Faculty Philosophical Position Toward Distance Education: Competency, Value, and educational Technology Support

A Critique

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As information technology has developed, the desire of the learner to gain education on their own in their own time frame has increased. Institutions of high education have sought to tap into the demand for information and courses delivered at a distance. This study provides valuable insight into the attitude of the faculty in the College of Agriculture at Texas A&M regarding distance education. The study also points out some of the challenges that Colleges may face in moving a faculty to become involved in distance education.

An excellent connection is made between the theoretical frame and recommendations and conclusions of the study. The purpose of the study and objectives were clearly defined. On first reading, I had difficulties in sorting out the difference between the different objectives. Later in the paper the authors were very helpful in explaining and illustrating what they set out to accomplish with each objective.

The authors should be commended for their efforts and procedures used in this study. By ensuring that the population was directly involved in teaching, and by doing numerous follow-ups we can feel confident about their results. They controlled for non-response error to ensure that the study could be generalized to the target population. However, in their conclusion, they generalize to educators, rather than the target population of the faculty in the College of Agriculture at Texas A&M.

The findings are clearly reported and easy to follow. Any confusion about what the objectives were is clarified in the narrative. The recommendations are supported by their findings and the theoretical framework that were established for the study.

Some questions for discussion are:

1. Do we understand how students learn under distance education? Are our assumptions about learning the same for distance as face to face instruction?

2. In order to change beliefs and values about distance education, would it be appropriate to teach a faculty about distance education strategies by using the distance delivery instructional process? If so, how would you structure the educational experience?

The researchers are to be commended for conducting and reporting on a timely topic that affects our profession.