Chapter 16
The Adaptation Process of a First-Time Distance Education Instructor:
A Single-Subject Research Study

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the adaptation process of an instructor lecturing for the first time via distance education by using the concerns-based adoption model components. This single-subject research study included an instructor who requested to lecture via distance education. The findings revealed that the instructor's informational and personal stages were higher than the other stages at the beginning, and these stages remained higher throughout the semester. The instructor was also at the preparation level before progressing to, and remaining at, the mechanical use level. Although the consequence stage was not one of the most intense concerns, the instructor became concerned with student engagement and learning outcomes throughout the semester. In addition to supporting instructors from technological and pedagogical aspects, this study recommends supporting students in adopting distance education and adjusting regulations to facilitate the instructors' self-concerns resolution and distance education adaptation accordingly.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education provides many advantages in educational institutions due to time and space convenience. Although it has been an alternative to face-to-face education, it has now become obligatory due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). Faculties or university instructors working in higher education institutions were therefore required to switch online teaching within a short period of time (Alshehri et al., 2020; Bozkurt et al., 2020; Rahiem, 2020). While higher education institutions

increasingly adopt distance education, instructors play a critical role in this process (Berge, 1995). Thus, the adaptation of instructors becomes essential, as the learning in distance education format highly depends on them (Berigel & Karal, 2013).

Moving from face-to-face to distance education can bring technical and pedagogical challenges for instructors (Conrad, 2004). When reviewing the literature, one can see that instructors do not generally adapt their teaching (Kirkup & Kirkwood, 2005) but continue to use their traditional instructional methods and strategies in distance education (Aydemir et al., 2016; Roy & Boboc, 2016). However, institutions providing appropriate support to their instructors can facilitate distance education adaption (Berigel, 2013). Gaining insight into how instructors adapt to distance education is advantageous to higher education institutions. Exploring the adaptation process of instructors to distance education can help one design and develop high-quality professional development programs and thus produce more successful and sustainable online practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The instructors' changing responsibilities and roles is one of the major obstacles in distance education adaptation (Keast, 1997). In addition to subject matter, pedagogy experts, evaluators, and instructors must also have the technical knowledge and skills (Bawane & Spector, 2009; Egan & Akdere, 2005; O'Neil, 2006) to design courses and guide students (Anderson et al., 2001; Berge, 1995). Rogers (2003) indicates that problems and needs are important factors influencing people's adaptation. Therefore, as instructors lecture via distance education, they may confront technical and pedagogical challenges (Conrad, 2004) and accordingly have a set of concerns (Kayaduman & Demirel, 2019; Hall & Hord, 2014).

The instructors' concerns have the potential to affect course design, instructors' performance and self-efficacy, and their overall adaptation to a different teaching format (Ghaith & Shaaban, 1999; Hall, 1976; Wexler, 2003). As well, technical, pedagogical, and support factors can raise concerns in distance education instructors. First, technical factors, such as the ability to create digital content, deliver an online lesson, increase student engagement, and evaluate learning outcomes via web-based tools, are one of the major obstacles in the adaptation process (Almarashdeh, 2016; Kayaduman & Demirel, 2019; Berigel, 2013; Menchaca & Bekele, 2008; Thomas & Stratton, 2006). In turn, these impediments can influence social, pedagogical, and administrative roles (Berigel & Karal, 2013), and instructors might be reluctant to adopt technologies due to technical factors (Andersson, 2006). Second, pedagogical factors can also raise concerns for instructors. Berigel and Karal (2013) state that instructors have problems adapting their pedagogical roles in distance education. Thus, students' indifference, low participation in online course activities, and unsatisfactory learning outcomes can raise concerns for instructors (Kayaduman & Demirel, 2019; Thieman, 2008). Lastly, receiving timely and effective support by institutions can positively influence the instructors' adaptation (Berigel, 2013; Evans & Myrick, 2015; Wang & Wang, 2009). Therefore, it is critical to consider the instructors' concerns while designing support programs for distance education (Kayaduman & Demirel, 2019).

Although there are research studies examining the instructor's adaptation to distance education from technological and pedagogical aspects (Almarashdeh, 2016; Berigel, 2013; Lochner et al., 2015; Rakes & Dunn, 2015; Thongsri et al., 2019; Wang & Wang, 2009), there is a growing need for theory-driven exploration of distance education adaptation to further identify the challenges faced by instructors. In this regard, the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) provides a useful framework for understanding

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