The application of the Educational Success Prediction Instrument (ESPRI) to an Undergraduate Population

Problem:

Dropout rates for online distance education classes have been consistently higher than those of traditional classes which according to some researchers suggest student academic failure (Phipps & Merisotis, 1999; Ridley & Sammour, 1996). At the present time there is no predictive instrument available for post-secondary online education instructors.

In 2003, Roblyer and Marshall created and tested the Educational Success Prediction Instrument (ESPRI) to “(1) help predict which high school students would be likely to succeed in virtual high school (VHS) courses and (2) provide a basis for counseling and support for other students interested in becoming online learners to help them become more successful.” (Roblyer and Marshall, 2003, p. 241) The ESPRI is considered to be a reliable predictor of educational performance with VHS populations.

This research seeks to determine whether the ESPRI will function as a reliable predictor of success when applied to undergraduate students enrolled in online asynchronous classes at a research I institution.

What was done:

Over 170 undergraduate students enrolled at a research I institution’s introduction to educational technology online courses were asked to complete the ESPRI instrument at the beginning of their online coursework. Student ESPRI scores were then compared with existing data derived from studies utilizing the ESPRI instrument. Studies used for comparison include Roblyer and Marshall’s initial 2003 sample and Ferdig, Papanastasiou and Dipietro’s 2005 sample. Specific statistical instruments were used to correlate factor analyses of existing samples, provide a differential prediction of final grades, and analyze the co-variance by group.

Why this is important:

According to Allen and Seaman (2004) enrollments in distance-delivered courses rose nearly 20% in 2003. Unfortunately, many times these online courses experience higher then usual dropout and failure rates (King, 2002). While the ESPRI has proven to be a reliable and valid instrument for application at the high school level, its validity and reliability has not been tested for use with undergraduate populations. This current study has been undertaken to determine if the ESPRI’s ability to accurately predict student success in online learning environments extends beyond Virtual High School settings to college aged populations.


