satisfaction and contributed to further practices of online learning.