

08.2.2026**Author**

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TitleGhanaian mature students' motivation to pursue degree programmes through distance education /
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2018

Source/Footnote

In: International review of education. - 64 (2018) 5, S. 585 - 606

Inventory number

47551

Keywords

Ausland : Ghana : Studenten, Studium, Lehre ; Erwachsenenbildung

Abstract

Mature distance education students in Ghana, like part-time students all over the world, need to be motivated in order to enjoy their studies and succeed in what they do. In order to come up with incentives for such learners to join and complete a course, universities have to be aware of the characteristics and the socio-economic background of this group of learners and use an approach that best suits their needs at any given time. Based on Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci's self-determination theory, the authors of this article investigate the factors that motivate mature students to engage in distance education and how their motivation is sustained throughout their studies. Using a survey questionnaire, the authors collected data from 210 mature distance education students (106 males and 104 females; aged 30+) of the University of Ghana. Interestingly, some of the authors' findings depart from the norm in terms of adult learners' motivations and what extant literature holds as typified in the work of Ryan and Deci. Adult learners more generally are described in the literature as being mainly intrinsically motivated (e.g. by the desire to learn for its own sake, for

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the enjoyment it provides, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes). Interestingly, this survey reveals that mature distance education students who were enrolled in a higher education programme offered by the University of Ghana were mainly extrinsically motivated, giving career development as their top reason for course selection. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)