Abstract

Higher education is seeing a substantial rise in both the number of adult learners who are returning to college as well as the number of online and blended courses being offered by institutions. Adult learners are returning to higher education and frequently finding themselves in an e-learning environment, which may not have existed during their first stint in college. Online and blended classes often require students to complete technology tasks that they may not be confident performing. This thesis uses descriptive statistics to determine which tasks commonly used in online courses adult learners are least confident performing, giving institutions more accurate data that can be used to create tutorials and orientation materials. This could improve adult learners' confidence with the technology used in an e-learning environment. Additionally, this thesis utilizes a two-way ANOVA to analyze and compare adult learners' confidence levels with technology tasks used in online courses to the confidence levels of traditionally aged students. The findings of this study showed that adult learners were most confident performing the most common basic computing and learning management system (LMS) tasks such as formatting documents, transferring files and turning in assignments using the LMS. The analysis of variance found that adult learners had significant gains in confidence with the technology commonly found in online and blended instruction after taking an online or blended course.