

Faculty Development: An Analysis of Current and Effective Training Strategies for Preparing Faculty to Teach Online

Dr. Karen Lackey

University of Northwestern Ohio

klackey@unoh.edu

Abstract

This study identifies how higher education institutions are preparing their faculty to teach online using a qualitative methodology. Six participants, three experienced and three non-experienced online faculty members, were purposely selected and interviewed. Participants were asked questions regarding their preparation experiences, the activities they felt were most beneficial, and areas in which they would like further development. The findings revealed that faculty found collaborating with colleagues, more one-on-one assistance with university personnel, and online courses and resources that offer both technical and pedagogical training to be the most beneficial to preparing them to teach online. The results of the study offer relevant information to redesign preparation activities that will better prepare faculty to teach online as well as encourage the adoption of online teaching.

Introduction

Over the last 20 years, online learning has become a common method of learning as well as a great alternative for providing nontraditional learners with a quality education. Though online learning has changed dramatically over the years, the methods with which faculty are prepared to teach online have not. Literature suggests there has been little improvement over the last 10 years in increasing the instructional and technical training and support needed by faculty to teach online successfully. Faculty members are transitioning into new foreign roles, ill-equipped with the technical knowledge to manage the course and the instructional skills to meet the needs of the online learner. Research suggests campus administration still do not understand the level of time and commitment teaching online requires of a faculty member, therefore hindering the level of support and resources allocated to such training efforts.

The literature also suggests there is still a gap in the training and quality of training being offered to faculty as they prepare to teach online. Consequently, a push for more frequent and enhanced training is necessary to prepare faculty to transition into the online environment with the same level of confidence they have as being a content expert in the traditional classroom. This study discovered the types of training currently being offered and how faculty perceived the training's effectiveness in an effort to add to the current literature of best practices for preparing faculty to teach online.

Research Questions

In this study, the question of how higher education institutions can better prepare faculty to teach online was addressed. Specifically, the study answered the following question:

1. How can higher education institutions better prepare faculty to teach online?
 1. In what ways are faculty being prepared to teach online through faculty development programs?
 2. What professional development activities do faculty find to be most effective in preparing them to teach online?
 3. In what areas do faculty perceive they need further preparation to enhance their online teaching experiences?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how higher education institutions can better prepare their faculty members to teach online. Specifically looking at training efforts, both informal and formal, to determine the overall effectiveness of each activity as well as areas of improvement needed. The results of the study provide administrative personnel with appropriate feedback on what training is desired and needed by current faculty. In addition, the study provides the foundation for a faculty development program that institutions should implement to support their online educators.

Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study was to gain a better understanding of how higher education institutions are preparing their faculty members to teach online courses as outlined by the Lewis (2007) study. Adjustments to enhance the study were made from the original work of Lewis. Specifically, the qualitative approach of phenomenology was used as the methodology to enhance the validity of the study compared to the general qualitative approach used by Lewis. In addition, the limitations in the Lewis study of four-year public institutions with online programs being used as the research sites was removed to create transferability of the study as well as meet the population of this study. Additionally, since the objective was to review the overall adequacy of training efforts in place at higher education institutions, no limitations were necessary in terms of focusing on private/public two-year and four-year institutions. Also, removing the limitations of only fully online courses used in the Lewis study to incorporating all online learning courses (i.e. web-enhanced, blended, and online) better served the sample population of traditional universities in this study.

Methodology

The research methods used in this study were an expansion of Lewis' (2007) study, which identified training methods used by higher education institutions and their effectiveness. This study sought to identify the current training methods being used in higher education institutions and changes in faculty's perceptions of effective training compared to those outlined in the Lewis study. Furthermore, the study aimed to gain a better understanding of the perspectives and behaviors of the online educator; therefore, the qualitative research of phenomenology was used. More specifically, the qualitative research design of phenomenology aims to capture how a person perceives, describes, feels about, and judges a phenomenon, which was important in understanding the essence of each participant's experience, as well as identifying any shared experiences (Patton, 2002). Consequently, phenomenology provided the lived experience from participants needed in this study to explain how each was prepared to teach online. A different population was identified; however, to maintain the validity of the study, the instrument and methodology used in the Lewis study was duplicated.

Research Locations

Higher education institutions located in northwest Ohio were selected for this study, each offering online courses. The locations were selected based on geographical convenience and ease of network connections at area academic institutions. Of the 19 colleges and universities in northwest Ohio, three institutions with the most friendly research approval process were purposely chosen. To protect the names of the institutions they will be identified as Northwest Ohio Institution-1 (NWOI-1) through Northwest Ohio Institution-3 (NWOI-3).

Northwest Ohio Institution-1 is a small, private university with an estimated 3,900 students enrolled for the 2010-11 academic year. The institution offers associate, bachelor, master's, and doctorate degrees in over 60 disciplines, with online and blended courses being utilized to support five online programs. Northwest Ohio Institution-2 is a small private university with fewer than 3,500 students enrolled. The institution offers on-campus and online associate, bachelor, and master's degrees in art, business, and criminal justice. Online courses support the online bachelor and master's programs in all three areas. Northwest Ohio Institution-3 is a small community college with over 4,100 students enrolled in certificate and associate degree programs in allied health, arts, business, engineering, and nursing. The college does not have any online programs, but does offer selected online courses and encourages faculty to offer web-enhanced courses when applicable.

Participant Criteria

In a qualitative study, the sample population is usually small, ranging from 3 to 20 people, as participants are purposely selected based on their experience with the phenomenon of interest and willingness to participate in the study (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). In this study, a total of six participants, two participants from each location, were selected with the limitation that each must currently teach an online course. Requirements for online instruction are based on Allen and Seaman's (2010) definition of online instruction, which consists of web-enhanced, blended/hybrid, and online. No other selection criteria were required for this study. One participant was experienced at teaching online courses with three or more years of experience. The other participant was non-experienced with less than two years of experience teaching online courses.

Data Collection

The data collection method of the study was semi-structured in-depth interviews with a series of open-ended predetermined questions where six participants from three different colleges located in northwest Ohio were interviewed. The questions were open-ended to facilitate casual conversations and in-depth responses. Additionally, the semi-structured interview acted as a guide to return to if the conversation steered away from the topic at hand (Dilley, 2000). The informal conversation of a semi-structured interview also allowed participants to offer additional information that contributed to the understanding of their experiences without limits or restrictions.

Instrument

The interview protocol questions from the Lewis (2007) study were used when interviewing the six participants. The interview questions in the study were organized into four sections: (1) participant background information, (2) preparing faculty to teach online, (3) additional assistance from the institution needed, and (4) additional comments from faculty about their training experience. The interview protocol of the Lewis study was pilot tested by two faculty members at different participating research sites as well as approved by the degree-granting dissertation committee, establishing the validity of content, feasibility, reliability, and appropriateness of the instrument. Gay,

Mills, and Airasian (2006) explained that content validity is established by the instrument being reviewed by experts in the field who have deemed the content appropriate for the intent of the study. Additionally, face validity of the interview protocol was established through careful review of the content to ensure the instrument measured what it claimed to measure (Isaac & Michael, 1997).

Analysis of Data

After conducting the interviews, each session was labeled and transcribed for easy analysis. Participants' names, position titles, and personal identifiers were given pseudonyms or concealed in the transcripts to ensure anonymity. After the tapes had been transcribed, each was listened to and transcripts were read through twice to ensure accuracy of transcribed data. Then through the process of triangulation, the hand-written notes were checked against the transcripts for accuracy (Creswell, 2003). Once finalized the transcripts were then printed, organized by institution and bound in a folder in preparation for analysis.

Next, each transcript was read through to identify any emerging themes from the literature review and the interview (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). Each transcript was also examined for patterns or key words identified by the participants. All comments were written in the margins of the transcripts. To ensure significant information and accuracy of that information had been captured, the transcripts were read through a second time. The comments and themes of each participant's transcript were then organized into smaller, more manageable classifications for easy comparison (Patton, 2002). Once the data was sorted, patterns within each participant's interview were identified to formulate a list of emerging themes. Two or more participants identifying the same information was classified as an emerging theme. After the transcripts were examined for themes, each was coded based on the appropriate interview question code. The data and themes from the transcripts were then used to answer the research questions as well as compare how experienced and non-experienced faculty perceived their experiences in being prepared to teach online. Whenever possible, rich, thick descriptions were used when reporting the findings to create transferability so readers could share in each experience as well as validate the findings of the study (Creswell, 1998).

Findings

A total of six faculty members were interviewed, two from each location (see Table 1). Three were females and three were males with an average of four years of experience teaching online. Participants taught in the disciplines of Business, English, Law, Psychology, and Radiology with an average of two online courses per semester. Each participant currently teaches online courses in conjunction with their traditional courses; however, fewer than half started teaching online voluntarily. Collectively, the participants have a total of 42 years of experience teaching traditional courses prior to teaching online courses, with 31 of the years belonging to the non-experienced faculty. Among the faculty interviewed, each participated in some type of formal and informal training activity to prepare to teach online. In the last six months, half of the participants have engaged in some type of voluntary training to enhance their online teaching skills, of which, only one training addressed pedagogy. Of the faculty interviewed, few expressed major challenges in transitioning into the online environment outside of learning the technology and not having face-to-face interaction with the students.

Table 1

Overview of Participants' Teaching Experience and Content Area of Expertise

| Participants | Institution Identifier | Primary Area of Teaching | #of Yrs Teaching Online | # of Yrs Teaching Traditional Prior to Online | # of Courses Currently Teaching |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Experienced | | | | | |
| David Young | NWOI-1 | Business | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| Kim Baker | NWOI-2 | English | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| Trevor Lucas | NWOI-3 | Psychology | 8 | 9 | 4 |
| Non-experienced | | | | | |
| Peter Chung | NWOI-1 | Law | <1 | 20 | 1 |
| Sara Thomas | NWOI-2 | English | 1 | 8 | 3 |
| Christy Garner | NWOI-3 | Radiology | 2 | 3 | 2 |

Note. Pseudonyms were given to protect the participants' identities.

Table 1 shows the participants and their categorization of experienced or non-experienced, their overall years teaching online and traditional courses, their primary area of teaching, and the number of online courses they are currently teaching. A brief background of each participant's preparation experience to teach online will be addressed in the following section.

David Young

David Young teaches synchronous fully online graduate business courses in conjunction with web-enhanced traditional courses. When he first began teaching online, it was a last-minute decision by campus administration and little time was given to prepare. David was actually paired up with a colleague to team-teach his first online course. The assistance he received from his colleague was short-lived, and the rest of the semester was what David called a "baptism by fire." The lack of assistance forced David to seek out help through the campus Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), whose personnel offered one-on-one training sessions as well as half-day face-to-face and online self-guided courses. As the institution's online programs grew, the CTL offered an online certification course, which David voluntarily completed and received monetary compensation.

Kim Baker

Kim Baker teaches fully online asynchronous English courses in conjunction with web-enhanced traditional courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Kim started teaching seated and hybrid classes at the same time in an adjunct capacity while working as a campus webmaster. Her job experience as a webmaster was a major contributing factor in her not seeking out nor being required to take training to teach online. If Kim needed help, she would seek out help from the campus IT personnel or her department chair. As an adjunct, Kim did participate in a platform training workshop before accepting a full-time teaching position at a different university. Since being in her new position, Kim has received no training, nor does she know of any being offered.

Trevor Lucas

Trevor Lucas teaches fully online asynchronous Psychology courses and web-enhanced traditional undergraduate courses in his full-time position in conjunction with working as an adjunct at a fully online university. Trevor did not participate in any training to prepare him to teach online in his

full-time position but was put through a three-phase formal development training program over a period of three years in his adjunct position. Over the years in his full-time position, Trevor has engaged in face-to-face basic platform training workshops to offset the changes in learning platforms as well as professional development courses that focus on best practices to teach online.

Peter Chung

Peter Chung is a veteran faculty member with the most teaching experience among all the participants; however, he has the least experience in teaching online. His decision to start teaching online was voluntary however it was driven from a concern of being left behind if his skill set did not include the ability to teach online. At the time of the interview, Peter had recently completed an online certification course offered by the campus center for teaching and learning (CTL) to prepare him to teach online. Since the certification course, Peter has also utilized the CTL for follow-up questions and self-guided courses as well as referenced the certification course for how-to videos.

Sara Thomas

Sara Thomas teaches web-enhanced seated graduate and undergraduate English courses. Four years ago, Sara taught a fully online course at the same campus at which she currently teaches; however, the experience discouraged her from teaching online since. Sara received no formal training to teach online nor was the decision voluntary. Given a blank course shell and a few weeks to prepare, Sara relied heavily on the help of colleagues. Over the years, since she taught that online course, Sara has engaged in very basic platform training and utilized the course management system to enhance her seated courses; however, training opportunities on campus have been very limited.

Christy Garner

Christy Garner teaches both seated and blended Radiology courses as part of a consortium agreement with local schools. The consortium was a last-minute venture that was set in place in less than six months, so her preparation was limited and very much trial-and-error. In addition, the structure of the courses require Christy to use additional technical equipment in her seated lectures outside of the learning platform, like a document camera, to ensure her blended students are able to review the same material as the live lecture is being recorded. Christy and her colleagues relied heavily on each other and the campus center for distance education as they transitioned into offering their program blended. Christy has since engaged in training opportunities that focus on the pedagogy of teaching online as well as additional basic platform training.

Research Questions Findings

The interview protocol for this study was designed to answer the aforementioned research questions of the study. In the following section, the findings from those questions are presented using rich thick description from the interviews, when possible, to create transferability.

Research Question 1: In what ways are faculty being prepared to teach online through faculty development programs?

The interviews with the six participants revealed that no one engaged in any formal faculty development program to prepare them to teach online for the first time but sought out formal and informal assistance through workshops, online training courses and resources, one-on-one assistance,

and colleagues during and after their first online experience. Despite the voluntary participation in the aforementioned preparation activities, some faculty felt as though they still did not receive actual preparation to teach online. Their statements will be discussed later.

Workshops. All of the participants indicated that, at some point, they participated in a workshop that taught them the basics of the learning platform at their institution. In fact, many of the participants indicated they took the basic platform training years before teaching their first online class. David, Trevor, Sara, and Christy all expressed that they had completed platform training long before teaching their first fully online course as they used the course management systems to enhance their seated courses. Each indicated the platform training they participated in was a face-to-face half-day meeting that dealt more with technical skills than pedagogy or course management strategies.

When asked what her platform training workshop entailed, Christy stated “We learned how to, for instance, set up the grade book, upload documents, add any type of data we wanted on there, such as course announcements and our contact information. We learned how to [upload] videos” Trevor also participated in a technology-focused platform training workshop, stating he learned about PowerPoint presentations, “...not only in terms of layout but how to translate those into different types of files.” He also expressed a new understanding of html as a result of his training. “I have learned more about html code than I ever thought I would so I know how to go and make things bold and italicized.” David also mentioned participating in Blackboard-specific workshops through the campus CTL. He recalls attending half-day workshops on how to setup a grade book and one on setting up a dropbox for assignments. The workshops David attended were outside of the platform certification course he later participated in online.

Online Training Courses and Resources. Most participants indicated taking an online training course or referencing online resources at some point in their preparation, whether to enhance their current skills or learn a new platform. Peter recalled referencing several online how-to videos embedded in his platform training course as well as a self-guided course offered by the university’s CTL to give him a quick understanding in a specific area of concern. David also indicated participating in some online self-guided courses offered by the CTL at his university.

David and Peter were also among the participants who completed platform training online, covering technical skills as well as some pedagogy in a 12-week course. When asked specifically what he learned from the training from a pedagogical standpoint, Peter indicated “tying all of your assignments to your learning outcomes. Determining what your learning outcomes are, having them clearly stated, and then having individual modules and assignments and so forth directly geared and assessed through your learning outcomes.” In addition to technical and pedagogical training, Peter and David’s platform training offered some guidance on university policies and logistical issues, such as communication and course procedures.

Trevor and Carrie also participated in an online course, but theirs was geared to enhance their skills for online teaching. The course was a four-week professional development course offered by the campus center for distance education on best practices for teaching online. The course focused on the pedagogy of online learning as well as the facilitator’s role in the process. When asked about the course in terms of specific pedagogy training, Christy stated she learned the importance of communication and making sure the students do not feel lost. “It is important to keep the students from feeling like they are just out there and nobody is responding to them.” The course also incorporated some of the logistics issues of course management strategies and administrative issues in online teaching as well as university policies that were missing in the face-to-face platform training.

In addition to taking the online best practices course, Trevor also completed a formal three-phase professional development program as an adjunct with his online institution. The first course was five weeks long and offered as an introductory training during his first year of employment. The course focused on platform training, university expectations, and how to engage the students through threaded discussion. When asked specifically about what he learned during this training, Trevor stated:

How to maneuver [in the platform] in terms of just the course management. But then the most important piece of that was the standards that they had. And it was very mapped out in real specific ways about expectations of faculty in terms of how many times you log on per week, how many responses you make in discussion post, the turnaround time on graded material so all of those mechanics on the teaching process.

After completing two years of employment, he was put through the second phase five-week training course that revisited some of the principles from the first training and then built upon them while adding some new course management strategies and methods for improving student feedback. Trevor further commented the third and final training course came after three years of employment and revisited the feedback strategies from the second training as well as added a “level of depth [to] all of those strategies.” Overall when asked about the major pedagogical takeaways from all of the training sessions, Trevor stated:

I think the one that probably stands out to me the absolute most is the having presence in the virtual classroom, meaning the students feel that you are there and that you have a social presence. You do that through a number of mechanisms, you log in at least every other day but I try to log in everyday, you respond to emails even if it's just informational, you respond by saying thank you for letting me know or thank you for sending that in or whatever. Having this sense of presence virtually, I think is critical and probably the best basic thing anyone teaching online can do.

One-on-one Assistance. Most of the participants (four out of six) sought out one-on-one assistance from university personnel during and after their first online teaching experience. David, Peter, and Christy all found solace in the their respective universities' centers for distance education personnel. Each expressed utilizing the centers for specific technical assistance such as maneuvering in and operating the course management system. David recalled being able to call the center and say, “I need some help on this and this, can we set up a time to meet. And then you go over and they will have some information ready for you and then train you.” He considered the personalized assistance like targeted workshops. Christy recalls asking the center's instructional designer for help on making her assignments more meaningful. “A lot of times I didn't know how to ... put [an] online assignments and make them meaningful. He really helped me do that and I was able to meet my objectives and ... [make] a good meaningful assignment.”

Kim also sought out one-on-one assistance during her first online teaching experience through her department chair and the university IT department. Kim's department chair offered her assistance with a brief overview of the course shell. She remembers receiving most of her help from the campus IT. “I did go to the IT guy that was in charge of Blackboard a number of times to find out how to do things.” Because of her technology background as a webmaster, Kim felt a kinship with the IT person and received additional tech resources from this individual, such as access to documents and a thumb drive full of how-to resources. When asked if she received any pedagogical training, guidance on course management strategies, or university policies from her department chair or the IT person, Kim

indicated she had not received any assistance from either.

Colleagues. Most of the participants indicated they sought out assistance from their colleagues at some point during their preparation to teach online. The assistance the participants received seemed to be a mix of technical and pedagogical guidance before, during, and after their first online teaching experience. Trevor recalls early on in his online teaching experience seeking out a colleague's assistance in one of his online course, stating:

I noticed that in our discussion boards students didn't participate very much when they posted and it felt so flat, it felt so not interactive and someone said "well do you have them respond to each other?" Well no I don't force them to do that and once I enforced them to do that the board came alive you know and I thought wow that was simple enough.

Trevor expressed the need to continue seeking out colleagues' help even after having several years of teaching online under his belt. "It becomes that you find people of like minds so to speak and then you bat ideas around or you see something that works then you think, 'hey I will have to try that.'"

Sara's, Christy's, and David's experiences were totally different from Trevor's. David was partnered with a colleague to team-teach his first online course and received hardly any assistance from his colleague. David recalls, "If I needed to know something I would go down and ask him a few questions but the meetings were very short. He was a pretty independent fella and didn't share a lot of information to be honest with you." As a result, David knew he would have to seek outside assistance if he was going to learn how to teach the online class. David admitted, "In a way, I guess he was doing me a favor because it forced me to go out and get training."

In Sara's and Christy's cases, they received the bulk of their training through their colleagues. Armed with a blank shell and no experience, Sara relied heavily on her veteran colleagues to mentor her during her first online course. She recalls looking over a lot of syllabi and being added as a teaching assistant to some of her colleagues' courses to see how they were setting theirs up before she began to build her own course. Sara remembers the most important thing her colleagues taught her when teaching online is to have regular contact with students. "Being involved in the discussion threads and how you set up and, you know, really moving those along and encouraging people to ... participate [in] regularly and meaningfully."

Sara also indicated receiving logistical, technical, and conceptual help from her colleagues. Specifically, she recalled having a lot of conversations with colleagues about "the idea that you are not just duplicating what you do in the classroom...[and] about getting interaction going and keeping an appropriate tone to that interaction and making standards of grammar." When asked specifically about course management and university policies, Sara stated she had conversations with colleagues about conflict management and communication issues but none about university policies. She described when she first taught online as the Wild West. "Everybody was doing their own thing in online classes and there was not much consistency from class to class, program to program." Sara did indicate though that in the last three years the university has made strides to "codify some policies and procedures for online teaching."

In Christy's case, she collaborated with the colleagues within her department in informal meetings about delivery methods, technology, schedules, and testing procedures. When recalling her discussion with her colleagues, she stated:

We would actually have meetings set up where we would bring our ideas to the table and bring our questions to the table and go through and work them out. And a lot of times we would have someone there who was familiar with the equipment... Of course, our dean was in on the meetings; he is the one that started the consortium project. So he would be in there to kind of tell us his vision of where he wanted us to go with this.

When asked if pedagogy was discussed in these meetings and between her colleagues, she indicated there was nothing discussed. The same was true of university policies. However, Christy recalled some course room procedures were discussed such as communication issues and how to resolve conflicts.

No Preparation. Even though all of the participants participated in some type of formal and informal training activity; Kim, Sara, and Christy still felt as though they received no preparation. In particular, Sara and Christy felt as though they were thrown into teaching online without any support or training. When specifically asked, “did you participate in any training that prepared you to teach online,” both responded “no.” Kim also responded “no” but her lack of preparation was more self-imposed as her job experience prepared her enough to teach online with little technical training or preparation. According to Kim, she “had worked as a supporter of people that were teaching online three years before I started teaching... they [faculty] would email me and said I need to do this and I would figure out how to do that for them.” She indicated this real life experience gave her a bird’s eye view of teaching online. Coupled with her technology background, this made any university-offered technical training opportunity a waste of time.

Research Question 2: What professional development activities do faculty find to be most effective in preparing them to teach online?

As previously discussed, the participants engaged in preparation activities such as workshops and online classes and resources, as well as sought out one-on-one assistance from university personnel and colleagues at some point while teaching online. All of the participants found aspects of the preparation activities and assistance beneficial but felt some parts of the training were less relevant. When asked, “what did you find most beneficial about the training you received?” Peter recalled his experience in his online certification course:

The training was actually very good. Because not only were there assignments but each one of the assignments were progressive in a sense that they would teach you the basics first. Like ok what's a module, how to do up a module, how to give a title to your module, how to create an introduction page. But then one of the best things was that there were videos for how to specifically create each one of those. So as you watch each one of the videos it would show you were to point and click. And then they also included reading information so that you could go through and you could read the literature about modules, what people thought about modules, ways to create modules, weaknesses and strengths so on and so forth. So I think it was pretty good both conceptually and in the way that it was organized. But also it was very much user friendly in the sense that you had videos that showed you how to point and click and how to create.

Trevor liked learning the “technical aspects of the course management system” in his platform training as it gave him the confidence he needed to maneuver in the course. He also found the philosophical reasons behind the discussion boards valuable from his formal training as an adjunct as it allowed him

to better understand and appreciate the tools available to mimic that in-class discussion in traditional courses.

All of the participants felt the training in which they participated held some value to their preparation to teach online; however, some felt aspects of the training activities were irrelevant. For example, Trevor indicated he felt learning some of the administrative tasks in the platform training was less relevant and took away from focusing on teaching. He stated:

You know I don't want to be the technician behind all that I want to be to still focus on the teaching aspect of it. Sometimes I think the technology aspect of it can get in the way, we have gotten better over time but we are not teaching technology... we are teaching our content ... we happen to use technology to facilitate it.

Peter also felt some aspects of his online certification training was not beneficial. He explained:

I guess as a beginning instructor some of the people that were presenting articles that we were required to read, some of it was clearly for the advanced person who had been teaching for 6 or 7 years. They would talk about defects or problems that they would have but basically they were referring to systems that we did not have or did not know how to use yet. So I think some of the literature was over our heads in the sense that maybe it really wasn't geared for the beginner it was geared for the veteran, so a person who had been teaching online for the last 10 years might have found some interest in that. But even in some of those contexts ... they were articles written from all kinds of foundations, for example 4-year institutions, 2-year institutions, [and] high schools. Some of the environments were completely foreign to what we would teach in and some of the problems that they were referring to were also foreign to anything we would encounter.

David, Kim, and Sara also echoed Peter's sentiments of an imbalance in beginner and veteran material presented in various workshops, both online and seated, as they were either too basic or over their heads. David recalled attending a few "high-end" workshops that he didn't get anything out of, where Kim indicated not attending certain workshops because they were too basic.

Although most participants found parts of the platform training useful, Sara described hers as generic and "it wasn't useful." She found it more useful to "just ask a colleague when I wanted to do a specific thing." Trevor had the same feelings when it came to anything that was a printed document. When specifically asked if it was a manual and would he reference it at a later date after training he indicated "no," he would go ask a colleague first. Peter also indicated some of the printed resources he received during his certification course were not as useful as he had hoped as they "repeated the same concepts over and over again."

Most Beneficial Preparation. In addition to assessing the preparation activities, the participants identified the types of activities they found to be most beneficial in preparing them to teach online. Overall participants found one-on-one assistance from university personnel and colleagues to be the most beneficial with additional positive attitudes towards personal experiences and online courses and resources.

One-on-one Assistance. Four out of six faculty felt one-on-one assistance through their universities' CTL personnel or instructional designer was the most beneficial to assisting them in teaching online. Both Peter and David expressed having the immediate assistance of a "live" person was the most

valuable to them. Specifically, David liked being able to ask a lot of questions, "...then after I left I would try to implement it and if I had problems I could just make a phone call and within a couple minutes they could get me back on track." Kim expressed having the one-on-one assistance from an IT person and her department chairs was the best assistance she could have received as it gave her immediate answers to her specific questions. "I think the [department chair]...gave me an overall impression ... how the course works and these are the kind of students [and issues] you can expect to have... So that was very helpful [as] she had lots of experience." Christy also expressed the one-on-one assistance as the most beneficial in preparing her to teach online. She specifically sought out the campus instructional designer to help her enhance her online assignments and coach her on the best practices for online teaching.

Colleagues. Although most of the participants indicated seeking out the help of their colleagues, only Trevor and Sara found their assistance to be the most beneficial in preparing them to teach online. When asked about what he liked about the assistance from colleagues, Trevor stated:

I think formalized training weighs upon the foundation and getting started. But it is not until the moment that you are in the middle of doing something or something goes wrong that you got questions. That colleague's support or that person you're talking to in the hallways that says here you know you can try this or do that, that is really invaluable to me and probably the best part of it. I am a big fan of trying to be around people that inspire you and I think that is key to that. It is just how I learn I think.

Sara also expressed her belief in collaboration with colleagues, "I'm a big believer in collaboration so I think that conversations with colleagues are going to be potentially as productive as formal training sessions sometimes anyway."

Additional Positive Assistance. Even though Christy and Peter cited one-on-one assistance as the most beneficial activity in preparing them to teach online, they also had positive feedback for online courses and resources. Christy found the online best practices course offered by the campus instructional designer to be really helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of the pedagogy of teaching online. Peter found the online videos and resources embedded in his certificate training course beneficial to reference as he prepared his online course. He stated "having recourse to all the assignments and all the modules so you could go back and you could relearn something in case you forgot it" was very beneficial to his preparation. Kim also felt outside of her one-on-one assistance from her department chair and IT person, her own experience as a webmaster aided in her preparation to teach online. She recalls:

The questions I got as being webmaster ... gave me some ideas as of what people were doing in their online classes and things that they perceived that they needed help with, which could range from how to have good threaded discussions, how to incorporate these online chats, or conference calls.

Increased Areas of Support Needed. Participants were asked what areas of support they felt would have enhanced their online teaching experience and an overwhelming five out of six indicated opportunities to collaborate with colleagues. Participants also felt having more pedagogical training and access to an instructional designer would have helped them when teaching online, as well as more personnel in the distance education centers and administrative help within their courses.

Collaborate with Colleagues. The majority of the participants felt collaborating with colleagues would have been an area of support that would have enhanced their online teaching experience. In

particular, David felt “it would be beneficial if faculty could get together occasionally and talk about what's working online.” Specifically he expressed wanting to see “some of the things they [colleagues] have done that the students have really responded favorably.” David suggested having “a forum set up where teachers could get together and share.” Kim expressed the desire to collaborate with other colleagues to gain examples of what they were doing online. For example, she would have liked to have seen “other instructors’ shells or tests or discussion thread questions, just as kind of examples.”

Christy also expressed the desire to meet with her colleagues in an informal setting to discuss some of the things they are doing in their online classes, she stated:

Get the colleagues together ... and just talk about what you're doing in online learning and just by talking to everybody else you get different ideas. Everybody's got different ideas, different theories, different ways of doing things. For instance, I know XXXX is using a Wiki for one of their projects you know I would like to see how that Wiki works and what they're using it for and what objectives they are meeting with that Wiki. We hear things through the grapevine but I have never flat-out seen some of these projects that people are working on.

Christy also expressed the desire to collaborate with faculty from other institutions who have years of experience teaching online. Sara and Trevor also articulated the same desire. Sara stated:

I would love for ... somebody who ...has a lot of experience with different kinds of components of different online courses; they would do presentations for faculty. Somebody who has a lot of expertise showed you how that can be done or the different options you have for showing that in an online environment. So I would like to see training that is targeted ... towards specific things like group collaborations, like discussion threads, like Elluminate or class meetings, those kind of things.

Trevor also commented, “it would be neat to have ...visiting faculty” come to campus to facilitate some training sessions. He added that the training should be conducted on campus so that the faculty would be learning together and not “sitting isolated from each other.”

More Pedagogy Training. Kim and Trevor felt being exposed to more pedagogy training that incorporated the online environment. (i.e. engaging students, matching learning objectives, etc) would have enhanced their online teaching experience. Kim expressed it would have been nice to receive training on how to engage the students online to “ask questions and really interact to with the material you are bringing to them.”

Trevor would have also liked more pedagogical guidance on effective ways to match learning objectives for his seated and online courses. He questioned, “how am I meeting them in a traditional way and how will I meet them in a non-traditional way, you know, online?” Trevor pointed out that, “in the end when a course shows up on a transcript it will be the same ... whether it be done online or done traditional face-to-face. So therefore, it should meet all of the same objectives.”

Access to Instructional Designer. Christy felt having an instructional designer in place during the development of the blended program would have been beneficial in providing critical pedagogical training to ensure a dynamic learning environment for the distance students. Trevor also felt having access to instructional designers who “...understand current trends in online learning and have their finger(s) on that pulse” would have been really beneficial in preparing him to teach online. He

expressed the idea of being a content expert does not always allow for the research necessary to keep up with pedagogical best practices.

More Administrative Support. Peter and Kim felt additional support in terms of personnel and administrative tasks would have been beneficial. Peter stated:

I think our technology center needs more personnel. They are good about getting back with you but they rarely can get back in touch with you right away, you know. And there are some times you need someone to get back in touch with you right now but because they are stretched so thin [they can't get back right away].

Peter also expressed the need for some of the CTL personnel to be more friendly and patient when dealing with beginner faculty. Kim also felt some administrative help in her course would have been helpful. She indicated:

I am not really a YouTube fan or a guru, but there is a lot of stuff out there on the web that if you can find it and link it, is very useful. So somebody that [*sic*] could maybe help with that or even just scan documents. That's the kind of ... assistance [that] would [have] been most helpful.

Personal Changes in Preparation. In addition to mentioning areas of support that would have enhanced their online teaching experiences, the faculty also discussed personal changes they would have made in their preparation to teach online. Trevor was very candid in his response by saying, "Did it earlier, [adopting online learning]!" He felt as though his slow entry into the online environment cost him valuable knowledge when it comes to some of the technology used today, like web 2.0. He stated, "so I think if [there is] anything I would do differently, ... [I would] have gotten onto that idea of collecting that data [technology used] earlier on and then sorting it out." David shared a similar desire to gain more technical knowledge prior to teaching. He expressed that "it would have been, I think, beneficial to have the training prior to teaching instead of teaching by trial and error, then going to get the training, so more pre-training." Peter on the other hand would have prepared with a partner. He expressed a feeling of isolation when he was preparing and would have benefited from paring up with someone to share confer with. He suggested:

One of the problems with online teaching is that you feel kind of isolated. It's just like you and the computer out there. At least for the learning and preparation stage, considering that there were a number of us already on campus doing the same thing, maybe there would have been a way we could have partnered together and learned with someone else.

The rest of the participants expressed a stronger desire to gain more pedagogical understanding and preparation before teaching online. Kim expressed she would have learned how to write exams and quizzes in a more meaningful way that "developed learning" and forced the students to think critically versus selecting multiple choice answers. Christy also felt she would have liked to have been better prepared in making her assignment better match up to her learning objectives. She doesn't feel she did this very well in the beginning. Sara on the other hand indicated she would have been more intentional on communicating encouragement in her classes. "I think that is a real important component and I don't think I did that very well in that [online] environment." She felt as though she might have discouraged students rather than encouraged them with her lack of understanding on how to communicate and provide critical feedback to her online students.

Recommendations for Future Faculty. Participants were also asked if they had any recommendations for other faculty getting ready to teach online. Four out of six participants felt incorporating a web-enhanced requirement into traditional courses prior to teaching online would better prepare someone for online teaching. Specifically, David, Peter, Kim, and Sara indicated using technology in their seated courses prior to teaching their first online class better prepared them to make the transition. Peter even went as far as suggesting it be a requirement, “I think maybe a requirement of some blended learning before would make people more comfortable with the process and then it wouldn't seem so intimidating and it would be a lot easier.” Kim also agreed that being comfortable with the platform is critical and suggested, “someone really [should] show you all the different aspects of the platform, because things are not where you would expect them.”

David advised faculty new to online teaching to participate in technology training early and use the information right away. He commented:

My advice would be to start taking workshops. Take the introductory workshop where they kind of just show you what the site will do...all the bells and whistles. Have a brief overview and then get a targeted approach, learning one piece of it at a time and start using it right away. As soon as you learn it, implement it and start using it in your class. There shouldn't be a big lag in training and beginning to use it if there is they are going to lose a lot of the information. If you could get some introduction training before the class starts and as soon as the class starts then continue to take workshops and try to add something new each week.

Christy had a more simplistic suggest for new faculty and that was to go into it with an open mind and have a back-up plan. She explained:

You always have to have a back-up plan because technology doesn't always work. For example, in the beginning ... a couple of lectures didn't get posted within 24 hours so we had to come up with another way for students to get the material.

Trevor had a similar suggestion that new faculty “just do it.” He stated:

If it is something you thought of doing, you should do it, if you are fearful it is not as somehow good as teaching traditionally then you should definitely do it and then give yourself a chance to look at how it can actually be better.

He also expressed that faculty need to open their minds as educators. “You know this isn't going to go away, in fact there is only going to be more of it.” He further expressed that:

If you want to teach as a career I think now it is our obligation to know how to do this because we are sending students out into a world in which technology will be a given. They are going to need to know how to maneuver in the technology and if we do not as educators then we will fail.

Kim's suggestion for faculty getting ready to teach online was geared toward course management. She recommended that faculty make their expectation known and clearly stated in several places throughout the course. “Make things really apparent for the students and be very direct and say very specifically what you want.” She further suggested to get students “involved with being interactive either with you or with each other.... make sure that you respond to everyone and that you are visible and [an] active presence.”

Lastly, Sara suggested faculty talk to current online students to see what they like and do not like about their online courses. She felt this feedback would give a new online faculty member a better understanding of what works and what doesn't. Sara also suggested collaborating with colleagues whenever possible as well as seeking out printed resources.

Research Question 3: In what areas do faculty perceive they need further preparation to enhance their online teaching experiences?

The participants were asked if there were any areas in which they felt they needed further preparation to enhance their online teaching experience. Five out of six participants indicated wanting more assistance in learning some of the online technology as well as using it to create a dynamic experience for the students. Peter in particular wanted to feel more comfortable with the "point and click" aspect of the technology as well as making sure everything is working in the course. Kim also expressed the desire to learn more about the platform technology, but in an in-depth way. She commented on wanting more understating of "the interworking of the platform in terms of metadata." Kim further commented on wanting more development on incorporating synchronous communication in her courses through chat and conference calls. She explained:

My classes are very text based...[and] I would like to add some more of that stuff [chats] at the same time recognizing it is an English class and let the students kind of be a little more interactive that way.

David also expressed wanting more technical training on how to bring in "video clips and sharing more resources over the internet, while the session [synchronous course] is ongoing. Like being in chat session and going out to the internet and ...sharing your desktop and bringing YouTube information in...." He also commented on wanting more training on Elluminate in regards to breakout sessions "where you have the ability to click on five or six [students'] names and send them to their own chat, then choose a couple other people to another one."

Trevor wants to learn how to use technology to develop his vision of an online course which is one that is "...very dynamic. I want to learn more about the best practices for developing video, podcast and all that embedded dynamic stuff." Sara on the other hand expressed a desire to have a more "systematic" development in "...the typical areas of a course and here are strategies for doing them online." She wants the how-to and the why of online teaching in her development. Sara expressed wanting training that takes "what you do in a classroom and gives you a sense of the range of options for doing that online as well as if there is anything particular to an online environment that you wouldn't do in a seated environment." She provided the example, "if your courses are primarily lecture or your courses are primarily discussion or are primarily group work Here is how to [or] here [are] your options for doing the different components." Specifically, Sara commented she would like more development in:

I'd like to see some training where you know you had one session on presentation or lectures. You had a session on conference calls or creating effective Skypes or chats or how to go about scheduling them or planning them or something like that. Plus one on running effective discussions through [the] threaded format. Here's a way to do effective group work. I think it would be interesting to have training that took each of those functions and showed you different ways of doing them.

Christy was the only participant to express the desire to have more pedagogical development;

however, she did not elaborate in anything specific or give examples.

Emerging Themes

During the data analysis, some themes emerged outside of answering the research questions of this study. Many of the themes emerged from some of the challenges participants experienced in transitioning into the online environment. A theme was identified if more than one participant articulated the same topic as it pertained to teaching online. The themes that emerged from this study are as follows:

1. Limited Student Interaction
2. Technology Challenges
3. Online Instruction Improves Traditional Courses
4. Changes in Telecommunication Technology Impacting Course Development
5. Short Notice of Faculty Online Assignments
6. Additional Preparation Time
7. Feelings of Isolation

Theme 1: Limited Student Interaction

Over half of the faculty struggled with having limited face-to-face interaction with their students and the challenges in communication that come with the restricted contact in the online environment. Sara admitted:

Everything is text so I think that was the challenge... There is a way to put that to students in a seated environment where you're looking them in the eye and you have all of your nonverbal[s] that communicate and encourage them and so on. Because I think [for] the students in my seated courses, there's more ... ways to send them cues about "yes, your writing needs work," and all these areas and "yes, I want you to..." I don't really know how to communicate some of those things that I communicate nonverbally with my students in seated courses.

Kim also struggled with effectively communicating with her online students. She indicated one of her biggest challenges was struggling with how to "adequately explain to the students what was expected, communicate with them, and answer their questions."

Trevor struggled more with the limited face-to-face interaction and connections he made in his traditional courses. He expressed his biggest challenge was not knowing his online students as well as he is used to in seated courses. Trevor explained:

Whether I like that better or not, but I am used to knowing them in a more personal way sometimes because of those interaction in the classroom they share or before or after class. I think the biggest thing I find is in [seated courses]... you don't get in [online] is the space in between class, you know what I mean the hallway conversation the before class and after class conversation that really adds to, at least my enjoyment of why I like to teach because you get to meet interesting people.

Christy also struggled not having face-to-face interaction with her online student. She admitted to relying on non-verbal cues in her seated courses to see if students are understanding the material. Christy stated:

The one thing I always I did when I taught in a live lecture was I like to engage the students. Meaning I would have the eye contact with everybody and I could tell when ...it wasn't clicking. So it was maybe, say, ok let's look at it this way or lets rewind and say that again and then you could see when you got that "ah ha" moment too. And with the distance you don't have some of your class there [on campus] so that was a challenge for me.

Theme 2: Technology Challenges

Two participants indicated that getting comfortable with the technology was their biggest challenge for adopting online teaching. David specifically commented on not being comfortable with the technology, especially the chat software Elluminate:

Just getting comfortable... was probably the main thing and then just learning the basic fundamentals on how to maneuver around... [in] Elluminate. Setting up the chat sessions, setting it up where you can restrict the number of people who can talk at the same time, recording the sessions. Just all that detailed information that you really need to know to make the chat session go smoothly.

Peter also expressed not feeling comfortable with the technology. Part of his challenge was not being a naturally tech-savvy person to begin with "like some of the kids that I have in class who are brought and raised up with it." He further commented:

The biggest challenge for me, and it is still the biggest challenge for me, is just getting comfortable with the technology. I'm more of a sit-down-and-talk kind of person. So I feel more comfortable in a one-on-one setting, so just getting comfortable with the technology. Teaching online and teaching in a more remote context and setting and learning the point and click, and feeling comfortable enough that I am going to be able to correspond.

Theme 3: Online Instruction Improves Traditional Courses

Half of the participants indicated that their experience teaching online classes has actually improved their traditional classes. Participants felt the repurposing of their assignments and the conscious effort to engage and promote discussion with students in their online classes has really helped them in their seated courses. In particular, Peter and Christy both indicated the effort they put in to ensure learning objectives are aligned with their assignments in their online classes has caused them to rethink their assignments and apply some of the concepts to their seated classes. Peter expressed teaching online has made him aware that each assignment has to have a "specific propose or reason" tied to learning objectives so "...in the end it all comes together." He further commented, "I think those are good things to be applied from the traditional teaching concept that I think you get from online teaching." Trevor also agreed that what he is doing in his online classes is helping him in his seated course. He stated, "To be honest...it's what I am learning online that is helping my traditional courses."

Theme 4: Changes in Telecommunication Technology Impacting Course Development

Two participants pointed out changes in telecommunication technology have really influenced how they go about designing their online courses. In the past, dial-up Internet connections were largely used among students and really limited the bandwidth power needed for students to access online video lectures, large PPT files and more. Sara recalls students could not "download a video or watch it because [of] the bandwidth issue or the dial-up issue" so she structured her course to be more

“flat... making it so there was very little that would be a problem for a student who was on dial-up.” Trevor also recalls, “there was a day [when] we could hardly put a PPT presentation on or anything with more bandwidth because student dial up wouldn’t allow for it... those days are quickly going away.”

Theme 5: Short Notice of Faculty Online Assignments

An overwhelming theme among participants was the lack of voluntary assignment to teach online and the little notice given to prepare once an assignment was issued. Almost all the faculty indicated being given short notice to teach online for the first time. David stated, “it was kind of a last-minute thing. I found out about a week before the course started that the Dean asked me to do this.” Christy’s experience was similar in that the school entered into a consortium agreement to offer their program blended before actually developing it as they had less than six months to overhaul the entire program to be able to offer it online. Christy recalls the experience to be a “whirlwind of a time” and not a voluntary option.

Sara was also put in a situation where her department wanted to offer the class she teaches online as part of their online degree program. She recalls being the only person who could teach the class so the request to teach online was not voluntary or something she would have liked to do. Peter’s experience was a little different from the rest of the participants as he was not forced to teach online or given little notice to prepare. However, he felt an overwhelming pressure to teach online or be left behind, stating, “I think clearly it’s time to jump onboard this train before it leaves you behind.” Interestingly, he commented he is not “...100% certain that online education is good for everyone” but knows “...education will come online and you are going to see more instructors, more institutions, more programs that are strictly online.”

Theme 6: Additional Preparation Time

Almost all of the faculty indicated teaching online courses takes additional time to prepare for compared to their traditional courses and often struggle to find the time to do it all. Trevor was very candid about not being able to “find [the] time to do it all” and wishes he could incorporate more into his online classes. Christy and David recalled doing a lot of preplanning before teaching their first online course. Christy stated, “there is a lot of preplanning that you have to do, whereas if you were doing a live lecture, there is not as much preplanning.” David also expressed he “sat and thought about what are the things I want to accomplish and how I was going to present the information.”

Kim and Sara had a lot of time invested in their first courses too as they both were given blank shells with which to teach. Both had to go in and develop the content in its entirety for each of their courses. Kim recalls, “I had to scan everything, upload everything and create everything myself. It was a huge amount of work.” She also pointed out that, “...even classes where I have inherited those [completed] shells I really have made a lot of changes, really tailored the class to what I wanted to teach.”

Theme 7: Feelings of Isolation

Both Trevor and Peter expressed feelings of isolation when teaching online. Peter commented that “one of the problems with online teaching is that you feel kind of isolated. It’s just like you and the computer out there.” Trevor echoed Peter’s sentiments and encouraged universities do more face-to-face interaction, specifically in training sessions so faculty members do not feel “isolated from

one another.”

Discussion of Findings

The six total participants for this study were purposely selected and categorized based on their experience teaching online. Three of the participants were experienced faculty who had taught online for three years or more and the other three were novice or non-experienced faculty who had taught less than two years online. The purpose of the selection was to determine if the experiences of faculty who had transitioned into the online environment in years prior differed from those who recently underwent the transition. Also, the desire to see if each group shared the same challenges in making the transition was of particular interest.

The participants in this study all taught traditional courses in conjunction with their online courses in the disciplines of Business, English, Law, Psychology, and Radiology. As a group they have been teaching online for an average of four years, teaching an average of two online classes a semester. Collectively, the participants have a total of 42 years teaching traditional courses prior to teaching online courses, with 31 of the years belonging to the non-experienced faculty. Fewer than half of the participants transitioned into teaching online voluntarily as program demands and campus administration forced them into the online environment prematurely. These findings are in accordance with the literature which suggests faculty are required to teach online rather than asked and are often used as a quick fix to fill an online course (Boettcher & Conrad, 2010; Seaman, 2009). Participants also indicated participating in formal training activities or receiving some type of informal assistance, which differs from the Lewis (2007) study results, where faculty did not receive or participate in any formal training. The participants also indicated not being required to receive or receiving any training to prepare them to teach online, which is consistent with the literature stating training, is not a mandatory requirement to teach online (Irani & Telg, 2002; Kosak et al., 2004; Lewis et al., 1997).

When analyzing the data there were not any noticeable differences or trends among experienced and non-experienced faculty members in their preparation to teach online or their experiences in the online environment. All faculty experienced challenges in transitioning in the online environment but nothing that could be linked directly to the experiences of a specific group. These results differed from the Lewis (2007) study, which indicated differences among the groups in terms of managing the number of students and assignments. In the Lewis study, non-experienced faculty struggled with the larger online classes and multiple assignments where both groups struggled with organizing their courses. Neither group of participants in this study indicated having any areas of concern in managing their online courses.

Preparation Activities

Literature indicates faculty should engage in some form of training to enhance and/or develop the skills necessary to teach online (Irani & Telg, 2002). The participants in this study participated in both formal and informal training activities such as workshops, one-on-one assistance, online training courses, and resources, as well as sought out assistance from colleagues. These findings are consistent with some of the more common types of training found in literature (Irani & Telg, 2002), excluding online courses which have become an emerging method of training in recent years (Kosak et al., 2004).

Although faculty in this study participated in some type of training, over half felt as though they were not prepared to teach online. One participant expressed her lack of training became such a point of

contention for her that she refused to adopt any future online classes, which, according to the literature, is a barrier for many instructors (Sadik, 2007). The participants of the Lewis (2007) study also expressed similar experiences of not feeling like they received any training to teach online even though they participated in informal training activities.

Despite some faculty not feeling as though they were prepared to teach online, most indicated the training and assistance they received was actually beneficial. In particular, faculty liked having assistance with and learning the technical aspects of the platforms, as it provided them a chance to get comfortable with the technology, which is also consistent with literature (Johnsrud et al., 2006; Seaman, 2009). Specifically, within the platform training one participant liked the progressive design of the training assignments as they reiterated previous points to help establish a firm foundation before moving on to other topics. Another participant liked learning about the philosophical principles behind the discussion threads and how his role as a facilitator intertwines with this online element of teaching. According to Kearsley (2000), understanding the principles of engaging students through active discussion and his or her role as a facilitator is the faculty member's most important role in the online environment.

The participants also mentioned some aspects of their training that they felt were less relevant to their online experience. One of the biggest complaints was the imbalance of material and activities in the platform training courses. Some of the faculty felt the material was too advanced for the beginner, while others felt the material was not advanced enough. Literature signifies finding the right balance of what training to offer is difficult for many institutions, especially when resources are limited (Levy, 2003). Also in regards to the platform training, one participant felt learning some of the administrative tasks of the platform took away from his focus on the content. His concerns are justified as literature points out learning how to use the technology should not take away from teaching the course (Levy, 2003; McLean, 2005). The other aspect faculty found to be less relevant was printed material. Participants felt some of the material was redundant and not something they would ever reference again. These findings differ from the literature that indicates printed materials are a viable and requested self-paced training method (Irani & Telg, 2002).

Most Beneficial Preparation

Overall, the majority of the participants in this study found the preparation with colleagues and the one-on-one assistance they received from university personnel to be the most beneficial in preparing them to teach online. Based on the literature, these findings are accurate as one-on-one training and mentoring are considered the primary and most effective methods of informal training (Clay, 1999; McCarthy & Samors, 2009). Faculty who had already indicated one-on-one assistance as their most beneficial area of assistance also mentioned these additional positive assistance areas: knowledge gained from personal job experience, access to a repository resource of how-to videos, and a pedagogy-focused online professional development course.

Increased Areas of Support Needed

Most of the participants in the study were satisfied with the training they received; however, each identified areas of support that would have enhanced their online teaching experience. An overwhelming five out of six faculty members identified more opportunities to collaborate with colleagues. According to the literature, other faculty members desire the opportunity to gather with colleagues informally through online or face-to-face interaction to share ideas and learn from one another (Irani & Telg, 2002; McCarthy & Samors, 2009; Olcott & Wright, 1995).

Literature also suggests that outside of technical training, faculty need assistance and support with developing courses and implementing online pedagogical techniques (Kosak et al., 2004; Lorenzetti, 2002). The participants in this study agreed with these findings as half the faculty felt more pedagogical training through workshops and instructional designers would have further enhanced their online teaching experience. The requests for more pedagogical training opportunities is not surprising as research points out most training opportunities offered are technical in nature (Seaman, 2009; Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2009). The findings of this study also support the limited pedagogical training opportunities available to current faculty members as the majority of participants did not indicate receiving any pedagogy training during or after their training.

Participants in the study also expressed that having more administrative help would have enhanced their online experience. In particular, the areas of more personnel in the distance learning centers and someone to help with scanning and uploading documents to the online courses were discussed by the faculty. According to the literature, these findings are common among institutions as many lack the resources necessary to provide adequate faculty support (Levy, 2003).

Personal Changes in Preparation

All of the participants expressed different ways they would have prepared themselves to teach online if they had it to do all over again. The overall theme among the participants was changes in increasing their technical and pedagogical skills which, according to the literature, are the most important skills instructors need to be successful in online instruction (Palloff & Pratt, 2009; Williams, 2003). Specifically, regarding technical training, two of the participants indicated the desire to participate in some sort of training before teaching online for the first time as well as partnering up with other colleagues for extra support, while another faculty member just wished he had adopted online learning early to get a jump start on the technology curve. The other two faculty members wished they had participated in more pedagogical training specifically in learning how to improve their online communication with students as well as developing tests that promote critical thinking.

Recommendations for Future Faculty

Literature suggests that the transition into the online environment can be challenging to some faculty as they are not as confident or comfortable in their technical skills to make the transitions (Bower, 2001; Johnsrud et al., 2006; Sadik, 2007). The participants in the study largely agreed with the literature and suggested that faculty members new to online teaching lay their apprehensions aside and go in with an open mind as well as a backup plan. One participant added that he felt learning how to teach online has now become an obligation among educators as students are being sent into a world filled with technology. His statements are further echoed in current literature that points out high schools are now requiring students to complete at least one online class as part of the graduation requirements, which mirrors the same obligation from high school educators to prepare their students for the world ahead of them (Hartman, 2009).

Four out of six of the participants recommended that faculty should incorporate technology early on in their traditional courses by offering web-enhanced courses as a way to become comfortable with the learning platforms. These findings are consistent with the literature as it suggests giving faculty the opportunity to utilize the technology prior to fully committing to using it online (Johnsrud et al., 2006; Seaman, 2009). Participants also suggested participating in platform training early and using it right away to avoid forgetting the information they learned. In regards to developing online courses, one participant recommended that faculty make their expectations known clearly and in multiple places throughout the course, another participant suggested seeking out feedback from current online students to see what they like about their classes.

Areas for Further Development

Based on the literature, the skills most sought after from faculty teaching online are technical and pedagogical; however, most of the participants of this study stated they would like future development in technical skills despite indicating receiving more pedagogical support would have enhanced their online experience. These findings are consistent with the Lewis (2007) study as participants also requested more enhanced technical training for the future over pedagogical training.

In particular the participants in this study expressed wanting more in-depth platform training, opportunities to become comfortable with the online learning technology, development on best practices of adding synchronous communication to their courses, as well as adding dynamic podcast and videos. These findings are not surprising as the online tools like blogs, wikis, audio lectures, and social networking sites are all encompassing online education; therefore, pushing faculty to learn more technology to meet the needs of the newer generation of online learners (Boettcher & Conrad, 2010). Additionally, some of the requests for more technical training stem from the dynamic nature of technology, adding additional pressure on faculty to keep abreast in the latest academic and social applications.

Although most of the faculty members requested additional technical training, one participant wanted more pedagogical development; however, she did not elaborate on any specific area. Her desire to receive more pedagogical development but lack of direction could be explained through limited best-pedagogical practice opportunities available. In traditional universities there has been no real push or guidance on what elements should be incorporated in the online learning environment as evidenced by the lack of pedagogical training opportunities available to faculty and the lack of resources allocated to the online learning departments (Allen & Seaman, 2010). According to the literature, these opportunities are relatively nonexistent as the research is fairly new and best-pedagogical practices are still in its infancy (Boettcher & Conrad, 2010; Kosak et al., 2004).

Emerging Themes

Seven themes emerged from the data analysis that were outside the original scope of the study but offered relevant insight into the participants' preparation process and online teaching experiences. The first theme was limited student interaction, four out of six participants indicated they struggled with not having face-to-face interaction with their students which, in certain cases, have negatively affected how they communicate with them. One participant in particular indicated teaching online is not as rewarding as teaching his traditional classes as he does not get to know his students as well, which is consistent with the literature (Kearsley, 2000). The literature also indicates communicating effectively online is a common struggle among faculty. The instructors who can become comfortable engaging students to think critically through guided discussion (Garrison, 1989; Harasim et al., 1995) and who can communicate empathy will be the better online instructors (Moore & Kearsley, 2005). The second theme identified was the participants' challenge to feel comfortable maneuvering within the platform and using the online technology associated with teaching synchronous courses. These findings are consistent with the literature as the lack of technical skills has been long cited as one of the biggest barriers for faculty when adopting online learning as a method of teaching (Bower, 2001; Johnsrud et al., 2006; Magnussen, 2008; Piña, 2008). In particular one participant expressed his discomfort with the point and click aspect of the technology but indicated feeling comfortable with everyday technology such as email, Internet and the like. His experience is not uncommon according to the literature, as faculty can feel comfortable using everyday technology in the course of their jobs but still have a level of discomfort when integrating technology into the classroom as a mode of

teaching (Mills et al., 2009).

The third theme discovered was that many of the faculty felt their experience teaching online has improved their teaching skills in their traditional courses, specifically in the areas of engaging students and aligning learning objectives with course assignments. These results are in conflict with the literature as Boettcher and Conrad (2010) suggested face-to-face instruction makes for the better online instructor. The fourth theme was changes in telecommunication technology have impacted how faculty develop their online courses. Faculty indicated the newer telecommunication technology has allowed them to create more dynamic courses than in the past as a result of higher bandwidth Internet connectivity. The fifth theme was faculty were given short notice about their first online teaching assignments and fewer than half volunteered to teach their first online class. As previously mentioned these findings are in accordance with the literature as many faculty members are involuntarily placed into online classes without preparation as a quick fix (Boettcher & Conrad, 2010; Seaman, 2009).

The sixth theme is a complaint among many faculty and cited in several resources as the number one reason for not adopting online learning as a method of teaching, and that is the additional time that teaching online requires. In this study, the participants largely expressed the additional preparation time that teaching online requires as a concern compared teaching a traditional course. According to a recent study by Seaman (2009), these findings are consistent as 64% of faculty felt teaching online took more effort to teach compared to a face-to-face course. Literature also suggests there is little incentive for faculty to adopt or develop online courses, as there is no monetary reward, reduction in workload, or consideration in tenure or promotions. The findings of this study contradict this literature, as two of the participants indicated being rewarded monetarily for completing their online certification courses. The final theme observed was that two of the participants felt teaching online can be isolating as there is limited face-to-face interaction with colleagues and students.

Future Research

The findings of this study could be further examined by comparing those experiences and preparation activities of faculty members in fully online institutions, specifically looking at any differences in faculty satisfaction and academic achievements between the two groups. Also, more research could be developed around the challenges faculty identified in the transition into the online learning environment to identify best practices for effectively facilitating the change. Specifically, the research should examine how to create buy-in from faculty by addressing some of the challenges presented. Lastly, as online programs grow in the traditional higher education institutions, more research should be done on developing formal professional development programs that support and develop faculty members in achieving their performance objectives and help them grow as online educators.

Conclusion

The question of how higher education institutions were preparing faculty to teach online was answered in this study. Specifically, the types of preparation activities were addressed as well as faculty perceptions of the effectiveness of each activity, including discussions on the activities they perceived to be the most beneficial. Additionally, both experienced and non-experienced faculty offered suggestions for improving current preparation strategies as well as areas of further development desired.

The findings of this study support current literature that suggests preparation strategies should include both technical and pedagogical training. The results highlighted a desire from participants to include

pedagogical support into preparation activities despite the emphasis on technology preparation activities engaged in by faculty and offered by the institutions. Going forward, informal and formal training programs should be thoughtfully balanced with technology and pedagogy using a progressive delivery method to provide faculty with the necessary skills to be successful in online teaching.

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