ASSESSMENT OF A MULTINATIONAL ONLINE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM ON ONLINE TEACHING: REFLECTIONS OF CANDIDATE E-TUTORS

Muge ADNAN
Department of Computer Education & Instructional Technology
Distance Education Centre
Mugla Sitki Kocman University
Mugla, Turkey

Filiz KALELIOGLU
Department of Computer Education & Instructional Technology, Baskent University
Ankara, Turkey

Yasemin GULBAHAR
Distance Education Centre, Ankara University
Ankara, Turkey

ABSTRACT

Teaching online requires different skills, roles and competencies for online instructors compared to teaching in traditional learning environments. Universities should offer ongoing support in various forms to help academic staff through their online journey. This paper provides insights into a multinational faculty development program for teaching online, elaborating on results of expectancy and satisfaction surveys. From a local program to a subproject within the Swiss National Science Foundation Project Scopes, e-Tutor aimed at expanding competencies in online lecturing and providing OER material for training colleagues. Designed in the form of a descriptive case study, this research was conducted with 34 attendees of e-Tutor. Data was collected using an e-learning readiness and expectancy questionnaire, and open-ended questions after the program to measure satisfaction. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the survey data and content analysis for open-ended data. Participants considered e-Tutor a well-planned and targeted program with good theoretical and practical balance. Duration of such courses, opportunities for adaptation to real-life situations, and localization of the content are areas to be explored further. For future studies, it would also be interesting to see whether participants can apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to create efficient online learning environments.

Keywords: **Professional development, faculty development, e-tutor, e-learning, online teaching and learning.**

INTRODUCTION

Momentous step changes are taking place in higher education with information, Internet and communication technologies developing at an unprecedented pace. Technology continues to influence and change the way higher education is delivered, resulting in the emergence of fully online courses, degree and certificate programs, as well as technology-supported on-campus courses (Arinto, 2013; Bates, 2008; Lepori, Cantoni, & Succi, 2003; Stein, Shephard, & Harris, 2011). Distance learning is also changing from conventional

print-based to online in this digital era, requiring new 'organizational and pedagogical models' (Tait, 2010, ix).

Being central to any teaching-learning process, faculty members profoundly need new knowledge, skills, and qualifications about how to effectively integrate and adapt online learning into teaching. A major hindrance to the uptake of e-learning is argued to be the people (Anderson, Brown, Murray, Simpson, & Mentis, 2006; Stein et al., 2011), and a lack of appropriate professional development (Rosenberg, 2007). Human and circumstantial factors are also emphasized by several researchers, replacing computers as the central focus for online teaching (Salmon, 2005). Human factor is key since instructors work in professional communities, not in isolation; hence, issues of management and organization, design, collaboration and other organizational issues are also valid for e-learning as an institutional change. Organizationally, change indicates a process to perform in a more efficient manner; often a difficult and painful process. Change is easier to manage when parallel to employees' goals, so faculty participation and engagement is critical in embracing online learning technologies, particularly in conventional teaching situations. Professional development programs are vital to integrate lecturers into this change process; advising about the change nature and background, as well as training on the basics of online learning, tools and techniques required to adapt conventional classroom environments to online.

Stein et al. (2011) indicated that faculty development leads to higher levels of adoption and continued use. Shea, Pickett, and Li (2005) also claim that it is possible to achieve higher levels of faculty satisfaction through effective faculty development programs. High quality online teaching and learning must be supported through systematic, well-organized, proper faculty development initiatives, so that high quality online teaching and learning is supported, and instructors have *au courant* views of e-learning required to engage online students (Shea et al., 2005; Stein et al., 2011).

Faculty Members' Changing Roles in Online Learning

Use of online technology to support teaching and learning fundamentally changes the instructor's role, who are now expected to use technology effectively, adapting pedagogical knowledge to virtual environments and digitized content (Hu & Potter, 2012). Teaching online is very different from face-to-face in classrooms, where instructors observe learners' reactions real time, offer immediate clarification on complex topics, personally get to know learners and communicate face-to-face. This is completely different online, where instructors have to manage the environment and guide learners, in addition to delivering content. Transformation from information provider to facilitator, guide or moderator has been discussed by several researchers (Bailey & Card, 2009; Berge 2001; Laurillard, 2002; Mehrotta, Hollister, & McGahey, 2001; Moore & Kearsley, 2005; Palloff & Pratt, 2001; Pundak & Dvir, 2014; Smith, 2005; Williams, 2003). Tait (2010, x) describes this as a new mediating and supportive teaching role "to support the capacity of learners to make sense of the wealth of resources which they can, with guidance, find themselves". Alternatively, Arends (2008) examines e-instructors' roles under five groups: (1) an effective learning environment; (2) instruction as science and art, (3) quality of instruction, (4) quantity of instruction, and (5) active teaching and learning. Bawane and Spector's (2009) study on the prioritization of online instructor roles concludes that, among an identified set of roles, the pedagogical role has highest priority, followed by professional, evaluator, social, and technologist roles.

Competencies Needed for New Roles: e-Competencies

Online instructors (known as e-instructors or e-tutors), require certain competencies in order to perform using technology-enhanced tools. Williams (2003) classifies e-competencies as communication and interaction, instruction and learning, management and administration, and use of technology. In addition to Smith's description of 51 e-competencies for teachers (2005), Guasch, Alvarez, and Espasa (2010) specify e-competencies based on literature including design/planning function, social function,

instructive function, technological domain, and management domain. Accordingly, instructors are to plan instructional design from objectives to lesson evaluation, improve their relationship and communication with students, instruct and facilitate learning in a deep, complex and critical manner, use the necessary technology, and organize and modify the online process. Varvel (2006), on the other hand, summarizes e-competencies from seven aspects: administrative (education system, ethical concerns, and legal issues); individual (qualifications, characteristics); technological (knowledge, technology skills); instructional design (teaching-learning process components and design); pedagogical (learning process stages, learning styles, student characteristics); evaluation (learning, achievement); and social aspect (social issues of process management). Having defined ICT competencies for instructors, UNESCO's ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (2011) also emphasizes the concept of teacher as "an exemplar" where teachers acquire necessary knowledge, skills and experience and serve as role model to students in virtual learning environments.

Professional Development to Acquire e-Competencies

Preparing teachers for online education means preparing for diverse roles and relevant competencies, achieved through proper, authentic, coordinated, to-the-point professional development activities. Arinto (2013) states that professional development in open and distance e-learning is a "complex process that requires continuous engagement…, critical reflection, and membership in a community of practice". Conducted at a small Philippines distance education university, her study (2013) about course design practices of faculty members concludes that professional faculty development programs on distance learning should target wide-ranging competencies in a methodical and articulate manner. Wilson (2012) emphasized the importance of professional development with opportunities for skills acquisition and collaboration as most effective in his New Zealand study on e-learning managers' views.

Yar, Asmuni, and Silong's (2008) study to determine distance education tutors' roles and competencies at Malaysian universities, stated they "serve as useful guides to effective professional development". Based on comprehensive literature review, current practices and outcomes of an institutional workshop, an online faculty development program was created to train e-tutors how to conduct high quality online teaching-learning activities.

Many universities offer skills acquisition opportunities to potential online faculty, including informal learning, mentoring, in-service training or structured certificate programs. Structured training programs are the foremost support universities can offer online instructors to improve online instruction quality, since they cannot be expected to design, develop and deliver online courses innately (Rovai, Ponton, Derrick, & Davis, 2006). Worldwide examples include Germany (Technical University in Berlin, Freie University of Berlin, or University of Frankfurt run specific programs), Austria (joint initiative by 14 universities offering a national "e-Learning Certificate"), North America (ASTD, Sloan-C, Bay Path College's 3-tiered faculty development program, Virginia Tech Institute's Online and Masters Online Certificate Programs, or North Carolina State University's Comprehensive Online Instructor Certificate Program), India (Tech-MODE), Australia (Monash University), and United Kingdom (Open University's special training program).

About e-Tutor Certificate Program

Based on concepts of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) (Shulman, 1986) and Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), the e-Tutor Certificate Program was designed to provide potential online instructors with essential pedagogical and technological knowledge and skills for effective online tutoring. The program instils e-learning concepts and processes, together with useful tools for management, organization and e-Learning content creation. Participants are expected to gain the following e-Learning skills:

- **knowledge of e-learning basic concepts and online learning theories;**
- **ability to determine what online learning theories are required to learn via e-learning;**

- understand the differences of and use learning and content management systems, and virtual classrooms;
- to define the concepts of online instructional design and methods;
- learn concepts of copyright, intellectual rights, digital rights management, creative commons, academic ethics and plagiarism;
- learn about various assessment types;
- realize the principles of graphical design;
- to create effective visuals, graphics and multimedia materials;
- integrate and use social media tools;
- to be knowledgeable about quality assurance in e-learning.

The program consists of 14 topics, carried out on a learning management system (LMS) supported by one-hour live, interactive virtual classes for each topic. The LMS features used for communication, interaction and activities are survey, choice, assignment, lesson, forum, quiz activity, chat, and wiki. Various materials provided to students include electronic handouts, narrated presentations, videos, audio, interactive activities, e-portfolio artefacts, and Web resource links. Participants are assessed based on performance of activities and e-portfolio content. Success requires completing >70% of assessment activities, including creating an online course (main outline, course plan, and some learning materials).

From a local faculty development program, it became a subproject within the Swiss National Science Foundation Project Scopes in cooperation with Ankara University, Turkey. e-Tutor aimed at expanding competencies in online lecturing and providing material OER for training colleagues. Training materials were translated into English by the tutors, then edited and proofread by a native speaker. e-Tutor was ran as an intensive 7-week professional development program in October-November, 2014, with 51 professionals attending from Canada, UK, Georgia, Ukraine, Switzerland, Germany, Norway, Russia, Belarus, Romania, and Lithuania.

This paper aims to assess this multinational online teaching faculty development program on the basis of the participants' expectations and reflections through the following research questions:

1. What were the expectations of participants?
2. What is the e-readiness level of the participants for e-learning?
3. What are the participants' reflections for the course in general?
4. Are the participants satisfied with the program in general?

METHOD

Participants

This study was conducted with 34 e-Tutor program attendees, 80% of whom were actively teaching in various disciplines at higher education level. Table 1 provides additional information about respondents' profession and service duration.

Table 1. Participants

Experience (years)	Profession	#	%
1-20	Instructor	27	79.41
4-10	Researcher	3	8.82
10-26	Software Developer	2	5.88
12	Lawyer	1	2.94
24	Physicist	1	2.94

Research Design

This descriptive case study assesses a multinational online teaching faculty development program, based on participant expectations and reflections. According to Yin (2003),

descriptive case studies describe a phenomenon or intervention in the context it occurs. Creswell also defines case study as 'an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g. activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection' (2007), and states that a '"case" may be a single individual, several individuals separately or in a group, a program[me], events, or activities (e.g. a teacher, several teachers, or the implementation of a new math program[me])' (2012). For the purposes of this study, the case is the implementation of e-Tutor program.

Data Collection Tools

Researchers collected data using an e-learning readiness and expectancy questionnaire, followed by 12 open-ended questions to measure levels of satisfaction. Both data collection tools were created by one of the researchers. The e-Learning Readiness and Expectation Questionnaire for e-Tutors (Gulbahar, 2012) was completed by 34 participants of the e-Tutor program. The questionnaire was structured on Gulbahar's study (2012), with expert opinions taken from the field of educational technology. The questionnaire included 26 items classified under five factors. Reliability coefficient for e-readiness scale ranged between .77 and .80 (Gulbahar, 2012). The e-Learning Readiness and Expectation Questionnaire for e-Tutors has 24 Likert-type questions valued between '1-Strongly disagree' and '5-Strongly agree' under two dimensions: e-Readiness and e-Competency. It includes two open-ended questions on how participants plan to implement knowledge and skills gained from e-Tutor, as well as their expectations as well as their principal reasons for preferring e-Tutor.

Upon completion of the program, participants were requested to answer the following 12 open-ended questions. A total of 29 e-Tutor participants responded to the questions:

1. **Has the e-Tutor Program met your expectations? Please explain.**
2. **What were the main benefits of the e-Tutor Program for you?**
3. **What do you think about the content delivered in terms of quality, intensity, and readability?**
4. **What do you think about the evaluation process (interactive assignments, e-portfolio artefacts, forum discussions etc.)?**
5. **What do you think about the teaching methods, techniques and activities used to deliver the content in terms of experiencing an online environment?**
6. **What do you think about the Learning Management System (Moodle) used?**
7. **To what extent did you benefit from the learning materials provided (videos, presentations, articles, etc.)? Did you find them useful and informative?**
8. **When adapting this course for your university, is there any aspect/topic you would change or amend? If yes, please explain which aspects and why.**
9. **What do you think about the Virtual Classroom Management Tool, Adobe Connect?**
10. **What do you think about the interaction level during the course?**
11. **Do you consider that you actively participated in the course during the seven weeks? Please explain your online experience in detail.**
12. **Is there anything else you would like to share with us?**

Both data collection tools were shared with participants, and responses collected via the Learning Management System.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data obtained from the e-Learning Readiness and Expectation Questionnaire for e-Tutors. Content analysis was used to analyze the data gathered from open-ended questions where participants' responses were manually coded by the researchers separately, then reviewed and paralleled. A frequency table created, emerging themes identified, and codes and themes rearranged and classified.

The following section presents the findings of the data analysis. Significant ideas and statements by some of the participants are included as quotations as a way to illustrate the findings.

FINDINGS

Expectations from the e-Tutor Program

According to responses to the open ended questions prior to e-Tutor, the participants' expectations mainly focused on acquiring or advancing their knowledge of e-learning technologies. They also wanted to have first-hand experience in an online course, and also to receive practical information about organizing and conducting an e-course. Figure 1 shows the emerging themes from participants' primary expectations:

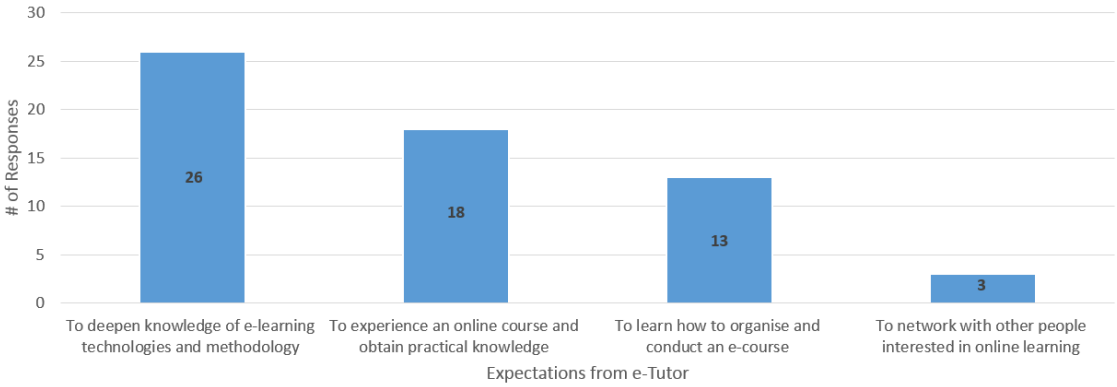


Figure 1. Expectations from e-tutor

Participants' future plans to use the knowledge and skills gained from e-Tutor concentrated on practice and teaching online (Figure 2). In addition, being able to develop an online or blended course, and helping colleagues prepare e-learning courses were also among their future plans.

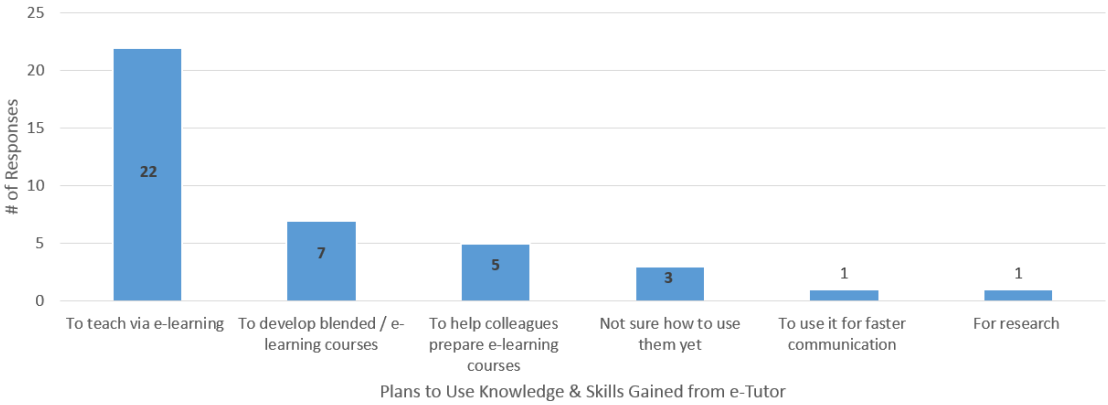
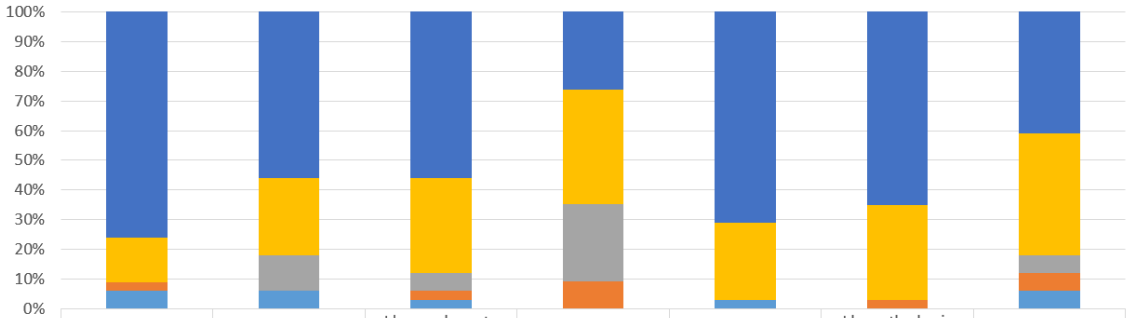


Figure 2. Plans to use knowledge and skills gained from e-tutor

Level of Readiness for e-Learning

Participants' technological readiness, measured by the e-Learning Readiness and Expectation Questionnaire for e-Tutors, revealed a reasonably high level of readiness in terms of having an Internet-connected home or office computer, having basic computer operating and Internet usage skills as well as adequate software knowledge to perform their daily work (Figure 3). Overall, 82% considered themselves as computer literate.

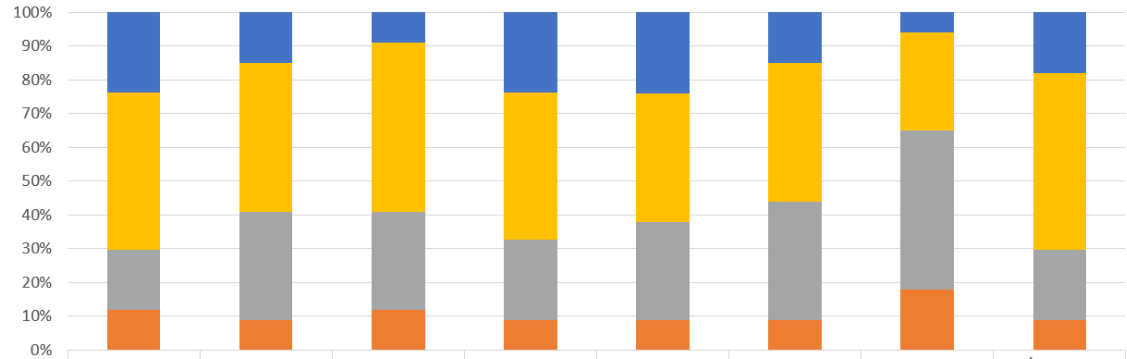


	I have a home computer with Internet connection.	I have an office computer with Internet connection.	I have adequate knowledge to use the software necessary to perform my daily work.	I have adequate computer hardware knowledge to solve every day technical problems.	I have the basic skills to operate a computer (e.g. saving files, creating folders).	I have the basic skills for finding my way around the Internet (e.g. using search engines, signing in).	I am computer literate
SA	76	56	56	26	71	65	41
A	15	26	32	38	26	32	41
NS	0	12	6	26	0	0	6
D	3	0	3	9	0	3	6
SD	6	6	3	0	3	0	6

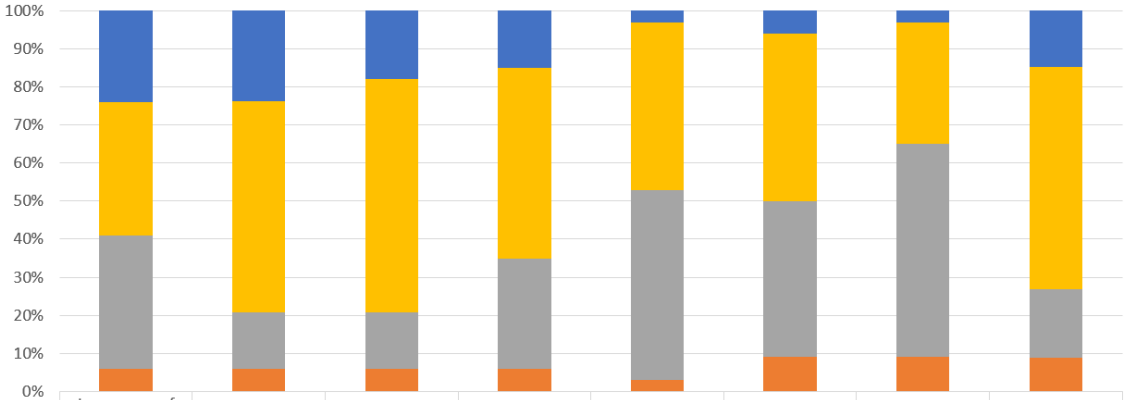
SA – Strongly Agree / A – Agree / NS – Not Sure – D – Disagree / SD - Strongly Disagree

Figure 3. Technological readiness for e-learning

Participants' pedagogical readiness and perceived competencies (Figures 4.1, 4.2) were measured on specific instructor activities. Data shows that participants are less confident in terms of their pedagogical readiness particularly for the design, development and use of digital materials and systems. They seem to be self-reliant on traditional instructor competencies, including communicating effectively with students, providing feedback to students, designing learning activities or assessment activities. Yet, they are not so self-assured where digital learning environments are concerned, and half of them are unsure about how to use learning management and virtual classroom management systems.



	I can identify the learning outcomes for e-courses.	I can create e-syllabuses for e-courses.	I can develop digital learning materials.	I can design learning activities.	I can design assessment activities (e.g. exams, forums).	I can develop content for a compact e-course.	I can create e-course content in different formats (e.g. text, audio, video).	I can use different teaching methods and teaching techniques to deliver the content.
SA	24	15	9	24	24	15	6	18
A	47	44	50	44	38	41	29	53
NS	18	32	29	24	29	35	47	21
D	12	9	12	9	9	9	18	9
SD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



	I am aware of and comply with ethical considerations for online learning.	I can communicate with students effectively.	I can provide feedback to students in an efficient manner.	I can set the rules and guidelines for my e-course.	I can manage synchronous and asynchronous activities.	I can use learning and content management systems effectively.	I can use a virtual classroom management system effectively.	I can use a variety of tools to communicate.
SA	24	24	18	15	3	6	3	15
A	35	56	62	50	44	44	32	59
NS	35	15	15	29	50	41	56	18
D	6	6	6	6	3	9	9	9
SD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

SA – Strongly Agree / A – Agree / NS – Not Sure – D – Disagree / SD - Strongly Disagree

Figures 4.1 / 4.2. Pedagogical readiness for e-learning

Participants' Opinions about E-Tutor

Quality of content

All participants were satisfied with the quality of content, which they defined as appropriate, well-organized, interesting, modern, and comprehensive, with and a good theoretical and practical balance.

> ***The choice of topics was excellent, and that's why I wanted to join the course in the first place. Starting with theoretical background and moving on to various methods, followed by relevant software and websites was perfect, and so was the weight given to each section during the course.***

> ***It was intensive; yet I think it was doable, largely due to the perfect organization of the topics and materials, and the adequacy of tasks. Short assignments were good, could be more, but less time consuming as the readability of the material was good – 'easy to understand' and overlapping with the synchronous session was helpful.***

Four participants stated they would be happier if they tackled one topic per week; covering two topics every week was a majority administrative decision taken to complete the whole program before the year end. Finally, one participant underlined the qualifications of the program tutors:

> ***Their class presence was responsive, professional, friendly, supportive, and flexible. They seemed to have a lot of experience, were very knowledgeable about the subject; also they were very willing to help and accommodate any learner needs that emerged. Their attitude was kind, but firm --the best mix really. They are highly useful role models for us as potential future teachers of e-learning.***

Assessment

Electronic portfolios were used for evaluation purposes throughout e-Tutor, where participants had to complete more than 70% of the activities. In general, participants seemed satisfied with this process, since it reflects the flexible nature of e-learning with a

variety of tools that are appropriately organized and managed. The participants were also quite content with interactive discussions and hands-on activities. One participant stated: 'e-portfolios help to collect all the material together, and are always available from anywhere. Forum discussions are also necessary and useful, where you can discuss topics that interest you'. Another participant considered this assessment method as 'fitting perfectly with the expected outcomes of the course'. One participant said the overall program 'managed to make it varied and interesting for learners. It was a real asset'. Nonetheless, almost half the participants criticized not having enough time to efficiently handle the tasks. One participant said: 'They were useful, but there were many assignments, and not enough time to complete them'.

Teaching methods, techniques and activities

According to most participants, teaching methods, techniques and activities used to deliver the information were used effectively.

> ***I admired the combination of techniques, suggested activities and social atmosphere of the course, created mainly by the tutors' friendliness and openness.***
> ***The way the course was set up (e.g. Moodle, videoconferencing) worked very well, giving us accurate e-learning experience, as did the homework assignments.***
> ***All the methods, techniques and activities perfectly fit the expected course outcomes. We experienced things we expect from our students, which will help in designing our own courses.***
> ***Good, interactive, well-explained, with different communication modes.***

Participants also favored the level of interactivity and synchronous class sessions.

> ***Synchronous teaching sessions were important - even more than I expected at the beginning. It kept us feeling part of the class. I liked [those] because of the feeling of involvement.***

Then again, several participants expressed a need for more interactivity during online meetings, and also to complete collaborative projects with more colleague interaction.

Learning management system and virtual classroom management tool

The e-Tutor program used the Moodle open-source learning platform, with which some participants already had prior experience. Participants with previous Moodle experience were comfortable with it, whereas others found it complicated at first, yet quite convenient and easy-to-use after grasping the "logic" behind it.

> ***This learning platform can be explored forever. I mean, the more you learn, the more you find something new in it.***
> ***Moodle learning management system is very good for timely communication with students, giving them useful and necessary information. It has all the tools needed for delivering and collecting materials*.**

Participants were also content with the virtual classroom software used; finding it convenient and useful. They experienced no technical problems; which was considered a positive feature of the tool. One participant mentioned difficulties with one specific browser.

> ***It was convenient, because we could see the presentation, ask questions and interact with others.***
> ***It's a good replacement for live dialogue.***
> ***I didn't have any technical problems. Nice. Interactive. Sufficient for our program.***

Learning materials

Participants valued the effort spent preparing varied multimedia materials, course notes and relevant website links. The learning materials were considered to be informative and useful.

> ***They are useful and informative, still, we need more practice to develop skills to better use them.***
> ***...it was sometimes the papers, the links you provided, and the course materials ... a good mix.***
> ***Yes, very interesting materials [were] provided to us. I often watch videos of lectures and presentations.***

The participants were asked about the perceived main benefits of e-Tutor. Participants' responses focused on using innovative software for creating learning materials, tools and applications as well as applying new pedagogical techniques into teaching. Figure 5 gives a graphical illustration of the emerging themes, followed by direct quotations from the participants.

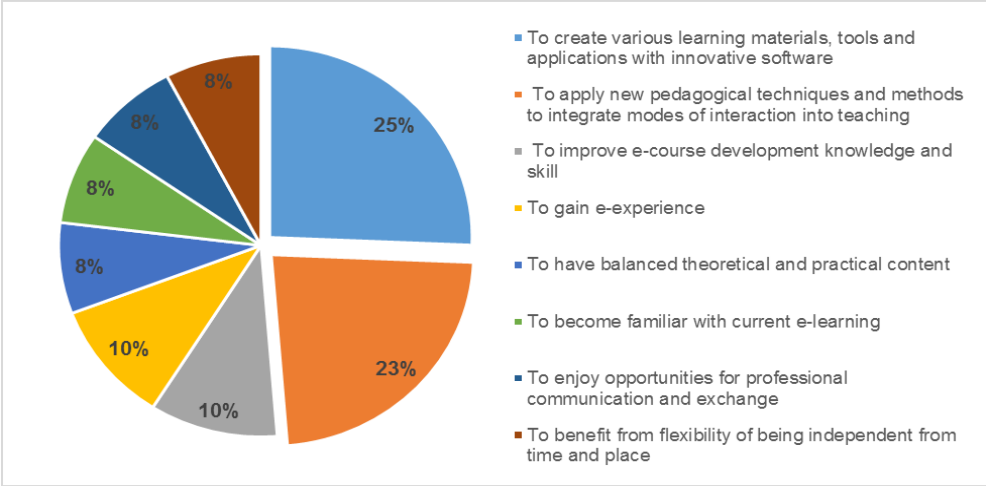


Figure 5. Perceived benefits from e-tutor

> ***This was the first time I'd participated in such a program with highly motivated adult "students" and even more motivated "teachers". I actively experienced the process, and now I understand my students better.***
> ***The main benefit for me was having access to materials which I can use at my university. Thank you very much for this.***
> ***I studied many new approaches for teaching, and also learned how to make teaching process more effective.***

Satisfaction with the program

Of the 29 respondents to the questions on satisfaction with the e-Tutor program, 75% stated they actively participated in the course, with 25% not actively and regularly joining the instructional activities.

> ***I found the environment and activities motivating, so I had no trouble engaging with them. I'm also very short on time, so it was important for me to do assignments as they were given. In some cases, where I felt I had more to learn from a certain activity, I may have put in more than was required; I generally invested more in the activities that I felt would be more directly useful to me.***

From the obligatory class time, I benefited most from the direct interaction approach --it felt like being in a real class with the teacher present. That was what most contributed to my sense of being part of an actual class group.

The majority of respondents (97%) stated that e-Tutor met their expectations. Three respondents considered it as a high level course that exceeded their expectations:

Yes, it did [exceed]. I expected a "masters' level class" --concentrated, easy to understand and follow with many real life tips and examples, a result-oriented course. And it really was like that!

Some emphasized the balance of theory and practice in the content:

In my view, the program successfully achieved its pre-set goals and the audience was exposed to a variety of theoretical and practical sessions and assignments. I enjoyed the training process.

Absolutely. It had just the right balance of theory and practice.

When I first looked at the content, I thought it was too much and I would not be able to manage that. But the content is well-balanced and practice-oriented!

Interaction throughout the course was another theme, reflected by participants as mostly high.

I truly enjoyed the chat opportunity during class and that people could ask/answer questions as they came up. The teachers were very friendly and encouraging, stimulating that interaction.

Tutors managed to maintain it on a high level. Everyone was involved; tutors responded quickly and were in tune with the audience. Thank you! It was a great job!

The course was very interactive. It was almost [like] a face-to-face course; we were able to ask questions anytime during the seminars. It's a very good format for 30-40 listeners (adults).

Only one participant was dissatisfied with the interaction level between participants:

If we are talking about participants, it wasn't really good. Few people participated in discussion forums, and even less were replying to somebody else's messages. It would be good to have a look at what others did with their e-learning courses and assignments, see what our mistakes were etc.

One objective of the e-Tutor program was to put the participants in learners' shoes in order for them to have first-hand experience with online learning environment:

It was important to experience a whole e-learning course as a student. The number of techniques used would help me to decide on my own options in terms of e-learning - what principles I adhered to, what I would like to keep doing, and what I would like to change. Being in a multinational class was also very interesting.

Being a subproject under the Swiss National Science Foundation Project Scopes, e-Tutor aimed at expanding competencies in online lecturing and providing material OER that can be used for training colleagues. Thus, it served as a model for its international participants, who would have like to adapt it for local practices. More than half the participants (58%)

stated they would adapt the course content without any change to its content or format. Others suggested adapting it with very slight changes like extended course duration, presenting/reducing graphic and social tools, administering more teaching methods, and providing more practical applications. Several participants mentioned concerns about colleague computer literacy levels and suggested some add-ons to include more features about LMS or changing the difficulty level of technical content.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Al-Salman (2011) says "unlike what has been traditionally required from faculty in academia, distance learning necessitates that online faculty master a number of roles and acquire a specific set of competencies". Teaching online requires different skills, roles and competencies for online instructors compared to teaching in traditional learning environments. Universities should offer ongoing support in the form of professional development programs in order to help academic staff through their online journey. This paper provides insights into a multinational online teaching faculty development program, e-Tutor, elaborating on its assessment through the results of expectancy and satisfaction surveys.

The findings indicated that, from the perspective of technological familiarity, the majority of the participants were ready to attend e-Tutor. However, in terms of pedagogical readiness, participants felt less qualified conducting e-course activities, whereas they were able to use a variety of communication tools, teaching methods or techniques in general. They were particularly not qualified in using learning and virtual classroom management systems, managing discussions tools or creating digital materials effectively. What participants expected from e-Tutor was to learn basic e-tutoring skills, to deepen their knowledge of e-learning technologies and methodology, experience an online course, obtain practical knowledge, and learn how to organize and conduct an e-course.

These expectations perfectly matched the e-Tutor program objectives, which aims at equipping participants with contemporary knowledge and skills on technology use and its integration into instructional processes to improve the quality and efficiency of e-learning practices. Over 75% of the e-Tutor participants stated that they would use the acquired knowledge and skills to teach via e-learning, develop blended or e-courses. Many participants stressed the benefits of e-Tutor as acquiring the ability to create various learning materials, tools and applications with innovative software, as well as applying new pedagogical techniques and methods, and possibly integrate modes of interaction into their teaching.

Balanced theory and practice shaped participants' reflections on the quality and variety of e-Tutor content. In e-learning, it is essential to provide learners with a rich variety of well-organized materials that best serve their interests and respond to individual needs. In the case of e-Tutor, participants' responses to open-ended questions showed that some benefitted from videos and visual materials, whereas others used written materials and took notes for studying and future use. Therefore, it is possible to say that e-Tutor achieved its aim of reaching out and responding to all participants.

The practice-oriented nature of e-Tutor and active participation in the process was well received by most participants. Many emphasized the importance of experiencing as an e-learner before teaching online. Providing first-hand online learning experience is paramount to ensure faculty fully appreciate the online learning experience in the environment their students will use. This has been claimed to have a positive influence. Referencing to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (1998), Stein et al. (2011) underlined the principle that puts learner engagement at the center of appropriate and effective professional training.

Practical and hands-on activities were fundamental to assessment, as well as electronic portfolios, which were well-reflected by participants. One drawback emphasized was the limited time allocated for completing the portfolios, since the overall program was completed in seven weeks. Deciding on the duration of online professional development programs is problematic because participants may need more time to complete activities; yet longer durations may lead to increased dropout or demotivation due to their routine business. On the other hand, shorter durations, as in the case of e-Tutor, may create pressure on participants to complete materials or activities more efficiently.

Synchronous class sessions were mostly discussed in terms of interactivity. Participants highly favored the opportunities for real-time interactivity through synchronous classes, with less interaction through asynchronous activities such as forum discussions. Synchronous sessions were said to instill a sense of involvement and communal belonging. Then again, participants wanted more interactivity during online meetings, as well as inclusion of a collaborative project to increase interaction with their colleagues. Collaboration and the value of collaborative effort have been underlined in other studies, and the concept of embedding professional development into everyday work life pointed out in addition to conventional courses, certification programs or workshops aiming at skills acquisition (Wilson 2007, as quoted in Stein et al., 2011).

Familiarity with learning and virtual classroom management systems was one concern expressed by participants in the readiness survey. Describing the course management system review process at the University of Florida, Means, Johnson, and Graff (2013) also determined during focus group interviews that many faculty members did not feel confident using such technologies, mostly due to their workload making learning of such technologies difficult.

One very important goal of e-Tutor, under the Swiss National Science Foundation Project Scopes, was to ensure adaptability of e-Tutor to different languages and cultures via its participants. Participants suggested adapting it either without change or with very slight changes like duration, social tools, teaching methods, and more practical applications. However, adaptation of e-Tutor for different cultures would definitely require certain changes to content, scope, and method of delivering content.

People are claimed to be a major limitation to the acceptance of e-learning (Stein et al., 2011; Anderson et al., 2006). Instructors play a crucial role in creating successful online learning environments, and amongst others, Stein et al. (2011) indicate that faculty development leads to higher levels of adoption and continued use. A recent study by Adnan and Boz (2015) considered if mathematicians and mathematics educators at a Turkish university with prior online experience as instructors or learners affect faculty members perspectives to teach online, and concluded that they were significantly positive about teaching mathematics online where they had participated in a professional online learning development program, and even more so if they practiced it. This was also emphasized by Chang, Shen, and Liu's study (2014) exploring the role perceptions of e-instructors in higher education where they concluded that 'e-instructors with sufficient training support rated [online instructional practices] higher than did those with little or only some training support'.

Online learning faculty development programs should reflect new roles, skills and competencies required from all instructors in any new online learning and teaching environment. This parallels with several accounts that professional development programs should address redesigning and rethinking multidimensional roles of faculty members (Arinto, 2013; Bawane and Spector, 2009; Chang et al., 2014; Guasch et al., 2010).

With the participants' help, the assessment of e-Tutor has led to certain issues being considered for similar programs: (1) well-balanced, well-organized programs with theoretical and practical dimensions; (2) longer duration to enable more time for hands-on

activities, yet keeping the program compact; (3) inclusion of collaborative projects to encourage additional interaction among participants; (4) motivation to participate in asynchronous discussion forum activities; and (5) experienced, responsive and dynamic tutors to keep participants engaged throughout the process.

For future studies, it would be interesting to see whether or not participants of faculty online teaching development programs can actively and efficiently apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to create online learning environments and to teach online.

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BIODATA and CONTACT ADDRESSES of AUTHORS

Muge ADNAN is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technology, Head of Informatics, and Director of Distance Education at Mugla Sitki Kocman University. She has also performed various key roles in national education and technology projects in Turkey. She graduated with a PhD in Computer Education and Instructional Technology from Middle East Technical University in 2005. Her research interests include technology training and integration, technology adoption, e-learning, faculty development, and digital divide.

Muge ADNAN
Department of Computer Education &
Instructional Technology, Faculty of Education
Distance Education Centre,
Mugla Sitki Kocman University, 48000, Mugla, Turkey
Phone: +90 252 211 16 14
E-mail: mugea@mu.edu.tr

Filiz KALELIOGLU is an Assistant Professor of Computer Education and Instructional Technology at the Education Faculty, Baskent University. She graduated with a PhD in Computer Education and Instructional Technology from Ankara University in 2011. Her academic interest areas are e-learning, social media in education, instructional design, technology integration and computer science. She serves as a reviewer for several journals in the field of educational technology. She has published many national and international articles and book chapters.

Filiz KALELIOGLU
Department of Computer Education &
Instructional Technology, Faculty of Education,
Baskent University, 06810, Ankara, Turkey
Phone: +90 312 246 66 66 / 2241
E-mail: filizk@baskent.edu.tr

Yasemin GULBAHAR is a Professor of Department of Informatics at Ankara University. She graduated with a BS from Mathematics and then got PhD in Computer Education and Instructional Technology from Middle East Technical University in 2002. Her academic interest areas are e-learning, learning analytics, social media in education, instructional design, technology integration and computer science teaching. She has published many national and international articles and book chapters. She is still working as the Head of Informatics, and Director of Distance Education Centre at Ankara University.

Yasemin GULBAHAR
Department of Informatics,
Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey
Phone: +90 312 214 13 50 / 6384
E-mail: gulbahar@ankara.edu.tr

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