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Traditional Faculty Resistance to Online Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that traditional faculty are resistant to online higher education, expressing concerns about the quality of the learning experience, a lack of administrator transparency, and the amount of time faculty spend to convert their classes to an online format (Community College of Aurora, n.d.; Green & Wagner, 2011; Paris, 2011. In fact, only 9% of faculty in a 2017 study indicated that they would prefer to teach in an online setting (Pomerantz & Brooks, 2017). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of faculty to increase faculty acceptance of online education. This study was conducted at a unique time during which the university had forced all courses to go online due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Based on the study, traditional faculty see online education as a viable means of delivering an education to students in theory. However, due to a lack of transparency from administration, concerns about over the time commitment to build a quality online program, their perceptions of what the institution values and recognizes, and the incentives for traditional faculty, they do not believe online learning at the institution studied is appropriate.

KEYWORDS: online education, eLearning, collaboration, course design, hybrid learning, traditional education, student engagement.

Online education has grown since 1990 and it is continuing to grow as traditional institutions of higher education seek to expand their offerings beyond the seated classroom (Community College of Aurora, n.d.; Green & Wagner, 2011). In Fall 2018, 6,932,074 students were enrolled in at least one distance education course compared to only 2,809,942 such students in Fall 2012 (NCES, 2020). This is a 246% increase in enrollment in just 6 years. Leaders of traditional colleges have determined that online education provides an opportunity not only for institutional financial sustainability, but also for growth; yet traditional faculty, or those who teach exclusively face to face, question the validity of online education and, as a result, may be resistant to and undermine such efforts (Sibley & Whitaker, 2015). In 2014, only 28% of academic leaders stated that their faculty members accept online education as a legitimate form of learning (Online Learning Consortium [OLC], 2014). Indeed, these faculty members have consistently argued that online education provides a lesser educational experience with respect to the physical classroom because of a perceived lack of interaction among participants. In fact, only 9% of faculty responded that they would prefer to teach in an online setting (Brooks & Pomerantz, 2017). However, traditional institutions of higher education that only offer seated, on-ground courses have embraced online education in response to rising numbers of students and increasing institutional financial

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needs, despite faculty resistance (Green & Wagner, 2011; Paris, 2011). Evidence supports the notion that online education is necessary for the future viability of even the most successful postsecondary institutions (Ubell, 2020).

Researchers have identified reasons why online learning is necessary to meet student needs. Flexibility is one of the reasons cited, as students do not need to go to a seated class at a specific time (Community College of Aurora, n.d.; Erstad, 2017). More specifically, because work schedules may prevent students from enrolling in certain classes, online flexibility can expedite their degree earning process. Another benefit of online learning is that it promotes ongoing social interaction that students may miss in the traditional classroom (Erstad, 2017). In fact, online students can engage their peers every day of the week at the time that works best for them, rather than waiting for the next classroom discussion, which may not occur for several days (Fain, 2019).

Considering the noted benefits of online education, academic leaders need to identify strategies to promote greater acceptance of this paradigm among traditional faculty (Baltaru & Soysal, 2017). The growth of online education is significant and is unlikely to slow down, as it is more convenient for students, offers an opportunity for institutional growth, and allows for the enrollment of students who would otherwise be unable to access higher education opportunities (Open Education Database, 2018). The future growth of traditional institutions requires faculty to teach online courses and support the institution's online program (Open Education Database, 2018). This was even more necessary in the age of COVID-19, as this study was conducted at the start of the pandemic when many institutions were forced to adopt online education. This qualitative study provides an examination of strategies to promote greater acceptance of online education among traditional faculty.

Theoretical Framework

Kotter (1995) proposed a method for managing change, known as the 8-step process to accelerate change, which can reduce faculty resistance to online education. In the original model, Kotter explained why transformation efforts fail and some of the common errors (Kotter, 1995. This serves as the theoretical framework for this study.

Building on the previous model, Kotter (2014) revisited these errors and determined that there are eight actions that any organization can take to accelerate change within it and to minimize resistance, namely creating a sense of urgency, building a guiding coalition, forming a strategic vision, enlisting volunteers, enabling actions by removing barriers, generating short-term wins, sustaining acceleration, and instituting change. This model closely mirrors the original one but, instead of identifying what an organization has failed to do, it focuses on what it can do preemptively. Understanding what an organization can do to help to minimize resistance to change and to push it forward can result not only in faculty accepting online higher education, but also in administrators seeing its value.

Creating a sense of urgency is the most important step in Kotter's model, as it relates to adopting online higher education and reducing faculty resistance to online learning, and it promotes the idea of the organization becoming aware of an existing problem and prioritizing the need to resolve it (Kotter, 2014). Kotter estimated that at least 75% of a company's management must support a change for it to be successful, as a lack of support from management translates into a lack of support from employees (Kotter, 2014). Without a sense of urgency, the organization will see no need to embrace online higher education and may maintain this position until the organization is too far behind to catch up with its competitors. Bridges (2009) supported this notion by affirming that to unfreeze the culture, an organization must start by creating a sense of urgency as described

in the Bridges 3-stage process. Leaders need to recognize the need for change, provide context for the change, and communicate that change across the institution (Dahlvig, 2017).

Although other steps in Kotter's model will be necessary for the success of online higher education, the adoption of online education is momentum-based rather than based solely on a model (Kotter, 2014). According to Kotter's model, if there is a sense of urgency, a vision, and a guiding coalition, then the volunteers will come and there will be a reduction in or elimination of barriers. The short-term wins will be easily recognizable as the program slowly starts to see the development of a plethora of online courses and the program will largely sustain itself. It is also possible to apply Kezar's (2014) model of reasons for the need for change in higher education, as it focuses specifically on change within this institutional setting. Higher education, more than ever before, is changing rapidly, and failure to embrace these changes can result in the institution falling behind its competitors (Kezar, 2014). Institutions that fail to change are likely to see declining student enrollments and lower revenues, and they could potentially close.

Kezar's (2014) model includes eight reasons why higher education needs to engage in change proactively, but there are four important areas for transformational changes: the connection of higher education to the global economy, greater public investment and a greater sense of accountability, increasingly diverse students who experience campuses differently, and the internationalization of campuses. Online higher education immediately addresses the first two points as it allows students from anywhere in the world to enroll, which in turn enables the institution to compete on a global scale without needing to create physical campuses. Online education also involves public investment in that the development of a quality program that encourages more students to attend universities will appeal to investors. Additionally, it responds to the increasingly diverse student population, as not all students can attend traditional learning environments due to personal and professional obligations (Flowers & Baltzer, 2006). Higher education instead fails when it focuses on one program or service, without rethinking the organizational structures and culture to support new students (Kezar, 2014).

Historical Background

Online education has grown since 1990 and it continues to grow as traditional institutions of higher education seek to expand their offerings beyond the seated classroom (Community College of Aurora, n.d.; Green & Wagner, 2011). In Fall 2018, 6,932,074 students were enrolled in at least one distance education course, compared only 2,809,942 such students in Fall 2012 (NCES, 2020). This is a 246% increase in enrollment in just 6 years. Online education has established a legitimate presence in higher education. However, the rise of online education began well before the 2009 boom in online learning. Advocates for online education stated that it would be the future of higher education, allowing institutions to enter new markets and providing an opportunity for revenue growth well beyond what is possible at a traditional campus (Green & Wagner, 2011). Nevertheless, some faculty have resisted change. Resistance to change is not a new phenomenon, and there are several theories that can inform positive pathways for change facilitators. People respond to change, risks, and new technology in different ways, which leads to questions on how traditional faculty view change and their willingness to accept new technology within higher education.

Current research has explained faculty resistance to online higher education and how to improve acceptance across the board. Online education is more advanced than ever, and students enjoy the ability to attend live sessions, meet virtually with their peers, and earn an education from the comfort of their homes. However, faculty remain concerned that students are being short-

changed in that they may not be receiving an education that is equivalent to a seated class (Archibald, 2017).

In 2014 only 28% of academic leaders stated that their faculty members accept online education as a legitimate form of learning (OLC, 2014). This may mean that less than one third of faculty members are willing to consider implementing online learning, as they do not see it as an effective means of delivering the content they have prepared for the class. The OLC's 2017 report tells a similar story. There was no significant change in the number of faculty members who considered online education a legitimate form of learning, meaning that approximately one third of faculty continue to believe that students who are enrolling in a distance education program are receiving a lower quality education (OLC, 2017).

In addition to the concerns associated with quality, faculty have listed several other reasons that they are resistant to online education. Another concern faculty had linked to implementing an online platform is that it is excessively time consuming with little payoff. Faculty see online teaching as a burden rather than something that will help to enhance their experience in facilitating the course, as well as the students' experience in taking the course (Khalil, 2013). In fact, the top concern in a survey of faculty in relation to teaching online was that they would have an increased workload (Lloyd, Byrne, & McCoy, 2012). While redesigning a course for an online platform may take some time on the front end, there does not seem to be enough evidence to suggest that the payoff will not be worth the resources put into developing the course. There is a growing demand for online courses, and institutions recognize that need. However, the number of faculty members committed to developing and teaching these courses using an online platform is lagging behind (Lloyd et al., 2012).

Finally, there is the concern that instructors will lose the personal connections they can establish with students in a face-to-face environment (Lloyd et al., 2012). Much online instruction is through text-based communications and, while there may be live video lectures, the amount of personal time each student receives with the instructor in the online class is less than in a face-to-face class by default. However, the amount of potential personal time with the student is greater since students can e-mail or call their instructors at any time during the week rather than having to wait until the next meeting date.

Faculty Resistance to Online Education

A survey completed by Educause in 2017 involved 157 institutions and received responses from 13,451 faculty members on this same topic. The key findings from this report were that nearly 50% of faculty members agreed that online education does nothing to enhance the student's learning and may even hinder it, but they believed that using a variety of teaching methods they would help them to become better instructors (Brooks & Pomerantz, 2017). Despite nearly 50% of faculty indicating that online education is not helpful or is detrimental to learning, the faculty were quite happy with the use of technology, with 71% rating their experience with technology as excellent. They indicated that they believed that technology would enhance and improve their teaching. Thus, it seems that there is a disconnect between the perception of the technology that enables online education and the perception of online education itself.

The most critical piece of technology used in online student learning is the learning management system provided by the institution. If the learning management system is not being used effectively, then that could affect how faculty perceive the quality of the education that students are receiving in an online course. Only 30% of faculty respondents indicated using the learning management system to facilitate an online class, while 80% of used it only to post a syllabus and push out course material (Brooks & Pomerantz, 2017). Similarly, 75% of faculty

utilized the learning management system to send out assignments and enter grades (Brooks & Pomerantz, 2017).

Writing the syllabus and providing handouts are basic class functions, but faculty members relied instead on the seated class to provide the lecture material and to facilitate classroom discussion. This trend supports the idea that faculty like to use the technology that makes online learning possible but, due to their perceptions of online education, they are not willing to adopt it or consider it a legitimate form of learning. In fact, only 9% of faculty responded that they would prefer to teach in an online setting. These results require more research on how to increase the number of faculty who utilize online education and perhaps even prefer it as a means of delivering content further, especially in light of the trend showing that students prefer online education over the traditional class.

Traditional faculty would better serve students by being willing to accept online higher education (Arenas-Gaitan, Rondan-Cataluna, & Ramirez-Correa, 2010). Both Kotter's (1995) and Kezar's (2014) theories of change can help to facilitate this shift. Based on Kotter's model, if there is a sense of urgency, a vision, and a guiding coalition, then the organization will have the foundation it needs to reduce faculty resistance to online higher education (Kezar, 2014; Kotter, 2014). There are known concerns in adopting online education, and these concerns will change how faculty react to the implementation of online higher education. Their reactions to change will include passively resisting it, aggressively resisting it, or embracing it (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). By using Kotter's (1995) and Kezar's models for change, this study examined what institutions can do to reduce traditional faculty resistance to the introduction of online higher education in a specific higher education setting, as well as how these findings can be applicable to other universities.

COVID-19 and Online Education

Online education has been under observation for quite some time and has steadily grown, but in 2020, COVID-19 forced institutions either to adopt online learning or to close until further notice (Gallagher & Palmer, 2020). This rush to adopt online education exposed many faults and flaws in the online programming of higher education, especially in terms of financial support. Less than 5% of traditional college budgets go to technology and online course development. This is despite more than a third of students having taken an online course.

The institutions that were prepared promoted their online program. In fact, Princeton University, Williams College, Spelman College, and many other elite institutions offered discounted tuition to build their online programs. Another example is the University of Illinois which removed its traditional MBA program in favor of an online MBA at a third of the cost (Gallagher & Palmer, 2020). Georgia Tech took it a step further and offered a Master of Computer Science completely online for only $7,000 exceeding 10,000 students just for the Fall 2020 term. This put pressure on other institutions to lower their prices or risk losing their student population.

After the Fall 2020 term, some institutions decided to open their doors. However, due to massive spikes in COVID cases, at least 20 major state and private institutions switched entirely to online learning for the foreseeable future (Burke, 2020). Some schools such as the University of Maryland and the University of Missouri opted to remain open through the end of the Fall semester 2020 and then to transition to online during Winter break prior to Spring term 2021. Without COVID, it is likely that many of these schools would have ignored or taken years to adopt online education. This sudden change highlighted just how unprepared many traditional institutions were for online learning.

Setting

The present study took place at a land grant institution of higher education that has been offering traditional instruction for more than 100 years, primarily in a brick-and-mortar setting. However, in recent years and due to the coronavirus pandemic, the institution has been expanding its online course offerings. This study took place in March 2020 at the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic and lasted until June 2020. Faculty members were surveyed and interviewed at a unique time wherein the University had forced *all* courses to go online.

The online program at the institution had existed for 6 years prior to the pandemic but it was slow to launch and there were gaps in priorities and training as, based on the faculty interview and surveys, administrators did not emphasize the importance of online education to faculty. This did not pose significant issues for the first 6 years, as online education was not mandatory and was seen as supplemental to traditional courses. However, the lack of emphasis and investment in online learning became apparent when the institution rushed to be fully online quickly due to COVID-19. The perspectives of faculty captured in this study are representative of this sudden shift in teaching modalities.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative methodology that borrowed heavily from the case study (Yin, 2003) methodology to understand what faculty think or believe about online higher education, as well as some of the reasons why they may choose not to embrace this modality. Qualitative case studies explore complex phenomena within specific contexts and guidelines (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In a long-standing traditional higher education institution that recently launched a department devoted to online education, a case study methodology is appropriate to understand the complex process of requiring traditional faculty to convert courses to an online format. Additionally, Yin (2003) argued that a case study follows a constructivist paradigm, which means that the truth behind various issues is subject to one's perspective; understanding traditional faculty's perspective may yield important information to inform the future direction of online learning at the institution being studied.

Participants

This study included all faculty with experience teaching in traditional higher education and who, within the last 12 months, converted their course into an online format or taught an online class for the university. Faculty needed to also have at least 3 years of experience teaching at the institution. Potential participants included 267 faculty members. The rationale for the criteria is that these faculty members need to have a background in traditional higher education and at least to have developed an online course before they can formulate thoughts about online higher education and why they believe it will either hinder or support student success.

Data Streams

The first data stream was a survey, which comprised items on faculty members' demographics and open-ended questions to assess their understanding of online education. The researcher sent it during the Spring 2020 term to those with experience teaching both traditional and online courses who would be teaching online for the Fall 2020 term. Of the 267 surveys sent, 80 faculty responded.

The second data stream was an interview with 10 randomly selected faculty who completed the survey. The interviews captured stories and detailed responses, which was necessary to achieve a full picture of their perspectives of online learning.

Data Analysis

The researcher compared the interview results with the survey responses. The primary focus was to determine whether there were conflicting responses between the survey responses and the faculty members' interview responses. Pattern matching is one of the staples of data analysis in a case study (Yin, 2003). The idea of pattern matching is to understand whether the patterns found match the hypothesis or focus of the study.

In addition to pattern matching, coding was used to find themes and patterns in the respondent's answers. Coding is applicable to all qualitative research and involves identifying words or phrases that summarize a sentiment or idea conveyed through the data (Saldana, 2008). Survey responses and interview transcripts were thoroughly analyzed, and responses were grouped based on similar findings. Inductive coding was used, meaning that all codes were generated from the participants' data rather than existing research or prior knowledge. This provided an untainted view of the responses. The findings from the coding process were compared against the findings from the pattern-matching process.

The pattern-matching and coding processes identified three primary themes among faculty members. The process of conducting the interviews and reviewing the survey results revealed that faculty had concerns regarding the quality of student learning, the time investment necessary to facilitate an online course effectively, and a lack of understanding from administration as to what makes a quality online program.

Trustworthiness

To establish the validity of the data and trustworthiness, it is necessary to meet criteria. The first criterion is credibility, which refers to how grounded the study is in reality (Shenton 2004; Yin 2003). The issue of faculty resistance is grounded in reality and is demonstrated by the studies previously cited.

The second method that of establishing validity and trustworthiness is transferability. This is the idea that the findings of the study can be applied to other situations (Shenton 2004; Yin 2003). While this study focused on faculty resistance to online education at a specific institution, this survey and the results could be applied to any institution establishing an online program.

Quality of Student Learning

Faculty in this study reported mixed feelings about online education. However, most agreed that it is a viable means of delivering an education as long as it benefits students who can continue to reach the intended learning outcomes and it allows faculty to deliver the same quality of content that they do in the traditional setting. Over 70% of faculty who completed the survey feel that administration does not fully understand or does not communicate the value of online education. Thus, convincing these faculty members that online education is the future of higher education has not had much success.

While all faculty who participated in the interviews do see online education as a viable option, other faculty members who completed the survey said that institutions should not adopt

online education. In particular, when expressing his feelings on this issue, John Smith indicated the following:

> *I don't think it should be encouraged. I don't think the experience is as good. I think it is a fine option, especially during the summer, which is when I have chosen it, to give the opportunity to students who might be away or working or interning during the day to be able to take a course asynchronously. My son has taken numerous classes online (prior to COVID-19 disruptions) and never felt like he got as much out of the experience, in terms of less opportunity to ask timely questions, less interaction with peers, and with faculty. For the many examples of synchronous online courses, that seems to be better for many classes as it enforces more discipline on a student (more like f2f), yet the degree of interaction is still limited. Many things cannot be done in that environment, or at least not to the same extent. For example, being able to walk around a campus to identify plants in a botany course or using team-based learning remotely. For those who just walk through PowerPoint slides in a class, it can be pretty easy. But for those who rely on back and forth or work out problems or draw out graphs and show changes, it is more difficult.*

Smith does not see online education as something that adds value to the student's degree program. Additionally, his comments are not unique, as 26 other faculty members had similar viewpoints, specifically that online education offers a lower quality education. One faculty member indicated that "we are adopting online teaching because of efficiency, not because we know it provides quality education." However, this view also depended on the course discipline or subject. For example, in the surveys, faculty agreed that subjects like math and science that require labs tend to be better suited to the traditional classroom due to the hands-on nature of these subjects. For example, John Smith stated the following:

> *For certain classes (labs, practicums) it really takes away from student experience/practice. Students these days learn better from hands-on experiences. This is harder to achieve through online learning. Plus, huge part of the educational experience takes place on campus but outside of classroom. Online class cannot cover those learning experiences for youth.*

Finally, faculty had an overwhelming concern that students were cheating in online courses. When asking a faculty member about academic dishonesty, she observed that "my working assumption when teaching online is that students are likely to be cheating on exams and assignments." The belief that students are cheating can make it difficult to assess student learning and engagement as methods of evaluation such as quizzes and worksheets become unviable. Additionally, all the faculty the researcher surveyed and interviewed are aware of options like the Lockdown Browser and proctoring but feel that these options invade student privacy by forcing them to show identification as well as the interiors of their homes.

Faculty Time Investment

Another concern faculty raised was that online education requires a significantly higher time investment. For students to benefit the most from the online classroom, the faculty member needs to record lecture material, build meaningful assignments, and create opportunities for students to engage. Faculty can build material over time, but they need much of it at the start of the course. Some faculty also suggested that students taking an online course expect an instantaneous response, and faculty feel as though they are never truly finished with their workday for this reason. The ongoing need to communicate can create stress. John Williams affirmed the following about how he felt about the time he needed to manage an online course:

> *Facilitating meaningful online learning requires considerable investment of time because students encounter a wide range of problems from access issues to misunderstanding course content and assignments. Online students, for example, may not know how to use interactive course elements such as Voice Thread or Flip Grid, or they may not be able to complete assignments that require them to work with technology to create and upload digital media for course assignments.*

Faculty indicated that this time investment is the requirement for meaningful online learning.

Additionally, faculty mentioned that they just want to teach. They do not believe that they should be responsible for developing the course and creating video lectures. Instructors want to be able to teach in front a class and not work as part of the production team. This desire emerged clearly in a communication with John Smith who stated the following:

> *I would like to videotape myself teaching in a classroom. But I will not do it unless someone else takes care of the recording and processing. All I want to do is show up in a classroom or studio and teach away. Otherwise, it just takes too much time, and my research productivity is much, much, much, much more important to the University administration than my teaching prowess.*

Many faculty members said they do not mind bringing their course online but do not want to make the necessary investment. There is also the concern that administrators are not aware of how to build an effective online program, which contributes to the required time investment.

Lack of Understanding from Administration

Faculty were concerned that administrators do not fully understand how to build an online program, are not clear about their motives and intent for creating it or are just trying to make more money. The primary concern of faculty is that online education is just a cash grab rather than an opportunity to offer an education to students who would otherwise be unable to obtain a degree. In fact, as Jane Doe said, "it depends on WHY they want to encourage that. If this is for the benefit of the students (working parents, students with severe disabilities), faculty would be happy to do that." Another faculty member affirmed that administrators need to "understand that online does not mean putting as many students as possible in a course." Faculty feel overwhelmed by the

number of students in an online course and overenrolling of students, which reduces the amount of individual time an instructor can spend with each student.

Another finding was that faculty believed that administration was not confident in its decisions. Institutions either need to fully adopt online education or to stick to their traditional programs. One faculty member indicated that administration should "either make it mandatory or not. Make a decision and stick by that decision, whatever the fallout and ramifications may be." He then added:

> *Furthermore, if you go towards an online environment of all classes including lab classes, lab fees will need to be revisited and either drastically reduced or eliminated. This is a substantial revenue stream for [the university] and the academic units that teach these types of classes.*

There seems to be a lack of research and understanding on what makes a successful online program on the part of administration.

Without communication from administration as to how they intend to implement online education, there is little faith in the online program at the institution. One faculty member stated:

> *While it depends on the course being offered, I think the true dichotomy in teaching is not in-person vs. online, it's whether or not the instructor decides to invest time and effort in a quality course. Although some courses can't be delivered digitally (e.g., field-based courses), instructors can deliver quality content in any medium.*

Jeremiah's perspective highlights that the issue is with the instructor's mindset and the design of the course, rather than whether the course is online or face-to-face. Online delivery alone should not influence whether the course provides a quality experience. Another faculty member confirmed this point:

> *With synchronous instruction, meetings, discussions, and problem-solving sessions, online students have equivalent experiences [to] students in face-to-face courses. Online courses allow students to focus more on content and less on classroom antics, side bar conversations, and off-task behaviors.*

Finally, Michael Smith made a strong point by stating that "most faculty are resistant to learning how to teach well online" and that "I think online learning environments have great potential in theory, but in practice often that potential is not realized." Again, this highlights an issue with mindset rather than with online education.

This study has helped to identify some of the reasons why faculty are resistant or even hesitant to adopt online higher education. These concerns fall into three separate categories: the quality of the instruction that institutions offer to students, the time necessary to create and facilitate an online course, and administration's lack of communication and understanding of the value of online education. Faculty are receptive to the idea of online education but do not think the institution is handling the adoption of online education appropriately, which will cause students to suffer in the long term.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify how faculty perceive online education and how those perceptions influenced their willingness to move to an online teaching modality. If faculty believe that online education at the institution does not have any benefit other than to generate more money for the institution, then resistance is likely as there is no sense of urgency. These faculty see the potential of online learning in theory, but do not agree with how the institution is implementing it. Institutions are using online education to generate more revenue, especially during a pandemic, but that does not mean that it is without benefit for students (Open Education Database, 2018). Online education can eliminate or minimize barriers to obtaining a degree, such as personal and social obligations that would not allow students to go to a campus at a scheduled time. This requires that faculty members believe that the online channel is an acceptable means of delivering an education to students and may even be beneficial for those who are easily distracted. The problem seems to be at the institutional level.

This challenging mindset is likely a result of lacking a sense of urgency regarding the change. According to Kotter's (2014) theory of change, change will only occur if there is a sense of urgency. Based on the interviews and surveys, faculty did not see a firm stance on the issue from administrators, and this was concerning. One faculty member expressed his frustrations stating that administrators need to "either make it mandatory or not. Make a decision and stick by that decision, whatever the fallout and ramifications may be." Faculty received mixed messages from the school about the role and purpose of online education, and they did not see online education as truly part of the program. Additionally, faculty indicated that they valued data and reasoning as to why the institution needs online education. Six faculty members suggested that the institution might evaluate student demands and whether they would like to see a more robust online program. This could create a sense of urgency if the faculty are student-focused.

In addition to communicating why there is a need for online education, removing barriers and generating short-term wins can help to change the opinion of faculty who do not believe that online education will provide a quality experience for students (Kezar, 2014). In response to questions on what administration can do to help to eliminate these barriers, one faculty member suggested that the institution simply needs to "provide better technology, hardware and software. Much of the equipment is not appropriate, and most faculty have no clue on the software available to them." More than 20 faculty members out of the 163 surveyed echoed this concern, indicating that they did not have proper training on the hardware and software available to them or did not know what they even had available.

Proving to faculty that online education can be as effective as a traditional classroom can help to reduce or even eliminate the stigma caused by lower quality institutions and diploma mills. There is plenty of research showing that online education is an effective model and, as proven above, faculty believe that it is effective. The issue is how the institution is delivering.

Kezar's (2014) model for change has made it clear that higher education, more than ever before, is changing rapidly, and that failing to adopt changes can result in the institution falling behind its competitors. Research has highlighted the demand for online delivery as one of the fastest growing sectors in higher education (Community College of Aurora, n.d.; Erstad, 2017). This has become truer in 2020, due to COVID-19 forcing many institutions to go entirely online. Faculty perceptions of online education at the institution under study are that it is an effective modality when executed properly. However, currently, faculty participating in this study had no faith in the administration and did not see it as an effective means of delivering an education at the institution.

Recommendations

Evidence supports the notion that online education is necessary for the future viability of even the most successful post-secondary institutions (Green & Wagner, 2011; Paris, 2011). Because of the noted benefits of online education, academic leaders need to identify strategies to promote greater acceptance of this paradigm among traditional faculty (Baltaru & Soysal, 2017). The institution should fully commit to online learning and explain the need for it based on Kotter's theory. Faculty are willing to put in the effort if they know it will be a quality program that is for the benefit of students. They also want to know that the program will be of high quality and that it will address academic integrity issues. Communication is key. Additionally, administrators should offer faculty financial incentives for developing their course in an online format. There is a considerable time investment involved in creating an online class. Nearly all faculty members who participated in the interviews wished that some sort of incentive existed, as they did not feel the compensation was representative of the time they spent developing an online class. Finally, faculty noted several ways that administrators could increase the acceptance of online education. Based on the findings, administrators should be more transparent with faculty about why they want to adopt an online program and take the time to understand what makes a quality online program. Moreover, institutions should offer training and information to administration on online education and how to lead online programs into the future.

The findings provide clear recommendations on how to correct the issues expressed by the faculty who participated. However, more can be done to provide a quality experience for students. The quality of online education is the primary concern of faculty, so everything that can be done should be done. Many of the recommendations presented by faculty focus on teaching students but not helping students to learn. Teaching occurs when we communicate ideas, concepts, models, and theories to others such as through lecture material. Learning is the acquisition of new information or an expansion of an existing body of knowledge. Teaching does not guarantee learning and learning can occur outside teaching. Implementing new technology and varying course structure can help to facilitate student learning and improve the quality of the program.

The online environment is an opportunity to get innovative. Most online courses at the institution are built around text-based communications and writing papers. This can quickly become mundane and repetitive for students and cause them to lose interest in the material. This is when learning stops. Faculty should be introduced to new tools and technologies that they can implement in their classroom to help make the course more fun, interactive, and engaging for students. Faculty members can then work with an instructional designer to incorporate these elements into their classes and to ensure that all accessibility requirements are met.

Varying the structure of the course is another way to keep students engaged and learning. A quality online program is not just about delivering the material, it is about delivering the material effectively and efficiently. There is value in consistency but, again, students tend to lose interest when everything feels the same. When they enter a new course, it should feel like a new course, not a duplicate of the previous course with different content. This may require additional time in the development process, but if faculty are truly focused on students, as mentioned in the surveys, then they would want to spend this extra time to ensure the course provides the best possible experience.

The Coronavirus pandemic highlights the need for institutions to have an online course plan ready in the event that the institution is not able to hold seated classes. Other events and disasters can force similar situations, and online education removes all physical barriers and boundaries. Less than 5% of traditional college budgets are dedicated to technology and online course development (Gallagher & Palmer, 2020).

The growth of online education is significant and is unlikely to slow down, as it is more convenient for students, offers an opportunity for institutional growth, and allows for the enrollment of students who would otherwise be unable to access higher education opportunities (Open Education Database, 2018). The future growth of traditional institutions requires that faculty teach online courses and support the institution's online program. Leadership needs to recognize and support faculty if it hopes to become successful in the online environment.

Limitations and Further Research

This topic requires a considerable amount of additional research. The present study evaluated a single institution, which provides insight into how its own faculty perceive online higher education. While these strategies may be applicable to other institutions, there are potentially other reasons and points of resistance that other researchers could study.

Another point of consideration is that the interviews with faculty took place at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when the institution had introduced online education, which faculty perceived as a suddenly forced policy. As time goes on, faculty perspectives could change as they become more familiar with the online environment and administrators become more comfortable with leading in an online world.

In summary, online education has been in the spotlight since the 1990s and will continue to be a topic of discussion for years to come. It can be an effective way to deliver an education to students, but only if the necessary time is spent building an effective online program. Faculty members do not want to put their time and resources into a program that they see as a cash grab rather than something that will help students to be successful and to meet their needs in the long term. It is up to administration to put its best foot forward, communicate the need for an online program, and work with faculty members to produce something that will benefit all students.

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Notes on Contributors

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Appendix A Survey

1. What is your role at this institution?
   Faculty member
   Administrator
   Both
2. If you are an administrator, what department and/or how many faculty members do you oversee?
3. Years of experience teaching face-to-face, seated courses _____
4. Years of experience teaching online courses _____
5. What percentage of courses do you teach that are exclusively online?
   0-25%
   26-50%
   51-75%
   76-100%
6. What percentage of courses do you teach that are exclusively face to face?
   0-25%
   26-50%
   51-75%
   76-100%
7. Do you believe that students have an equal or greater opportunity to get a quality education in an online learning environment than a face-to-face, seated course? Explain.
8. Based on your experience, does the online learning environment require a larger time investment to facilitate than a face-to-face, seated course? Explain.
9. Based on your experience, is technology a barrier for online teaching adoption for faculty?
10. Based on your experience, does the online learning environment create a greater number of academic dishonesty cases than a face-to-face, seated course? Explain.
11. Based on your experience, do students and administration expect quicker turnaround times for e-mails, phone calls, and grades in the online learning environment than in a face-to-face, seated course? Explain.
12. What can administration do to encourage the adoption of the online learning environment among faculty members? Explain.