

Staff development challenges in the adoption of e-teaching and learning in higher education

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Accepted 18 October, 2016

ABSTRACT

In the last few decades teaching strategies and delivery methodologies have been challenged tremendously by rapidly changing social needs and perpetually changing global realities transformed by among others innovative technologies. However, little research has been done to identify the feelings and experiences by lecturers during the change towards online teaching and learning. The aim of this paper is to document the challenges of lecturers at the University of South Africa (UNISA) during the process of change towards online teaching and learning. Through a pilot case study within the framework of UNISA, the experiences, in terms of staff development, of four lecturers were analytically and qualitatively documented through face to face interviews. This study was of an exploratory nature and used an inductive qualitative approach to gain insight into why lecturers continue to be negative and struggle towards technology integration practices. Results brought about new questions and insights towards understanding the broader role of UNISA in moving lecturers towards online teaching and learning. It revealed the first step to dealing constructively with the challenges of lecturers' attitudes and staff development on the change horizon. The practical implications of this paper provide university support staff and university management with suggestions for technology acquisition and staff development for lecturers in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Higher education, lecturers, open and distance learning institution, online technology, online teaching and learning, staff development, educational technology, e-learning, transition, open distance learning.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades curriculum development has been challenged tremendously by rapidly changing social needs and perpetually changing global realities transformed by among others e-teaching and innovative technologies. Opportunities for training in educational technology for lecturers in higher education in open distance learning institutions are keys to a collaborative process towards e-teaching (Hambrock, 2010). The institution has not solved significant institutional challenges that are faced by lecturers in the move towards the implementation of e-learning. For example staff development has not particularly focused on lecturers and no attention has been given to their challenges as lecturers. Organizational guidance and support of lecturers is important for the successful integration of technology in higher education institutions

(HEIs) (Grove et al., 2004). However, little research has been done to identify the feelings and experiences by lecturers during the change towards online teaching and learning in HEIs.

HEIs are major players in every economy as they are responsible for educating and developing the next generation of decision makers in the industry and government and all other areas of the economy. Since open and distance learning (ODL) was introduced as the chief goal of the academic identity and focus of UNISA in 2007, it became necessary to accept online teaching as part of the institutional operational plan (IOP) (Baijnath, 2014). However, the expectation that the university engage in online teaching does not in itself determine or translate into how the university can allow the adoption of the initiative, and adaptation of teaching and learning

environments and materials by lecturers.

The nature and praxis of online teaching and learning has brought with it more challenges and complex issues for lecturers in HEIs. Learning to know is not just about acquiring a specific body of knowledge, but an approach, an attitude to knowledge and the process of generating it (Hooper and Hokanson, 2004). The University of South Africa has been concerned with empowering the lecturers to use whatever technologies are available to improve the quality of their teaching which results in the improvement of the quality of the students' learning. Since the university acutely influences learner outcomes and teaching practices reflecting on the way universities as organizations influences educators' learning and practices is important (Robinson and Carrington, 2002:210).

The advantages that higher education institutions can gain in the use of educational technology are many and there are many reasons for employing educational technology in the process of developing the scholarship of teaching (Nicholas and Thomas, 2000). However, the demand for compliant university lecturers willing to adopt new technologies for teaching does not necessarily result in obedience. Therefore, reflections upon the move towards new online technology must proceed with profound modesty and caution.

The focus of this paper is therefore to explore the staff development challenges that lecturers experience in implementing online technology for teaching and learning in higher education institutions. The study was a pilot study using a small group interview design to test the interview questions and research methodology. Based on the results the interview questions and methodology would need to be refined. It will then be necessary to carry out the study through the whole university in order to improve all the aspects that derail the complete success and appreciation of the staff development program towards e-teaching and learning.

Background and context

The United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) principles address specific concerns regarding the need for more responsible and sustainable business and corporate practices; these include issues as human rights, labour standards, environmental concerns and anti-corruption. The university has focused on applying the UNGC principles to the way that the university treats its students and teaching. However, there have been challenges regarding how UNISA has equally applied these principles and in the manner in which it deals with staff development especially for lecturers. One of the main constraints of an institution committed to quality teaching lies in the reluctance of university staff, especially lecturers, to change programme delivery and their ways of teaching. For the lecturers to organize their activities

responsibly and effectively, a proper understanding of the context in which they are working in is important (Anderson, 2006).

At UNISA the drive for online teaching and learning was moved from simply "raising awareness" to using a more integrated environment with the available tools. An online teaching and learning strategy and policy provided direction and scope for the university, in terms of online support to academics and capacity building among all members of staff and served as a plan of action. This development has issued the "convergence" hypothesis, suggesting that the use of ICT will open opportunities for distance education to become more like on-campus-teaching, and that on-campus teaching will adopt methods and technology formerly used solely by distance educators (Vicheanpanya, 2014). This expanded role adds considerable complexity and many new challenges for the business-as-usual for lecturers in higher education institutions. An aligned response to the needs concerning online teaching and learning was promoted and focused on various demands from the university women community. However, the initiatives implemented by UNISA towards teaching online have had many challenges especially for lecturers.

A proactive intervention was put in place to empower all academics to take full advantage of online pedagogical principles in their teaching and learning. First and foremost the learner management system, myUNISA, was introduced at the University of South Africa. A basic A-Z tool training was phased in. Other myUnisa support initiatives like myUnisa Forums, E-learning encounters, virtual learning environments (VLE), podcast training and the myUnisa Coffee Breaks were put in place (The Unisa 2015 Strategic Plan). In order to uphold the standards of online teaching, the UNISA Centre for Professional development was engaged to design and develop a dedicated staff development programme to train academics as well as teaching assistants to effectively facilitate learning in an online environment. From my own personal observation I assumed that by not attending online training courses in their numbers, lecturers registered their dissatisfaction with the online initiatives. However, research needs to be done to prove this assumption. Staff development activities that are extremely mandated or coerced by a power hierarchy, although well intentioned, are doomed for failure (Penlington, 2008). Therefore, these and other initiatives failed to accurately address what it is that lecturers need during staff development. The manner in which these initiatives were brought about did not manage to achieve one of the most important original objectives, which was to stimulate the lecturers' buy-in (Baijnath, 2014).

Role models beyond the initiatives mentioned above were not easily found as more online efforts by colleagues created resentment from fellow colleagues. Lecturers were secretive with their creative trial and error

efforts as they were not acknowledged by the institution if they went public with their efforts. The power of teacher (lecturer) co-learning emerges very strongly from some studies reviewed (Avalos, 2011; Moon et al., 2014). It starts with informal exchanges in cultures that facilitate the process, continues in networking and interchanges among the university community and situations, and is then strengthened in formalised experiences such as courses and workshops to support collaboration. From the above argument it seems like lecturers like to learn from each other and without this the new online developments become an uninteresting and solitary endeavour. Therefore, it is important for lecturers to co-learn through talk, to co-learning through observation and feedback from their peers (Moon et al., 2014). It is against this background that this paper seeks to identify the Staff development challenges that lecturers experience in the adoption of e-teaching and learning in an ODL higher education institution in order to improve on staff development initiatives.

Change processes that enable a smooth transition towards change are encouraged since they define and shape lecturers thinking. The higher education institution has to invent flexible mechanisms that allow lecturers to adhere gradually to an institution-wide obligation. Understanding the challenges that lecturers will face during this change is the first step to dealing constructively with the challenges that will inevitably loom on the horizon. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to document the feelings and experiences of lecturers at an open and distance learning institution, during the process of change towards online teaching and learning. This will have great implications towards lecturers' e-teaching staff development in an open distance learning institution. The paper further provides practical recommendations to university support staff and university management with suggestions for successful staff development initiatives.

Problem statement

Following from the background discussion it is now possible to provide the problem statement for this study: Lecturers are unwilling or offer resistance to the adoption of e-teaching and learning initiatives. Utilising educational technology to support online teaching and learning is avoided by the lecturers even when the ODL institutional mandate expects it from them. They seem to be fearful of the involvement of anything that has to do with e-learning.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study presented the major assumptions associated with phenomenographic qualitative research approach. Phenomenography is explained as a qualitative, non-dualistic

research approach that identifies and retains the discourse of research participants and focused on people's understanding (Barnard et al., 2015). This study needed to gain insight into why lecturers continue to be negative and offer resistance towards the integration of online technology in their teaching practices. Through a case study conducted at UNISA, the experiences in terms of staff development of four lecturers were analytically and qualitatively documented through face to face interviews. A pilot study using a small-group interview design was used. A small group of four lecturers were systematically selected considering four variables namely race, faculty, gender and lecturing experience. Two of the four lecturers were selected from the Mathematics Department of the College of Science and Technology and two from the English Department of the College of Human Sciences. To ensure a balanced participant selection from each department, the following selections were made from each department: one male and one female, one black and one white participant, one more experienced and older, and one inexperienced and younger. This systematic selection was aimed at ensuring a balanced view from lecturers that were experienced older lecturers and younger less experienced lecturers. The assumption was that the younger lecturers that were new to the profession of lecturing would be more receptive to the use of educational technology. Regardless of the qualifications and titles within the lecturing fraternity it appeared that the fear of e-teaching and learning through education technologies was a common phenomenon. For example one of the young lecturers who was against technology, studied and has previously been lecturing at a university in Southern Africa. She had never used technology through all her qualifications that went up to a PhD in Mathematics. However, she was still hesitant to embark on e-teaching and learning.

Ethical considerations

Permission was sought from the selected lecturers through a personal phone call. Dates were set and the interviews were carried out in the comfort of their offices. The four selected lecturers gave permission to be interviewed and, after confirming confidentiality, opened up to their personal views about their transition towards e-teaching and learning. The duration of each interview was about three hours. In some cases the information provided by the lecturers went outside of the expected parameters. The interviews were transcribed from the audio tapes. Both researchers carried out the interviews and analyzed the data separately.

Carefully designed open-ended questions were prepared to seek the opinion of the four lecturers on the staff development programs that are offered at UNISA to enable a smooth transition towards e-teaching and learning. An in-depth interview was then conducted with the lecturers. The questions were administered to the participants at a convenient time that they were available. Qualitative data was therefore gathered through video-recorded and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the four university lecturers. The main questions used were:

1. How have you welcomed and embraced online teaching as a lecturer?
2. How have you received the staff development offered at UNISA for improving the process towards online?
3. Has staff development for online teaching been relevant to you as a lecturer?
4. How would you introduce online technology to the university if you were the vice-chancellor or the staff development coordinator of online teaching?

Statistical analysis

The results of the study were presented as raw data since the

methodology used required only a small sample that would provide rich data. Analysis of data in this phenomenographically collected data was undertaken through comparison of data obtained from a group of participants in an attempt to describe the experience of the phenomenon in terms of the essential meaning of the qualitative variations (Entwistle, 1997). There is no single procedure specified in phenomenography since the starting point is always the data and involves differentiation and organization of parts in an interpretive analytic process (Svensson, 1984, 1997).

RESULTS

The research provided a detailed description of the components of the interviews in relation to acceptance towards online teaching and learning in higher education institutions. Included in the results are documentations of each lecturer's experiences and their challenges during the process towards on-line teaching and learning.

Participant one:

RESEARCHER

How have you welcomed and embraced online teaching?

LECTURER 1

I am really annoyed with the way the university introduced online technology at this University. They took us as stupid unthinking people. They tried to prove to us that they were the only ones who can think and that we do not have brains.

RESEARCHER

Why do you think so?

LECTURER 1

How can someone just come and tell us that we are going on line, without even finding out whether we wanted it or not.

RESEARCHER

Who is this someone?

LECTURER 1

I am even ashamed to say who it was as in most cases the information came through the grape vine. It was like truths, like gossip whatever it was. At my age it was annoying. I am not a young person.

RESEARCHER

What was the real problem?

LECTURER 1

During the training that we get from support staff, I simply could not tell what the purpose of the workshops was. Even the direction to where we were going was not clear. The learning that I needed was to link online teaching with my subject as far as assessment was concerned. I was never consulted so I just either looked at them wasting their and my time. Sometimes I never went for the workshops, preferring to work in my office.

RESEARCHER

Yaa this seems to be a real problem.

LECTURER 1

At UNISA no one is clear with the terms that we use. Tell me what is the difference between online and fully online? What is the difference among the so called Group A, B, C, D talked about by the VLE team? Look, these are just a few of the problem. So how are you expected to solve what you do not understand? I do not understand these things that they are bringing to us.

RESEARCHER

So what are you going to do seeing that UNISA forces you to go the online teaching way?

LECTURER 1

UNISA must wait until they are clear with the process before they can impose it on us. Else there will be more problems than solutions. Let me tell you. My fellow lecturers in my department are very frustrated. The dean now ignores us.

RESEARCHER

So how would you plan to introduce it well to the other lecturers if you were the leader of the teaching online project?

LECTURER 1

(First expressing doubt on how to respond to this question.)

I think I will find advice on how I can teach cumulative frequency online from some of my colleagues if that will help me. (Talking to himself in frustration) I think this will work well. But I can't read things seriously from the computer. I wonder how the students can work seriously from a computer.

RESEARCHER

You have not answered my question. How would you

plan to introduce it well to the other lecturers if you were the leader of the teaching online project?

LECTURER 1

Well I would let the lecturers do what they have been used to while planning for their lessons and then slowly get them into the ideas about online teaching.

RESEARCHER

How?

LECTURER 1

Lecturers must prepare their lectures as normal and then decide how they want to use it online. I am not clear about who will advise on online technology support for teaching. I personally do not know what the support technologies are or what they entail. For example I know what I will do when preparing for my lesson. I have been teaching for the past twenty five years. At least the lecturers will use their experience to decide about how to teach online.

RESEARCHER

And then how will you go about it?

LECTURER 1

I can show the process. I need somewhere to plan exactly how I will carry out the teaching process. Then only can I decide what online technology to use. Be it a podcast, video conferencing or a satellite broadcast, a tablet etc. So I do not like it when you tell me what I must do and what I must use in my online teaching. Why decide for me?

RESEARCHER

That is interesting.

LECTURER 1

On a more serious note, it is through serious reflection about the process of e-teaching and learning where one can harvest the best way of dealing with e-teaching and learning. Courageous actions towards actually practicing e-teaching and learning can start to move the process towards e-teaching and learning faster. The few who are willing to do these courageous moves towards practicing e-teaching and learning in real life, will experience real e-teaching transformation in their lives.

Participant two:

RESEARCHER

How have you welcomed and embraced online teaching?

LECTURER 2

I think this is one of the endeavours that are very important to this institution. I appreciate what the leaders in this institution have done with regards to going towards online teaching and learning. However there are a few flies that spoil the broth.

RESEARCHER

What are those?

LECTURER 2

UNISA sometimes forgets that this institution is an open distance learning institution. This place is lonely. I was so lonely that when I first came here I almost went into depression. I was welcomed by the head of department and that was it. I never saw him again. I did not know what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and more so why I was doing it. This is the same with what is happening with the process towards online technology.

RESEARCHER

What do you mean by loneliness and to be frustrated with loneliness in this situation?

LECTURER 2

I was literally alone in a new environment called ODL. First of all I did not know what ODL was and then I did not know how to manage ODL situations better. I still don't understand the relationship between ODL and e-learning.

RESEARCHER

What do you think causes loneliness in this institution?

LECTURER 2

The first thing is that messages are all conveyed through e-mails or e-news. Some of it I get, some of it I do not get and some of it gets not read in the process. No human being reminds you. If I get the information, I always struggle to understand it as the real message is hidden somewhere inside. This I tell you is in the majority of cases.

RESEARCHER

What was most frustrating?

LECTURER 2

The major problem is I am always alone. Even among lecturers in the other offices you are in the majority of cases alone. Those lecturers who are available are not willing to share their information with you. It is like they are afraid of being quoted or that they do not want you to know their information. They guard their knowledge as if it is going to die. As a result with this move towards online you cut a lonely journey.

RESEARCHER

Clarify on this lonely journey?

LECTURER 2

You are never sure about the situation and terms you are dealing with. There are no role models to look up to. There is never a chance to sit down with your colleagues to seriously discuss issues. As a result the institution UNISA gets away with a lot of unworkable things, a lot of impossible and sometimes laughable things that do not help the process towards online teaching.

RESEARCHER

How have you received the staff development offered at UNISA for improving the process towards online?

LECTURER 2

They try very hard but they are also doing things on their own. No consultations. The same confusion results from their well-intentioned efforts.

RESEARCHER

Are you then saying that you gain nothing from the staff development?

LECTURER 2

I feel that what I get from staff development must first be reflected and discussed amongst us lecturers and my other colleagues. This never happens and therefore there is this uncertainty about what is being offered and what is going on. There is some lack of trust between us and the trainers. In addition the training goes on for only five hours. Then you just forget about what you learnt there. There is simply no use for this exercise.

RESEARCHER

What makes you not remember what you learn during

staff development?

LECTURER 2

Practice makes perfect. But then where and how do you practice what you have learnt? Alone? Haa it doesn't work. You need to practice in communities of practice or with your colleagues and still get support from the trainers. One needs to reflect about whether what he is doing is worthwhile and not wasting their time. You can't share your attempts with other colleagues if you are not so sure about what you are doing. So working in teams does not happen so well. We will see.

RESEARCHER

What is most frustrating with staff development?

LECTURER 2

They train you, and then they do not check on how you are doing. They literary dumb you. I would need support after the workshops in case I get stuck through the process. External support people do exactly the same if not worse. They train and disappear. When you also attempt something on your own, I feel neglected and not recognised.

RESEARCHER

Why do you feel like this? What is the feeling? Explain to me.

LECTURER 2

Anything that you do in this institution is not appreciated. Actually if your colleagues know that you are working hard you actually get into trouble. They hurt you and isolate you. Actually one is scared of being known to be working hard towards e-learning.

RESEARCHER

So how would you plan to introduce it well to the other lecturers if you were the leader of the "teaching online project"?

LECTURER 2

The first thing that I would do is to sit down with the whole department/college/school in order to unpack the problem. I will ask everyone to go and do some research and come back with feedback. It is only after this, that we will go for the learner management system.

RESEARCHER

How do you see our learner management system as the

solution to our problems?

LECTURER 2

I have seen this learner management system. I however need someone to sit down with me and suggest where I can use what I have here. Don't tell me I must go for useless workshops and then expect me to come up with some miracle work. Those workshops are useless. I doubt whether those who offer them know what they are doing.

RESEARCHER

So you feel that the presenters do not know their work. Who would you then prefer to train you?

LECTURER 2

The presenters are not able to link what they teach with our subject pedagogical issues. Look at the way I planned for my lesson. This is what I need to be used to unpack my lessons online. But what happens? They just train from the air. It's tough.

RESEARCHER

"The plan of the lesson was good. It was an excellent job. Everything of what they deemed their pedagogical issues was there." What then are you going to do since the university is forcing you to teach on-line?

LECTURER 2

A consultative work is better. We also need the instructional designers to be trained well. I have experience with what one lecturer did. He planned his lesson very well.

RESEARCHER

How did you get to know that it can work?

LECTURER 2

I am proud to say that there is a guy who worked with an instructional designer colleague. The instructional designer did not know any mathematics yet he planned for the online teaching well. The lecturer saw the benefit of relevant team work. This could be the solution for excellent teaching online teaching.

Comment

After this the university sends somebody to work with him and help him with online teaching. An excellent online

lesson was produced. The lecturer was so proud of himself that he became protective of that particular lesson. He didn't want the other lecturers to see it in case they would copy his work.

Participant three:

RESEARCHER

How have you welcomed and embraced online teaching?

LECTURER 3

I feel sad about this whole process. We are being asked by UNISA to jump across a wide dam. Most of us won't reach the end. We will drown. What they are doing is like taking a fish out of water and expect it to swim.

RESEACHER

What do you mean?

LECTURER 3

Look at it this way. A long time ago people recognised individuals with their own talents. People were good in different areas like English, mathematics, geography etc. Very few were geniuses and good in everything. We respected each other with these different talents. Now why is it that all of a sudden we must all be geniuses in e-teaching or online teaching whatever you call it. I am very slow as far as online technology is concerned. I even struggle with my cell phone and I-pad. So why this fuss?

RESEARCHER

Are you not getting help with the staff development being offered?

LECTURER 3

To be honest with you staff development at UNISA though good it misses a point. For example their offerings are too general. I have never related them to my subject English. Why does someone who does not know my subject advise me on how to teach it online. Can she advise me even if it is not online?

RESEARCHER

Do you think UNISA can get the type of person that you want to help you?

LECTURER 3

It is not my problem. UNISA should have done that

homework before it started this process. Students are still passing without this online business of yours. So what is the big deal?

RESEARCHER

So since online technology is the in-thing, what do you suggest that we do to make it easier for all lecturers to buy in the process of online teaching?

LECTURER 3

Let me plan my lessons and do what I am used to. The university must send me the person talented in technology to help me decide and carry out the teaching online process. He or she must tell me what to use and where to use it best. He must tell me how to use it properly. For example I struggled to mark online using j-router. I had to call a secretary in our department to come and help me. She took me step by step and at the end I managed to mark 50 scripts. This was after I had attended useless j-router workshops about 10 times.

RESEARCHER

So is this how you want to be taken through to online teaching?

LECTURER 3

Yes. The university must do interviews like the one you are carrying out to all of us so that we tell them whatever we want. The people up the university ranks do not understand our problems and they are not interested in our problems. But then it will take us a long time to grasp the idea of e-teaching. By that time perhaps there will be air-teaching, something new and then I will be in trouble again. I feel belittled by these guys. Maybe it is a nice way to force us to leave the institution.

Participant four:

RESEARCHER

How have you welcomed and embraced online teaching?

LECTURER 4

I have worked with many well-intentioned people who are doing everything for e-teaching and learning. However, they are scared of being open or to really acknowledge their feelings. They tend to read and refer to another self help book. In fact I am part to many of these negative unparticipatory behaviors.

To be honest with you, I am not sure whether I welcomed or embraced online teaching. I did what I did because I was forced by UNISA and its management.

RESEARCHER

Who is this UNISA and its management?

LECTURER 4

Well for me it is the people up there who make those decisions without consulting us. I love anything online because you learn new interesting things. This endeavour was particularly not interesting to me because I did not know exactly what they wanted from me.

RESEARCHER

What was most frustrating?

LECTURER 4

MyUNISA (MyUNISA is the name given to the learner management system at UNISA) has been most frustrating for me? It seems the support staff never checked to find out if MyUNISA is working all the time. When I want to practice on myUNISA, it is not working. When I want to send information to the students it is not working. It's like I have to time the times when the system is working in order to work on myUNISA. However you can't always be tracking when myUNISA is working and putting deadlines for assignments or tests or discussion forums become a laughable exercise.

RESEARCHER

So you think the support staff is the ones not looking after myUNISA?

LECTURER 4

UNISA support staff does the staff development for us. Why do they not make sure it is working?

RESEARCHER

Don't you think that perhaps it is ICT that is the problem?

LECTURER 4

Well I don't know, and I think that management and support staff must find that out. It is not my role. Whoever does staff development must see that things are in order. The other day in the A-Z workshop the server was said to be down and we had to go with no training. Time and energy wasted. I promised myself never to go to staff developments again.

RESEARCHER

But has staff development for online teaching been relevant to you?

LECTURER 4

Staff developers at UNISA sometimes do not take time to prepare what they want to deliver to us. It seems they are also not well trained to be able to realise our needs. Relevant people must be employed by the university before things get to a head. How can a person who never learnt how to use computers help you on a computer? Worse still how can such a person be creative on a learner management system which uses a computer and be creative in their endeavours. Tell me.

RESEARCHER

I suppose you are very right. I agree totally with you.

LECTURER 4

This could have been a nice move towards teaching online, but most lecturers are frustrated. There are so many changes as to what is required so often. Ah I just do not know where we are going.

RESEARCHER

So how would you plan to introduce it well to the other lecturers if you were the leader of the teaching online project?

LECTURER 4

My first plan of action would be to bring in experienced external people with the proper knowledge to train everyone in the institution on online issues.

RESEARCHER

How?

LECTURER 4

External people must either be employed or brought into the institution to train different aspects for going with the online project for teaching and learning.

RESEARCHER

So what are these different aspects?

LECTURER 4

For example we need to know how to upload file and staff on the computer. We need to know how to hyperlink, organize data. As I talk to you I have so much disorganized data that I do not know what to do with it. That is a problem I am sure most of us have. Yet training comes with writing, tools and uploading. We need to go back.

RESEARCHER

Ok. So you need basic training before you do the training that is offered by support departments?

LECTURER 4

For example during staff development they shout about choosing the right support technology for your module or lesson. I personally do not know the different types of support technologies. Yes I have done podcasts, but is that the only support technology that I can use. We need help with the social media that is relevant to different subjects.

RESEARCHER

How will you then move in the meantime?

LECTURER 4

These problems can be figured out with time. So without much help from the institution lecturers will figure the solutions out. However it will take as long as what we have now will no longer be relevant and wanted. Maybe then we will have to start the whole process again. What I am trying to say here is the processes towards online must be dealt with relevantly but with speed. A terrific speed indeed. Then we will all win.

DISCUSSION**Pedagogical challenges**

Lecturers expressed that staff development lacked depth and was not based on needs, but rather on the assumptions of the administration. An example of training which provided the mechanics of using the MyUnisa (Sakai-based learner management system) tools without being content specific. While the lecturers can be comfortable with the tools, they have no idea about how to use them in their specific subject-areas. Lecturers expressed their need to observe colleagues who had used educational technologies successfully in their teaching. According to Bandura (2001), observation of modelled behaviour is how most behaviour is learned. Providing opportunities for observing such behaviour can give lecturers more examples of successful experiences with technology.

The mathematics lecturers complained about staff development leaders who do not envision the need for a combination of asynchronously and synchronous models for particularly the science subjects. All the lecturers complained about isolation online before, during and after staff development for online teaching. In cases where they tried to team up with other lecturers, some of the

colleagues dropped out of the program, sought help elsewhere. Lack of acknowledgement of the lecturers' pedagogical content knowledge skills led to conflict of interest and the break of trust between the two parties. In his studies Wall (2012) highlighted participant isolation online and the pedagogical soundness of e-learning as areas that led to challenges within e-teaching and learning staff development programs. The removal of these constraints within staff development programs to access technology reinforces the flexibility and independence of learning in an online environment (Wall, 2012).

Lecturers expressed that staff development for online lacked intellectual depth, and were not based on their needs as lecturers but rather on the assumptions of the trainers, instructional designers and management. They expressed that staff development for online teaching and learning at UNISA did not include the theoretical underpinnings of subjects' content and their translation into teaching by women lecturers.

Institutional challenges

One of the lecturers complained that the push by the university, for government subsidy, created ill-prepared staff development programs. The universities need to prove that they are doing something to influence the lecturers to adopt online teaching without much interest in the quality of those programs or even the human and adult touch to the programs. The propensity to generate substantial revenue to the universities gives rise to less concern to the quality of among others staff development programs (Muhammad et al., 2004; RocSearch, 2003). The results of their research showed that the lecturers were seemingly overloaded with work. Lecturers complained of lacking simple computer skills and staff development seem to take that into consideration. Some acknowledged that they had resorted to hiring external help at their cost in order to minimize the stress. The reluctance by lecturers to use educational technology for teaching process has been widely documented. The fact that it is stressful, challengeable and technical tools are not efficient and effective enough in higher education institutions is a challenge (Balash, 2011; Cuban, 2001). It was interesting to note that lecturers also needed to have their e-teaching and learning efforts rewarded in any way possible. Because this was not being implemented most lecturers lost interest. "They are wasting my time. I don't gain anything from it". A lecturer comment s during the interview. On further questioning, the lecturer said if they can give us some money incentives or possibly points or promotion.

Technological challenges

Lecturers in this study expressed their discontent with not being included in the original decision-making about staff

development. Outcomes that lecturers were expecting from the development were half achieved or not achieved as expected. Lecturers need to be included in technology decisions for the chance of integration to be better accepted (Sandholtz and Reilly, 2004). One way of including lecturers in decision making is a formal needs assessment that would help identify and evaluate the needs of lecturers. Discussions with lecturers together with technicians and administrators were never provided for. Lecturers need to be included in technology integration decisions for the implementation of e-learning to be successful (Sandholtz and Reilly, 2004). The availability of technicians to provide logistical support after the training to lecturers was another challenge.

During the interviews, the lecturers complained that the present process towards e-teaching interferes with the daily routine of teaching and discourages rather than encourages lecturer participation. The lecturers have expressed incompetence in using simple online platforms and cannot easily move forward with the more complex online issues.

The results also showed that the environment failed to link the new knowledge to lecturers' previously constructed knowledge and/or experience. A clear sense of purpose and direction that was informed by the institutional policies and translating into staff development online initiatives was one of the challenges experienced. Practical ideas that could be effectively and efficiently used to enhance the desired learning outcomes during staff development were not clear. Evaluation and reflection after the workshops appeared not to be taken seriously.

The challenges highlighted above in the transition towards online teaching and learning if upheld, have important implications on how staff development of lecturers in ODL higher education institutions should be organised.

Attitudinal challenges

Already teaching and learning without online technology is complex and not linear like in other professions. Online instruction requires a different pedagogy and unique set of skills quite distinct from those needed in other settings (Fetherston, 2001; White and Low, 2013). Therefore lecturers fear the reality that they will face new challenges of teaching in an unfamiliar terrain, causing them to be initially skeptical and resistant at the inception of the e-teaching and learning.

The interviews confirmed the general public belief that e-learning is ineffective and that the quality of instruction with e-teaching and learning is not different from what they were already doing. Secondly, there seems to be friction due to a conflict of positions and qualifications. For example, lecturers did not think that someone with a certificate or a diploma cannot teach them something as serious and as important as e-teaching and learning.

Unfortunately some of the interviewed lecturers identified the staff development trainers who are struggling and it further derailed their confidence.

Technical challenges

Poor internet connectivity constitutes a threat to the smooth operation of online activities. The occasional erratic functionality of myUNISA often creates dysfunction for the users who are the lecturers. Lecturers' accessibility is a major threat to the motivation towards e-teaching and learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results indicate that as much as Unisa provides a variety of staff development programs to the lecturers that are geared towards e-teaching and learning, there are complex issues associated with this process. Staff development for e-learning is supposed to facilitate and open avenues for effective e-teaching and learning and therefore a lot has to be learned from the way lecturers view the staff development program. This will open the possibility for improving all aspects of the staff development program. "Attitude to change across the organization is very divergent, and the process of adaptation is often difficult" (Anderson, 2006; Muirhead, 2004; Levy, 2003; Woodall, 2007). Judging from the results, this study is of the opinion that these challenges are surmountable.

The results provided a detailed description of the components of the interviews carried out with lecturers in relation to documentations of each lecturer's academic experiences during the process towards e-teaching and learning. The conclusion drawn from the findings showed that since management and support staff in open distance learning environments are ultimately responsible for implementing technology in their universities, their involvement in the successful integration of technology is essential. The type of training, management and support staff receive, influences the attitude of women lecturers and the level of integration of technology in the university curricula. Lecturers' development needs have been identified through the results from this research. In addition, conversations about the adoption and adaptation of e-learning staff development had started to take place (Baijnath, 2014). Development programs and initiatives that are available internally and externally have as a result been communicated to higher management (The Unisa 2015-2030 university operational plan).

Lecturers are teaching during times when persevering with online teaching may be terrifying seemingly unproductive, frustrating or boring. Motivation is extremely important and those who seek to provide staff development need to know how to encourage lecturers to find a compelling reason to undertake the tasks that

promote e-teaching and learning. There is need to encourage lecturers to be little classroom researchers, who are able to recognize the broader social context in which individual thinking and learning develops. Motivating lecturers is one thing, but keeping them motivated is another. Lecturers need to be recognised when they succeed, and be allowed to know that failure is part of the whole system. The aim should be to encourage lecturers to venture into the unknown and succeed through trial and error. One should be able to articulate the kinds of experiences that stimulate lecturers to reflect on their practice and begin to make changes in their teaching (Vicheanpanya, 2014).

Lecturers must also be provided with the opportunities to interact and share ideas. Hambrock (2010) identified lecturer isolation as one issue that can inhibit educational change. The professional development model used should create a learning community cohort which may have decreased feelings of isolation as lecturers change their practice and beliefs. Providing opportunities for focused discourse among the lecturers on new instructional strategies on using technology and the challenges lecturers were facing implementing new ideas may also contribute to a decrease in the feeling of isolation.

The lecturer holds the key to successful integration of online technology into their teaching because they control its use and create opportunities for students to use the technology for their learning. Therefore, online technology training is critical. Without training, without the opportunities to learn to use the equipment for themselves, lecturers may have difficulty being motivated or comfortable using the online technology in their teaching environment. There must be continuous support for lecturers in the process of change. Change is seldom easy, but lecturers who receive more than just once-off appropriate technology training workshops, will appreciate development more. For such lecturers, change is neither a headache nor a chore, but a natural and welcome evolution. For the online teaching's development continuation and expansion lecturers must come to use the new practices of e-teaching almost out of habit and be provided with technical feedback which guide them into adapting the new practice (Anderson, 2005). Lecturers need support critically while implementing change towards online teaching or while they are putting new practices to their unique teaching condition. They need ongoing guidance and direction to make whatever adaptation may be necessary and at the same time maintain development fidelity.

Since management and support staff in open distance learning environments are ultimately responsible for implementing technology in their universities, their involvement in the successful integration of technology is essential. Findings from Oyeleke (2012) indicated that technology training tends to be most successful when lecturers and administrators plan together. When either

group tried the workshop without support and input from the other, events often did not go smoothly. In addition the amount of training and the type of training management and support staff receive influences the attitude and level of integration of technology in the university curricula. Therefore, opportunities for training in educational technology for higher education management and support staff are keys to a collaborative process towards e-teaching.

An organization which is prepared for learning practices and problem solutions based on a will to scrutinize and improve the organizational processes, develops the capacity to learn from other organization's experiences, who are willing to experiment. Lastly women lecturers need to be trained in all aspects that refer to online technology. Providing bits and pieces of formal support for women is not valuable. Stand-alone training without follow-up support, such as additional training, collegial discussions and technical resources, provides no positive long-term results (Bauer et al., 2002). Most countries now require lecturers to be technically competent to qualify for a teaching certificate (Avalos, 2011).

This was a pilot study focused only on only a pilot group of four lecturers at Unisa in order to test the interview questions and research methodology. Results from this pilot study will now have to be used to refine the interview questions and methodology, and then it will be necessary for a broader study to be undertaken, which will focus on a more representative sample including both lecturers and support staff responsible for the training.

Conclusion

The lack of well-planned staff development programmes that motivate lecturers towards the e-teaching process tend to discourage rather than encourage lecturer participation. It can therefore be expected with some confidence that, at least a part of the findings, can be generalized to other situations that wish to encourage lecturers towards e-learning. The findings will make university management aware of the attitudes of lecturers in their movement towards e-teaching and learning, and the factors that are associated with such attitudes. This will in turn assist management in developing management policies, and taking appropriate action to address the concerns of lecturers during staff development. It must however be realised that the challenges that abound going towards online teaching for, do not outweigh the positive efforts put into staff development, and it is therefore worthwhile to keep on trying better ways of implementing staff development.

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Citation: Makina, A., and Madiope, M. (2016). Staff development challenges in the adoption of e-teaching and learning in higher education. *African Educational Research Journal*, 4(4): xx-xx.
