Enhancing Staff Satisfaction through E-Learning: A Humanistic Focus on Development in Higher Education

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Abstract

This study assesses e-learning initiatives' impact on staff satisfaction and development in a higher education setting using a mixed-method approach. Survey data from 39 participants reveal high engagement and satisfaction, with 44% studying weekly and 72% completing courses. Qualitative insights from interviews with four participants highlight personal and professional benefits but also identify time management challenges. Suggestions include creating learning communities and flexible learning requirements. The study also discusses the challenges of time management and balancing workload to improve employee engagement with e-learning platforms. Results emphasise the need for accessible e-learning platforms and continuous support to enhance staff development.

Keywords: E-learning, Staff Development, Staff Satisfaction, Transnational Higher Education.

1. Introduction

Staff satisfaction can be looked at from various perspectives. Morris and Ye (2024) emphasise the importance of adopting a humanistic approach by considering employees' voice to enhance satisfaction and retention. A key takeaway from their study is the intrinsic motivation plays a vital role in driving employee engagement and satisfaction. In the ever-evolving higher education, universities and colleges strive to stay at the forefront of innovation and excellence. Staff members value self-development programmes not only for personal improvement but also to remain competitive in the labour market and for potential promotions. Consequently, effective staff development programmes have become a critical influencing factor for staff satisfaction. This study employs a mixed-method approach to explore e-learning initiatives for staff development and satisfaction. Specifically, it combines quantitative data from a survey of 40 participants who have engaged in e-learning with qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with four of these participants.

The study aims to:

- Assess the overall satisfaction of staff with e-learning initiatives in higher education.
- Identify specific factors in e-learning contributing to or detracting from staff satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

Technological advancements have enabled the learning environments to be extended from traditional in-house training to the possibilities of online learning. This shift to a technology-based approach provides flexible planning to enhance staff development and inspire students to take ownership of their education (Blackburn, 2015). Teaching staff as enablers must have the required skills so that students can be better coached and inspired. Digital mobility, in this case, highlighted by digital competency, has emerged to be a focusing part, which can also be utilised to be a tool to measure staff engagement and satisfaction (Shindina et al., 2024). As Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to develop, the purpose for life-long learning seems to have a more focused direction as staff members should be equipped with more up-to-date skills for future challenges and unexpected rapid technology advancements.

Recent studies have demonstrated that e-learning can significantly enhance employee engagement and satisfaction by providing flexible, customised and interactive learning experiences. For instance, research has identified key factors such as accessibility, customisation, interactivity, and flexibility as crucial elements in fostering positive outcomes in e-learning. Additionally, a study on the impact of e-learning on employee satisfaction highlighted that technology, educational content, motivation, and attitude are significant variables influencing learning satisfaction (Navimipour & Zareie, 2015).

However, researchers have also reported the reoccurring challenges such as time conflicts, busy schedules, and workload negatively affecting motivation and engagement in staff development. The lack of flexibility in traditional training programmes has contributed to further frustration due to the added pressure, especially with some mandatory training and qualifications required for promotion and personal development. E-learning platforms, in this case, play an important role in bridging the gap. It has been proven to be a beneficial added initiative to support individual development, and the platforms provide a range of topics that staff need and should enhance. That said, the effectiveness of e-learning is hard to assess. For example, to what extent is the knowledge being transferred, is it fully grasped, and could it be applied in the daily work environment? It is rather difficult for programme managers to measure outcomes of e-learning, identify areas for improvement, and provide additional support where necessary.

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method approach, combing quantitative and qualitative data collection methods for a comprehensive understanding of staff satisfaction with e-learning initiative. A structured questionnaire was designed and sent out to collect detailed insights among staff members who have been using an e-learning platform for two years at a transnational higher education provider. The university has distributed 100 e-learning accounts among staff members across all faculties and departments, ensuring EDI in this practice. The questionnaire covered accessibility, interactivity, content relevance and quality and overall satisfaction. 39 responses were collected, and four participants were invited to provide more in-depth feedback and elaborate on their experiences and perceptions on how e-learning has affected their developmental planning and satisfaction working at the institution through semi-structured interviews. All participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymised. There might have been selection bias as the volunteers might have more positive or negative experiences from the interviews. To address the bias, the study acknowledges the potential limitations of convenience sampling and suggests future research with broader participant pools.

4. Results and Findings

4.1. Survey Findings

The survey showed that 44% of respondents engaged with the e-learning platform on a weekly basis, 33% reported studying monthly, and 3% of participants engaged quarterly (Figure. 1). While 21% reported occasional use, it showed this initiative has been utilised among staff members.

● Weekly	17
● Monthly	13
● Quarterly	1
● Occasionally	8
● Never	0

Figure 1. Frequency of studying on the e-learning platform

72% of participants reported they have successfully completed a course, which shows a high commitment. On the contrary, 28% of respondents only browsed the platform and failed to

complete a course. This means that while the platform attracted interest, not all users were able to complete the courses they started.

The majority of the respondents found the content provided on the online courses were quite relevant. Specifically, 51% found the content very relevant to their professional development, while 46% reported it as relevant (Figure 2). Only 3% of participants were neutral on this point. This suggest that the platform's content was generally well-aligned with staff needs and interests.
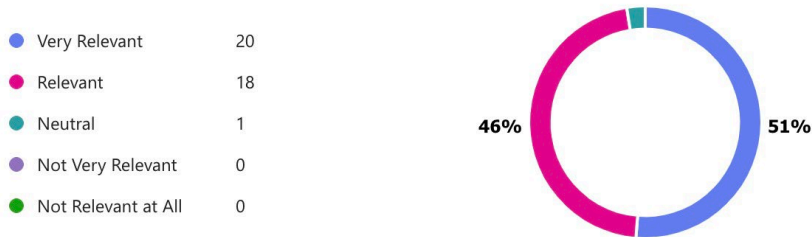
● Very Relevant	20
● Relevant	18
● Neutral	1
● Not Very Relevant	0
● Not Relevant at All	0

46%   51%

Figure 2. Relevance of the content provided on the e-learning platform

Overall satisfaction with the e-learning platform was also high. The survey found that 51% of respondents were very satisfied with their experience, and 44% were satisfied (Figure 3). A small percentage, 5%, reported neutral satisfaction levels. This shows that most users had a positive experience with the e-learning platform, which demonstrates the effectiveness in meeting staff development needs.
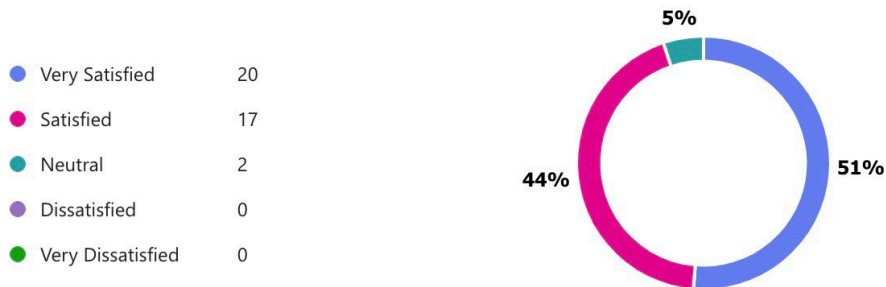
5%

● Very Satisfied	20
● Satisfied	17
● Neutral	2
● Dissatisfied	0
● Very Dissatisfied	0

44%   51%

Figure 3. Satisfaction with the e-learning platform

4.2. Interview Findings

The interviews revealed that the e-learning platform significantly contributed to both personal and professional development. Participant 1 noted,

> *"The courses containing topics of brain and communication, which contribute to my personal interest in learning about brain functioning. The learning process prepares me for further exploration of communication strategies that can improve my work efficiency."*

In terms of professional development, they mentioned that they acquired leadership management skills and applied them to their team management through some leadership enhancement courses. Participant 2 emphasised the value of the platform for professional development, and said,

> *"This online platform keeps me up to date with new trends and tools to help me keep abreast of new developments and technologies in my area of work, especially improved my performance in a team through skillful communication and understanding the trending tech in data management."*

Participant 3 and 4 both found the platform inspirational and beneficial for preparing learning materials in teaching, as Pp 3 said,

> *"The platform has various resources, including pedagogical courses necessary for high quality teaching, research-related courses, e.g. programming in various software, which is necessary for high-quality research, and my field-specific courses that help me to learn how the modules are taught in other schools by other professors. I think it is invaluable platform for my professional development."*

Participant 4 also highlighted how much this e-learning initiative served as an added tool to developing pedagogical skills, noting,

> *"First, the university provides limited opportunities to develop our pedagogical skills, while the e-learning platform covers this gap. For instance, recently I completed a module on how to use AI in education. No such courses are provided by our university while it is essential. Similarly, I am now learning how to create chatBox without programming which is very useful knowledge for educators. Second, edX offers research-related modules, e.g. programming with Python or R. it helps to cover the gap in research-related knowledge/skills of academics. I believe the university must have this kind of learning platform. Also, let me mention that this platform offers flexibility - during the semester I tried to use if over the weekend, but not always I had free time so I could easily catch up during the winter and summer break when I spent more time on learning. So it provides a flexible personalised learning experience."*

Additionally, participant 1 highlighted the challenge of finding a fixed time weekly to engage with the platform, noting that,

> *Though I have an account, it is very difficult to find a fixed time weekly to take the course. After one or two weeks without learning the course, you need to retake the previous*

sessions again. This platform looks useful but really need time to focus on it. It is good if university can continuously provide the online resources, but it is still hard to balance the self-learning time with the tasks.

Participant 2 mentioned that, regarding study metrics, the platform does not track time spent on projects and assignments. The courses are very project-based, requiring several hours for weekly sessions on assignments outside the platform before submission. As the university requires a certain amount of time to ensure the utilisation of the resources, they argue that eliminating the minimum learning hours learning requirement should be considered as it is not a relevant criterion to evaluate the benefits of the online courses to the course participants. The online courses are utilised as inspirational sources and the heavy workloads of the academic staffs might not allow a regular learning schedule.

Participant 1 further proposed the establishment of a community that could meet monthly to discuss progress in online learning and recommend beneficial courses to improve the e-learning experience.

5. Discussion

The study's findings highlight the positive feedback the e-learning initiative brought to enhance staff development in higher education institutions. The results demonstrated high levels of engagement and satisfaction among staff members, as the online learning platform meets the professional and personal development needs. This aligns with previous research emphasising the importance of flexible and accessible learning opportunities in promoting job satisfaction and professional growth (Blackburn, 2015; Morris & Ye, 2024).

The interview participants then further reported the benefits for keeping them updated with new trends and technologies, improved communication and leadership skills, and the additional support valuable pedagogical and research-related courses. These insights underscore the intrinsic motivation of staff to engage in self-development activities and the e-learning creates a positive impact.

Despite the positive feedback, participants identified challenges such as time management and the need for more collaborative learning experiences. Participants suggested establishing a learning community and eliminating rigid learning hour requirements. The findings suggest that higher education institutions should prioritise flexible and accessible e-learning platforms, provide continuous support, and foster collaborative learning environments. Eliminating rigid requirements and adopting a more personalised approach can better accommodate staff needs and schedules, which in return, enhance overall satisfaction and development.

The use of convenience sampling in this study may have introduced bias, as participants who volunteered for the interviews might have had more positive or negative experiences. Future

research should consider broader participant pools across multiple institutions to improve the robustness and generalisability of findings.

6. Conclusion

The study's results indicate that the e-learning platform generally has a positive impact on staff satisfaction and development. The quantitative data demonstrate high levels of satisfaction and engagement, while the qualitative data provide rich insights into the platform's contributions to personal and professional growth. Participants' suggestions highlight the need for flexibility, continuous support, and community engagement to enhance the e-learning experience. By addressing identified challenges and implementing suggested improvements, institutions can further optimise their e-learning initiatives to support continuous professional growth in higher education.

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