Business faculty e-readiness and willingness towards online instruction


Suggested Citation:

Received May 22, 2014; revised June 12, 2014; accepted July 27, 2014
Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Steven M. Ross, John hopkins University.
©2014 Academic World Education & Research Center. All rights reserved.

Abstract
Online instruction provides a rich integrated environment, as recent innovative educational technologies are changing lives of both students and faculty staff. This research aims to investigate e-readiness and willingness of Business faculty staff towards online instruction, and whether their experience in using educational technologies influences their attitude. Survey methodology is facilitated through the use of the questionnaires. The survey domain is a random sampling of Business faculty staff in Egyptian HEI. The population for this study was 479 full-time Faculty staff, and only 456 returned and completed questionnaires are considered as the study sample. Results showed that faculty attitude toward online instruction is positive, which reflect their e-readiness and willingness to include online instruction, but experience in using educational technology did not significantly predict their attitude towards online instruction. The result of this research has significant implications to HEI when they plan, develop, and adopt online instruction strategies.

Keywords: e-Learning, educational technologies, attitude, higher education

*ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Mohamed Elsaadani, The Arab Academy for Science & Technology & Maritime Transport, Alexandria, Egypt, E-mail address: mohamed.elsaadani@gmail.com / Tel.: +2 011119799 66
1. Introduction

It is the time for online instruction as its popularity worldwide is increasing. Educational technologies are changing lives of both students and faculty staff (Tubaishat & Lansari, 2011; Asgharkia, 2010). Recent innovative technologies especially multimedia and the Internet showed that they have a significant impact on learning in higher education institutions (Smith & Winking-Diaz, 2004; Hodges, 2004; Muhlhauser & Trompler, 2002).

Online instruction was defined by several authors through different perspectives. Welsh et al. (2003) defined online instruction as the use of computer network technology through the Internet in order to deliver knowledge. In the same context, group of authors (Holmes & Gardner, 2006; Rosenberg, 2001; Arbaugh & Duray, 2002; Behrouzian & Nejad, 2011; Behrouzian et al., 2011) determined that online instruction provides access to learning resources on an anywhere-anytime basis. All these authors’ definitions agree that online instruction provides a rich integrated environment with knowledge resources. Moreover, their focus includes learning, technology and access. Therefore, the principle of online instruction is using multimedia technologies and the Internet to enhance the availability and quality of learning.

Traditional classroom settings at every level of education are rapidly being replaced with technologically supported learning environments. Online instruction is one of the most recent and powerful implementations of technology in the field of education, thus it is becoming an important component in education and has great impact on teaching activities (Howland & Moore, 2002; Matthews, 1997). This integration of technology with learning environment aims at increasing the speed and quality of learning (Marquardt & Kearsly, 1999) as well as changing the roles of the classroom in the learning process (Noble, 1998).

Understanding online instruction is very important in this regard. Moore and Kearsley (1996) declared that online instruction requires special technologies used for course design, instruction and communications as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements. In the same context, Boettcher and Conrad (1999) mentioned that online instruction involves using technology as delivery tools to enhance educational objectives. Rosenberg (2001) determined that online instruction involves the use of telecommunication technologies in order to deliver a wide range of solutions that enhance knowledge and performance. Seok (2006) mentioned that online instruction facilitates the achievement of several enhancements especially to learners, such as: the development of a self-directed learning process and the creation of ongoing problem-solving skills, which will benefit most their employers.

In the same context, several researchers declared that students and faculty staff benefit from online instruction activities; they all achieve several developments regarding their own knowledge, experience levels, communications skills, self esteem, and self-confidence. Moreover, institutions benefit from online instruction as well, they will be able more to meet the needs of the fast changing and computer literate societies (Cooper, 2000; Kern, 1996; Manternach-Wigans, 1999; Miller, 1999).

Role of faculty staff is changing as the integration of ICT with the developed e-learning technologies has created a pressure for change in the role on higher education institutions if they would like to benefit from e-learning (Colis & Moonen, 2003). This is the reason that McFadzean (2003) declared that faculty staff should be part of a new model of online teaching holding a major role.

2. Faculty Staff & Online Instruction

Online instruction is a platform with flexible learning using Information Technology and Communication (ITC) resources, tools and applications, and focusing on interactions among teachers, learners in an online environment (Codone, 2001). Faculty staff plays a very important role in online instruction. They stand in different positions in this regard; some faculty staff had a negative point of view regarding online instruction. A number of them do not support it at all because they believe that
it does not solve modern learning problems and difficulties (Conlon, 1997), or it may reduce standards or even devalue society point of view regarding university degrees (Gallick, 1998), or students may not be able to find quality learning materials (Twigg, 2001), or even it will be difficult to guarantee the quality of faculty staff themselves (Weiger, 1998).

On the other hand, the majority of faculty staff had a various levels of a positive point of view regarding online instruction. Some faculty staff using technology as tools in the classroom in addition to the traditional means (Yazon et al., 2001). Others are using some online instruction features such as communications and internet technologies. They see online instruction as one way to deliver learning materials or to communicate with learners while using traditional methods as their main approach (Katz & Yablon, 2002). On the same context, other group of faculty staff already using online instruction heavily, they believe that it is more convenient and more appropriate as well as it produces higher quality outcomes (Palloff & Pratt, 2000).

Faculty staff has a very important role in online instruction, as it requires good level of the planning of the learning activities and for the required instructional strategies needed as well as their technical support (Rohfeld & Hiemstra, 1995).

As the technology is advancing, the demand of online instruction is also increasing and the prospects for e-Learning are clearly bright and many (Advisory Committee for Online Learning, 2001). Designing and developing distance education programs requires specialized training and skills for faculty staff. This is more so in case of online instruction (Dikshit et al., 2003).

3. Faculty Staff E-Readiness

The evaluation of faculty staff e-readiness is essential for the successful implementation of online instruction. Though online instruction is a very broad area of research, this study is concentrating and focusing on the education system and especially the e-readiness of Business faculty staff, which is a more promising area of whole e-learning scenario (Kakoty et al., 2011). Research spectrum in the field of e-learning has much been made regarding the benefits to the institutions adopting e-learning, there has been little, if any, investigations into the attitudes and views of the users themselves (Kakoty & Sarma, 2011).

Demiray (2012) declared that e-readiness, which is the ability to use information technology, can be achieved through the combination of several dimensions. Among these dimensions technology and communication protocols (CPTSC, 2006).

Establishing e-readiness is very important and considered as a baseline to assist with external resources and other barriers to e-learning. With reference to eLRA project (2001), a group of critical success factors that support e-readiness for e-learning includes faculty and students as well as administratives. Faculty staff e-readiness for online instruction requires a university to develop a mechanism to handle faculty staff support, which includes faculty training (e.g. assistance in developing and delivering an online course), technical support issue, as well as other issues inherent in e-learning (e.g. funding, faculty workload, communication). The eLRA project stressed that faculty staff support should provide assistance include professional development, a help desk for faculty, and faculty mentoring. It is necessary to provide assistance that focuses on providing faculty with ongoing technical assistance and help with efficient management of course instruction, as well as focuses on providing faculty with mentoring to improve pedagogical effectiveness.

Several authors (Volery & Lord, 2005; Boshra, 2007) determined criteria and variables that impact faculty staff implementation of online instruction. Many researchers attempted to lay down criteria or domains for successful online teaching, these critical success domains in e-learning environment are different to those in traditional learning environment. They determined that faculty staff e-readiness can be assessed within three main aspects: competences, experiences, and attitudes.
4. Research Objective

This research aims to investigate e-readiness and willingness of Business faculty staff towards online instruction, and whether their experience in using educational technologies influences their attitude. This research results will provide aid to Business faculties in promoting the use of Educational technologies in teaching and learning, as well as applying online instruction in a more effective and productive ways, also it will aid in preparing more qualified and skilled workforce graduates. This research is concentrating only on experiences and attitudes dimensions of the online instruction, as it will seek to discover the attitude of faculty staff towards online instruction, and whether their experience in using educational technologies influence their attitude toward online instruction.

5. Methodology

Data collected through a questionnaire of 456 staff member (professor, assistant professor and lecturers) of Business studies departments in Egyptian higher education institutions. Questionnaires are effective tool to measure different characteristics such as values, attitudes, feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). The questionnaire was designed to collect information relevant to experiences and attitudes that influence the implementation of online instruction. Ideas for instruments that were used in this study were adopted and modified from the literature reviews of previous studies (Alharbi, 2002; Chen, 2003; Alsaif, 2005; Alshehri, 2005).

When an instrument is accurate and consistent, it is supposed to have a high degree of reliability (Mueller, 1986; Slavin, 1992). Thus, minimizing the errors and biases in a research study (Yin, 2003). Alpha coefficient measured reflected an acceptable level of reliability for the survey items. According to a Cronbach Alpha, reliability for the experience with technology and attitudes toward online instruction was 89%.

Slavin (1992) declared that validity is the degree to which an instrument is actually measures the concept it is supposed to measure. Moreover, Light et al. (1990) determined the way to measure validity is by having a group of experts to examine the instrument and agree that it assess what it is supposed to assess, it looks right, it reads right, and it feels right. This research instrument was presented to 19 experts in the field of research studies in higher education, who were asked to review and give their feedback. The instrument was evaluated and revised with their comments.

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) program was used in coding and analyzing the data in light of the questions of the study instrument. The probability level for a test of statistical significance for the study is p<.05, to ensure a 95% confidence in generalization of the findings.

6. Results & Conclusions

The analysis of instrument's data showed that the overall attitude of faculty staff towards online instruction is positive (M = 4.25, SD = 0.86).

The highest influence on this attitude is shown by their responses to the statement “Faculty need training before the implementation of online instruction” (M = 4.54, SD = 0.69). Approximately 75.4% of the faculty strongly agreed with this statement. The second highest influence on this attitude is shown by the faculty’s responses to the statement “The institution should be concerned about the needs of faculty and students when adopting online courses.” (M = 4.71, SD = 0.54). Approximately 69.8% of the faculty strongly agreed with this statement.

The statement that received the lowest ratings was “Online instruction is as effective as the face-to-face classroom teaching” (M = 2.93, SD = 1.78).

In order to discover whether faculty staff experience with educational technologies is a predictor for their attitude towards online instruction, a multiple regression was conducted. The analysis
showed that the experience in using educational technology did not significantly predict the faculty’s attitude towards online instruction ($R^2 = 0.242$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.089$, $F = 1.473$, $p = 0.157$).

Results showed that faculty attitude toward online instruction are positive, which reflect their readiness and willingness to include online instruction. This result is consistent with Alshehri (2005), Alghonaim (2005), Alsaif (2005), Alzaid (2003), Alharbi (2002), Allehaibi (2001), and Aleriieni (1999), who found that faculty members have positive attitudes towards online instruction.

The result of this study provides valuable insights into faculty staff attitude towards online instruction and their experiences in using educational technologies. This information may be used to develop and support factors that enhance strategies for adopting online instruction by Business faculty staff. The analysis conducted provided business faculties in Egypt with an insight into the participant’s performance towards critical information needed by the staff members to their e-readiness and their implementation of e-learning. The critical analysis of the staff members skills whether technological or pedagogical was deemed extremely important in the evaluation of the current status of e-learning at faculties of business in Egypt as it helped the instructors in strengthening or adjusting themselves to apply e-learning system effectively to meet education industry needs.

7. Future Research

Further research should extend to the entire faculties and institutions of business at higher education in Egypt to get better representation of the whole population.

References


Demiray, U. (2012). Leadership Role of Turkey for ICDEEEWA - Leadership Role of Turkey Among Distance Education Institutions from the Balkans (Southeastern Europe) to the Baltic, Turkic and Caucasian Republics, to the Middle East and North Africa, Anadolu University, Eshisehir-Turkey.


Howland, J. & Moore, J. (2002). Student perceptions as distance learners in Internet based courses. Distance Education, 23(2), 183-195.


