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TRAINING FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS: SELF-GOVERNED OR TUTOR-DRIVEN LEARNING PROCESS?

Abstract:

The current paper examines the differentiated impact of the instructional conditions of the online business education course on different aspects of its participants' learning behavior. The study is performed in terms of the evaluation of "Women Entrepreneurs: The Education and Training for Success Programme" funded by the European Union Horizon 2020 initiative. The four-level Kirkpatrick evaluation model and Constructivist theory constitute the theoretical framework of this study.

The learning and teaching analytics are derived from the student-tutor matched Moodle log data set. The sample of participants include early-stage female entrepreneurs working in the service sector. The tutors' sample consists of the undergraduate students of Business Administration and Economics. For the construction of the outcomes and predictors, we use the Agent-based and Mode-based classifications of online interactions. The data analysis employs GLS Fixed-Effects and Logistic Regression models.

Our findings deliver strong evidences for the need and importance of tutors' active presence to improve participants' engagement and retention in online training. The theoretically predicted preference of entrepreneurs towards a self-governed learning process is reflected in the independence of peer interaction and business networking within the programme on its instructional conditions. Instead, teaching behavior predicts participants' contributions to the course content and initiative to communicate with tutors. The lack of the latter has been empirically defined as a dominant reason for programme dropouts.

The theory-related impact of our findings challenges the reasonability of an exclusive application of the constructivist perspective for the online business education creation. We provide an evidence-based advocacy for the reciprocal effectiveness of engaging field-specialized students in training young business professionals. Addressing the characteristics of female entrepreneurs' learning and its stimulus constitutes our contribution to the Adult and Blended education literature.

Keywords:

Online learning behavior, course instructional conditions, tutor-student interaction, contribution and observation, online business education, training female entrepreneurs