

Student Diversity in Higher Education: The Impact of Digital Elements on Student Learning Behavior and Subject-Specific Preferences

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Abstract : By combining face-to-face sessions with digital selflearning units, the learning process can be enhanced and learning success improved. Potentials of blended learning are the flexibility and possibility to get in touch with lecturers and fellow students face-to-face. It also offers the opportunity to individualize and self-regulate the learning process. Aim of this article is to analyse how different learning environments affect students' learning behavior and how digital tools can be used effectively. The analysis also considers the extent to which the field of study affects the students' preferences. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students from different disciplines at two German universities (N= 60). The questions addressed satisfaction and perception of online, face-to-face and blended learning courses. In addition, suggestions for improving learning experience and the use of digital tools in the different learning environments were surveyed. The results show that being present on campus has a positive impact on learning success and online teaching facilitates flexible learning. Blended learning can combine the respective benefits, although one challenge is to keep the time investment within reasonable limits. The use of digital tools differs depending on the subject. Medical students are willing to use digital tools to improve their learning success and voluntarily invest more time. Students of the humanities and social sciences, on the other hand, are reluctant to invest additional time. They do not see extra study material as an additional benefit their learning success. This study illustrates how these heterogeneous demands on learning environments can be met. In addition, potential for improvement will be identified in order to foster both learning process and learning success. Learning environments can be meaningfully enriched with digital elements to address student diversity in higher education.

Keywords : blended learning, higher education, diversity, learning styles

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