The Role of E-learning for Faculty Development in China

Abstract

While discussion on faculty development in China has been increasing in recent years, our understanding of the strategy for the development remains limited. This study with a survey aimed to examine whether e-learning could meet faculty members’ expectations for their professional development. Our findings suggest that e-learning is identified as a preferred means of opening new opportunities to meet the needs of faculty in China where faculty development still remains traditional training and it has bright prospects. The result also highlights individual perspectives as a critical factor shaping e-learning behavior, and provides implications for the policy of faculty development.

Keywords: e-learning, faculty development, individual perspective, China

Introduction

Research highlights how faculty development can provide a strategic lever for ensuring institutional excellence (Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy and Beach, 2006). There are two major means to foster the development, namely faculty learning communities (FLCs) and faculty development programs (FDPs), both of which focus on fostering faculty members’ teaching ability (Light and Calkins, 2008; Ward and Selvester, 2012). However, the developmental need for faculty members is not just improving teaching skills; it has evolved over time along with the development of higher education. Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy and Beach (2006) chronicled the shifts in faculty development by identifying Five Ages in the USA, in which each era reflects changes in the emphasis