

Investigating the Experiences of Higher Education Academics on the Blended Approach Used during the Induction Course

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Abstract : South African higher education institutions are following the global adoption of a blended approach to teaching and learning. Blended learning is viewed as a transformative teaching-learning approach, as it provides students with the optimum experience by mixing the best of face-to-face and online learning. Although academics realise the benefits of blended learning, they find it challenging and time-consuming to implement blended strategies. Professional development is a critical component of the adoption of higher education teaching-learning approaches. The Institutional course for higher education academics offered at a South African University was designed in a blended model, implemented and evaluated. This paper reports on a study that investigated the experiences of academics on the blended approach used during the induction course. A qualitative design-based research methodology was employed, and data was collected using participant feedback and document analysis. The data gathered from each of the four ICNL offerings were used to inform the design of the next course. Findings indicated that lecturers realised that blended learning could cater to student diversity, different learning styles, engagement, and innovation. Furthermore, it emerged that the course has to cater for diversity in technology proficiency and readiness of participants. Participants also require ongoing support in technology usage and discipline-specific blended learning workshops. This paper contends that the modelling of a blended approach to professional development can be an effective way to motivate academics to apply blended learning in their teaching-learning experiences.

Keywords : blended learning, professional development, induction course, integration of technology

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