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iJOINED ETCOR
ISSN 2945-3577



The Exigency
ISSN 1908-3181

Role of Instructors in Students' Retention, Engagement, and Performance in the Virtual Classroom: The E-Learners' Experience

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Received: 10 December 2022

Revised: 26 December 2022

Accepted: 01 January 2023

Available Online: 03 March 2023

Volume II (2023), Issue 1, ISSN: 2945-3577

Abstract

Aim: Due to the paradigm shift in the learning environment, the instructor's role has become an indispensable part of every aspect of electronic learning (e-Learning). This challenges instructors to adjust their teaching style and design new pedagogies in meeting the e-learners' needs. This paper aimed to investigate the instructors' role in online learning and how they affect learners through their e-learning experiences.

Methodology: A qualitative research methodology was used in the study specifically Husserl's transcendental phenomenological design. Twenty English language e-learners engaged in focus group discussions and interviews. They were chosen through a purposive sampling technique.

Results: Findings revealed that instructors used approaches such as direct method, humanistic, collaborative, and student-centered approaches. In terms of the instructors' attitude, the participants expressed their difficulty with teachers who are inconsiderate of technical difficulties, lack empathy, and intimidating which hinders their learning. However, instructors who radiate a positive attitude, competent and proficient, and are innovative in facilitating lively interactions enhance students' retention and engagement.

Conclusion: From the findings, it can be inferred that teachers' role as course designers, Ignacian values influencers, and facilitators is vital in the e-Learning process. Thus, it is recommended that instructors be trained in digitally mediated teaching aids and encouraged to increase their pedagogical efficiency in engaging the learners behaviorally, intellectually, and emotionally in the virtual classroom.

Keywords: eLearning, engagement, experience, performance, retention

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization has declared the COVID-19 infection a pandemic early last year and it has now become a foremost public health problem worldwide (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). The policy of physical distancing measures is mandated to prevent the further spread of the virus resulting in the global shutdown of schools and universities. This has resulted in a tremendous crisis-response paradigm shift of colleges and universities into online learning as an educational platform. The teaching and learning activities were immediately shifted to a full e-Learning environment. eLearning (refers to a computer-assisted learning system that utilizes computers and the Internet. Other terms such as virtual learning, blended learning, online language learning, hybrid learning, and distance learning also refer to eLearning (Nortvig, et al., 2018).

Due to this paradigm shift in the learning environment, the instructors and students are challenged and required to learn effective ways of delivering e-Learning. Researchers hold the view that the shifting of the educational platform leads to the changing of the roles of teachers and the nature of teaching. Huang (2018) claimed that explaining the instructors' roles in the e-Learning process constitutes a great challenge to many researchers, thus the need to clarify and examine the instructors' roles in various instructional contexts cannot be disregarded.

At the heart of this transition, the role of the instructors became a highly valued phenomenon. Bond, et al. (2018) cited that the digital transformation of the academic environment is confronted with many challenges, therefore, educational institutions must prepare potential professionals to meet these challenges and provide solutions. Thus, shifting the different educational contexts has brought about great changes in the teaching and learning process (Sanchez, et al., 2022).



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The challenge for the instructors in this new norm of teaching is a continuous journey in discovering the precise combination of pedagogy, instructional methodologies, and more recently, technology to help students learn effectively. Student assessments and experiences have always been essential tools to provide relevant data on how students perceive learning experiences in the new environment and the E-learning process.

This study, therefore, was designed to explore the e-Learners' experiences with their instructors' significant role in facilitating the learning process. It explored the challenges and experiences of the e-Learners and the impact of their instructors in achieving retention, engagement, and performance in the virtual classroom.

This study assumed that instructors' behavior, approaches, and competence play a crucial role in the retention, engagement, and performance of students in the virtual classroom. This assumption is supported by the Community of Inquiry theory developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000). The theory is based on the concept of three distinct "presences": cognitive, social, and teaching. It posits that "presence" is a social phenomenon that manifests through interactions among students and instructors which is a vital component of online learning. It also acknowledges online classes as active learning environments or communities reliant on instructors and students sharing ideas, information, and opinions. For an e-learning landscape to be highly interactive among students and instructors, the usage of discussion boards, blogs, wikis, and video conferencing is considered.

This study is also anchored on John Dewey's Theory of Constructivism. The theory posits that learners construct their understanding and knowledge based on their experiences. As learners experience the world and reflect upon their experiences, they shape their representations and integrate new information into their prior knowledge. Dewey's social constructivist theory suggests an instructional design that enhances reflective practice by both learner and teacher. It is a pedagogical approach that involves an interactive discussion in an e-Learning environment that replaces straight lecturing. Carlsbad (2020) believes that Constructivism transforms learners from passive information receivers into active learning participants. Thus, the instructor is responsible for designing learning experiences that provide a venue for the students to consciously build their information rather than passively ingesting the textbook or subject content.

In this learning theory, the e-Learners are encouraged to participate actively in the teaching and learning process. The teacher serves as a facilitator who coaches, facilitates, motivates, and scaffolds students in developing and evaluating their understanding and learning.

This study is also reinforced by George Siemens' Theory of Connectivism, a learning theory for the digital age. It presents a model of learning that acknowledges the relevance of understanding learning in a digital age. Siemens (2004) states that the community has a common interest that welcomes interaction, sharing, dialoguing, and thinking together. The interaction can be made possible with the use of technology. Thus, the theory highlights how internet technologies such as web browsers, search engines, wikis, online discussion forums, and social networks contributed to new avenues of learning. Connectivism offers ideas on learning skills and tasks needed by learners to progress in a digital era.

Moreover, Connectivism utilizes the power of the internet and produces a learning environment that cultivates the social nature of the learners. It encourages online collaboration and social interaction so that your learners can feel like they are part of an amazing eLearning experience.

In a nutshell, instructors become more facilitative when aligning instruction with social constructivism, connectivism, and community of inquiry theory. Their responsibility is to design learning environments that assist learners to make connections between their prior and currently acquired knowledge.

Objective

This study explored the experiences of English language learners in the web-based learning environment on how the instructors' cognitive, and affective roles enhance their retention, engagement, and performance. Specifically, this study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the instructional approaches employed by the instructors that help increase the e-Learners' retention, engagement, and performance in an online class?
2. What are the qualities of the instructors that enhance the e-Learners' retention, engagement, and performance in an online class?
3. What are the qualities of the instructors that hinder the e-Learners' retention, engagement, and performance in an online class?
4. What are the roles of the instructors in enhancing the retention, engagement, and performance of the e-Learners in the virtual classroom?



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METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized the transcendental phenomenological research design introduced by Husserl, which is a philosophical approach to qualitative research methodology that aims to explain human experience (Moustakas, 1994). Neubauer et al. (2019) mentioned that phenomenology focuses on issues that deal with what they are, rather than quantitative questions like how many. Also, it explores what people have encountered and focuses on their understanding of phenomena (Gumberg Library, 2019) which is intended to describe the essence of a phenomenon (Alase, 2017). Also, Stansen and Chambers (2017) described phenomenology as a qualitative approach that emphasizes the likeness of the existing experience within a specific group. He added that this approach utilizes an interview with a group of participants who have first-hand experience of an event or situation. Alase (2017) reiterated that the essential purpose of the approach is to describe the nature of the particular phenomenon.

The Transcendental approach utilized in this study examined the phenomenon of instructors' influence on enhancing the e-Learners' retention, engagement, and performance affecting their quality of education in the new type of learning by finding and collecting common feedback from the participants. It also described the experiences of the participants which emphasizes the formation of themes; thus, the research design is deemed suitable to be used in this study.

Population and Sampling

Twenty (20) English Language E-Learners from the Arts and Sciences and Teacher Education Program of a Marian Catholic School in Cagayan de Oro City were involved in the study. The purposely selected participants engaged in virtual Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews. The qualification considered in selecting the participants as a valid source of information was the following: 1) the participant was officially enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022; 2) an English major enrolled in a Marian Catholic School, and 3) engaged in an e-Learning modality. To aid in the data collection process, interview questions were presented on a shared screen to assist the interviewee in answering the questions. All interviews were digitally recorded for later transcription and coding. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using the constant comparative method.

Instrumentation

For triangulation purposes, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and semi-structured interviews were conducted. To aid in the data collection process, a thorough conversation, sharing of personal experiences through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and conversational interviews were done with the purposely selected participants via a virtual platform. This aimed to develop a deep understanding of the phenomenon and to create a dialogue between the participants and the researcher.

Triangulation was employed in the analysis to provide a multidimensional perspective of the data. Triangulation is a method employed during the analysis to ensure the credibility and validity of research findings (Sanchez & Sarmiento, 2020). Triangulation is done by combining theories, methods, or observers in a research study that can help ensure that the biases arising are overcome from the use of a single method. Also, triangulation offers a more balanced and fair explanation of the gathered data to the readers. In this undertaking, triangulation is done by reviewing the transcribed notes and themes that were listed during the series of interviews, the transcript of the FGD, and the coding of the different words and themes from the transcripts (Bhandari, 2022).

Ethical Consideration

Research Protocols were observed by the researcher to ensure the quality and reliability of the study and research findings. The researcher sought approval from the dean and the participants to conduct the study. Consent letters were provided for the participants to express their willingness to take part in the study. When approved, the researcher scheduled the FGD and interviews with the participants. The researcher personally conducted the online interview via Google Meet. Interview questions were presented on a shared screen to assist the interviewee in answering the questions. All interviews were digitally recorded for later verbatim transcription. Before the recording, permission, and consent were sought for Data privacy act compliance. Pseudonyms were used to maintain the anonymity of the participants during the document analysis. The data gathered remained confidential and



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anonymous. Nobody, other than the researcher knew their answers to the interview. The collected data were discarded after they have served their purpose.

Data Collection

In gathering the data, the researcher sought the approval of the e-learners for an in-depth conversation, focus group discussion (FGD) and interview with them. Due to the pandemic, safety protocols were implemented and minimum health standards were observed, thus, the data collection process was done virtually through a Google Meet platform. To aid in the data collection process, a thorough conversation and sharing of personal experiences through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were done with the purposely selected participants via a virtual platform. This aimed to develop a deep understanding of the phenomenon and to create a dialogue between the participants and the researcher.

The data were then gathered, read, analyzed, and categorized for like ideas and themes. Remarkable statements from the e-learners were highlighted to determine the similarities among their responses. Meanings were established from the substantial responses into themes. Through this method, the researcher developed themes of the event, situation, or experience to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The researcher described the instructors' teaching approaches, and cognitive and affective skills affecting the quality of education of learners in the new form of learning.

Data Analysis

After gathering the relevant data of the study through the responses of the participants, data analysis followed utilizing a Thematic Approach as suggested by Husserl's Phenomenological research design.

The transcribed data from a recorded video of the Focus Group Discussion were collected, read, revisited, and categorized into ideas and themes to create clusters of meaning. Through this process, the researcher formulated the common meaning of the event, situation, or experience and attain a more profound understanding of the phenomenon. Directly related opinions are going to be emphasized to assess the similarity among the answers of the participants.

In order to answer the research questions, the data were analyzed utilizing Thematic Analysis. According to Maguirre and Delahunt (2017), Thematic Analysis is a process that involves finding patterns or themes in qualitative data. The purpose of thematic analysis is to find themes—that is, significant or intriguing patterns in the data—and then utilize those themes to discuss the research or make a point. A strong theme analysis goes much beyond just summarizing the data, it interprets and clarifies phenomena. For undertaking this kind of analysis, Braun & Clarke (2006) offer six-phase guidance that is a highly helpful structure: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up. These protocols were methodologically and carefully followed. To verify that no data was missing, steps one through five were accomplished (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Various meanings were developed from significant responses to themes in the next stage of the analysis. Through this method, the researchers developed a common meaning of the event, situation, or experience and gained a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The researchers would identify the various factors and gain more insight into the nature and purpose of the phenomenon.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section presents the analyses and interpretation of data obtained from the participants of the study. The information is presented in themes with interpretation and implication. The presentation is organized based on the order of the problems in the statement of the problem

1. Instructional approaches employed by the instructors

Themes

Direct method
Humanistic approach,
Collaborative learning approach



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Student-centered approach

From the data, the instructional approaches employed by the instructors in the e-learning environment revealed by the Learners were categorized into four themes namely: direct method, humanistic approach, collaborative learning approach, and student-centered learning.

1.1 Direct Method

The majority of participants' responses categorized the Direct Method as the foremost approach utilized by online instructors to increase the retention, engagement, and performance of e-Learners. The following are the samples of the transcription showing the use of the Direct method approach:

e-Learner 5: Our English instructor provides us with clear explanations, descriptions, and illustrations of the lesson.

e-Learner 15: Our instructor help us build our confidence in engaging and performing using English language during classes.

e-Learner 3: Asking questions before the discussion to test if the students did an advanced study about the topic and solicit insights and additional information during the lecture

e-Learner 4: Our instructor gives a clear flow of instructions considering the proper usage of language and grammar in every performance task given.

e-Learner 7: Our instructor employs the Direct Method because the instruction used in class is the target language. It hugely focuses on oral communication. Hence, in an online class, there will be a great exchange of Q&A between the teacher and the student using the target language.

The direct method of teaching language is relevant not only in the face-to-face mode of learning but also in virtual learning. This approach refrains the e-Learners from using their native language and uses only the target language during the online class.

Pearson (2021) showed in his study the positive results of the use of direct instruction in remote schools. Similarly, Jackson, et al. (2020) findings proved that the Direct Instruction approach help retains information and students perform well in class. Also, Andriyani (2015) confirmed that the use of the Direct Method positively affects the speaking skills of the learners when learners are actively involved in the activities and discussions and the usage of demonstrations, pictures, gestures, and real situations. Thus, Millsaps (2020), and Dizon and Sanchez (2020) stressed the inventiveness of instructors in this approach specifically in an online platform to develop new techniques.

1.2 Humanistic Approach

Another relevant instructional approach that emerged in the response of the e-Learners in the interview is the Humanistic approach as one of the strategies utilized by the language teachers in the online platform. The following are the samples of transcription:

e-Learner 1: The instructor also gives a feeling to the student that they are free and valued, in that way they can engage and perform in class.

e-Learner 8: A teacher needs to be open to the ideas and opinions of the students. The students will be able to express their ideas freely in the discussion.

e-Learner 3: Instructors radiate positive energy to the students which are somehow contagious and can affect and motivate the students to be involved and take part in an online class

e-Learner 18 They provide a friendly environment so students can freely express their opinions

e-Learner 20: Our instructors value our feelings and emotions. If there is anxiety, it will greatly affect our performance.

The humanistic approach stresses that knowledge and feelings go hand-in-hand in the learning process (Sanchez, 2022). In humanistic learning, cognitive and affective learning are both relevant. Lessons and activities focus on the student and their intellect and feelings. Alastair (2012) postulates that in the



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Humanistic approach, the learners' interests, goals, and enthusiasm are taken into account so that the full potential of the learner can be achieved.

Arifi (2017) emphasizes the relevance of the humanistic approach in teaching language. The role of emotions in communication and the inclusion of emotions in the learning process is relevant. Thus, instructors as curriculum designers conceptualize activities that are associated with learners' lives and experiences and attempt to engage the learners effectively through excitement, emotion, or even fun. Shirkhani and Ardeshir (2013) accentuate that the Humanistic approach to language teaching prioritizes the development of human values, self-awareness and understanding of others, human feelings and emotions, and active engagement of learners in the learning process.

1.2 Collaborative Learning Approach

One approach that highlights the language teachers' online teaching pedagogy identified by the e-Learners is the collaborative Learning Approach. Below are some data from the investigation:

e-Learner 7: The instructor allows us to work in small groups allowing us to think and share our thoughts to one another, practice our communication skills, perform, and retain information better

e-Learner 2: Using interactive tools such as videos, pictures, applications, and other forms of media would aid us in comprehending the discussions better.

e-Learner 9: I think the approach that our instructor used is the collaborative approach where eLearners are assigned to break out rooms in the Google meet to work with the group

e-Learner 19: Online games like Kahoot and other apps were effective approaches to increase retention and collaboration of the students

e-Learner 14: Collaborative work help us to increase our engagement and performance.

The group work and performance, allows us, learners, to practice and demonstrate what we have learned from the strategies and the qualities of our instructor, whether asynchronous or synchronous meeting.

Collaborative learning known as team-centered learning posits the idea that learning with others is better than learning alone. Individuals work in a group and accomplish tasks together. Higley (2018) mentioned that e-learning environments promote supplementary learning experiences where learners can interact, collaborate, and take ownership of their learning. Faja (2013) added that virtual collaborative activities can engage the students, create a sense of community, and allow them to experience and practice virtual teamwork skills.

The findings implied that instructors provide a variety of eLearning opportunities for learners to interact with their peers. The instructors explore activities that are most effective for online collaborative learning.

1.3 Student-Centered Approach

One crucial approach employed by instructors during online classes is Student-Centered Approach. Here are the experiences of the students of the approach in the virtual class

e-Learner 10: From my experience, my teachers usually utilize a student-centered approach, so \ basically activities that help us learn from doing the tasks.

e-Learner 2: I think the most effective instructional approach is student-centered. If we experience what we are learning, everything will follow.

e-Learner 9: The instructors provide individual tasks online that optimize our capacity to accomplish them.

e-Learner 19: Our instructors choose appropriate topics and activities suited to our needs by considering our proficiency level.

Findings revealed that student-centered pedagogy known as competency-based and personalized learning facilitates learner-empowered learning (Baker & Robinson, 2018). Instructors scaffold learners toward meaningful engagement with the material adequate to the potential of the learners. In other words, the teaching and learning process focuses on the needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles of the learners.

Asoodeh, et al. (2012) found that the student-centered approach was successful and effective as a technique for teaching students. Similar findings were revealed in the study of Hinosolongo and Dinagsao (2014)



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showed that learner-centered teaching has a significant impact on students' learning skills and strategies. Also, Kassem (2019) revealed that the student-centered approach enhanced the students' motivation, attitudes toward the language, self-efficacy, autonomy, and beliefs about language learning.

Therefore, teachers embrace the pedagogy of providing the learners a voice and choice in their learning by allowing them to explore their interests and engage in the learning process.

2. Qualities of the instructors that enhance the learners' retention, engagement, and performance

As to the qualities of the instructors that encourage learners' retention, engagement, and performance in the virtual classroom, the following themes were revealed: instructors who radiate a positive attitude, competent and proficient, and are innovative in facilitating lively interactions enhance students' retention and engagement.

Themes

Competent and Proficient Instructors

Radiates Positive Attitude

Innovative in Facilitating Lively Interactions

2.1 Competent and Proficient Instructors

The participants disclosed the qualities of the instructors that influence their retention, engagement, and performance in the virtual classroom. One is competent and proficient in the English language. The following are samples of transcription:

e-Learner 2: The instructor is very organized in discussing every topic, very knowledgeable on what he/she teaches in class

e-Learner 7: The instructors have an excellent accent, register of words, and experience when applying his/her topic discussion during an online lecture

e-Learner 17: The instructor is knowledgeable enough to sustain the things that the students need to learn and be informative during the discussion wherein he/she can be able to show his/her students that he/she is a product of excellence and is smart and wise enough to handle the students

e-Learner 10: They have mastery of the subject matter because teachers are viewed as a fountain of information

e-Learner r 14: I engage more in my online class when the teacher is knowledgeable of the subject matter

e-Learner 4: The instructor delivers the lesson engagingly using questions, activities, and other strategies that capture my attention, and when the teacher explains spontaneity with examples; not just reading the material

Martin and Budhrani (2019) believe that by being proficient in the field, online instructors know not only the content or subject matter but also understand how to deliver the content appropriately facilitating the online medium. It means that online instructors must have competence in understanding and delivering the content and also in translating the knowledge into teaching. These skills and competencies of the instructors help build rapport with their learners which is vital to effective learning and motivation.

2.2 Radiates Positive Attitude

Radiate Positive Attitude is one of the themes revealed by the participants during the investigation. The following are samples of the transcription:

e-Learner 3: The instructor is punctual, has a clear quality of voice, and shows a positive the attitude that motivates students to be actively engaged, be participative, and boost themselves in an online class

e-Learner 14: The instructor possessed an admirable attitude,

e-Learner 11: She/He is approachable and responsive to the student's questions and conduct consultation

e-Learner 7: The language instructor is dedicated to teaching the language and greatly concerned about the learning outcome of his/her students

e-Learner 6: The instructor has enthusiasm and deals with the learners with cheerfulness and excitement



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The data revealed that instructors have a complete understanding of their student's needs so they were able to cope with the demands of online classes. Also, instructors' attitude toward the learners has a great impact on the learning process. Some studies recognize the significant relationship between the instructor's enthusiasm and students' intrinsic motivation to learn like the study of Alsharif and Qi (2014) which confirmed that the instructors' attitude affects the students' satisfaction and performance in web-based learning. Also, the study of Alsharif (2014) revealed the implications of instructors' attitudes, enthusiasm, and teaching style toward student learning.

Thus, instructors have a responsibility to assess, reassess, and analyze their attitude during the eLearning process that may impact or influence the students' affective domain and ability to meet educational outcomes.

2.3 Innovative in facilitating lively interactions

One of the identified characteristics of online instructors is innovation in facilitating lively interactions.

Sample transcriptions are as follows:

- e-Learner 9: -One of the qualities of the instructor that influence the learner's retention, engagement, and performance in an online setting is the creativity of the teacher. If the teacher knows how to think of unique and interesting activities for the students, it will encourage the learners to engage, perform and retain the knowledge they have learned from the teacher's discussion*
- e-Learner 2: Use images, animated videos, and creative eye candy design to heighten his/her students' attention span during lengthy online discussions*
- e-Learner 8: explores different language teaching approaches that best favor his/her students' language learning.*
- e-Learner 16: Students are more likely to participate and retain information when educators employ interactive activities in their discussions.*
- e-Learner 7: Provide activities appropriate to the student's level and creative in asking questions*

3. Qualities of the instructors that hinder the learners' retention, engagement, and performance

In terms of the instructors' attitude, the participants expressed their difficulty with teachers who are inconsiderate of technical difficulties, lack empathy, and intimidating which hinder their learning.

Themes

- Inconsiderate technical glitches*
- Lacks Empathy*
- Intimidating*

Here are the experiences of the participants on the instructors' attitude that hinders their retention, engagement, and performance during the online class:

- e-Learner 7: If the teacher is rude and unapproachable, the student tends not to engage and prefers to be silent instead of engaging.*
- e-Learner 2: Some teachers are not flexible and considerate of the reality that not all students has a good internet connection that leads to late passing tasks, etc.*
- e-Learner 13: Some teachers lack empathy for the problems of the students by being inconsiderate of the problems we meet in the virtual class*
- e-Learner 19: Some instructors have an intimidating attitude which I have also met some in the online class and it caused me to keep silent and be less participative in class*
- e-Learner 14: We are afraid to share our opinions and ideas, especially in an online class when the instructors are not considerate of our emotions. We are afraid to get embarrassed in the class*

Findings revealed that the instructors' attitudes can help or hurt student motivation, retention, and engagement in an online class. With the e-Learners experiences, it is evident that negative teacher attitudes can impair students' academic achievement and increase their anxiety level in class. The study of Ulug, et al. (2011) confirmed these findings and proved that the teachers' positive attitudes have positive effects on students' performance and personality development while their negative attitudes have a negative effect on the students. Also, Soric (2011) proved that the negative attitude of teachers negatively affects the academic achievement of the students.



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This clearly shows that instructors surpass the boundaries of the classroom in the students' academic lives. It is evident how instructors impact the lives of the students during the eLearning process as the second-highest determining factor in the development of the students after the parents. Students see their instructors as role models while learning, thus, their attitude and behavior affect their academic outcomes like attitudes, behaviors, and engagement.

The results implied that strategies and teacher training programs can be designed to educate teachers to better handle conflict-inducing situations and attitudes in online teaching.

4. Role of the instructors in the virtual classroom

Three themes emerged when the participants were asked about the roles of the instructors in enhancing the students' retention, engagement, and performance. The following themes are course designers, Ignacian values influencers, and facilitators.

Themes

Course designers

Facilitators

Ignacian values influencer

The transcription below is the experiences of the E-Learners on the roles of the teachers in enhancing their retention, engagement, and performance in an online class.

e-Learner 20: He or she uses different teaching methods and must consider that each the student has different learning styles.

e-Learner 9: He or she incorporates different interactive tools during his or her lectures. He or she asks questions frequently in assessing if the students understood and absorbed the lessons.

e-Learner 1: The instructors motivate and influence students of the Ignacian Core Values of excellence, Service, and Faith.

e-Learner 7: The instructors are inculcators and influencers of Ignacian Values

e-Learner 19: The instructors put God first at the center of the discussion

e-Learner 3: The instructor is instrumental in facilitating the performance of his/her students and plays a vital role when it comes to ensuring that they retain information, engage in class discussions and perform tasks

The results indicated that the online instructor's role is significant to the success of online learning. The findings align with Mcnair-Crews's (2015) study which identified instructors' fundamental roles such as social, and intellectual moderators.

Sims and Baker (2021) revealed that in the digital platform, the role of the instructors transformed from teacher-centered to student-centered, low-interaction to high-interaction, and low-initiator to high-initiator. Roddy et al. (2017) found that online instructor roles require a paradigm shift regarding instructional approaches, virtual management techniques, and the ability to engage students through virtual communication. This implied that Instructors do not only design the course materials and activities but also provide social interaction opportunities, and ensure high-quality instruction in the virtual classroom. Instructors' role does not limit only to designing the curriculum and facilitating the learning process but importantly deals with the affective formation of the students, as an influencer of goral morals and values.

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The following results were disclosed after the data gathered were analyzed:

Findings revealed that the online instructors used approaches such as direct method, humanistic, collaborative, and student-centered approaches to stimulate learning, add impact, and promote interest in the online class environment. Students experienced difficulty with instructors who are inconsiderate of technical difficulties, lack empathy, and intimidating hinders their retention, engagement, and performance in the virtual classroom. This means that the negative behavior of the instructors limits e-Learners' retention, engagement, and performance, and obstructs learning.



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The e-Learners' experiences confirmed that instructors who radiate a positive attitude, are competent and proficient, and are innovative in facilitating lively interactions enhanced students' retention and engagement. This means that the instructors' behavior holds a paramount relevance and lifelong impact on the E-learners. This impact pertains not only to the teaching of academic skills but also to the development of student self-esteem. Developing self-esteem in the virtual classroom is associated with increased engagement and learning outcomes.

The instructors' role as course designers, Ignacian values influencers, and facilitators is vital in the e-learning process. The instructors' role in the online class is of paramount importance not only to e-Learners' retention, engagement, and performance but also to their academic success, in general. It is, thus, imperative that meaningful approaches have to be explored to assist the students in their online retention and engagement difficulty. Instructors' vibrant behavior and competence in the learning process are comparably effective in improving students' online performance. However, the instructors' negative attitude is found disturbing and hindering the learning process.

In general, the findings of the study confirm the researcher's assumption that the instructors' behavior, approaches, and competence play a crucial role in the retention, engagement, and performance of the students in the virtual environment. Garrison, Anderson & Archer's theory specifically on the concept of three distinct "presences": cognitive, social, and teaching theory, is confirmed in the study. The physical and mental abilities of the instructor and the instructor's personality attributes have become instrumental in the learning process.

The findings point to the need for the instructors to be innovative in their strategies in online teaching, be trained in digitally mediated teaching aids, and be encouraged to increase their pedagogical efficiency in engaging the learners behaviorally, intellectually, and emotionally in the virtual classroom. Indeed, the necessity for greater efforts is much needed in supervising, monitoring, and assessing students' learning online. This is undoubtedly more crucial than in face-to-face learning contexts.

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