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E-tutors’ teaching readiness in distance learning companion project in Taiwan

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Abstract

E-tutors play an important role in after-school distance learning project. This study focused on developing the readiness instrument for evaluation of the e-tutors, and hoped to assist the mentor to understand the teaching e-tutors well. Teaching readiness index scale was used as research instruments. Besides, qualitative data was also collected for analysis in the study. Distance Learning companion project started from October 22, 2013 to January 9, 2014. Forty four e-tutors participated for one hour and a half a course, twice per week. The results indicated that at the beginning of distance learning companion project, forty-two e-tutors showed high job readiness and high psychological readiness (R4), and two e-tutors showed low job readiness and high psychological readiness (R2). After a semester of teaching and training, 44 were high job readiness and high psychological readiness (R4). According to the results of the study, job readiness was improved and the psychological readiness was maintained. In the study, it was found that the content of the training workshop mainly focused on job readiness, but neglected psychological readiness. In the future, more content about psychological readiness should be designed in the training workshop to support the e-tutors.

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Keywords: Distance learning companion; readiness; situational leadership theory; e-tutor

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1. Introduction

Due to the development of technology and Internet, it brings new opportunities for education. Through online learning platform, students can learn and acquire knowledge regardless of the limitation of the time and space. For educator, providing equal education opportunity is always important. Students in rural area usually didn’t receive as much educational resource as students in the cities (Huang, Liu, Lin, & Chang, 2011). Fortunately, online tutoring provides a channel to deliver the educational resource to the students in need (Huang, Liu, Sung, 2011). Ministry of Education in Taiwan initiated the distance learning companion project in 2006 to apply the platform, Joinnet, to deliver online tutoring to the students in rural area. In 2013, the project served more than 1000 students in rural area. More and more e-tutors participated in this project, and ensuring the e-tutors teaching readiness and providing them suitable support is important (Yang, Liu, Lin, Hu, Cheng, Wu, Cheng, & Chang, 2010).

Hersey and Blanchard (1993) proposed the idea of readiness in situational leadership theory, and readiness indicated the degree to which the individuals’ ability and willingness to take on the task. The purpose of this study is to investigate the e-tutors’ teaching readiness in the distance learning companion project.

2. Methodology

2.1. Experimental design

A single group pretest-posttest design was applied in this study. In the beginning of the semester, the e-tutors filed the questionnaire for the pretest. After the online tutoring last for a semester, the e-tutors filed the questionnaire in the end of the semester (Fig. 1).

2.2. Participants

44 undergraduate students participated in this study, and all the participants joined the distant education program, and take the role as e-tutors. 23 e-tutors were male, and 21 e-tutors were female. Among the e-tutors, 5 were freshman, 12 were sophomore, 11 were junior, 7 were senior, and 9 were graduate students.

2.3. Instrument

Teaching Readiness Index Scale (TRIS) was designed based on the readiness concept in situational leadership theory proposed by Hersey and Blanchard (1993). Two dimensions were included in TRIS: Work readiness (7 items), Psychological readiness (3 items). The scale was designed in 8 point Likert scale style. According to the score in the two dimensions, we could divided the tutors into four categories: Low readiness (R1): Work readiness and psychological readiness scored from 1 to 4; Mid-low readiness (R2): Work readiness scored 1 to 4 and psychological readiness scored from 5 to 8; Mid-high readiness (R3): Work readiness scored 5 to 8 and psychological readiness scored from 1 to 4; High readiness (R4): Work readiness and psychological readiness...
scored from 5 to 8. The result of reliability analysis indicated that the Cronbach’s alpha of working readiness was 0.85 and the Cronbach’s alpha of psychological readiness was 0.82. The Cronbach’s alpha of total scale was 0.90. The result indicated that the Teaching Readiness Index Scale have suitable reliability.

3. Results

3.1. Teaching readiness of e-tutors in the beginning and the end of the semester

Moreover, it was found that in the beginning of the semester, 42 e-tutors were high readiness and 2 were mid-low readiness, and all the 44 e-tutors were high readiness (Fig. 2). The result indicated that the e-tutors’ teaching readiness were significantly improved during the online tutoring.

Moreover, the result indicated that the e-tutors’ working readiness were significant improved in the end of the semester (t=6.25, p<.001), however, their psychological readiness did not significant in the end of the semester (Table 1).

Table 1. The t test of e-tutors’ teaching readiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>pretest M</th>
<th>pretest SD</th>
<th>posttest M</th>
<th>posttest SD</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working readiness</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>6.25***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psychological readiness</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.001

4. Conclusion

In this study, we develop a Teaching Readiness Index Scale (TRIS). It was found that most of the tutors have high teaching readiness when they join the distance education program. Providing teacher training courses and experience sharing seminars for the tutors is important. However, in this study, we found that e-tutors’ psychological readiness did not significant improved in the end of the semester, and it may be the lack of the related training course in the training workshop during the semester. In the future, more training course to enhance e-tutors’ psychological readiness and examine the effect of the training course on e-tutors’ teaching readiness.
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References


