

Preface

Prior to embarking on this research investigation, I worked as an academic in several different higher education institutes of technology (polytechnics) within New Zealand. This involved face-to-face teaching and, over time, increasingly online teaching. It was around this time that I began studying for a Master of Education degree in online education. I completed this degree part-time as an online distance student over the course of several years (while working), only meeting and getting to know my fellow learners and lecturers in ‘cyberspace’. Many of these experiences were stimulating and valuable, some were transformational and a few were disappointing and uninspiring. These experiences contributed to my interest in why certain situations, within the context of technology-mediated learning environments, encouraged my tendency towards making an effort, persisting in the face of difficulties and wanting to do well; while others fell into the ‘just get it done’ category. I understood at some level that it wasn’t just me who contributed to my *motivation to learn*, but that there existed a complex relationship between myself as a learner and the wider learning environments in which I found myself. Wanting to understand why this was the case was my motivation for undertaking this research.

Structure of the Book

The book is organised into six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the subject of the book, Chap. 2 reviews the literature on online learning and motivation that informs and supports the aims of the investigation. Chapter 3 briefly describes the case study methodology that underpins this research and the methods used to generate and analyse data. It then goes on present in-depth findings from two case studies that form the context for this research. In Chap. 4, the key findings are discussed

highlighting their importance with reference to the wider motivation and online learning literature. Using the findings and understandings outlined in the previous two chapters, Chap. 5 then presents the practical guidelines for online teachers, instructional designers and learners. Chapter 6 concludes the book by highlighting its contributions as well as recommendations for future research.

Motivation in Online Education

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