

On or Off-Line: Dilemmas in Using Online Teaching-Learning in In-Service Teacher Education

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Abstract : The lecture discusses a Language Teaching program in a Teacher Education College in northern Israel. An on-line course was added to the program in order to keep on-campus attendance at a minimum, thus allowing the students to keep their full-time jobs in school. In addition, the use of educational technology to allow students to study anytime anywhere, in keeping with 21st-century innovative teaching-learning practices, was also an issue, as was the wish for this course to serve as a model which the students could then possibly use in their K-12 teaching. On the other hand, there were strong considerations against including an online course in the program. The students in the program were mostly Israeli-Arab married women with young children, living in a traditional society which places a strong emphasis on the place of the woman as a wife, mother, and home-maker. In addition, as teachers, they used much of their free time on school-related tasks. Having careers at the same time as studying was ground-breaking for these women, and using their time at home for studying rather than taking care of their families may have been simply too much to ask of them. At the end of the course, feedback was collected through an online questionnaire including both open and closed questions. The data collected shows that the students believed in online teaching-learning in principle, but had trouble implementing it in practice. This evidence raised the question of whether or not such a course should be included in a graduate program for mature, professional students, particular women with families living in a traditional society. This issue is not relevant to Israel alone, but also to academic institutions worldwide serving such populations. The lecture discusses this issue, sharing the researcher's conclusions with the audience. Based on the evidence offered, it is the researcher's conclusion that online education should, indeed, be offered to such audiences. However, the courses should be designed with the students' special needs in mind, with emphasis placed on initial planning and course organization based on acknowledgment of the teaching context; modeling of online teaching/learning suited for in-service teacher education, and special attention paid to social-constructivist aspects of learning.

Keywords : course design, in-service teacher-education, mature students, online teaching/learning

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