

Chapter 7

Institutions of Higher Education: Education Preparation Programs, Pre-Service Teachers, and Online Delivery Platform

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ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education are facing many tough questions as to how best to address lower on-campus attendance and budgetary concerns. Many scholars believe the answer lies in distance education. This chapter begins with the description of online learning, online course philosophical approaches, and online course design models that have arisen in higher education in some part to the need to increase revenue. Next, the authors address student preferences and perceptions of online learning, specifically, adult learners and perceptions and preferences of online learning as they relate to teacher interactions/teaching loads/demands. Finally, they propose a solution to the identified key problems.

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INTRODUCTION

Institutions of higher education (IHE) must have sustainable funding options to supplement the loss of funding created by state budget-cutting to maintain continued operation (Pierce, 2014). One solution to a sustainable funding stream is through increased student enrollment rates (Pierce, 2014). For IGEs to compete with the high enrollment rates of online program institutions, they must strategically develop and implement cost-effective, alternative options to traditional program delivery that spans beyond the traditional face-to-face instruction only model (Eckel, & King, 2004; Pierce, 2014). The trend of online programming has become the preferred method for many institutions; however, there are often many considerations that are unaccounted for, thus, leading to problems in implementation outcomes (Clayton, Blumburg, & Anthony, 2018). Key problems in this case study include a lack of (a) information about student preferences in traditional versus non-traditional educational delivery platforms; (b) perceived value of online learning by students; and (c) how student preferences and perceived value should be a consideration in decision making before assuming it is a sustainable enrollment and retention method (Burnette, 2015; Clayton et al., Fengfeng & Xie, 2009). The solution for these key problems lies in the institution administration's ability to examine multiple factors that impact student perceptions of value and preferences relative to online learning and traditional classrooms before making decisions to implement online programs.

BACKGROUND

In this era of decreased funding in the form of state budget cuts and decreased enrollment rates, IHEs have been forced to find sustainable ways in which to supplement operating costs (Roebber & Meadows, 2012; Pierce, 2014). The current trend of online program delivery is implemented by colleges and universities nationwide and appears to have provided a solution to university enrollment and revenue; however, there is research literature that supports and refutes this solution (Burnette, 2015; Burke, 2004). Online programming is marketed by IHEs as a cost-efficient alternative to traditional face-to-face learning targeting adult learners with the guarantee of providing a more accessible, flexible, and convenient way to obtain a college degree (Auld, Blumberg, & Clayton, 2010). Although IHEs view the online programming format as a means to generate enrollment and revenue, often the student perceptions of online learning are not fully considered in the decision-making process (Clayton et al., 2018; Pierce, 2014; Roebber & Meadows, 2012). Adopting an online program approach is often based on unilateral, academic

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