Elearning and Academic Workloads: What is the role of Professional Development

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Illuminate issues associated with academic staff workloads across applied health degrees utilising eLearning

eLearning – the use of various technological tools that are either Web-based, Web-distributed or Web capable for the purposes of education.
METHODOLOGY

The research used critical theory to
• explore and uncover the privileged position/s
• give voice to the participants,
• promote emancipation through understanding and action
  
(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Freire, 1970)

Drew on complexity theory to illuminate institutional influences
  
(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007)
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• What is the experience of academic staff of implementing eLearning within applied health degrees?
• What skills and knowledge does an academic staff member transfer into the role of facilitator of eLearning and what could be developed further?
• What impact does designing, developing, facilitating and evaluating eLearning appear to have on the workload of an academic and how can it be measured?
• What is the perception of key stakeholders within the organization of the skills and knowledge required by academic staff to effectively integrate eLearning into their practice?
• How does the institutional environment influence the development of eLearning within the tertiary institution?
METHOD

• Results from previous questionnaire
• Workload diaries
• Moodle statistics
• Discussion groups – academic staff, programmes leaders & Online learning
• Individual interviews with senior managers
Assumption: that academic staff workloads are comparable in relation to eLearning and face-to-face (f2f) delivery of any applied health degree, with one key difference – the loading of programme teaching/learning material into a Learning Management System (LMS).

Workload literature is contradictory – no research located specific to applied health degrees.
Academic workloads are influenced by many variables, such as

- the type of course
- the preparedness of the academic,
- academics understanding of teaching and learning philosophies
- the institutional eLearning philosophy
- institutional support processes and
- professional development available.

(Haber & Mills, 2008; Nichols, 2008)
• “For staff, the key limitations of using technologies in higher education were: increases to their workloads; usability/technical issues; the loss of f2f interaction; ... and the priority given at the institutional level to technology over pedagogy” (Waycott et al., 2010, p. 1208).
## THEMES

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<th>Academic Staff</th>
<th>Programme Leaders</th>
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<th>Individual interviews</th>
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</table>
• the content, timing and effectiveness of training

• the institutional focus on technology rather than pedagogy training

• lack of training and support for new academic staff
WORKLOAD

• Time – to learn and to do
  • ... it is a huge challenge all this in terms of technology
    ... competency in your own field, the teaching field
    and the technical IT field is huge as well (Academic Staff).

• Student engagement
  • ... the extra times goes into the feedback side, the
    people side of it (Individual Interview).

• Role Clarity
  • ... it’s the line between what is education and what is
    a technician/administrator role (Programme Leaders).
ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

• Leadership
  – Overall strategic vision for eLearning not overt

• Technology
  – disconnect between academics and the service groups supporting them.

• Non integrated electronic systems
  – Re work and increase in workloads

• Quality and Managing Risk
  – More integrated approach required
• The institution adopts a pedagogy driven model of eLearning.

• Professional development in educational pedagogy and practice implemented for new and existing staff.

• Develop frameworks /processes to support workloads.

• The institution continues to progress strategic projects relating to infrastructure, quality and performance management.
• By understanding the pedagogy and practice of education, both within f2f and eLearning environments, academics become empowered to have greater control over their workloads.

• Workload stress is reduced and academics become more engaged and productive members of the educational team.


