September – 2016

From On-Campus to Online: A Trajectory of Innovation, Internationalization and Inclusion

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Abstract

This paper presents a study focused on a trajectory for developing an online operating mode on a campus-based university in the area of Massachusetts, USA. It addresses the innovation process and the changes and challenges faced by faculty and administrators. Methodologically-speaking, a mainly ethnographic approach was used for a systematic process of collecting data in context, in order to understand organizational strategies put in place to launch and improve online course provision. Leaders of the process and teachers of online courses were also interviewed. What emerged was: a) the online operating mode was prepared much in advance and linked to scenarios of internationalization and inclusion in higher education; b) there was an underlying discourse of inter-connectedness among different places and groups of people; and c) the partnership and collaboration between administration and faculty was essential. One of the main conclusions demonstrates that, despite careful formulation of the online component, it still does not enjoy the same status as the face-to-face element of courses, and, as a result, is largely ignored in terms of promotion in the teaching profession.

Keywords: Higher education, online education, faculty, administration, professional development, internationalization, inclusion

Introduction

Over the past two decades, online education has been expanding rapidly and is now a well-established mode of education in countries throughout the world (Conole, 2007; Edmundson, 2007; Stella & Gnanam, 2004; Vrasidas & Gene, 2006). As a result of the credibility that new technology and communication platforms have introduced into the educational field over the past 20 years, higher education institutions are integrating an online component into their educational provision. Thus

online education courses and programmes exist alongside face-to-face courses, providing a wide range of possibilities for students to choose. This panorama is also the result of different measures and policies to support educational and technological development, such as the dissemination of Information Communication Technologies (ICT), cheap telecommunications, the existence of open resources and digital libraries, and the spread of access points. The shift to online education is related to a variety of needs, such as: a) the increasing number of enrollments, b) new audiences, c) the massification and diversification of the student population, and d) the promotion of lifelong learning. The E-learning in European Higher Education Institutions (Gaebel, Kupriyanova, Morais, & Colucci, 2014) survey also states that:

> Besides pedagogical and economic motives, the institutions refer to a growing need for flexibility of time and place, and better use of resources, benefiting both residential students and a wider range of professional and other lifelong learners. (p.7)

Indeed, for example, in the USA, "more than one-third of all higher education institutions are fully engaged in online education" (Allen & Seaman 2010, p. 20) and "… twenty-one percent growth rate for online enrollments far exceeds the less than two percent growth of the overall higher education student population" (p.2). A similar scenario exists in Brazil. According to the Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais (INEP, 2013), between 2011 and 2012, enrollments rose by 12.2% in distance courses and 3.1% in face-to-face ones. With this growth, distance learning now represents over 15% of all degree enrollments. In 2013, Europe was offering online learning courses in approximately 82% of institutions (Gaebel, Kupriyanova, Morais, & Colucci, 2014). Moreover, there is now a huge industry geared towards the online education market worth more than 482 million dollars annually (Romiszowski, 2005).

The integration of online courses into educational provision and its associated educational paradigm has had various implications for higher education institutions. Not only it is necessary to develop and introduce new services but it is also necessary to integrate them into existing ones. Furthermore, the education of wider faculty and staff regarding e-learning pedagogy and technology also represents a very important challenge set by the introduction of digital-online opportunities.

This paper focusses on an area of higher education that has gradually included online courses as part of its pedagogical provision and it addresses the issue of the challenges that faculty and administrators face to cope and develop online education in the present global scenario. Data was collected at a campus-based university in the Boston area using participant observation and interviews.

The Online Paradigm and the Transformations of Educational Environments

Internationalization and Inclusion

Universities have a long history of international relations and, in recent decades, the processes of globalization have accelerated the internationalization of higher education institutions, leading to several activities of a transnational character.

Due to their characteristics, online courses fit the designs of internationalization. In particular, by: a) allowing appropriate responses in real time to new challenges and questions posed by transnational aspects of globalization; b) making possible for students to enroll in courses all over the world, without needing to relocate; and c) the construction of personal educational trajectories at various institutions without educational quality suffering. In short, within the globalized world of online education, national borders are no longer a barrier to individuals who want to choose a specific educational trajectory, and to pursue their objectives. This "globalized access" to tertiary education (Canole, 2007; Romiszowski, 2005) provided by digital technology is promoting democratization, defined as the process to increase "either the access to higher education of populations that would be otherwise excluded, or increasing the range of people who might be served by elite institutions" (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006, p. 568).

Indeed, although inequalities and exclusion remain, online education is boosting the number of students enrolled in higher education and, consequently, the diversity of online classes. As online education allows transnational enrollments, it promotes not only the mix of individuals in virtual classrooms or other digital educational environments but also interaction within social networks, such as chat rooms, digital cafés, blogs, and discussions groups, broadening the range of new social mixtures and cyber-experience into different groups in relation to education, culture, rationality, learning styles, age, races, nationalities, expectations, and demands. As such, diversity and social inclusion is a characteristic of online educational environments. The multicultural nature of online educational settings intensifies the possibilities of internationalization and creates both new diversities and innovative educational scenarios that pose questions and challenges to teachers, students, administrators, and other educational agents.

Professional Development: Change and Innovation

Most of the faculty members in traditional campus-based universities were not appointed with the prospect that, in the future, they would teach online. However, due to the demand of online courses, as Hicks (2014) notes:

> We are moving into an era where all faculty need to have a level of competence with online learning and technologies. This is no longer optional but is core to the university learning environment. (p. 267)

Online teaching involves new and innovative pedagogy and technology that support different teaching practices, as well as the adaptation and transference of skills to this new learning environment. In addition, both surveys and literature have indicated that as one of the most important issues for assisting and to supporting faculty online teaching. (Guri-Rosenblit, 2008; Hicks, 2014; Reeves, 2005; Thompson, 2007; Zawacki-Richter, 2008; Zondiros, 2008).

New issues raised by online education have an impact on the nature of academic work in terms of teaching, research, community development, and intellectual propriety (Harlen & Lunde, 2007; Moreira, Henriques & Aires, 2015). Furthermore, as Vrasidas and Glass (2006) highlight "... time spent developing online course instruction can be deleterious to faculty when their review process is based on research." (p 74)

Although higher education policies regarding university careers vary from country to country, regardless of the teaching methodologies used by teachers (online, face-to-face, or blended), several

authors state that online teaching was not yet fully considered on campus-based universities (Caplan & Graham, 2008; Fahy, 2008; Harlen & Lund, 2007; Hicks, 2014; Thompson, 2007; Vrasidas & Glass, 2006; Wolcott, 2003). Moreover, in Europe and in the USA, the situation is similar, with higher education institutions having only started developing strategies in the field of online education regarding faculty and staff professional development in recent years. However, as Gaebel, Kupriyanova, Morais, and Colucci (2014) point out in regard to the European area, "(w)hile e-learning activities are often driven by individual departments or even individual academics, faculty e-learning strategies are not very frequent (13.8%)." (p. 8)

Administrators, in both traditional and distance education universities, need to create the conditions for professional development and introduce new policies to accompany the changes introduced by online education. This includes both a legal framework for faculty careers that take into account the specific features of online teaching and the regulation of distance education, which are necessary to achieve recognition of quality and excellence of performance and professional development. The observation made by Wolcott (2003), that "(t)he lack of inclusive policies has caused particular difficulties for distance education faculty" (p. 550) remains current.

Methodology

A mainly ethnographic approach was used for a systematic process of collecting data in context to understand the organizational strategies for developing and improving the design, supply, and implementation of online courses. One special characteristic of ethnographic research is the long-lasting presence of the researcher at the place of investigation, gaining daily proximity and direct involvement in the social setting to create familiarity with the "native" culture, and to develop interpersonal relationships with locals. This life experience allows the researcher to move toward the comprehension of the other.

Data was collected, from January to June 2011 in a university located in the Boston area through participant observation, as well as collaboration and participation in activities related to online education. I also conducted interviews with leaders, teachers and technical designers, in addition to analyzing bibliographical resources and online documents. Since I completed all of the necessary procedures to be at the university as a visiting international researcher, I explained my research goals and received permission to carry out participant observation and to interact with professionals during work time.

The selection of both locals of research and participants is key to an ethnographic study and is related to the research questions formulated in advance. In this study I opted for a university where the online component was clearly a success. The university where the study was conducted appears to be an excellent place for the observation and study of both the way it processes the accessibility and integration of different higher education publics that rely on online education. Another import aspect was that the interaction processes established with the various university departments to construct its online pedagogical offering give the impression to be well-defined. Indeed, given the complex nature of the processes of learning and teaching online courses, one must consider the various stakeholders in the process. Moreover, the report, *The US Market for Self-paced eLearning Products and Services: 2010-2015 Forecast and Analysis* indicates this university as the third top institution in higher education for online provision.

While I was conducting fieldwork, the different groups I had contact with, and which played an important role in the university's online component, demonstrated to me that their different perspectives were local, in the sense that they are part of the interactions between the different groups that, together, created and implemented the online teaching component at the university.

As such, an important characteristic of the study objectives was the way it was socially networked. I was already aware that my field site was not a traditional one. After consulting websites and hyperlinks, I began to delineate my itinerary in the field, although its contours changed each time a new link was added and articulated with the previous one. Nevertheless, it was only when I started to interview faculty members in their role as teachers that I perceived how their discourse related to that of other groups at the university. What they did and are doing to teach online courses was connected to university policies, to the administrators, to their personal life, to the university dynamics for training, learning and embedding technology in teaching, and to informal relations with previous groups, people, and to university life in general.

Indeed, because my own background as an online teacher in an open university endowed me with the "intellectual and cultural affinity, indeed 'useful' knowledge, guiding [me] in new terrains and pointing out the need to modify standard fieldwork assumptions and settings" (Marcus, 1995, p.15), I felt comfortable with the skills and know-how of how to proceed, jumping from one place to another, from one person to another, and from one subject to another. In short, "I was encouraged to follow connections which were made meaningful from that setting" (Hine, 2000, p 60), that is, just "following connections" (Marcus, 1995, p. 96) and "following the people" (Marcus, 1995, p.96). I experienced different departments and sectors of university life, while the diversity of people involved provided me with myriad perspectives on how the trajectory to include and extend online pedagogical provision was developed and constructed.

As such, the social network of my object of study starts to emerge more clearly and as more multifaceted (Hine, 2000; Marcus, 1995). The "mobile ethnography" took "unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across and within sites of activity" (p. 96).

The network was taking shape. Now it was a matter of how to locate key people on the network and interview them to better learn what their questions, stories, aims, and concerns were. Following an almost snowball process, interviewees were located in different groups, duly interviewed, and data collection initiated. The faculty group was the one most familiar to me, as they were my colleagues. Although most I had never met before the interviews, we belong to the same professional group. Usually, the location of the interviews was indicated by the interviewee (e.g., cafés, offices, using skype, university hall) and lasted for an hour or more. My main intention was to understand the reasons why a faculty member, not geared towards teaching online courses, became involved with these new methodologies. I was interested in how they are trained to meet quality standards, what difficulties they faced, their relationship with students, and how they perceived students' diversity and acted to meet their expectations. I conducted in-depth interviews with 10 faculty members from different departments, who have experience in teaching online courses, and two recently retired faculty members involved in launching technology and online education on campus. The experiences of three professors without online teaching experience, one of them a programme director, were also considered. Additionally, interviews with two instructional designers were conducted, a group interview with the university online board, and a conversation with the Dean of the college (currently in charge of online pedagogical provision) was carried out.

Findings

Towards Online Education

Established in 1863, the university where this study was developed boasts around 66,000 students globally, nearly $500 million in faculty research funding, $4 billion in state-wide economic impact, and is, according to The World University Ranking (2015), one of the top 100 universities in the world.

The university online course rate of growth was 17% in 2009, while 2010 saw 45,815 enrollments on online courses, which represented an increase of 14% in comparison to 2009. Nowadays, the university boasts a wider range of educational online courses, currently over 1,500.

The population enrolled on online courses is made up of 45% of male students and 55% of female. As expected, most students live in Massachusetts (69%), with about 30% resident in other U.S. states. Students living outside the U.S. make up about 1%, and 70% of students are 34 years old or younger.

The university became interested in online delivery and Learning Management Systems (LMS) development in the early 1990s. During this period, the possibility of distance education provision was being studied by a pioneer group in "experimental technology," which was created with the aim of launching educational technology in teaching and delivering distance education courses across campus. At that time, this transdisciplinary group of 25 faculty members saw the possibilities of expanding provision domestically and internationally through distance education, which was also perceived as a way of enhancing diversity, as this method made it possible to reach more students. During this earlier period, educational technology was still in its infancy. LMS was being experimented with, in order to try online delivery courses, with this innovative and alternative mode of teaching being studied to understand how this type of technology would serve the university's aims. Another dimension of this experimental group was getting faculty and staff involved with educational technology. By the late 1990s, workshops were offered to encourage and support the use of LMS and develop websites, resulting in more and more faculty using hybrid teaching. In 1998, the first fully interactive seminar across university campuses using ICT and internet was offered. By this time, the Division of Continuing Education also attempted to offer more online provision.

In 2001, the Board of Trustees established the university's online education consortium, with the main aim, in the words of the person responsible for it, "...to serve community educational needs and increase access to a quality, affordable and internationally-recognized education." (Participant 12, personal communication, May 18, 2011). This consortium provides services related to three main components: global marketing, technology support, and services for online education programmes. From the perspective of those responsible for this consortium, the success of its mode of operation is not only due to the cooperative model used but also due to the way to the online component was paved at an institution whose quality was already recognised.

Faculty Adhesion to the Process

A large number of faculty and staff think that online courses are less prestigious than face-to-face ones and that they lack authorship of their classes' materials. Indeed, reasons for faculty and staff resistance to online teaching may include familiarity with online technologies, research constraints,

and time necessary to learn new methodologies. Moreover, an important problem is that online teaching is usually outside the faculty's full-time teaching duties, therefore representing a considerable investment for faculty and staff already overloaded with work and responsibilities.

In spite of the abovementioned scenario, there is a growing number of teachers who are either already teaching online or using digital technology to support their face-to-face teaching, which also contributes to an easier transition to a full online teaching.

It is the individual faculty member's decision to begin teaching online courses. Consequently, there is a wide range of positions and experiences among faculty regarding online teaching: faculty members that have been teaching for several years and others more recently; the ones who took the opportunity to teach online as a personal challenge and taught themselves these new methodologies and technologies; faculty who took the opportunity offered by the university and started their training, following the university's requirement to teach online; faculty who are still thinking about the issue; some faculty members who are resisting these new methodologies; others who do online teaching because they have been in love with technology for a long time and had tried it many different ways; and finally, faculty that abhor it because they cannot imagine teaching without being physically present. There is also a group of faculty whose experience with online teaching started in the early 2000s; some initiated their teaching directly at the university following a letter of invitation from the department's Dean, or from the Division of Continuing Education. Others started to teach online in other universities. Finally, among faculty members with coordination responsibilities, although they are sympathetic towards online education and attempt to implement it within programmes under their supervision, they do not have time to learn new methodologies. And others still hesitate because they think that online courses are not suitable for their students.

Training for online teaching also varies: some were self-taught as a result of research interests, others took a two-hour initiation course at the university and then continued learning themselves or took more courses. Others followed a process of gradually introducing ICT into their teaching. Others were using educative technology in their classes and then took the step of integrating ICT. The ones who began their training more recently (i.e., 2004) attended a series of short courses provided by the university. All of the faculty members and staff I interviewed considered that the initial training was insufficient and that, especially during the first year, a huge investment of time was necessary to become both familiar with the methodologies and take advantage of the technology. In the words of one faculty member, "Being an online teacher represents a lot of work and it is considered a stigma and less prestigious." (Participant 2, personal communication, May 24, 2011) However, it is interesting to note that these teachers continue to teach online every semester and some consider experience as a face-to face teacher to be essential for an online teacher, lamenting the fact that teacher education programmes do not offer enough education regarding e-learning. However, all of them are still concerned about the future, with the issues of updating new technology and methodologies, workload, and professional development being at the centre of their concerns.

Internationalization is noted throughout students' diversity in virtual classes. All the teachers interviewed reported that about a quarter of their online students are foreign nationals, either living abroad or in the U.S. Although diversity is not explicitly addressed, it is considered in course planning, mainly in welcome materials and support. As a faculty member noted, "...to work with a diverse group of people is a challenge. And in online education we do not immediately perceive differences of age, language, sex..." (Participant 5, personal communication, June 7, 2011).

Finally, although faculty members acknowledge online courses and recognize that they should improve their ties with the online university, they also pointed out that their identity is with the campus and department.

Administration Endorsement

Internationalization was the main reason for the launch of online education at this university. Today, online education provision continues to be regarded as an excellent way of achieving and taking part in the processes of internationalization, not only because of the financial benefits (international students pay higher tuition fees) but also because it is one way of innovating in higher education. As someone responsible for a college that currently promotes online education programmes and courses pointed out:

> ...provision for the global market ...is necessary for any university to reinvent itself and to grow ...although, for this to happen, there needs to be an ongoing process that involves considerable dialogue to achieve funding, partners, to offer scholarships, to create community involvement and the design and teaching of courses.... (Participant 11, personal communication, June 16, 2011)

Under pressure to increase the number of students who take online courses and facing some "faculty resistance to the online endeavor," (Participant 11, personal communication, June 16, 2011) the administration are aware of the need to implement online training and to reward faculty members who decide to teach online.

In fact, more recently in 2010, the campus under study created a new academic unit. One of its sub-units is responsible for the supervision of online education, articulating and coordinating online pedagogical provision with other colleges and departments on campus, taking care of faculty and departments' good will to develop online teaching provision. By drawing upon the work of marketing groups, it also explores certain areas to build up transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary online education programmes and courses between colleges and departments. As such, this unit is playing a greater role in the expansion of online education, while "...learning how to play the role of innovation and transparency in transdisciplinary fields" (Participant 11, personal communication, June 16, 2011).

Another dimension of this unit is implementing policies designed to encourage and support online teaching. The ongoing measures include several dimensions: technological, pedagogical, financial, and professional development. With regard to technological and pedagogical ones, in addition to promoting the idea that online teaching is new and exciting, it is also well paid, because not only is the teaching paid, like in face-to-face situations, but extra money can also be earned from copyright of teaching materials. As well, courses and workshops are provided through the Digital Learning Studio to faculty and staff who want to initiate or improve their knowledge about technological tools that can be in association with the LMS or used independently to improve face-to-face teaching, such as blogs, apps, and wikis. This service also helps faculty to enhance their pedagogy and didactical choices by working on the technological component that best fits the purposes of teaching. Awards and conferences targeting the recognition and sharing of online education experience are sponsored, as well as the use of hybrid teaching.

Finally, the unit is developing networks to support a system network that simultaneously encourages excellence in e-learning, and the launching of the scholarship of e-learning, as well as other services to support students all over the world.

Discussion

The findings show that the trajectory to online education at the university under study was prepared much in advance with a rationale that was sustained and proportional to technological progress at the time and linked to local experiences and conditions. Throughout this process, three important moments emerged: i) the creation of an experimental group in the early 1990s, which studied the technology available at the time and attempted to integrate it into the university, simultaneously investigating the possibilities of online educational provision to serve the goals of the university; ii) the creation of the University Online segment in 2001, which offered back-office services to support the technological development of online teaching, as well as marketing and development, iii) the creation, in 2010, of an independent financial and pedagogical unit that supervises, implements and develops online provision and simultaneously cares about professional development.

The experience of the past 20 years came to show appropriateness to the extent that it has allowed online provision to be sustainable, whose quality is now recognized, both nationally and internationally. It also shows that partnership and collaboration between administration and faculty has been an essential component since the beginning of the process, even more because, as Simpson (2009) remains "... few institutions have had policies that address alternate forms of scholarship or reflect the dimensions of faculty roles associated with distance education" (p.62)

Moreover, it may be noted that, in the literature on professional development of online teachers, as stated by Caplan and Graham (2008):

> A final strategic building block in the success of online course offerings is the institutional development of a process that encourages and inspires faculty to be creative in a web-based environment... It is often more meaningful, however, for faculty members to know that they will receive recognition for their willingness to engage in innovative online education activities, and that their efforts will reward them with tenure, promotion, salary merit increases, and other tangible benefits. (p 256)

Another important aspect is the integration of the online component in teaching schedules and its importance to career development. As Vrasidas and Glass (2006) remind us, "Faculty moderately participate in e-Iearning because teaching online is not well rewarded, compensated, or financially encouraged." (p. 73)

Indeed, though some faculty are already working according to this recent paradigm and coping with its new necessities and roles, at this university, as at others, both recognition and scholarship continue to be the most important issues for teacher participation, and consequently to the general success of online education (Guri-Rosenblit, 2008; Wolcott, 2003; Moreira et al., 2015).

The training pathway to become an online teacher and how each teacher does this, although dependent on personal circumstances, as well as on the motivation and conditions they consider necessary to teach the way they wish, was a multifaceted discourse where the same pattern emerged as I interviewed more teachers.

Although some faculty and staff believe that this institutional problem will be solved mostly because of the demand for online courses, meanwhile it remains a problem for the majority of teachers.

As can be observed, the component of online education has gradually been granted similar status to traditional courses at the university under analysis, and in some programmes, this condition has already been accomplished. In addition, the university is implementing measures to support training, professional development and the launch of the e-learning scholarship.

Final Considerations

In agreement with Conole (2007), we can say that online education and e-learning "is one of the key catalysts for change in current higher education" (p. 286). Indeed, from the administrators' viewpoint, as well as for some faculty and adjunct faculty, the new roles required by online education are already in place.

Within the context of higher education, the ongoing process of innovation that online courses offer, and which almost all campus-based universities are currently experiencing, is related not only to technical, methodological, and pedagogical issues inherent to the development of a critical and participatory manner, but also to the implementation of measures that contextualise online education, with all of its specific characteristics, within existing higher education policies. This is very important to promote the acquisition of institutional competences, that can allow successful responses to demands on faculty and institutions to meet the needs of different socio-cultural contexts, such as the internationalization of higher education, and the mobilization of knowledge, attitudes, and values at the individual and social levels necessary to meet the challenge of a growingly intense multicultural environment (Rey, Carette, & DeFrance Kahn, 2006). Indeed, the higher education population is also increasingly diverse, due to the use of online education, which has contributed greatly to facilitating access to a wider variety of students, particularly working adults (Sanchez & Gunawardena, 1998).

Constraints regarding online teaching gaining a similar status to face-to-face teaching in relation to tenure are still far off, as pointed out by faculty and staff members at the university. A key question is how faculty pursue the discussion and reflection on online distance education and e-learning to further democratize higher education and give access to knowledge globally. Another is how faculty take advantage of the global scenario, accelerated by online education, to push educational innovation besides technology, and to get more involved in the possibilities online education offers in terms of the internationalization and globalization of higher education.

Moreover, given that there are new educational issues concerning different higher education publics, which differ in relational aspects, as well as learning styles, expectations, and professional demands, the educational community must design new approaches and solve problems posed by the rapid social change induced in higher education. The challenge lies in the ability to recognize cultural diversity in the context of distance education and to take advantage of that diversity to design online courses that are able to successfully promote learning and increase students' capacity to fully participate in the knowledge society.

At the university under study, the trajectory began long ago and was developed via a collaborative mode of operation between administration and faculty. This strategy provided a sustainable movement toward online education. It was a discourse of inter-connectedness among different places

and groups of people, technology, students, conditions and recognition of work, professional development, and personal expectations that created the network to support online education.

It is possible to study the inclusion of the online component from different perspectives, such as that of the university's online oversight board, teachers, students, and administration, as well as novice teachers, as they are typically involved in the launch of online courses at universities. For each one of these groups, I could have gone to the field as an ethnographer and presented the "native viewpoint," providing an ethnography of a bounded group. Thus, indeed, further research is needed for this case study to discover similarities, common elements, and differences in the processes developed by the various universities in their efforts to expand online teaching provision. Specifically, it is important to understand the role of teachers' efforts in implementing online education and what the contexts and conditions of those efforts were.

Another interesting area worth further study is the experimental group created in the 1990s. It seems that this group's role was essential to establishing the foundation of a solid movement toward online education. For example, in what ways was this group related to the local conditions and university culture? What was its role in the creation of the UniversityOnline? And what was its role in setting up the services supporting teachers to imbed technology in their teaching? What did the administration think of their experience? What can we learn from this pioneer group regarding its mode of organization, innovation, relationships with other groups at the university in order to speed up internationalization?

Faculty is another dimension for further research. Studies regarding faculty at conventional universities focus on faculty resistance, both to adopting technological innovation and embracing distance teaching (Thiessen, 2001). Although considered an essential element in the development and quality of online courses, faculty perceptions and motivations regarding online education are rarely addressed in the literature (Thompson 2000; Vrasidas & Gene, 2006, p. 71). Thus, further research is necessary to improve understanding of this fundamental component in the success of online education. How will faculty face the global trend in higher education, while dealing with issues of professional development and research? Finally, students present another view that needs to be assessed regarding how a campus-based higher education institution should progress in its online provision.

Acknowledgements

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