ONLINE LEARNERS’ EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

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With the increase of educational programs and classes offered online, many people have taken advantage of the convenience of these offerings. Along with the rapid growth of distance learning, there has been a reported high attrition rate among online learners. Some research suggests that part of the attrition involved student expectations not being addressed or realized. While much research has been done on online learner characteristics and quality of distance education courses, little has been done in relation to the learners’ expectations of the class, their perception of personal learning, and their sense of satisfaction. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of a set of three variables that measure student expectations in online classes and a set of three variables that measure perceived outcomes. The three expectations used were course relevance, interaction with instructor, and interaction with peers, and these were assessed against the student perception of their own meaningful learning and their satisfaction with the educational experience. The results of this study indicate that there are correlations between student expectations and perceived outcomes. This adds to a better understanding of ways in which some of the dynamics of online learning could be enhanced and learner expectations addressed and perhaps result in a higher sense of satisfaction of the online learners of the learning experience.