

Lecturers' experiences and perceptions of the transition from traditional taught courses to an online (internet) environment utilising technology enhanced learning

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Through a pilot study conducted at one university in the United Kingdom (UK), questions to determine demography, preferred method of face to face teaching, organisational culture, work values and individual learning style of the lecturer were tested in relation to the influence they had on their engagement with Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL). 15 participants were sampled from a population of 35, all were lecturers within a Faculty of Nursing.

Whilst the main research study intends to identify factors impacting on lecturers' engagement with TEL within all UK universities, the purpose of the pilot study was to measure the effectiveness of the data collection tool. A correlational cross-sectional study of descriptive design was used to survey participants through an online data collection tool consisting of predominately Likert type questions. The survey instrument was developed from a theoretical framework drawn from previously validated research. Participants were invited to complete the survey enabling testing for reliability and validity.

The reliability of the independent variables were examined using Cronbachs Alpha using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 20 (SPSS). Cronbachs Alpha was 0.837 overall, indicating a high level of internal consistency for the Likert scale questions. Individual factors all resulted in acceptable results; therefore no questions will require removal. An acceptable level of consistency between responses is indicated by a result greater than 0.5 (Sapsford, 2007). Qualitative findings (validity testing) highlighted confusion relating to whether some questions in the Learning Styles section were considering the lecturer's teaching experience, or their experience as a learner. Minor stem and scale typographical errors were noted on some Likert scale questions. A fuller explanation was added to the main study questionnaire relating to the lecturers' learning style being the imperative factor, typographical errors were corrected.

One early finding requiring validation within the main study, indicates that 70% of lecturers have been in post for 15 years or more; the majority are engaged with TEL but require extensive support. This result could provide guidance for staff support and provide employers with a structured approach to future staff development programmes. A strong 'Global' learning style is indicated from those lecturers who are fully engaged with TEL requiring either no or minimal support. Global learners according to Felder & Soloman

(1993) tend to learn in large jumps, absorbing material almost randomly without seeing connections, and then suddenly "getting it", they are able to solve complex problems quickly or put things together in novel ways. If validated in the main study, this same factor, if isolated, could be used to determine future selection of academics (Higher Education Funding Council for England [HEFCE] 2011).

References:

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