Chapter 85
The Rhetoric of Fear:
Voices and Stories Told of Faculty Who Engage in Online Teaching

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ABSTRACT

Amongst the glamour and allure to teach online, the literature indicates faculty often see and experience teaching online as daunting, painful, and time consuming. While, many studies seek to detail faculty experiences with course and program design, few studies seek to understand the faculty emotional reaction and their response to online course development and online course teaching. Using phenomenology this preliminary research study sought to explore and document faculty involvement in online teaching using theories of experience, postulated by Dewey (1938) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis (2003) to analyze and give voice to the emotional experience and reaction of faculty who are involved in online teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the number of online courses and programs has grown tremendously promoting a need for institutions to seek faculty who are willing to accept and participate in online teaching. Like most disciplines, faculty have been expected to respond to the increasing demands for online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2010). Such response requires exploration into the experiences of faculty in online teaching. Supporting faculty and providing support is crucial for the process of designing, developing, and instructing online programs and courses (Bruner, 2007; Kyei-Blankson, 2009). To date, few studies provide a discussion to the emotional reaction and response of faculty who engage in online teaching. While current research on faculty participation in online learning has focused on program and course design, issues related to the faculty's experience developing and teaching online courses has largely been ignored (Chen & Chen, 2006), therefore, this study taken from a larger study provided an opportunity

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to highlight the emotional responses of faculty involved in online teaching, but also discuss their voices and stories told. This will serve as a platform to inform those involved in online teaching.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In more recent years faculty have been expected to participate in online learning as a part of their regular duties as faculty (Appana, 2008). Despite this expectation, faculty have still been hesitant to convert their traditional courses to an online format (Fish & Gill, 2009). These authors found that faculty felt uncertain and uneasy towards online learning due to perceived assumptions regarding the quality of learning and student learning outcomes. This uncertainty stemmed from assumption concerning the nature of learning and mode of learning (Appana, 2008), subscribing to myths and misconceptions of online learning (Li & Atkins, 2005), lack of competency in technology and online learning methods (McGuire, 2005) and institutional incongruence with relation to faculty, attitudes, beliefs, and practices (Mitchell & Geva-May, 2009; Simpson, 2010). Further, Saba (2005) revealed that faculty who teach online are oftentimes unsure how to teach online, due to a lack of skills sets and experience in online environment. This ultimately leads faculty to experience anxiety and negative feelings towards online teaching.

As faculty engage in online teaching, the pathway of course migration to online environments often begins with the assumption that instructional designs, grading procedures, and other methods that typically work in the traditional classroom would remain the same in online settings. When faculty come to terms with the reality that these two environments are entirely different, they suddenly become frustrated (Bruner, 2007; Conceicao, 2006) and realize the need for professional development activities and support programs that will help them teach successfully online. Instructors face the challenge of the preponderance of online courses, a distinct set of online student needs (e.g., independent learning, unlimited access to course content) and the need to promote interaction in online learning (Conceicao, 2006). This placed a burden on experienced instructors who have taught exclusively in face-to-face settings.

The acceptance of online learning within universities and individual curricula has challenged previously established teaching methods and faculty responsibilities (Dabbagh, 2004). The transition to online teaching for experienced faculty is not easy and has been labeled as "daunting", "painful" and "stressful" (Grosse 2004). In addition, there is considerable evidence that teaching online requires additional extensive preparation time (Lorenzetti, 2006) and this preparation time was found to add additional stress on faculty (Lorenzetti, 2006). Further, Grosse (2004) found that veteran face-to-face instructors had to revise their teaching methods. This was found to cause a sense of uncertainty and frustration for veteran faculty (Grosse, 2004).

According to Campbell (2006, p. 00) with the new teaching role, faculty have expressed "concerns for the loss of personal and intimate interactions" with their online students. Some veteran faculty who were new to online learning have expressed concerns about their lack of ability to teach skills requiring "hands on" instruction at a distance (Conceicao, 2006). Osborne, Kriese, Tobey, and Johnson (2009) and Tallent-Runnels, et al. (2006) state that it is imperative to address instructors' concerns and obstacles that lead to anxiety, apprehension and stress as they teaching at a distance. Despite faculty's emotional reaction to online teaching, online teaching presents a learning curve that may be difficult for faculty to undertake. As noted by Gerlich (2005, p.8) online teaching presented a "steep learning curve associated with learning to teach online." Because of the many tools and strategies associated with online learning, faculty are sometimes left frustrated, overwhelmed, and exhausted, due to the intense work needed to teach