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Online coaching as a Relationship of Inquiry

Exploring one-to-one online education

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Abstract

In educational development, much focus is put on the use of computers and other digital tools to enhance teaching and learning. One of the most used digital communication forms is one-to-one communication using text, images, and video. One-to-one communication for educational purposes has, however, so far received only modest attention in research.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore inquiry-based one-to-one online education. An additional purpose is to explore opportunities and limitations with the Community of Inquiry framework, one of the most used models for analysis of online learning, when analyzing one-to-one online education. A particular interest is put on the role of emotions in the analyses. The empirical case used in the thesis is the Math Coach program who employs one-to-one education for k-12 students in mathematics via chat and a shared digital whiteboard.

The thesis consists of an introduction and four papers. First, in Paper I online coaching is defined, explained, and discussed through a review of previous research and a study of the establishment and operation of the Math Coach program. Secondly, the Community of Inquiry framework is adapted for use in one-to-one settings forming the Relationship of Inquiry framework. Paper II initiates the adaption using a survey study, Paper III evaluates the role of emotions in the framework, and Paper IV consolidates the Relationship of Inquiry framework with a comprehensive description of its components and a transcript coding procedure.

The findings indicate that inquiry-based one-to-one online education can be explored utilizing *Online coaching as a Relationship of Inquiry*. Online coaching is theoretically grounded in collaborative constructivism, critical thinking, and proximal development. It is defined as an inquiry-based learning activity where a person gets support on a specific subject matter from a more knowledgeable person using the Internet. The Relationship of Inquiry is a conceptual connection that is built between two persons that engage in a critical discourse in order to resolve an educational issue. Central for the framework is the elements of cognitive presence, teaching presence, social presence, and emotional presence. Emotional presence is especially examined and confirmed as a critical interdependent element of the framework.

Keywords: *online learning · online coaching · one-to-one online education · Community of Inquiry · Relationship of Inquiry*