

They think I should teach online! The influence of college faculty's beliefs about colleagues and institution on online teaching

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As online education grows, it becomes increasingly important to understand the perceptions of online teaching faculty. The influence of colleagues and institution on faculty job satisfaction has been well documented. However, less is known about the influence of faculty beliefs about their colleagues and institutions on their online teaching. The purpose of this study was to understand how the beliefs of college of education faculty members about their colleagues and institutions influenced their online teaching. Participants were interviewed about these beliefs. Results were mixed with some participants indicating that their beliefs about colleagues and institution did in fact influence their online teaching in a variety of ways and with differing teaching outcomes. The implications of these results are discussed.

Keywords: online teaching, faculty beliefs, colleagues, institutional influence

Introduction

One of the major roles of a university is to prepare students to become an educated citizen and skilled part of the workforce (Newman, Couturier, & Scurry, 2010). With technology rapidly changing the United States from an industrialized to a knowledge-based economy, higher education has experienced growing pressure to prepare students for the technology-rich world of the 21st century (Kukulska-Hulme, 2012). The rationale for using technology in higher education is multifold and includes: enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, accommodating the learning styles of today's students, increasing access to learning opportunities and flexibility for students, developing the skills and competencies needed in the 21st century, and improving the cost effectiveness of the system (Bates & Sangra, 2011). In particular, the vast number of resources available to students via the Internet is changing traditional education paradigms, positioning online learning to be one of the most influential change agents in higher education over the next five years (Johnson et al., 2013).

Currently, most institutions of higher education in the United States see online education as a critical component of their long-term strategy (Allen & Seaman, 2016). In 2011, 89% of four-year, public institutions offered online courses, and enrollment over the past 10 years has grown

at a greater rate than in traditional courses (Parker, Lenhart, & Moore, 2011). As of Fall 2016, there were 6,359,121 students taking at least one online course, comprising 31.6% of all enrollments in higher education (Seaman, Allen, & Seaman, 2018). Despite initial reservations about the quality of online education, evidence from the US Department of Education suggests that online students perform “moderately better than those receiving face-to-face instruction” (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2010, p. ix) and over three-quarters of university leaders believe online delivery is “just as good as” or better than face-to-face (Allen & Seaman, 2013). In addition, university students report that they prefer learning environments that include online delivery, claiming they better support their learning styles (Dahlstrom, 2012).

Online delivery is poised to dramatically change how courses are taught in higher education. Yet most faculty are not specifically taught how to teach online (Gabriel & Kaufeld, 2008) and there is a lack of research into factors that influence online teaching. A deeper understanding of these factors could lead to improvements in delivery and support of online courses. This qualitative study examined how faculty beliefs about colleagues and their institutions influence the online teaching of faculty in a college of education.

Literature Review

Influences on Teaching Practices

Two of the most important elements of teacher knowledge are knowing the concepts of one’s content area and knowing how to teach (Shulman, 1986). However, teaching happens in a context and contextual factors also influence teaching. In higher education, contextual influences on faculty include discipline, institution and colleagues. In their classic book *Academic Tribes and Territories*, Becher and Trowler (2001) describe these as the territory (the discipline) and the tribe (the social context of faculty).

Discipline and Institutional Context

In higher education “teaching does not happen in a vacuum; it takes place in the context of, among other things, a discipline and a departmental (or other organizational entity) culture” (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009, p. 548). Differences in teaching approaches in higher education have been found based on different disciplines (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Lindblom-Ylänne, Trigwell, Nevgi, & Ashwin, 2006; Neumann, 2001; Smeby, 1996; P. Trowler & Cooper, 2002). Trowler (2009) stresses that faculty are influenced by disciplinary traditions and other cultural structures constructed over time, termed “teaching and learning regimes” (p. 182). These regimes are made up of a constellation of rules, assumptions, practices and relationships related to teaching and learning issues in higher education” (P. Trowler & Cooper, 2002, p. 221).

Northedge and McArthur (2009) contend that the role of the teaching faculty member is as a required representative expert that mediates the discipline-centric “academic discourse” (teaching and learning process), keeping it from reverting to everyday discourse. A large part of what students learn from faculty are the “ways of thinking and practicing” particular to their discipline, and the teaching of these ways of thinking and practicing greatly influence how faculty teach (Hounsell & Anderson, 2009). When faculty are socialized into a department they

are also socialized into distinctive approaches to teaching and learning (Neumann, 2001) as well as curricular planning activities (Smeby, 1996).

Institutional influences may be so strong that actions taken in teaching may actually be a compromise between what one believes and the place in which one teaches. Faculty at different institutions may have similar beliefs about teaching, but have been found to teach differently due to the institutional context (Norton, Richardson, Hartley, Newstead, & Mayes, 2005). In addition, the same faculty member in different contexts may adopt different approaches to teaching in those different contexts (Lindblom-Ylänne et al., 2006).

Colleagues

Within the context of higher education, collegial relationships are highly influential. Not surprisingly, within academic departments, individual faculty members strongly affect the department climate (Moran & Volkwein, 1988) and the relationships among faculty influence job satisfaction (Callister, 2006; Ponjuan, Conley, & Trower, 2011). Wright (2005) emphasizes that the informal practices and interactions within a department are as important in shaping a faculty member's perceptions of their department as formal policies and procedures. He goes on to note that faculty who perceive themselves to be "at odds" with their department's perceived organizational culture show higher levels of job-related stress, report less satisfaction in their positions, and spend less time on teaching.

As Puzziferro and Shelton (2009) assert, "creating contact in the form of a community of practice around academic resources, institutional accountability, teaching strategy and culture, and the academic discipline are critical to faculty success" (p. 5). Collegial relationships among faculty have such profound impact on faculty success that some researchers insist "the evidence is so compelling that if one were allowed only one line of inquiry to predict a faculty member's success in the field it might well be "tell me about your colleagues" (Hitchcock, Bland, Hekelman, & Blumenthal, 1995, p. 1108).

In their study examining faculty interaction and its influence on teaching, Roxå & Mårtensson (2009) found that faculty members have serious and reflective conversations with trusted colleagues that can profoundly impact a faculty member's teaching practice. The common elements of these conversations are that they are private, tend to only happen with a small number of colleagues within one's discipline or academic department, and include discussion of "important disciplinary content, and challenges about how to support students' understanding" (p. 553).

This study looked at the influence of faculty beliefs on online teaching. This qualitative study in particular seeks to understand how the beliefs of college of education faculty members regarding colleagues and institution influenced their online teaching.

Influence of Social Context

When looking at the influence of the social context on online teaching in higher education, positive pressure from colleagues has been found to influence a faculty member's decision to

adopt online teaching (Osika, Johnson, & Butea, 2009). On the other hand, negative pressure from colleagues can act as a strong disincentive for faculty to teach online (Ulmer, Watson, & Derby, 2007). In addition, colleagues who share negative stories of online teaching can negatively influence the perceptions of faculty who have less experience teaching online (Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008).

Colleagues also play an important role in faculty learning about technology. In surveys and interviews faculty have ranked “sharing knowledge with colleagues” as the most influential source of learning about teaching and learning with technology (Price & Kirkwood, 2014), “asking colleagues” as the most effective way to learn about new computer-based technologies (Georgina & Olson, 2008), and chosen “learn best from my co-workers” when describing preferred ways to learn about new technology-based teaching methods (Bowe, 2011).

As asserted by (Oncu, Delialioglu, & Brown, 2008), “a colleague’s influence not only is a prompt for teacher awareness about the technology options available, but it also provides encouragement and reassurance for the teacher to see that things can be safely done as well as providing confirmation that the technology will, in fact, work in their classrooms” (p. 32). Teachers appear to be more willing to use a technology after observing fellow colleagues’ instructional choices with that technology (Adams, 2010). “Teachers feel more convinced of being able to use [digital learning materials] DLMS when they see their colleagues (who are probably as skilled as themselves) are successful in making use of DLMS in their courses” (Kreijns, Van Acker, Vermeulen, & van Buuren, 2013, p. 233). This may be especially true for faculty faced with the prospect of teaching online. Allowing faculty to observe examples of successful online teaching and learning has proven to be an effective motivator to get faculty to teach online (Ragsdale, 2011).

Methodology

The research questions guiding this qualitative study are:

1. How do faculty members’ beliefs about their colleagues influence their online teaching?
2. How do faculty members’ beliefs about their departments or college influence their online teaching?

Participants

Six individual faculty member participants were interviewed in this study. Pseudonyms are used to identify individuals. Participants were purposefully sampled from this group by the researchers in order to yield the most information (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In describing sampling for case study, Stake reminds us that while “balance and variety are important; the opportunity to learn is of primary importance” (1995, p. 6). In this case, balance and variety of participants were sought by selecting two male and four female faculty at varying stages of their careers. One interview participant was at the assistant faculty level, four were at the associate level, and one was a full professor. In hopes of learning the most, subjects were chosen representing various COE departments and therefore differing colleagues and student populations. All participants had taught multiple classes online using synchronous and asynchronous methods as well as hybrid, or a blend of online and face-to-face. Selectees were

known to the researchers for willingness to incorporate new technologies into their online teaching, for their thoughtful and engaging online work with students and finally for their likeliness to participate. The variety of participants was also considered in this study as a way to provide multiple perspectives on the theory guiding the study.

Study Setting

The setting of this study was a college of education (COE). In 2013, when the data for this study was collected, the COE was comprised of 10 departments, 225 faculty and 1,947 undergraduate and graduate students. This COE is the primary preparer of teachers going in to the state's public school system. The college is a leader in distance education at its campus, with the highest number of distance programs of any college at its campus. This emphasis on distance education has been primarily driven by its need to prepare teachers living on islands spread throughout the Pacific. This need also prompted the COE to establish an Office of Technology and Distance Programs in 2001 with the goal of promoting and supporting technology integration and distance education. This office currently employs two full-time faculty who serve as director and instructional designer as well as 17 full-time staff and 11 student workers.

Interviews

The semi-structured interview instrument consisted of four background information questions and six open-ended questions. Open-ended questions asked about faculty's opinions about teaching online, the influence of colleagues and college expectations, student preparedness, and technology support. Figure 1 displays the research and interview questions. Because pilot testing of interview questions is crucial (Merriam, 2009), three pilot tests were conducted with faculty members with expertise in online teaching. The instrument was revised based on this feedback prior to use with the six participants.

Research Question:

How do faculty members' beliefs about their colleagues influence their online teaching?
 How do faculty members' beliefs about their departments or college influence their online teaching?

Q1. How has the success/obstacles faced by other online instructors impacted your decision to teach an online class?

Q2. What role do your colleagues play in your decisions?

Q3. What do you think is expected of faculty in the college of education in terms of using technology in teaching?

Q4. How do these expectations affect your use of technology in teaching?

Q5. Where do you think you and your colleagues/department need to go with online teaching in the next few years?

Q6. How do you see this affecting your teaching?

Figure 1. Research and interview questions

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and member checked and a codebook developed. Saldana's (2009) first and second coding cycles were used to look for patterns and themes within the data. The first round of coding used structural coding and the second used Saldana's "pragmatic eclecticism" (2009, p. 47) or keeping an open mind before deciding which additional coding methods are appropriate. Analytic memos were also used to document the analysis.

Results

Collegial Influence

Three of the six participants, Kate, Jean and Stephanie, described relationships with their colleagues that had influenced their online teaching. Figure 2 displays a summary of participants' opinions on if colleagues influenced their online teaching and statements reflecting these views.

Colleagues Influence my Online Teaching		
Kate	Y	<i>"Anything I know about, and the whole way I think about how to engage in an online environment comes from the impact of those conversations with colleagues."</i>
Stephanie	Y	<i>"Well gee, I need to learn how to do that."</i>
Tom	N	<i>"The naysayers I don't care anything about."</i>
Jean	Y	<i>"Personally I get a lot of help."</i>
Jack	N	<i>"I don't want to be around folks who are dragging me down."</i>
Amy	Y/N	<i>"I think collegial discussions about what we're doing would be really helpful."</i>

Figure 2. Participant reports of collegial influence

Kate mentioned that she discussed challenges and possible solutions with her colleagues. She also went on to say that *"Anything I know about, and the whole way I think about how to engage in an online environment comes from the impact of those conversations with colleagues. It's not just stuff I made up."*

Jean described collaborating with a colleague with expertise in universal design to redesign one of Jean's online courses. The collaboration was so successful that they jointly wrote up the experience as a journal article and online teaching has become a new part of Jean's research agenda. Jean also specifically listed members of her department who have online teaching and technology expertise saying *"So we are lucky in this department, that we've got all that support."*

Stephanie discussed seeing colleagues using new technologies saying *"I've seen a lot of things that I think are more innovative than what I currently do."* She also felt that she ought to learn these new tools and techniques and said *"more recently, my colleagues are starting to use science notebooks, they're using a stylus with writing and drawing, you know on the iPad? And since I'm an art teacher I think, 'Well gee, I need to learn how to do that.'"*

Conversely, the other half of the participants, Tom, Amy and Jack, felt their teaching was less influenced by their colleagues. Tom talked about his colleagues who resist technology saying, *“The naysayers I don't care anything about. People complain about it and I just figure, it's supposed to change... So for people who whine about the technology, that's just, they are living in an age that doesn't exist anymore.”* He also commented that his colleagues did not have the requisite knowledge to successfully redesign courses for online delivery. He said *“we have some faculty saying, ‘I think we can do this ourselves’, and I'm saying, ‘I don't think they can.’ I think they've done stuff online, but to me when I see it, it's been more taking what I did face-to-face and just putting it on...it hasn't been really a reconceptualization.”* In specifically talking about the role his colleagues play in his online teaching Tom said, *“The only role they play is that they show me how things work. Sometimes we've collaborated on things, but not that often.”*

Amy and Jack both saw themselves as leaders in their department regarding online teaching. When asked if her colleagues influenced her online teaching, Amy answered *“Absolutely no, because I was one of the first people, and I've done more than probably 90% of the people on this faculty with the majority of my work being online. There are some people (whispers) that are just getting there. (laughing).”* Jack felt that online teaching was something that had been expected of him as part of his job and said, *“When I was hired here, I was expected to show leadership. I mentioned that. That was part of my hire. I was supposed to know something about distance education.”* He went on to describe his observations of colleagues, saying,

I confess I've taken no pleasure in seeing others struggle. I've seen a lot of professors I think try to export their face-to-face teaching into the online environment...I believe technology changes the way you behave, it alters communication...So when I see others struggling, narrating some PowerPoint, thinking that now I can just put it on the web instead of boring my students in the classroom, my brain goes, ‘it didn't work probably in your face-to-face class, and it's going to work worse on the internet because the students won't watch it.’ They'll feign watching it, you know, they'll skim it or do some crazy thing. So, if the question is have I been influenced by my professional peer group? I pick my models pretty carefully. And my models are success models... I don't want to be around folks who are dragging me down.

While Amy thought of herself as a leader of distance education in her department, she did express a desire for more sharing among the faculty about their practices in online teaching. She said,

If we have the opportunity to ever discuss the way we're using the technology, or ideas for courses that, you know, so if we have time to just chat for a bit...So I think collegial discussions about what we're doing would be really helpful. More of that, more time devoted to that, would be really helpful.

Expectations to Teach Online

Figure 3 displays participants' opinions on if online teaching is expected by their college or department and if so, who specifically is expected to teach online.

Kate	N	
Stephanie	Y	Faculty in my program are expected to teach online
Tom	N	
Jean	Y	New faculty are expected to teach online
Jack	Y	Faculty in my department are expected to teach online
Amy	Y	Faculty in my department are expected to teach online

Figure 3. Participant reports of online teaching expectations

Two participants, Tom and Kate both felt that online teaching was not specifically expected of faculty by the COE administration. Kate thought online teaching was valued by the administration but not specifically expected, saying, *“I think they are too smart to say you are expected to do anything because professors don’t like that.”* She went on to say *“I don’t think you will be somehow shunned if you refuse teaching online.”* Tom also did not feel an expectation for COE faculty to teach online and said, *“an expectation that you have to teach a class online? I don’t think there is one. In fact, I think we have often asked people: ‘would you do this online?’ I don’t think there is an expectation that you will do it online.”*

Stephanie was less sure about online teaching expectations. While she expected it of herself and felt it was an expected part of her program, she was less sure about the overall college, saying, *“I don’t remember it ever being, is it written down anywhere?...So I don’t know what, I guess I don’t know what the expectation is. I know what I would expect. I would expect everybody to use it.”*

The three faculty who mentioned they would be retiring within five years, Tom, Jean and Jack, emphasized the changing nature of teaching and that the new, incoming faculty would be expected to solve the challenges inherent to online teaching. Jack said,

And you know it’s happening and it’s not going to stop. But, I’m kind of glad I’m retiring. Because I think I kind of fit the era in which I grew up, which was still to come to a place called school, and have conversations around the water cooler kind of thing. I don’t get that with my smart phone, it’s not the same.

Jean thought the new faculty would be better able to use technology with students who expect it saying,

What I see happening is that as we retire and the new people come in, I think there’s going to be more technologically-savvy new professors. I think they’re going to be more willing to jump into the online as long as they know it’s expected...I think new people coming in, that might be more of that ilk, probably will be able to handle them [digital native students] better. They all know how to circuit that for useful purposes. I am not right there yet as to how can I use this.

Tom also hoped the new faculty would be better able to engage students commenting,

I think there is a mismatch between me living in an older world and them [digital native students] living in another world and I’m hoping that new faculty, the young folks coming in who we’ve got here, who grew up with that, actually have ways of thinking about that and using that and finding ways to make that work for them.

Discussion

Beliefs about Colleagues

The influence of colleagues within one's department and college have been shown to be highly influential on departmental climate (Moran & Volkwein, 1988), job satisfaction (Callister, 2006; Ponjuan et al., 2011; Wright, 2005), academic success (Hitchcock et al., 1995; Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009) and approaches to teaching (Lindblom-Ylänne et al., 2006; Neumann, 2001; Norton et al., 2005; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009). Social systems and interactions are highly influential on adoption of technologies (Rogers, 2003; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003) especially in academic settings, both K12 (Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Sadik, Sendurur, & Sendurur, 2012; Li & Choi, 2014) and higher education (Osika et al., 2009; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008; Ulmer et al., 2007).

The findings in this study were split, in that three of the six participants reported that their online teaching was influenced by their colleagues, and three did not see themselves as influenced by colleagues. Two of the three who felt influenced by colleagues described seeking out colleagues for specific advice on online teaching and one described collaborating extensively with an expert colleague to improve her online course. This aligns with the large body of research on the general influence of colleagues as well as findings that faculty prefer to learn about new technologies and technology-based teaching methods from colleagues (Bowe, 2011; Georgina & Olson, 2008; Price & Kirkwood, 2014).

The third participant who felt influenced by her colleagues, described feeling inspired to try new tools and techniques after seeing colleagues successfully use them. Others have also reported that teachers who see their colleagues successfully using technology in teaching feel reassured that the tools could work in their own teaching (Oncu et al., 2008), that they too could be successful with the technology (Kreijns et al., 2013), and that they are then more willing to use the technology (Adams, 2010). In addition, observing examples of successful online teaching has proven to be a motivator to get faculty to teach online (Ragsdale, 2011).

Despite this, half of the participants in this study reported that their online teaching was not influenced by their colleagues. One possible explanation for this is the culture of the institution itself. Faculty at research oriented institutions tend to experience far greater levels of autonomy and personal control over decision making than those at state or community colleges (Austin, 1990) and may be less likely to be influenced by others.

Also, each of these three saw themselves as leaders in distance education within their programs or departments either due to higher levels of online teaching experience or specific roles charging them with leading online teaching efforts. It may be that their experience or leadership role placed them in a position of influence rather than one of being influenced by others. As described by Mirriahi et al. (2012), faculty

who have adopted a greater number of technologies tend to be in an intermediary position in their department network and, hence, assist with the spreading of information across a departmental social network...and therefore [have] the potential to influence adoption decisions of their colleagues. (p. 34)

And finally, the three who felt least influenced by colleagues described seeing their colleagues struggling with online teaching and lacking the skills and knowledge base to design effective online courses. As previously mentioned, seeing successful examples of technology infused teaching can be highly influential. However, in this case, if these faculty were seeing their colleagues struggling with online teaching, and in their opinion not designing courses of the highest quality, they may have been less likely to be influenced by them.

Institutional Beliefs

The context of a faculty member's university or department can influence job satisfaction (Morrison, Rudd, Picciano, & Nerad, 2011), productivity (Rosser & Tabata, 2010), commitment to the institution (Lawrence, Ott, & Bell, 2012), and how likely they are to remain in the position (Xu, 2008).

An important aspect of institutional context is the availability and openness and clarity of information. For example, transparent decision-making has been found to be critical for faculty collegiality and satisfaction (Cipriano, 2011) and faculty who perceive a department's communications are open are more likely to stay in their position (Daly & Dee, 2006). More specifically, providing useful information via methods that make it easy to find are important for faculty satisfaction and success (Waltman & Hollenshead, 2005).

In the results of this study, faculty participants were split on whether they believed their departments or institutions expected them to teach online. Two participants clearly stated they did not believe they were expected to teach online, one was unsure, and three thought they were expected to teach online. This lack of consensus may indicate that this institution could improve its communication of expectations to faculty. Clear expectations, especially with regard to the criteria for success are a primary concern for faculty, especially when associated with tenure (Eddy & Gaston-Gayles, 2008).

Limitations

The results of this study must be considered within the limitations of the study itself. The first and perhaps most limiting factor is the small number of participants. Because of the small sample, the findings cannot be generalized to larger populations (Stake, 1995) nor are the participants "sampling units" (Yin, 2014, p. 40) from which generalizations to a larger population can be made. Using interviews as a method of collecting data also has limitations in that responses can be distorted by personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, and recall error as well as self-serving answers or the emotional state of interviewee and their reaction to the interviewer (Patton, 2001). In this study, the participants were discussing their beliefs and online teaching and were not expected to become anxious or angry, emotional or overtly political. Personal bias, another limiting factor, is an acceptable and expected result as participants were asked to discuss their personal beliefs. Also, to dispel any anxiety over participation, participants were assured confidentiality of their answers and anonymity in the study's write up.

Implications & Conclusion

Professional development for online faculty should include experienced colleagues.

The findings of this study have implications for professional development of faculty teaching online. As previously mentioned, most faculty are not taught how to teach, much less to teach online. Professional development often focuses on the “how-tos” of using specific pieces of software that are not designed for educational purposes. A “leap of faith” is then made in assuming that faculty will be able to transform how-to technological knowledge into meaningful integration with content and pedagogy. As noted by Mishra and Koehler (2006) this emphasis on the technology itself leaves faculty on their own to develop integration strategies through trial and error.

Half of the participants in this study learned from more experienced colleagues about online teaching. The two who reported that they did not collaborate with colleagues felt confident in their own online teaching abilities and described their colleagues as struggling, and lacking the skills and knowledge to reconceptualize their teaching for the online environment. One participant reported that her colleagues did not influence her but that she felt more sharing of best practices in online teaching would be helpful.

The findings in this study suggest that an effective format for online faculty professional development would be one that places less emphasis on specific tool training and more on the sharing of best practices and practical advice from experienced and trusted colleagues. Colleagues within a discipline or department are more likely to share common pedagogical beliefs (A. Trowler, 2009) and faculty who can align technology uses with their existing pedagogical beliefs are more likely to use the technology themselves (Ertmer, 2005). After observing and discussing their colleagues’ vetted online teaching techniques, online teaching faculty may be motivated to gain the additional technological knowledge to use those techniques.

Institutional Expectations Should be Clear, Rewarded and Supported

Faculty in higher education are increasingly being asked to teach online (Allen & Seaman, 2015) and administrators can more effectively support online programs when they understand faculty perceptions about teaching online (Wingo, Ivankova, & Moss, 2017). On the other hand, for faculty to be successful they need to be aware of the expectations of their academic environments (Austin, 2002) and those expectations should be communicated clearly and early on in a faculty member’s tenure with an institution. Shifting institutional or departmental expectations can lead to faculty disillusionment making leaving the institution more likely (O’Meara, Bennett, & Neihaus, 2015).

A majority of US institutions of higher education see online delivery as core to their mission (Allen & Seaman, 2011). However, faculty perceive online course development and delivery as taking more time and work than traditional courses (Seaman, 2009). In addition, faculty cite lack of financial support (Green, Alejandro, & Brown, 2009), inconsistent or unclear intellectual property policies (Hoyt & Oviatt, 2013), and lack of institutionalized recognition (Bacow, Bowen, Guthrie, Lack, & Long, 2012) as barriers to online teaching. Institutions need to

specifically reward and value the online dimension of faculty workload to recruit and retain faculty (Simpson, 2010). Faculty expected to teach online also need ongoing support that is flexible, engaging and easy to attend (Elliott, Rhoades, Jackson, & Mandernach, 2015). Faculty that report feeling well supported by their institutions in their online teaching efforts also report higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment (Lee, 2001).

The results of this study found a lack of consensus on institutional expectations for online teaching among the participants. While these participants had taught many online courses, they were selected for participation due to that experience. Without clear expectations and accompanying reward structures and support, faculty may choose not to teach online.

In conclusion, this study looked at the impact of faculty beliefs about their colleagues and institutions on their online teaching. Results were mixed with some participants indicating that their beliefs about colleagues and institution did in fact influence their online teaching in a variety of ways and with differing teaching outcomes. The implications of this study include professional development that should include experienced colleagues and institutional expectations about online teaching that should be clearly communicated, supported and rewarded. As demand for online higher education continues to grow, the factors impacting online teaching should be further researched.

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