

Problems and Complications in Open and Distance e-Learning: Perspectives from the Philippines

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Abstract

In the digital era, rapid advances in information and communication technology have resulted in substantial changes in remote education (DE) practise around the world. The term "open and distance e-learning" (ODeL) was coined by DE practitioners at the Philippines' open university to refer to new forms of DE marked by the convergence of an open learning philosophy, DE pedagogies, and e-learning technologies. From the perspective of the institution's top ODeL practitioners, this essay addresses the Problems and Complications that ODeL provides for the Philippines' open university.

Keywords: distance education, online learning, e-learning, open and distance e-learning

Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, quick enhancements In the realm of distant education, innovations in data and correspondences (ICT) have resulted in considerable developments (DE). Using virtual learning environments (VLEs) and other Web advances, a number of DE universities have transitioned from print-based to online delivery. DE academics have referred to this as a generational shift because it has affected DE associations, practises, and communities (Abrioux, 2001; Bennett, Agostinho, Lockyer and Harper, 2009; Cleveland-Innes, 2010). (Taylor, 2001, for example, shows how evident it is.) 163 The term "open and distance e-learning" (ODeL) was used by the University of the Philippines - Open University (UPOU), the Philippines' only modular DE organisation, to refer to a novel technique of on-the-web or Web-based DE. "Kinds of instruction arrangements that use modern advancements to allow a variety of simultaneous and nonconcurrent correspondence with students and teachers who are actually separated for part or the complete instructional experience" is what ODeL stands for (Alfonso, 2012, n.p.). ODeL broadens the definition of "open and distance learning" (ODL) to include the use of e-learning or internet learning procedures to enable various types of cooperation and exchange that can overcome any issues between instructors and understudies (Anderson, 2008c; Calvert, 2005; Garrison, 2009) and provide access to a vast array of intuitive and media learning assets that can be used to create learning conditions for understudies in a variety of situations (Bates, 2008; Haughey, Evans and Murphy, 2008; Tait, 2010). DE organisations can use on-line portals and VLEs to provide both individual and cooperative learning through "progressively complicated instructive designs" (Haughey et al., 2008, p. 15). Certainly, the adaptability and flexibility of

configuration distinguishes twenty-first-century DE from previous types of DE (Garrison, 2000; Haughey et al., 2008; Tait, 2010). While "normalised, standardised, and formalised methodology for planning and conveyance" (Peters, as cited in Burge and Polec, 2008, p. 238) was used in modern period DE, the distinction between course development and course conveyance is becoming increasingly blurred in internet-based DE, with "previous course advancement jobs... being dismantled and reevaluated" (Abrioux, 2001, p. 1) as the role of instructors in the design of academically compelling learning environments (Anderson, 2008c; Bennett et al., 2009). Furthermore, DE course designs are becoming increasingly "asset oriented" (Calvert, 2005; Naidu, 2007) and "online dialogue based" (Jara and Fitri, 2007), with "more liquid and dynamic" course materials. of simultaneous and offbeat web-based cooperative exercises (Mason, 1998).

Methodology

The results of an aggregate contextual investigation of ODeL course configuration practice in a DE organization in light of the encounters of ten college educators are introduced in this paper. An aggregate contextual analysis (Stake, 1995) is shaped from the examination of a few individual models to give an overall comprehension of a peculiarity that traverses numerous cases (Harling, 2002). Scientific speculation is the objective, which is characterized as "the development of a hypothesis that guides in the perception of extra cases or conditions" (Robson, 2002, p. 177). The ten examination members were picked for two reasons: (1) they utilize different Web innovations (2) Their overall understanding of DE at UPOU spans several "ages," from the early stage of pre-bundled print-based materials with up close and personal instructional exercises, to the middle stage of print-based materials with online instructional exercises, to the later stage of asset-based web-based co-educating. As a result, eight full-time UPOU employees and two partner workforce directors who have been with the college from its inception were chosen to participate in the examination. Three of them are men, while the remaining seven are women, mirroring the gender divide. college's general orientation balance. Aide teachers make up three, academic administrators four, and full teachers three. Four have no less than a decade of remote showing experience, two have over five years of involvement, and four have under five years of distance educating experience. Every teacher shows courses in an assortment of fields, all at the doctoral level, and four at the undergrad level. Moreover, each of the ten are personnel overseers or play authoritative parts, giving them a novel vantage point from which to notice other employees' course configuration rehearses and think about the variables that impact this training, the issues that emerge, and the ramifications for strategy and activities.

Conceptual Framework

In the writing on the effect of innovative reconciliation on instructive practice, two propensities arise. That's what the first is, in spite of prevalent thinking, showing strategies in e-learning conditions are not generally changed or improved (Conole, 2004; Hedberg, 2006; Kirkwood, 2009; Natriello, 2005). All things considered, conventional showing strategies remain, and in specific circumstances, unequivocal protection from instructive advancement exists. In an investigation of VLE use by teachers at an Irish organization, Blin and Munro (2008) found that the VLE was basically used to scatter course-related content that had recently been conveyed over

the Intranet or on paper (see likewise Sharpe et al., 2006). Hedberg (2006) refers to overview results demonstrating that internet learning implied the arrangement of data on the web and unmoderated conversations for most of in excess of 20,000 understudies and 800 staff reviewed in five conspicuous innovation foundations in Australia. In both grounds based mixed learning and DE conditions, Kirkwood (2009) sees that "regardless of monstrous interest in framework by legislatures and individual establishments, there... [are] terrible degrees of take-up, commitment, [and] restricted arrangement of 'learning networks'" (p. 109). The blend of components that record for non-groundbreaking innovation use shifts by climate (Kirkwood, 2009). Workforce readiness for the complicated and hard act of plan for fruitful picking up involving innovation might be valid in the overwhelming majority, conditions. The reconciliation of numerous information frameworks is expected for eLearning plan, which is anything but a basic or clear methodology. Markauskaite and Goodyear (2009) tracked down proof of the requirement for and intricacy "of coordinating academic edges and ICT devices with the other information outlines expected to plan useful learning assignments" (p. 621) in their investigation of one college educator in Australia "to find how different mental assets are initiated and mixed in making complex expert decisions about learning configuration, instructing, and request in unambiguous settings" (p. 617). As indicated by Siemens (2007), educators' curatorial job in arranged learning requires topic ability to pick, explain, and show materials that permit students to draw in with the topic and construct an understand of the vital ideas of the discipline. Simultaneously, "[the] curatorial instructor praises the independence of students" by "making places in which information can be made, examined, and related" instead of "administering information," and students' "opportunity to investigate is boundless" (Siemens, 2007, n.p.).

Problems and Complications in ODeL: Conclusions and Discussion In conclusion, the participants in the study identified two obstacles and challenges: (1) the need to foster creative practise among UPOU academics who are not yet involved in ODeL; and (2) the need to support and sustain innovative practise among innovators (Table 1). Table.1 Problems and Complications in ODeL Practice at UPOU

How to stimulate innovation?	How to sustain innovation?
<p>New demands on educational institutions and faculty to adopt innovative practices (P10, P7)</p> <p>Need to address faculty indifference (P5, P6) and resistance (P3) resulting from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of time (P3) - the difficulty of ODeL (P3) - the need for pedagogical reorientation (P3, P5) <p>Need for training and models (P3)</p> <p>Need to address political considerations (P6)</p>	<p>Need for resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - time to engage in design work (P4, P5, P7) - appropriate tools (P1) <p>Need for guidance and technical support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - student information as an input to design (P1) - addressing diverse student backgrounds (P8) - students as co-creators (P2) <p>Need for community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - for sharing good practices (P2) - building a network of experts (P3) <p>Need for quality standards (P1, P4, P6)</p>

While faculty resistance to technology integration is a common concern, the way this issue is handled at UPOU may be unique to this setting. To begin with, individuals categorised as "unengaged in creative practise" are mostly affiliate professors or part-time UPOU lecturers from other UP units. Despite receiving ODeL training through UPOU-sponsored workshops and seminars, Some participants in the study (particularly P3, P5, and P6) expressed concern about this group's apparent inability to cope with the demands of online distance instruction. This is because, according to P3 and P5, ODeL necessitates not only the development of technological skills, but also a pedagogical re-orientation, which many academics would find difficult. As P9 pointed out, faculty members are hired to teach courses based on their subject matter expertise, not necessarily on their understanding of acceptable and successful pedagogy, especially in online learning environments. As a result, they must (re)consider their teaching methods and be open to trying new ones: DE pedagogy is not the same as traditional face-to-face training. And I don't believe we've been successful in changing the attitudes of our affiliate academics to this point. Until now, they depended on computers and email to respond to children's problems as if they were in a face-to-face environment. They have no idea how to create learning activities for students who are taking classes online.

Because course materials mediate distant education in numerous forms, I believe the challenge for teachers is to comprehend this mediation and then employ media as an agent, the teacher's agent, to accomplish teaching. They frequently complain that the university did not provide them with adequate education. That is one thing, and I believe that is accurate. However, you must first realise the nature of that labour, come to terms with yourself, and surface your own idea of what teaching entails, in my opinion. (P5)

P3 and P5's comments suggest that faculty members' ODeL training may be insufficient. In this study, P8 reported "no good orientation" as a challenge she faced as a new faculty member. This begs the question of how much and what kind of orientation and training are needed to achieve the educational reorientation outlined in P3 and P5. Faculty members appear to need time to conduct research, experiment, and practise learning in addition to attending a training programme. On the other hand, many associate professors are unable to devote the time required to teach online (as noted by P3, P5, and P7). They also have a variety of tasks in their respective areas, including teaching and research. As P3 pointed out, teaching online is difficult: "I believe the hesitation is primarily due to the fact that teaching in a distance learning environment is really difficult" (cf. Collis & Moonen, 2008).

The issue is that associate professors continue to teach a major portion of UPOU's course offerings each semester. Even though it has become clear that UPOU requires more full-time faculty than its founders anticipated, finding additional full-time academics has proven difficult. To begin with, both the UP System and the Philippine government must agree to the creation of more teaching positions, and this approval is conditional on budgetary issues. Second, as recent faculty recruitment efforts have proved, finding professors with the necessary knowledge, skills, and disposition to teach remotely is difficult.

UPOU's reliance on affiliate faculty for course delivery, as P6 pointed out, makes recruiting affiliate professors a political as well as an administrative challenge:

Who are you going to teach the class to? Then I consider politics... we must be aware of the fact that we are on two tracks, in particular... If the College of XXX decided to quit competing one day, an entire track would be lost! They [College instructors] divide and conquer when it comes to teaching. In these areas, they have a say. I'm attempting to keep a proactive relationship with them; otherwise, if they decide to cease [teaching with us] one day, we'll be caught off guard... (P6)

Indeed, as two UPOU programmes have discovered, a severance of links with affiliate faculty members might lead to the discontinuation of a programme. This is one of the faults of small and medium-sized DE universities that rely on campus sister schools for academic collaboration in planning and delivering courses and programmes (Abrioux, 2006b).

In addition to the issues of a lack of innovation, there are concerns about how to promote people who are innovating. The importance of resources, advice, and community—what Laurillard (2008) refers to as "mechanisms for creativity in teaching and learning"—was emphasised (p. 529). Time and tools were listed as two resources in particular. At least three academics indicated that they are unable to complete design assignments due to a lack of time (P4, P5, and P7). This could be due to the "special climate of UPOU," where full-time teachers are "very much active in the operation of the university," as P5 pointed out. Few would disagree, however, that design is "creative labour that takes thought... [and] quiet time" (P5), and that without it, even the most enthusiastic teachers wind up rehashing previous lessons (P8). It's also important to have the correct tools to aid in course design. P1 mentioned the importance of having access to "data from previous course offerings" to prevent having to recreate the wheel to "build your course site and design your course from the ground up." Academics require technical help and supervision, especially when introducing a new pedagogy. "You need information about the learners before you can develop your course," P1 pointed out, "since course design may become a constraint for some students if you don't consider their profile, their past" (cf. Naidu, 2007).

At the moment, giving faculty members the profiles of students enrolled in a course is not done consistently across all UPOU programmes and courses. 5 Furthermore, some programmes have extremely high enrolment levels, and the enrolment profile developed just includes basic information like age, gender, domicile, educational accomplishment, and occupation.

Conclusion

The UPOU professors and administrators who took part in this study showed a lot of interest in ODeL and a willingness to try new things. They recognise that they are in the minority, and they see developing creative teaching and learning practises across the university as an ongoing challenge. Higher education institutions are "now shifting from a period of rich and mostly bottom-up experimentation to a phase in which institution-wide use of ICT is being encouraged," according to Collis and van der Wende (2002). (p. 8). These institutions deploy ICT in three stages: (a) "institutional-wide technological infrastructure," (b) "rich pedagogical use of this infrastructure," "Strategic use of ICT with a view to the different target groups of higher education" and (c) "strategic use of ICT with a view to the diverse target

groups of higher education" (p. 8). While many institutions are likely to have finished the first stage, the second "is in many cases still in development," and the third "has in most cases not been expressly considered yet," according to the research (p. 8). In the instance of UPOU, this appears to be the case. The findings of the study have ramifications for UPOU academic developers and administrators, especially in terms of faculty development programmes, faculty support, and strategic planning for ODeL adoption across the university.

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