

Resolving non-completion in higher (online) education

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RESOLVING NON-COMPLETION IN HIGHER (ONLINE) EDUCATION

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Keywords: Higher education, Design-based research, Non-completion, Predictors, Interventions, Review

1. BACKGROUND & RESEARCH QUESTION

The non-completion problem:

- A considerable number of students in higher (online) education do not complete a study course or program.
- Next to financial consequences, this also has consequences for students' confidence and reputation of educational institutions.

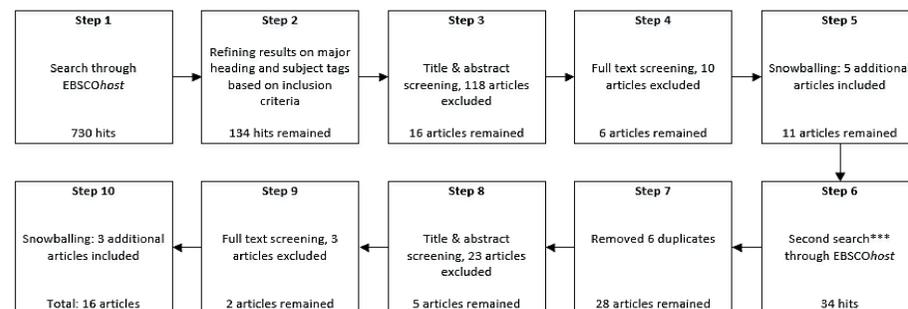
The present study:

- To our best knowledge, there is not yet an overview of characteristics of interventions raising completion rates.
- A literature review on modifiable predictors of (non-)completion (part a, not presented here) and interventions to raise completion rates (part b) in higher (online) education was performed as a first step of a four-year design-based research project.

Research question:

- What are the key characteristics of effective and efficient interventions to raise completion rates in higher (online) education?

2. METHOD



*Search terms: "higher education" or "university" or "distance" and "dropout" or "non-completion" and "intervention" or "prevention" or "program".

**8 inclusion criteria were taken into account for screening articles.

***Additional search for interventions prior to enrolment, search terms: "matching" or "selection" or "study choice" or "study decision".

3. RESULTS

Characteristics	Interventions				
	Coaching & Remedial teaching (K**=6)	Peer mentoring (K=3)	Motivational contact (K=3)	Academic dismissal policies (K=3)	Interventions on instruction (K=1)
Impact on completion rates	↑ Increasing	↑ Increasing	↕ Inconsistent	↓ Decreasing	↑ Increasing
Effect size (Cohen's d)	? Unknown	? Unknown	? Unknown	0.07	? Unknown
Effect (min. and max. difference between groups or cohorts)	6% 54%	10% 48%	2% 25%	7% 8%	7% 22%
Duration (min. to max.)	One session One year	One semester One year	One course One semester	One year	One course One semester
Mode of intervention (online, face-to-face or blended)	Face-to-face Online	Blended Online	Online	Blended Online	Online
Educational context (online or face-to-face educational context)	Face-to-face	Face-to-face	Face-to-face Online	Face-to-face	Online
Target factor(s)*	🧠 ❤️ 🔄	❤️ 🧠	❤️	🧠 ❤️ 🏛️	❤️

*Target factor(s) are based on the categories of the part a of this literature review.

**K is the number of intervention studies included in the corresponding category.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- Interventions raising completion rates significantly are coaching or remedial teaching and peer mentoring. Academic dismissal policies decrease completion rates in the first year, but thereby raise graduation rates.
- Interventions raising completion rates significantly focus on dispositional cognitive (knowledge and skills, e.g., self-regulation skills) and non-cognitive (affective, e.g., social integration), as well as situational (e.g., social support) factors.
- More systematic and aligned (i.e., to research on predictors) research on interventions is needed, which advocates for a design-based research approach.
- More scientific publications on interventions to raise completion rates are needed, in order to build a knowledge base on how to increase completion rates in higher (online) education.
- This especially counts for interventions prior to student enrolment.