

ONLINE DISTANCE ACCOUNTING EDUCATION: EXPLORING THE LECTURERS' ACCOUNTS



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PRESENTATION STRUCTURE



FOCUS OF RESEARCH



RESEARCH METHOD






DRAFT RESEARCH FINDINGS



IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH

-  Existing research mostly focuses on students' experiences
-  Almost completely silent on lecturers' experiences/perspective
-  This research seeks to redress the balance by investigating:
 - 'The academics' experiences of teaching accounting through the medium of distance learning (DL)**

RESEARCH METHOD



Semi-structured interviews with accounting academics across HEI in UK.



Interview questions focused on:

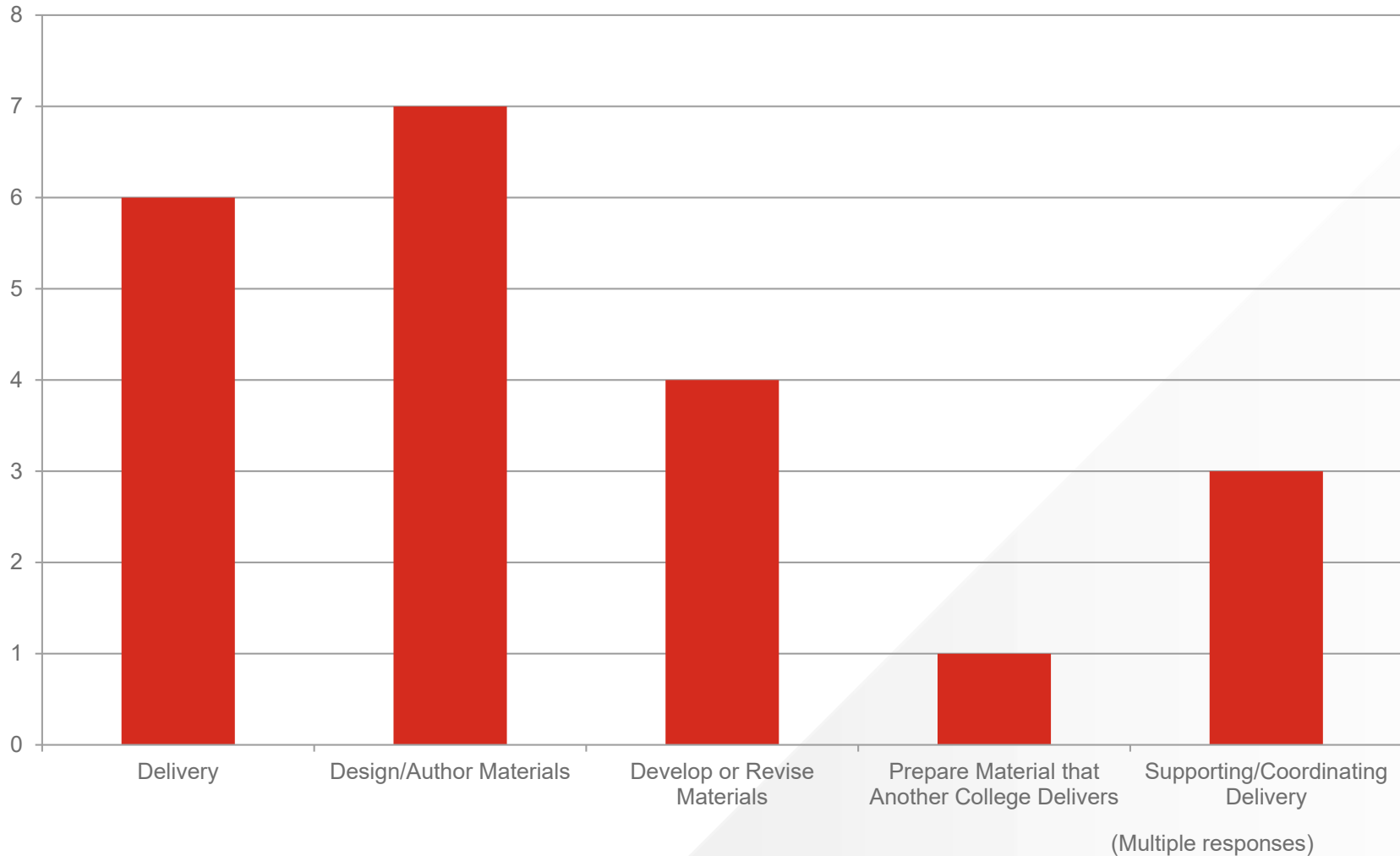
- ❖ **Current delivery** of distance education
- ❖ **Training and support** in teaching and in developing DL resources
- ❖ **Challenges and opportunities** in the delivery of distance education
- ❖ **Impact** of accounting distance education on staff/students



Use of qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) to identify key themes in the interviews

PROFILE OF LECTURERS

Level of Responsibility in Distance Education



RESEARCH FINDINGS



TRAINING AND SUPPORT



LACK OF TRAINING




- Majority of lecturers had little or no formal DL training
- Majority had no training in managing online discussion boards.
- Learnt on the job - *“in many respects you just got on and did it”*.






SUPPORT SYSTEMS IN PLACE

- Mainly support from colleagues - *“sat down with the previous module leader and discussed the best way to run the module”*.
- Also support from strategic people with DE experience/background - e.g. learning designers on the team.

CURRENT TRAINING AND SUPPORT

-  How to use technology in the classroom (but NOT how to use technology in DL).
-  Technical support is readily available for issues with online discussion board.
-  Generic tutor training e.g. in teaching practice, marking and feedback

TRAINING AND SUPPORT NEEDS

-  What is best practice in the delivery of DL:
Would be useful both staff and students.
-  Technological training and support specific to DL
-  *“I think if more resources could be invested in the delivery of DL, it would be to material writing, developing proper handbooks, developing customised textbooks where you can use chapters from different authors to create a customised book”.*

CHALLENGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING –

1. *COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION*



Difficult to communicate concepts compared to face-to-face contact:

‘there are certain theoretical/technical accounting concepts/terms used in the profession which can be difficult to convey over an electronic medium’ .



Physical separation/Lack of personal one-to-one interaction

CHALLENGES OF DL -

2. *MANAGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT*



CONTENT

- ❖ Students need well-structured material in advance to know how to progress
- ❖ Students struggling with voice-over slides
- ❖ Writing materials and devising assessments that students will engage with online
- ❖ Not knowing how much information to provide
- ❖ Adapting pre-existing materials - “*converting [it] into something that can be consumed online*”

CHALLENGES OF DL -

3. *MANAGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT* contd.



❖ Ensuring student engagement

“the subject area is the biggest challenge for something like accounting;

‘it’s very hard I think for any student to pick up a text book and grasp things...so the challenge is actually trying to develop materials to explain the text and getting students to do lots of exercises, using excel spreadsheets and things like that’.

❖ Managing students’ online discussions

“I found it difficult with students that can dominate the chat board”.

CHALLENGES OF DL –

4. MANAGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT contd.



SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING (REAL TIME) CAN BE UNMANAGEABLE:

“you are trying to answer questions from various different people at the same time and depending on the scale it can become unmanageable”







ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING PREVENTS LIVE DISCUSSION:

“the students could watch the videos afterwards or decide to come to the lectures, but there was no option to participate in a live webinar, which would have been great”

OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY DL

Not all negative views – there is recognition that there are opportunities. Include :

-  Wider access – to students who otherwise would not have a chance
-  Can open doors for the Univ re: subsequent F/T enrolment for students concerned/family/friends
-  If properly designed and resourced, can conceivably be cheaper than F/T equivalent
-  Can help academics to be more effective in their face to face teaching – as they will appreciate more the areas where students have greater difficulties.

CHALLENGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING: INCLUSIVITY



BEING ABLE TO CATER FOR DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS:

“with DL you might have mature students, some who are younger with limited experience, some with more experience, and being able to cater for all of them is quite challenging”.



CULTURAL AWARENESS AND TRAINING:

“tutors based in the UK higher education institutions, it is important that they get training and general awareness of different cultures and different expectations from different contexts”.

CHALLENGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING: TIMING



DIFFERENT TIME ZONES:

“I arranged to speak to them about four weeks ago, but quite a few of them wrote in to say the time was not convenient as they were at work, so I cancelled it”



PREPARATION OF ONLINE MATERIALS:

“whether it’s for material that you’re writing or constructing, like going through readings or textbook chapters, or whether it’s videos or spreadsheets...however long you think it’s going to take, quadruple the time”.

CHALLENGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING: TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES



ACCESS:

“we sometimes assume particular things based on where those guys are. I sometimes get students saying in the last week I’m sorry but my broadband has been down and I haven’t been able to get access to whatever it is you have”.







ONLINE PLATFORMS

“personally I wasn’t crazy about Blackboard, I think Moodle is personally a better Mechanism and Camtasia, I mean I’m not that familiar with Kaltura, Camtasia had its share of problems”

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IMPACT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION ON TEACHING OF THE CURRICULUM

DIVERSE VIEWS:



More sensitive to how communicate concepts



Greater cultural awareness and understanding





“when students are [at a] distance, they generally often tend to pick things from their home countries, and if there are people going to supervise them, it is important that they are aware of developments and changes in those countries that are being researched by the students”.



Greater awareness of student difficulties

“it also gave me a bit of a clearer understanding of what they struggled with... with the discussion boards you can get a feel of what they were posting, so it made you more aware of what they found difficult”

WAYS FORWARD...

-  Formal training of distance learning delivery including best practice
-  Identifying ways to improve tutor engagement and interactions with DL students
-  Institutions to provide more opportunities for blended learning
-  Institutions should not see distance education as a cheap option but allow time for it's delivery

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