

**Determining the Attitudes, Barriers, and
Perceptions of Faculty and Administrators to
Distance Education at a Community College in
Jamaica.**

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Background

1. Advantages to DE: flexibility, convenience, (Mullen & Tallent-Runnels, 2006; Wuensch et al, 2008; Young & Norgrad, 2006; O'Malley, 1999).
2. Online education continues to grow with no signs of slowing (Horspool & Yang, 2010).

Background (Contd.)

1. Some educators and trainers: DE is not “academically sound” (Fowler, 2005), “does not solve teaching and learning problems” (Horspool & Yang, 2010), and that “courses will significantly increase an already heavy workload of faculty” (Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, & Marx, 1999).
2. There are difficulties that institutions may face regarding their adoption and implementation of DE (Berge 1999; Berge & Muilenberg, 2001).

Williams Community College (WCC), (pseudonym)Jamaica

- ▶ Student population: Approximately 3000 part-time and full time
- ▶ Part time and full time faculty: 120
- ▶ Two campuses
- ▶ Seven Departments: Business & Professional Studies, Nursing, Computer Studies, Pure & Applied Sciences, Continuing Studies, Arts & Humanities, and Student Support Services

At WCC ...

Faculty and administrators are affected by:

- ▶ Competitiveness and changes in the marketplace
- ▶ Difficulties with finding space for prospective students

Solutions: (1) Instituted Weekend College – (7th year)
(2) Classes three/four days per week

But did not solve the problem with increase in enrollment

So in order to maintain competitive advantage and fulfill the College's mission to provide education for all; I argued that WCC should adopt and implement a Distance Education (DE) programme. Hence my research ...

Theoretical Framework

The study rests on Rogers' (1995) diffusion of innovation and Fullan and Miles' (1992) change theories for its theoretical framework.

Rogers' model looks at the way innovations unfold in a population while the change theory looks at how administrators, faculty, and other stakeholders develop and implement change initiatives.

Research Questions

Research Question 1

What are the attitudes of faculty and administrators towards Distance Education?

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference in the attitude of faculty and administrators towards the implementation of Distance Education at WCC.

Research Question 2

Is age a primary factor in faculty and administrators self-perceived technology skills to support the implementation of DE at WCC?

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference among the age of faculty and administrators' self-perceived technology skills to support the implementation of Distance Education at WCC.

Research Questions

Research
Question

3

- What are the Self-Perceived Technology Skills of faculty and administrators?

Research
Question

4

- What are the critical factors that facilitate the implementation of Distance Education at WCC as perceived by faculty and administrators?

Research
Question

5

- What are the barriers that affect the implementation of Distance Education as perceived by faculty and administrators?

Research Questions

Research Question 6

- What should faculty and administrators at WCC do to implement Distance Education?

Research Question 7

- What are the major incentive(s) to the adoption and implementation of Distance education at WCC?

Methodology

The survey research design was used

- ▶ Census Population=120; Pilot = 30: Main study = **80** full and part-time F&A at WCC.
- ▶ Participants included principal, vice principals, lecturers, laboratory technicians, registry, student support service and library personnel.
- ▶ The survey (**96 items**) was adapted from the Alharbi (2002), and Berge's (1999) Barriers to Internet/Intranet - Based DE in Postsecondary Institutions instruments.

Methodology (Contd.)

Methodology used in the analysis of data

- ▶ Descriptive statistics- Mean and standard deviation
- ▶ Independent samples t-test for equality of means
- ▶ Regression Analysis
- ▶ Tukey HSD – Determine which age groups differ from each other
- ▶ Confirmatory Factor Analysis – verify and confirm what the literature says. E.g. Literature on barriers

Ethical Considerations

1. An application was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval prior to conducting the study, to ensure that ethical practices required in academic research were adhered to.
2. Confidentiality was emphasized however, participants were asked to identify whether they were faculty or administrator.

Findings

- ▶ 80 surveys administered; **61(76.25%) returned**
- ▶ Postgraduate qualification: 26 (42.6%)
- ▶ Bachelors degree: 23 (38%)
- ▶ Over 6 yrs teaching experience: 29 (47.6%)
- ▶ Less than 5 yrs technology experience: 9 (14.8%)
- ▶ Office Computer; 91.8% Home: 98.4%
- ▶ Never taken Course(s) online: 46 (75.4%)
- ▶ Never taught online: 43 (70.5%)

Findings(Contd.)

Attitudes of F&A towards implementation of DE

1. The perceptions and attitudes of F&A to the adoption and implementation of D E was positive
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of F&A towards the implementation of D E at WCC.

Self-Perceived technology skills of F&A to support the implementation of DE

Faculty and administrators show a propensity to, or intensity in the use of technology

Findings (Contd.)

4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Faculty and Administrators used two types of technological skills:
 - a) manipulative or hands on (Factor 1)
 - b) electronic presentation skills (Factor 2).
5. There were no statistical differences, hence, the self-perceived technology skills of faculty and administrators positively supports the implementation of DE.

However, the use of DE instructional methods and video conferencing seemed to be the least technology skills of faculty and administrators

Findings (Contd.)

6. The greatest self perceived technology skills exist among the 20-30 age range. The next was 31-40, 41-50 and the 51-60 age ranges. Hence the younger the faculty and administrator the more technology skills he/she uses.

Age a primary factor in S-PTS of F&A?

7. No

Findings (Contd.)

Critical factors that facilitate implementation of DE

1. Commitment from faculty and administrators
2. Sufficient finance to attract qualified and knowledgeable faculty
3. Concern and needs of adopting and implementing Distance Education.
4. Administrators role in recruiting faculty with different techniques and technology skills
5. Access.

Findings (Contd.)

Barriers that will affect the Implementation of DE

DE literature identified 10 barriers (Berge, 1998; Berge & Mrowoski, 1999; Berge & Muilenberg, 2001)

1. Evaluation and effectiveness
2. Student Support Services
3. Organizational Change
4. Technical Expertise Support and Infrastructure
5. Administrative Structure
6. Programme Quality
7. Threat of Technology
8. Access

(Time and compensation and Legal Issues were not included)

Findings (Contd.)

What should faculty and administrators do to implement DE

1. Ensure that faculty is capable of using learning technology
2. Train faculty to deliver learning
3. Provide technical support for Faculty, administrators, and students for seamless delivery
4. Provide incentives to faculty
5. Provide adequate funding and
6. Provide training/instruction when needed

Findings (Contd.)

Major incentives to the adoption and implementation of DE

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

1. Convenience (increased flexibility)
2. Rewards or motivation
 - ▶ educational equity
 - ▶ increased salary
 - ▶ increase in qualified faculty
 - ▶ hiring qualified personnel

Recommendations

1. Even though faculty and administrators showed positive attitude to the adoption and implementation of DE, they should be sensitized about its incentives. Eg. (a) implementation will not complicate their jobs (b) DE is as effective as traditional teaching.
2. A training programme for stakeholders to educate about their roles and how to effectively manage a D E programme. Technology changes incrementally; therefore, faculty and administrators should keep abreast with its changes and challenges to enable them to deliver a quality product.

Recommendations (Contd.)

3. An action research should be undertaken on how to implement a DE Programme at WCC.
4. A qualitative research of the same title be conducted using the same research questions to elicit/capture in-depth information/details from the interviews of faculty and administrators.
5. This research is repeated in other community colleges in Jamaica/Caribbean that wish to adopt and implement DE.

It was my pleasure
Thank You!