

COURSE DESIGN IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES FROM STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES USING CONJOINT ANALYSIS

*Chen-Yin Lee, College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, University of Northern Colorado,
501 20 St., Greeley, CO, 80639, 970-313-3115, inin30@hotmail.com*

ABSTRACT

Suffering from severely declining birth rates, the higher education organizations in Taiwan are forced to face a more competitive environment. Since it has been shown that more aggressive strategies targeting at students' satisfaction and service quality are crucial for recruiting and retaining students, it is worthwhile to investigate on students' perspective toward course design. Due to the fact that the conjoint analyses has been demonstrated in effectively solving consumer's choice problems by its focus on trade-offs that occur in the decision-making process. With limited studies regarding the application of conjoint analysis in the field of Educational Technology, it warrants Educational Technology researchers' attention to the course design issue from the conjoint methodology perspective.

Need of the Study (Rationale of the Study)

Taiwan has been facing the decreasing birth rates in recent years. The number of students has been declining, making the demand for higher education shrinks. However, the supply for higher education remains the same, leading to more competition among the higher education institutions. As a result, recruiting new students and retaining current students becomes top priorities for higher education organizations. Previous studies have indicated that higher education has increased the need to apply more aggressive strategies to recruit students and focus more on service quality and student satisfaction (Joseph, Yakhou, & Stone, 2005). Quality of course design reveals the core product offered by academic institutions, which influences students' satisfaction toward their institutions (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Furthermore, Mukherji (2006) argued that course content and teaching methods exerted influence over students' perception of course or educational service quality. To better understand service quality of courses, students' perspectives and needs regarding courses have to be taken into considerations. Students are more satisfied if their expectations concerning courses are met. Additionally, students' satisfaction toward courses has been demonstrated to be a strong predictor of student retention (Klein, Noe, & Wang, 2006; Tinto, 2000). As a consequence, course design from students' perspective becomes critical in order to retain current students and recruit new students in the highly competitive academic environment in Taiwan. Conjoint analysis is a popular research technique in the field of marketing. Huber (1987) argued that conjoint analysis produces strong prediction power for consumer choice problems due to its emphasis on trade-offs that occur in the decision-making process. Consumers evaluate a product by using a multiplicity of factors or attributes of a given product and make trade-offs among attributes. However, limited studies regarding Educational Technology courses utilizing conjoint

analysis were found. Therefore, it warrants Educational Technology researchers' attention to the course design issue from the conjoint methodology perspective.

Purpose of the Study

The current study includes two primary objectives. First, it attempts to apply a consumer-based perspective to Educational Technology courses in order to improve service quality. Second, the present study aims to develop a template in course design decision in the context of Educational Technology using conjoint analysis.

Method

The target population will be the students in Educational Technology programs in Taiwan. Random sampling will be utilized for data collection. Three hundred subjects will be expected. A full profile conjoint analysis among several types of conjoint methods will be used in the current study because it is the most common measurement tasks (Hair et al., 1998). Attributes of courses will be derived from two focus groups and several in-depths interviews of college students in the Educational Technology programs. The levels within an attribute will depend on the attribute type, i.e., either yes/no or high/medium/low. The number of the conjoint course scenarios will emerge after the decision regarding the number of attributes and levels within an attributes is made.

Subjects will be required to rate the Educational Technology course scenarios on an 11-point scale from 0 (do not prefer) to 10 (strongly prefer). Multiple regression analysis along with a sensitivity analysis will be performed using SPSS for data analysis at significance level of .05.

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