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Background

Enrollment in higher education online coursework has continued to increase. Recent data identifies:

- 2.1 million undergraduate students study fully online
- 770,000 graduate students study fully online (The changing landscape of online education (CHLOE), 2017)

Problem

Most institutions offering online courses have adopted quality standards for course design. Assurance of quality online teaching has lagged behind. An excellent online course is the result of quality instructional design in combination with the delivery of quality teaching. There is a need for more research about how to measure the delivery of quality online instruction in higher education courses.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to report principles essential for quality online instruction, as perceived by faculty with experience teaching online.

- Quality instructional design and quality course instruction are dissimilar concepts.
- Reviews of online courses assure consistency between course structure, learner outcomes, and assessments.
- Quality of online instruction is embedded in how pedagogy is applied.



Design

A qualitative, descriptive study design to gather anonymous data from participants using a convenience sampling methodology. The following thematic question guided the research:

- What principles or pedagogical practices do higher education faculty, with online teaching experience, consider essential for quality online instruction?

Methods

Data collection through online deployment of a researcher developed survey. Focused reflection on pedagogical approaches for creating and sustaining a community of inquiry (Garrison, 2011).

- Open communication
- Planning for critical reflection
- Establishing community
- Establish purposeful inquiry
- Sustain respect
- Sustain inquiry
- Congruent assessment

Next Steps

Quality and effectiveness of online education can only be assessed through an evaluation process that applies rigorous principles.

- It is necessary to establish a comprehensive framework for measuring the quality and impact of online instruction.
- Students, faculty, and administrators benefit from improved evaluation of the quality of online teaching.
- Final results should inform the long-term scope and direction of future related research with implications for higher education institutions offering online courses.

References

Complete list of references available upon request. Please email: tracia.forman@utrgv.edu