

**Exploring key determinants of faculty's satisfaction with e-learning instructions:  
Focus on hospitality programs**

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**ABSTRACT**

Innovations in e-learning technologies point toward a revolution in education, allowing learning to be individualized, enhancing students' interactions with others, and transforming the role of the teacher. While the success of e-learning depends heavily on the satisfaction of students and available technologies, satisfaction on the part of the instructor, as a facilitator of learning rather than just a distributor of content, is also important and serves as one of the critical measures for the assessment of effectiveness of programs. In this vein, the purpose of this study is to identify the moderator factors that affect the satisfaction of online faculty in hospitality programs.

**Keywords:** online learning; e-learning; factor analysis; faculty satisfaction; higher education

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**INTRODUCTION**

The number of universities and colleges offering e-learning is rapidly growing. In U.S. higher education, 96% of the institutions having enrollments over 15,000 offer online courses and there are about 3.2 million students taking at least one online class per semester. It is reported that the growth rate of online learning enrollment far exceeds that of total enrollment in

U.S. higher education (Allen & Seaman, 2007).

Faculty's satisfaction, along with students' satisfaction, is a critical building block of quality (Sloan Consortium, 2002) in online education. Faculty's satisfaction is quite important, given that it affects faculty's motivation, which, in turn, contributes to enhancing students' learning experience. Webster and Hackley (1997) stated that the positive attitude by e-learning instructors toward technology, interactive teaching style, and control over technology contributed to some of the success of effective learning. Selim (2007) also found that instructor's attitude toward interactive learning was the most critical success factor in e-learning. In this vein, this study aims at identifying key determinants of faculty's satisfaction with e-learning courses in hospitality programs.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

E-learning involves three parties, i.e., students, instructors, and education institutions. There is no denying that the success of e-learning depends heavily on the student learning/student satisfaction in that their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with e-learning experiences has direct impact on student retention. Satisfaction on the part of students, according to the American Distance Education Consortium (American Distance, n.d.) is the most important key to continue learning.

Nevertheless, as a facilitator of learning, the role of an instructor in e-learning and their satisfaction with their instruction cannot be underestimated in the process of assuring the learning quality. Faculty satisfaction and student satisfaction are likely to be a function of each other. Several motivating factors of the participation of faculty in e-learning have been explored

by previous studies. The National Education Association (National Education Association, 2000) found that approximately 75% of faculty surveyed had a positive feeling about distance education. Ulmer, Watson, and Derby (2007) also found faculty with an experience of teaching distance learning viewed distance education as effective in terms of student performance and instructor-to-student interaction. Faculty members like to teach online, expecting to access more diverse student population (Sloan Consortium, 2006) and perceiving an opportunity for students to engage in highly interactive communication with the instructor and their peers (Sloan Consortium, 2006). Similarly, students' outcome may function as a motivation factor for faculty. According to a study, the level of faculty's satisfaction is higher in courses where student performance is better (Hartman, Dziuban, & Moskal, 2000).

Faculty's satisfaction is also generally high when the institution values online teaching and implements policies that support the faculty. They are more satisfied when the institution recognizes that online teaching is time-consuming and provides release time for course development (Sloan Consortium, 2006). Recently, Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) confirmed that three elements, i.e., student-related, instructor-related, and institution-related factors, are relevant to faculty's satisfaction, student-related factors being the most important among the three. On the other hand, studies found such factors as compensation, an equitable reward system for promotion and tenure, policies that clarify intellectual property issues (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2009), and students' low course survey evaluation to be the issues relevant to faculty's concerns, which in turn potentially influence faculty's perception that teaching in the online environment is effective and professionally beneficial.

## **INSTRUMENT AND MEASURES**

Questions will be based on moderator variables on the input-process-output model for online interaction learning theory proposed by Hiltz (1994). Technological Characteristics, institutional characteristics, course characteristics, and instructor's characteristics will comprise independent variables. Especially, course characteristics will include Class size, the level of students, participant dispersion, and a course format. For dependent variable overall satisfaction will be measured..

## **SAMPLE, DATA COLLECTION, AND ANALYSIS**

The sample will consist of college and university instructors of hospitality education. The researcher will invite instructors or tutors including graduate teaching assistants in the hospitality programs who have ever taught an e-learning course to participate in the study. After two weeks, a follow-up email will be sent to non-respondents. Self-reported data will be analyzed to confirm the factors pertaining to faculty satisfaction. Descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation model will be utilized to validate the scale and to see what moderator variables had impacts on faculty's satisfaction with teaching online learning course.

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