Innovators and laggards? Faculty adoption of online distance education

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INNOVATORS AND LAGGARDS?

FACULTY ADOPTION OF ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION

by

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December 2012
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Innovators and Laggards? Faculty Adoption of Online Distance Education
be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Innovators and Laggards? Faculty Adoption of Online Distance Education

By

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Over the past decade, institutions of higher education have seen enrollments in distance education, especially in the form of online learning, proliferate in striking numbers. In fact, some traditional colleges and universities are only experiencing real institutional growth in the areas of online learning. Even though a major push to increase the availability of distance education technology has occurred, effective adoption has not always followed suit. In hopes of speeding up the diffusion process, many colleges and universities have begun to contemplate the increased integration and institutional adoption of online learning. One of the most critical factors administrators must consider is the approval and acceptance by their faculty members. In order to gain an increased understanding of the adoption process, this qualitative study describes the lived experiences and perceptions of faculty members who have chosen to adopt online distance education. Utilizing the Diffusion of Innovations theory as a conceptual framework, this case study describes nine distinct faculty members’ processes and experiences regarding the adoption of online distance education. This study focuses on why faculty members decided to adopt online distance education, their innovation-decision process, and how teaching online has impacted their role as a faculty member.

Keywords: adoption, diffusion, online, distance education, faculty
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
--Robert Frost, The Road Not Taken

In loving memory of Gerald P. Scott

First, I would like to thank my parents, Gerald and Myong Scott for supporting me in all of my educational endeavors. As the first in my family to receive a PhD, this has been a lifelong dream come true. There have also been numerous people that have been influential in the pursuit of my PhD. I would like to thank Dr. Anneli Adams, for her early leadership and guidance. Without you all of these opportunities that have been afforded to me may not have been possible, and for that I will always be grateful. I also would like to thank Dr. Vicki Rosser, my advisor and chair, for her balanced mentorship throughout the dissertation process. Dr. Rosser, thank you for your continued support and guidance. At this time, I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Kendall Hartley, Dr. Nancy Lough and Dr. LeAnn Putney for their support and feedback. I cannot forget to thank the faculty members in the Higher Education Leadership program as well as my fellow students and colleagues. Finally, I could not have accomplished any of this without my partner in crime, Susan Donoff. There were many times that I thought I would fail or not be able to continue, but you were always there urging me onward.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Overview

Enhancements to information technology have afforded institutions of higher education the ability to provide quality education at a distance, without regard to time or space. No longer are institutions restricted to traditional “brick and mortar” classrooms that require students and faculty to be present for learning to occur. New technological innovations such as computers, the Internet, email, mobile devices and learning management systems now provide students and instructors’ the ability for instant access to course materials, anytime and anywhere. This “just in time” learning provides institutions the flexibility to offer multiple courses in different formats. Moreover, technological advancements have allowed for institutional growth and increased access.

According to Gardener (2000), academic institutions need to act more rapidly and radically adopt new technologies. Therefore, it is important that colleges and universities begin to evaluate their ability to adopt online distance education and create an environment of growth and sustainability. In hopes of speeding up the diffusion process, many colleges and universities have begun to contemplate the increased integration and institutional adoption of online learning. As a result, one of the most critical factors they must consider are the perceptions and concerns of faculty members. In fact, many of the important decisions made by college and university administrators in regards to online learning are based upon their understanding of faculty acceptance (Allen & Seaman, 2011).

In order to gain a better understanding of faculty members adoption of online teaching, this qualitative study will describe the lived experiences and perceptions of
faculty members who have chosen to adopt online distance education. Utilizing the Diffusion of Innovations theory as a conceptual framework, this case study describes nine distinct faculty members’ processes and experiences regarding the adoption of online distance education. This study focuses on why faculty members decided to adopt online distance education, their innovation-decision process, and how teaching online has impacted their role as a faculty member. A cross-case analysis will also demonstrate how different faculty member’s adoption practices and perceptions compare across teaching disciplines, academic rank, academic standing, and other demographic variances.

Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the study which includes: a review of the literature, purpose of the study, research design, research questions, definition of key terms, possible limitations, and the significance of the study. The chapter begins with a brief review of the relevant scholarly research and theory on faculty members’ adoption of distance education, which includes related perceptions and concerns, as well as the conceptual framework that will be utilized. Following this review of literature, a discussion on the methods for the research design of this study will be described. The final sections of this chapter will include an overview of the research questions, a listing of the definitions of key terms, and the significance of the study.

Review of the Literature

One of the most significant characteristics of modern American society is the speed at which technology is changing and evolving. Educational technology, particularly information and mass media technology, has not only provided greater access to higher education, but has changed the way educators teach, collaborate and research (Gumport & Chun, 2005). Originally, distance education began with simple
correspondence courses delivered by the postal service; now, it has evolved into a process in which institutions offer degrees completely via online instruction (Casey, 2008). Provided this emergent context, technology has had and will continue to have a major impact on the expansion of distance education at colleges and universities (Taylor, 2001). However, even with major expenditures allocated towards the integration of information technology into the teaching and learning process, technology is being used more logistically rather than as an essential medium for delivery (Geoghegan, 1994).

Many factors have given rise to the increase in online enrollments, including: advancements in technology, changing student demographics, increases in student demand, the rise of for-profit online colleges and the impact of the current economic downturn (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Folkers, 2005; Hannan, 2005; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Lei & Gupta, 2010). According to the 2006-2007 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2008) report, the most common factors cited as affecting distance education decisions were meeting student demand for flexible schedules, providing access to non-traditional college students, increased course availability, and increased student enrollment.

A review of the literature indicates that the majority of the research on the phenomenon of faculty teaching online consists of surveys focusing on faculty members’ perceptions of online education (Bennett & Bennett, 2003; Berge, 1998; Belchier & Cucek, 2002; NEA, 2000; Shea, Pickett, & Li, 2005) and factors that may motivate or inhibit them from teaching online (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000; Shea, 2007). Other research into the phenomenon of distance education has also focused upon a comparison of the quality and instructional methods of traditional face-to-face courses to online
courses (McCarthy & Samors, 2009; Means, Toyania, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009; Russell, 1999). Furthermore, qualitative studies tend to focus more on faculty experiences teaching online and its impact on their workload (Major, 2010; Schulte, 2011; Wolcott & Betts, 1999). This section of the literature review will focus on faculty perceptions of distance education and possible motivational factors that may impact the adoption of online learning.

**Faculty Perceptions and Concerns**

Change can present a challenge to university faculty, as their culture is one of individualism and academic autonomy, while moving initiatives to online learning can cause a major change in the roles of teaching and learning (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). Through the expansion in the delivery of higher education, online learning has caused a key shift in the social organization of teaching and learning by altering the following: a change from teacher centered to learner centered, the temporality of education, process of teaching, and geographical distances (Gumport & Chun, 2005). Therefore, the rapid rise of online distance education has begun to challenge some of the previously established norms of teaching, faculty responsibilities and student roles (Dabbagh, 2004). In many instances faculty must begin to conceptualize and adapt their traditional courses to the online distance education format.

A further review of the literature suggests that faculty perceptions and concerns in the adoption of distance online education are centered around the following: an increase in workload, more required professional development and training, a higher level of technology competency, incentives and rewards, quality of instruction, and ownership of intellectual property (Folkers, 2005; Garza, 2009; Levy, 2003; Maguire, 2005; Tabata &
Johnsrud, 2008). More recently, in a study of faculty attitudes towards distance education, faculty members participation in online distance education directly results from issues associated with their skill in using technology, their attitude toward technology and distance education, and their adoption of innovations (Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008). The next section of the literature review will examine some of the motivational factors that may influence faculty adoption of online distance education.

**Motivation to Teach Online**

Teaching online can have a great impact on a faculty member’s life, which can influence their decision to adopt or reject teaching in this new medium. Although the main purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of the adoption process, it is also important to identify and comprehend motivational factors that may impact a faculty member’s decision to teach online. Multiple studies have categorized faculty motivators and inhibitors in the participation of online distance education as being either intrinsic or extrinsic factors (Betts, 1998; Meyer, 2002; Parker, 2003; Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, & Marx, 1999; Schifter, 2000). Early studies on faculty motivation to teach online found that intrinsic motivators, such as personal goals and meeting student needs, were important factors for participation (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000). In a study of faculty participators of distance education, Betts (1998) found that intrinsic factors, such as intellectual challenge, personal motivation to use technology and the ability to reach new audiences that cannot attend classes on campus had a positive effect on distance education participation. Extrinsic motivators such as credit towards promotion and tenure, recognition and awards, and merit pay did not have a significant effect on faculty participation (Betts, 1998). The next section will discuss the Diffusion of Innovations
which will provide a theoretical framework for understanding the adoption process an individual goes through when choosing to adopt something new.

*Conceptual Framework*

The adoption process consists of multiple theories described by Rogers (2003) Diffusion of Innovations, including: the innovation-decision making process, individual innovativeness, and perceived attributes of the innovation. Everett Rogers’ research on diffusion is considered one of the most important and widely used theories for understanding change and adoption (Sherry & Gibson, 2002). In varying areas and topics, Roger’s research has provided a major theoretical framework for researchers wishing to gain a greater understanding of the factors involved in the adoption process (Rogers, 2003). Some researchers have suggested that diffusion theory may be most appropriate when investigating the adoption of technology in higher education environments (Parisot, 1997). These theories will serve as the framework of this case study in order to gain a better understanding of faculty members’ adoption of online distance education.

The adoption of something new, even with apparent advantages of the innovation, is often a complicated task. In one of the most influential diffusion studies of all time, Ryan and Gross (1943) found that even though a new hybrid corn seed developed by agricultural scientists yielded an increased harvest of twenty percent per acre, the typical farmer moved slowly from awareness to full adoption. Why were farmers so slow to adopt the new corn seed, even with a perceived advantage over their current methods? Interviews were conducted in order to discover when the hybrid corn seed was adopted and the process leading to the adoption of the innovation (Ryan & Gross, 1943). In their
study, Ryan and Gross (1943) found that the diffusion process is dependent upon interpersonal communication and the social modeling by individuals who were early adopters of the hybrid seed. According to Lowery and DeFleur (1995), one of the most important findings was “the adoption of innovation depends on some combination of well-established interpersonal ties and habitual exposure to mass communication” (p. 127). Because of their classic study, Ryan and Gross (1943) created the paradigm and customary research methodology that has been used by future diffusion investigators.

The process of adopting new innovations, similar to online distance education, has been studied for more than thirty years (Rogers, 2003). Everett Rogers’ research on the diffusion of innovations is considered one of the most important and widely used theories for understanding the change and adoption process (Sherry & Gibson, 2002). In varying areas and topics, Roger’s (2003) research has provided a major theoretical framework for researchers wishing to gain a greater understanding of the factors and processes involved in the adoption of something new. Past adoptions of new technology in education have provided opportunities to address specific problems or make tasks easier and more efficient (Carr Jr., 1999).

An exploration of faculty members’ innovation-decision making process of online distance education may provide university administrators with an understanding as to the factors that lead to the adoption of online distance education. One of the major strengths of the Diffusion of Innovations theory is the broad foundation that it affords when trying to understand the factors that may influence the choices an individual makes about an innovation (Straub, 2009). Therefore, diffusion of innovations may provide a theoretical explanation for adoption, and could offer insight into how to expedite the diffusion
process based on what is learned about those faculty members who have already adopted online learning. In addition, the identification and recruitment of possible early adopters and champions of online distance education can enhance peer-to-peer communication channels and allow the diffusion to reach critical mass (Hansen & Salter, 2001; Rogers, 2003). As a result of the study it is also imperative to understand what consequences the adoption of this new innovation may have on faculty and institutions (Rogers, 2005).

A review of the literature reveals that distance education has especially been impacted, as the evolution of technology has created a new paradigm in the realm of teaching and learning. In today’s educational world, faculty and students have the ability to share and communicate from a distance with the touch of a button. With this evolution of new teaching and learning, the focus remains on faculty members’ acceptance and utilization of this new medium. Therefore, it becomes critically important to begin to explore the adoption process by the early adopters that have already made the decision to teach online. Why have they chosen to teach online? Why do they continue to teach online? By gaining a better understanding of faculty adopters’ decision making process as well as their perceptions of online distance education, we may be able to answer these questions.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this multiple-case study is twofold: first, to explore and describe the circumstances leading to the adoption of online distance education for faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university; and second, to discover faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online by those who have adopted online distance education. This study will take place at a four-year, large public,
doctoral-granting research university (hereafter referred to as Early Majority University) located in the Western Region of the United States, and will focus on select faculty members that currently teach online.

**Research Design**

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative methods can be used to gain a new perspective about what is already known or to gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively. Creswell (2007) describes qualitative research as “a process in which research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 37). He also suggests in studying this problem, researchers should use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, collection of data in natural settings, and a data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns and themes. Qualitative research methods allow for a deeper understanding through the stories and words of the participants rather than the micro-analysis of variables (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 2002).

In this descriptive and comparative case study, the aim is to uncover the core of the faculty experience. According to Merriam (2002), insights gained from case studies can help directly influence policy, practice and future research. Yin (2009) describes a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (p. 18). Yin’s (2009) case study design allows the researcher to engage in the necessary ethnographic work that helps delineate the event or concept from the setting.
According to Yin (2009), typically a case study design is most appropriate when research is used to answer “how” and “why” questions. In this study the main focus is on how faculty adopted online distance education and why they chose to adopt. Therefore, in this case, by exploring and describing the lived experiences of faculty members, this study hopes to identify common themes and shared experiences among the sample of faculty members. In addition, the ability to compare adoption patterns and opinions from multiple faculty adopters will allow for a more robust and compelling study.

Merriam (1998) suggests that in order to get at the essence or the basic structure of the experience, the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection. Yin (2009) agrees, stating “interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs or behavioral events” (p. 108). In order for each participant to define their world in their own unique ways, open ended questions focusing on “how” and “why” they adopted will be the main emphasis of the interviews (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). Each participant will be interviewed approximately 1 to 2 hours and recorded using a digital recorder.

The analysis of data will be an extensive process. According to Glesne (1999), “data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with data, you describe, create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories” (p.130). In order to ensure accuracy, the interviews with participants will be transcribed immediately after each session. While still fresh from the interview, the immediate transcription allows for the interviewer to make hand notes in regards to the participant’s demeanor, mood, and any other important illustrations that may have occurred (Merriam,
Some minor clarification and note-checking of the transcription will be done as follow-up. The transcripts will then be analyzed and used in the coding of data and the establishment of common themes.

After an analysis of data, the next step would be to construct categories or themes that capture a reoccurrence of any type of dominant pattern (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). According to Merriam (1998), categories and subcategories are most commonly constructed through the constant comparative method of data analysis. Therefore the unit of data analysis will be sorted into groupings that have something in common with one another. In addition, the categories of this study will also originate from a review of common themes within the literature and other similar research studies. In the manual coding of data it is important to recognize any patterns that begin to emerge. Patterns can be reflected by a visual matrix based upon categories generated from the theory and the frequency of themes that emerge during the interviews.

The rationale for the selection of the site was based upon the institution’s early majority level of adoption of online distance education. In the fall of 2011, approximately 12,756 students were enrolled in online courses, which comprised of about thirty-eight percent of the total 33,539 students enrollment at the institution (Institutional Website, 2012). In addition, approximately 675 online courses were taught by 239 individual full and part-time faculty members (Institutional Website, 2012). According to the institutional common data set for 2011-12, there were 1,259 full and part-time faculty members (Institutional Website, 2012). Rogers’ (2003) diffusion S-curve would classify the faculty 19% adoption rate for the institution in the “early majority” category.
Therefore, for the purposes of this study the aforementioned university will be referred to as Early Majority University.

![Graph showing EMU Institutional Faculty Adopters]

*Figure 1. Early Majority University institutional faculty adopters*

Furthermore, like many other 4-year public institutions, Early Majority University is facing economic and financial hardships. Due to substantial budget reduction issues, Early Majority University is representative of other typical 4-year public institutions facing fiscal uncertainty. Some similarly situated institutions have begun to express the possibility of adopting more online courses in order to increase enrollments and generate more revenue (Carroll-Barfield, Smith, Prince, & Campbell, 2005). Thus, this case was chosen at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university with an enrollment of approximately 27,000 students that could be considered a typical institution of size and stature.
Research Questions

A review of the relevant literature indicates that there is a gap in the description of the adoption process of online distance education by faculty members. In order to shed some light on this under researched topic, the following set of research questions will provide guidance for the establishment of data collection and analysis of the study.

1. Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?
2. How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time?
3. How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?
4. How do the faculty members’ adoption experiences and perceptions compare with one another?

The first research question focuses on the faculty members’ decision-making process to adopt online distance education, while the next two questions focus more on their perceptions of online distance education as a teaching medium. The final research question hopes to show how the experiences and opinions of multiple faculty members are different or similar.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions are presented for the clarification of terms used throughout this study:

*Adoption* – “A decision to make full use of an innovation as the best course of action available” (Rogers, 2003, p. 21). 

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**Diffusion** – “A process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” (Rogers, 2003, p.5).

**Distance Education** – “The teacher and the student are separated geographically so that face-to-face communication is absent; communication is accomplished instead by one or more technological media, most often electronic (interactive television, satellite television, computers, and the like” (AAUP, 1999).

**Early Adopter (Respect)** – “The early adopter is respected by his or her peers, and is the embodiment of successful, discrete use of new ideas” (Rogers, 2003, p.283).

**Early Majority (Deliberate)** – “The early majority adopt new ideas just before the average members of a system. They may be deliberate for some time before completely adopting a new idea” (Rogers, 2003, p. 283-284).

**Individual Innovativeness** – “The degree to which an individual or other unit of adoption is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of a social system” (Rogers, 2003, p.22).

**Innovation** – “An idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption” (Rogers, 2003, p. 12).

**Innovation-Decision Making Process** – “the process in which an individual decides to adopt or reject the innovation” (Rogers, 2003).

**Innovator (Venturesome)** – “The salient value of the innovator is venturesomeness, due to a desire for the rash, the daring, and the risky” (Rogers, 2003, P.283).

**Laggards (Traditional)** – “Laggards are last in a social system to adopt an innovation. Laggards tend to be suspicious of innovations and change agents. Their
innovation-decision process is relatively lengthy, with adoption and use lagging far behind awareness-knowledge for a new idea” (Rogers, 2003, p. 284).

*Late Majority (Skeptical)* – “The late majority adopts new ideas just after the average member of a system. Innovations are approached with a skeptical and cautious air, and the late majority do not adopt until most others in their system have already done so” (Rogers, 2003, p.284).

*Online Learning* – “A subset of distance education, in which content delivery and communication are achieved primarily through the use of computers connected to the internet” (Watson, 2008, p.2).

**Limitations**

In a research design, limitations to the study are an expected occurring phenomenon. As such, this qualitative study is limited by scope and methodology. Within the scope of this study are one single institution and the faculty members that have chosen to teach online. This small pool of participants only comprise of one particular view in the adoption of online learning under a specific set of circumstances. This particular view may not be generalizable to all individuals under different circumstances. Participants will also be asked to recollect circumstances that may have occurred in the past, and this recollection may contain gaps as individuals do not always remember the minute details of things that happened.

Some limitations are inherent within the qualitative methods that have been selected. Many qualitative studies can be time consuming, especially during the interviews, transcriptions, data analysis and interpretations of the study. Furthermore, the data collection for this study is reliant upon the conversations and interviews with
selected participants. Therefore, the quality of the study is dependent upon the researcher’s ability to ask the right probing interview questions in order to elicit responses that align to theory. In addition, the process of converting interview data into robust and descriptive analytic content is based upon the researcher’s ability to identify and analyze themes and ideas.

Significance of Study

Over the past decade, institutions of higher education have seen enrollments in distance education, especially in the form of online learning, increase in striking numbers (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Parsad & Lewis, 2008). In fact, some traditional colleges and universities are only experiencing real institutional growth in the areas of online learning. In 2009, student enrollment growth in online courses was 21.1%, compared to an overall enrollment growth rate of 1.2% in public higher education (Allen & Seaman, 2010). According to the November 2010 Sloan Consortium report, estimates on the increase of students taking at least one course online from 2002 to 2009 have seen a compound annual growth of 19% (Allen & Seaman, 2010). In the fall of 2002, approximately 1.6 million students were taking a course online; by 2009 that figure had dramatically increased to 5.6 million students (Allen & Seaman, 2010). As such, some may consider online education as one of the fastest growing educational endeavors in United States higher education.

Even though major push to increase the availability of distance education technology has occurred, effective adoption has not always followed suit (Wallhaus, 2000). As many college and universities begin to contemplate the increased integration and institutional adoption of online learning, one of the most critical factors they must
consider is acceptance by their faculty members. Many of the important decisions in regards to online learning made by college and university administrators are based upon their understanding of faculty perceptions (Allen & Seaman, 2008). In fact, some have suggested that the success and failure of online-based education is primarily a result of faculty acceptance (Lynch, 2002). Numerous faculty, whether they are relatively new or seasoned veterans, approach teaching online with several concerns regarding the quality of online course design, its development and delivery (Maguire, 2009).

Through an analysis of faculty perceptions and the innovation-adoption process, it may be possible to contribute to the research on the adoption of online education. Some researchers have contended that taking a qualitative approach may be useful and according to Major (2010), “investigating how faculty experience online teaching is critical to understanding new practices and patterns of behavior that occur in the technology-mediated environment” (p.2161). Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of the circumstances leading to the adoption and continued use of online distance education, this study will use thick, rich narrative to describe and explain the lived experiences of faculty members. Through an investigation of the lived experiences of faculty members during the innovation-adoption process and their perceptions of online distance education, this study will help support administrators as they begin to contemplate or implement online distance education at their institutions.

**Summary**

Chapter one has provided a brief overview of the research topic and introduced the basic principle of the study and its design. In an effort to gain a better understanding of the adoption and continued use of online distance education, the following sections
were included in this chapter: a brief summary of the relevant literature, an explanation of the conceptual framework, the purpose of conducting this study, research design and methodology, research questions, definition of key terms, limitations, and the significance of the study. Chapter two will provide a more in-depth review of the related literature, which includes a brief history of distance education, research on faculty perceptions of online teaching, and their motivation to adopt or reject. The following chapter also provides a succinct description of the diffusion of innovations that will provide a theoretical framework to support and guide the study.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

As many colleges and universities begin to contemplate the increased integration and institutional adoption of online distance education, one of the most critical factors they must consider are the perceptions and concerns of faculty members. Many of the important decisions made by college and university administrators in regards to online learning are based upon their understanding of faculty acceptance (Allen & Seaman, 2010). Some have even suggested that the success and failure of online-based education is primarily a result of faculty acceptance (Clair & Baker, 2003; Lynch, 2002). In fact, at the departmental level, faculty commitment and buy-in are essential in order to make the move to distance delivery (Schauer, Rockwell, Fritz, & Marx, 2005). Numerous faculty, whether they are relatively new or seasoned veterans, approach teaching online with varying opinions regarding the quality of online course design, its development and delivery (Maguire, 2009). Therefore, the reluctance of faculty to use technology is considered one of the biggest obstacles in the adoption of online learning (Bennett & Bennett, 2003).

Through an analysis of faculty perceptions and the innovation-adoption process, it may be possible to contribute to the research on the adoption of online education. Some researchers have contended that taking a qualitative approach may be useful and according to Major (2010), “investigating how faculty experience online teaching is critical to understanding new practices and patterns of behavior that occur in the technology-mediated environment” (p.2161). Therefore, in order to gain a better
understanding of the circumstances leading to the adoption and continued use of online
distance education, this study will use thick, rich narrative to describe and explain the
lived experiences of faculty members. Through an investigation of the lived experiences
of faculty members during the innovation-adoption process and their perceptions of
online distance education, this study will help support administrators as they begin to
contemplate or implement online distance education at their institutions.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant scholarly research and theory on
faculty members’ adoption of technology and distance education, related perceptions and
motivational factors, and the diffusion of innovations. This chapter begins with an
overview of literature that recounts the history of distance education followed by a
discussion of the varying definitions’ of online distance education. Following this review
of the historical context and varying definitions of online distance education, the next
section of the literature review focuses on faculty perception and motivational factors that
may impact the adoption of online learning. The final section of the literature review
provides a detailed description of the conceptual framework that will guide this research
study.

The History of Distance Education

One of the most significant characteristics of modern American society is the
speed at which technology is changing and evolving. Educational technology,
particularly information and mass media technology, has not only provided greater access
to higher education, but has changed the way educators teach, collaborate and research
(Gumport & Chun, 2005). Originally, distance education began with simple
correspondence courses delivered by the postal service; now, it has evolved into a process
in which institutions offer degrees completely via online instruction (Casey, 2008).

Provided this emergent context, technology has had and will continue to have a major impact on the expansion of distance education at colleges and universities (Taylor, 2001). However, even with major expenditures allocated towards the integration of information technology into the teaching and learning process, technology is being used more logistically rather than as an essential medium for delivery (Geoghegan, 1994).

A review of the literature illustrates that historically, the growth and success of distance education is based upon three major factors; the thirst for education, the need to enhance and democratize accessibility to higher education, and an increase in the development and availability of technology (Casey, 2008; Gumport & Chun, 2005; Larreammendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Prewitt, 1998; and Schulte, 2011). For those students who desire continued learning, but are unable to attend conventional schooling, either because of geographic or socio-economic distances, the advancements in technology have allowed distance education to meet their needs. Although today distance learning is mostly associated with online learning management systems that deliver course content with ease of a “mouse click”, their basic premise remains the same. Historically, the premise of distance education has been to reduce the burden from traditional colleges and universities, lower the cost of education, and create alternative opportunities for learning (Holmberg, 1977).

*The Evolution of Distance Education*

Different forms of distance education have existed in the realm of academia for over 100 years (Casey, 2008; Gumport & Chun, 2005; Larreammendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Prewitt, 1998; Schulte, 2011). In her research into the origins of
distance education, Matthews (1999) identified and categorized the evolution of distance education into three distinct divisions: early correspondence courses, limited media enhanced courses, and fully integrated courses. Taylor (2001) also classified distance education into five distinctive dimensions or models: correspondence model, multi-media model, tele-learning model, flexible learning model and the intelligent flexible learning model. These different manifestations of distance education run parallel to advancements in varying technologies that have helped shape how we classify distance education today.

*Distance Education: The Correspondence Years*

The early development of correspondence courses coincides with the introduction of the United States Postal Service’s free delivery service, which included rural areas (Prewitt, 1998). The correspondence course is considered the earliest form of distance education, utilizing mail as a means to deliver instruction over a distance. In 1852, the Pitman Shorthand training program delivered innovative stenographic practices to women throughout the United States (Casey, 2008; Matthews, 1999). Secretaries seeking expanded learning would use the U.S. Postal Service in order to mail their homework to the Stenographic Institute. After the completion of the required coursework, the secretaries would then receive a certificate in stenographic short-hand skills (Casey, 2008). Although not in a traditional university setting, this format of providing distance education and certification to working adults formed the foundation for today’s for-profit education model.

Another of the earliest correspondence courses was the Ticknor Society to Encourage Studies at Home, which was mostly utilized most by women seeking access to higher education (Agassiz, 1971; Casey, 2008). In 1873, Anna Ticknor, the daughter of a
prominent Boston scholar and Harvard professor, founded the society in order to provide women with an opportunity to pursue a liberal education. Following acceptance into the program, the student would choose from six different areas of study (English, German, French, history, science, and art). Correspondence would then occur between the instructor and the student; the learning was self-paced and assignments completed at the student’s leisure. Therefore, the student was responsible for going over the assignments and submitting any work that was required (Bergmann, 2001). Due to increased access for women across class barriers, the Ticknor Society expanded and provided distance education to approximately 10,000 women over a 24-year period (Agassiz, 1971; Casey, 2008).

Traditional institutions of higher education were also quick to jump on board as William Rainey Harper developed correspondence courses for the Chautauqua movement and the University of Chicago (Larreammendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). Harper developed the first correspondence program in Chautauqua, NY that eventually led to the New York’s authorization of correspondence courses and the development of the “Correspondence University” in Ithaca, NY (Casey, 2008). As the first president of the University of Chicago, Harper is considered the founder of university correspondence instruction that involved teaching by mail (Holmberg, 1986). Through the Department of Home-Study, students could take as much as one-third of their coursework required for a bachelor’s degree through correspondence courses (Larreammendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). Eventually in 1891, this new experience of correspondence courses would be replicated at the University of Wisconsin and begin to expand within colleges and universities throughout the world (Watkins, 1991).
Distance Education and Mass Media

In the early 1920’s broadcast radio provided another medium for distance education (Hew, 2004; Prewitt, 1998; Casey, 2008). No longer was coursework restricted to the mail as the radio became educationally viable due to its low cost, ability to bring dramatic feeling to the classroom, and the use of listening that helped foster imagination (Dale, 1969). From 1918 to 1946, educational licenses were granted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to over 200 colleges, including the University of Salt Lake City, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of Minnesota (Casey, 2008). Although it seemed very popular, instructional radio never really caught on, and by 1940 only one college-level course was available by radio (Casey, 2008). The decline of the use of radio as an instructional tool led to the eventual use of instructional television.

The use of instructional television first began in 1934 when the University of Iowa started to broadcast courses by television, and by 1953 the university had created the first instructional television station (Berg, 2002; Casey, 2008). With the invention of the television, other universities began to expand their distance learning opportunities by broadcasting courses in this new media format. In fact, during this time the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) provided twenty channels that would be available to institutions at a low cost for the distribution of courses (Casey, 2008). In a famous quote, Thomas Edison said, “I believe that the motion picture is destined to revolutionize our educational systems and that in a few years it will supplant largely, if not entirely, the use of textbooks” (as cited in Albach, Berdahl, Gumport, 2005, p397). Despite Edison’s prediction, the use of television as an instructional medium for distance education never
really caught on, and by the 1960’s it had in fact, abated (Hew, 2004). In the late 1960’s, de-emphasis of televised instruction began as researchers discovered the limited educational benefits of televised delivery versus traditional classroom instruction (Berg, 2002). Eventually, the uneven flow of communication between the student and faculty member became a major issue, but that was about to change with the invention of the computer microprocessor and the explosion of the World Wide Web (Casey, 2008).

Distance Education Today

Upon examination of the history and future of distance education, Uhlig (2002) suggests the emergence of an affordable personal computer, the expansion of the internet, and the acceptance of accreditation agencies has encouraged the rapid growth of internet-based courses. In the early 1980’s the first personal computer made its introduction to education, enabling individual’s access to information and data by computing ingenuity (Van Dusen, 1997). Following the invention of the computer, distance education reached critical mass with the development of the World Wide Web, as the internet became the newest instructional frontier (Berg, 2002; Casey, 2008; Hew, 2004; Van Dusen, 1997). The World-Wide Web provided an opportunity for all computers to link to one another and share information from any place in the entire world. As such, the two-way communication problems that limited distance education in the past were no longer an issue, as synchronous and asynchronous communication tools such as email, online discussions, and video chatting became reality.

Institutions have been quick to jump on board, and as of 2001, 98% of U.S. public schools were connected to the internet (Cattagni & Westat, 2001). Over the past decade, institutions of higher education have seen enrollments in distance education, especially in
the form of online learning, increase in striking numbers (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Parsad & Lewis, 2008). In fact, some traditional colleges and universities are only experiencing real institutional growth in the areas of online learning. In 2009, student enrollment growth in online courses was 21.1%, compared to an overall enrollment growth rate of 1.2% in public higher education (Allen & Seaman, 2010). According to the November 2010 Sloan Consortium report, estimates on the increase of students taking at least one course online from 2002 to 2009 have seen a compound annual growth of 19% (Allen & Seaman, 2010). In the fall of 2002, approximately 1.6 million students were taking a course online; by 2009 that figure had dramatically increased to 5.6 million students (Allen & Seaman, 2010). As such, some may consider online education as one of the fastest growing educational endeavors in United States higher education. Even though there has been a major push to increase the availability of distance education technology, effective adoption has not always followed suit (Wallhaus, 2000). Unfortunately, although major expenditures have been allocated towards the integration of information technology into the teaching and learning process, the technology is being used more logistically rather than as an essential medium for delivery (Geoghegan, 1994).

Many factors have given rise to the increase in online enrollments, including: advancements in technology, changing student demographics, increases in student demand, the rise of for-profit online colleges and the impact of the current economic downturn (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Folkers, 2005; Hannan, 2005; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Lei & Gupta, 2010). According to the 2006-2007 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2008) report, the most common factors cited as affecting distance education decisions were meeting student demand for flexible schedules,
providing access to non-traditional college students, increased course availability, and increased student enrollment. The Medical College of Georgia has turned to distance education as a way to increase their enrollments and be able to deliver high-tech education to its students (Carroll-Barfield, Smith, Prince, & Campbell, 2005). Therefore, today’s need for online distance education is not much different than its original intentions of providing access and an ability to reach students beyond the classroom walls.

**Defining Distance Education**

Although distance education has taken many forms, in order to comprehend the historical context it is important to recognize and understand the varying definitions that help define distance education (Casey, 2008; Matthews, 1999). From the early days of postal correspondence courses to today’s boom in virtual learning environments there are many different definitions that have been used to describe this educational form, such as: independent study, correspondence education, correspondence study, home schooling, home study, external study, teaching at a distance, off campus study, open learning, outreach education, e-learning, online learning and many others (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Matthews, 1999; Schulte, 2011).

Due to the varying definitions found in the literature, Schulte (2011) separated the evolution of distance education based upon four categories: traditional education, geographic distance, autonomy, and teaching and learning. As one of the earliest distance education researchers, Holmberg (1986) believed that distance education was an individual activity that was done by students at home or on their free time, stating: “distance education includes the various forms of study at all levels which are not under
the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture
rooms on the same premises” (p.26). Tabata and Johnsrud (2008) created a more modern
definition, which states: “distance education uses technology to deliver instruction and
learning freed from the geographical and time constraints associated with face-to-face
instruction” (p. 626).

The 1999 Amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965 set forth the
legislative definition of distance education as follows:

The term ‘distance education’ means an educational process that is characterized
by the separation, in time or place, between instructor and student. Such terms
may include courses offered principally through the use of: 1) television, audio, or
computer transmission, such as open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave,
or satellite transmission; 2) audio or computer conferencing; 3) video cassettes or
discs; or 4) correspondence (NCES, 1999, p.56).

Rawson-Jones (1974) disliked the word “distance education” but agreed to the term as
the verbiage “distance teaching” put too much emphasis on the professor, while “distance
learning” unduly stressed the role of the student. The term distance education seems to
combine the two, and makes for a satisfactory compromise (Schulte, 2011). Although
many definitions exist that describe distance education, the fact remains that they all are
similar in that instruction is performed over a geographic distance that physically
separates the faculty member and the student (Davis & Meyer, 1999; Holmberg, 1986;

For the purposes of this study, I will adapt the AAUP (1999) definition of
distance education or distance learning, which states: “the teacher and the student are
separated geographically so that face-to-face communication is absent; communication is
accomplished instead by one or more technological media, most often electronic
(interactive television, satellite television, computers, and the like)”. A slight
modification to the previously mentioned definition can be accomplished by adding the online component. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, all references to distance learning, online education, and distance education will be encompassed by the phrase “online distance education”.

**Research on Faculty and Distance Education**

A review of the literature indicates that the majority of the research on the phenomenon of faculty teaching online consists of surveys focusing on faculty members’ perceptions of online education (Bennett & Bennett, 2003; Berge, 1998; Belchier & Cucek, 2002; NEA, 2000; Shea, Pickett, & Li, 2005) and factors that may motivate or inhibit them from teaching online (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000; Shea, 2007). Other research into the phenomenon of distance education has also focused upon a comparison of the quality and instructional methods of traditional face-to-face courses to online courses (McCarthy & Samors, 2009; Means, Toyania, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009; Russell, 1999). Qualitative studies tend to focus more on faculty experiences teaching online and its impact on their workload (Major, 2010; Schulte, 2011; Wolcott & Betts, 1999). This section of the literature review will focus on faculty perceptions of distance education and possible motivational factors that may impact the adoption of online learning.

**Faculty Perceptions of Online Distance Education**

According to Fullan (1982), the educational change process begins with what teachers think and then what they do. Change can present a challenge to university faculty, as their culture is one of individualism and academic autonomy, while moving initiatives to online learning can cause a major change in the roles of teaching and
learning (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). Through the expansion in the delivery of higher education, online learning has caused a key shift in the social organization of teaching and learning by altering the following: a change from teacher centered to learner centered, the temporality of education, process of teaching, and geographical distances (Gumport & Chun, 2005). Therefore, the rapid rise of online distance education has begun to challenge some of the previously established norms of teaching, faculty responsibilities and student roles (Dabbagh, 2004). In many instances faculty must begin to conceptualize and adapt their traditional courses to the online distance education format. In a study of Boise State faculty members that taught online, Belchier and Cucek (2002) found when changing from an in-class to a distance education course, faculty reported there was a need to change the processes rather than the content of the course. The greatest impact was on class discussions and interactions with students.

A phenomenological study by Crawley, Fewell, and Sugar (2009), investigated one faculty member as he shifted from face-to-face to online instruction. The subject of the study was a senior science educator with 39 years of teaching experience who held a doctorate in science education and the rank of Professor. For 35 years before teaching online, he taught the same undergraduate and graduate-level science courses in the face to face environment and for the last three years he began teaching courses offered exclusively online. As enrollments began waning, the department began to seek alternative means of program growth. Therefore, the professor made the decision to teach online in order to “maintain and enhance the existing master’s degree program in science education” (p.169). The senior faculty member viewed teaching online to be something new, which would allow him some new personal and professional challenges
and also possibilities for new levels of intellectual engagement, reward, and scholarship.

Although in the beginning he encountered many technical challenges, he began to adapt
his instruction and initially became a leader in the department’s use of technology. He
also discovered that the online environment began to offer a higher level of interaction
with his students than in the traditional classroom.

Many studies suggest that barriers do exist for faculty members regarding their
participation in teaching online. In fact, Maguire (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of
thirteen studies, which examined the overall perceptions and attitudes of faculty towards
teaching via online distance education. The findings of Maguire’s (2005) study revealed
the following:

Concerns of faculty regarding the participation in teaching online include a lack
of standards for an online course, the threat of fewer jobs, and a decline in usage
of full-time faculty which faculty believe results in a decline in quality for faculty.
In addition, faculty note lack of time, lack of institutional support, lack of
scholarly respect in areas of promotion and tenure, and a lack of training as other
obstacles in participating in distance education. (p.3)

A further review of the literature suggests that faculty concerns and perceptions in the
adoption of online distance education are also centered around a need for more
professional development and training, a higher level of faculty technology competency
(Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008), increase in incentives and rewards (Belchier & Cucek, 2002;
Green, Alejandro, & Brown, 2009), and quality of instruction (Betts, 1998; Valentine,
2002; Wichersham & McElhany, 2010; Wilson, 2001). Figure 2 shown below is a
combination of the aforementioned studies representing different faculty perceptions and
concerns regarding online distance education.
Figure 2. Compilation of faculty perceptions and concerns

Quality of Online Instruction

A review of the literature revealed one constant theme which concentrated on the concerns of educators on the quality of online instruction versus the traditional classroom. Some research has indicated that negative perceptions of faculty towards distance education exist based upon the idea that it is not as credible or equivalent to traditional classroom education (Tick, Patrick, & Costin, 2005). Other studies propose that online distance education may be equal or superior to traditional classroom instruction (Russell, 1999; Means, Toyania, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009). In fact, a compilation of studies in the 1990’s found that there was no significant difference in student outcomes between distance and face-to-face instruction (Russell, 1999). Furthermore, in 2009, the U.S. Department of Education conducted a meta-analysis of
online learning and revealed that online students outperformed students in traditional face-to-face courses (Means et al., 2009). Still, the quality of online instruction and learning is one of the major concerns of faculty members (Betts, 1998; Valentine, 2002; Wichersham & McElhany, 2010; Wilson, 2001). In a National Education Association (2000) survey, approximately fifty percent of the faculty expressed negative or cautious feelings towards distance education. A more recent survey of faculty perceptions found that seventy percent of those surveyed rated learning outcomes for online courses as inferior or somewhat inferior (McCarthy & Samors, 2009).

Academic leadership perceptions about the quality of learning outcomes for online courses, in comparison to face-to-face courses, have gradually changed in a positive direction. According to the Sloan Consortium report (Allen & Seaman, 2010), over seventy percent of academic leaders in public institutions report that online is as good or superior to face-to-face instruction. Although most of the research in regard to the quality of online instruction has been positive, this has not influenced faculty at traditional colleges and universities to adopt this new medium (Geoghegan, 1994). One study found that although eighty percent of public 4-year colleges currently make course management tools available to their faculty members, approximately twenty percent of faculty members’ actually use them in their course (Lynch, 2002). According to Jacobsen (1997), “universities are in a situation where there is widespread adoption of instructional technology by innovators and early adopters, but limited adoption by mainstream faculty”.

Unfortunately, a review of the literature reveals there is no consensus regarding the quality of online instruction versus traditional face-to-face instruction. As this study
will concentrate on the adoption process, it is important to identify the perceptions and concerns of faculty. This is by no means considered an exhaustive review, as there are numerous studies that concentrate on perceptions and concerns and most of them determining similar results. Although it is important to understand the perceptions of faculty members’ it is also crucial to also begin to identify motivational factors that may lead to the eventual adoption of online learning. The next section of the literature review will examine some of the motivational factors that may influence faculty adoption of online distance education.

Motivation to Teach Online

Teaching online can have a great impact on a faculty member’s life, which can influence their decision to adopt or reject teaching in this new medium. Although the main purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of the diffusion and adoption process, it is also important to identify and comprehend motivational factors that may impact a faculty member’s decision to teach online. For example, many faculty members participating in online instruction have reported that preparing and teaching an online course requires more instructional time than the traditional classroom approach (Mayadas, Bourne, & Bacsich, 2009). This added instructional and preparation time can have a huge impact on a faculty member’s decision to proceed with the adoption process. Therefore, before trying to comprehend and identify the adoption process, it is important to recognize factors that motivate a faculty member to adopt online teaching even with the apparent barriers and disadvantages. This section of the literature review will briefly discuss identified motivational factors that lead to the initial adoption and continued implementation of online distance education.
In 1924 (Roethlisberger, 1941), a team of researchers working for the Western Electric company went to their Hawthorne plant in order to study the ways to improve the productivity of employees. These early experiments were the beginning of modern theories in organizational behavior and motivation (Ott, 2008). The Hawthorne study indicated that the employees were very complex individuals and that multiple variables can influence an individual’s motivation (Roethlisberger, 1941). Therefore, it became important for theorists to begin to understand that human beings are multifaceted individuals with very different desires and motivations.

Many factors may or may not motivate faculty to adopt online distance education. In order to gain a better understanding of the motivation of faculty members it is important to understand basic concepts on the theory of motivation. Some faculty may receive intrinsic or internal motivation such as: personal goals, pride, and desire to help; while others may experience extrinsic or external motivation such as: financial gain, public recognition or social stature. The hallmark for the theory of motivation begins with Abraham Maslow, whose early work on motivation, even after continued criticism, is still referred to as the basis for motivational theory (Ott, 2008).

In his 1943 article entitled “A Theory of Human Motivation,” Maslow (1987) theorized that human actions are directed towards goal attainment and that motivational structures exist within all humans. As lower levels are satisfied, they no longer drive the behavior and are no longer motivators (Maslow, 1987). Maslow (1987) theorized that all humans have five basic levels of needs that have been represented in a hierarchy of needs. The four lower levels of the hierarchy are considered basic physiological needs and are often referred to as deficiency needs, due to the fact that they motivate people to
act only when they are not met to some degree. The top level, self-actualization, is considered a growth need because individuals are always striving to satisfy this need. Maslow defined these needs as “goal states” that motivate and drive people to increase activities to reduce tension (Rouse, 2004).

Physiological needs are the lowest and most basic level of the hierarchy and are considered to be things such as food, water and oxygen. Safety needs are often referred to the need for shelter and the protection from harm, which could include the unknown. Belongingness needs refer to the need to be social and part of a group, as well as the need to love and be loved by others. Esteem needs are considered how one feels good about oneself, which includes self-respect and self-esteem. Esteem also includes the desire for reputation or recognition. The final and top level of motivation, self-actualization, Maslow (1987) defines as “the desire for self-fulfillment, namely, the tendency for him to become more actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming” (p.383). A review of the literature indicates that faculty members may be motivated by the higher levels of Maslow’s Hierarchy (esteem and self-actualization) to adopt online distance education (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000; Shea, 2007).

Faculty Motivational Factors

Multiple studies have categorized faculty motivators and inhibitors in the participation of online distance education as being either intrinsic or extrinsic factors (Betts, 1998; Meyer, 2002; Parker, 2003; Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, & Marx, 1999; Schifter, 2000). Early studies on faculty motivation to teach online found that intrinsic motivators, such as personal goals and meeting student needs, were important factors for
participation (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2000). In a study of faculty participators of distance education, Betts (1998) found that intrinsic factors, such as intellectual challenge, personal motivation to use technology and the ability to reach new audiences that cannot attend classes on campus had a positive effect on distance education participation. Extrinsic motivators such as credit towards promotion and tenure, recognition and awards, and merit pay did not have a significant effect on faculty participation (Betts, 1998). A study by Schifter (2002) also found that intrinsic motivators such as the personal motivation to use technology, opportunities for faculty to develop new ideas, the possibility to improve teaching, ability to offer diverse course offerings, and greater flexibility for students had a positive impact on faculty motivation to teach online.

The study by Betts (1998) describes the top inhibiting factors towards teaching online as being more extrinsic. According to the study, the top factors that inhibit faculty from teaching online are the lack of technical support, concerns about faculty workload, lack of release time, lack of grants for materials/expenses, and concerns about the quality of courses. Schifter’s (2002) research confirmed Betts’ (1998) findings that the top inhibiting factors for participators in distance education were lack of technical support provided by the institution, lack of release time, concerns about faculty workload, lack of grants for materials/expenses, and concerns about the quality of courses.

In order to discover what increased their motivation to teach online, Shea (2007) analyzed the survey results of experienced faculty members teaching in a multi-institutional online program. The results of the survey revealed the top five motivators to continue teaching online were: flexible work schedules, new challenges, addressing student needs, learning of new technologies and pedagogies, and providing access to new
student populations (p.77). Shea (2007) also discovered other factors that influenced the decreased motivation of experienced faculty members were: inappropriate compensation for online course development and concerns regarding student access to the online environment.

This section of the literature review indicates that faculty members’ have many concerns and perceptions about online distance education such as: decline in quality of instruction, loss of jobs, lack of rewards and incentives, increase in workload, and technical issues. Even with these concerns, faculty members’ are intrinsically motivated to learn new technology, improve teaching, and reaching out to a student population that yearns for online distance education courses. By gaining a greater understanding of faculty members’ perceptions of online distance education, this research will be able to further explain and describe the adoption process. The next section will discuss the Diffusion of Innovations which will provide a theoretical framework for understanding the adoption process an individual goes through when choosing to adopt something new.

**Theoretical Framework**

The adoption of something new, even with apparent advantages of the innovation, is often a complicated task. In one of the most influential diffusion studies of all time, Ryan and Gross (1943) found that even though a new hybrid corn seed developed by agricultural scientists yielded an increased harvest of twenty percent per acre, the typical farmer moved slowly from awareness to full adoption. Why were farmers so slow to adopt the new corn seed, even with a perceived advantage over their current methods? Interviews were conducted in order to discover when the hybrid corn seed was adopted and the process leading to the adoption of the innovation (Ryan & Gross, 1943). In their
Ryan and Gross (1943) found that the diffusion process is dependent upon interpersonal communication and the social modeling by individuals who were early adopters of the hybrid seed. According to Lowery and DeFleur (1995), one of the most important findings was “the adoption of innovation depends on some combination of well-established interpersonal ties and habitual exposure to mass communication” (p. 127). Because of their classic study, Ryan and Gross (1943) created the paradigm and customary research methodology that has been used by future diffusion investigators.

The process of adopting new innovations, similar to online distance education, has been studied for more than thirty years (Rogers, 2003). Everett Rogers’ research on the diffusion of innovations is considered one of the most important and widely used theories for understanding the change and adoption process (Sherry & Gibson, 2002). In varying areas and topics, Roger’s (2003) research has provided a major theoretical framework for researchers wishing to gain a greater understanding of the factors and processes involved in the adoption of something new. Past adoptions of new technology in education have provided opportunities to address specific problems or make tasks easier and more efficient (Carr Jr., 1999). Therefore, diffusion theory is appropriate when investigating the adoption of technology in higher education environments (Parisot, 1997).

An exploration of faculty members’ perceptions of online distance education may provide university administrators with an understanding as to the factors that lead to the adoption of online distance education. One of the major strengths of the Diffusion of Innovations theory is the broad foundation that it affords when trying to understand the factors that may influence the choices an individual makes about an innovation (Straub,
Therefore, diffusion of innovations may provide a theoretical explanation for adoption, and could offer insight into how to expedite the diffusion process based on what is learned about those faculty members who have already adopted online learning. In addition, the identification and recruitment of possible early adopters and champions of online distance education can enhance peer-to-peer communication channels and allow the diffusion to reach critical mass (Hansen & Salter, 2001; Rogers, 2003).

**Diffusion of Innovations**

Diffusion is a type of progression by which an innovation is adopted, over time, among members of a social system (Rogers & Scott, 1997). An innovation can be defined as “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption” (Rogers, 2003, p.12). Diffusion theory focuses on the individual and the choices he or she makes when choosing to adopt an innovation. Therefore, the primary concern with any diffusion research is how and why an innovation is adopted and why one innovation is adopted at a faster or slower rate than others.

The main elements of the Diffusion of Innovations framework are: (1) the innovation and perceived attributes, (2) communication channels, (3) time, and (4) social system (Rogers, 2003). Element one, the innovation, focuses on the following components: (a) the perceived attributes of the innovation, (b) how early adopters differ from late adopters, and (c) when individuals or other units begin the adoption of the innovation. Element two, communication channels, explains how a new idea or innovation is communicated from one individual to another. Element three, time, centers around three components: (a) the innovation-decision process an individual chooses whether to adopt or reject an innovation, (b) the use of adopter categories to define the
level of innovativeness in an individual or other unit of adoption, and (c) the rate of adoption or speed with which an innovation is adopted. Rogers (2003) defines the final element, social system, as “a set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem-solving to accomplish a common goal” (p.23). The members of this social system can be comprised of individuals, informal groups, organizations or subsystems. All four elements work together in order to best describe the diffusion of an innovation, such as faculty adoption of online distance education.

Diffusion research has mostly been associated with technological innovations and in his book; *Diffusion of Innovations*, Rogers (2003) repeatedly uses the word “technology” synonymously with “innovation.” In order to understand what, where, and why technology acceptance or rejection may occur in an educational setting, the study of diffusion and adoption can be employed (Holloway, 1996). One of the major strengths of Roger’s (2003) theory is in the broad foundation that it provides when trying to understand the factors that may influence the choices an individual makes about an innovation (Straub, 2009). Online distance education represents the innovation in this study and the decision-making process faculty members progress through when adopting this new form of teaching and learning then represents diffusion. Therefore, by exploring the different elements of the innovation-decision process, this study hopes to gain a better understanding of faculty members’ adoption of online distance education.

**Innovation-Decision Process**

The individual adoption of an innovation is not something that happens instantly, but is rather a process that occurs over time. Rogers (2003) defines this as the innovation-decision process in which, over time, the individual makes choices and

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decisions in regards to the adoption or rejection of an innovation. Adoption is seen as “the decision to make full use of an innovation as the best course of action available” (Rogers, 2003, p.21). The innovation-decision process is influenced by prior knowledge (previous practices, needs, innovativeness, and norms of social system), the perceived attributes of the innovation (relative advantage, compatibility, trialability, and observability), the characteristic of the individual who adopts the innovation (socioeconomic characteristics, personality variables, and communication behavior), and communication channels (Carr, 1999; Li & Linder, 2007; Rogers, 2003).

Potential adopters of an innovation pass through the following five stages when progressing through the diffusion process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation (Rogers, 2003). First, an individual must be exposed and learn about the innovation (knowledge); second they must form a positive or negative attitude towards the value of the innovation (persuasion); then, the decision must be made to adopt or reject (decision); then, the innovation is put into use (implementation); and finally, the individual seeks reinforcement based upon the innovation-decision they have made (confirmation). Figure 3 shown below displays the sequential model of the innovation-decision making process when progressing through the different stages.
A study of faculty adoption of web-based distance education at the China Agricultural University found that seventy percent of participating faculty stayed in the early stages of the innovation decision making process (no knowledge, knowledge, or persuasion) and approximately thirty percent were in the later stages (decision, implementation, and confirmation) (Li & Lindner, 2007). Over seventy-three percent of those faculty members surveyed felt that limited access to higher education was a problem in China, which directly impacted their progress through the innovation-decision making process (Li & Lindner, 2007). Therefore, since one of the major barriers in China is the limited access to technology and web-based tools, this creates prior conditions that can impact the adoption behavior of an innovation (Rogers, 2003). The study also discovered that prior teaching experiences and experiences with distance education had a positive impact on faculty members’ knowledge stage in the innovation-decision making process. This result concurs with Rogers’ (2003) perspective that previous practices and prior experiences have a major impact on the innovation-decision process.
Sahin and Thompson (2007) also found in their study of faculty members’ adoption of instructional computer use, that knowledge was an essential stage in the innovation-decision making process. They concluded that if faculty members did not have some prior level of expertise in using computers, the expectation to adopt computer technologies in their teaching could not exist. They agreed with Rogers’ theory (2003) that without basic prior knowledge or experiences, possible adopters may have a level of uncertainty that has a direct impact on their beliefs and perceptions about the innovation. Sahin and Thompson (2006) also discovered that faculty members’ lack of accessibility and availability of computers influenced their ability in the adoption of computers for instructional purposes.

*Adopter Innovativeness*

Another factor in the diffusion of innovations theory is the level of innovativeness of the adopter. All individuals are different and one size does not fit all. Rogers (2003) reflects this in his use of adopter categories in order to classify the level of innovativeness in an individual. The level of adopter innovativeness can help categorize faculty members’ into different adopter categories that have very diverse needs (Keesee & Shepard, 2011). The utilization of adopter categories portrays individuals as adventurous, respectable, cautious, doubtful, and old-fashioned. Rogers (2003) identified five major adopter categories that possess their own distinct characteristics. Each adopter category is based upon innovativeness, which Rogers (2003) defines as: “the degree to which an individual or other unit of adoption is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of a social system” (p.22).
Not all individuals within a social system can possibly adopt an innovation at the same time (Rogers, 2003). Therefore, individuals that adopt at different moments during the diffusion process may contrast with another in terms of social and psychological characteristics. Based upon the degree of innovativeness of the individual, some may choose to adopt earlier or later in the diffusion cycle. As shown below in figure 4, Rogers’ (2003) research illustrates adoption categories reflected in a bell shaped S-curve, with innovators (2.5%) and early adopters (13.5%) selecting the technology first, followed by the early (34%) and late majority (34%), and eventually the laggards (16%).

Figure 4. Adopter Categories Based on Innovativeness (Rogers, 2003, p. 281)

Rogers (2003) describes innovators as venturesome risk-takers, having an important role in the organization as the gatekeeper who controls the flow of new ideas into a system. He describes the characteristics of innovators as: being young in age, having high social status in terms of amount of education, prestige, and income, having access to multiple paths of communication, and cosmopolite (Rogers, 1965). On the contrary, laggards tend to be localites with their point of reference being the past and they tend to interact primarily with those who have similar values to them (Carlson, Gallaher, Miles, Pellegrin, & Rogers, 1965). Early adopters are a more integrated part of the local
social system than innovators and considered localites rather than cosmopolites. Early adopters tend to have the highest degree of opinion leadership and within most social systems; change agents consider them to the most important person (Rogers, 2003).

The diffusion of innovations is a social process and as early adopters become more confident and experienced with an innovation, they will take on the role of “champions” and encourage more reluctant faculty to explore and eventually adopt the innovation (Rogers, 2003). Consequently, the diffusion process can become self-sustaining if opinion leaders within a social system are targeted and their attitudes towards an innovation remain positive (Ambrose, 2007). Thus, it is important that college and university administrators begin to identify and support potential early adopters of online learning, specifically concentrating on early adopters’ perceptions of online distance education and their decision to continue to adopt this new medium of instruction (Signer, Hall, & Upton, 2000).

After identifying early adopters, institutions can then begin to provide those faculty members with support in order to increase their confidence and proficiency with online distance education (Signer, Hall, & Upton, 2000). Furthermore, as early adopters become more confident and proficient in their use of the innovation, they will become “opinion leaders” and encourage other reluctant non-adopters to embrace the new technology and begin to adopt online distance learning (Harris, 1997; Jacobsen, 1997). The successful adoption of an innovation by an organization depends on the ability of the early adopter category achieving a level of critical mass (Rogers, 2003).
Perceived Attributes of an Innovation

Some studies have shown that adopter categories can be predicted based upon faculty members’ perceptions of the perceived advantages of their course management system (Keese & Shepard, 2011). Positive attitudes towards the perceived attributes of an innovation correlate significantly to the diffusion-adoption process (Sahin & Thompson, 2007; Samarawickrema & Stacey, 2007). Rogers (2003) identified five characteristics attributed to all innovations as relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability.

The relative advantage is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being an improvement over something that already exists. The greater the perceived advantage, the more likely the innovation will be adopted. For this reason, many scholars have considered relative advantage as being one of the strongest predictors in the rate of adoption (Rogers, 2003). Compatibility is the perception that an innovation is similar to or consistent with the existing values or understandings of an idea. If something new can fit into an existing schema, it becomes easier to adopt. Complexity refers to the perception an individual has in regards to how difficult an innovation is to understand and use. Trialability is the accessibility an individual has for experimentation with the innovation. The ability to try something out before buying has been an accepted premise in the adoption of new products such as cars and electronics. The last characteristics, observability is the degree to which an individual is able to view the results of an innovation, the premise being that if you see everyone in your social system using the innovation, the greater the likelihood of individual adoption.
Some studies have shown that the perceived attributes of an innovation have affected the adoption rate of online distance education (McQuiggan, 2006; Mwaura, 2004; Samarawickrema & Stacey, 2007; Tornatzky & Klein, 1982). A meta-analysis of existing innovation characteristics literature suggests that relative advantage and compatibility were positively related to adoption, while complexity had a negative impact (Tornatzky & Klein, 1982). A recent study of 913 faculty members that taught online discovered that ninety percent of those surveyed reported that they were satisfied with the course they had just taught and with teaching online in general (Shea, Pickett, & Li, 2005). The majority of faculty members reported feeling that the online environment was appropriate for teaching their content area and that if given the opportunity, they would teach another course online again. Faculty members also reported that they would recommend teaching online to other colleagues, which could promote the diffusion process.

A study by McQuiggan (2006) on faculty concerns and perceptions in the adoption of a course management system found that there was a significant difference in the perceived attributes of a course management system (CMS) for adopters and non-adopters. Specifically, adopters’ perceptions of the course management system showed higher levels of a relative advantage over the way they used to do things, more compatibility with their teaching, an ease in learning to use the course management system, and the ability to see and try the system before adopting (p.1165). Non-adopters expressed no need in having to use the course management system and did not perceive any relative advantage over current teaching methodologies. Because there was no
perceived advantage, most non-adopters were not interested in trying or observing the course management system.

Mwaura (2004) conducted a research study in order to discover what factors influenced faculty members’ decision process to adopt or reject web-based instruction. Qualitative research methods were utilized in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the experiences of faculty members that had chosen to adopt, were about to adopt, or had rejected web-based instruction. The majority of those interviewed were in the “chosen to adopt” category (Mwaura, 2004). The results of the study indicated that complexity, relative advantage, and compatibility were the most significant attributes in faculty members’ decision to adopt or reject online distance education (Mwaura, 2004, p.34). Furthermore, the results of this study found trialability and observability not to be a significant determining factor.

Samarawickrema and Stacey (2007) also found that certain aspects of web-based instruction in which faculty members perceived as a relative advantage, were more easily adopted than those that were not. Rogers (2003) described the following sub-dimensions of relative advantage: economic profitability, a decrease in discomfort, saving time and effort, immediacy of reward, low initial cost, and social prestige. In her study, Mwaura (2004) discovered that low initial cost or social prestige had no impact in the adoption process. Mwaura’s (2004) study found the following results:

In brief, how faculty members perceived web-based instruction (WBI) affected their decision to adopt it in their teaching activities. If they found WBI consistent with their values and beliefs of what effective teaching is, with their past experiences, and with their instructional needs, they tended to adopt; otherwise there was a high possibility of rejecting it. (p.40)
Faculty members cited that advantages that did impact the decision to adopt were the decrease in printing costs, easier ways to distribute course content, ability to communicate to diverse students, rejuvenation of teaching methodologies, better time management, more time for research, and more engagement with students (p. 36-38).

**Summary**

From the earliest educational technology of paper and pencil, to the latest technology of computers and cell phones, teaching and learning has evolved with the adoption of these devices. A review of the literature reveals that distance education has especially been impacted, as the evolution of technology has created a new paradigm in the realm of teaching and learning. The two-way communication issues that plagued earlier types of distance technology seem like memories of the distant past. In today’s educational world, faculty and students have the ability to share and communicate from a distance with the touch of a button. With this evolution of new teaching and learning, the focus remains on faculty members’ acceptance and utilization of this new medium. Therefore, it becomes critically important to begin to explore the adoption process by the early adopters that have already made the decision to teach online. Why have they chosen to teach online? Why do they continue to teach online? By gaining a better understanding of faculty adopters’ decision making process as well as their perceptions of online distance education, we may be able to answer these questions.

The Diffusion of Innovations provides a theoretical framework which could help explain the innovation-adoption process that faculty members progress through when adopting online distance education. A review of the literature reveals that during the innovation-diffusion process there are major factors that must be considered, such as: the
perceptions about the innovation and the level of individual innovativeness. Research studies with faculty members in similar settings show that both of these factors can have an impact on the adoption or rejection of online education. This study hopes to go beyond the diffusion process in order to discover the motivations that affect the continued adoption of online distance education by faculty members. The literature reveals multiple intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors exist that can influence the continued acceptance of online learning. Therefore, this study will examine not only the adoption process of faculty members, but also what continues to motivate them to teach online.

Chapter 3 will present the methodology that will be utilized to explore faculty members’ innovation-adoptation process as well as their motivations to teach online. The chapter will include an overview of the research design, including the process of selecting an institution for the study as well as the individual participants. Then chapter 3 will include a description of the various modes of data collection, as well as the techniques used to analyze the data. Following the description of the data collection and analysis, the chapter will then focus on an explanation of the credibility, validity, and reliability of the study. The chapter ends with a description of the ethical considerations of the study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

As many college and universities begin to contemplate the increased integration and institutional adoption of online learning, one of the most critical factors they must consider are the opinions and perceptions of their faculty members. An examination of how and why faculty members adopt online distance education may provide university administrators with suggestions on best practices to approach the integration of this new teaching medium. Chapter 2 provided a review of the relevant research on faculty adoption of online distance education and Rogers’ theoretical framework on the Diffusion of Innovations. Everett Rogers’ research on diffusion is considered one of the most important and widely used theories for understanding change and adoption (Sherry & Gibson, 2002). In varying areas and topics, Rogers’ research has provided a major theoretical framework for researchers wishing to gain a greater understanding of the factors involved in the adoption process (Rogers, 2003). Some researchers have even suggested that diffusion theory may be most appropriate when investigating the adoption of technology in higher education environments (Parisot, 1997).

Design of the Study

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative methods can be used to gain a new perspective about what is already known or to gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively. Creswell (2007) describes qualitative research as “a process in which research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 37). He also suggests in
studying this problem, researchers should use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, collection of data in natural settings, and a data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns and themes. Qualitative research methods allow for a deeper understanding through the stories and words of the participants rather than the micro-analysis of variables (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 2002).

In this descriptive and comparative case study, I aim to uncover the core of the faculty experience, which is best achieved by conducting a case study. According to Merriam (2002), insights gained from case studies can help directly influence policy, practice and future research. Yin (2009) describes a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (p. 18). Yin’s (2009) case study design allows the researcher to engage in the necessary ethnographic work that helps delineate the event or concept from the setting. Moreover, a case study provides a detailed description of a single unit or entity within a bounded context (Merriam, 2002). Consequently, the single bounded units of analysis in this study are the individual faculty members that have adopted online distance education.

In order to gain multiple perspectives across a range of adoption processes, multiple faculty members were asked to participate. Although each faculty member was treated as an individual case, a comparative or multiple-case study design was utilized (Yin, 2009). According to Merriam (1998), “the more cases included in a study and the greater variation of the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be” (p. 40). Yin (2009) agrees, stating that a significant advantage to using a multiple-case
design rather than a single case format, is the potential for conducting a more robust study.

According to Yin (2009), typically a case study design is most appropriate when research is used to answer “how” and “why” questions. In this study the main focus was on how faculty adopted online distance education and why they chose to adopt. Therefore, in this case, by exploring and describing the lived experiences of faculty members, this study hopes to identify common themes and shared experiences among the sample of faculty members. In addition, the ability to compare adoption patterns and opinions from multiple faculty adopters allowed for a more robust and compelling study.

**Purpose**

A review of the literature identified several factors in which we can explore how an innovation, like online distance education, is adopted by a specific population within a social system. The adoption process consists of multiple theories described by Rogers (2003), including: the innovation-decision making process, individual innovativeness, and perceived attributes of the innovation. These theories will serve as the framework of this case study in order to gain a better understanding of faculty members’ adoption of online distance education. The purpose of this multiple-case study is twofold: first, to explore and describe the circumstances leading to the adoption of online distance education for faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university; and second, to discover faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online by those who have adopted online distance education.
Research Questions

A review of the relevant literature indicates that a gap in the description of the adoption process of online distance education by faculty members. In order to shed some light on this under researched topic, the following set of research questions will provide guidance for the establishment of data collection and analysis of the study.

1. Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?
2. How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time?
3. How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?
4. How do the faculty members’ adoption experiences and perceptions compare with one another?

The first research question focuses on the faculty members’ decision-making process to adopt online distance education, while the next two questions focus more on their perceptions of online distance education as a teaching medium. The final research question hopes to show how the experiences and opinions of multiple faculty members are different or similar. Questions one through three align with the conceptual framework of the diffusion of innovations, exploring the diffusion process as it applies to the adoption of an innovation by members of a specific social system.

Site Selection

The rationale for the selection of the site was based upon the institution’s early majority level of adoption of online distance education and a diverse faculty pool of participants. In the fall of 2011, approximately 12,756 students were enrolled in online
courses, which comprised of about thirty-eight percent of the total 33,539 students enrollment at the institution (Institutional Website, 2012). In addition, approximately 675 online courses were taught by 239 individual full and part-time faculty members (Institutional Website, 2012). According to the institutional common data set for 2011-12, there were 1,259 full and part-time faculty members (Institutional Website, 2012). Rogers’ (2003) diffusion S-curve would classify the faculty 19% adoption rate for the institution in the “early majority” category. Therefore, for the purposes of this study the aforementioned university will be referred to as Early Majority University (EMU).

Furthermore, like many other 4-year public institutions, Early Majority University is facing economic and financial hardships. Due to substantial budget reduction issues, Early Majority University is representative of other typical 4-year public institutions facing fiscal uncertainty. Some similarly situated institutions have begun to express the possibility of adopting more online courses in order to increase enrollments and generate more revenue (Carroll-Barfield, Smith, Prince, & Campbell, 2005). Thus, this case was chosen at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university with an enrollment of approximately 27,000 students that could be considered a typical institution of size and stature.

According to the Carnegie Classification (Carnegiefoundation.org, 2010), this university is considered a research university with “high research activity” having between 60-79 percent of bachelor’s degree majors majoring in professional fields, and graduate degrees offered in at least half of the fields corresponding to undergraduate majors. The campus is situated in a midsize city located in the southwest region of the
United States. The institution of study currently offers seven degree and five certificate programs completely online (Institution Website, 2011).

Selection of Participants

The use of purposeful maximum variation sampling techniques was utilized in order for participants to be representative of the population. According to Merriam (1998), “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61). Purposeful sampling is criterion based and the criteria used for the selection of participants are based on the fact, that the faculty members have already adopted online distance education as a mode of teaching. Therefore, the aforementioned study was conducted with select faculty members who had been identified as teaching an online distance education course in the 2011-2012 academic year. Faculty members were classified as full time assistant, associate or full professors. A review of the Early Majority University’s 2011 and 2012 course catalog identified faculty members that teach an online course.

The faculty members identified as teaching an online class for the 2011-2012 academic year were sent an introductory letter by campus email in regards to the participation in the study. Approximately one week after the introductory letter had been mailed, an electronic inquiry was sent to the faculty members’ Early Majority University email address, asking for confirmation of participation in this study. A pool of participants was created from those confirming their participation in the study. In order to achieve maximum variation of phenomena, 9 faculty members were selected based upon public information. Public information was accessed through departmental
websites and classified as gender, education level, faculty status, faculty rank, and area of
instruction. In order to achieve maximum variation it is important to have faculty members who vary by academic department, level of instruction, and demographics. Using a maximum variation type of sampling allowed for the researcher to gain a better understanding of how the adoption of online distance education was accomplished by different faculty members in different settings (Patton, 1990). The goal was not to build a random generalizable sample, but rather a representation of a range of experiences related to the phenomenon of teaching online (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000). Before any interviews were conducted, the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Early Majority University. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned.

**Data Collection**

The six sources of evidence that can be collected for a case study include: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2009). In an effort to triangulate data, the aforementioned case study utilized analysis of personal and public documents, semi-structured interviews with faculty, and member checking. Case study data has typically been drawn from interviews, field notes, and existing documents (Merriam, 1998). In order reveal things that cannot be observed, it is also important to seek out the paper trail which includes personal and public documents. These documents are described by Patton (2002) as, “all routine records on clients, all correspondence from and to program staff, financial and budget records, organizational rules, regulations, memoranda, charts, and any other official or unofficial document generated by or for the program” (p. 293).
Merriam (1998) suggests that in order to get at the essence or the basic structure of the experience, the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection. Yin (2009) agrees, stating “interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs or behavioral events” (p. 108). In order for each participant to define their world in their own unique ways, open ended questions focusing on “how” and “why” they adopted will be the main emphasis of the interviews (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). Each participant will be interviewed approximately 1 to 2 hours and recorded using a digital recorder.

**Data Analysis**

The analysis of data was an extensive process. According to Glesne (1999), “data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with data, you describe, create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories” (p.130). In order to ensure accuracy, the interviews with participants will be transcribed immediately after each session. While still fresh from the interview, the immediate transcription allows for the interviewer to make hand notes in regards to the participant’s demeanor, mood, and any other important illustrations that may have occurred (Merriam, 1998). Some minor clarification and note-checking of the transcription will be done as follow-up. The transcripts will then be analyzed and used in the coding of data and the establishment of common themes. According to Spradley (1980), “in order to discover the cultural patterns of any social situation, you must undertake an intensive analysis of your data before proceeding further” (p.85). Using domain analysis as suggested by Spradley
(1980), cultural patterns, patterns of behavior, themes, concepts and ideas will be identified.

Themes

After an analysis of data the next step would be to construct categories or themes that capture a reoccurrence of any type of dominant pattern (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). According to Merriam (1998), categories and subcategories are most commonly constructed through the constant comparative method of data analysis. Therefore the unit of data analysis will be sorted into groupings that have something in common with one another. In addition, the categories of this study will also originate from a review of common themes within the literature and other similar research studies. In the manual coding of data it is important to recognize any patterns that begin to emerge. Patterns can be reflected by a visual matrix based upon categories generated from the theory and the frequency of themes that emerge during the interviews.

A review of the literature provides a theoretical framework of possible themes that could emerge from the data. In one of the most influential diffusion studies of all time, Ryan and Gross (1943) found that even though a new hybrid corn seed developed by agricultural scientists yielded an increased harvest of 20 percent per acre, the typical farmer moved slowly from awareness to full adoption. The key elements or themes of diffusion are the innovation, communication channels, time, and social system. The four elements work together in order to best describe the adoption process for a population, such as faculty, over a specific period of time (Rogers, 2003). These themes will be utilized in order to drive the purpose of the study as well as help shape the answers to the research questions.
Comparative Case Analysis

Multiple or comparative-case analysis is comprised of essentially two stages of analysis, the within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998). For the within-case analysis each faculty member was treated as an individual case. Once the data analysis of each case had been completed, the next step was to begin a cross-case analysis. This helped build a better explanation of the occurrence under multiple circumstances that were different or similar. This also led to a more robust study and a better understanding of the phenomenon by prevalent explanations across multiple contexts and circumstances (Yin, 2009).

Validity and Reliability

No matter what type of research, the concerns of validity and reliability are approached through careful attention to a study’s conceptualization and the ethical way in which the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Although, the results of the different types of paradigms differ as quantitative researchers seek casual determination, prediction and generalization of findings; qualitative researchers seek instead clarification, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997). Therefore when judging the quality of the study, the terms validity and reliability are essential criteria for quantitative research; whereas qualitative paradigms use credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as essential criteria for quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Utilizing the techniques for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research as advocated by Lincoln & Guba (1985), I addressed credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), and dependability (reliability) in the aforementioned
study. According to Merriam (1998), six strategies can be employed in order to enhance internal validity which include: triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination, collaborative modes of research and researchers biases. In order to establish credibility or internal validity, I gathered the data over a period of time and employed member checking, peer debriefing and triangulation of data (Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

Questions about external validity focus on whether the case currently being examined is generalizable beyond the immediate findings of the particular case. According to Yin (2009), “…case studies rely on analytic generalization. In analytic generalization, the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory” (p. 43). One of the strengths of doing a multiple case study is that replication logic can also lead to a strengthening of support for the theory (Yin, 2009). In addition, with respect to transferability, it will be important to provide thick rich description enabling the reader to conclude if the results of the inquiry are transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

According to Yin (2009), “the goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study” (p. 45). In order to maintain dependability (reliability), it is important that the consistency in the process and steps of the research are verified through careful examination, or “audit checking” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Merriam (1998) describes this audit trail as the ability to describe how the data was collected, how categories originated, and how decisions were made through the inquiry. In order to increase the reliability in this study, I employed a presentable database as prescribed by Yin (2009).
In addition to the final case study report, the formal database included case study notes, documents, and narratives.

**Ethical Considerations**

Numerous ethical considerations needed to be addressed with this study. Mostly these fell under the category of the protection of human subjects and integrity of the study. In order to protect the participants involved in the study, a full review and approval from the Institutional Review Board was secured. This review included the approval of the general interview protocols, purpose of the study, and the potential risks to the participants.

Participant’s identities were kept private and pseudonyms were used to protect anonymity. Whenever possible, public information was utilized in describing rank, gender and discipline of participants. In order to maintain the integrity of the study it also was important for the researcher to recognize any biases that may be present and attempt to reduce them.

**Summary**

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the design of the study, which includes the methodology, selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, and considerations pertaining to the validity and reliability of the study. The need to hear and understand the adoption process from the voices of faculty members leads this study towards a more qualitative approach. The utilization of a cross-case design adds a level of robustness to the study and allows for a maximum variance of adoption processes to be explored. This chapter also discussed how different techniques will be used in order to address concerns of credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), and dependability.
(reliability) in the aforementioned study. In conclusion, this chapter also addresses the ethical considerations of working with human subjects and the integrity of the study.

Chapter 4 summarizes the results and findings of the study and provides an analysis of the data that was collected. It will include vignettes from all the participants, emergent themes, and a cross case analysis.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the findings of a multiple case study in which the researcher gained a better understanding of faculty members’ adoption of online teaching. This qualitative study focused on why faculty members decided to adopt online distance education, how they went about the adoption process, their early and current perceptions and how teaching online has impacted their role as a faculty member. Data were collected from individual faculty member interviews and state and institutional documentation. Documents were used to provide background and context to the study. As suggested by Spradley (1980), these data were coded and common themes, cultural patterns, patterns of behavior and concepts were identified.

Chapter Organization

This chapter begins with a summary of findings from state and institutional documentation followed by vignettes of each participating faculty member. Each vignette tells the story of why faculty members adopted online distance education, their perceptions, and how the adoption has impacted them as a faculty member. This section focuses on addressing the research questions by presenting findings within individual faculty vignettes. The final section of the chapter provides the results of a comparative-case analysis where faculty member’s experiences and perceptions were compared with one another.

Early Majority University State Case

The case institution chosen for this study was Early Majority University (EMU), a large public, four-year research intensive institution located in the Southwestern United
States. Higher education within the state is governed by members of an elected board that set policies and approve budgets. According to a 2009-2010 governing board report on distance education (State Governing Board, September 2010), over the past decade, distance education within the state has experienced substantial growth within all colleges and universities.

![Figure 5. State unduplicated headcount of students participating in distance education.](image)

Source: State Governing Board 2009-2010 Distance Education Report

In fact, the state unduplicated headcount of students participating in distance education has increased from 5,798 in the fall 2001 semester to 31,186 in 2009, which was an increase of 25,388 students or 438 percent (State Governing Board, September 2010). This expansion of students participating in distance education coincides with the state's rapid population growth.

With the exponential population growth experienced within EMU’s state, an increasing number of students have become eligible to participate in higher education. One of the methods of reaching these potential students is to provide more distance education at state public institutions of higher education. As more and more students
begin to expect and demand an increased availability of distance education, the members of the state board feel they must take a proactive and positive stance in providing quality education for their state’s students (State Governing Board, September 2010.). This board defined this stance as investigating alternative funding sources, enrollment trends, faculty development, institutional collaboration, accessibility, online student services, online degrees, and an increase in staffing and support (State Governing Board, September 2010).

According to a report by the state governing board, distance education is one of the performance indicators utilized in order to measure institutional effectiveness in delivering quality education to all of its students (State Governing Board, September 2010). According to the governing board’s master plan, “Distance education is specifically aimed at meeting two of the master plan goals: 1) a student-focused system, and 2) an opportunity and accessible education for all” (State Governing Board, September 2010). Their plan is to extend distance education so that every student in the state is exposed to some type of technology-mediated education prior to graduation.

However, in a recent report card on public postsecondary education, EMU’s state scored the lowest possible grade in regards to innovations in online learning (Institute for a Competitive Workforce, 2012). This low grade is based upon the lack of a central clearinghouse of online offerings amongst all higher education institutions within the state and little coordination in regards to innovations in online learning between campuses. In addition, this low grade was also based upon the fact that EMU’s state governing board had not established long or short term goals for improving and increasing online learning (Institute for a Competitive Workforce, 2012).
Early Majority University Case

The institution selected for this case study was Early Majority University (EMU). EMU is a large public, four-year research intensive institution located in the southwestern United States. In 2011-2012, approximately 675 online courses were taught by 239 individual full and part-time faculty members (Institutional Website, 2012). According to the institutional common data set for 2011-12, EMU had 1,259 full and part-time faculty members (Institutional Website, 2012). Therefore, Rogers’ (2003) diffusion S-curve would classify the faculty member’s 19% institutional adoption rate in the “early majority” category. EMU’s enrollment for fall 2011 was approximately 27,000 students which encompassed undergraduate, graduate and professional students. Currently EMU offers 10 degrees and 5 certificate programs fully online, with plans to increase online degrees by 9 in the near future (State Governing Board, September 2010).

EMU is considered a relatively new institution of higher education established in the late 1950’s. The institutional website describes the university as “an institution that has transformed itself from a small branch college into a thriving urban research institution” (Institutional Website, n.d.). An analysis of online enrollments over a period of 10 years indicates an astronomical growth in online distance education, as EMU’s online student enrollment skyrocketed from 2,139 students in 2000-2001 to 33,539 in 2010-2011 (Early Majority University Institutional Analysis and Planning, n.d.). This is an amazing growth rate of over 1568 percent over a 10 year period and surpasses the institutional, which has subsequently only experienced a 2 percent overall growth during the same time period.
The Office of Online Education at Early Majority University is responsible for extending educational outreach and access to university courses for faculty and students who desire an alternative form of course delivery, such as online learning. According to their website, the office consists of 22 staff members including: a director, instructional designers, instructional technologists, interactive applications coordinators and developers, art designers, and administrative personnel (Institutional Website, n.d.). Over the past few years, EMU’s Office of Online Education has attempted to make substantial progress in supporting the institution by providing the state’s population with quality education.

Recently, EMU’s Office of Online Education revised their mission statement and developed a strategic plan (State Governing Board, September 2010). The mission of the Office of Online Education states:
The Office of Online Education extends educational outreach and access of University courses, degree programs, and research opportunities to the local and global communities in an effort to serve a diverse population of students who prefer or need alternative methods of delivery. OE is committed to learner needs and interests by providing exemplary services to the University academic community. As an entrepreneurial and innovative learning technology field, OE is committed to collaborating on research initiatives, faculty development, active learning, measurable outcomes, and using empirically proven pedagogies with emerging technologies to increase the opportunity for successful learning outcomes of EMU students (Office of Online Education Website, n.d.).

According to the state governing board report, EMU-Online Education has collaborated with other institutional offices like the Academic Success Center and assisted in the creation of an online service center for remote students (State Governing Board, September 2010). The goals of these services are to mimic the similar services that are provided on the physical campus in the online environment. In addition, EMU-Online Education has partnered with other academic support units across the campus to “eliminate redundancies, increase efficiencies, and provide innovative new strategies in faculty development” (State Governing Board, September 2010).

According to EMU’s Online Education website, a course development process exists for those faculty members wishing to develop and teach a new online course (Office of Online Education Website, n.d.). This process is based on the design and development of a new course being offered at the university. Following consultation with their department chair, it is first suggested that faculty members view the online education course listings to ensure that the course is not already being offered by Online Education. The next step would be to complete and submit the online Course Development Approval Form (Appendix E). This form asks for information such as the course prefix, course number, credits, when development begins and ends, indication of whether this would be a Departmental Model Course, course title, prerequisites and a
short description. Once the form has obtained the required signatures from the department chair and Dean, this form is then routed to the Office of Online Education for final approval. After final approval, the faculty member would meet with an instructional designer to plan the design and development of the course (Office of Online Education Website, n.d.). Figure 7, taken from the Office of Online Education website, represents a visual representation of the course development process.

![Course Development Process](image)

*Figure 7. EMU Course Development Process*

*Source: Office of Online Education Website, n.d.*

The popularity of online distance education has necessitated the creation of an easy to use website for interested faculty members. According to the Frequently Asked Questions portion of the Office of Online Education website:

There are incentives in place for online education course designers and instructors. Availability of incentives depends on the course, whether or not it has been taught online before, consent of the sponsoring department and Online Education, and other factors. To discuss specifics contact the Director of Online Education.
Previously, a publicly available policy pertaining to faculty salary and incentives outlined these policies and procedures in great detail were available on EMU’s Provosts’ website. Appendix F contains a portion of the Distance Education Instructional Salary and Incentives Policy that specifically addresses financial incentives for designing and teaching an online course (Appendix F).

**Faculty Interviews and Vignettes**

*Introduction*

In June and July of 2012, the researcher emailed, ninety-six full-time faculty members who were listed in the Early Majority University’s 2010-2011 online course catalogs. An invitation was sent to each faculty member’s college email address requesting participation in a research study on faculty adoption of online distance education (see Appendix C). Employing purposeful maximum variation sampling techniques, ten faculty members with varying gender, rank, and college were selected from a pool of representative respondents in order to participate in the study. Interview times and dates were scheduled, and were to be conducted either in person or over the phone. At this time participants were notified that they would be recorded using a digital device and they would need to complete an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix D) prior to the interview. Interview questions were derived from the approved Interview Protocol (see Appendix A) with each interview lasting approximately one hour.

During the interviews, faculty members were asked a series of interview questions (see Appendix A) that addressed each of the following research questions:

1. Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?
2. How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time?
3. How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?
4. How do the faculty members’ adoption experiences and perceptions compare with one another?

Interview questions were chosen in order to elicit responses that supported the theory and research questions. As a result, specific interview questions were grouped and aligned in order to answer corresponding research questions (see Appendix B). Each vignette addresses the first three research questions as described by the faculty members, with the final research question being addressed at the conclusion of Chapter 4. Following the interviews, digital recordings were downloaded and transcribed by a secure transcription service that focuses specifically on qualitative research methodology. Unfortunately, at this time one of the interview recordings was found to be inaudible and unable to be transcribed. As a result, one faculty member was not included in the study and the final individual cases focused on nine faculty members that had varying levels of rank, years of experience, gender, and areas of instruction.

Based upon their time to adopt a fully online course within this specific social system, faculty members were classified into one of Rogers’ (1995) adopter innovativeness categories. Adopter categories are the classifications of the members of a social system on the basis on innovativeness, or the degree to which an individual is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than members of a system (Rogers, 1995). Figure 7 shows a visual representation of faculty member adopter categories based upon their adoption of a fully online course.
In addition, Table 1 provides a visual aid in classifying the demographic information for each of the participants. In order to maintain their anonymity the use of pseudonyms was used. As indicated by their adopter categories, faculty member vignettes are arranged by level of innovativeness starting with innovators, then early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. At the conclusion of each faculty vignette, a table has been included to show a visual representation of the themes that emerged for their responses to the research questions.
Table 1
Faculty Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>First Year Teaching$^a$</th>
<th>Adoption of Fully Online Course</th>
<th>Adopter Innovativeness$^{bc}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Innovator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Hotel Administration</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Early Adopter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Early Adopter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Early Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Late Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Urban Affairs</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Late Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Late Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Laggard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Laggard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
$^a$ First year teaching as a graduate student, adjunct, or professor.
$^b$ Adopter innovativeness categories were based upon date of adoption within social system
$^c$ Levels of adopter innovativeness as defined by Rogers (2003) are innovator, early adopter, early majority, late majority, and laggard.

Bill
Bill adopted online elements for his courses early in his teaching career. Around 1991-1992, as a teaching assistant in his doctoral program, he and another graduate student wanted to discover a way for their students to get external feedback on their writing. They realized that during peer reviews in their traditional classrooms, students were getting the same perspectives from the same teacher and same students. According to Bill:
We used it to get outside, because what we found was that in peer review especially—you have the same teacher, you have the same students—they are kind of given the same perspective, and so will often respond in kind when they get feedback on whatever the letter of the project might be. This way what we found was that the feedback—we got offered another perspective to give the students some kind of broader understanding of what it meant to write to a particular audience, and how they use language, and how the language they used could affect their readers.

Bill and his fellow graduate instructor would have the students write letters, and then they would exchange them between the classes. The other class would read the other students papers and provide a peer review. As a result, this would afford students the possibility of getting fresh and new perspectives, rather than the same perspectives from teachers and students in their home class.

Bill was honest as he describes his first attempt at teaching a completely online course in 1997 as being, “really awful.” Before becoming aware of learning management systems, Bill would use a website he created in order to “set up individual interactions on email, and then set up email groups so that small groups of students could talk together on a kind of discussion board.” At that moment, he was committed to online delivery as he had already been designing websites to enhance his traditional courses since the early 90's. During this time, there was some trepidation amongst his colleagues as they perceived him as “having two heads,” meaning “they did not know what to think of him.” He also discovered that a great amount of his time early on was spent teaching students how to use the technology. At that time in the early 90’s, modern educational technology was still in its infancy, and therefore, students did not know how to even open folders or send email.

In those early years, Bill was “committed” to technology and was convinced that technology would have a prominent role in the future of higher education. At his
previous institution, Bill and one of his colleagues were seeking different ways that they could enhance education. According to Bill:

We wanted to explore what are the possibilities for students. I mean, it was a residential campus, but we still wanted to explore those possibilities to see what it would bring to our students’ ability to learn, and to think about what we wanted them to think about, and to try the kinds of things. It was a matter of trying and seeing what we could find out—how much students could learn—what they would lose and what they would gain through virtual discussion versus face-to-face discussion.

One of the main reasons Bill decided to teach online was his desire to discover new ways to enhance the learning environment. He wanted to find more effective ways for students to learn things, stating: “For me it was so much more about them figuring out ways to do things, because I’m much more about a “knowing how” kind of guy rather than a “knowing what.” One of the things that appealed to Bill in regards to the web was the capability of providing students all of the course content with the additional ability to upgrade and change content in real time.

After beginning his tenure at EMU, Bill realized that he and his department were in need of finding ways to manage multiple adjunct course sections, while also providing students the ability to access course materials. At that time, Bill attended a meeting where the Dean addressed the faculty stating, “We’re running out of space. We have to figure out how to save space at this university, and so what I want to propose is that every course offers at least one lecture of at least one hundred students or more.” Bill thought to himself, “I teach a writing course. How do you lecture a writing course?” Eventually, the department decided that they were “going to need to do online delivery” and as a result, even developed an electronic textbook for the course. It is Bill’s opinion one of
the major reasons he was hired at EMU was due to his prior experience in electronic delivery and the ability to teach in computerized classrooms.

Since the late 1990’s, Bill has always had “web components” in his courses. In fact, students have been submitting all their materials to him electronically since 2000. In his view, one of the major reasons he did this was that it is more “ecologically sound” and allows for the “ability to keep track of things more efficiently and more effectively.” In Bill’s opinion, one of the major differences between traditional and online courses is the lack of “real-time contact.” He explains, as a faculty member in a classroom, you have the ability to see whether students are “getting it”, which can be more difficult in the online environment. As a result, one of the first things he tells students when they take an online course is that “this is not a correspondence model. Your job is to learn the material, think about it, and engage with others in the classroom.” Bill believes that learning comes from conversation and working with others. He also believes the essential core behind quality distance education is the ability to engage and interact.

After his many years of teaching online and utilizing educational technology, Bill has formed many perceptions about online education. Although he feels that online education can be a “game changer” and is a great thing, he feels that “distance education in many respects has always been an economic engine” a “cash cow” that supports other people’s agenda. He disagrees with online initiatives such as Khan Academy or MITx, as in his opinion, they focus more on delivery and less about education. Bill states, “Delivery is not the same thing. Learning and education is not about the same thing as delivery.” From his perspective:

When you talk about this, there are people out there who only look at MITx and Khan Academy as way to simplify education and make it a profit—make a profit
on it. I think education is a right. I think every person should be able to go to college. I mean, I agree—I mean those socialists over in Europe—yeah. People should be able to go all the way through college for free. Sixteen years.

When asked about how distance education has impacted his role as a faculty member, Bill responded: “It has made me a better teacher.” Teaching online has forced him to think about the different ways that he can deliver his course information. In addition, when asked about how it has impacted him personally, Bill replied, “I don’t think about it in those kinds of ways. I’ve always thought of my course as being an online course” (personal communication, July 12, 2012).

Table 2
Bill’s Response to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1^a</th>
<th>RQ2^b</th>
<th>RQ3^c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Committed to technology</td>
<td>• Future of education</td>
<td>• More time spent teaching technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• External Feedback</td>
<td>• Ecologically sound</td>
<td>• Flexibility in manipulating content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhance traditional classroom</td>
<td>• Increased ability to keep track of course materials</td>
<td>• Better teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interactions between students and faculty</td>
<td>• Lack of contact</td>
<td>• Alternatives to teaching course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effective student learning</td>
<td>• Quality based upon ability to engage and interact</td>
<td>• No personal impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student access to course materials</td>
<td>• Game changer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manage multiple courses</td>
<td>• Too much emphasis on convenience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Economic engine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Delivery is not same as education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
^a Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?
^b How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time?
^c How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?

Peggy
Not long after starting to teach in 1994, Peggy made the move to adopt online distance education in 1998, stating she was one of the first in her area to teach online at
EMU. Prior to teaching online, Peggy described herself as a “techie” person, keeping up to date with all the technology that was available. When the ability to create web pages was introduced, Peggy decided to adopt the available technology and began using web pages as a resource for her classes. It was during this time that she realized that she could do more than use them just a resource, but actually as a way to convey essential information. After becoming aware that EMU was thinking about offering online classes, she was all for it stating: “My perceptions of online were favorable from day one.”

Labeling herself as a “pioneer”, Peggy was immersed in the process of discovering and learning about pedagogy, when an opportunity to teach online presented itself. Peggy doesn’t quite recall the exact details, but either through a committee she was serving on or just hearing about the opportunity, an announcement went out asking if any faculty members were interested in teaching online. From the beginning, Peggy was given support from her department chair, whom she describes as “progressive” and “technology oriented” and proceeded in the preparation of teaching a fully online course.

During the early preparation phase, Peggy attended a few training and professional development sessions offered by the institution. Most of these informative sessions focused on how to utilize some of the basic technology of the learning management system, such as “moving files back and forth.” Due to her prior experiences in working with HTML web page design, Peggy already had some level of helpful knowledge. As a result, Peggy only required minimal help in the “ways of putting the information up so that the students would find it and making sure that I was organized in that process.” From the beginning, Peggy had decided not to do any type of exams. Instead she created quizzes that ‘checked students reading and their knowledge’ as well
as applied projects. In order to gain additional insight, Peggy had already done a little research stating:

Already in the literature they were talking about how “if you were going to do online education you needed to find different ways to assess their learning”. I thought, well, we are applied. How can you apply a damn test? I hated giving tests in my online class—in my regular classes, and so it was just very easy to develop on.

One of the first things Peggy realized about teaching online is that because of the constant communication with students, sometimes allowing for only a twenty-four hour response window, she was “pretty well tied to the computer.” But that did not bother her as she liked that part and as a result, she was able to get to know her students better. She also discovered that students could hide very quickly in an online course and as a result, and made it a point to talk with each student individually, via email or discussion group within the first two weeks of the class. Although the Online Distance Education office provided the opportunity to pre-record her lectures, Peggy refused, stating:

I hated to be a talking head, and so I always used videos that were out there that got the same point across. I tried some audio lectures, but still to me that wasn’t the way that I wanted my students to learn. That wasn’t my way, because I used to do that in class and not have any interaction and I realized the students learned from interaction, not forced, but interaction, I did an intro once, and that was it.

When asked to compare the online and traditional classroom experience, Peggy was concerned with the lower level of student participation in online course evaluations. As a result of all traditional and online courses within the college adopting digital course evaluations, response rates have dramatically dropped. According to Peggy, “I’m lucky if I get ten percent of my students to complete the distance education evaluations. I got thirty some percent to do the college evaluation this last semester.”
In Peggy’s opinion, there are also many “people that just don’t trust online education” because there are rumors they hear about their colleagues “who put their syllabus up and put up their exams but they don’t do a damn thing other than that. Maybe check in for e-mail once in a while.” Consequently, she feels that many people “don’t trust the students are learning anything” and they feel that students can cheat “profusely” with online exams. Even knowing about the negative perceptions towards online education, Peggy feels it is “here to stay.” However, in her opinion, “it cannot stay the same, but rather continue to grow and evolve.”

According to Peggy, teaching online has impacted her personally and professionally. Personally, she has been able to witness the improvement in students’ writings. She is able to see the development in students from the first week until the last week. As a result, Peggy feels that teaching online has also given her the ability to have more freedom in how she approaches the subject matter and also the flexibility in manipulating course material. Peggy states:

If I see a couple students not understanding it one way I can make that switch so quickly, where if it’s in a class it may take a day or two to get that—a class or two to get that switched, I can switch it within the hour online, so I just have a little more—I believe I have more freedom.

Professionally, Peggy has found while juggling roles an administrator and an instructor, online teaching has allowed her to do both. This is very important to Peggy, as she states: “teaching, that is one of the main reasons I became a professor, is to teach.” Teaching online has allowed her to do both, which she says would be “almost impossible” if she was teaching an on campus course. According to Peggy:

I have found with being in administration, online teaching allows me to still be able to concentrate on knowledge transfer and being involved with the students—and more so one-on-one than in a class of 60 or 90—but the interaction that you
can have within a classroom is—you can’t put a dollar amount on either of them (personal communication, June 28, 2012).

Table 3
Peggy’s Response to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>RQ2&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>RQ3&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Resource</td>
<td>• Favorable in beginning</td>
<td>• Tied to computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Techie Person</td>
<td>• Got to know students</td>
<td>• Low participation on online evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pioneer</td>
<td>• Student can hide in online class</td>
<td>• Growth in students writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity</td>
<td>• Interaction</td>
<td>• Freedom with subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Convey information</td>
<td>• Here to stay</td>
<td>• Flexible w/material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Needs to evolve</td>
<td>• Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
<sup>a</sup> Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?
<sup>b</sup> How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time?
<sup>c</sup> How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?

*Donald*

Donald began utilizing elements of online education in 1997 when he and a postdoctoral colleague were involved in a research project. At that time they were not really teaching online, but rather “experimenting” or “developing” rich media content. According to Donald, “We had sound, video, 600 images that had been collected, engravings and artifacts. It allowed me, then, to introduce a dimension to the course that I probably would not have otherwise, which was visual source material.” When he started teaching full-time in the fall of 2008 he incorporated much of the same material he had used previously. Donald’s experiences as a post-doc launched his interest into the possibility of “cutting-edge” thinking about his discipline.

When asked about his perceptions of online education before his initial adoption, Donald said that he did not have much of a “background in new media” but was
“fascinated” by the prospect and even turned down other teaching positions due to the possible “skills and career development” opportunities. By the late 90’s, it was also clear to Donald that that “online education in the sense of internet based was going to be the way you use interactivity or media-rich instruction.” This was a major appeal for Donald coming to EMU, as this was possibly a place where innovation was being welcomed and encouraged. He reflected on those early years:

There was a premium on thinking about contemporaneity, thinking about higher education, instruction, the discipline not necessarily bound to structures and practices of previous generations or, for that matter, previous centuries. In essence, it seemed like a good place to want to be novel.

Furthermore, when Donald first came to EMU, he attended a new faculty orientation where he was introduced to members of the Office of Online Education. During the first weeks that he was there he began some discussions about the possibility of developing an online distance education course. According to Donald, “at that time it really felt like part of what my discipline was becoming and part of what I wanted to be a part of.”

In preparation for teaching an online course, Donald feels that one of the most important things the institution had was professional development support. Early on, Donald said that some course delivery was in a multimedia format and not entirely online, but rather a lecture component that was taped and offered via television through a school district cable channel. Many of those lecture components, he still uses in his online courses today. During these videos he would sit in front of a desk and had to fill a 58 minute lecture with no editing. He refers to these “affectionately as the hostage tapes” as he compares them to someone holding up a newspaper saying, “I am still alive.”

When asked about some of the things that may have influenced his adoption of online distance education, Donald mentions a few. During this time Donald states that
the College of Liberal Arts started to develop a pathway degree that could be satisfied entirely online. He felt it was a mandate from either the state or the system of higher education to allow students a pathway to a fully online degree. The course he had developed immediately filled a need in the development of that degree pathway. Donald also mentions that at that time, “there were some institutional incentives” in the form of a “small stipend” to develop the course. There was also an option to teach as an overload for either pay or course load credit, which in fact he utilized in order to have more research time. According to Donald, “I was able to create more research time which I needed at that point in my career to complete my research projects. So there were a couple of different incentives to want to do it beyond just an interest.” Donald does believe that stipends run a risk of attracting people that only want the stipend and feels that “if you’re trying to create an incentive for faculty to do something, research project, travel funding, or other things are a better way to do it.”

Donald feels that one of the issues he has with online courses is the sense of “alienation” from the students. Due to this reason, he tries to avoid teaching semesters where every class is completely online. When he has taught “completely online” he feels “very removed” from the students and, as a result from the university. Another thing that concerns Donald about distance education courses is the “low proportion” of online evaluations which makes it difficult to do things like annual evaluations and promotions.

Today, Donald feels that most of the discussion about the quality of online distance education is based upon the “massive online, sort of open courseware” thinking in that the “primary value of online education is convenience or its volume.” He believes convenience is one of the big issues, stating:
Whether it's student convenience or instructor convenience, that too often is associated with online courses or online education. We should not be doing this because of the convenience for the instructor any more than we should be encouraging students to do it for their convenience because you could be at home and not have to park or which was sort of part of the subtext to the distance ed communications to students in the early years. In that sense, that's just missing the point. I think that, again, the issue of quality really has to do with identifying what your course objectives are or your degree objectives are, measuring the outcomes, and are the students achieving those objectives?

When asked about the impact the adoption of online education has had on him professional and personally, Donald replied: “It has not been what I had hoped. It has not been a place to develop pedagogical innovations.” During his early years, Donald believed that teaching online would be a part of his professional dossier, and a place to experiment. But in the end, feels that “probably has not been as much,” indicating that he has had many other experiences that have been more “formative” in thinking about his instruction. However, one of the aims teaching online has helped him achieve, along with what he believes is a “primary instructional goal” of the university, is the ability to offer courses with large enrollments. According to Donald:

There have been moments in the past few years when many people have worried if that would cost them their jobs. Teaching distance education, particularly because my classes fit where certain students needed to enroll, meant I've always been beating students off with a stick instead of chasing them down. That has probably given me a degree of questionable job security confidence and autonomy (personal communication, July 12, 2012).
Table 4

Donald’s Response to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>RQ2&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>RQ3&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Development of rich media content</td>
<td>• No background</td>
<td>• Attend professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interest</td>
<td>• Fascinated</td>
<td>• More research time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Possibility for discipline</td>
<td>• The way of future interactivity or rich media instruction</td>
<td>• Low level of participation in evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Skills/career development</td>
<td>• Student alienation</td>
<td>• Not what he expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• State/ institutional pressure</td>
<td>• Common perception based upon online open courses</td>
<td>• Not place to develop pedagogical innovations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial incentives</td>
<td>• Convenience should not be issue</td>
<td>• Less impact on professional dossier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

<sup>a</sup> Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?

<sup>b</sup> How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time?

<sup>c</sup> How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?

**Megan**

Although Megan received her PhD in 2001, she had already been teaching for 10 years with her Master’s Degree. During her experiences as a Masters level faculty, she was introduced to teaching online. In 1997, she began supporting her traditional classes with online elements and eventually started teaching fully online classes in 2002. When asked about her early perceptions about online education, Megan replied:

Well, I think I had—it reflected my ignorance of teaching in general. I thought it was simply a matter of putting your PowerPoints up there and maybe recording something. I didn’t really understand the theory behind how you can actually educate someone online; it has to be interactive and you have to involve everyone in the course, so there’s a whole skill set above and beyond just teaching in the classroom.

In fact, she “cringes” when reminiscing about some of her early courses, but believes at that time the technology available did not promote good teaching.
After receiving her PhD, Megan was not given a choice in the initial adoption of online distance education. She was informed during the hiring process that “This is the course. It’s being taught online, so you’re teaching it online.” The state that she was going to be working in did not have the program throughout all of its institutions. Therefore, the university was sending faculty members by plane to other parts of the state in order to teach those courses. Eventually, there was a push to save money by offering more courses online. Although not given a choice about teaching online, Megan says she enjoys teaching online because “I can relate to the students at any time of the day rather than maybe it’s not the best time at 8:00 in the morning, 8:00 to 10:00.” Megan has even become a champion of online education and after attending a school function; she and another professor cornered the current President and tried to convince him to have more classes online. According to Megan she told the President: “You really have to put some more money into online education because it’s urban sustainability. People don’t have to drive and park. You don’t need buildings and they don’t have to be heated.” The President at that time did not agree, stating, “No, I don’t believe in it.”

In those early years of adoption, Megan tried to get other faculty members to share their course information, but to her surprise everyone refused. In fear of losing their intellectual property, many faculty members she would ask to share their information would say “no.” This required her to build an entire course from scratch, but she was up to the challenge. According to Megan, “I felt interested. I like challenges like that. As I said, I was sort of an early adopter. I was oblivious to what the challenge was, so I was over-confident. I wasn’t frightened, and I should’ve been.” In the beginning, Megan attended some informal training, but basically learned how to teach
online as she went along. Early on there was just a focus to learn the technical aspects with no regard to the “pedagogy” of teaching online. In Megan’s opinion this has improved greatly over time, and at her current institution, EMU, there is lots of support available.

One of the things that shocked Megan the most about teaching online was the low evaluations she received in her online courses. She was used to getting high evaluations for her traditional classes. Megan mentions she would get comments like, “I didn’t learn anything from this course,” and she would think, “Well, it’s the same stuff in person.” But then she realized it really wasn’t. She recognized that she needed to increase the interactivity in her courses and try and get the students to relate to one another by working in teams. She became overwhelmed by the technology and mechanics of teaching online and chuckles to herself saying, “The only thing I can be proud of is that I was an early adopter, not that I did anything right.” When asked about comparing online to traditional teaching, Megan says she prefers traditional classrooms. According to Megan:

Because I’m old; I’m in my late 60’s, and I’ve been teaching for at least 20 years and I’m used to it, and I find it weird to teach people that I don’t know what they look like and I don’t hear their voice. It’s just weird. Then I meet them when they come here for graduation and I think—and I think, in terms of my pedagogical skills for online, I probably am out of the basement, but maybe I’m just holding on at the first floor and I’m not really excelling. I sometimes say to myself, “Would I like to take one of my courses?” and the answer is often no /laughs/.

When asked about the impact the adoption of distance education has had, Megan says the workload for the creation of online courses has increased. Megan says: “A lot of the work is front-end loaded, and then it’s just kind of like driving the car.” She becomes exhausted after some of her in-person lecturing; Megan also believes that distance
education will help “extend her career” as it is “less physically taxing.” Throughout the interview Megan continuously mentions trying to learn more about instructional pedagogy for online teaching. In Megan’s opinion, as a doctoral student she received no guidance in teaching online which caused her to struggle early in her career. She feels that teaching online “was left out of her education.” In those early years, she wishes she would have had a mentor or at least an opportunity to “see how other people did their courses.” Even today she continues to aspire to become “better” at teaching online, commenting:

I really need a mentor, someone who people would come and say, “That course she taught, that was the best course,” and then I can learn from her and see what she did. I would like to see the university provide more online teaching “show your stuff day.” It doesn’t cost a lot of money (personal communication, June 26, 2012).

Table 5
Megan’s Response to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1a</th>
<th>RQ2b</th>
<th>RQ3c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Support traditional classroom</td>
<td>• Ignorance</td>
<td>• Attended professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Job requirement</td>
<td>• Interactive</td>
<td>• Low evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Institutional budget savings</td>
<td>• Required new skill set</td>
<td>• Increased workload for course creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal interest</td>
<td>• Technology does not promote good teaching</td>
<td>• Extend career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Urban sustainability</td>
<td>• Continued development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
a Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?
b How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time?
c How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?

Henry

Henry, an Assistant Professor in the College of Liberal Arts, did not have a prior strong opinion about teaching online before his initial adoption. When asked about his
initial perceptions about teaching online, Henry responded: “I thought, oh well, yeah
distance stuff. They have been doing that for years. It used to be you’d mail stuff in but
now, wow, you can do everything on the computer.” Early in his teaching career, Henry
first experienced teaching at a distance after taking over a correspondence course from a
previous faculty member. Students would obtain a course packet and they would mail in
lessons through the postal service as they were completed. If testing was necessary,
distance education students would be required to have the exam proctored. Students
would work at their own pace and complete assignments and exams. When assignments
were completed, they would mail this information back to Henry, and after he submitted
a final grade to the distance education office, students would get credit for the course.
According to Henry, “teaching online was not a new concept; it was simply that we were
using new technology to do something the student has been doing for years.”

A few aspects made Henry’s initial adoption of online distance education
attractive. First, during his early teaching years at a community college, he was
approached by his department chair with an opportunity to teach an existing traditional
class online. Although it seemed like a lot of work in the beginning, Henry believed the
long-term convenience factor would outweigh the initial workload increase. Henry
explained:

In a way my reaction to the convenience of the online format sort of mirrored a lot
of the student’s reactions. To me it was, ‘oh yeah, I could still do this and I don’t
have to drive over there on Tuesday and Thursday nights. Which is what I’m sure
is exactly what our students were thinking. If you could have your classes online
you do not have to come to campus as often. It is convenient. It was more work
on the front end, but once I have it set up, I don’t have to drive over to the college
twice a week.
Another factor in the adoption of online distance education after being hired at Early Majority University was the possibility of receiving a developmental incentive for creating a new distance education class. According to Henry, “if you designed a new distance education class that was not currently being offered, you would get the development incentive money. Who doesn’t want $1,500?” Convenience again was also a factor as he states: “you could have one of your classes be online, and you don’t have to come to campus as often. It’s convenient.” As Henry discovered, the majority of work was at the developmental stage of setting up the course but things became noticeably easier after continuing to offer the same course online. According to Henry, “At first it’s a lot of extra effort. Then you work some bugs out, by the second semester it runs a lot more smoothly. By the third semester you just go in, answer questions, and provide some guidance.” Henry also stated that he enjoyed the process of developing a course whether online or otherwise, comparing it to “being asked to create an artistic book”.

Henry’s experiences adopting online distance education have impacted his current perceptions about teaching online. When asked about the quality of online education, Henry believes that online courses “can be really neat and really informative and of very high quality. They can also be really awful. Of course this can be said of classroom sections.” Amongst the “older generation” colleagues in his department, many have been very suspicious of online education and have been very critical. To some extent Henry believes their concerns are valid but also feels that some may be hypocritical, stating:

They see it as taking away from the quality of experience that comes from old fashioned classroom teaching. To some extent I think some of their concerns are real. Online education I think also offers some neat stuff that can be very valuable. What I will say is that because of the potential for fraud, some degree of proctoring across the span of a completely online education would be a good idea. What’s funny is some older generation faculty have complained that you
could have students getting degrees that just kind of floated their way through online courses. I always sort of chuckle at that because to some extent they do that in classroom sections as well.

Henry believes that the quality of education is not solely based on the format but rather on the reduction of standards in higher education. According to Henry,

> We keep reducing, lowering the standards so we can attract more majors like athletes and other people of disadvantaged backgrounds. Then in order to get them through, we lower our standards some more and then more. It’s like a race to the bottom as they put it. In other words the level of challenging versus whether you can fudge your way through it isn’t an online versus classroom thing. It is the quality of education in general, so you can make an online class just as challenging as a classroom section.

But overall it is Henry’s opinion, “there are probably a greater portion of bad online classes than classroom classes” and that “it is possible that online education has made it possible to accelerate the decline and quality of higher education.”

Online distance education has also had an impact on Henry’s role as an instructor. First, he began to appreciate more of the time that he has spent in the traditional face-to-face classroom. Due to the perceived benefits, Henry has also begun to use more online technology to support his traditional classroom sections by enhancing his courses with online tools such as the grade book, having online quizzes, and posting course material. In addition, Henry has been forced to discover inventive ways of using the technology in order to assess and evaluate his teaching online. After adopting full online courses, Henry discovered one of the major impacts of teaching online was the low to nonexistent response rates for student evaluations in online courses. According to Henry, “The big complaint around here with online teaching was that you’d get four evaluations at the end of the semester and they’d be the four people that had a bone to pick.” With the low response rate to evaluations there was no true way to assess performance and quality in
his online courses. As a result, Henry had discussions with an instructional designer from the distance education office, where they formulated a way to increase his response rates for online course evaluations. Realizing that they could not require students to take the evaluation, they decided to include an access code on the evaluation that students would need in order to take the course final. Students were not required to fill out the evaluation, only go to the page and retrieve the access code. However, when students went to this evaluation page, they ended up taking the evaluation anyways since they were already there. This increased the response rates of the course evaluations, and according to Henry: “the response rate went from 3 percent to 85 percent” (personal communication, June 27, 2012).

Table 6

Henry’s Response to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>RQ2&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>RQ3&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity</td>
<td>• No prior opinion</td>
<td>• Increased workload in beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Convenience</td>
<td>• Not new concept</td>
<td>• Appreciation of traditional classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial incentives</td>
<td>• Informative</td>
<td>• Heightened use of technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal interest</td>
<td>• Potentially awful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhance traditional courses</td>
<td>• Potential for fraud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Quality not based on format</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Greater portion of bad online courses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Decline of quality in higher education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
<sup>a</sup> Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?
<sup>b</sup> How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time?
<sup>c</sup> How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?
Peter

Peter started teaching as soon as he became a Masters student in 1997 and started teaching online eleven years later in 2008. His initial perceptions about teaching online were that:

Students would sign on to the classes for the wrong reasons and that it would be a—well, let’s just say a different kind of teaching experience, right? That it wouldn’t be as robust, it wouldn’t be as productive and illuminating.

He based most of his early perceptions about teaching online on discussions he had with colleagues about for-profit online colleges. According to Peter, “the online university did a lot of damage in terms of perception as it was just cranking out inferior students and it just gave the whole enterprise a bad name.”

Multiple factors went into the reasoning behind Peter’s initial adoption of online distance education. At this time, due to a relationship he was in, Peter was spending his summers in another state. His original thought was, “I’m spending four months in another state, wouldn’t it be cool if I could also teach and earn my summer salary?” So the possibility of teaching and earning a summer salary was an initial incentive. While looking into the possibility of teaching a summer course, he also “discovered that you actually got paid to develop courses”, which was another incentive. In addition, at that time the department did not have any online courses and he was supported as using an innovative way to “broaden the curriculum, or course offerings, in the delivery system.”

He states that the leaders in his department were “gung-ho” about the possibility of offering courses online. Early on conversations occurred within the department about the concerns and skepticisms of offering courses online. In Peters’ opinion, there was so much “pull coming from above” as “deans love these things”, “because the people who
are looking at the balance sheets are saying, in terms of the full-time equivalent (FTE); it’s a moneymaker.”

Peter was also curious about this new world, stating: “I had heard conflicting things. Some said that it was the way of the future; some people thought that it was a scam. I wanted to see for myself what it was all about.” In the end, Peter was motivated to teach online for “personal” reasons like “the ease and convenience” of being able to teach while on the road and by the curiosity of what online teaching was all about.

During his early years teaching online Peter says he was not prepared for the level of frustration in terms of communication and the delivery of the information. He ended up dealing with low-level technical stuff that he was not able to assist students with, having to refer students to other places for help. In fact, students were asking less about the class and the material and more about technical issues. According to Peter:

That was somewhat jarring because then the energy that you spend on the class, by and large, is maintenance. It cuts both ways because overall once the class was created, the amount of work you have to put into it is pretty minimal, but the work that you do put into is dry, technical, managerial, you know. It’s not intellectually that stimulating.

Peter was also surprised at the higher “vanishing rate” of students in online classes. Especially those students that stopped participating at the beginning, but come back later in the semester in panic mode trying to do whatever they can to “salvage the grade in the course”, but unfortunately by that time it is often too late. One of the major differences Peter sees between traditional and online courses is the lack of “intellectual interactivity”.

When asked about his current perceptions of online distance education Peter’s initial response was: “Personally, I love it.” He talks about his ability to travel while teaching online, even mentioning a summer he spent in Europe “backpacking” while
having the ability to teach. In addition, the “flexibility” of teaching online requires him to only make minor tweaks to his online class, which frees up the ability to do other parts of his job. But Peter also questions his decisions and sometimes feels guilty, stating:

Then the guilt kicks in because, when I teach a class in the classroom, every time I do it, I update things. You know, it’s new and it’s fresh. I do tweak things, but there’s not a lot of moving of big pieces so the class is sort of the class, right? There’s a bit of guilt in there, feeling like I’m not giving them something fresh or revitalized. Because, you know it takes more effort to change things in the online world, so if you’ve gotten it to a point where it all hangs together nice and tight, leave it alone. I guess there’s just a bit of guilt on my part in the sense that, like, you wind it up and you let it go, this thing that you’ve already created, and you sort of step back and just watch it happen.

Peter has tried to speak to his colleagues about this “selfish perspective” of teaching online, but many of them have still not decided to adopt. Peter also feels that teaching online is not an intellectual, dynamic, ongoing thing.

The adoption of online distance education has had an impact on Peter’s personal and professional life. Teaching online has forced him to become more familiar with technology, like how to give a lecture with a microphone and video camera. He has also become popular with majors as his class roster is immediately filled. According to Peter, every single time they have offered the course online, they have had to raise the caps for the course. Peter frees up time when teaching a “three load” by offering a few of them online, allowing him to conduct more research and writing during the semester. Another thing Peter mentions is that early on, many of his colleagues questioned whether “teaching online was a good thing for the department? Or is this a good thing for us, because we pride ourselves on being rigorous and having high standards. Is this going to detract from that?” However, Peter feels that many colleagues have just sort of “forgotten about it” and are content with his ability to get students “moved through this
course, move so many bodies through this course a year, as that’s a good thing for the department.” Peter mentioned that he and his colleagues periodically review each other’s teaching, but during our interview, he informed me that he has never had one person review his online class (personal communication, June 27, 2012).

Table 7

Peter’s Response to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1a</th>
<th>RQ2b</th>
<th>RQ3c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Convenience</td>
<td>• Student have more technical issues</td>
<td>• Additional workload in development of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Flexibility</td>
<td>• Not robust</td>
<td>• Ability to teach in summer while traveling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial Incentives</td>
<td>• Not productive</td>
<td>• Flexibility in managing course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Departmental interest &amp; pressure</td>
<td>• Not Illuminating</td>
<td>• Guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curiosity</td>
<td>• Early perceptions based on for-profit online colleges</td>
<td>• Increased familiarity with technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inferior students</td>
<td>• Courses always full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Low-level of communication with students</td>
<td>• Popularity within the department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Disappearing student</td>
<td>• More time to conduct research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not intellectually stimulating</td>
<td>• Increased support from department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of intellectual interactivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not dynamic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Loves it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

a Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?
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c How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?

Cindy

Before coming to Early Majority University, Cindy was encouraged by her previous institution to use an online learning management system as a means of “educational support”. Starting around 2005, Cindy began using the campus portal to access course rosters, interact with students outside of class, record grades, and post
course material. These experiences began to shape her early perceptions as Cindy found this as a way to enhance pedagogy and as a way to add value and interaction to the on-ground teaching experience. According to Cindy,

Initially, I saw it as an administrative tool. For example, I used to have a handwritten book in which I would record students' attendance. When I switched to an online platform to do that, I started to communicate with students as well—I started to see the benefit of having one place on the computer where I could compile all that information rather than having to write it down and then use my handwritten notes to do grading and stuff like that. Initially, I saw it as a supplementary aid to in-person teaching, in-class teaching and very much used it that way.

Even though some of her colleagues were resistant, Cindy began to see the value and “administrative efficiency” in the online environment, but she also realized that this was something the students desired. It came to a point where students started to encourage her to use it more “extensively” by requesting more content to be put online. In those early years, one of the main things that influenced her decision to teach online was the “efficiency” or ability to keep track of things in an easier way. As an adjunct teaching four or five classes, she found it to be a “difficult administrative burden” and was looking for ways to make things easier.

When Cindy started working at EMU in 2005, her department asked for volunteers to be part of a collaborative process in creating online courses to teach basic general education courses. Because of her previous knowledge of supporting her “live” classes and her desire to get to know her new colleagues, Cindy decided to volunteer. At this time her department chair was encouraging faculty to participate in the development of online courses and she states “it was kind of kismet.” Cindy also found this as an opportunity to expand her knowledge base in terms of teaching.
After coming to EMU, Cindy initially took three workshops, which were being offered by the professional development office, on how to use the learning management system. This was an invaluable experience and according to Cindy, “I think that without that I would have been less confident.” Cindy also mentions that during this time there was a push by EMU administration to encourage and incentivize faculty to start moving into online teaching. According to Cindy: “there was a definite encouragement and incentive offered by the administration at EMU to start moving into online teaching.” Cindy confirmed that she received a $1,500 stipend and feels that this incentive may have influenced her and her colleagues to teach an online course, stating: “I think that was a big incentive because I think some people, myself included, who might have been a little bit more reluctant, the fact is that we could not only engage this new technology, but be reimbursed for it.”

Cindy categorizes her current perceptions of online teaching as positives and negatives. On the positive, she feels that due to actual space limitations in traditional classes she has an ability to reach more students in an online class. Cindy indicated that she gets between fifty to sixty students in an online class, where-as on ground sessions are limited to thirty-five to forty students. Another positive is that she has noticed that students that do not normally participate in class, the quiet or shy students, have the ability to speak up or think more succinctly about their answers before commenting. The final positive Cindy has seen in the adoption of online classes is the ability to meet student needs. According to Cindy, “people who have, obviously, created their schedules or are trying to do a lot of things including raise a family as well as work as well as go to school, the online environment is really positive.”
On the negative side, Cindy shows some frustration in constantly having to remind students of deadlines and course requirements. She feels, “I constantly have to remind people about when things are due. I don't know what it is about the online environment, but it seems as though instructions have to be repeated often.” Another negative is the lack of connection students have with the faculty member and other students in the course. Although she has found a way to overcome this by creating small groups within the course, this has required additional work as she is having to do more in terms of instruction and thinking about how people interact with her and one another.

Cindy feels disconnected in online classes, and says:

I don't know who people are. I only know their names. Even though I've often asked to post photos, and some people do, I miss the visual. I miss the fact that I can't identify people if I see them on campus. I don't know who they are. I only know a name.

Cindy is not sure about where online instruction is going, but thinks it is here to stay and not a “fad” or “flash in the pan.” When asked to compare online courses to traditional classrooms, she feels that she has equally as many poor students online as in the classroom, but in her opinion in order for online students to succeed they must be “incredibly motivated because it's very easy to just skate through.” In addition, one of the things that she has noticed when comparing online to traditional classes is the low-level of participation she gets in student evaluations for online courses. The feedback she tends to receive from an online class is often “scattered” or “absent” and this is something she would like to see corrected. Cindy has witnessed another phenomenon that occurs in her online courses but not in her traditional courses: students just stop participating. They stop turning in assignments, stop contributing and quit logging in.
They don’t even end up dropping the class, but rather finish off with an “F” for the course.

Teaching online has had multiple impacts on Cindy as a faculty member, both professionally and personally. Professionally, this has opened her up to another way of teaching as she feels that she has been able to reach out to more students that she may have never met. Teaching online has influenced the way she teaches in the face-to-face classes as well. According to Cindy:

I think it's made me more conscious about this whole thing. I was talking about of building a way to connect with one another, with the material, and I think that that has—I think that I take that into my in-person classes as well. I'm not the kind of instructor who just lectures for 50 minutes and then asks for questions. That has never been how I've taught, and it's not how I ever will teach. In that way, thinking about how to involve people in what they're learning in the online challenges helps—me think a little bit more outside the box.

Personally, teaching online has made Cindy more aware about technology and social media. By adopting more digital technology, she feels more connected to a younger generation of students stating:

I'm much more aware of how students who were born in the 90s are interacting with one another and how much more of that is done digitally. I think personally it's kind of kept me in tune or a little bit more in touch with students that are incoming undergrads and the ways that they interact (personal communication, July 02, 2012).
Cindy’s Response to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>RQ2&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>RQ3&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Institutional encouragement</td>
<td>• Enhance pedagogy</td>
<td>• Required professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Educational support</td>
<td>• Added value and interaction</td>
<td>• Constantly remind students of deadlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administrative efficiency</td>
<td>• Ability to reach more students</td>
<td>• Low level of participation in evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student encouragement</td>
<td>• More student participation</td>
<td>• New teaching ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Career</td>
<td>• Meeting student needs</td>
<td>• Influenced traditional classroom teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge expansion</td>
<td>• Lack of interaction</td>
<td>• Heightened awareness about technology and social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial incentive</td>
<td>• Students are equal</td>
<td>• Connection to younger generation students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disappearing student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

<sup>a</sup> Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?

<sup>b</sup> How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time?

<sup>c</sup> How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?

Paul

As a visiting professor at Early Majority University, Paul was informed when selected to be an instructor in the summer of 2011 that he would be teaching an online class. According to Paul:

Yeah, basically in the past it had been an in-person course, and I was looking for additional employment and compensation, those types of things, actually looking for the course itself. My position is that as a visiting assistant professor here in the department, and when I was selected, that’s when I was informed this was gonna be online.

This worked out well for Paul, as he desired a summer teaching position and as it turned out, that class happened to be online. He was already interested in developing an online class as he believed that there was beginning to be an increased emphasis in online teaching. According to Paul, “I knew that it was a desirable skill-set to have.”
In the beginning, Paul was confused by the differing definitions of online education classifying himself as “fairly ignorant” about what distance education meant, as online education meant different things to different people. Paul stated:

I had seen various levels of online education, different approaches to it; everything, as I said, from basically just a standard class portal in which you would develop a syllabus and post grades, and everyone would—most people would use, and just basically using that to dump assignments and have people read the textbook. People were calling that online education and were calling it an online class and I didn’t think very much of those types of approaches.

Wanting a more robust course, Paul made every effort to increase his knowledge of teaching online and investigate what online education meant at EMU. Paul describes those experiences:

I saw what was being done there and they were very intensive efforts, and they were oftentimes centered around video-recordings of people lecturing, and it wasn’t just the standard class that was being lectured. They were actually video-recordings specifically of a person lecturing to the camera. There wasn’t any audience. I thought that was interesting, and had heard some feedback from students, some who, I guess, liked it, but many who didn’t like kinda staring at somebody and having something packaged that way. I was interested in then understanding if there really was an overarching philosophy of what online education was, and particularly since I was here at EMU, what EMU’s perspective of online education was and what resources there were to be had.

Before being asked to teach an online class, Paul had attended an informational meeting about online education geared towards faculty interested in developing an online class at Early Majority University.

After learning that he would be teaching an online class, Paul experienced some “trepidation” about having a very limited amount of time to prepare for his class. First he met with a faculty member in the department that had already developed some materials for teaching online. Although he did not end up using those materials, he was grateful that that faculty member was willing to share their resources. After that, he met with
some personnel from the Online Education office who “shepherded” him through the process of understanding the structure that was being delivered through the campus online portal. He was specific about not wanting to share his PowerPoint presentations for fear of someone cannibalizing his intellectual property. At these meetings with an instructional designer, Paul was introduced to a computer program called Camtasia, which is screen capture software that allows you to record your desktop with the addition of audio. Paul describes this as, “an opportunity to basically present my slides and have narration there and be able to enhance them with facts or zoom in, highlighting and underlining things.”

Early in Paul’s experience in teaching online he had been struck by the “unpredictability” of the online class. He began to realize that many of the students that had registered for his online class didn’t log in, and a small amount of students had begun participating and then suddenly stopped participating: they disappeared. Paul also indicated a limitation in the online system itself, as contacting students can only be through the web campus portal. This requires students to log in and read the emails, which is a vicious cycle as the students have stopped logging in and don’t see the web campus portal email. One of the main disadvantages of teaching online described by Paul is, “this discontinuous contact between faculty and students.” However, he feels that this provides an opportunity for students to clearly and concisely frame their questions in e-mails and for the faculty member to answer accordingly. Unfortunately, the amount of time that passes between these types of communication can be “disjointed” and prohibits the “free flow of communication.”
Paul’s perceptions about online education have grown more robust over time. He knew that there was a growing demand, but also realized it had many limitations. He would recommend online education in many instances, except in “whole degrees” or a “general undergraduate degree that’s online.” According to Paul:

There’s things that I think are missed out on, but I think it’s a great partner with in-class education, a mixture of online and in-class education, because it works real well. I think online education probably works really great for—a complete online education works probably really great for people that are going back and getting really specific degrees like MBAs and those types of things, but I’m hesitant about—if I had kids that were college age, I’d really recommend that they take some online education but make sure that they were taking some in class.

In addition, Paul has realized that it is hard to write a letter of recommendation for a student that you have never met.

As far as the quality of online instruction, Paul states, “I think it really depends on the faculty.” In his opinion, he feels that there are some poor quality courses out there that are being delivered to students and that faculty should carefully consider course delivery and what to expect from online students as far as time commitment and difficulty. He believes:

Faculty need to consider making sure that the material is very content-rich and is something above and beyond what a textbook—reading a textbook or taking quizzes at the end of the chapter can provide, because that’s something the students can do outside of the university. They can’t get the degree from their textbook, we need to be delivering something else to the students.

Teaching online has had a positive impact on Paul’s role as a faculty member as “it’s helped me to think more creatively about how I teach, and reinforced some of those ideas that I already understood.” Paul feels that he has been able to interact with more students in a shorter period of time while being able to better leverage his time. Being a full-time teaching faculty, he has been able to teach three classes a semester, and a few
other mid-semester classes, by managing his time teaching some of them online. Paul states “going back to that semester where I taught five classes in one burst and had 500-plus students. That would not have been physically possible, and the only way it was possible was because of the time saved.” Adopting online distance education has not only impacted Paul’s teaching, but “pushed him to think in other ways about my life as well.” (personal communication, June 25, 2012).

Table 9

Paul’s Response to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1^a</th>
<th>RQ2^b</th>
<th>RQ3^c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity</td>
<td>• Ignorant</td>
<td>• Increased creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No choice</td>
<td>• Varying definitions of online education</td>
<td>• Affirmation of ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Career enhancement</td>
<td>• Increased emphasis in online teaching</td>
<td>• Interact with more students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Desired skill-set</td>
<td>• Unpredictable</td>
<td>• Leverage time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Disappearing student</td>
<td>• Increased personal awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Limitations in LMS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discontinuous contact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not recommend whole degrees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Growing demand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Quality depends on faculty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

^a Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?

^b How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time?

^c How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?

Joanne

Joanne, after 30 years of teaching, only recently offered her first online distance education course. Due to the elimination of her previous department, she moved to a department with an entirely online major and was assigned to teach online classes. In her previous unit, Joanne had met a junior faculty that taught a few classes online, but she personally did not have any interest in changing formats, stating: “I like teaching face-to-
face. I love the engagement with the students.” Although Joanne found online teaching an “interesting format”, she describes herself as not having a lot of technical expertise.

When asked about her early perceptions of online distance education, Joanne responded by saying, “my impressions were not very good.” She could not imagine that the online format could be as potentially powerful as a face-to-face course. Early on Joanne felt that online was not as good a format for the delivery of education. But after being exposed to some of the benefits of online learning, her opinions have changed for the better. Joanne described her observation of a junior faculty in her previous department:

When the junior faculty member that we had was teaching, the students loved it. She was especially skillful in doing it. She was very dedicated to, and she had, one of her degrees was in art, and she was very interested in making it a very engaging type of environment for the students. She went over, bent over backwards to make it very experiential and to have really interesting projects for the students. The students embraced it, and that was probably the first point at which I could see the value, if not in an all online class, incorporating a lot of the technologies.

One of the criticisms she has heard about their online degree program is that it tends to be rather “canned” and because many graduate students are handed a class they are not even experienced in, those courses can be “so mechanized and so unimaginative that it’s almost the worst of distance education, versus somebody who creates it themselves and has mastery of the content and then uses the technologies to enhance that.”

According to Joanne, she did not choose to teach online. During her first semester that she taught completely online in her new program, there was a curriculum revision process and a decision was made to turn the online courses into hybrid classes. In her opinion, she didn’t like the all online format as students didn’t know each other and they didn’t know the faculty. According to Joanne:
I was hearing from the students, again, that they were feeling very
disenfranchised, that a lot of the part-time faculty and graduate assistants weren’t
responding in a timely manner, that, again, everything was very, kind of
mechanized and rote. They felt like they, what one of the students said was they
felt like the degree program was just corralling them rather than really teaching
them.

Joanne describes her transition to teaching fully online as “pretty smooth”. Even though,
Joanne did not teach a fully online course until 2011, she had been employing online
elements to support her traditional classes for the past seven years. She used the learning
management system to post power point presentations, have online discussion groups and
to post videos. Joanne describes herself as not “very technologically literate” and took
professional development workshops before adopting those early elements.

When asked what may have influenced her decision to adopt online elements to
support her face-to-face courses, Joanne stated: “students begin to expect it.” In Joanne’s
opinion, “They’re (students) socialized into thinking that their syllabus is going to, you
know, there’s going to be a web campus presence for them and that the materials are
gonna be, for the class are there.” She began by posting the syllabus for the course and
then power point slides every week. She started to communicate with students through
the online announcements and through the email in the learning management system.

Eventually, she found value in some of the online tools stating:

I started using the “turn it in”, especially in the, well, I used it for undergraduate
and graduate classes, but as a developmental tool for the graduate students so that
when they’re working on a professional, or their term papers, they could turn it in,
professional abstracts.

She describes the eventual introduction of discussion groups as “wonderful, absolutely
wonderful.” Due to budget cuts, Joanne also needed a way to give handouts to students
without the ability to print them. According to Joanne, departmental administration
suggested, that “you post it”, so part of the initial adoption was driven by the institution for cost-cutting measures to cut down on the use of paper.

When asked about her perceptions about online instruction, Joanne feels that if the entire degree program is online, students lose out on a lot. However, she does feel that for some classes it could be a perfect delivery system as long as it does not end up being a correspondence course. In fact, when asked about the comparison of quality between online and traditional courses, she says it can be “very, very, variable, which is true of face-to-face classes.” Teaching online has had a major professional impact on her role as a faculty member and according to Joanne: “I spend way too much time online” stating she spends approximately thirty hours a week teaching two online classes. Another impact teaching online has had on her personally, is her increased ability in navigating technology. Joanne recalled a story about a recent use of this new found knowledge:

You know, I think that I’m—was it yesterday or the day before? I was messing with something with the computer where if I downloaded a file it would go to the desktop instead of documents, and I said something to my husband. He’s always the one that kind of would jump in and fix anything relative to the computer, and so I said something to him about it. Then, he said, “I’ll take care of that later,” and I just went and changed it. He said, “Wow.” [Laughter] (personal communication, July, 11, 2012).
Table 10

Joanne’s Response to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1a</th>
<th>RQ2b</th>
<th>RQ3c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • No choice fully online – department elimination  
• Supported traditional classroom  
• Student expectations  
• Cost-cutting measures | • Early impressions not good  
• Student unfamiliarity  
• Entire degree programs students lose out  
• Opinions changed over time  
• Discussion groups wonderful  
• Perfect for some courses  
• No correspondence courses  
• Quality varies | • Professional development  
• Discovery & adoption of other online tools  
• Too much time spent online  
• Increased knowledge of technology |

Notes:
a Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?  
b How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time?  
c How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?

**Cross-Case Synthesis of Faculty Responses**

Findings of this study indicate no discernible pattern of adoption experiences when comparing faculty members by demographics such as gender, rank or college. These varying demographics did not help to explain any pattern in regards to why faculty members adopted online distance education, their perceptions or impacts of teaching online. However, a few indicators or common themes became apparent when comparing the following categories among faculty members, including: approximate year the initial adoption occurred, adopter categories, level of technology experience, choice to teach online and early positive and negative perceptions.

Table 11 shows a visual representation of a comparison of faculty members’ adoption experiences and perceptions.
Table 11

Comparison of Faculty Experiences and Perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year of Adoption</th>
<th>Adopter Category</th>
<th>Prior Enhanced Classroom</th>
<th>Incentives</th>
<th>Convenience</th>
<th>Tech Savvy</th>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Early Perceptions</th>
<th>Professional Development</th>
<th>Departmental Support</th>
<th>Continued Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Innovator</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pos</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Early Adopter</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pos</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Early Adopter</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pos</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Early Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unc</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Late Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Non</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Late Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Neg</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Late Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pos</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Paul</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Laggard</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unc</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Laggard</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Neg</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Faculty Vignettes

This study focused on gaining a better understanding of faculty members’ adoption of online distance education. This was accomplished by describing the lived experiences and perceptions of faculty members who had already adopted online distance education. Therefore, in order for each participant to define their world in their own unique ways, open ended questions focusing on “how” and “why” they adopted was the main emphasis of the interviews (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009).

After completing a qualitative approach to the analysis of data, faculty vignettes provide the ability to recognize emerging and common themes. These themes yielded
data which answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1. According to Everett Rogers (2003), the main elements of the Diffusion of Innovations framework are: (1) the innovation and perceived attributes, (2) communication channels, (3) time, and (4) social system. Some of the themes extrapolated from this study directly aligned with Rogers’ (2003) theory of diffusion, specifically the innovation-decision process and perceived attributes of the innovation. Furthermore, new themes emerged that were not identified within the diffusion of innovations framework. Chapter 5 explicates these implications for theory and practice by addressing each of the research questions, and concludes with suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of the process of adoption of online distance education amongst full-time faculty members’ at a traditional 4-year research institute. This case study describes the adoption process through the faculty members’ own voices and lived experiences. Chapter 1 introduced the study by providing detailed background information, including the purpose, research design, research questions and significance of the study. Chapter 2 reviewed the literature, which included the history of distance education, research on faculty and distance education, and introduced the Diffusion of Innovations framework. Chapter 3 provided details on the qualitative research methods and case study design that this study employed. Chapter 4 presented the findings of the study by addressing the results of the state, institution, and individual faculty member cases. This concluding chapter provides a discussion of the findings, a review of the research questions and correlations to previous literature, a discussion on the implications for theory and practice, future research possibilities, and final remarks on this study.

Discussion of Findings

Over the past decade, institutions of higher education have seen enrollments in distance education, especially in the form of online learning, increase in striking numbers (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Parsad & Lewis, 2008). Even though a major push to increase the availability of distance education technology has occurred, effective adoption has not always followed suit (Wallhaus, 2000). As many colleges and universities contemplate
the increased integration and institutional adoption of online learning, one of the most
critical factors they must consider is acceptance by their faculty members. In fact, many
of the important decisions in regards to online learning made by college and university
administrators are based upon their understanding of faculty perceptions (Allen &
requires faculty support for technology adoption.

The adoption of online distance education can have a great impact on a faculty
member’s life, which can influence their decision to adopt or reject teaching in this new
medium. As discussed in Chapter 2, previous studies have categorized faculty motivators
and inhibitors in the participation of online distance education as being either intrinsic or
extrinsic factors (Betts, 1998; Meyer, 2002; Parker, 2003; Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, &
Marx, 1999; Schifter, 2000). In addition, a review of existing literature also suggested
that faculty members’ concerns and perceptions in the adoption of online distance
education concentrated around a lack of professional development and training (Maguire,
2005), levels of technology competency (Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008), an increase in
incentives and rewards (Belchier & Cucek, 2002; Green, Alejandro, & Brown, 2009) and
the quality of online instruction (Betts, 1998; Maguire, 2005; Valentine, 2002;
Wichersham & McElhany, 2010; Wilson, 2001).

In the preceding study, faculty members were asked to recount their innovation-
decision making process and perceptions regarding the adoption of online distance
education. Individuals that participated in this study were blunt and honest with their
comments, sometimes painting an unpopular picture for those who wish to rapidly adopt
online distance education. An investigation into the process of adoption raises concerns
of quality and standards within online education. Although the main focus of this study
was how and why faculty members adopted online distance education, it is also crucial to
understand the overall impacts and consequences to higher education by this rapid
adoption. In the hopes of speeding up the diffusion process, the discussion of findings
provides administrators and leaders a guide for their own institutional adoption as well as
a cautionary tale towards this unparalleled growth. Document analysis provided
contextual information for the case study by framing the state growth and decision
making, policies governing distance education, and technical and professional
development support provided by the institution. The following section will thoroughly
discuss the four research questions that were the driving force behind this study.

Research Question 1

Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting
research university chosen to adopt online distance education?

An analysis and comparison of faculty members’ cases revealed multiple,
emergent themes that address the first research question. When describing why faculty
members decided to adopt online distance education, the following overarching themes
emerged: 1) internal motivation, 2) perceived attributes/advantages, 3) incentives, and 4)
social system/influences. Within each main category or theme, subcategories were also
discovered that enhanced the explanatory power of the major themes.

With respect to the initial adoption of online distance education, several faculty
members were internally motivated to teach online, whether it was out of curiosity,
personal interest, a desired skill-set or an already embedded appreciation of technology.
Bill mentioned his prior commitment to technology and wanting to discover new ways to
enhance the learning environment (personal communication, July 12, 2012). Peggy described herself as a “techie” person and adopted online elements to convey essential information (personal communication, June 28, 2012). Donald adopted online education in order to experiment and develop rich media content, and also to investigate possibilities of “cutting edge” thinking about his discipline (personal communication, July 12, 2012). These findings aligned with the results of other studies that discovered intrinsic factors, such as: personal motivation to use technology, opportunities to develop new ideas, the possibility to improve teaching, and the ability to offer diverse course offerings and reach new audiences as having positive effects on participation and adoption (Betts, 1998; Schifter, 2002).

At the same time, it is also important to note that six out of the nine faculty members that participated in this study ventured into teaching a fully online course by first supporting their traditional classrooms in a hybrid or blended format. As a result, faculty members were able to enhance their traditional classrooms by providing course materials online, extending classroom discussions, providing external feedback, increasing student access to rich media content and completing administrative tasks like grading. Faculty members also found the adoption of online courses provided perceived advantages over the traditional classroom setting, such as the capability to manage multiple classes during the semester, be more eco-friendly, increase interaction with students, update course materials on the fly and the ability to manage and teach courses with large enrollments.

A few faculty members also revealed that the main motivational factors in their adoption of online distance education were incentives. The use of incentives is another
way to change behavior and increase the rate of adoption, by “offering direct or indirect payments of cash [as a] diffusion strategy that affects the perceived attributes of innovations, especially relative advantage” (Rogers, 2003, p.237). Incentives that are stronger and personally lucrative were more likely to impact the adoption of an innovation (Brewer & Tierney, 2011). Incentives described by faculty members in this study included the possibility of career advancement, job-skill enhancement, increased opportunities for instruction, financial stipends, guaranteed enrollments, convenience and flexibility. Henry described his initial adoption of online distance education at EMU as based upon receiving a course development stipend and the convenience of not having to come to campus as often (personal communication, June 27, 2012). Peter reinforced this position by stating he was looking for a way to teach and make summer salary while being in another state (personal communication, June 27, 2012). Cindy mentioned that she also received a stipend and felt the incentive may have influenced her and her colleagues to teach an online course (personal communication, July 02, 2012). However, Donald mentioned receiving a similar type of stipend but this did not influence his decision to adopt, and in fact, he believes that stipends can attract people for the wrong reasons (personal communication, July 12, 2012). Rogers agrees with this assertion (2003), stating that incentives may often increase the quantity of adopters and lead to the eventual adoption by those that may have chosen not to adopt otherwise. However, when offering incentives, Rogers (2003) cautions that there can be ethical implications.

The final theme that emerged can be categorized into what Rogers (2003) calls social systems or influences. Consequently, several faculty members were influenced by change agents in the form of student requests and expectations or pressures by leaders
and administrative personnel at the state, college and departmental level. According to Peter, there was so much “pull coming from above” as “deans love these things,” “because the people who are looking at the balance sheets are saying, in terms of the full-time equivalent (FTE); it’s a moneymaker” (personal communication, June 27, 2012). In Megan’s case, she was hired due to a desire by the state and university to offer more online courses as a means to lower budgets and save money (personal communication, June 26, 2012). In addition, several faculty members felt institutions and departments perceived online learning as a way to increase student enrollments and enhance their stature. In Joanne’s case, the institution suggested adopting online elements in order cut down on the use of paper and printing costs (personal communication, July, 11, 2012).

Moreover, three faculty members in this study mentioned that they were told upon hire that they would be teaching an online course. For that reason, they may not have had as much personal choice in the adoption of online education. This was due to either a requirement upon being hired, or the fact that the department or program they were moving to was entirely online. Enticed by the possibility of full-time academic employment, faculty members engaged in a social system which indirectly resulted in a decision to adopt online distance education. Table 11 shows a visual representation of the most common themes and the subcategories that populate those themes.
Table 12
Themes and Subcategories for Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Motivation</th>
<th>Perceived Attributes/Advantages</th>
<th>Incentives</th>
<th>Social System/Influences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tech-savvy</td>
<td>Academic Resource</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovator</td>
<td>Eco-friendly</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>No choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed to technology</td>
<td>Convey information</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Institutional encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal interest</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Institutional budget savings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired skill-set</td>
<td>Enhance traditional classroom</td>
<td>Career enhancement</td>
<td>Job requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge expansion</td>
<td>External feedback</td>
<td>More research time</td>
<td>Student encouragement/expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Increased interaction</td>
<td>Full enrollments</td>
<td>State/institutional/department pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manage multiple courses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Enrollment enhancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative efficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effective student learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to course materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of rich media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2

How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time?

During one interview, it can be difficult to investigate and explicate the change of perceptions over time. However, this study attempted to gauge faculty members’ perceptions before and after they chose to adopt online distance education. Two questions were posed at different intervals during the interview that asked faculty members to reflect on their early and current perceptions (Appendix A). In addition to assessing their perceptions, it was also essential to gain a better understanding of faculty members’ views and opinions on the major perceived differences between face-to-face
classes and online distance education courses. Understanding potential adopters’ perceptions can add to the exploration of the innovation-decision process. Interview questions specifically targeted faculty members’ early perceptions, their current perceptions, issues of quality and a comparison of traditional versus the online format (Appendix A). Early perceptions were based upon conversations with colleagues, readings in literature and popular mass media outlets. Current perceptions were based upon faculty members’ own experiences in teaching online, which is why they may be more specific to an evaluation of teaching and learning processes rather than just an overall opinion.

In this study, faculty members had varying early perceptions that were based on the first two stages of the perceived attributes of an innovation: relative advantage and compatibility (Rogers, 2003). Select faculty members were able to recognize the relative advantage teaching online offered over traditional classroom instruction. In addition, the ability for many faculty members to try teaching online in a hybrid/blended format also afforded them the capacity to comprehend how this new medium was compatible with their existing values or understandings of online distance education. According to Henry, “teaching online was not a new concept; it was simply that we were using new technology to do something the student has been doing for years” (personal communication, June 27, 2012). Most early adopters had favorable opinions, believing that online education was the future of education. By the late 90’s, it was clear to Donald that “online education in the sense of internet based was going to be the way you use interactivity or media-rich instruction” (personal communication, July 12, 2012). In addition, other faculty members mentioned that online education was a great way to
support their traditional classrooms by enhancing the learning environment. Bill mentioned how he used the online environment to augment peer reviewing (personal communication, July 12, 2012). Peggy realized the online environment provided a way to convey essential information (personal communication, June 28, 2012).

Negative early perceptions may have been based on opinions and discussions about for-profit online colleges. Particular faculty members also felt teaching online was not an ideal medium for the delivery of education, due to the constant unpredictability of technology and the possible outcome of inferior students. According to Peter, “the online university did a lot of damage in terms of perceptions, as it was just cranking out inferior students and it just gave the whole enterprise a bad name” (personal communication, June 27, 2012). Others stated that interactivity and communication were much lower in online courses. In Joanne’s opinion, the online format could not be as potentially powerful as a face-to-face course (personal communication, July, 11, 2012).

Several participants also mentioned that early opinions were based upon their ignorance about online education. Several faculty members felt confused by the different forms of online education, and mentioned not receiving any guidance or online teaching experience when working on their doctorates. Megan even mentioned overconfidence in her teaching ability, believing that teaching online was just taking your traditional coursework and putting it online. She learned quickly, through her own experiences, that this was not the case (personal communication, June 26, 2012). As with the adoption of anything new, there is a level of uncertainty about the innovation, and Rogers’ (2003) defines this as “the degree to which a number of alternatives are perceived with respect to the occurrence of an event and the relative probability of these alternatives” (p.6). This
was most evident in the case of Paul, who in the beginning, was confused by the differing definitions of online education and self-classifying himself as “fairly ignorant” about what distance education meant (personal communication, June 25, 2012). Based upon his level of uncertainty, Paul decided to investigate the varying definitions of online education, and utilized the institutional resources available to him in order to reduce uncertainty. Megan also commented on her own ignorance in teaching in general and even “cringes” when thinking about several of her early courses (personal communication, June 26, 2012). Interestingly, both of the faculty members that mentioned early uncertainty had no choice in teaching online, and were in fact, hired to teach fully online courses.

Most current perceptions discussed during faculty member interviews revolved around the technical and pedagogical aspects of teaching online. It was evident in several faculty members’ opinion, that online learning met student needs and therefore was a growing demand in higher education. With its ability to reach more students and the fact that it can provide more urban sustainability, many faculty members felt that online education was here to stay. Negative current faculty perceptions were shaped by their experiences teaching online. As there was limited interactivity and communication, one of the most recurring themes throughout faculty interviews was the sense that the online environment fostered student and faculty disconnect. Personally several faculty members also felt that teaching online was not dynamic, intellectually stimulating or illuminating. Others indicated that online learning is not perfect for all courses, and therefore, institutions should be cautious in offering complete degrees or programs online.
In understanding current perceptions of faculty adopters, it was also necessary to address their opinions of the possible differences in quality between traditional classrooms and online learning. When asked about the quality of online courses, numerous faculty responded by saying it varies and depends upon the individual instructor. Paul stated, “I think it really depends on the faculty” (personal communication, June 25, 2012). In fact, certain faculty indicated that quality was not based upon the medium of teaching online itself, but rather on the ability of the individual faculty member. Henry agreed, stating, “online courses can be really neat and really informative and of very high quality. They can also be really awful. Of course this can be said of classroom sections.” It could be argued that various levels of inconsistency in quality exist in traditional classrooms – and that this is not just a phenomenon in online classes. Joanne supports this by stating that, “quality is very, very, variable, which is true of face-to-face classes” (personal communication, July, 11, 2012). These findings support other studies that propose no significant differences exist between teaching mediums (Means, et. al., 2009; Russell, 1999).

One of the major quality concerns when comparing traditional and online courses revolved around issues of cheating and disappearing students. Several faculty members worried about the possibility of students cheating in an online course. In an online format, it may be possible for students to take tests together or make copies of online exams and share them with other students. In addition, due to the lack of contact, several faculty members were also concerned that it may not even be the student enrolled in the class that is completing the work. Another phenomenon described by several faculty members as occurring in the online class, but not in the traditional classroom, is the
“disappearing student.” In online courses there are several students that just stop logging in, participating or completing any of the work -- they just disappear. Several students try to come back at the end of the semester, scrambling and begging the faculty to allow them to complete all the missed work in order to obtain a desired grade. However, according to faculty members, countless numbers of students do not come back to the course. Cindy witnessed this phenomenon firsthand, stating that students just stop participating in her online courses. They stop turning in assignments, stop contributing and quit logging in. They don’t even end up dropping the class, but rather finish off with an “F” for the course (personal communication, July 02, 2012). Table 12 shows a visual representation of faculty early perceptions, current perceptions, comparisons in quality and major perceived differences between traditional and online classes.
Table 13

Themes and Subcategories for Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Perceptions(^a)</th>
<th>Current Perceptions(^b)</th>
<th>Quality(^c) &amp; Comparison(^d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Favorable</td>
<td>• Here to stay</td>
<td>• Lack of contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Future of education</td>
<td>• Game changer</td>
<td>• Limitations in LMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasis in online</td>
<td>• Urban sustainability</td>
<td>• Based upon ability to engage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education</td>
<td>• Growing demand</td>
<td>and interact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhance pedagogy</td>
<td>• Enhanced Access</td>
<td>• Cheating issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Added value and</td>
<td>• More student participation</td>
<td>• Quality not based on format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction</td>
<td>• Entitlement</td>
<td>• Disappearing student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Efficient</td>
<td>• Discussion groups wonderful</td>
<td>• Low faculty evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rich media</td>
<td>• Perfect for some courses</td>
<td>• Students are equal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negative

| • Not as powerful         | • Student alienation        | • Decline of quality in higher |
| • Bad format              | • Not robust, productive or|   education                   |
| • Inferior students       |   illuminating              | • Common perception based upon |
| • Student unfamiliarity   | • Not intellectually        |   online open courses          |
|   Technology does not    |   stimulating               | • Varies                       |
|   promote good teaching   | • Lack of interaction       |                                 |
| • Ignorant                | • Greater proportion of bad|                                 |
| • Varying definitions     |   online courses            |                                 |
| • Unpredictable           | • Whole degrees online      |                                 |
| • No guidance             |   not recommend             |                                 |
| • Overconfident           | • Dollar driven             |                                 |
|                            | • Delivery is not education|                                 |
|                            | • Student can hide          |                                 |
|                            | • Needs to evolve           |                                 |

Notes: Specific interview questions were used to identify these themes (See appendix A).
\(^a\) Prior to your initial experiences teaching online, what were your perceptions about online education?
\(^b\) What are your current perceptions about online instruction?
\(^c\) How did teaching online compare to teaching in a traditional classroom?
\(^d\) How do you feel about the quality of online instruction versus traditional classes?

Research Question 3

How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their teaching role as a faculty member?

The adoption of online distance education has not only personally impacted them, but also has had a major impact on their professional role as a faculty member.
According to Rogers (2003), “consequences or impacts are the changes that occur to an individual or social system as the result of the adoption of an innovation” (p.436). Due to the fact that teaching online requires a specific level of technology use, it is not surprising to hear many faculty members mention that teaching online has impacted their level of use and familiarity with technology. This was especially dominant in those faculty members that consider themselves less experienced with technology.

Several participants felt a heightened sense of appreciation within their traditional classroom, while several others voiced their disappointment with the online experience. Particular faculty commented on feeling rejuvenated in their careers, as they were able to make more connections with younger generation students. Although most of the personal impacts have been positive, Peter shared his feelings of guilt when teaching online courses (personal communication, June 27, 2012). His guilt derives from the fact that he may not be doing his all in teaching his online courses. Because most of the content in his courses is stagnant and not really evolving, he expresses guilt in knowing that he is giving packaged course material to students.

Professional impacts on faculty members can be divided into three main categories: time, career and teaching and learning. There was one main consensus that all participating faculty members agreed upon, which was adopting a new online course requires an enormous amount of preparation time. Although a large amount time was spent in the early development of the course, several felt the preparation for the same class taught in subsequent semesters actually decreased. According to Megan, “a lot of the work is front-end loaded, and then it’s just kind of like driving the car” (personal communication, June 26, 2012). Henry agreed, stating, “At first it’s a lot of extra effort.
Then you work some bugs out, by the second semester it runs a lot more smoothly” (personal communication, June 27, 2012). Peter found this work to be dry, technical, and not stimulating and felt that once the class was created it only required a minimal amount of effort in order to maintain (personal communication, June 27, 2012).

Inherent within the process of teaching online, it was also not surprising to hear the majority of faculty members mentioned that they were spending numerous hours online. As a result, they spent most of their time responding to student emails and monitoring discussion boards. A few participants also mentioned they were surprised at the increased amount of time spent responding to student inquiries about issues with the technology rather than the subject material itself. Teaching online has also had a positive effect on time. In this study, many faculty members mentioned due to the flexibility of teaching online as providing them with more time to accomplish research, service duties and other administrative tasks. There was also location flexibility as two faculty members mentioned not having to drive to campus and the ability to teach online while being in another state or country.

The adoption of online distance education has also had an impact on the careers of faculty members, and in one faculty member’s opinion, has extended the life of her career. Due to the general impediments of aging, Megan felt that as she had gotten older, teaching traditional lectures were so draining and as a result, the ability to teach online has in fact extended her career (personal communication, June 26, 2012). The majority of those faculty members that currently teach online continued to receive support from the leaders in their departments or colleges. Faculty members that taught undergraduate or required courses mention that their classes are always guaranteed full enrollment, even
to the point of needing to add more students above the cap. According to Donald, “teaching distance education, particularly because my classes fit where certain students needed to enroll, meant I've always been beating students off with a stick instead of chasing them down” (personal communication, July 12, 2012). Faculty members also mentioned the ability to increase enrollments and register more students without the need to build new buildings or classrooms.

However, the greatest impact on faculty members that adopted online distance education was in the area of teaching and learning. All faculty members interviewed felt that teaching online had a major impact on their student course evaluations. One of the main consequences of teaching online was the low level of participation in course evaluations. The majority of faculty members participating in this study commented on the miniscule and insignificant amount of student evaluations that were completed for their online courses. These concerns were not only based on a lower volume of respondents, but also in lower evaluation scores on those that were received. In fact, the preponderance of student evaluations that were completed only complained about the course and unevenly skewed towards negative comments. Many faculty members also mentioned the fact that before adopting online distance education, they attended training or professional development. Conversely, most of these sessions focused on the design and technological elements and not the pedagogy of teaching online. Overall, the effect of teaching online has had a significant impact on participants’ level of teaching. As a result of being exposed to the different facets of online education, faculty members in this study became better teachers. In addition, there was also an increased awareness of the different ways faculty could support their traditional classrooms through hybrid/blended
instruction. Table 13 shows a visual representation of the themes that emerged when faculty were asked to describe the impact of the adoption of online education.

Table 14

Categories and Subcategories for Research Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Professional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heightened use of technology</td>
<td>Additional workload in development of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased creativity</td>
<td>Tied to computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased personal awareness</td>
<td>Too much time spent online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased familiarity with technology</td>
<td>More time for research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to younger generation students</td>
<td>More time spent teaching technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of traditional classroom</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>Ability to teach from another location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>职业生涯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>研究与教学</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 4

*How do the faculty members’ adoption experiences and perceptions compare with one another?*

Based on demographic classifications such as area of study, rank or gender there were no major patterns that distinguished one faculty member’s experiences and perceptions from another. However, by factoring in the time of adoption and level of
technology use, patterns and themes emerged, allowing for a comparison in the contrasting experiences and perceptions amongst faculty participants. Interestingly, at the end of each interview, participants were also asked to self-classify themselves into one of Rogers’ (2003) adopter innovativeness categories. Although no professor self-classified themselves in the laggard category, most responses fell directly or one level from their actual adopter category within this specific social system (Figure 1).

Faculty members that adopted earlier in the diffusion process of online distance education had a higher level of technology use and appreciation, and their perceptions tended to be more favorable. In addition, these faculty members also self-identified themselves as innovators and early adopters when it came to technology use. Earlier adopters were not motivated by incentives, but rather by more intrinsic motivators such as self-interest, personal enrichment and a desire for change. The majority of earlier adopters chose to teach online as they felt there was a benefit or perceived advantage over their current practices. Early adopters, although given the choice to teach online, were approached by administrators suggesting the adoption of online distance education in order to address space or budgetary issues. Earlier adopters were less likely to attend professional development, as they already had some level of appreciation or mastery over technology. In addition, due to their generally limited level of technology proficiency, many earlier adopters mentioned having to teach as well as learn how to use online technology. It is important to note, however, that all of the earlier adopters continued to teach online as many felt that this new medium of teaching was here to stay. Therefore, in their opinion, online learning should continue to grow and evolve.
Faculty members that adopted later in the diffusion process were more likely to have a lower level of technology experience, some even describing themselves as low-tech. Consequently, these faculty members self-identified as part of the early and late majority of adopters of educational technology. Faculty that adopted later were more likely to be driven by financial incentives and convenience, citing the ability to be compensated for designing a new course and not having to be present on campus to teach. More recent adopters were likely to not have had a choice and in fact were hired directly to teach a fully online class. As a result, they were more likely to have uncertainty about online distance education and what it entails. In addition, several of these faculty members did not have an opportunity to try elements of online learning by first supporting their traditional classes in a hybrid or blended environment. As online distance education is becoming more diffused within the general population, these faculty members experience less apprehension from their colleagues more support by their department chairs and deans. In addition, later adopters attended more professional development and required various levels of coaching or mentoring from the distance education office. Interestingly, many late adopters’ negative perceptions about teaching online have not impacted their decision to continue teaching in the online format. In fact, only one faculty member, who was not given a choice to teach online, mentioned that she would be rejecting the completely online environment in favor of a hybrid/blended medium. Table 14 show a visual display of the different faculty members’ adoption experiences and perceptions separated by the time of adoption.
Table 15

Faculty Experiences and Perceptions Separated by Time of Adoption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year of Adoption</th>
<th>Adopter Category</th>
<th>Prior Enhanced Classroom</th>
<th>Incentives</th>
<th>Convenience</th>
<th>Tech Savvy</th>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Early Perceptions</th>
<th>Professional Development Support</th>
<th>Departmental Support</th>
<th>Continued Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Innovator</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pos</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Early Adopter</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pos</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Early Adopter</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pos</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Early Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unc</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Late Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Late Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Neg</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Late Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pos</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Laggard</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Laggard</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Neg</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Implications for Theory**

Understandings of earlier adoptions of new technology in education have provided opportunities to address specific problems or make tasks easier and more efficient (Carr Jr., 1999). In varying areas and topics, the Diffusion of Innovations has provided a useful theoretical framework for researchers wishing to gain a greater understanding of the factors and processes involved in the adoption of something new (Rogers, 2003). As a result, Everett Rogers’ research on diffusion is considered one of the most important and widely used theories for understanding change and adoption (Sherry & Gibson, 2002). The investigation of the adoption process in this study consists
of multiple theories, described by Rogers (2003) as: the innovation-decision process, individual innovativeness and perceived attributes of the innovation. Various researchers have contended that taking a qualitative approach may be useful, and according to Major (2010), “investigating how faculty experience online teaching is critical to understanding new practices and patterns of behavior that occur in the technology-mediated environment” (p.2161). Therefore, through an analysis and description of faculty perceptions and the innovation-decision process, it is possible to contribute to the research on the faulty adoption of online distance education.

As a result of using Rogers’ (2003) theory of diffusion, this study only provides a description of the process of adoption rather than a prescriptive way in which to facilitate adoption (Straub, 2009). Several of the themes extrapolated from this study directly aligned with Rogers’ (2003) theory of diffusion, while other factors did not. Although this current study does specifically conform to past diffusion studies, certain elements of the theoretical framework allowed for the possibility to address and answer the research questions. A description of the innovation-decision process and an analysis of perceived attributes resulted in a greater understanding of why faculty members adopted online distance education. Although not prescriptive, the results of these findings support elements of the Diffusion of Innovations theory, (Rogers, 2003) and indicate that by gaining a better understanding of how and why faculty members have chosen to adopt, it may be possible for state and institutional administrators to speed up the diffusion process of online learning.
Innovation-Decision Process

The adoption-decision process is comprised of five stages of an individual’s progression through their assessment and eventual decision to adopt or reject an innovation (Rogers, 2003). Each faculty member’s case provided a rich, thick narrative in the form of vignettes that described their innovation-decision process. Although implicit, all faculty members participating in this study progressed through a series of stages as they moved from the awareness/knowledge stage to the decision to adopt. First faculty members became aware of online learning, then they formed an opinion or early perception, next they made a decision to adopt and implement their innovation and finally they sought confirmation in their decision to adopt. As they maneuvered through the process of adoption, faculty members constantly received information from different resources, whether it was from students and colleagues, mass media or other types of communication channels.

Perceived Attributes

According to Rogers (2003), the perceived attributes of an innovation can directly affect the rate of adoption. From the faculty perspective, the ability to understand and describe the perceptions of those that have chosen to adopt may contribute to the research on the rapid growth and expansion of higher education’s adoption of online distance education. One of the most important methods of explaining the rate of adoption, perceived attributes include: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability (Rogers, 2003). This study found that relative advantage, trialability and compatibility may have been influential in the adoption of online distance education, while complexity and observability may not have been a factor.
The majority of early adopters were able to enhance their classrooms with elements of online distance education, prior to their initial adoption of a completely online course. Rogers (2003) defines this ability to experiment with an innovation on a limited basis before adoption, as trialability. Therefore, the ability for individuals to try an innovation before adoption can greatly increase the rate of the diffusion process and likely influence the individual’s decision to adopt (Rogers, 2003). Aligning to this theory, several faculty members in this study mentioned the ability to enhance their traditional classrooms, and found the adoption of online courses provided relative advantages over the traditional classroom setting. These results reinforced a study by McQuiggan (2006) that found adopter perceptions of the course management system showed higher levels of a relative advantage over the way they used to do things -- more compatibility with their teaching and the ability to see and try the system before adopting (p.1165). In addition, the ability to experiment with elements of online education provided faculty members an opportunity to be exposed to various perceived attributes and advantages over traditional methods that were currently being utilized. The literature supports this as other studies have shown that the perceived attributes of an innovation can directly affect the adoption rate of online distance education (McQuiggan, 2006; Mwaura, 2004; Samarawickrema & Stacey, 2007; Tornatzky & Klein, 1982).

Perceptions about the attributes of an innovation by those individuals that potentially may adopt, and not those by experts or change agents, can also affect the rate of adoption (Rogers, 2003). Although Rogers’ (2003) diffusion theory does not help to explain prior and current perceptions, it is important to note the perceptions of innovators and early adopters may have an effect on the time and ability for an innovation to be
completely diffused throughout a social unit. According to Rogers (2003), the diffusion of innovations is a social process and as innovators and early adopters become more confident and experienced with an innovation, they will take on the role of “champions” and encourage more reluctant faculty to explore and eventually adopt the innovation. Therefore, this theoretical framework affords the ability to understand and gauge the perceptions and processes in earlier adopters, which can be a very important indicator should colleges and universities desire to speed up the diffusion process.

**Implications for Practice**

The results of this study are specific to the context of the adoption of online distance education by full-time faculty members employed at a 4-year research intensive university. While not directly a part of the study, my investigation of faculty members’ perceptions of online education and describing their innovation-adoption process, has raised an eyebrow of caution concerning standards and quality. Throughout the investigation of this phenomenon, there was a sense of immediacy for traditional colleges and universities to adopt online distances education. As a result of the rapid growth and immediate perceived necessities to increase more online education, one cannot help but wonder what impact this will have on institutions of traditional higher education. It was surprising to hear that several faculty members felt the quality of higher education varied across the board, no matter what medium. There were as many references to poor instruction in the traditional classroom as there were in the online format. Having the majority of faculty members mention that they know of colleagues that are poor traditional professors should be alarming in itself, irrespective of the medium of instruction. This section of chapter 5 provides implications for practice that responsible
leaders and administrators should consider when they desire to increase and enhance the quality of those online offerings.

Celebrate Innovation

One of the main ways institutions can speed up the diffusion process is to celebrate innovation. The identification and recruitment of early adopters within any social system can lead to an enrichment of peer-to-peer communication channels, allowing for the diffusion of the innovation to reach critical mass (Hansen & Salter, 2001; Rogers, 2003). Colleges and universities should encourage their faculty members to share best practices, especially those that have adopted early and successful innovations in teaching and learning. For example, in this study many of the participants reported that they received low levels of participation when dealing with online student course evaluations. Henry was able to create an innovative way in which students in his online class were required to use a pass code in order to take the final exam. The access code was located on his course evaluation, which only asked students to view and retrieve the access code, but did not require them to complete the assessment. However, students were already directed to the evaluation, so they decided to complete the evaluation. As a result, Henry’s participation rates on his evaluations improved dramatically. Henry mentioned that this was celebrated within his department and by his college dean. This begs to question: why is this innovative way in conducting online evaluations not used by everyone at EMU? Megan, an earlier adopter, suggested that the university have more “show your stuff” days for faculty to share their best practices. By celebrating and supporting innovation, pioneering and innovative faculty members can be provided a platform to share best practices as well as innovative ways of teaching and
learning. As a result, other professors that may be interested, but trepidatious, have an opportunity to see how their colleagues are addressing similar issues.

**Professional Development**

The majority of faculty members that participated in this study talked about needing or attending some level of training or professional development. I would also argue that it is important to provide experience and training opportunities for graduate students whose intentions are to join the professoriate. Furthermore, there should be multiple approaches when addressing professional development. First, faculty should be provided venues in which they are able to collaborate and discuss ideas in an informal setting. The sharing of ideas and examples allows for opportunities of collaboration amongst colleagues. Second, technical training should be offered that covers more of the “nuts and bolts” approaches to online learning. Third, pedagogical training should be available that covers best practices in teaching and learning. Finally, institutional and departmental budgets should be allocated for professors and graduate students to attend national and regional conferences. This would allow them to observe how members in their field of study are addressing parallel issues and other new inventions. Interestingly, due to legislatively mandated budget reductions, administrators at EMU recently decided to eliminate their teaching and learning center, which provided professional development to their faculty and staff. However, there have been some recent indications of collaboration amongst EMU’s library, distance education office and office of technology to offer more development and training in regards to technology and online instruction.
Incentives

The utilization of incentives can be a controversial decision, but one cannot deny their effectiveness. Incentives are especially effective with those individuals that may be more reluctant to adopt or outright reject the diffusion process. This is a double edged sword, because individuals that are motivated by incentives may not have the noblest reasons for adoption, but there may be individuals that choose not to adopt unless there are incentives being offered. In addition, those that choose to adopt based upon incentives may choose to reject the innovation once they stop receiving the incentive. In this study, we witnessed several late adopters admit their main decision to teach online was largely based upon incentives. There are many strong opinions when it comes to the use of incentives to motivate an individual. Although most of the opinions appear to be negative, there is no denying the fact that in order to get a group of individuals to adopt something rapidly; one of the best ways is to offer them a valuable incentive.

As there is no universal agreement in the specific types of incentives, colleges and universities must decide exactly how those incentives are packaged and advertised. However, it is important to remember that incentives need to be strong enough to cause change. In addition, incentives should be based upon specific criteria that must be met in order to receive the incentive. Several faculty members in this study that received stipends also mentioned that they were required to follow a rubric with specific guidelines in order to receive the incentive. These guidelines should be based upon faculty and staff input as well as best practices and guidelines that are suggested by empirical research.
Due to the increased amount of time needed to develop an online course and affording for additional training, faculty members should be compensated for their time. However, incentives do not always have to take the form of monetary stipends as several faculty members suggested there were other ways to incentivize participation. Donald suggested that institutions try funding research projects or provide travel funding, while another suggested the possibility of release time to conduct research. In addition, the results of this study indicate that several individuals have chosen to continue the adoption of online education while they are no longer receiving the incentive. This is most likely due to the strong relative advantage that is perceived over the current procedures or traditional teaching practices ways that have been used in the past (Rogers, 2003).

Technological Support

In order to maintain a level of quality it also is important for institutions to invest in hi-tech infrastructure and appropriate levels of technical support. This ensures that technological issues are being addressed and allow for the professor to teach the online course with a level of confidence in the technology. Several participants mentioned various problems or issues they had with the technological aspects of teaching online. In fact, many mentioned that they spent a large portion of their time addressing student problems with the technology and not focusing on the content of the course. There is a certain level of apprehension when it comes to faculty and technology and in order to ensure buy-in there must be some level of confidence in quality assurance. If faculty perceive technological impediments as a disadvantage then they may be more likely to resist and reject the adoption of online distance education.
At this time, EMU’s Office of Online Learning should be commended, as numerous faculty members in this study appreciated their continued assistance and guidance. In fact, without their support, late adopters may not have received the assistance needed in developing and teaching their online courses. This study indicates that late adopters needed more one-on-one assistance when it came to the design and implementation of an online course. Therefore, it is essential to have a team of experienced instructional designers that can assist faculty with the design and development of online courses, particularly those taught by late adopters. In addition, it is also important for faculty members to have a point of contact that they can refer to whenever they have questions or problems. Professional development should be a continuous process and not just a one-time workshop. In this study, we see that faculty members continued to receive support from the distance education office well beyond their initial decision to adopt online education.

**Trialability**

As indicated in this study, the opportunity to utilize components of distance education allowed for a smoother transition in the adoption of fully online courses. As a result, administrators and leaders should encourage the incremental adoption of online learning to support the traditional classroom. By incremental adoption, faculty members are exposed to the technology and elements of online learning that are perceived as advantageous. This helps to change the perception of online learning, and allows for incremental training for those faculty members that are low-level technology users. As they become more familiar with the technology and pedagogy of online instruction, the transition to a fully online course should become an easier one. As several faculty
members indicated, the following are ways in which the face-to-face class can be supported: a repository for course materials, syllabi, video lectures and course grades, online quizzes and tests and discussion forums. Providing opportunities for faculty members to try online learning in a limited and incremental way could speed up the diffusion process and ease the anxiety of transitioning to fully online instruction.

**Limitations**

In a research design, limitations to the study are an expected occurring phenomenon. As such, this qualitative study is limited by scope and methodology. Within the scope of this study are one single institution and the faculty members that have chosen to teach online. This small pool of participants only comprises of one particular view in the adoption of online learning under a specific set of circumstances. This particular view may not be generalizable to all individuals under different sets of circumstances. Participants were also asked to recollect circumstances that may have occurred in the past, and this recollection may contain gaps as individuals do not always remember the minute details of things that happened. In addition, when addressing research question two, it was difficult to gauge changes over time during one interview. Finally another limitation of this study was the fact that level of student, graduate and undergraduate, was not factored into the analysis of data.

Some limitations are inherent within the qualitative methods that have been selected. Many qualitative studies can be time consuming, especially during the interviews, transcriptions, data analysis and interpretations of the study. Furthermore, the data collection for this study is reliant upon the conversations and interviews with selected participants. Therefore, the quality of the study is dependent upon the
researcher’s ability to ask the right probing interview questions in order to elicit responses that align to theory. In addition, the process of converting interview data into robust and descriptive analytic content is based upon the researcher’s ability to identify and analyze themes and ideas.

**Future Research**

The next step in this research is to replicate this study from a student perspective. A description of how and why students adopted online distance education could provide colleges and universities insight into the student experience. In addition, a comparison of faculty and student factors could add to the literature on adoption and diffusion. It may also be insightful to do a longitudinal case study around a specific faculty member or student who is just beginning their adoption process. This could provide in-depth insight leading to a greater understanding of the process maneuvering through the diffusion process.

Another aspect of this research is to study the effect the adoption of online distance education has on colleges and universities. Most diffusion research stops at the decision to adopt an innovation rather than continuing to understand how this choice has been implemented and to what ends (Rogers, 2003). According to Rogers (2003) there are three dimensions of consequence which can be analyzed: 1) desirable versus undesirable, 2) direct versus indirect, and 3) anticipated versus unanticipated. Utilizing these three dimensions, a long range study at a college or university of the consequences as they occur over time would add to the limited research in this area and could result in greater comprehension of the impact of online distance education.
Conclusion

Following an exploration and examination of faculty members’ adoption and perceptions of distance education, multiple trends and indicators emerged from the data. First, when describing why faculty members decided to adopt online distance education the following overarching themes emerged: 1) internal motivation, 2) perceived advantages, 3) incentives, and 4) social influences. Second, faculty members had varying perceptions prior to their initial adoption that were categorized as positive and negative. Early perceptions were based upon conversations with colleagues, readings in literature, or popular knowledge. Current perceptions were based upon faculty members’ own experiences in teaching online, which is why they may be more specific to teaching and learning and not just an overall opinion. When addressing issues of quality in online courses, many faculty responded by saying it varies and depends upon the individual instructor. There was a feeling that quality in online courses could be equal to face-to-face classes. Due to the fact that teaching online requires various level of technology use, it is not surprising to hear many faculty members in this study mention that teaching online has impacted their level of use and familiarity with technology. Professional impacts on faculty members can be divided into three main categories which are time, career and teaching and learning.

Certainly, online learning will continue to grow and challenge the traditional classrooms of higher education. While it is impossible to predict the future, indications are that online distance education will become more prevalent as colleges and universities seek ways to increase access and meet student needs. The purpose of this study was to provide leaders and administrators with a framework in which to understand faculty
adoption of online distance education. Although this study only represents a snapshot of the faculty perspectives of teaching online, we should heed their warnings and consider the consequences of adoption. Unfortunately, the consequences of adoption are not always positive (Rogers, 2003).

Online learning is a paradox within itself. As a result, the perceptions and concerns indicated by participants are not powerful enough to cause a rejection of online learning, but rather continued caution. Although the majority of faculty members in this study understood numerous issues dealing with quality of online teaching, these individuals continued to teach online. One faculty member revealed to me that they recently noticed that students’ grades were getting higher and higher, yet out of complacency and convenience they have chosen to continue teaching the course in the same way using the same exams. This same faculty member also revealed that their department does annual course evaluations for traditional classes, but their online course had never been evaluated. Other faculty members disregarded these indicators, commenting there are just as many poor face-to-face instructors as there are online instructors. Admittedly, the focus of this study was not on teaching quality in higher education, but rather represented a truthful and honest portrayal of faculty adoption of online distance education. It is indeed a cautionary tale.
APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

1. How many years total have you been teaching?
2. How long have you been teaching online?
3. Prior to your initial experiences teaching online, what were your perceptions about online education?
4. Please describe the circumstances that lead to your initial teaching online.
5. Why did you decide to teach online?
6. What may have influenced your decision to teach online?
7. How did you feel when you were informed you would be teaching an online class?
8. How did you prepare for teaching an online class? (Did you create the course or did someone else?)
9. Please describe your early experiences teaching online.
10. How did teaching online compare to teaching in a traditional classroom?
11. What are your current perceptions about online instruction?
12. How do you feel about the quality of online instruction versus traditional classes?
13. How has teaching online impacted you as a faculty member?
14. What advice would you give to an instructor new to online teaching?
## APPENDIX B

### Research Questions & Interview Questions Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1. Why have certain faculty members at a four-year, large public, doctoral-granting research university chosen to adopt online distance education?</td>
<td>4. Please describe the circumstances that lead to your initial teaching online.</td>
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<td>5. Why did you decide to teach online?</td>
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<td>6. What may have influenced your decision to teach online?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. How did you feel when you were informed you would be teaching an online class?</td>
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<td>Q2. How have faculty members’ perceptions of teaching online changed over time</td>
<td>3. Prior to you initial experiences teaching online, what were your perceptions about online education?</td>
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<td>10. How did teaching online compare to teaching in a traditional classroom?</td>
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<td>11. What are your current perceptions about online instruction?</td>
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<td>12. How do you feel about the quality of online instruction versus traditional classes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q3. How has the adoption of online distance education impacted their role as a faculty member?</td>
<td>8. How did you prepare for teaching an online class? (Did you create the course or did someone else?)</td>
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<td>9. Please describe your early experiences teaching online.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13. How has teaching online impacted you as a faculty member?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q4. How do the faculty members’ adoption experiences and perceptions compare with one another?</td>
<td>3. Prior to you initial experiences teaching online, what were your perceptions about online education?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Please describe the circumstances that lead to your initial teaching online.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13. How has teaching online impacted you as a faculty member?</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX C

Letter of Contact

UNLV
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS
Department of Educational Psychology and Higher Education

Name: (Name)
Subject: Adoption of Online Education Study

Dear (Name):

We are writing this email to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a qualitative case study regarding faculty members' adoption of online distance education. This study is being conducted by Thomas Scott, a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership, and is being supervised by Dr. Vicki Rosser, a professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Higher Education. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to describe faculty members' adoption of online distance education and their perceptions on its impact on teaching and learning.

We have chosen to contact you regarding this study due to your listing as an online instructor in the 2011-2012 course catalog. It is important to investigate the adoption process as well as perceptions from those faculty members who have already chosen to teach online. We hope that this study will provide an opportunity to contribute to the literature on an under-researched topic in higher education.

Interviews for this qualitative study will be conducted during July 2012 and should take approximately 1 hour. Please reply to this email if you are interested in participating in this study on the adoption of online distance education.

If you would like additional information regarding this study please contact Dr. Vicki Rosser via campus mailstop 3003, via email at Vicki.rosser@unlv.edu or via phone at 702-895-1432. Please accept our sincerest thanks for your consideration of this research opportunity.

Collegial Regards,

Dr. Vicki Rosser & Thomas Scott
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Department of Educational Psychology and Higher Education
Informed Consent Form

Department of Educational Research, Cognition & Development

TITLE OF STUDY: Faculty Adoption of Online Distance Education: A Diffusion of Innovations Study

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Vicki Rosser (Primary), Thomas T Scott (Student Researcher)

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: (702) 895-1432 – Dr. Vicki Rosser

Purpose of the Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explain faculty members’ adoption of online distance education and their perceptions on its impact.

Participants
You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit the following criteria: You were listed in the course catalog as the instructor of an online course during the 2011-2012 academic year.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: Participate in an in-person interview about your initial experiences teaching an online class and how it has impacted your role as a faculty member. With your permission below, the audio of this interview will be recorded.

Benefits of Participation
There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to add to the research community by gaining a greater understanding of the adoption process and how it impacts the role of the faculty members.

Risks of Participation
There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks as you will be asked to reflect on previous experiences that may have caused you discomfort. You may choose at any time to not answer questions posed to you during the course of this interview.

Cost/Compensation
There is no financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take between 2-3 hours of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Vicki Rosser at 702895-1432. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, or any complaints or comments

Participant Initials

Deemed exempt by the ORI-HHS and/or the UNLV IRB. Protocol 1204-4127M
Exempt Date: 06-20-12
TITLE OF STUDY: Faculty Adoption of Online Distance Education: A Diffusion of Innovation

regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794 or toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Confidentiality
All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for 3 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be shredded or otherwise destroyed.

Participant Consent:
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Participant                              Date

_________________________________________
Participant Signature to Consent to Audio Record

_________________________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)

_________________________________________
Participant Initials

Deemed exempt by the ORI-HS and/or the UNLV IRB. Protocol 1204-4127M
Exempt Date: 06-20-12
## APPENDIX E

### Course Development Approval Form

**Instructions**

Please be as complete and specific as possible while completing this form. Once submitted, a printable version of your Course Development request will appear with lines for required signatures. Deliver the form to the Office of Online Education, after signatures from the academic area are received.

### Course Information

- **Course Prefix (eg ANTH):** [Choose -]
- **Course Number (eg 101):** [Choose -]
- **Credits (if known):** [Choose -]
- **Development will begin during this term:** [Choose -] Spring 2022
- **Development will be complete before this term:** [Choose -] Spring 2022
  - Full term course
  - Modular, beginning of the semester
  - Modular, middle of the semester
  - Modular, end of the semester
- **Is this a Departmental Model Course?** [Choose -] Y N
- **This course is** [Choose -] Fully online Hybrid

If you have questions, please contact the OE Director at [Contact Information]

### Course Title (250 characters Maximum):

### Prerequisites (250 characters Maximum):

### Short Description (1500 characters Maximum):

### Lead Course Developer Information

Start by entering the last name of the person who will be the lead developer for this course. Matching names in our database will appear in a popup box along with departments.

- **Last name:** [Choose -]
- **First name:** [Choose -]
- **Campus address:** [Choose -]
- **Building:** [Choose -]
- **Room:** [Choose -]
- **Mailing Address:** [Choose -]
- **Phone:** [Choose -]
  - **Include area code:** [Choose -]
- **Email:** [Choose -]
- **College:** [Choose -]
- **Department:** [Choose -]
- **Status:** [Choose -]

Would you also like to enroll in the online workshop certificate offered by Online Education? [Choose -] Y N

### Additional Developers

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<thead>
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<th>Last name</th>
<th>First name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Enroll in workshop?</th>
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[Submit]
APPENDIX F

Distance Education Instructional Salary and Incentives policy

DISTANCE EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL SALARY AND INCENTIVES POLICY


PHILOSOPHY

The Distance Education Program has realized tremendous growth in number of students served and number of faculty participating over the last several years. While distance education enrollment management continues to become more efficient, and course and program offerings have become even more cost effective over time, difficult financial times within the university have made it necessary to revisit the funding structure for course development and delivery as well as incentives used to grow the program. The Distance Education program growth has been supported, in large part, by a Part-Time-Instruction budget built around current and anticipated course offerings that include pay for course development, course delivery, and salary incentives for faculty to participate in Distance Education. In addition, resources from the Office of Information Technology provide funds for faculty and departmental/unit incentives. The substantial increase in required PTI-funding for Distance Education and the number of faculty participating in the program have led to a need to review, codify and, where necessary, modify the procedures for ensuring good flow and appropriate approvals of curricular and compensation information between faculty, departments/units, colleges/schools, and the Executive Vice President and Provost's Office.

PRACTICE I

The Distance Education staff coordinates and plans in conjunction with the faculty, department chairs/unit supervisors, and deans which courses will be taught through
Appendix F

Distance Education in order to meet the overall academic mission and to offer the best distribution of courses possible.

PRACTICE II

Distance Education should pay a faculty member for course development as an incentive to develop new offerings and in recognition of the extra time it takes to prepare a course to be delivered through these methods. (FY03 $1,500 for new course development)

PRACTICE III

Compensation for teaching a Distance Education course shall be the standard part-time instructor (PTI) salary per credit. This amount will be paid to PTI instructors as well as full-time faculty teaching off-load.

PRACTICE IV

To encourage instructors to teach in Distance Education, an additional incentive should be paid to PTIs and full-time faculty teaching off-load. This additional pay should be indicated as a stipend to the salary and paid only the first time the course is offered. (FY03 $350 per credit stipend)

PRACTICE V

When a faculty member teaches on-load through Distance Education then the department/unit should receive a financial incentive of $650 per credit hour only the first time the course is offered. If a different instructor teaches the course, then the department/unit should again receive the incentive.

PRACTICE VI

Faculty wishing to teach a course through Distance Education must process a form that authorizes the teaching of the course. The department/unit and college/school must sign the form authorizing that the course be taught and indicating whether the course will be taught on- or off-load. Subsequently, an extracompensation form must be signed for full-time academic and administrative faculty and classified staff requesting permission
References


Maguire, L. (2009). The faculty perspective regarding their role in distance education policymaking. *Online Journal of Distance Learning and Administration, 12*(1).


State Governing Board. (September 2010). *State Board 2009-2010 distance education report.*


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EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

**Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership**  December 2012
Emphasis: Higher Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

**Master of Education**  December 2007
Emphasis: Curriculum & Instruction – Technology Integration
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

**Bachelor of Science in Education**  May 2004
Emphasis: Secondary Education – Theatre Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

**Bachelor of Fine Arts**  May 1995
Emphasis: Acting
New York University

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**Doctoral Dissertation Research**  January 2011 – Present
“Innovators and Laggards? Faculty Adoption of Online Distance Education”
Department of Educational Psychology & Higher Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

- Conducted faculty interviews and collected contextual documentation for inclusion in a multiple case study on faculty adoption of online distance education.
- Currently completing dissertation in anticipation of Fall 2012 defense date.

**Council on Ethnic Participation Pre-Conference Survey**  Fall 2011
Association for the Study of Higher Education
EPY 716 – Evaluation Research Methods
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

- Conducted interviews with stakeholders, developed program theory model, logic model, and preconference evaluation.
- Stakeholders deployed survey instrument during Council on Ethnic Participation Pre-Conference in conjunction with the 2011 annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education.
Administrative Professional Development Survey  Spring 2011
Center for Academic and Professional Excellence (CAPE)
College of Southern Nevada
Las Vegas, NV
• Created a professional development survey for administrative staff on the following topics: demographics, needs assessments, and workshop participation.
• Survey was deployed electronically using Student Voice and final results were included in annual report and disseminated to administrative staff during professional development workshops.

Faculty Professional Development Needs Survey  Fall 2008
Center for Academic and Professional Excellence (CAPE)
College of Southern Nevada
Las Vegas, NV
• Created a professional development survey for faculty on the following topics: demographics, needs assessments, and workshop participation.
• Survey was deployed electronically using Student Voice and final results were included in annual report and disseminated to faculty and staff during professional development workshops.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Information Technology  January 2010- July 2010
College of Southern Nevada
Las Vegas, NV
• Provided instruction on basic computer skills; including hardware, operating systems, word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software. Duties included development of course syllabus, exams and assessment of student abilities. Utilized online learning management system (Angel) to administer simulations and exams, post grades, discussion forums, and

Instructor, English as a Second Language  January 2008- September 2009
College of Southern Nevada
Las Vegas, NV
• Taught English as a Second Language (ESL), English Literacy Civics, and/or Citizenship Preparation to adult learners. Class levels range from Beginning Literacy to Advanced ESL with an emphasis on the following skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and communicative grammar. Citizenship classes also incorporated the following: U.S. holidays, U.S. history and government, and civic engagement.
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Senior Analyst, Office of eLearning July 2011- present
College of Southern Nevada
Las Vegas, NV

- Plan, coordinate, develop and conduct faculty training sessions on instructional technologies and media resources to support instruction.
- Serve as the point contact for individual faculty, academic departments, and schools on faculty training on instructional technologies.
- Plan and coordinate programs, speakers, workshops, orientations, and discussion groups to disseminate expertise and research on the effective use of technology to enhance instruction and learning.
- Provide individual consultations to faculty to assist with using technology and media tools to enhance instruction and learning.
- Collaborate with faculty and other departments (IT, HR, Faculty Senate, Academic Council, etc.) on projects to promote the integration of technology into instruction at CSN.

Manager, Center for Teaching Innovation July 2008- June 2011
College of Southern Nevada
Las Vegas, NV

- Planned, coordinated, developed, and conducted: faculty training needs assessments; annual and semester-based faculty development programs; training sessions on pedagogy/andragogy, instructional technologies and media resources, and best practices on student-centered teaching. Serve as the point of contact for individual faculty, academic departments, and schools on faculty development.
- Planned and coordinated programs, speakers, workshops, orientations, and discussion groups to disseminate expertise and research in effective pedagogy, enhanced learning, teaching skills, scholarship in pedagogy/andragogy, classroom management, and effective use of technology to enhance the classroom experience. Provided confidential teaching consultations to assist faculty with using technology and media tools to design and present course content.
- Collaborated with faculty and other departments (e-Learning, IT, Faculty Senate, Academic Council, etc.) on projects to promote innovation and topics of interest to CSN faculty. Developed initiatives for new faculty development, such as the Part-Time Faculty Academy and Great Teachers Seminars.
- Worked with other CAPE employees to execute CAPE programs, served as the CAPE web master, and served on institutional technology committees.
Coordinator, Faculty Development

College of Southern Nevada
Las Vegas, NV

- Developed content, materials, and resources for a comprehensive faculty training program to include modules on: pedagogy/andragogy and learning theories, classroom management, best practices for effective teaching, cultural competencies for faculty, and technology in instruction.
- Conducted research and built an online faculty teaching and learning repository with comprehensive scholarship on teaching and learning.
- Developed a part-time faculty resource web site and conducted faculty training sessions.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Developed the following program initiatives: Part-Time Faculty Academy, Part-Time Faculty Mentor Pilot-Program, Part-Time Faculty Handbook, Great Online Teachers Retreat, Professional Development Survey, First Year Teaching Circle, New Faculty Orientation,

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

Adult Basic Educator Certificate #080819 (Nevada)
Level 1 & Level 2 SMART Notebook for SMART Board Certified Trainer

SERVICE ACTIVITIES

College of Southern Nevada (CSN) Web Advisory Committee, CSN Faculty Senate Bylaws Committee, CSN Food Service Advisory Committee, CSN Education Trends Scan Task Group for Strategic Planning, CSN Internal Recognitions Committee, CSN Distance Education Review Committee, CSN Academic Technology Advisory Committee, CSN Customer Service Committee, Various CSN Search Committees (2007-2011)

TECHNOLOGY ACTIVITIES

Microsoft Office Suite, 2007 & 2010, Microsoft Publisher, Adobe Design CS, Captivate, Camtasia Studio, Podcasting, RSS Feeds, Blogs, Wiki’s, Moodle, WebCT, Angel Learning, Blackboard Learning, Database Software (Excel), Concept Mapping Software, Dreamweaver, I-Movie, Audio Editing, web based applications like Google Docs, SMART Technologies, I-Clickers, Jing Project, SPSS, Document Cameras, Skype, FTP, YouTube, Teacher Tube, ITunes U
PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Creation and facilitation of faculty training and professional development programs
- Development and facilitation of technology workshops
- Website creation and maintenance
- Development and presentation of pedagogical/andragogical training materials
- Grant writing (Perkins, Service learning, etc.)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS/MEMBERSHIPS

- The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)
- The American Educational Research Association (AERA)
- The Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association (RMERA)
- The North American Council for Staff, Program and Organizational Development (NCSPOD)
- The League for Innovations in the Community College

PRESENTATIONS

**Faculty Adoption of Online Distance Education**
November 2012
Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association (RMERA)
Las Cruces, NM

**The Great Online Teachers: A Day of Collaboration**
February 2011
League for Innovations Conference
San Diego, CA

**Engaging the Mobile Generation**
March 2010
League for Innovations Conference
Baltimore, MD

**Does a Wiki Grab You?**
May 2009
National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD)
Austin, Texas