Chapter IX

Adoption of Online Courses in Higher Education: Evaluating the Readiness of Business Students and Faculty

Anita Borja Enriquez, University of Guam, USA

Abstract

This chapter examines the state of readiness towards adopting online distance education (DE) courses between undergraduate business students and business faculty at the University of Guam (UOG). The study was timely, given the infancy planning stage of online education delivery at UOG. Preferences among business student respondents, based on generation groups, ethnicity and occupation status, were reviewed. The following research questions were posed to guide this study: (1) At what stage of the undergraduate program do undergraduate business students recognize the importance of using the Internet for online education use?; (2) What factors explain the rate of adoption towards Internet use by undergraduate business education students and business faculty at UOG?; and (3) Are there significant differences between undergraduate business education students and UOG business faculty in the perceived state of readiness of adoption of online distance education? Overall, business students expressed willingness to pursue this delivery format.
Introduction

This study purports to evaluate the perceptions and attitudes towards adoption and diffusion of Internet use by undergraduate business students and business faculty at UOG as a basis for determining their state of readiness towards adopting online DE courses. It comes at an opportune time, as UOG is at its infancy stage of offering online DE courses. Rogers’ (1995) model on diffusion of innovations explains in part the early reluctance of a majority of people on the adoption of any innovation, given the timing of educational reform on instructional technology due to information technology (IT) advances (Tsang-Kosma, 2005). In the study reported in this chapter, all undergraduate business administration majors and business instructors at UOG were surveyed using an attitudinal survey instrument. The state of readiness towards online DE courses was examined between business students and faculty respondents. In addition, differences between business student respondents’ “state of readiness” by ethnicity and occupation status were examined.

To guide the present study, the following research questions were posed: (1) At what stage of the undergraduate program do undergraduate business students recognize the importance of using the Internet for online educational use?; (2) What factors explain the rate of adoption towards Internet use by undergraduate business education students?; and (3) are there significant differences between undergraduate business education students and faculty in the perceived state of readiness of adoption of online DE courses?

Background

Tremendous research exists concerning the adoption of instructional technologies by faculty in higher education (Macchiusi & Trinidad, 2001; Yohon, Zimmerman, & Keller, 2004). According to Nachmias and Segev (2003), there is a rapid increase in the use of the Internet as an instructional tool in higher education. However, research is scant (Limayen & Hirt, 2000; Singh & Pan, 2004) on the reasons associated with student adoption of online courses. The introduction to the early majority of (instructor) users should be related to their perceived program and process needs (Carr, 1999; Rogers, 1995). Beggs (2005) asserts that as faculty members are asked to utilize new technologies in their pedagogy, some accept while others resist. This reluctance to adopt a new technology is common among people in general (Wilson, 2004). The challenge of infusing technology into instruction can be attributed to the need for more technological training (Duhaney, 2001; Means, 2001). Yohon et al. (2004) suggest that training on Web-based teaching tools should include pedagogy and student engagement solutions so that faculty members understand how to effectively use technology tools. Luke, Moore and Sawyer (1998) contend that for students to be better prepared to learn with technology, teachers should be better prepared to teach with technology. New technology adoption, according to Yan and Fang (2004), starts from faculty consensus to adopt this technology.

Finley and Hartman (2004) posit that people need to feel comfortable that they either have or will be able to attain the required skills and knowledge prior to adopting any innovation. This kind of confidence is associated with building faculty confidence towards integrating
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