



UNIT 2. METHODS AND STRATEGIES TO KEEP ATTENTION IN DISTANCE LEARNING

AIM

aim is to know basic methods and strategies to arouse students' attention in distance learning.

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Unit 2. Methods and strategies to keep attention in distance learning.

2.1. Strategies to keep attention and motivation in distance learning.

Motivation, attention and learning are concepts closely connected to one another. When the content of what you are studying is appealing, it is easier to invest your time on it. That is what teachers must manage to get from their students.

The first thing teachers need to take into account is that every student has different motivations, so dedication has to be personalised. In distance learning it is more difficult to know students, their environment and interests, but it is advisable to try to get as much information as possible. As a starting point we can use the ARCS model designed by John Keller in 1987, so we need:

- Attention
- Relevance
- Confidence
- Satisfaction

Instructors must use strategies that can manage to improve our students' participation, their effort and creativity. As a consequence, their motivation and attention span will also improve. It is essential to keep students' attention. In addition, it is important that the content presented is always important and relevant for the formative deficit that the student may face. Teachers must give them the opportunity to conceptualize the material and meet the objectives proposed (for instance, to get a particular certificate). Some advice to get students motivated could be:

- Be innovative and creative: make the most of the ICT tools that we have the opportunity to use.
- Expose the objectives in a clear way. It is recommended to specify at the beginning of a unit what are the contents, objectives, methodology and grading criteria.
- It is essential to use different methodologies, since every individual will react in a different way. It is recommendable to alternate diverse activities: written, oral, video resources, in group, individual, etc.
- Foster and promote students' curiosity, by for example asking questions in the forums or sending links to articles that can be relevant for the course contents.
- Provide feedback to their contributions, so they can learn from their successes and mistakes. Don't make your students wait for too long when they hand in a project.
- Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal communication. Do consider that technical aspects are also important. Make sure that sound and image quality are appropriate.

- Invest time on communicating with students about the course and connect their experience with the contents that they are expected to learn. Call or write to them: build a relationship. Learning will be much more significant if students feel that their instructor is a close person.

Online education offers great benefits for teachers, since it is a convenient way of getting everywhere and transmitting our knowledge. However, the lack of real time physical interaction to see students' reactions can be a drawback. That's why all this advice can help to get our students engaged in the course and get effective learning.

2.2. Methods and principles to more effectively arouse and sustain students' motivation and interest

- Mentoring is essential: distance learning is not just a virtual classroom; students must feel assisted at all times. Mentoring is the easiest way to understand the difficulties that our students can have and make their learning experience meaningful.
- Content is crucial: teachers must anticipate to their students' necessities and thoughts and make the content as attractive as possible. To do so, teachers must work on their abilities of writing and designing. Too long texts must be avoided, it is important to summarise the most relevant details of our learning concepts. It is advisable to include content in different formats: videos, images, illustrations, infographics, games, etc. Different sources will foster students' attention.
- Expert collaboration: contacting with other professionals and experts can be helpful to improve the content. They can broaden some concepts or participate in a videoconference. This variety can arouse our students' attention and make their motivation improve.
- Sharing enlivens our courses: when students have the possibility of sharing their practice, they feel more attached to other participants and at the same time it can enrich their own knowledge. It is also recommendable to create a forum where they can ask doubts and discuss among them about topics related to the course. This strategy will stimulate their eagerness to be part of the group.
- Social networks can extend our online course: they are a complement for the teaching and learning experience. It is important to maintain a personal level, be recognisable and respect netiquette rules. Keeping in touch and fostering participation and communication will help them being motivated.

2.3. Anticipate consequences of actions that do not address students' attention span

Students with a short attention span may have difficulties when trying to focus on tasks for any length of time without being easily distracted. This can have different negative effects in the short and long term, including:

- Poor performance at work or school.

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- Inability to complete daily tasks.
 - Missing important details or information.
 - Communication difficulties in relationships.
 - Poor health related to neglect and inability to practice healthy habits.
 - Difficulties in social and emotional development.
 - Conflictive behaviour.
 - Depression.
 - Understatement in the work market.

All these reasons must raise teachers' awareness on the importance of fostering students' attention, since success in learning will have a great impact on the development of each individual. Apart from the academic advantages, which are obvious, training attention and arousing interest can affect their social development.

References

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