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A study on Guidelines for quality, design and development of online learning courses and programs

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Abstract

The history of online education dates back to the 1970s with computer assisted learning, followed by

Computer-based training and multimedia during the 1980s, web-based education during the early 1990s and e-learning during the last two decades, across higher education institutions worldwide. As

Online courses and programs gained popularity, the challenges to create an effective course or program also increased due to the complexity involved in online course design, development and delivery. There were other issues as well concerning learners such as learner motivation, expectation,

experience and challenges learners faced during the course. All this led to the preparation of guidelines and standards from organizations and experts to help course creators, administrators, faculty and instructors. The idea was to provide a framework to design and develop a highly effective quality course or programme.

While there are several such guidelines, there are differences in each of these. Additionally, many universities and institutions can create their own guidelines. In this study, we try to analyze some of the guidelines widely used by course creators, institutions and universities. The analysis illustrates how different guidelines focus on various quality categories of design and development. Through this research, a sample of guidelines are examined for this background, basic information, purpose, contents, characteristics and similarity.

Keywords:

Guidelines, online learning, courses, programs, standards, framework, quality, course design

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Introduction

Though computer-based education dates back to the 1970s with computer assisted learning, the early steps of online learning started post 2000 with initiatives such as MIT Open Courseware, OER, Wikiversity and so on. Later in 2008, Massive Open Online Courses were started in a few places, which were short duration online courses popularly known as MOOCs. But it was 2012 which, according to The New York Times, became "the year of the MOOC" as several well-financed providers, associated with top universities, emerged, including Coursera, Udacity, and edX. MOOCs and their forms gained popularity with these providers offering courses from top Universities in the world. Many other MOOC providers also joined hands in offering a diverse set of courses. Later, from offering just short duration MOOCs, the providers slowly expanded their offerings with new varieties such as specializations, professional certificates, and other long duration programs.

While all these developments were happening, there were various research happening on online learning programs such as MOOCs, closed ended courses, etc. In fact, MOOCs became one of the top researched areas in distance learning. The reasons for this huge increase in research were three-fold: 1) With the increase in popularity of online learning, questions were raised on the quality of the courses. (Allen and Seaman 2016). For instance, learners faced multiple issues during the learning process. Course instructors and administrators too faced by various issues while designing and developing the courses also increased. This gave ample opportunity for experts and researchers to conduct research on various topics of online learning 2) Since it was a new concept, experts in this education field found interest in exploring research opportunities in this area. 3) As creating and offering online learning courses and programs involve complex processes with multiple aspects and actors, the researchers found multiple research gaps and opportunities.

Out of the above three reasons, lack of quality control was most prominent. The American Federation of Teachers issued a report indicating the importance of high standards of good practice; they stated that a lack of quality controls could jeopardize an institution's effort to implement a successful online education program (Feldman et al. 2000). Thus, not only researchers, but organizations and institutions too started working towards this. They started developing guidelines for creating online learning courses and programmes. This was mainly intended 1) to create highly effective quality online courses 2) to resolve the learner issues and 3) to help organizations and course creators to make it easy and streamline the process of designing and developing online courses.

Parallelly the role of Instructional designers became critical. Instructional design became important because creating an effective online course requires more than just compiling information and uploading it to a platform. It is a systematic process involving the analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation of instructional materials and activities. Thus, the guidelines that were prepared by organizations had a high influence from Instructional designing.

Organizations have also used alternatives to guidelines. Some organizations have created frameworks such as quality framework or sometimes simply framework. There are also Standards and Instruments that are developed by organizations. And finally, organizations have also created rubrics or simply checklists, that act as guides for course creators.

Irrespective of what they are or what they are called, all these - guidelines, frameworks, standards, instruments, rubrics and checklists - the overall aim was to come up with best practices in designing and developing online courses. These online course design evaluation instruments have been created to help instructors design highly effective courses and assess quality (Baldwin et al. 2018). These tools can be used to encourage improvement in online courses through course design consistency and foster a dialogue about quality in online courses (Legon 2015).

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Basically, they include a combination of the process, rules, regulations, suggestions, recommendations, and quality items as a checklist, to design a learner-centric online course or program and evaluate it. For the sake of simplicity, we will use the term quality guidelines while generally mentioning these documents. Researchers Sally J. Baldwin1 and Yu-Hui Ching have conducted research on multiple facets of reviewing evaluating instruments regarding online courses and programs. Their research forms the basis for this study. In this paper, we analyze some of these guidelines to understand how these guidelines help organizations, institutions and individual course creators in creating a highly effective online course. We will also see how these guidelines differ from each other.

Research Gap and Objectives

Since the start of online learning, there has been various research conducted in this major area. The studies are conducted under various categories. Some of them include Quality of online courses, learner satisfaction, learner engagement, learning experiences, instructional designing, design and development of online courses. LMS, gamification. accessibility, pedagogy, curriculum design and so on. However, to the best of our knowledge, there is limited research on the topic of Guidelines for quality or design of online courses. Also, previous research did not include some prominent guidelines. This research aims to address these concerns.

The following research questions guided the study:

How are the quality guidelines different from each other?

What are the background information and basic points of these quality guidelines?

What are the focus areas of these quality guidelines for online courses?

The objective of this research is to (1) list some of the prominent quality guidelines, (2) discuss the purpose and main theme of each of these guidelines through their characteristics and finally (3) states the similarities in each of these guidelines.

Method

Literature review and search for online course evaluation instruments were conducted. In order to look for the right quality guidelines, the following terms (in conjunction with course design and development) were used on Google search engine: "Guidelines", "Quality framework", "Standards", "Checklist".

From the literature review and Google search, it is found that more than 35 such quality guidelines are available that meet the following criteria: 1) publicly available, 2) published after 2000, 3) can be used as a checklist even if there is no review process. For the purpose of this study only a sample quality guidelines document based on judgmental sampling is used and reviewed.

The identified guidelines were reviewed to examine and compare various themes, commonalities and differences.

List of Quality Guidelines

From the literature review, the following guidelines were found being discussed in multiple papers (Baldwin, S. et al., 2018, Baldwin, S. J. 2019, Baldwin, S. J et al., 2019, Lowenthal, P. R., et al.,2021):

Blackboard's Exemplary Course Program Rubric & California Community Colleges' Online Education Initiative (OEI) Course Design Rubric

The Open SUNY Course Quality Review Rubric (OSCQR)

Quality Matters (QM) Higher Education Rubric

Illinois Online Network's Quality Online Course Initiative (QOCI)

California State University Quality Online Learning and Teaching (QOLT)

Canvas Course Evaluation Checklist 2.0 (CCEC)

Quality Learning and Teaching Instrument (QLT)

Quality Course Teaching & Instructional Practice (QCTIP)

Quality Learning & Teaching (QLT-SF State) Evaluation Instrument

Course Rubric (CR), University of Central Florida

Rubric for Evaluating Online Courses (REOC) University of North Dakota

Online Course Evaluation Guidelines (OCEG) University of Wisconsin, La Crosse

Additionally, a few other guidelines were found:

Guidelines for developing Online Courses for Swayam (from Ministry of HRD, Government of India)

EOCCS (from EFMD)

edX Document Resources and MDC (from edX)

Guidelines for Quality Assurance (from CommonWealth of Learning)

Quality Assurance of Online Learning Toolkit (from Australian Government)

National Standards for Quality and Online Courses (Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance & Quality Matters)

Quality Guidelines Examined

From the literature review and Google search, few guidelines were sampled to be examined. They are listed below.

List of Quality Guidelines examined:

OEI Course Design Rubric (from The California Community College)

Swayam Guidelines (from Ministry of HRD, Government of India)

Exemplary Course Program Rubric (from Blackboard)

Quality Matters Higher Ed Course Design and Rubric (from Quality Matters)

EOCCS (from EFMD)

edX Document Resources and MDC (from edX)

Guidelines for Quality Assurance (from CommonWealth of Learning)

Quality Assurance of Online Learning Toolkit (from Australian Government)

The background information on the selected sample Quality Guidelines are provided below:

1. OEI Course Design Rubric (from The California Community College):

The OEI stands for Online Education Initiative, and it is the initiative from California Virtual Campus Online Network of Educators. The California Virtual Campus (CVC) is a systemwide resource for the

116 California Community Colleges (CCCs), ensuring that significantly more students are able to complete their educational goals by increasing both access to and success in high-quality online courses.

This OEI Course Design Rubric contains the online course design standards developed and adopted by the CVC-OEI. The Rubric is intended to establish standards relating to course design, interaction and collaboration, assessment, learner support, and accessibility in order to ensure the provision of a high-quality learning environment that promotes student success and conforms to existing regulations (California Community Colleges, 2018).

2. Swayam Guidelines (from Government of India):

The Guidelines for developing Online courses on Swayam was developed in 2017 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development under Government of India. SWAYAM provides an integrated platform and portal for online courses, using information and communication technology (ICT) covering High School till all higher education subjects. The Guidelines propose to lay down technical and production standards for the e-content (Ministry of Education, Govt. of India, 2017).

3. Exemplary Course Program Rubric (from Blackboard):

The Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric, as outlined by Blackboard (2012), underscores key facets of course development, including design, interaction, collaboration, assessment, and learner support. This rubric is readily accessible online, enabling instructors to assess their courses without incurring any fees. Originally formulated by Blackboard, a prominent learning management system (LMS) provider, this framework serves to commend courses of exceptional quality. Typically employed for the evaluation of pre-existing courses, the Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric can also function within peer review scenarios, facilitating users of the Blackboard platform in showcasing exemplary standards in online course structuring. Furthermore, an online community exists to foster discourse among educators, developers, and instructional designers regarding best practices in course design, with a foundation in the principles outlined by the Blackboard Exemplary Course Program (Blackboard, 2023)

4. Higher Ed Course Design and Rubric (from Quality Matters):

The Quality Matters Framework is a recognised peer review framework that measures quality in blended and online course design and uses the Quality Matters Rubric to examine course quality and provide feedback for improvement to the institution. The inception of Quality Matters was initiated by a select cohort of peers within MarylandOnline, Inc. (MOL) consortium, driven by the imperative to address a prevalent issue across educational institutions: the establishment of robust mechanisms for assessing and assuring course quality. This imperative gained particular significance as institutions embarked upon the development of systems facilitating the reciprocal sharing of online course enrollments among diverse educational entities. Consequently, there emerged a pressing need to devise methodologies ensuring parity in course quality, thereby guaranteeing equitable educational experiences for all students irrespective of the course's origin. In 2003, MarylandOnline, Inc. delineated the framework for the Quality Matters program, envisaging a scalable approach to course quality assurance.

The Quality Matters Rubrics and Standards were designed to assist course developers, educators, academic staff, entire institutions, and principally, students. The General Standards and Specific Review Standards within each Rubric serve as a framework to steer individuals through the process of developing, assessing, and enhancing online and blended courses.

The eight General Standards of this Rubric are: 1. Course Overview and Introduction, 2. Learning Objectives (Competencies), 3. Assessment and Measurement, 4. Instructional Materials, 5. Learning Activities and Learner Interaction, 6. Course Technology, 7. Learner Support and 8. Accessibility and Usability (Quality Matters, 2023).

Achieving these quality benchmarks at or exceeding the 85% threshold is essential for certifying the caliber of the courses. In the realm of online course development, course designers employ this QM rubrics as a tool to facilitate the creation of courses that align with established standards from their inception. Furthermore, these rubrics serve the dual purpose of evaluating the degree to which a given course conforms to said standards, thereby identifying areas necessitating enhancement or refinement.

5. EOCCS (from EFMD):

EOCCS stands for EFMD Online Course Certification System. It is an international course certification system operated by EFMD Global. The EOCCS document sets out the Standards and Criteria to evaluate the quality of online business and/or management-related courses that meet the published EOCCS eligibility criteria.

Though this is meant for evaluation, universities and institutions can use this as quality guidelines for online course design and development.

The standards and the associated criteria are grouped into four chapters covering the different areas. The four chapters are: The Institutional Context, Course Composition, Course Delivery and Operations, Quality Assurance Processes (EFMD Global, 2024).

6. edX Document Resources and MDC (from edX)

edX, the online learning platform by 2U, Inc., traces its origins to a joint venture between Harvard and MIT. Originally conceived as an experiment to democratize education, it now serves as a conduit for learning for over 83 million individuals globally under the umbrella of 2U.

edX has documentation for different types of audiences such as learners, course team, developers, researchers, operators and documentors. However, edX's "MOOC Development Checklist (MDC)", is a rubric that helps institutions and course creators to create high quality courses online.

The MDC is divided into two parts - minimum requirements and optional best practices. edX encourages Course teams to use the MDC in conjunction with their own MOOC development tools. MOOC courses should meet the MDC's minimum requirements prior to being offered on the edx platform (edX, 2016)

7. Guidelines for Quality Assurance (from CommonWealth of Learning)

Recognizing the significance of ensuring the quality of MOOCs and in response to requests from various stakeholders for guidelines on quality assurance and accreditation for MOOCs, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has formulated the Guidelines document in collaboration with numerous experts in the field. Drawing from extensive consultations and surveys, the Guidelines aims to provide guidance to the four primary stakeholders - governments, MOOC providers, learners, and accreditation agencies — on ensuring the quality of MOOCs. It is important to note that this document does not prescribe specific measures, but instead encourages stakeholders to develop their own quality assurance mechanisms after gaining a thorough understanding of MOOCs (CommonWealth of Learning, 2016).

8. Quality Assurance of Online Learning Toolkit (from Australian Government)

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This Guideline (Toolkit) was initially developed in 2017 by the Department of Education and Training, Australian Government. This toolkit emerges in tandem with the surge of online and blended education within higher education across APEC economies in the past decade. Developed collaboratively, it bears the input of diverse stakeholders. In 2016, representatives from government bodies, quality assurance agencies, and higher education institutions across 13 APEC economies convened at the APEC Quality Assurance of Online Learning Workshop to deliberate and enhance the preliminary toolkit. Subsequent validation workshops in Vietnam, Indonesia, and Mexico in 2017 further refined its contents. The insights gathered from these engagements have been pivotal in shaping this Quality Assurance Guidelines document (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, 2019).

Findings

The sample Quality Guidelines were examined and analyzed for the following: Basic Information, Purpose and Contents, Characteristics, Similarity and unique features.

Table 1 provides the basic information about selected Quality Guidelines. Table 2 provides the purpose and Contents of each of the Quality Guidelines. Table 3 describes the characteristics of Quality Guidelines. Table 4 discusses the similarity in most Quality Guidelines.

The following short forms are used for Quality Guidelines:

OEI: OEI Course Design Rubric (from The California Community College)

Swayam: Guidelines for developing Online Courses for SWAYAM (from Ministry of HRD, Government of India)

Blackboard: Exemplary Course Program Rubric (from Blackboard)

QM: Quality Matters Higher Ed Course Design and Rubric

EOCCS: EOCCS Standards and Criteria (from EFMD)

edX MDC: MOOC Development Checklist (from edX)

CW: Guidelines for Quality Assurance (from CommonWealth of Learning)

QA Toolkit: Quality Assurance of Online Learning Toolkit (from Australian Government)

Table 1: Basic information about selected Quality Guidelines

Quality Guidelines	Basic Information
OEI	*Start Year: 2014* *Intended Audience: Instructors and Staff* *Is there a Checklist part of this Guidelines: Yes* *Rating Scale available? Yes (Available),* *Provide Rating Scale if available: Incomplete, Exchange Ready, Additional Exemplary Elements*

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Swayam	*Start Year: 2017* *Intended Audience: National Coordinators, Institutions, Course Faculty and Course Designers* *Is there a Checklist part of this Guidelines: No* *Rating Scale available? No* *Provide Rating Scale if available: Not applicable*
Blackboard	*Start Year: 2000* *Intended Audience: Instructors and Course designers* *Is there a Checklist part of this Guidelines: Yes* *Rating Scale available? Yes (Available),* *Provide Rating Scale if available: Incomplete, Promising, Accomplished, Exemplary*
QM	*Start Year: 2003* *Intended Audience: Faculty, Instructors, Instructional designers, Colleges and Universities* *Is there a Checklist part of this Guidelines: Yes* *Rating Scale available? Yes (Available),* *Provide Rating Scale if available: Important, Very Important, Essential*
EOCCS	*Start Year: 2016* *Intended Audience: Higher Education, Corporate Institutions, and Public Agencies.* *Is there a Checklist part of this Guidelines: Yes* *Rating Scale available? Yes* *Provide Rating Scale if available: Above Standard, Meets Standard, Below Standard*
edX MDC	*Start Year: 2012* *Intended Audience: Course Team* *Is there a Checklist part of this Guidelines: Yes*

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	Rating Scale available? No *Provide Rating Scale if available: Not Applicable*
CW	*Start Year: 2016* *Intended Audience: Governments, accreditation bodies, institutions and learners* *Is there a Checklist part of this Guidelines: Yes* *Rating Scale available? Yes* *Provide Rating Scale if available: Criteria Met: Yes, No, Not Applicable*
QA Toolkit	*Start Year: 2017* *Intended Audience: Institutions and Course teams* *Is there a Checklist part of this Guidelines: Yes* *Rating Scale available? No* *Provide Rating Scale if available: Not Applicable*

Table 2: Purpose and Contents of Quality Guidelines

Quality Guidelines	Purpose	Contents
OEI	*To ensure that all courses offered promote student success and meet existing regulatory and accreditation requirements*	*The rubric is divided into sections. There are four sections: A, B,C and D. Section A addresses Content preparation, Section B addresses Interaction, Section C addresses Assessments and Section D addresses Accessibility*
Swayam	*To ensure that every student benefits from learning material through ICT*	*The guideline comprises Definition, Swayam Board, National Coordinators, Scope, Creation of online courses for Swayam, Notifications, Assessment and Certifications and IPR*

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Blackboard	*To share best practices and rate courses*	*The rubric comprises four major areas: Course Design, Interaction & Collaboration, Assessment, and Learner Support.*
QM	*To Promote and improve the quality of online education and student learning nationally and internationally*	*Eight General Standards*
EOCCS	*It aims to evaluate the quality of any online business and/or management course that has a contemporary perspective and, where of an appropriately high quality, to certify it.*	*EOCCs Framework comprises four major chapters: Institutional context, Course Composition, Course Delivery and Operations, and Quality Assurance*
edX MDC	*To maintain the highest degree of course quality*	*Two parts minimum requirements and optional best practices. The sub-parts include: Course Announcement and Introduction, Course structure, Instructional materials and Assessments, Course Administration and Learner Engagement,*
CW	*It aims to support decision making about the sorts of quality measures that are appropriate in different contexts*	*The Guidelines has been developed to guide the selection of quality metrics by four stakeholder groups: governments, accreditation bodies, institutions and learners. There are two stages for using the guidelines. The first stage involves identifying the purpose(s) of the MOOC from the stakeholders' perspectives. In the second stage, stakeholders are encouraged to reflect on the metrics that will determine whether that purpose has been achieved.*

QA Toolkit	*It aims to stimulate conversations and help guide the development of consistent approaches to the QA of online education at the policy, regulatory and institutional level.*	*The Guidelines (toolkit) comprises the following five elements: Domains, Principles, Research findings, Focus points and Evidence*

Table 3: Characteristics of Quality Guidelines

Quality Guidelines	Components & sub-components	Review	Success criteria	Outcome
OEI	*Six sections and 56 elements*	*Yes, by OEI trained peers*	*Course must display all exchange ready elements to pass*	*Successful courses will be placed on state-wide learning exchange registration*
Swayam	*Four Quadrants*	*Review process exists with AAC, SMEG*	*Not provided. But should follow Section 6, 8 and 9*	*Approved courses can be offered on Swayam*
Blackboard	*Four categories, 17 sub-categories, 63 elements*	*Yes, by ECP experts*	*Scores are weighted, with exemplary courses earning 5–6*	*Recognition, institution award presentation*
QM	*Eight general standards and 43 specific review standards*	*Yes, by QM certified peer reviewers or master reviewers*	*Course must rate "yes" on all 14 of the "essential" standards, & 85% overall*	*Earn QM recognition*

EOCCS	*Four Chapters and Assessment criteria includes key areas in each Chapter. Total 21 key areas*	*Through a Review panel meeting. The Panel will refer to a document called the EOCCS Quality Profile*	*Should meet the assessment criteria*	*Internationally recognized certification, Continuous improvement, Community and Peer-to-peer learning*
edX MDC	*Document Resources available for eight audiences. The MDC has two parts. Each part has four sub-parts with multiple items*	*Not provided*	*Should meet the MDC's minimum requirements prior to being offered*	*Courses offered only if minimum requirements are met.*
CW	*Four major stakeholders. Checklist comprises eight major components.*	*Not provided*	*Should follow the Checklist for MOOC Accreditation*	*Helps in achieving High quality MOOCs.*
QA Toolkit	*Three major areas and Nine Domains*	*Not provided*	*Should follow the Checklist provided under Focus Points*	*Provides an approach to the quality assurance of each domain that is specific to online or blended education*

Table 4: Common Elements in Quality Guidelines

Elements in Quality Guidelines	*OEI*	*Swayam*	*Blackboard*	*QM*	*EOCCS*	*edX MDC*	*CW*	*QA Toolkit*

Intro or Course Overview	*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*
Course / Learning Objectives	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*
Easy Course Navigation	*No*	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*
Learner Engagement using Technology	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Student-to-Student Interaction (Peer Learning)	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Learning Outcomes	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Assessments align with Objectives / Outcomes	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Assessment Rubrics	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*	*Yes*
Accessibility/ Accommodation for Disabilities	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Technical / Operations Support	*Yes*	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*

Observations and Interpretation

The Quality Guidelines examined and analyzed provided various insights.

First, the target audience and purpose varied from guideline to guideline, although the overall intention is common which is to help institutions and course teams to design & develop effective online courses & programs and promote best practices in online learning. While some guidelines (such as edX MDC) catered to just one or two groups, other guidelines (such as Swayam, EOCCS & CW) catered to a wide variety of audiences.

Second, from this study, it is clear that these guidelines differ in all three aspects: 1) length, 2) format and 3) contents. Some guidelines comprised just a checklist with one or two pages, while other guidelines ran into multiple pages. On average the guidelines document had approximately 15 pages. While some quality guidelines provided comprehensive instructions, some other guidelines were restricted to only checklists, such as edX MDC (although there were other documents in their website, but those are not necessarily meant for guidelines). Few Guidelines such as the QA toolkit provided clear description with figures and examples. This was not observed in other guidelines such as Swayam or OEI. Quality Guidelines such as Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric, provided a lot of clarity on how to award points for every item in the category. This feature was missing in many guidelines.

Third point is about the scope, expected outcome and usage of these guidelines. Guidelines such as CommonWealth Guidelines stated the scope and usage explicitly. Such explicit mentions were missing in a few guidelines. The stakeholder may not fully appreciate the guideline if the scope is not clearly stated in the guidelines.

Conclusion

The Quality Guidelines examined are created with the intention to promote best practices in online course design. Designing and developing an online course without using any Guidelines is like building a house without safety and building codes (Baldwin, et al, 2018). Though such courses built without using any quality guidelines are possible, it may create problems or concerns for some of the important stakeholders. Evaluation of online course design may provide validation and continual improvement for stakeholders (Baldwin, et al, 2018). Courses of superior quality are inclined to enhance user satisfaction and foster superior learning outcomes. Studies suggest that adhering to standards and undergoing peer review are instrumental in promoting this quality (Chao et al. 2006; Feldman et al. 2000).

These guidelines offer institutions, course designers / course teams a systematic and organized way to discuss, plan, design, develop and run online courses and programs. The guidelines examined differed in almost all areas such as purpose, intended audience, scope, length, format and contents.

The information from this study can help inform instructional designers, instructors of online courses, course teams, and operations teams in terms of selecting and using Quality Guidelines for improving online course quality.

Future research can focus on comprehensive examination of guidelines from different countries. The future research can also be conducted on how easy or difficult to use these guidelines and also the cost-benefit analysis of using these guidelines.

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