Chapter 96

Findings Identifying How Administrative Leaders Might Recruit, Select, Train, Motivate, and Support Online Faculty

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ABSTRACT

This study is a phenomenological study exploring faculty experiences teaching online coursework in master's programs in education. The study sought to understand and categorize learning factors that might produce stress and job burnout in the online instructional environment. In addition, the demands, expectations, and associated stress-producing factors in the online instructional environment were examined to distinguish best practices for online faculty. Moreover, attributes required by faculty best suited for the expectations and demands in distance learning were classified. Online faculty perspectives with teaching experience in the modality for three or more years generated the study's findings and insights. Stakeholders such as administrators, faculty trainers, faculty mentors, and faculty interested in employment in distance learning may find these insights useful to identify realistic criteria to base future decisions about teaching online, employment practices, hiring standards, and training opportunities. Insights about best practices, standards, and procedures have been articulated to assist in the development of administrative decisions, initial training programs, faculty mentor supports, and on-going faculty training.

INTRODUCTION

Institutions of higher education in the United States are offering increasing numbers of online programs and courses (I. E. Allen & Seaman, 2014). While traditional faculty members who are engaged in face-to-face lectures have recognized online teaching as a new teaching method that reaches potential university enrollees, traditional faculty continue to remain doubtful regarding the efficacy of online learning (I. E. Allen & Seaman, 2014; Columbaro & Monaghan, 2009; Mills, Yanes, & Casebeer, 2009). The suspicion

and continued distrust of faculty toward online learning have been depicted in traditional universities' preference to hire faculty who earned their degrees at traditional institutions (I. E. Allen & Seaman, 2014; Columbaro & Monaghan, 2009). This preference for hiring faculty who prefer the traditional methods of teaching has the potential to result in a shortage of faculty who appreciate online learning.

Having online faculty, who can be most involved and fulfilled in an online environment, is imperative for the growth and success of institutions of higher education. However, only a small percentage of academic leaders believe that their faculty members subscribe to the legitimacy and value of the online modality (I. E. Allen & Seaman, 2014). It is essential that online faculty be encouraged about the academic success of their online learners because the expansion of online learning requires committed and competent faculty in sufficient numbers to meet student demand. This study sought to examine the experiences of faculty in an online learning environment in order to identify the factors that can produce job burnout and stress in master's programs in education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary objective of this study was to explore the experiences of faculty in an online learning environment as it related to job burnout and stress in master's programs in the discipline of education. The study also identified the teaching strategies, personal attributes, organizational skills, software competencies, and job satisfaction of faculty who taught in online master's degree programs in education to overcome the burnout problem. The literature review was done to ascertain the theoretical foundation of the topic being studied. After an exhaustive literature review search on the topic of engaged and experienced characteristics of online faculty who have taught three or more years in master's degree programs in education, it became evident that there were no studies done in this specific area. There was a dearth of literature that dealt with online faculty teaching at the master's level in the education field, which warranted this study. Key findings from the I. E. Allen and Seaman (2014) Babson Survey Research Group report on online education, *Grade Level: Tracking Online Education in the United States* include: (1) The percent of academic leaders rating the learning outcomes in online education as the same or superior to those in face-to-face remained unchanged at 74.1%; (2) Only 28.0% of academic leaders say that their faculty accept the "value and legitimacy of online education"; (3) The proportion of chief academic leaders reporting online learning is critical to their long-term strategy reached a new high of 70.8%; and (4) The adoption of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Course) is reaching a plateau, only 8.0% of higher education institutions currently offer one, another 5.6% report MOOCs are in the planning stages.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ADULT LEARNING

To meet the educational needs and abilities of adults, Brookfield (1999) pointed to the necessity of establishing a "connectedness" to learning, encouraging adults to incorporate their previous learning and experience, to be more self-directed, and to link the curriculum to their lives and their work. Three theories of adult learning that have significantly affected higher education and the online learner include andragogy theory by Malcolm Knowles, transformative learning by Jack Mezirow, and student-centered learning by Carl Rogers.

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