

Establishing Learn2Learn as a student transition program within a busy academic cycle

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Abstract

Successful student transition to higher education is influenced by assumptions and self-awareness about how to learn at a tertiary level. Learn2Learn is an online program aiming to teach students how to be self-regulated learners and manage their own learning outcomes, thus promoting their autonomy. Commencing and first year higher education students were invited to participate in the program, with 46 students participating. Correlation and regression analysis were significant, showing increases in module completion were associated with higher academic scores. Findings and implications are presented and discussed in this paper.

Proposal

Rationale

The first year of university is a transition period for students and is a critical time to establish student engagement and retention (Nelson & Clarke, 2014). Successful transitions are evident by how familiar students become with university expectations, and their confidence to succeed (Briggs, Clark, & Hall, 2012). Tett, Cree, and Christie (2017) noted that learning how to blend in and changing their approaches to learning were key moments in successful student transition.

The Learn2Learn program is an interactive, online programs featuring six-modules (Menzie-Ballantyne, Rutherford, & Mann, 2021). The modules were informed by research into self-regulated learning, effective study strategies, socio-emotional intelligence as well as personal and social capabilities such as those required for group work. The inclusion of a Self-Regulated Learning approach enables students to take more control over their learning experience and tailor learning to meet their needs. Reliance upon online learning, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, gave Learn2Learn advantages, not least for being self-paced. The time commitment required to complete each module varies, averages however, are around 90 minutes per module.

Mentor supported, peer-to-peer engagement following each modules is another feature of the Learn2Learn program. Mentors complete the modules during training to help clarify and endorse themes during weekly meetings. Furthermore, mentors help create a sense of belonging amongst the participants. Research shows the importance belonging has towards persistence and commitment to study (Kift, Nelson, & Clarke, 2010; Tinto, 2009).

Approach/Method

First year and commencing students were invited to participate in the program just prior to Semester 2, 2021. Participation was initiated in two waves with the first commencing two weeks before the start of semester, the second one week from the start of semester. Both waves were of three weeks' duration, two modules each week. Students had ongoing access to the modules after mentoring ended, thus they were able to revisit modules to complete at their own pace.

46 students (20 Female, 26 Male, Mean age = 21 years) participated from Swinburne University. Correlational analysis showed a significant, positive correlation between the overall percentage of module completion and academic scores (grade percentage) ($r = .328, p = .026$). Further regression analysis found that 10.8% variance in academic outcomes was associated with module completion ($R^2 = 0.108$).

Audience discussion

The structure of the program with its relevant content and mentoring support has a positive association with academic outcomes. However, challenges remain in delivering the program within a busy academic cycle, potentially explaining modest participation rates. We aim to discuss the following with the conference audience.

1. When the required commitment by students is high, what might encourage participation?
2. What place does online delivery have in a post Covid learning environment?
3. How might you pitch this program to students to pique their interest? (creative & daring)

References

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