Identifying Volitional Strategies of Distance Learners

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**Theoretical Background**

Volition = all (learning) activities directed toward an intended goal (Achtziger & Gollwitzer 2010)

- crucial factor for successful learning in distance learning settings
- needed to initiate & maintain learning processes (Comor, 1993).

**Research Questions**

Which volitional strategies are used by distance students to a) initiate learning activities, b) maintain and c) stay tuned even when difficulties arise?

Are there volitional strategies used by distance students, which are consequently used in all three phases?

**Method**

32 adult learners (M_{age} = 29.8; SD = 7.1; 14 male) were interviewed all studied in a distance learning program at a German university.

Data collection through semi-structured interviews previously validated by interviews with 7 other distance learners.

**Participants**

- 32 adult learners (M_{age} = 29.8; SD = 7.1; 14 male)

**Materials**

Data collection: April until July 2017

Face-to-face or online interview of about 25-35 minutes

Interviews: audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and analyzed computer based

**Procedure**

1st interview was structured in three phases:

1. 1st phase: initiate learning activities
2. 2nd phase: maintain learning
3. 3rd phase: stay tuned when difficulties arise

For each phase we asked:

1. what kind of volitional difficulties the students normally experience
2. which strategies they have for dealing with these difficulties

Data collection: April until July 2017

Face-to-face or online interview of about 25-35 minutes

Interviews: audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and analyzed computer based

**Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Most Used Cognitive Strategies</th>
<th>Most Used Metacognitive Strategies</th>
<th>Most Used Resource Oriented Strategies</th>
<th>Most Used Regulation of oneself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st phase</td>
<td>n=17</td>
<td>n=14</td>
<td>n=16</td>
<td>n=11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd phase</td>
<td>n=16</td>
<td>n=14</td>
<td>n=16</td>
<td>n=12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd phase</td>
<td>n=16</td>
<td>n=14</td>
<td>n=16</td>
<td>n=11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

It seems as if metacognitive strategies can easily be adopted to fit the need of volitional strategies.

Cognitive strategies are less likely to be used as volitional strategies, as they are used traditionally to cope with the material itself.

The most used strategies to be used as volitional strategies are planning and controlling.

Interesting in the context of distance learning is also, that interaction with others seems to be an important factor for volition.

**References**


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