

**Literature Review: Motivating Students in the Hybrid Classroom Through Teacher  
Communication.**

by  
Amanda DeCardy  
EDD 8008 CRN 20071  
Principles of Instructional Technology

Nova Southeastern University  
November 15, 2011

## Introduction

The practice of offering grade 6 through grade 12 courses using distance education technologies has rapidly increased in popularity since the beginning of 1994 (Compton & Davis, 2010). As more and more teachers are being asked to implement an online learning component to their face-to-face classroom, understanding the factors that motivate students to actively participate in a hybrid learning environment are critical to create new pedagogical approaches that take into account student needs in the online learning environment (Holley & Oliver, 2010). Students in hybrid learning environments show different levels of motivation compared to motivation in strictly face-to-face environments (Leong, 2011). The motivation in computer-supported or hybrid learning environments has special properties that are unique to its environment and differ from traditional environments. ChanLin (2009) states that in order to “promote learning, educators should identify components of instruction that increase learning motivation” (p. 92). This review examines the literature related to the impact of teacher communication as a form of motivation in hybrid learning environments. This paper first addresses motivation in education, including theories and models of motivation. Secondly, the paper gives a brief overview of hybrid learning. Finally, the paper examines teacher communicational behaviors in terms of motivation and hybrid learning.

## Method

The resources for this literature review primarily come from books and journal articles. The research began with chapters in Moore’s *Handbook for Distance Education* where Holmberg (2007) explains how “empathy and belonging promote students’ motivation to learn” (p.70) in any environment. Holmberg (2007) further explains how

simulating a conversation in the non face-to-face environment can promote the feelings that lead to motivation. I next searched the online databases in the Alvin Sherman Library. I initially used the ERIC database and searched for peer-reviewed journal articles about motivation in the K-12 online learning environment. I quickly found that my search was too limiting as most of the information that was available focused on university level students. I expanded my search to include university level participants and found several worthy articles. Based on the articles I found in the Education databases, I expanded my search to the Psychology and Behavioral Sciences databases and used ProQuest Psychology Journals to find peer-reviewed articles about communication and motivation. I used online resources and textbooks for my search and did not go to a physical library for my research.

The search terms I used included student motivation, instructional technology, technology, teacher communication, self-efficacy, and ARCS. I evaluated the articles by first reading the abstracts to identify the article's applicability to my topic. After reading all of the abstracts, I read the first several paragraphs to identify the research questions (if it was not clearly outlined in the abstract). I scanned each of the methods sections and then read the discussion/conclusion sections to identify and compare finding between studies. I closely studied the reference lists for the articles I found relevant to my topic to look for commonalities and also to identify other articles that may be pertinent to my research.

I did not limit my search to certain years, but I did look for the most recent articles first. I then worked backwards by using the reference lists and the information in class textbooks to identify seminal studies about my topic.

## **Analysis**

### **Motivation in Education**

Motivation is defined as “the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained” (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008, p. 4) and is indicated by choice, persistence and effort.

Brophy (1987) identifies three types of student motivation. The state of motivation occurs when students participate in an activity for the purpose of gaining knowledge. The trait of motivation refers to a student’s “enduring disposition (p. 40) to learn, and intrinsic motivation refers to a student’s level of enjoyment for a particular activity.

Malhotra and Galletta (2003) question the traditional distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic and offer an alternative point of view as a “gradient of knowledge” (p. 4). Instead of identifying intrinsic and extrinsic as polar opposites, they look at motivation as part of a continuum where students “transition from a status of lack of motivation, through a series of externally-driven regulations and incentives, to reach a self-determined level of intrinsic regulations which increases their curiosity and determination to achieve a specific objective” (Gomez, Wu & Passerini, 2010, p. 386)

Research has established a framework of influences on a student motivation. Internal factors that influence student motivation are “related to the features of the course itself” (Kim & Frick, 2011, p.2) that can impact student’s motivation. External factors encompass “aspects of the learning environment that can influence the learner’s” (p.2) motivational level. The final influence consists of personal factors, which are “motivational influences caused by the learner” (p.2).

#### *Theories and Models of Motivation.*

Previous research has unveiled several cognitive-motivational theories, including attribution theory (Graham and Williams 2009), achievement goal theory (Maher and

Zusho 2009), self-efficacy theory (Schunk and Pajares 2009, interest theory (Schiefele 2009), and Wigfield, Tonks and Klauda's (2009) expectancy-value theory (see Wentzel & Wigfield, 2009 for a more detailed accounting).

Keller's ARCS Motivation Model has been applied in web-based learning settings to create, stimulate and maintain motivating learning environments (ChanLin, 2009). Keller (2006) identifies the four elements of learner motivation.

1. Attention: Gaining and sustaining attention in relation to the instructional content
2. Relevance: Relating to the learning objective and to the use in future learning
3. Confidence: Building confidence in learning and accomplishment with success occasions
4. Satisfaction: Reinforcing learning satisfaction intrinsically and extrinsically

Keller and Suzuki (2004) found that "it is clear that systematic, holistic motivational analysis of the audience as incorporated in the ARCS model will help lead one to the creation and selection of motivational tactics that are consistent with the motivational needs of the audience" (p. 236). Keller (2008) expanded his original model to include volition as a fifth element in learner motivation, which allows the learner to self-regulate their original intentions to learning. Undermotivation and overmotivation are, however, concerns (Keller, as cited in Mory, 2004) whereby it is detrimental to their learner to be in either position. "Undermotivation results in low productivity levels, whereas overmotivation results in high error rates and poor efficiency due to stress and

overconfidence” (Jonassen, 2004, p. 769).

## **Hybrid Learning**

Rovai and Jordan (2004) define hybrid learning is “a flexible approach to course design that supports the blending of different times and places for learning, offering some of the conveniences of fully online courses without the complete loss of face-to-face contact. The result is potentially a more robust educational experience than either traditional or fully online learning can offer”. Lin and Overbaugh (2009) define hybrid instruction as “classes in which a blend of both traditional classroom instruction and online learning activities are utilized, including synchronous and asynchronous communication modes” (p. 999). The degree of online instruction and face-to-face instruction varies and as a result, yields several terms that fall under e-learning, which include “web-enhanced”, “hybrid” and “fully online” (Vernadakis, Antoniou, Giannous, Zetou and Kioumourtzoglou, 2011). Web-enhanced courses are the closest to the face-to-face environment, as only course outlines and announcements are put online for students. Hybrid courses are still face-to-face courses, but include more online activities, including quizzes and synchronous or asynchronous discussions. Fully online courses are usually full online courses that use online media for teaching and learning (Vernadakis et al., 2011).

Klein’s (2006) research found that higher levels of motivation were found for students in blended or hybrid learning environments because of the additional tool

available to facilitate learning. The additional tools required the students to take a more active role in their own learning, which was directly related to their motivational levels. Clayton, Blumberg and Auld (2010) found that high student self-efficacy was an important factor for choosing an online learning experience over a traditional classroom experience and that “students’ self-efficacy beliefs usually increase if they have a successful online experience” (p.361).

Keller (2008) asserts that a key assumption should be made by applying “basic principles of learner motivation to all learning environments” (p. 175), including hybrid learning, e-learning, online learning, and mobile learning”

### **Instructional Communication**

Instructional communication research has focused on identifying specific teacher behaviors that can increase or decrease their ability to help students reach their learning goals. Nonverbal immediacy is a common theme seen in instructional communication research. According to McCroskey, Richmond and Bennet (2006), nonverbal immediacy encompasses positive behaviors towards students. Growing evidence in the literature suggests that teacher behaviors such as responsiveness and assertiveness are seen as positive behaviors thus it is “reasonable to expect a student to have more positive affect toward their teacher, work harder to learn what the teacher is trying to teach, and appreciate the content they are learning” (McCroskey et al., 2006, p. 404). Baker (2010) further examined the impact of online instructor immediacy for student motivation and identified a positive relationship between instructor presence and student motivation.

Simonson, Smaldino, Albright and Zvacek (2009) identify communication through feedback as a positive teacher behavior. Simonson et al. (2009) posit that teachers should

provide meaningful and timely feedback to learners in an e-learning environment. As a result, students gain control over their learning when they know how they are doing with regards to achieving the learning objectives. When electronic components are introduced into the educational feedback process, Kitsantas and Chow (2007) found that students who “enrolled in courses with an online computer component... report (a) higher instances of help seeking behavior, particularly from instructors, and (b) feel less threatened to seek help than students in traditional learning environments” (p. 383).

**Using communication technology.** Instant messaging (SMS), email and online forum are text-based communication media and are accepted as being low in “information richness” (Rau, Gao & Wu, 2008, p. 4). However when they are combined with face-to-face instruction in the hybrid environment, they have the ability to augment instruction.

Wickramanayake’s (2006) research used a combination of instant messaging and email to compare the impact on student’s motivational levels at a university in Jamaica. Students were divided into two groups where one group received personal messages on either their cell phone or via email and the second group received non-personal messages on their cell phone or via email. Wickramanyake (2006) hypothesized the personal messages would be a greater motivating factor over the group messages, but found that no significant difference existed in terms of grades which was his indicator of motivation. Surprisingly, attendance was lower for the group who received personal messages.

In a high school classroom study, Rau et al. (2008) reinforced the link between teacher communication and student motivation as part of the learning when they examined the impact of combining mobile and Internet technologies to strengthen the bond between teacher and students.



“The result showed that instant messaging helps bonding the two roles – student and instructor – in the instruction process effectively. When combined with Internet communication media, it can significantly increase student extrinsic motivation without causing higher pressure. Additionally, communication media demanding public expression rather than private dialogue should be adopted with careful consideration, since they raise student pressure (Rau et al., 2008, p. 1).

Kim and Keller (2011) expanded the depth of research of email as a teacher communication tool by randomly assigning pre-service teachers to one of two groups in a recent study. One group received motivational and volitional email messages (MVEM) and the other group received a generic email message consisting of general reminders for the class. The results of the study indicate that while preservice teachers who received MVEM demonstrated greater volition, “there was no significant difference between control and experimental students on motivation or on performance” (Kim & Keller, 2011, p. 106). These results contradict an earlier study by Kim and Keller (2008), which similarly sent MVEM personal messages to one group and non-personal messages to a second group. Kim and Keller (2011) speculate the reason for the discrepancy in the most recent study was because the preservice teachers already had a high level of motivation whereas the large college undergraduate class had a lower motivation standard in the 2008 study.

### **Deficiencies in the Evidence**

Previous research on student motivation has focused primarily on university level students in blended learning or distance education courses. Recent studies have examined post-secondary students preferred learning environments and the connection to the students’ level of engagement in the class (Clayton, Blumberg & Auld, 2010). Other studies have analyzed how university students engage themselves in blended learning environments and have made recommendations to map out course design (Holley & Oliver,

2010). Very little research has addressed motivation in the secondary level hybrid-learning environment. Rau et al. (2007) was one of the most meaningful studies because the examined teacher communication and student motivation in a hybrid-learning environment.

The literature indicates a lack of opportunities for educators to learn about student motivation in hybrid or blended learning environments. Current educators lack information about how to effectively facilitate blended learning environments in order to promote higher-level thinking skills (Shroff & Vogel, 2010). Pre-service education programs frequently do not include teaching and facilitation competencies for blended learning environments (Compton & Davis, 2010).

### **Conclusion**

Evidence from a wide range of articles advise that teachers should include motivational strategies in their online learning environments to create a positive learning environment for their students (Dennen and Bonk, 2007). In the hybrid learning environment, teacher communication is an especially effective motivational tool. Contradictory in only one instance, personalization of messages to students appears to be more motivational to learners than group or mass messages. I believe this review contributes to the idea that teacher communication deeply impacts student motivation in the hybrid-learning environment.

## References

- Baker, C. (2010). The impact of instructor immediacy and presence for online student affective learning, cognition, and motivation. *The Journal of Educators Online*, 7(1), 1-30. Retrieved from <http://www.thejeo.com/Archives/Volume7Number1/BakerPaper.pdf>
- Brophy, J. (1987). Synthesis of research on strategies for motivating students to learn. *Educational Leadership*, 45(2), 40-48. Retrieved from [http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed\\_lead/el\\_198710\\_brophy.pdf](http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_198710_brophy.pdf)
- Clayton, K., Blumberg, F., & Auld, D. P. (2010). The relationship between motivation, learning strategies and choice of environment whether traditional or including an online component. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 41(3), 349-364. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8535.2009.00993.x
- Compton, L., & Davis, N. (2010). The impact of and key elements for a successful virtual early field experience: Lessons learned from a case study. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 10(3), 309-337. Retrieved from <http://www.citejournal.org/vol10/iss3/general/article1.cfm>
- Dennen, V. P., & Bonk, C. J. (2007). We'll leave the light on for you: Keeping learners motivated in online courses. In B. H. Khan (Ed.), *Flexible learning in an information society* (2nd ed., pp. 64-76). Hershey, PA: Information Science Publishing.
- Gomez, E. A., Wu, D., & Passerini, K. (2010). Computer-supported team-based learning: The impact of motivation, enjoyment and team contributions on learning outcomes. *Computers & Education*, 55(1), 378-390. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2010.02.003
- Holley, D., & Oliver, M. (2010). Student engagement and blended learning: Portraits of risk. *Computers & Education*, 54(3), 693-700. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2009.08.035
- Keller, J. (2006). *Motivational design* [Official Site for John Keller]. Retrieved November 1, 2011, from <http://www.arcsmodel.com/Mot%20dsgn.htm>
- Keller, J. (2008). First principles of motivation to learn and e<sup>3</sup> learning. *Distance Education*, 29(2), 175-185. doi:10.1080-1587910802154970
- Keller, J. M., & Suzuki, K. (2004). Learner motivation and e-learning design: A multinationally validated process. *Journal of Educational Media*, 29(3), 229-239. doi:10.1080/1358165042000283084
- Kim, C., & Keller, J. M. (2008). Effects of motivational and volitional email messages (MVEM) with personal messages on undergraduate students' motivation, study habits and achievement. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 39(1), 36-51.
- Kim, C., & Keller, J. M. (2011). Towards technology integration: the impact of motivational and

- volitional email messages. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 59(1), 91-111. doi:10.1007/s11423-010-9174-1
- Kim, K. J., & Frick, T. W. (2011). Changes in student motivation during online learning. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 44(1), 1-23. doi:10.2190/EC.44.1.a
- Klein, H. J. (2006, Fall). Motivation to learn and course outcomes: The impact of delivery mode, learning goal orientation, and perceived barriers and enablers. *Personnel Psychology*, 59(3), 665-702.
- Leong, P. (2011). Role of social presence and cognitive absorption in online learning environments. *Distance education*, 32(1), 5-28. doi:10.1080/01587919.2011.565495
- Lin, S., & Overbaugh, R. C. (2009). Computer-mediated discussion, self-efficacy and gender. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 40(6), 999-1013. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8535.2008.00889.x
- Malhotra, Y., & Galletta, D. F. (2003). Role of commitment and motivation in knowledge management systems implementation: Theory, conceptualization, and measurement of antecedents of success. *Proceedings of 36th annual Hawaii international conference on systems sciences*, 1-10.
- McCroskey, J. C., Richmond, V. P., & Bennett, V. E. (2006). The relationships of student end-of-class motivation with teacher communication behaviors and instructional outcomes. *Communication Education*, 55(4), 403-414. doi:10.1080/036345206007025662
- Mory, E. H. (2004). *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology* (D. H. Jonassen, Ed., 2nd ed., pp. 745-783). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Rau, P.-L. P., Gao, Q., & Wu, L.-M. (2008). Using mobile communication technology in high school education: Motivation, pressure and learning performance. *Computers & Education*, 50, 1-22. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2006.03.008
- Rovai, A. P., & Jordan, H. M. (2011, November 2). Blended learning and sense of Community: a comparative analysis with traditional and fully online graduate courses. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 5(2). Retrieved from <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/192/274>
- Shroff, R., & Vogel, D. R. (2010). An investigation on individual students' perceptions of interest utilizing a blended learning approach. *International Journal on E-Learning*, 9(2), 279-294. doi:10.1080/01587919.2011.565495
- Simonson, M., Smaldino, S. S., Albright, S., & Zvacek, S. (2009). *Teaching and learning at a distance: Foundations of distance education* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Vernadakis, N., Antoniou, P., Giannousi, M., Zetou, E., & Kioumourtzoglou, E. (n.d.). Comparing hybrid learning with traditional approaches on learning the Microsoft Office Power Point

2003 program in tertiary education. *Computers & Education*, 56, 188-199.

Webster, C. A. (2010). Increasing Student Motivation through teacher communication: Six essential skills every physical educator should master. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 81(2), 29-33.

Wickramanayake, D. (2006). *Group and individualized motivational messages sent by short message service and e-mail to improve student achievement* (Doctoral dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Davie, Florida). Retrieved from MARPs, Practicums, and Applied Dissertations database.