

Abstract

Cognitive presence sustains the learning community through intellectual discourse. Previous studies have explored cognitive presence using mainly quantitative measures in relation to students' perceived learning. This study adopts a mixed-method approach to investigate students' perception of cognitive presence, its relationship with academic performance, and its manifestation in blended learning courses in selected Tanzanian universities. The study adds empirical evidence about the emerging blended learning courses. A total of 351 students were involved in the study. The findings show that students reported a high cognitive presence (mean = 3.9, SD = 0.51). Furthermore, cognitive presence predicted student performance. Qualitative data show that students explored information through interaction in group discussions and presentations, with the main push being questions from instructors (teaching presence). Students integrated and applied their knowledge by discussing among themselves, teaching others, and practicing what they had learned. Nevertheless, lack of prompts for feedback, time constraints and lack of confidence were linked with low levels of cognitive presence. The study concludes that students experience high cognitive presence, which predicts their academic performance. The findings imply that cognitive presence tends to influence student performance, regardless of the varying levels of its manifestation.

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