Assessing the Relationship Between Mandatory Faculty Development for Online Career College Instructors and Transformative Learning

Tremayne Simpson

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Assessing the relationship between mandatory faculty development for online career college instructors and transformative learning

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
in the National College of Education
National Louis University

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Acknowledgements

For myself, an accomplishment of this magnitude was unforeseeable and for a long time it was not even on my radar. Fortunately, God has blessed me with many individuals that have refused to allow me to avoid this educational pursuit and have fueled me to the completion of this journey. I will try my best to acknowledge all the individuals that have served as my foundation of support.

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Dedication

To Landon. My greatest accomplishment, is to have you as my son.

Don’t allow your dreams to overwhelm you.

Never let a rough path deter you.

Stay humble.

This is for you.
Abstract

Online teaching and learning has become a primary focal point for higher education administrators. Institutions have focused their strategic plans to maximize opportunities to grow their campuses, through distance education. A consistent issue that has surfaced with distance education initiatives is teacher preparation for online education. The issue is further compounded in proprietary institutions that may have limited resources and guidance for structuring effective faculty development programs. It is beneficial for faculty program developers to implement adult learning concepts into their courses to improve the overall training transfer for instructors. Transformative learning is an adult learning theory that focuses on the transformation that learners experience when they acquire new information that enables them to critically reflect on their thinking and change their perspective. This qualitative research study focuses on the relationship between mandatory faculty development for proprietary online instructors and transformative learning. Through extensive data collection, including surveys and interviews, this study indicates that mandatory faculty development can produce transformative learning experiences for proprietary school instructors.
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Chapter 1 Introduction

Traditional methods of instruction are primarily obsolete and new, innovative approaches have been initiated to improve student engagement and retention of information. Over 70% of North American universities view online learning as a significant part of the institutional long-term strategy (Islam, N., Beer, M., & Slack, F., 2015). The reception of modern technology has been positive; however, several concerns have emerged during the rapid deployment of this new learning initiative, which has impacted administrators, faculty, and students. Faculty preparation and development remains as one of the most notable concerns in online education (Islam, N., Beer, M., & Slack, F., 2015).

Teaching Online

In addition to the new experience of teaching online, instructors also see changes in their instructional roles in the virtual environment. The role of facilitator can be a metamorphosis for some instructors, that may be more comfortable with observing the real time learner reactions, instead of serving as a guide in the online environment (Adnan, M., Kaleliolglu, F., & Gulbahar, Y., 2017). Many institutions have elected to place faculty training emphasis on learning how to navigate technology and limited time is available to place a viable focus on adapting to the facilitation role. In addition to navigating learning technology, instructors must become familiar with maximizing opportunities for student engagement, in a non-face-to-face environment. Faculty members that are underprepared to teach online can lead to unfavorable experiences for both the instructor and students.

The numerous changes and new experiences can result in a resistance to embrace online learning, due to a loss of instructional identity. According to Ali et al. (2005), new online instructors tend to perceive their teaching expertise as novice, due to their level of unfamiliarity.
Regardless of prior teaching experience in the classroom, instructors must reflect on and evaluate their current practices in preparation for online instruction. This presents a great opportunity for instructors to gain new insight regarding teaching and learning, which can be implemented into both the traditional and online classrooms (Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006). This transformation is important and can benefit the instructor, students, and the institution.

**Transformative Learning in Faculty Development**

Transformative learning is a comprehensive adult learning theory, which focuses on the learner’s ability to question their assumptions and beliefs about teaching and revising their perspectives (Cranton, 2006). A key for preparing instructors to teach in an online environment is heavily based on their willingness to change, enhance, and revise their instructional approaches. “When educators are led to examine their practice critically and thereby acquire alternative ways of understanding what they do, transformative learning about teaching takes place” (Cranton, 2003, p. 32). Although, adult education has permeated many facets of education, there has not been a comprehensive consideration for faculty development (Lawler & King, 2000). According to Lawler & King (2000), it is important for adult education theory to influence faculty development, because instructors/participants must be viewed as adult learners.

According to McQuiggan (2012), there are few faculty development models that consider the prior knowledge of instructors and are typically designed as one-size-fits-all models. Research has shown that adult learners thrive in situations where they can apply their learning. According to Cranton (2003), faculty program developers can capitalize on this by creating content that enables instructors to actively practice new concepts and reflect on prior knowledge.
Action Research

According to Anderson (2007), action research should directly address an institutional concern or issue. Action research is considered to be reflective and is conducted by practitioners that use their own site for evaluation (Anderson, 2007). Additionally, researchers have suggested that action research is best done in collaboration with participants that relate closely to the topic of the study (Anderson, 2007).

Midwestern Career College (MCC) served as the site institution for this research study. MCC is a small, private, for-profit institution, that provides certificates and associate degree programs for students seeking employment in the allied health and business industries. The institution is privately owned and does not receive state-based funding and most of the revenue is generated from student tuition (College Navigator, 2021). MCC was selected as the research site for this study because the institution represents a model of a college that is underrepresented in previous faculty development research.

Midwestern Career College Institutional Study

Historical Context

According to the National Center for Education and Statistics (2020), Career and Technical Education (CTE) is defined as academic programs that are designed with objectives that focus on industry-based skills and knowledge that are required specifically for designated jobs and fields of work. The role of the career college is quite simple…prepare students for immediate job placement. Program and curricula are rigidly designed to ensure that only the courses needed to provide the student with the necessary skills for a career are provided, with limited electives’. Program layout and sequencing is heavily influenced by industry professionals through required advisory boards and employer advising forums. In some cases, corporate
sponsors provide resources for programs that are geared towards generating employees for their companies.

Midwestern Career College (MCC) is an example of a CTE institution and serves as the focus of this institutional study. This career-oriented institution maintains a focus for preparing their students for job placement, by providing them with industry-specific, professional training. The faculty are active industry professionals that utilize their experiences and technical knowledge to train their students.

Originally, the institution was founded in 2004, as Citi College of Allied Health, with initial approval from the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) to operate as a vocational school (DAPIP, 2021; College Navigator, 2021). The school was nationally accredited by the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement. All original programs were related to the allied healthcare industry (DAPIP, 2021). After the approval of Title IV funding, several changes were made including, a name change to Midwestern Career College (MCC) and the opening of several campuses, that served: Naperville, Chicago, and Blue Island, Illinois (DAPIP, 2021). In 2018, MCC was approved to change the scope of the institution to offer programs in Business Administration (DAPIP, 2021).

Currently MCC is accredited by the Commission of the Council on Occupational Education (COE), IBHE and offers 20 combined associate and certificate-level program offerings (MCC Catalog, 2021).

Midwestern Career College’s mission is to “provide premier career-focused education to empower students with academic training, technical expertise, and professional support to launch or advance their successful careers” (Mission and Vision, 2020, para. 1). The vision is to “transform lives through preparing students for career success” (Mission and Vision, 2020, para.
2). The mission and vision statements are closely aligned with a focus on student career outcomes. The conceptual framework for all institutional operations is based on the principles of integrity, excellence, and diversity (Conceptual Framework, 2020).

**Faculty**

According to Proper (2017), there has been a rise in the utilization of adjunct faculty in higher education, led by for-profit institutions that maximize opportunities for “adjunctification.” The primary reason that adjuncts are utilized more than full-time faculty is due to operational costs. According to Magness (2016), many for-profit colleges staff over 90 percent of their courses with adjunct faculty. MCC participates in a similar model of adjunct faculty utilization. As of Fall 2020, MCC has a faculty breakdown of: 48 adjuncts and nine full-time instructors (College Navigator, 2020). There are no tenure-track faculty opportunities available.

**Faculty Development**

Based on the researcher’s knowledge of the process, the new faculty members must successfully complete mandatory faculty development prior to being assigned to teach courses. The current faculty development course is delivered fully online and provides training for several modules, including faculty expectations, technology training, compliance, faculty support and payroll training. Prior to the online format, the mandatory faculty development course was delivered in an in-person format. Faculty must complete a three-part assessment, to be eligible for a training certificate. The Director of Online Learning and the Director of Academic Operations evaluate all new instructors based on their matriculation through the assigned training modules. Faculty maintain access to the training course during their active time as an MCC instructor, which can be used as a guide for periodic review.
Once the faculty have completed the initial training, they are provided with training sessions on an as needed basis. Group-based training is provided whenever new procedures, course enhancements or processes are introduced. In these cases, one session of training is provided and recorded, with an expectation that all faculty members participated during the live session or by viewing the recording. Assessment of comprehension is evaluated during in-class observations or based on the instructor’s compliance with following the new procedure or process. Follow-up training is available, at the instructor’s request or if assigned by administration.

**Problem Statement**

To meet the demand for online learning, academic administrators are pressuring educators to implement online learning strategies (Islam, N., Beer, M., & Slack, F., 2015). Unfortunately, due to time constraints, there have been issues with providing effective training for faculty and appropriate technical support, especially with smaller institutions. This issue is further impacted when considering the training efforts that are needed for traditional instructors to transition to teach online or hybrid courses. In addition to the learning curve associated with using technology, faculty must also make a pedagogical transformation to facilitator in the online environment, instead of “information provider” in the traditional setting. The role of facilitator can be a metamorphosis for some instructors, that may be more comfortable with observing the real time learner reactions, instead of serving as a guide in the online environment (Adnan, M., Kalelioglu, F., & Gulbahar, Y., 2017). Many institutions have elected to place faculty training emphasis on learning how to navigate technology and limited time is available to place a viable focus on adapting to the facilitation role. Obviously, institutions are witnessing instances where
faculty are not fully prepared to embrace online learning, which leads to unfavorable experiences for both the instructor and students.

To keep pace with the current landscape of higher education and to provide students with a more interactive experience, Midwestern Career College (MCC) introduced learning technology to their program instruction. Starting in January of 2019, all programs were required to use the D2L-Brightspace learning management system. In addition, D2L-Brightspace became the platform for delivery of fully online courses. Prior to the introduction of D2L-Brightspace, MCC operated with non-digital instructional materials, which made it difficult to ensure that all classes were being taught in a standard format. Once online learning technology was introduced, the MCC management team developed a strategy to leverage the overall usage.

A major problem with the deployment of online learning technology was that many instructors were not familiar with basic usage and proper implementation strategies. The Director of Online Learning devised multiple strategies for improving the transfer of training, which included: creating one-on-one sessions, group training sessions and peer-based training modules. However, a majority of the faculty were still confused with how to effectively use the technology and began to become concerned and frustrated with the initiative for online learning. A key area of opportunity will be to gain an understanding of instructors’ experience in faculty development, to identify if they acquired transformative learning.

Faculty hesitance towards fully embracing online teaching and learning represents a major concern for the institution’s strategy to further develop distance education. In this case, MCC has potential gaps in understanding the effectiveness of faculty preparation programs for online learning. The intended action research is important for MCC to be able to provide a
foundation for effective, faculty training programs that lead to transformative learning experiences for instructors.

The outcomes of this study will be important for ensuring that instructors gain foundational skills in mandatory faculty development and acquire transformative learning, that will benefit overall instruction for the future.

**Gaps in Literature**

There is a gap in research for online teaching and learning faculty development programs in for-profit colleges. A lot of the research is based on “traditional” institutional approaches to faculty development. However, there could be a good reason little, or no research has been done for the for-profit sector, regarding this topic. According to Sax (2006), online learning training for faculty at small institutions is generally chaotic, due to insufficient staffing and limited budgets. This becomes even more difficult at for-profit colleges because the focus is not placed on faculty development.

According to Gelbgiser (2018), for-profit colleges tend to focus on operational efficiency, which includes the practice of standardizing courses, to maximize flexibility. Many for-profit leaders do not value faculty training because “canned” courses are pre-populated and only need an instructor that has valid credentials to manage the assigned class (Gelbgiser, 2018). The research is limited because faculty development is not a primary area of importance for the proprietary sector. The focus of this research will be to examine the developmental experiences of prospective online instructors that teach at for-profit institutions.

**Purpose of the Study**

Faculty development programs are not only created to prepare instructors to teach in an online environment, however there is a need to train them for implementing innovative
approaches to their instruction. Faculty development programs must deliver technical training, instrumental, and communicative knowledge that is essential for instructors to be successful with teaching in an online environment (McQuiggan, 2012). Faculty members that participate in development programs to prepare for online teaching take on the role of adult learner. As adult learners in their training, they must be prepared to reconsider and change their beliefs and assumptions of teaching in learning.

Therefore, an effective faculty development program would create a transformative learning experience for instructors, which would prepare them to thrive as instructors in an unfamiliar environment. The purpose of this qualitative action research study is to gain an understanding of the faculty transformative learning experiences that are acquired from participating in mandatory faculty development. This inclusive examination of faculty experiences will also explore the influences that moderating variables (faculty demographics and teaching experience) can have on the faculty member’s learning experience.

**Importance of Study**

Online teaching and learning is a primary focal point for all institutions in higher education, including the for-profit sector. Institutions have focused their strategic plans to maximize opportunities to grow their campuses, within a virtual format. According to Alexiou-Ray et al. (2015), faculty training has fallen behind in many campus online learning initiatives, because they are ill-prepared to integrate technology and effectively use course software. This can deter the institutional growth of online teaching and learning. The issue has been two-fold, in that: faculty are hesitant to use innovative learning in the classroom and there are cases where they are not comfortable with using technology overall. Also, this represents an underlying
tension between the administrative focus to move forward, without acknowledging that faculty 
are being left behind.

It is imperative that faculty development programs are comprehensive and deliver 
foundational training, that is fortified with activities that produce transformative learning 
experiences. Faculty development programs that foster transformative learning can serve as a 
significant tool for assisting in the development of instructors that consistently seek improvement 
in their instruction and embrace new challenges. Implications of this research include the 
opportunity to provide faculty development program developers with an understanding of the 
elements that can be used to ensure transformative learning.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research is based on Mezirow’s transformative 
learning theory. According to Mezirow (2012), the transformative learning theory is based on a 
cycle of learning, “which occurs in one of four ways: by elaborating existing frames of reference, 
by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits 
of mind” (p.84). Adult learners experience transformational learning when a previously stored 
frame of reference is challenged by new information or completely transformed (Mezirow, 
2012). Personal, critical reflection is a component of transforming points of view. Mezirow 
associated the stages of adult learners’ transformation into ten distinct phases (Mezirow, 2012). 
The specific phases of transformative learning will serve as the specific gage to evaluate 
participants’ experiences in this research study. The theory is further described in chapter two of 
this study.
Contribution to Relevant Research

Transformative learning theory serves a comprehensive method for understanding how adult learners process and retain information (King, 2002). The theory provides a foundation for professional development, in that the adults (teachers) attempt to implement new learning into their prior beliefs and assumptions (King, 2002). King (2002) conducted a study to examine the occurrence of transformative learning in relation to faculty development for educational technology. Guided by the research, King (2002), based the study on the following premises: teachers serving in the role as adult learners, recognition that transformative learning can occur in the educational process, and that changes in their professional development can be examined. The study consisted of 175 teachers that were participating in courses that provided them with professional development, with a focus on learning technology. A mixed-methods approach was used, with a learning activities survey serving as the quantitative instrument and interviews and essays provided the qualitative data (King, 2002). King (2002), determined from the data collection, that transformative learning provides viable insight into the assessment of teachers’ experiences with their progression through professional development and application of their skills.

This study contributes to the current cycle of literature by continuing the premise established by King (2002) and others, by classifying teachers as adult learners and using their experiences to assess transformative learning.

Research Question

The research question for this study addresses the relationship between mandatory faculty development and transformative learning, which is depicted in the conceptual framework (detailed in Chapter 3). This research will examine this relationship, through the lens of
proprietary college instructors’ experiences with participation in mandatory faculty development training. The research question being addressed by this action research is:

- What is the relationship between mandatory faculty development for college instructors at a proprietary institution teaching online courses and transformative learning? How can mandatory faculty development be improved to lead to more transformative learning?

Research Design Overview

The methodological consideration for this research is related to the overall purpose of the study. According to Willis (2010), participatory action research (PAR) is used to identify an issue, implement a solution for improvement and provide observations/conclusion regarding the study. This study was designed based on a qualitative phenomenological approach, which provides the best opportunity to gain an understanding of faculty transformative learning experiences.

Data Collection and Analysis

A survey and follow-up interview were used to develop a comprehensive answer to the research question of the study. The survey was delivered electronically and consisted of 20 questions that are related to the specific phases of Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory. There was a combination of multiple choice and open-ended questions that cover demographic and experience-based inquiries. A question was provided that invited participants to participate in a follow-up survey. An interview was provided to volunteer participants and consisted of follow-up inquiries to topics provided in the survey and questions that add more context to their transformative learning experience. The pool of participants for the study was 40 active MCC full-time and adjunct faculty members, that represented seven academic programs and general
education courses, with experience with teaching online or hybrid courses. All instructors that teach hybrid and online courses participate in mandatory faculty development prior to being assigned to teach courses. Survey data and interview transcripts were coded separately, with a focus of identifying common themes. Specific data collection, population, and analysis, information can be found in Chapter three of this research study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used frequently throughout the study, and they will be defined as follows:

- Faculty Development-Faculty development refers to the activities that focus on the improvement of an instructor’s teaching skills (Gillespie & Robertson, 2010). For the purposes of this study, faculty development refers to the preparation training that is provided to prospective, online instructors.

- For-Profit Education (Also known as proprietary education)- For profit colleges are educational institutions that operate as a business, with a goal of generating revenue. Institutional sustainability is based on the institution’s ability to make profit, primarily from student tuition (Kirkham, 2021).

- Online Learning (also known as e-learning)- Online learning is defined as “learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments using different devices (e.g., mobile phones, laptops, etc.) with internet access. In these environments, students can be anywhere (independent) to learn and interact with instructors and other students” (Singh & Thurman, 2019, p. 290). In this study, online learning will be identified as learning that takes place in a virtual environment.
• Online Teaching-Delivery of instruction in a virtual environment, through the internet, which typically occurs in an asynchronous format (Sales, 2009).

• Transformative Learning- “A process that involves reflectively transforming the beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotional reactions that constitute our meaning schemes or…meaning perspectives (Mezirow, J. & Associates, 1990, p. 223).” According to Cranton (2006), transformative learning enables people to reflectively review their frames of reference, to prepare them for change. Specific phases of transformative learning are provided in chapter two of this study.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Assumptions of this work include that all participants’ experiences are accurately interpreted and align with the associated phases of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. Additionally, it is assumed that all participants remember specific details from their mandatory faculty development training and have accurately provided them in the survey and interview.

There are two primary delimiters in this research, which involve the population sample and site of study. Administrators were deliberately removed from the sample population, to eliminate a possible conflict of interest, in regard to their role in implementing faculty development training. Secondly, only one institution was used for a study site, instead of multiple institutions.

A key limitation of this study is the limited amount of research that is available for for-profit faculty development. Therefore, supporting literature is derived from institutions with similar programs of study. Another limitation of the study is that the institution requires faculty development, which is not largely supported in research. Delimitations and limitations of the research are further described in chapter three of this research study.
Overview

Each chapter of this research study provides support for the research and its overall premise. Chapter one introduces the study. The introductory chapter identifies the problem statement, which is derived from the cited gaps in literature. In addition, the research question, study design, and overview of the methodology is provided.

Chapter two summarizes the literature that is associated with the topic and research problem. The chapter is separated into six distinct topics that relate to the focus of the study. Specifically, a literature review is provided for, the history of faculty development, faculty development programs, faculty perceptions of online teaching and learning, impacts of faculty development, effectiveness of faculty training programs, and theories of faculty development.

The conceptual framework and methodology for the research is provided in chapter three of the study. A diagram of the conceptual framework for this study, as well as a narrative summary is provided to describe the research expectations, involving the variables of mandatory faculty development and transformative learning. The methodology description identifies the research design, population, data analysis, and measures taken to ensure the confidentiality and safety of the participants. A positionality statement is provided to disclose the researcher’s connection to the work, as well as actions taken to ensure validity in the research.

Chapter four of the study provides a summary and analysis of the results. This includes an interpretation of the data findings and statistical information. The concluding chapter of the research study provides a full discussion of the findings, including the implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and conclusion for the study.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

There is limited research available for online teaching and learning faculty development programs in for-profit colleges. According to Sax (2006), online learning training for faculty at small proprietary institutions is generally chaotic, due to insufficient staffing and limited budgets. According to Gelbgiser (2018), for-profit colleges tend to focus on operational efficiency, which includes the practice of standardizing courses, to maximize flexibility. Many for-profit leaders do not value faculty training because “canned” courses are pre-populated and only need an instructor that has valid credentials to manage the assigned class (Gelbgiser, 2018). The research is limited because faculty development is not a primary area of importance for the proprietary sector. Despite the limited resources directly related to proprietary institutions, there is literature that speaks to the importance of faculty training and the impact that it has on instructor development. In addition, there are general preparatory training methods that have been identified as effective measures for improving distance education instruction. This chapter will provide an overview of faculty development and discuss its evolution over time. Specific focus will be placed on the impact of faculty development on student learning, and overview of training programs, faculty perceptions of distance education, and evaluation of faculty development training programs. Finally, theories related to the work of this study will be addressed.

History of Faculty Development

Over time, colleges and universities have continuously committed to support the improvement and success of their teachers through faculty development. The term faculty development is highly ambiguous because it encompasses multiple meanings, programs, activities, and structures. In addition, the expected outcomes for faculty development may differ,
based on the institution. Several definitions exist in literature; these have developed over time as the field has changed and grown.

According to Rose (1976), faculty development represents anything a faculty member does outside of the classroom. Rose’s intention for this definition was to simplify the concept and to focus on the idea of educational improvement. The problem with this definition is that it may be too generalized. It accounts for all activities, however not all things that a faculty member does outside of the classroom are for the purpose of development.

Francis (1975) created a definition that aimed to focus on the specific outcomes of faculty development. He defined the term as a “process which seeks to modify the attitudes, skills, and behavior of faculty members toward greater competence and effectiveness in meeting student needs, their own needs, and the needs of the institution” (1975, p. 720). This definition is comprehensive; however, it is also a bit convoluted. Rose and Francis’s definitions of faculty development represent two opposing sides of the continuum...from simple to complex.

Gillespie and Robertson (2010) provided a definition that was succinct but encompassed the essence of faculty development. From their perspective, “faculty development focuses on the improvement of the individual instructor’s teaching skills” (Gillespie & Robertson, 2010, p. 8). Educational development has been developed to provide a more inclusive perspective to encompass all the areas that factor into faculty development in higher education.

**Educational Development**

The Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education and other researchers focused on the term Educational Development in place of faculty development. Educational Development serves as a more inclusive term for contemporary academic development (POD Network Executive Committee, 2016). Amundsen and Wilson
(2012), identify educational development as a compilation of the methods used by faculty members or those that support them, to enhance classroom instruction. Educational development is a developing field that centers on the advancement of higher education teaching and learning (Amundsen & Wilson, 2012). Educational development is comprised of three primary subfields: Faculty development, instructional development, and organizational development. These subfields highlight the individual faculty member’s development, the development of classroom instruction and maximizing institutional effectiveness, through the investment of supporting teaching and learning (POD Network Executive Committee, 2016).

**Evolution of Faculty Development Research**

The roots of faculty development can be traced back to the 1800s, when Harvard University faculty members were provided with sabbatical leave, which was used to further develop their subject-matter expertise in their field of study (Ouellett, 2010). Faculty development continued to evolve and change over time. The changing trends in education and society have created paradigm shifts in faculty development research. Sorcinelli et al. (2006), categorized the paradigm shifts into specific periods of faculty development research. These periods included the past ages and the new age of faculty development.

The first stage of faculty development is known as the Age of the Scholar, which occurred in the 1950’s and 1960’s and was used as a tool to improve the competence of scholars (Sorcinelli et al., 2006). During this time, institutions could inform students that they were invested in developing their faculty, to provide better education experiences (Sorcinelli et al, 2006). Faculty progress and success was based on their level of subject matter knowledge and research (Sorcinelli et al, 2006).
According to Sorcinelli et al. (2006), the second stage was the Age of the Teacher, which occurred during the mid-1960s and into the 1970s. During this period, faculty wanted to establish a balance between quality instruction and scholarship (Diamond, 2002). This shift in focus introduced the inclusion of a broad range of goals, topics and activities that are categorized as faculty development. With the change in focus, the education community wanted to broaden the definition of scholarship, to include research about faculty development, which was scarce (Sorcinelli et al, 2006). Institutions began to develop training centers that were dedicated towards faculty development and research. The Professional and Organizational Development Networking (POD) in Higher Education was developed during this period, which was founded by faculty and scholars of various institutions (Sorcinelli et al., 2006). This national organization served as a key factor in establishing the importance of faculty development in higher education.

The Age of the Developer occurred in the 1980s. with a focus on expanding the scope of faculty development. Campuses began to create employee roles that were designated to oversee faculty development programs and models (Sorcinelli et al., 2006). Faculty development practices were funded by governmental initiatives that were implemented to improve undergraduate education. This included innovative program designs and institutional initiatives (Sorcinelli et al, 2006).

The final stage of the past age of faculty development was the Age of the Learner. The Age of the Learner period occurred during the 1990s, with a shift in focus towards student learning (Sorcinelli et al., 2006). Faculty development prior to this period, maintained a singular focus on teaching and instructional development, with little to no attention paid to the students. According to Barr and Tagg (1995), there was a spark in interest in student-centered instructional methods, which included collaborative learning and question-based teaching strategies. This
period was evolutionary and set the precedent for systemic, student-focused learning initiatives, which developed new institutional roles and multi-layered, faculty support programs. According to Barr and Tagg (1995), the shift to the learning paradigm enables institutions to break free of the restraints that were set forth, by a traditional, dominant paradigm that focused on instruction as the college’s purpose.

Due to the shift towards online learning and instructional technology, Sorcinelli et al. (2006), designated the paradigm at that time as the Age of the Network. In this age, faculty developers must collaborate with others to identify best practices for adhering to the needs of changing institutions, new institutional problems, and evolving students (Sorcinelli et al., 2006). According to Sorcinelli et al.’s research (2006), there is a large (and growing) community of faculty development practitioners that are new to the field but have backgrounds as teachers. Many of these practitioners may not have backgrounds in traditional faculty development research, however they have a strong knowledge of learning technology, due to their experience in the classroom (Sorcinelli et al., 2006). The term “networking” in this case, is derived from the understanding that the new age of faculty development practitioners must work with the those from the old stages, to improve practices overall.

Faculty development research continues to evolve and builds on more layers, based on the experiences seen by the stakeholders. Beach et al. (2016) follow-up to Sorcinelli et al.’s (2006) work, discussed the next period in the evolution timeline, which is the Age of Evidence. The new entry into the evolution timeline, was developed based on the increasing interest in undergraduate outcomes and the “focus on assessing the impact of instruction on student learning, of academic programs on student success, and of faculty development within institutional mission priorities” (Beach et al., 2016, page. 31). The role of the faculty developer
continues to expand to meet the needs of institutional effectiveness, administrators, and individual faculty members (Beach et al., 2016). In addition, to expanded needs, faculty developers are also under increased pressure to deliver proof to administrators that the program implemented are effective and to function as agents of changes for various departments in the institution (Beach et al., 2016).

**Faculty Development Programs**

According to Lee (2010), the concept of faculty development centers began in 1962, when the first center was developed in the United States, that was focused on teaching and learning research. There was a rapid expansion of educational development centers that were founded thereafter, in North America (Lee, 2010). This expansion is also shown in the number of members that have joined the POD Network, which has increased from twenty members at the inception to more than 1,400 members as of 2021 (POD Network Executive Committee, 2016). Goals and values associated with faculty development vary by institution, and several program types have been created to account for the varying range of focus (Diamond, 2002).

**Structures**

According to Lee (2010), faculty development centers and developers have adapted based on the needs of the institution, the students and evolution of the faculty. The expansion of centers has led institutions to appoint faculty directors that may have a strong interest for assisting in the development of their peers, however they may have a limited base of knowledge for faculty development and the literature that supports the field (Lee, 2010). According to Sorcinelli et al. (2006), there are many centers that have leaders in place that have less than five years of field experience. These centers offer a defined set of functions or services and programs that are used to assist faculty patrons (Lee, 2010).
According to Beach et al. (2016), faculty development centers represent one type of structure, which has expanded over time. Beach et al. (2016), conducted a study with faculty developers to identify the types of structures that are in place at their institutions. The results of the study revealed that comprehensive universities’ use of faculty development centers increased from Sorcinelli’s (2006) previous study, to 59% from 51% (Beach et al., 2016). This trend was similar in other types of institutions, with a general focus on providing faculty with a centralized resource for development. According to Beach et al. (2016), other structures for faculty development include: individual leaders that are responsible for overseeing faculty development efforts, committee oversight, system-wide offices, and clearinghouses. Due to changes in faculty needs, institutions have declined in their usage of committees and clearinghouses (Beach et al., 2016). Although the general trend has shown that there is a move towards consolidated and centralized faculty development structures…differences in budgets and institutional needs have created unique characteristics for each institution (Beach et al., 2016). These differences can impact the scope of services provided at each institution.

**Services**

Beach et al. (2016), explored the programs that are most utilized by developers, which address the common needs that are witnessed in institutions. In their study, Beach et al. (2016), provided a survey to developers, asking them to identify three signature services that are associated with their centers. Participants were given an opportunity to provide information to be contacted, if they wanted to share additional details about their services (Beach et al., 2016). Out of the 120 that elected to be contacted, 70 participants were interviewed to elaborate on their signature services (Beach et al., 2016). The top services that were identified in the survey results were: new faculty orientation, integration of learning technology and active, inquiry—based, or
problem-based learning (Beach et al., 2016). These results were consistent with what was found in a comparable study that took place a decade earlier, conducted by Sorcinelli et al. (2006). According to Beach et al. (2016), developers continue to provide services for the general areas of faculty development need, however the study revealed that there is a clear plan for expansion that will enhance the scope of their work.

Types of Faculty Development Programs

Developers offer a variety of programs and delivery modalities, to support the evolving range of services offered by faculty development centers. According to Lee (2010), developers are in alignment with the evolution of the services offered and continue to serve as facilitators of faculty development. Workshops, individual consultations, faculty candidate programs/orientations, and faculty-led programs, represent common types of faculty development programs.

Workshops

Workshops can be delivered in multiple formats including online or in-person and are based on a specific, pedagogical theme or set of topics. Workshops can be delivered as a series of events or as one single event, offered by internal staff or faculty members or from external consultants (Lee, 2010). According to Cook and Marincovich, 2010, the concept of a workshop should evolve to create a better sense of engagement for the participant. Problem-based learning workshops are delivered with the idea of providing specific scenarios as the premise for a workshop. While traditional workshops are more generalized, problem-based workshops can assist a faculty member with directly, addressing their perceived deficiencies (Cho & Rathbun, 2013). According to Beach et al. (2016), workshops provide developers with an opportunity to document training for many faculty members.
Individual Consultations

Consultations are provided for faculty that are seeking additional guidance or are in need of a refresher related to topics in which they request additional clarity (Lee, 2010). Individual consultations are typically not efficient; however, they are highly valuable and can ensure confidentiality for the faculty member (Beach et al., 2016). Consultations can lead to direct changes to the faculty members’ practice; however, they can require valuable time from the faculty development administration team (Lee, 2010).

Faculty Candidate Programs/Orientations

Institutions offer in-house training programs that are used to prepare faculty to teach online. Commonly known as orientations, these training programs provide new faculty members with essential information, based on instructional skills, available resources, expectations, and learning technology training (Lee, 2010). These programs vary based on the needs of the institution, for example some programs typically in the for-profit sector require faculty to complete an online orientation training course prior to teaching in an online environment (Lowenthal & White, 2009). According to Lowenthal et al. (2019), large universities and public institutions may provide some form of base training and require faculty to adjust course content on their own, as needed.

Faculty-Led Programs

According to Diamond (2002), faculty-led programs provide faculty members with the opportunity to identify activities that best serve their goals, with limited input from administration. Faculty-led programs can be supported by stand-alone, teaching and learning centers. Teaching and learning centers can be found in several types of institutions (community colleges, research, and comprehensive institutions) and are led by academic staff (Cook and
Marincovich, 2010). Larger centers may also be found at the state or district level, to support all regional instructors. The centers provide specialized programming, instructor resources and access to learning technology. Faculty members can frequently utilize the center’s resources to research teaching topics and to further develop their instructional approach.

According to Lee (2010), faculty-led programs can also be delivered in the form of faculty learning communities (FLCs). Faculty learning communities (FLCs) are cohort-based and are comprised of faculty members based on the collective needs of the group (Lee, 2010). Some examples include FLCs for new faculty members, department administrators, or cohorts based on specific departments (Lee, 2010). Faculty learning communities (FLCs) are more extensive than other programs offered through faculty development, because they are usually ongoing and require additional funding and support (Lee, 2010).

**Faculty Motivation to Participate in Training Activities**

According to Condon et al. (2016), faculty development is valuable for faculty members and provides them with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and instructional approaches. Practical logic suggests that faculty that develop their teaching strategies will improve in the classroom, which can assist with improving student learning (Condon et al., 2016). Sorcinelli’s (2006) research supports this logic and suggests that faculty development practices can assist in the improvement of college level, teaching, and learning. In addition, the advances in online learning technology have expedited the expansion of distance education initiatives for most institutions, which further supports the need for faculty development and training (Batts, et al., 2010).

Despite the research that supports the need for faculty development, administrators have had trouble with instructor participation and involvement with training activities (Menges, 1997).
According to Lowenthal et al. (2013), there are numerous factors that are used to explain faculty motivation to participate in faculty development activities. Based on the varying levels of faculty goals, some faculty attend trainings to add to their tenure portfolios (Huston and Weaver, 2007), others participate to improve their teaching skills (Sorcinelli, 2006), while others only attend because it is mandatory, and they are coerced to do so (Lucas, 2002).

According to Lowenthal et al. (2013), the differences in faculty member experiences makes it complicated to generalize their source of motivation. Lowenthal et al. (2013), conducted a study to identify the sources of motivation of faculty at varying types of higher education institutions. In the study, the following institution types were sampled: a public research university, a four-year public college, a catholic university, and a proprietary institution (Lowenthal et al., 2013). In a mixed-methods research approach, 524 combined, full-time, and part-time faculty members were surveyed with a mix of Likert scale and open-ended questions, used to investigate their motivation for attending faculty development training sessions (Lowenthal et al., 2013).

Based on the results of their study, the question that directly related to faculty motivation to participate in training activities, produced the following results: all faculty members cited “release times” and “stipends,” as strong factors of motivation, in fact the “incentives not a factor” answer received the most unfavorable score overall (Lowenthal et al., 2013). Based on this question, faculty members feel that incentives serve as a key motivating factor for participating in faculty development. In addition to compensation and release time, another high scoring area in the survey was that “professional development was required” by the institution (Lowenthal et al., 2013). According to Lowenthal et al. (2013), institutions must provide a reward structure to acknowledge faculty participation in training activities.
Faculty Perceptions of Online Teaching and Learning

According to Walters et al. (2017), distance education has become a focal point for higher education institutions’ missions and strategic plans, which has placed pressure on faculty to adapt their instructional methods to accommodate online learning techniques. According to Cook and Marincovich (2010), if used properly, learning technology can expedite the teaching and learning process and can serve as an ally for faculty. However, faculty must be confident in their understanding of learning technology and how to implement its usage in their classrooms. In a survey conducted in Sorcinelli et al.’s (2006) research, the integration of learning technology was identified as one of the top three challenges for faculty members. According to Shih and Sorcinelli (2000), training programs must be designed to guide instructors on how to implement new learning technology, without the complete replacement of their teaching pedagogies. Faculty may not embrace modern technology, if there is a perception that they must completely change their approach to instruction.

This transition has also impacted faculty instructional approaches, in that effective online instruction requires them to be more of a facilitator than a lecturer (Bair & Bair, 2011). This has created somewhat of a divide between instructors’ teaching philosophies. According to Kirkwood and Price (2012), there are differences in philosophy regarding teaching and learning for instructors. Some teachers have teaching-focused conceptions which focus on cascading information to their students and others are learning-focused and are dedicated to cultivating their students’ understanding of course concepts. These two differences can influence teacher perceptions of online teaching and learning and can lead to feelings of being underprepared to teach in a distance education environment (Bair & Bair, 2011).
According to Espinoza and Neal (2018), there are several factors that inhibit faculty from fully engaging in online teaching and learning. The factors range across various topics, however the most prevalent are philosophical differences with the concept of online learning, considerations for the time that it takes to develop online courses and lack of comfort with using and relying on learning technology (Espinoza & Neal, 2018).

In their study, Espinoza and Neal (2018) used Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK), to capture the role that innovative technology has on faculty perceptions of the legitimacy of online learning. Espinoza and Neal (2018), used the results of other studies to identify the primary concerns that faculty have regarding transitioning to online teaching and learning. Faculty concerns regarding preparation time and apprehension of using technology in their instruction were deemed to be the most prevalent. According to Espinoza and Neal (2018), scholars have suggested that professional development can assist in positively changing faculty perceptions and overcoming their concerns. Espinoza and Neal (2018) proposed a revised version of TPACK, that would be used to address the prevalent issues identified in their research. Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge would present a fourth element that would be added to the base TPACK model, which accounted for “Content Knowledge.” The focus would be on the faculty members’ understanding of how learning technology can assist them in identifying how their instructional approach can be enhanced by purposefully integrating each area of the TPACK model, which includes: technical knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and content knowledge (Espinoza & Neal, 2018). A key factor of the TPACK model is grounded in the training that is provided to the faculty member.

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must be confident in their understanding of learning technology and how to implement its usage in their classrooms. According to Sorcinelli (2006), training programs must be designed to guide instructors on how to implement new learning technology, without the complete replacement of their teaching pedagogies. Faculty may not embrace modern technology, if there is a perception that they must completely change their approach to instruction. Austin (2010) supports this by stating that training developers should not generalize their content for faculty, instead they should acknowledge the needs of instructors based on their career levels and experience. Generalized training may create disinterest and may not adhere to the specific needs of the faculty member (Austin, 2010).

**Impacts of Faculty Development**

The impact that faculty development has on student learning has been continuously debated and researched. Obviously, acquiring or learning a new skill can improve an individual’s understanding of effective instruction. However, a difficult concept to assess is the actual transfer-of-training and implementation into the classroom. Condon et al. (2016), discuss how the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) promotes the idea of evidence-based instruction, that identifies specific implementations of a newly acquired skill into the classroom. Faculty that utilizes SOTL use their classrooms as active research studies to gain an understanding of how a program improves their instruction. There have been some drawbacks associated with SoTL. For one, it is difficult for faculty members to fully ascertain if their training leads to improvements or learning or if it is a result of students organically mastering the subject-matter (Condon et al., 2016).

Boyer’s (1990), work is credited for the foundation of scholarship of teaching. However, the roots of SoTL can be found in the research of several contributors that were interested in
studying concepts which opposed the idea that the teaching and research operated in a polarizing manner (McCarthy, 2008). In fact, the framework for the four scholarships which are represented in Boyer’s work, was originally developed by Eugene Rice, with a focus on highlighting the role of college professors (McCarthy, 2008). However, Boyer’s research focused on the role of academics as scholars, instead of professors that serve institutions (McCarthy, 2008).

According to Boyer (1990), the idea of scholar should be expanded to include all the aspects that are associated with teaching and research responsibilities. To properly illustrate the importance of these aspects, Boyer (1990) proposed four general areas of scholarship: discovery, integration, application, and teaching. According to Boyer (1990), the proposed scholarship views were developed to acknowledge the limited oversight of the faculty rewards system and to account for the complex responsibilities that are associated with the evaluation of college professors. According to McCarthy (2008), the implications of Boyer’s research served a higher role in developing the foundation for future research.

Huber and Hutchings (2006), expanded on the Boyer’s work and acknowledged that SoTL paved the way for faculty to make inquiries regarding their own instruction and their students’ learning and to share their discoveries with other colleagues. This idea termed as “the teaching commons,” is “a conceptual space in which communities of educators committed to pedagogical inquiry and innovation come together to exchange ideas about teaching and learning and use them to meet the challenges of preparing students for personal, professional, and civic life” (Huber and Hutchings, 2006, p. 26). Innovative technology has enabled this faculty network to expand beyond the walls of the instructor’s institution. According to Huber and Hutchings (2006), faculty can now share syllabi and other course materials with other instructors around the world, by using digital repositories. According to Huber and Hutchings (2006), the teaching
commons enable faculty to contextualize the theoretical framework provided by SoTL and to identify practical methods that can be applied to their practice.

**Faculty Development Impact on Student Learning**

There is an idea that faculty development can serve as a “Placebo Effect” in education. Faculty members tend to be motivated after the conclusion of a faculty development activity and may take that enhanced engagement into the classroom. If that class session is deemed as a successful learning experience, is it because of the instructor’s motivation or the implementation of the acquired learning from the faculty member? According to Holloway (2006), teacher motivation and the implementation of faculty development skills into the classroom do not have to be mutually exclusive. From that interpretation, faculty development’s impact on learning can be more inclusive than just accounting for how new instructor skills can directly affect student engagement in the classroom.

According to Condon et al. (2016), it is difficult to connect and evaluate the impact of faculty development on student learning, due to the relationship of the associated terms. Regarding the scholarship of teaching and learning, faculty development provides faculty with the opportunity to learn new techniques, strategies, and technology (Condon et al., 2016). According to Condon et al. (2016), student learning is more commonly associated with assessment, which does not assess the teacher’s faculty development. To evaluate the effectiveness of faculty development on student learning, assessment must be able to assess both aspects of teaching and learning (Condon et al., 2016).

According to Condon et al. (2016), the most challenging task is to assess the impact of faculty development on student learning at the course level. Faculty members may implement aspects of their training over a series of terms and courses, which may not be reflected in a
specific class section (Condon et al., 2016). Measuring the impact at the course level involves the use of a longitudinal approach, in which the researcher examines student work, which is gathered over a period of time (Condon et al., 2016).

According to Wehlburg (2010), there are indirect practices that can be put in place to assess the effectiveness of faculty development, based on the developer’s role in preparing the teacher to instruct based on program and course learning outcomes. Standard institutional, programmatic, and course-level assessments are put in place to validate student learning outcomes and to ensure accreditation compliance (Wehlburg, 2010). According to Wehlburg (2010) faculty developers must align training course objectives with the designated standards of the assessments that are used to measure student learning. Faculty developers have an obligation to be aware of the accrediting standards and understanding the requirements needed to maintain compliance with the agency (Wehlburg, 2010). Through this transformative process, faculty developers can create courses that can assist faculty members with improving class performance and maximizing opportunities to impact student learning.

According to Hines (2009), there are common essential components that are necessary to fully assess the impact of faculty development on student learning. The common components should be systematic, goal-directed, have measurable objectives, a clear standard for determining success, methods that measure objectives, multiple forms of measures, summative and formative data, and evidence that a causal relationship exists (Hines, 2009). According to Hines (2009), determining a causal relationship consists of having an assessment design that compares faculty development participants with non-participants. This measure would determine if the faculty development had a direct impact on the student learning process. Researchers have taken a variety of approaches to identify and assess causal relationships.
The Tracer Project

A longitudinal mixed-methods study was conducted involving both the Washington State University and Carleton College campuses, to study the impact of faculty development on student learning. The study was named “The Tracer Project” and was conducted by Carol A. Rutz, Beverly Nagel, William Condon, and Cathryn Manduca. The goal of the study was to develop an understanding of the relationship between student learning, faculty development, and instructional practice (Condon et al., 2016). The study was conducted over a three-year span and including multiple methods to address the research questions, which included: faculty interviews, analysis of course components, classroom observations, and an assessment of student work for both campuses (Condon et al., 2016).

The study found that faculty development programs that were implemented at both campuses served as a key factor of pedagogical changes that promoted student learning. Specifically, at Washington State University, over 300 faculty members participated (with varying project roles) in the research project and conveyed in their interviews that faculty development assisted in improving their instructional practices and positively impacted student class performance (Condon et al., 2016). To maintain consistency, the researchers took a similar approach with the Carleton College campus, however additional ethnographic approaches were used to accommodate the smaller amount of faculty (Condon et al., 2016). Over 80 Carleton College campus faculty participated in the research study (Condon et al., 2016).

To ensure that faculty development was being measured accurately, in relation to student learning, all critical thinking assignments (during the study) were graded based on an adjusted rubric (Condon et al., 2016). Although this study demonstrated that there is a positive connection
between faculty development and student learning, additional studies are needed to further ascertain the direct impact.

**Further Analysis of Assessment Practices**

Hines (2009), took a deep dive to review the assessment practices identified by faculty developers, to determine how their programs impact student learning. In the study, 20 individuals representing public and private non-profit institutions agreed to participate in face-to-face interviews, with open-ended questions (Hines, 2009). The study design was based on Chism and Szabo’s 1997 survey of faculty development administrators. According to the survey results, many participants disclosed that their assessment efforts were based on satisfaction outcomes, which is similar to the findings of the Chism and Szabo (1997) study (Hines, 2009). Hines (2009), found that nine of the 20 developers were recipients of grants and were required to provide detailed reports. Five of the eight grant recipients used assessment measures that were directly related to the impact on teaching and learning, with the omission of satisfaction (Hines, 2009). These respondents sought to find evidence of the impact of faculty development, using classroom observations (conducted by the developer), review of course materials and teacher-distributed surveys that were provided to students (Hines, 2009). According to Hines (2009), this study encouraged the developers to identify more direct methods of assessment, including the possibility of identifying correlations between institutional data and faculty development efforts.

**Effectiveness of Faculty Training Programs**

According to Plank and Kalish (2010), increased institutional accountability and fiscal responsibility have led to the need for faculty development program assessment. In addition, faculty development exists in an Age of Evidence, which is based on quality improvement, teaching, and learning efforts that are supported by evidence (Beach et al., 2016). As discussed
throughout this literature review, faculty development can take on various forms based on the needs and goals of the institution. A valid program assessment must be developed based on the specific structural characteristics and goals of the department or institution (Plank and Kalish, 2010). The goals of the program must be aligned with the institution’s mission, to establish an assessment of the programmatic outcomes and measures (Plank and Kalish, 2010).

**Challenges Associated with Faculty Development Evaluation**

Although there is a clear need for faculty development program assessment, developers have encountered challenges in their pursuit of proper assessment strategies. According to Chism and Szabo (1997), faculty development programs are evaluated based on user satisfaction, instead of focusing on the measurement of program outcomes and goals. According to Hines (2011), superficial measures have been historically used to assess faculty development programs, due to the complications and complexities involved in developing viable assessments. Kuscera and Svinicki (2010), further support the research by acknowledging that the field of faculty development has not made much progress in evaluation standards, since the early 1990s. Hines (2017), identified five specific obstacles that may speak to the challenges that are associated with faculty development program evaluation:

1. *Misguiding evaluation mindsets*—where preconceived ideas regarding evaluation impede the desire to conduct rigorous evaluation.
2. *Weak infrastructure*—where the way in which CTL resources, workflow allocation, and operational procedures are structured hinder efforts to conduct quality evaluation.
3. *Ill-conceptualized curricula*—where the CTL curricula represent an ever-expanding menu of offerings without an intentional curricular design.
4. *Fuzzy goals and short-aimed missions*—where a CTL mission is myopically focused on faculty needs, and program goals are aimed on process not product.

5. *Ill-conceived evaluation frameworks*—where evaluation planning is done in an intuitive manner without the use of a sound evaluation framework (para. 2).

**Faculty Developers’ Approaches to Evaluation**

Beach et al. (2016), surveyed faculty developers to identify how they assess their programs. Specifically, developers were asked to rate their assessment of faculty development outcomes, data collection practices, and how they share results (Beach et al., 2016). Based on the collected results the most popular choices for program outcomes were participation numbers and participant satisfaction (Beach et al., 2016). Data collection was consistent with the key outcomes measured, with self-report surveys being cited as one of the preferred data collection methods. Finally, directors were asked how they disseminated results and the results were widespread, however dissemination through publications and reporting at advisory boards, were cited most in the survey.

Overall, Beach et al.’s (2016) study supported the efforts of previous research in that program evaluation is still challenging for directors, which pushes them towards superficial measures for satisfaction (Hines, 2017). More advanced measures of evaluation require time and vast resources, which are not attainable for more faculty development program directors. According to Plank and Kalish (2010), participant satisfaction surveys, engagement data and self-reflection surveys can be used for data collection methods, however, developers or individuals responsible for faculty development may lack the time necessary to rigorously evaluate the data on a consistent basis. Hines (2017), conducted a field study to gain an understanding of the evaluation approaches used at nine different faculty development centers.
“The nine field testing institutions included one community college, two 4-year institutions (a private liberal arts and private proprietary), five comprehensive universities (three public and two private), and one Research I institution in which the CTL served the Faculties of Science” (Hines, 2017, para. 5). Hines (2017), accompanied each sited director over a three-year project, to ensure that they used the Four Phase Program Evaluation Model to evaluate their respective programs.

**Four Phase Program Evaluation Model**

The Four Phase Program Evaluation Model was developed based on Stufflebeam’s CIPP model, that specifically focuses on Context, Input, Process, and Product, due to the evaluation issues that were cited by faculty development center directors (Hines, 2017). The Four Phase model is based on specific phases that encompass the components of the CIPP model. Specifically, Phase one focuses on contest, Phase two examines process, Phase three reviews product in relation to the plan for evaluation, and Phase four analyzes plan implementation (Hines, 2017). With each phase, graphical organizers were created to depict how specific criteria areas were to be evaluated, based on the cited specifications. The final phase of the plan requires developers to collect all associated data, analyze it, interpret it, and use it to make the necessary improvements to their programs and centers (Hines, 2017).

The field study participants collectively acknowledge the benefits of having an organized model that could be used to evaluate their programs. Many commented on how the model enabled them to reassess their work and to prune data collection efforts (Hines, 2017). Although, the feedback was positive, there were several noted challenges to implementing the model, including: lack of sufficient time, making sense of the terms involved in the phase planning of the model, intimidation with working with the model, and difficulty with applying the model to
fluid programs, that require constant revision (Hines, 2017). Despite the challenges, many developers have adopted the model for program evaluation.

**Outcome-Based Evaluation Model**

Additional pressure has been applied to the need for Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTLs) to effectively measure program outcomes, due to the expansion of educational technology integration (Chen et al., 2013). The Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of South Dakota was opened in 2007, with a mission focused on providing instructors with essential resources, support, and training that could be applied directly to their instruction (Chen et al., 2013). Chen et al. (2013), prioritized program effectiveness over other areas of need, due to the importance of ensuring that the services provided by their center were relevant and benefited the faculty participants. In developing a comprehensive plan for assessment, Chen et al. (2013) used an outcome-based evaluation system which is focused on the following premises: faculty members’ satisfaction of services, faculty members’ learning, the impact on the institution, application of the learning, and the impact on the students (Guskey, 2002).

Chen et al. (2013), used a two-stage system to deploy their evaluation strategy. Stage one took place during the first few years of the center’s establishment and was primarily an output-based assessment, which was used to gather center-use statistics, demographics, and comparative analytics for each year of operation (Chen et al., 2013). Stage two of the plan was conducted from 2010-present and focused directly on outcome-based evaluations, that were developed to fully understand the impact of the program. To support the exist output-based data, the following measures were implemented: concrete objectives were developed for each event and assessment, existing university student course survey data was used in the program evaluation, and random faculty surveys were administered at the end of each academic year to identify if the workshop
and training experiences, impacted teaching (Chen et al., 2013). The combination of implemented measures was directly used to assess the center’s objectives using both quantitative and qualitative measures. According to Chen et al. (2013), the outcomes-based evaluation that was implemented created some challenges, however they feel confident that the data collected assisted in the validation and expansion of the services offered by their center. For the future, Chen et al. (2013), plan to add more rigor to their evaluation process by adding process-based evaluations with a focus on identifying how the transfer-of-training is directly applied to the classroom.

**Theories of Faculty Development**

Over time, several theories have been used to develop faculty development models for higher education. Knowles (1975), pioneered adult learning theories when he developed the term “andragogy” to describe how adults learn. The emphasis of andragogy is that adults seek out learning that they find important or practical to their lives.

Interestingly, theoretical framework does not serve as the primary basis for faculty development practices. Approaches vary, based on institution, which has led to research being conducted, regarding the practices used at different institutions. Meyer and Murrell (2014), conducted a research study to identify the prevalence of theoretical foundation for faculty development for online teaching. In their national study, data was collected from 39 higher education institutions based on their faculty development for online teaching and learning practices (Meyer & Murrell, 2014). The institutions were surveyed on three items, including: base of learning theory used to create their program, importance of information provided to faculty during training sessions and the importance that the institution placed on faculty comprehension of assigned training topics (Meyer & Murrell, 2014). Based on the study, the
results revealed that the institutions feel that there should be less of a focus on theory when developing faculty development programs for online teaching. Instead, they feel that the focus should be placed on student learning styles and how their instructional approaches should accommodate them appropriately (Meyer & Murrell, 2014).

Nancekiveli et al. (2019) conducted a study to further examine the myth that student learning styles are set at birth, which may contradict the focus of some of the faculty program development models. The study was delivered in two online experiments that comprised of 668 participants, with 90 percent believing that individuals are more apt to acquire learning, if they are taught based on their learning style (Nancekiveli et al., 2019). However, this group of participants was split based on their confidence in their beliefs, with one group for “essentialists” that had strong beliefs and another group for “nonessentialists”, which were flexible in their stated beliefs (Nancekiveli et al., 2019).

Nancekiveli et al. (2019), reviewed the survey questions and found that the essentialist participant group tended to believe that learning styles are heritable, are predictors of academic and career success and cannot be changed, whereas the nonessentialist group responses, were more malleable and support the belief that learning styles could be changed over time. Faculty training developers that adopt the focus on learning styles may miss the opportunity to provide a more adaptive approach to their content design. According to Nancekiveli et al. (2019), individuals tend to accept their understanding of behaviors that are based on brain-associated functionality, which gives them an opportunity to distinctively categorize people. The idea of learning styles serves as a reflection of this assumption of thought.
Transformative Learning Theory

Jack Mezirow’s transformative learning theory was introduced to expand upon the adult learning research that has been studied since the early 1920’s (Taylor et al., 2012). Transformative learning theory focuses on the premise that adult learners receiving new information are simultaneously evaluating prior knowledge and understanding (Mezirow, 2012). Quantitative research was commonly used in adult learning research methodology, prior to Mezirow’s introduction of sophisticated qualitative methods. Mezirow’s focus on qualitative research was based on his initial study that was purposed with identifying factors that impeded the success of women that were enrolled in community college reentry programs (Mezirow & Marsick, 1978). Initial data was collected from 83 women from four different community colleges, that were enrolled in twelve diverse programs. Mezirow developed the primary components of the transformative learning theory from the nine-phrase process that was discovered during his data collection process (Mezirow & Marsick, 1978). According to Mezirow and Marsick (1978), these phrases create a change in the individual’s “meaning perspective”, which is defined as “the structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions (p. 82). According to Mezirow (2012), meaning perspective is also known as frame of reference, which is formed based on the interpretation of experience, which are internally or externally developed.

According to Mezirow (2012), the transformative learning theory is based on a cycle of learning, “which occurs in one of four ways: by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind” (p.84). Adult learners experience transformational learning when a previously stored frame of reference is challenged by new information or completely transformed (Mezirow,
Personal, critical reflection is a component of transforming points of view. The transformations of thought are associated with the following phases, which serve as the foundation of Mezirow’s (2012) transformative learning theory:

1. a disorienting dilemma.
2. self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame.
3. a critical assessment of assumption.
4. recognition that one’s discontent and process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change.
5. exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions.
6. planning of a course of action.
7. acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans.
8. provisionally trying out new roles.
9. building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and
10. a reintegration of new assumption into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective (p. 86).

According to Taylor and Cranton (2012), transformative learning theory is based on constructivist principles, in which an individual’s perspective is developed by their experiences and perceptions. The constructivist principles suggest that learning continually modifies what an individual already knows (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). According to Cranton and Taylor (2012), transformative learning represents a new form of andragogy, because it provides the framework for understanding adult learning and guidance for teaching adult learners.
**Evaluation of Transformative Learning Theory**

According to Cranton and Hoggan (2012), evaluation models have been developed to assess adult learning in general, however they are irrelevant for the assessment of transformative learning. The outcomes of knowledge that serve as the underpinnings of transformative learning, are not values that can be, predicted, or measured (Cranton & Hoggan, 2012). Communicative, instrumental, and emancipatory are the kinds of knowledge that serve as the foundation of transformative learning (Cranton and Hoggan, 2012). According to Mezirow (2012), effectiveness of transformative learning is based upon an individual’s critical self-reflection of their personal experience. Based on the outcomes of the theory, holistic approaches to evaluation serve as the best form of assessment.

Mezirow (1991), explained that transformative learning outcomes should not be specified in advance, due to the organic process of the phases. According to Mezirow (1991), assessment can take place in the form of observation of the individual’s change and advancement through the phases. Furthermore, Mezirow (1991), reinforced the idea that the process should be evaluated and not the product. Individuals’ actions should be observed, to evaluate indications of transformative learning. According to Cranton and Hoggan (2012), there is limited research available in regard to evaluation methods for transformative learning, primarily based on the arguments provided by Mezirow. However, the most common techniques for evaluation of transformative learning in teaching and research are; self-evaluation, interviews, narratives, observations, surveys, and other holistic qualitative methods (Cranton and Hoggan, 2012).

**Transformative Learning Theory in Practice**

Transformative learning theory serves a comprehensive method for understanding how adult learners process and retain information (King, 2002). The theory provides a foundation for
professional development, in that the adults (teachers) attempt to implement new learning into their prior beliefs and assumptions (King, 2002). King (2002) conducted a study to examine the occurrence of transformative learning in relation to faculty development for educational technology. Guided by the research, King (2002), based the study on the following premises: teachers serving in the role as adult learners, recognition that transformative learning can occur in the educational process, and that changes in their professional development can be examined. The study consisted of 175 teachers that were participating in courses that provided them with professional development, with a focus on learning technology. A mixed-methods approach was used, with a learning activities survey serving as the quantitative instrument and interviews and essays provided the qualitative data (King, 2002). King (2002), determined from the data collection, that transformative learning provides viable insight into the assessment of teachers’ experiences with their progression through professional development and application of their skills.

According to Taylor (1997), there has been a redundancy of research regarding Mezirow’s work, due to limited critiques of the research. Many aspects of transformative learning theory have served as a foundation for adult learning (Taylor, 1997). However, one aspect of Mezirow’s theory that has been criticized is the first aspect, the disorienting dilemma. According to Taylor (1997), researchers have criticized Mezirow’s description of disorienting dilemma, due to a lack of context. Perspective transformation from Mezirow’s description, seems to be a definitive result of disorienting dilemma, which is not always the case (Taylor, 1997). Taylor (1997), conducted a review of literature to identify why some disorienting dilemmas can develop a perspective transformation and why some do not. The assumption is that the possibility for perspective transformation is based on the historical context or significance (to
the individual) of the impacting event (Taylor, 1997). Overall, context continues to serve as a factor in contemporary and future studies of transformative learning theory.

*Nerstrom Transformative Learning Model*

Mezirow’s (1978) transformative learning theory has served as an inspiration for several studies, that have used his research as a primary focus. According to Nerstrom (2014), previous researchers were not able to develop a simplified approach to explaining transformative learning theory. The Nerstrom Transformative Learning Model (2014) was heavily inspired by Mezirow’s (1978) research; however, it simplifies the original ten-phase process and reduces it to four segments. The ten-phases associated with the transformative learning theory are valid for the explanation of the process, however it is difficult for researchers to ascertain individual entry into a specific phase (Nerstrom, 2014).

Nerstrom’s model is sequentially ordered with practicality in mind and all phases are encountered. “The four phases are (a) having experiences; (b) making assumptions; (c) challenging perspectives; and (d) experiencing transformative learning” (Nerstrom, 2014, p. 327). Nerstrom’s model (Figure 1) is visually represented as a cycle of learning, that does not conclude once the individual has experienced transformative learning (Nerstrom, 2014). The model’s expectation is that once an individual has experienced transformative learning, they will be more receptive to a repeat experience.
Conclusion

Online teaching and learning serve as a current and future focal point for higher education. Faculty development is a key to ensuring that instructors are prepared to meet the needs of the institution and to ensure proper training for their students. Faculty perceptions of online teaching and learning are sculpted based on their experience with the preparation support provided to them from their institution. Hence, the efficacy of a faculty development training course can serve as a key factor for predicting the effectiveness of an institution’s success in implementing distance education programs.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Online teaching and learning has become a focal point for higher education. Institutions have focused their strategic plans to maximize opportunities to grow their campuses within a virtual format. The issue has been two-fold; faculty are hesitant to use innovative pedagogy in the classroom and there are cases where they are not comfortable with using technology overall. This represents an underlying tension between the administrative focus to move forward, without acknowledging that faculty are being left behind and may have negative perceptions of teaching in an online environment. Institutions typically provide mandated development for prospective online instructors.

The research question for this study focuses on the relationship between mandatory training for online instructors and transformative learning. It is:

What is the relationship between mandatory faculty development for college instructors at a proprietary institution teaching online courses and transformative learning? How can mandatory faculty development be improved to lead to more transformative learning?

This chapter will begin with an overview of the conceptual framework, followed by a thorough description of the methodology used for this research study. A detailed summary of the research design is provided, including following: description of the participants, methods, and details for each aspect of data collection, data analysis, limitations/delimiters of the study, positionality statement and a concluding summary of the chapter.
Conceptual Framework

Figure 2

Mandatory Faculty Development

Faculty Demographics

Transformative Learning

Teaching Experience
The conceptual framework (Figure 2) of this study is based on the potential factors that may be involved in transformative learning experiences. Based on the literature review of this study, a more in-depth focus on the variable of mandatory faculty development is needed to identify a possible relationship with transformative learning experiences.

According to Cranton (1996), educators view faculty development as an opportunity to develop their practice and approach to instruction. Faculty continuously develop their craft of teaching over time, based on their experiences and training. According to Whitelaw et al. (2004), the implementation of instructional technology has further influenced the need for development and has introduced a new form of instructional complexity, which can serve as a trigger for transformative learning to occur. According to King (2002), learning technology can present feelings of confusion and intimidation for faculty members and learners. In faculty development, faculty members are in the role of learner and the transformative learning theory provides the necessary framework to properly associate the cognitive changes that they experience in their learning (King, 2002).

Mandatory faculty development is the independent variable and is displayed in the left portion of the conceptual framework diagram. For this research study, mandatory faculty development is represented as the institution-provided mandatory training that is assigned to all instructors prior to teaching in an online environment. The relationship between mandatory faculty training and transformative learning was measured through the faculty members’ explanations of their experiences. The explanations are documented in the surveys and interviews conducted. The hypothesis is that mandatory faculty development can lead to a transformative learning experience for faculty members.
Faculty demographics is in the upper middle portion of the conceptual framework diagram and is designated as a moderating variable. No research was found that supports a connection between faculty demographics and transformative learning. This framework posits that a relationship exists between the variables and the hypothesis will be explored and included in this research. There is a possibility that faculty characteristics such as: age, racial/ethnicity, professional title, and assigned program, can serve as factors for developing transformative learning experiences. This variable connects to the line that represents the relationship between mandatory faculty development and transformative learning, in the conceptual framework diagram.

Faculty teaching experience represents the second moderating variable and is in the lower middle portion of the conceptual framework diagram. This variable also connects to the line that represents the relationship between mandatory faculty development and transformative learning, in the conceptual framework diagram. There was no research found that supported a connection between faculty teaching experiences and transformative learning. This research posits that teaching experience serves as a catalyst for the development of a relationship between faculty development and transformative learning. There is limited research that is based on the designated career stages associated with faculty members that teach at for-profit institutions.

Due to the lack of a tenure system, career stages cannot be directly compared to faculty members that teach at traditional universities and colleges. According to Austin (2010), there are three primary career stages that are designated for tenure-eligible faculty members: early career, midcareer, and senior. Although they do not directly apply to career college faculty, the designation headings will be used for this research study, with intervals that are loosely based on the typical stages that are used to categorize faculty careers (Austin, 2010).
Table 1

*Years of Teaching Experience Intervals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Stage</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Career</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midcareer</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>10 or more years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research hypothesizes that teaching experience strengthens the possibility of a relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Specific questions in the survey and interviews will be used to identify specific themes that support the possibility of this assumption.

**Transformative Learning**

Transformative learning represents the dependent variable of the study and is located on the right side of the diagram. To illustrate the expected relationships amongst variables, direct lines are drawn between each independent variable and the dependent variable. Transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990) serves as the theoretical framework for this research study. According to Mezirow (1990), transformative learning is a process of learning through action, which is initiated by the decision to change one’s meaning perspective. Transformative learning theory focuses on the premise that adult learners receiving new information are simultaneously evaluating prior knowledge and understanding (Mezirow, 2012).

For this study, transformative learning is documented based on the recorded participant experiences, via survey and interview. Specifically, relationships are determined based on collected data, which determines the participants’ placement and experience within the associated phases of transformative learning.

**Methodology**

A constructivist approach is taken in this study; this recognizes that participants construct reality based on their experiences. Taylor (1998), acknowledged that many studies based on transformative learning theory have employed a qualitative research design which best captures the experience of the participant. Over time, research processes have become more transcendent
with an expansion to action research designs which adds additional context to study designs (Taylor, 1998).

Qualitative research represents a social inquiry method that enables researchers to gain an understanding of how people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world that they live in (Atkinson, 1995). According to Anderson et al. (2007), action research is a practical exploration in which the researcher actively participates within the study. Action research is usually conducted by school professionals or faculty that are actively working in the institution or by outsiders that work with institutional “insiders” that assist them with the study. Action research was utilized for this study, with active faculty members serving as the participants.

**Paradigmatic Roots**

The interpretivist paradigm is heavily focused on human interest in research. Interpretivism has been strongly associated with qualitative research because complex human issues cannot be defined by systematic and theoretical answers, without appropriate context (Atkinson, 1995). The context is provided through an analysis of the experiences of individuals that are impacted by the phenomenon. Qualitative researchers implement several techniques that are used to assist in the process of understanding and recording the experiences of their research participants.

According to Bryman (2001), qualitative researchers are usually critical of research that is derived from the positivist school of social research, which focuses on a natural science-based approach to interpreting human behavior. Atkinson (1995) believes that the polarization between Interpretivism and positivism limits the possibilities for expanding research, however the separation of social research thought has continued in modern studies. Interpretivism is associated with several variations of thought within social research, including Phenomenology
(Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). According to Littlejohn and Foss (2009), a phenomenology is a philosophical tradition, in which the researcher attempts to understand the world through experience.

**Relevance of Chosen Methodology**

This research study design is based on a qualitative phenomenological approach. The phenomenological research design is utilized when the essence of the study is based on the researcher’s focus of understanding the interactions and experiences of their participants, in relation to the phenomenon (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Donalek (2004), describes phenomenological studies as a type of research that is used to understand topics in which there is limited knowledge. This design resonates with this study, in that the participants’ experiences will provide the necessary data to answer the research question. The researcher is interested in analyzing their experiences through survey and interview, to gain an understanding of the context of their experiences with preparing to teach in an online environment.

Researchers serve a key role in phenomenological studies, in that they must interpret the experience of the participant from the context of the vantage point, while acknowledging their own feelings and beliefs (Donalek, 2004). Qualitative research design holds a direct connection to transformative learning because it served as Mezirow’s selected design for his initial study that produced the theory (Mezirow & Marsick, 1978). This research study has taken a similar approach to ensure that identified transformative learning experiences are appropriately interpreted by the researcher.
Data Collection

Participants

The focus of this study is to understand and evaluate transformative learning, based on the experiences of faculty members that participate in the mandatory online teacher preparation course. Adjunct and full-time faculty members teach in either online or hybrid course at Midwestern Career College (MCC). There are currently 40 faculty members, representing 11 academic programs that will serve as the pool of participants for the study (MCC Catalog, 2021). Program directors that teach classes within their program were omitted from the candidate pool because they assist in the administration of all faculty development initiatives, which may create a conflict of interest. The Vice President of Academic Affairs granted permission for the researcher to email an initial survey link to the prospective participants. The prospective participants were emailed to request their participation in the survey and interview, with contact information provided by an active faculty member directory. From the pool of candidates, 19 faculty participants agreed to complete the survey, representing seven academic programs and general education instructors.

Surveys

An electronic survey containing 20 questions was sent to the survey volunteers via email. An online survey tool, Microsoft Forms, was used to deliver the questions and to record the data. The survey was primarily constructed with open-ended questions that are directly related to the ten specific phases that are directly associated with transformative learning theory, as well as demographic and experience related inquiries. A full text of the survey questions and protocol is provided in the appendix for the study (Appendix A Survey Questions). A question was provided in the survey to invite participants to participate in the interview. Participants that selected the
option of “yes” were placed into a pool of candidates that were considered to participate in the interview. Participants that volunteered for the interview provided their contact information within the online survey.

**Interviews**

In a phenomenological study, there are typically three to ten participants selected for research (Cresswell, 2014). Furthermore, “interview data for program evaluation allows the evaluator to capture the perspectives of program participants” (Patton, 1990, p. 278). Due to the depth and focus of the research, adding more individuals could saturate the results and make it difficult to determine the findings of the study. For this study, six participants were selected for interviews. The participants were selected based on their years of teaching experience, with two representations from each of the three age intervals of teaching experience.

Each interview was conducted via videoconferencing. The interviews were scheduled for 30 minutes, with automated transcription. The automated transcripts were downloaded, reviewed for accuracy, and saved in a Microsoft Word document, which was stored in a secured OneDrive folder. All participants signed written consent forms in advance of the interview. The interview duration time was tested with peers that represent similar backgrounds to the prospective participants.

**Data Analysis**

Survey and interview transcripts were coded separately, using Dedoose, which is a web-based qualitative data analysis software tool. Common themes were identified in the coding process, based on the specific phases of Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory. A codebook was developed to organize the data based on common themes, found from the surveys and interview transcripts. In addition, sub-codes were created to capture all variations of themes
that could be found from the data. All data was stored in a secure account, with additional backup on a separate hard drive.

Confidentiality

According to Cresswell (2014), building trust with participants is a primary factor for reducing the risk of potential ethical issues. Building trust is accomplished by ensuring credibility, accurate and honest reporting, respecting privacy, and securing data (Cresswell, 2014). Throughout the research process, participant confidentiality and protection from potential harm remained a top priority for this study.

Participation in the research study was completely voluntary and without coercion. To ensure confidentiality, the survey questionnaire did not require respondents’ names. Participants that volunteered to participate in the follow-up interview disclosed their names, however their identities are protected with secured data storage. Participant responses were used to support findings however specific names were not included in the research study.

An informed consent form was implemented, to ensure that participants were aware of the ethical considerations of the study. Each participant received the form prior to the start of the study and provided their signed permission to participate in the study. In addition to the study’s purpose and intent, the form also included a provision that granted participants the authority to terminate their participation at any time during the process. The form, as well as all instruments used in the study were provided to the institutional review board (IRB), for review and authorization to conduct the study. The IRB granted full authorization for the researcher to conduct the study. All associated consent forms are provided in the appendix of this study.
Limitations

There are two primary limitations for this research study. First, there is limited research that is focused on for-profit career college instructor faculty training and its relationship to transformative learning. This presents a large gap in available information, therefore, to clarify the direction of the study supporting literature was cited from adjacent areas of faculty development and higher ed. Although this research serves as a contribution to understanding this possible relationship, additional future studies that are related to this topic will be needed to validate the findings.

Secondly, faculty development for online instructors is a requirement at the selected institution. As an institutional requirement, prospective online instructors must successfully complete faculty development training prior to being assigned courses to teach. The institution’s faculty development program is led and developed by internal, campus administrators. The research varies on mandatory faculty development, and there are some researchers that have found that the practice can produce negative results. Sorcinelli (1997), identified that faculty value their autonomy and that mandatory faculty development programs could be unsuccessful, because of the resistance to forced participation. According to Kreaden (2002), the Stern School of Business at New York University has been successful in their implementation of a mandatory faculty development program, however, it is managed by faculty and guided by external consultation.

Delimiters

This qualitative research study was delimited by placing restrictions on the pool of participants. The participants for this study do not hold administrative roles. Specifically,
program directors were omitted from the study, due to their participation in the development of faculty development activities and courses.

In addition, this study was focused on one institution as a primary source for research. With a topic that focuses on faculty perceptions, it would be important to include a varying range of institutions that could serve as a better representation of collective experiences and observations of transformative learning.

Validity

According to Cresswell (2014), qualitative validity is established by using multiple approaches in the research design. Due to the subjectivity involved with qualitative research, the concept of validity vastly differs from the quantitative method. For this research study, a variation of strategies was used to ensure validity. Table 2 depicts the specific strategies that will be implemented in this study.
Table 2

*Strategies to Support Validity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triangulation</th>
<th>Survey and interview methods were used to ensure that the research question is assessed with a variance of data sources. According to Cresswell (2014), establishing themes based on different data sources adds to the overall validity of a study.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member Checking</td>
<td>The findings of the study were shared with participants to ensure the accuracy of the qualitative findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positionality statement</td>
<td>A statement is provided to disclose the potential researcher bias, in relation to the study. The interpretation of the research findings is framed by the scope of the researcher’s background and relationship to the topic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reliability

Reliability refers to the idea that a study can be reproduced with consistent results (Boudah, 2020). To ensure reliability for this study, all participants were given the same electronic survey. In addition, identical protocol and questions were utilized for participants that were selected for the follow-up interview. Any variance in interview questions was based upon the need for follow-up questions that are implemented for clarity.

Trustworthiness

According to Boudah (2020), trustworthiness is associated with the researcher’s ability to convince their audience that the qualitative techniques used for the study were able to produce credible findings and conclusions. In addition to implementing the cited measures used for establishing validity, member checking was used to verify the findings of the study. A select subset of participants was asked to review coding themes and findings, to provide input on the interpretation of their contributions. Feedback was reviewed to identify potential inaccuracies or flaws in the study’s findings.

Positionality Statement

The researcher for this study serves as the Director of Online learning at the selected research location, Midwestern Career College. In that role, the researcher is responsible for overseeing all distance education operations, including faculty preparation and development. Based on the researcher’s background and experience with higher education, there is a belief that the faculty represents the most key factor in driving online learning initiatives. The research has served in the role of faculty member, academic administrator, and training developer and holds perspectives for each role vantage point, regarding faculty development. The researcher’s interest in this topic, is directly driven from the perspective of a stakeholder that hopes to
contribute to the development of enhanced faculty development programs that maximize opportunities to produce transformative learning experiences. The interpretation of the research data is influenced by the researcher’s experience and direct connection to the subject matter.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the qualitative phenomenological design was utilized to assist the researcher with answering the proposed research question. The historical underpinning of qualitative research and the design foundation used for the development of transformative learning theory served as the framework for this research study. The overall purpose of this research was to understand the impact that mandatory faculty development has on creating transformative learning experiences for prospective online career college instructors. Survey and interviews were used to ensure that participants were able to convey their experiences and for the researcher to appropriately interpret their perspectives to add to the limited knowledgebase of the phenomenon. Survey and interview data were coded and appropriately categorized based on common themes. The following chapter will provide an analysis of the study results.
Chapter 4 Results

Introduction

This chapter has been provided to discuss and report findings from the data collection and analysis portion of this research study. The goal of this research was to identify the potential relationship between mandatory faculty development and transformative learning. The research question for this study is: *What is the relationship between mandatory faculty development for college instructors at a proprietary institution teaching online courses and transformative learning? How can mandatory faculty development be improved to lead to more transformative learning?*

To align with the research question, the findings provided in this chapter will be discussed based on the specific phases of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. Each phase will be discussed individually, with findings from the surveys conducted and interviews to serve as support. In addition, this chapter will provide a summary of participant demographics and an analysis of the response rates. This chapter is organized into two sections; section one presents the survey demographics and the second summarizes the findings from the survey and interviews.

Survey Analysis

The online survey was distributed to 40 instructors that teach online or hybrid courses, in which 19 responded. Table 3 depicts the participant survey demographics. The table is categorized with the variables of gender, race/ethnicity, and education. A column is provided to detail the percentage of respondents that each individual category represents.
Table 3

*Faculty Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate/Diploma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Participant Demographics**

Several survey questions were used to gather demographic information for the participants as depicted in table 3. An open-ended question was used to ask participants to describe their gender. All provided answers were listed as either “male” or “female.” Based on the provided responses, most faculty survey participants were female (52.6%).

The survey question that was used to collect ethnicity information was delivered in an open answer format, instead of pre-selected categories. Data collection categories were based on the answers provided in the open format. In many cases, categories were grouped based on naming variances for each ethnic group (i.e., African American/Black). The category of “other” was used to depict responses that provided two or more ethnic groupings. Caucasian/White faculty members represented the largest percentage of participants (36.8%), followed by Asian (21.1%). The combined category percentages of Caucasian/White and Asian (57.9%) represented a higher number of participants than all other groups.

Participants were provided with a pre-populated list of options for the question of highest degree or level of school completed. The following answers were available for participants to select, high school, associate degree, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, doctorate degree and other. Based on the results, advanced-level degrees (Master’s and Doctorate) represented 63.2 percent of the faculty member participants.
### Table 4

**Program of Instruction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate of Applied Science in Accounting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate of Diagnostic Medical Imaging Radiography</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate of Applied Science in Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Technology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate of Applied Science in Diagnostic Medical Sonography</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate of Applied Science in Non-Invasive Cardiovascular Sonography</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate of Applied Science in Surgical Technical</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Assisting</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

*Faculty Teaching Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 or more years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online Teaching Experience Prior to MCC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Development Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Midwestern Career College (MCC) offers 11 certificate and degree programs. A pre-populated survey question was provided to the faculty participants, regarding the program that they teach for at MCC. The participation summaries for each program are depicted in Table 4. The highest percentage of respondents (36.8%) taught in the Medical Assisting certificate program. Associate degree program instructors represented 52.7% of the participants.

Faculty teaching experience represents a moderating variable for the study. A survey question was presented to the participants in which they were asked to provide the number of years that they have taught in higher education or another venue for adult education. The question was presented in an open-ended format, which enabled participants to write-in the number of years of instructional experience. For the purposes of the study, years of instruction are categorized based on specific intervals of experience (0-5 years, 6-10 years, and 10 or more years). Instructors in the first interval range (0-5 years) represented 42.1 percent of the participants, which matched the interval range for veteran instructors (10 or more years) that participated in the survey. Instructors in the six to ten range represented the lowest percentage of participants (15.8).

Because the research is focused on online instructor faculty development, it was important to differentiate instructor experience based on modality of instruction. A question was provided to participants that asked them to indicate if they had experience teaching in online education, prior to participating in the faculty development training course. Most faculty participants (52.6%) have not taught online courses prior to the training, which would indicate that the training was their first experience with online education faculty development. Full results are in Table 5.
Table 6

*Faculty Development Training Format*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Person</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Midwestern Career College provided instructors with an in-person faculty development training format. Due to the limitation of that format, a comprehensive online faculty development format was provided to prepare instructors to teach online in a virtual format. Instructors were asked to indicate the format of training that they participated in for their online instruction preparation. There was an identical percentage of faculty that participated in the online and in-person training formats (42.1%). There were a few participants (15.8%) that took part in both formats of training.

**Presentation of Findings**

Several survey questions were directly related to the specific phases that are associated with Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. This section provides an analysis of the findings and themes that emerged from participant responses. An analysis is provided for each of the ten phases, including the associated questions and collected response results. Specifically, designated themes will be supported by interview responses and paraphrases/quotes from corresponding interviews.

**Phase One: Disorienting Dilemma**

A disorienting dilemma represents the first phase in the transformative learning theory and represents an experience that is unexpected and disrupts one’s preconceived expectations (Mezirow, 2012).
### Table 7

*Disorienting Dilemma Associated Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Associated Question(s)</th>
<th>Response Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Survey                 | (S-11) Were you surprised by anything you learned in your online instructor training course? In other words, did you experience an “aha”! moment? Please explain. | 19 total responses  
11 (57.9%) “Yes”  
8 (42.1%) “No” |
Survey Analysis

Question 11 assessed if participants experienced a disorienting dilemma in their faculty development experience (Table 7). The question was, were you surprised by anything you learned in your online instructor training course? In other words, did you experience an “aha”! moment? This question was used to assess disorienting dilemma, because a key idea of the phase is the element of surprise. Specifically, individuals are introduced to a new learning concept or event that disrupts their preconceived ideas or perceptions (Mezirow, 2016). With this question, participants can reflect upon their learning from the training and identify the concepts that were new or surprising to them. Of the 19 total responses to the question, 11 (57.9%) indicated yes, eight (42.1%) indicated no in assessing their experience with a disorienting dilemma.

Online Student engagement emerged as the primary theme. Many participants that answered yes to the question indicated that they were not aware of the significant differences in student engagement methods for online students. The faculty development training provides methods for addressing online student engagement, which served as the “aha” moment for some of the participants. One participant indicated the following in support of the student engagement theme, “Yes, students have a much harder time staying engaged in online classes, which was a big takeaway from training.” Another participant said, “Yes, the training clearly identified the need to be flexible when dealing with student online learners. There is always the element of surprise. We need to have a contingency plan to evaluate any potential risks and unknowns as part of our planning process. Once students lose focus, then the class session is compromised.”

A common theme found for individuals that answered no was familiarity with utilizing learning technology. Seven of the nine participants (77.8%) that answered no to the question, had previous experience with teaching online courses. This may have interfered with experiencing a
disorienting dilemma, because the information provided in the training was not new to them. One participant stated that, “No. I had previous exposure to D2L, so I was already familiar with the LMS.” There may have been a few newly introduced concepts, however, they may have had familiarity with general learning technology information.

**Interview Analysis**

Interview question two was used to assess participants’ experience with disorienting dilemma. The question was, when did you start teaching online courses and why? This question was used to evaluate disorienting dilemma, because the rationale for teaching in an online environment can organically serve as an unexpected circumstance. Specifically, the question was provided to enable the instructors to reflect upon their first online teaching experience, with the intention of them providing their first experience with encountering an unknown circumstance. Based on interview participant responses, four cited a disorienting dilemma (66.6%) and two (33.3%) summarized an indirect experience.

A common theme associated with participants that answered yes was the **COVID-19 pandemic**. Specifically, participants indicated that they were teaching in a face-to-face format, however, the institution transitioned to an online instruction format due to restrictions that were placed on in-person learning environments. This theme serves as a disorienting dilemma because there was a clear disruption in the participants’ expectations of how their courses would be taught. Without much notice, they had to quickly learn about a new modality of instruction and connect with their students in an unfamiliar setting. One participant stated, “I started teaching when the coronavirus pandemic hit, which made it really hard for the students to attend in-person classes…which was a learning experience for us all.” Another participant indicated “I started teaching online courses solely because of COVID-19”. In summary, the participant continued
their answer by discussing their hesitancy to teach online because they did not feel that students would have the same learning experience as they would in a traditional course setting. Another key quote from the participant was “I didn’t think that I had a choice in the matter, and it became fight or flight.” With a lack of options, the participant moved forward with faculty development and accepted an online teaching assignment.

The two participant responses that were indirectly related to a disorienting dilemma cited a long-term preparation to teach online courses. For them it was not unexpected, however, they gained a lot of new knowledge in their instructional experience. One participant said “Well, it was for the convenience. When I first started teaching, I realized how face-to-face was definitely a preferred method of instruction because you got a chance to interact with the students in person. But then as I continue to educate myself being introduced to online method of instruction, I gained so much new knowledge.” This comment was coded as indirect because the participant mentioned that the perception of their prior online training was that online teaching was convenient, however, the perception changed over time with the acquisition of additional knowledge. Although the disorienting dilemma was not a result of the mandatory faculty training, it still served as a catalyst for transforming the initial perception.

The second participant that provided an indirectly related answer discussed how the impact of the classroom served as a disorienting dilemma. The answer was construed as being indirect, because the participant identified that the initial, acquired learning from the faculty development was expected. However, the unexpected disruption occurred once the participant began to teach the course and experienced the differences in student learning that were discussed in one of the training course modules. The participant stated “In reflection, a major challenge was identifying ways to ensure that my students were learning. My prior assumption was that
this would not be a major issue in teaching online classes. I mean it was mentioned in training…but I thought that it was not a big deal. However, I quickly found out the difference with my first set of students and it hit me like a ton of bricks.” The participant went on to mention that they consulted with the faculty training developer to gain more information on student assessment in online courses. The two indirectly related responses serve as examples of disorienting dilemmas, however, they were not directly related to the mandatory faculty development training.

**Phase Two: Self-Examination**

The self-examination of assumption phase of transformative learning is based on an individual’s assessment of personal beliefs, when introduced to an unexpected disruption. In the case of this study, the faculty development training, and the preparation to teach in an online environment represent the potentially unexpected disruption.
Table 6

_Self-Examination of Assumptions Associated Questions_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Associated Question(s)</th>
<th>Response Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Survey                | (S-10) Were there ideas that were presented in your training course that were contrary to your previous instructional experience? a. Yes b. No | 19 total responses
|                        |                                                                                        | 4 (21.1%) “Yes”               |
|                        |                                                                                        | 15 (78.9%) “No”               |
| Interview             | (I-3) What challenges and highlights have you encountered personally and professionally in your journey to teach online? | 6 total responses
|                        |                                                                                        | 6 (100%) Directly related to training |
**Survey Analysis**

Question ten was provided to participants to assess if self-examination occurred during the mandatory faculty development. The question was, were there ideas that were presented in your training course that were contrary to your previous instructional experience? This question assesses the self-examination phase, because it calls upon participants to identify the specific ideas from the training that were contrary to their previous understanding and instructional beliefs. Participants were provided with multiple choice answers (yes and no) for this question. Only four participants (21.1%) selected the answer yes. Most participants selected no (78.9%), which may suggest that the ideas presented in the training were similar to previously learned information. No common themes were derived from the survey results because the answers were provided in multiple choice format. The question provided an option for participants to explain their answers, however, no comments were provided.

**Interview Analysis**

A broader question was provided to interview participants, to assess their self-assessment activities. The question was, what challenges and highlights have you encountered personally and professionally in your journey to teach online? Participants were provided with this question with the intention of gaging their perceived challenges, which would enable them to self-assess and reflect on their experience. Six-out-of-six (100%) participants provided answers that suggested that they self-assessed their preconceived beliefs after participating in the mandatory faculty development.

The following are major themes that were associated with responses that were collected from participants: student engagement, technical competency, and student assessment.
Student engagement theme. Two participants that provided answers that were directly related to the training explained student engagement was not initially perceived to be a potential challenge with teaching online courses. However, the mandatory faculty development course provided module content that discussed the differences in on-ground versus online student engagement best practices. Their perceptions were further challenged by their experiences in the classroom. One participant provided the following response, “Before teaching (online) I thought that students would not be attentive in class. Initially it was a challenge, but like it mentioned (the training) I found several interactive ways to keep them engaged and active.” This example supports phase two of transformative learning because the new information enabled the participants to assess their previous assumptions.

Technical competency theme. Two other participants explained that their assumption regarding student technical competency was challenged after participating in the training and teaching online courses. In the interview the participants stated that their assumptions were that students would be proficient with technology and that it would not be a primary challenge in their instruction. The mandatory faculty development training provided module content focused on training with learning technology. Once they began teaching their online courses, the faculty participants were surprised to see that several students struggled with understanding the functionality of the learning management system. One participant stated, “The people that kind of lack the technological skills tend to struggle a little bit more, which could take away from you being able to guide the class how you want to because you have to kind of troubleshoot for students that struggle.” In this case, the instructor did not anticipate (from prior assumption) that there would be a significant challenge with teaching students that are not technologically savvy.
**Student assessment theme.** A key portion of the mandatory faculty training course is based on methods that can be used to assess student learning in online courses. Two faculty participants explained that their initial assumptions were challenged, because they assumed that assessing online student learning would be similar to on-ground student learning assessment. One participant stated, “In reflection, a major challenge was identifying ways to ensure that my students were learning. My prior assumption, was that this would not be a major issue in teaching online classes.” The participants also added, “I had to review the content from the training course, because I just did not think that it would be necessary to change the way that I check on student learning…obviously I was surprised.”

**Phase Three: Critical Assessment of Assumption**

In the critical assessment of assumption phase, individuals begin to assess past assumptions. In this assessment, there is a critical review of biased perspectives that may inhibit the individual from acquiring new knowledge.
Table 7

**Critical Assessment of Assumption Associated Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Associated Question(s)</th>
<th>Response Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Survey                 | (S-12) After the training, did you critically assess any pre-conceived assumptions about online learning? | 19 total responses  
                          | 7 (36.8%) “Yes”  
                          | 12 (63.2%) “No”                                             |
| Interview              | (I-5) What is your opinion about online learning overall? Did the training change your perspective of online learning? | 6 total responses  
                          | 5 (83.3%) “Yes”  
                          | 1 (16.7%) “No”                                             |
Survey Analysis

Survey question 12 was used to evaluate if the participants critically assessed pre-conceived assumptions regarding online learning (Table 7). The question was, after the training, did you critically assess any pre-conceived assumptions about online learning? This question was provided to identify if the participants critically assessed their assumption about online learning, based on their training experience. Seven (36.8%) of the respondents answered yes to critically assessing their assumption about online learning. One main theme emerged from the participants that answered yes to the question, which was technological advancements.

Technological advancements theme. Some participants identified that they were surprised to learn about the numerous features that are available with learning technology. This included participants that had previously experienced online teaching and learning. One respondent answered, “Yes, I have been an online student and instructor for many years, and my understanding of online instruction has evolved with new technological advances, so at MCC, the training I have received has ratified the experience I had before.” Another participant answered, “Yes I actually assessed the fact that online learning can be limiting when it comes to delivery and that was not the case completely.” Interestingly, a strong majority of participants (63.2%) answered no to the survey question. This would mean that they did not critically assess their past assumptions, which could represent several implications. Unfortunately, no specific themes were identified from this group of survey respondents.

Interview Analysis

Interview question five was used to assess the critical assessment of assumption phase. In the interview, participants were asked if the training challenged their previous assumption about
online learning. The question was, what is your opinion about online learning overall? Did the training change your perspective of online learning? This question connects with this phase, because it enables participants to critically reflect on their previous assumptions about online learning. Based on the provided responses, five (83.3%) participants answered yes to critically assessing their previous assumptions. Specific themes associated with this group were: sustainability of online learning and flexibility associated with online courses.

**Sustainability of online learning theme.** Some participants acknowledged that their previous perspectives of online learning were negative, because they did not believe that it was a modality that was sustainable. Due to limited experience in teaching online, they believed that it was more of a learning trend that would eventually fade out. One participant replied, “Based on the training, it is clear that online learning is not going anywhere…years ago, I thought it would be a fading trend. I never thought that I would be teaching in this environment.”

**Flexibility in online learning theme.** A couple of interview participants explained that they initially had negative perceptions of online learning, because they were not aware that course flexibility could be applied to courses that are based in the health sciences field. One participant provided the following answer, “So it did change my mind (faculty development). Initially, I was 100% against online because I teach in the medical field. But I learned that the flexibility of online learning can be beneficial for most courses.” The one participant that answered no, provided the following response: “No, I've always actually felt that we would eventually have more online learning, the training just reinforced my thoughts.”
Phase Four: Recognition of a Shared Process of Transformation

In the recognition of a shared process of transformation phase, individuals recognize that they are transforming and identify that others may have similar experiences. Recognition of shared transformation experiences can provide additional perspective.
Table 8

Recognition of a Shared Process of Transformation Associated Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Associated Question(s)</th>
<th>Response Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>(S-19) Do you believe that you experienced transformative learning, as a result of participating in the faculty development training course for online instructors?</td>
<td>19 total responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16 (84.2%) “Yes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (15.8%) “No”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview Analysis

Survey question 19 was provided to participants, to assess their recognition of transformative learning. The question was, do you believe that you experienced transformative learning, as a result of participating in the faculty development training course for online instructors? It was provided in an open-ended format to gather information regarding their transformation and the potential for acknowledging shared experiences. The results of the question are summarized in table 8. A brief definition of transformative learning was provided for this question and 16 participants (84.2%) acknowledged that they experienced transformative learning during the mandatory faculty development training. Two specific themes were associated with the collected responses: innovative instructional methods and overcoming anxiety (with teaching online courses).

Innovative instructional methods theme. Five of the sixteen participants that acknowledged having a transformative learning experience cited the innovative instructional methods as supporting rationale. Another answered, “Yes, there are always new ways to deliver learning material that you may have not thought of previously. We get complacent in our teaching and forget there are always new or better ways to deliver the material that enhance student learning”.

Overcoming anxiety theme. A significant majority of participants that acknowledged having a transformative learning experience explained that the training assisted them with overcoming their perceived anxiety for teaching online courses. One participant answered, “At first, I was hesitant to teach online courses. However, after training I was not as anxious and quite comfortable with teaching online/hybrid courses.” The cited comfort level was attributed to the varying methods that were provided in the training that could be used to maximize student
engagement. Three participants (15.8%) responded that they did not experience transformative learning and no specific themes were associated with their responses.

**Phase Five: Exploration of Options for New Roles**

In the exploration of options for new roles phases, individuals begin to think about ways to apply the innovative ideas and understanding acquired in transformative learning. In doing so, new roles and actions are taken into consideration.
Table 9

*Exploration of Options for New Roles Associated Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Associated Question(s)</th>
<th>Response Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>(S-13) Did you develop new ideas about teaching in an online environment, as a result of the training? If so, provide some examples.</td>
<td>19 total responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (52.6%) “Yes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 (47.4%) “No”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>(I-7) Based on your proficiency from the training course, are you open to explore additional roles in the online learning environment (outside of teaching)?</td>
<td>6 total responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (100%) “Yes”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Analysis

Survey question 13 was provided to identify if participants believed that they developed new ideas about online learning, as a result of their mandatory faculty development participation. The question was, did you develop new ideas about teaching in an online environment, as a result of the training? If so, provide some examples. This question was intended to provide participants with the opportunity to think about how the training may have inspired them to explore new roles. Also, participants were asked to provide examples to gain an understanding of how their new learning would be applied in an enhanced or new role. As summarized in table nine, ten participants (52.6%), answered yes to the question and provided examples. Instructional enhancement emerged as a significant theme, based on the responses provided.

Instructional enhancement theme. Many of the participants explained how the training course prepared them to enhance and develop their roles as online instructors and potential administrators. One participant responded: “Yes, depending on the instructional resources provided, one can be very creative in how concepts are delivered and assessed”. In this response, the participant highlighted how learning technology can provide new opportunities for creative instruction, which is discussed in the faculty development training. Nine (47.4%) of the participants answered no, with the primary theme being that they were already aware of the concepts provided in the faculty development training course. Specifically, the participants were not able to think about enhancements to their roles or new roles, because they were already aware of the presented ideas, due to previous training and experience.

Interview Analysis

Interview question seven was provided to further assess if participants were willing to consider new roles, as a result of their acquired learning. The question was, based on your
proficiency from the training course, are you open to exploring additional roles in the online learning environment (outside of teaching)? All six of the interview participants (100%) answered yes to the question. One major theme was identified from their answers, which was technical proficiency.

**Newfound technical proficiency theme.** Most of the participants summarized how the faculty development training improved their confidence with utilizing learning technology. Prior to the training, they did not feel that they had the necessary technical proficiency to consider new roles in online learning. One participant responded, “Oh yeah, of course…the faculty development really piqued my interest and now I feel more tech-savvy. I would love to guide other instructors if I had an opportunity.” In this case, the participant would like to consider a role as a trainer for online teaching and learning.

**Phase Six: Planning of a Course of Action**

In the planning a course of action phase, individuals develop an informal or formal plan to strategize how they will utilize what they have learned.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Associated Question(s)</th>
<th>Response Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>(S-9) Do you think that the training adequately prepared you to implement technology in the classroom?</td>
<td>19 total responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17 (89.5%) “Yes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (10.5%) “No”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(S-14) After participating in your training course, did you develop a plan (formal or informal) of action to ensure that you retained the information?</td>
<td>19 total responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (73.7%) “Yes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (26.3%) “No”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Survey Analysis**

Two survey questions were provided to account for the planning of a course of action phase (Table 10). Survey question nine asked participants if they felt that the training prepared them for implementing learning technology in the classroom. The question was, do you think that the training adequately prepared you to implement technology in the classroom? The question was intended to provide participants with an opportunity to discuss their feelings about the training, which would serve as precursor for developing a course of action plan. Most participants (89.5%) answered yes to the question.

*A key theme found from the responses was planning for troubleshooting with technology.* Specifically, participants responded that they developed a plan to handle technological issues, based on the troubleshooting techniques that they acquired from the training. One participant responded, “For the most part. As with anything, there are glitches you must iron out once you are doing it yourself. It is a learning process, in which the training course prepared me for”. In this case, the participant explained how the faculty development training course prepared them for identifying technical issues with their courses and how to troubleshoot accordingly. Two participants answered no (10.5%), without a rationale for their answers.

Survey question 14 specifically asked participants if they formally created a plan based on their acquired learning from mandatory faculty development. The question was, after participating in your training course, did you develop a plan (formal or informal) of action to ensure that you retained the information? This question was intended to provide a direct answer for the phase, by asking the participants to discuss the plans that they developed based on the acquired information from the training course. Fourteen (73.7%) respondents answered yes to this question.
One major theme emerged from the answers, which was planning through active practice. The participants explained that their method for retaining the acquired information was to actively implement presented methods from the training into practice. One participant responded, “I quickly assessed whether I know how to perform the tasks that I had in mind, and from there I make sure that I have retained information I needed and update my lesson plans as needed.” Another participant responded, “I took notes during the training, and I practiced when I got home.” In these cases, the participants identified plans for using their acquired learning in their classes.

Five (26.3%) participants responded no to the question. Time limitations emerged as a key theme for the participants that responded no. Collectively, the participants that answered no cited lack of time to review notes and to set a plan of action as rationale for their answer. They were required to immediately teach online classes, with limited time to prepare and reflect on the faculty development. No specific interview questions were allocated for this transformative learning phase.

Phase Seven: Acquisition of Knowledge and Skills

In this phase, individuals begin to implement their plans into practice, based on the acquired knowledge. According to Mezirow (2012), this represents an important part of the transformation.
Table 11

Acquisition of Knowledge and Skills Associated Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Associated Question(s)</th>
<th>Response Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>(S-15) Do you think that your training has served as a catalyst for implementing changes to your instructional approach?</td>
<td>19 total responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13 (68.4%) “Yes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (21.1%) “No”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (10.5%) “Neutral”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>(I-6) Can you please summarize how the training course has changed your teaching practice overall?</td>
<td>6 responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (100%) “Yes”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Analysis

Survey question 15 was allocated to the acquisition of knowledge and skills phase (Table 10). Participants were asked if they felt that the faculty development training served as a catalyst for the implementation of changes to their instructional approach. The question was, do you think that your training has served as a catalyst for implementing changes to your instructional approach? Thirteen participants (68.4%) answered yes to the question.

Student engagement emerged as the key theme. Specifically, participants responded that the faculty development provided them with new strategies for maximizing student engagement, that could be used in all modalities of learning. One participant mentioned the following, “Yes, the online training gave some insight in ways to engage students…for example, I was not aware of how to use breakout (groups) in the virtual lecture.” In this case the participant explained how the acquired information regarding online collaborative learning techniques provided her with an opportunity to enhance student engagement in the course.

Four (21.1%) answered no to the question. No specific themes were identified from the responses. Two participants (10.5%) provided answers that were interpreted as being neutral. A key theme associated with their responses was based on multiple training experiences. Specifically, the respondents could attest to the information acquired from the MCC mandatory faculty development, however, they were hesitant to identify it as a catalyst for implementation, due to their previous training from other institutions. One respondent answered, “Well, in my case, I bring experience from other institutions; I cannot tell you that the specific content from MCC training is the catalyst for implementing changes. Nevertheless, I’m sure that it contributes to some extent to that change.”
Interview Analysis

Interview question six was provided to identify if the faculty development training course has changed the teaching practices for the participants. This question was used to further support the premise of the phase in which individuals implement learning into practice. The question was, can you please summarize how the training course has changed your teaching practice overall? All six participants (100%) provided answers that would signify that the training course led to the changing of their overall teaching practice. “One respondent answered, “I definitely believe that it has changed my perspective and maybe in a way a lot different than others. For me. I’ve learned with online I feel you have to be more detail oriented. So, I have learned to be more detailed both face-to-face and online because of the training that I have received.”” Another responded succinctly added, “Yes, I learned to be better at adapting in the classroom”.

Phase Eight: Provisionally Trying Out New Roles

The provisionally trying out new roles phase is based on the individual’s confidence with applying their skills and taking on new challenges. This enables individuals to practice experiential learning, which represents a key theme of transformative learning.
Table 12

_Provisionally Trying Out New Roles Associated Questions_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Associated Question(s)</th>
<th>Response Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>(S-17) Would you be comfortable with expanding your role in the online learning environment?</td>
<td>19 total responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16 (84.2%) “Yes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (15.8%) “Neutral”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Analysis

Survey question 17 was provided to assess the participants’ comfort with expanding their role in the online environment, based on the acquired skills learned from the faculty development training (Table 12). The question asked, would you be comfortable with expanding your role in the online learning environment? This question was specifically asked to assess the participants’ confidence in applying their skills towards a new or expanded role in online learning. Sixteen participants (84.2%) answered yes and welcomed the challenge for a new role in the online learning environment.

Flexibility theme. Many participants were excited about acquiring new roles in online learning, due to the possibilities that are associated with an asynchronous environment. One participant responded, “Yes! I love online teaching and learning. I think it makes it more accessible for the student and teacher. It is the way of the future and I would love to have more roles in this area”. Another participant responded, “Yes. I would love to have more opportunities to do more and teach other classes. It would be great to help other instructors that may be struggling in teaching online.”

There were three responses (15.8%), that were interpreted as neutral. Specifically, this group of participants are interested in additional online learning opportunities, however, they are not fully able to commit due to the impact on personal obligations. Implications are that they would expand their roles if their obligations permitted them to do so. No interview questions were allocated for this transformative learning phase.
Phase Nine: Building of Competence and Self-Confidence

In the building of competence and self-confidence phase, individuals can achieve an improved level of confidence. In addition, individuals should become more self-aware as they transition in their learning.
### Table 13

**Building of Competence and Self-Confidence Associated Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Associated Question(s)</th>
<th>Response Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey (S-16)</td>
<td>Currently, are you confident in your role as online/hybrid instructor as a result of the training? a. yes b. no c. neutral</td>
<td>19 total responses&lt;br&gt;15 (78.9%) “Yes”&lt;br&gt;4 (21.1%) “Neutral”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview (I-9)</td>
<td>How would you improve faculty development?</td>
<td>6 responses&lt;br&gt;4 (66.7%) “Yes”&lt;br&gt;2 (33.3%) “No”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Analysis

Survey question 16 was provided to assess the participants’ level of confidence based on the mandatory faculty development training course (Table 13). The question was, currently, are you confident in your role as online/hybrid instructor as a result of the training? In this phase, individuals experience improved confidence, which served as the premise for implementing this question. Participants are directly asked to assess their level of confidence in relation to their training participation. Fifteen participants (78.9%) answered yes to this question. Comments were not provided with their answers, so no common themes were identified from the responses. Four participants (21.1%) answered neutral and did not provide rationale for their responses.

Interview Analysis

Interview question nine was provided to participants to assess their opinion of improving faculty development. The question was, how would you improve faculty development? This question was used to evaluate the participants’ self-awareness and confidence in critically analyzing their faculty development experience. The intention is that participants would be able to reflect on their confidence in their discussion of how they would make improvements to faculty development. For this question, “yes” answers were allocated to responses that demonstrated participant confidence and self-awareness in assessing faculty development. “No” answers were interpreted as responses that signified skepticism in participant confidence and self-awareness. Four participants (66.7%) provided responses that were interpreted as yes answers. Two themes were identified based on the response: engagement activities and mentoring.

Engagement activities theme. Specifically, the participants feel that faculty development could be improved if there were more opportunities for faculty to interact with each other in the
assigned activities. Specifically, the participants would like to be able to engage with their peers to share feedback regarding the acquired knowledge. From their perspective, the current format is isolated. One participant explained the following, “I’m not sure how it would work timing wise, but instructors should be able to work with each other in breakout rooms. Maybe they are given a case study and they work together to find a solution, using the provided strategies from training.”

**Mentoring theme.** A few participants mentioned that new instructors should be paired with veteran faculty members, to improve comradery and transfer-of-training. They feel that a mentoring component would be mutually beneficial to all faculty. One participant responded, “I would pair every new online teacher, with someone that has already taught at least two online classes. The more experienced teacher could mentor the rookie instructor before taking the first course. The training can’t provide these essential best practices, from actual experience”.

Two participants (33.3%) provided responses that would be considered to be no answers. A common theme associated with these participants was lack of qualification. Specifically, they felt that they were not qualified and proficient enough (in their training) to provide a critique for improvement. One participant stated, “Well I’m barely just learning it myself, and I wouldn't even begin to think about how I would be able to improve it.”

**Phase Ten: New Perspective**

In the final phase, individuals gain a new perspective based on their experience. The fresh perspective can lead to new ideas, revelations, and changes to personal thinking.
Table 14

*New Perspective Associated Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Associated Question(s)</th>
<th>Response Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>(S-18) Have you been able to assist other online instructors, based on your proficiency with teaching online?</td>
<td>19 total responses 16 (84.2%) “Yes” 3 (15.8%) “No”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>(I-8) After mastering some of the foundational, technical components in the training do you actively seek ways to advance your training and acquisition of knowledge and skills in the online environment?</td>
<td>6 responses 6 (100%) “Yes”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Analysis

In survey question 18, participants were asked if they have assisted other instructors, based on their newly acquired learning and experience with teaching online (Table 14). The question was, have you been able to assist other online instructors, based on your proficiency with teaching online? The intention for this question was to give the participants an opportunity to identify if they used their acquired knowledge to assist others. This question is used to assess if the participants experienced a new perspective from their acquired learning. Nineteen participants (84.2%) answered yes to this question. No specific themes were identified from the responses. Three participants (15.8%) answered no to the question. No specific rationale was provided in their responses.

Interview Analysis

Interview question eight was used to understand the continuous learning techniques that participants have implemented, as a result of their newfound learning and perspective. The question was, after mastering some of the foundational, technical components in the training do you actively seek ways to advance your training and acquisition of knowledge and skills in the online environment? This question was intended to enable participants to provide depth in their reflection of their experience, to explain how their new perspective has impacted their practice and ideas regarding online learning. All six of the participants (100%) answered yes to this question.

Continuous learning emerged as the common theme among the responses. Most of the participants expressed their appreciation for participating in the mandatory faculty development course and how it has led them to seek additional training and knowledge in online teaching and learning. One participant said, “Online teaching was an extremely difficult transition for me,
however, I gained confidence from what I learned in the training. Now, I am always seeking to learn more about online teaching, for continued improvement.” Another participant responded, “Yes, I am always excited to learn more about the tools available in the learning management system.” The participant went on to say that she would like to see additional follow-up training that would enable her to learn more technical tools and advanced methods for growing in the role of an online instructor.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the purpose of this chapter was to report and analyze the findings obtained in the data collection for this research study. Qualitative coding was implemented to identify common themes from the survey and interviews. The themes identified in the data collection are used in answering the research question for this study. Chapter five will provide a detailed analysis based on the study’s findings. In addition, a further discussion of the implications and potential impact of this study is provided in the concluding chapter.
Chapter 5

Summary of Research

The opening chapter of this study provided an extensive overview of the research. The premise of the study was explained, including the challenges that are faced by instructors as they prepare to teach online courses. In addition, an institutional study of the selected site for the research, Midwestern Career College was provided, including a thorough analysis of the problem that the institution has experienced with providing mandatory faculty development for prospective online instructors. The cited challenges serve as an example of what other institutions have faced in their faculty development initiatives. The theoretical framework, research design, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are also discussed in chapter one.

The literature review for the research study was provided in chapter two. Specific topics associated with faculty development, adult learning, and online teaching and learning were summarized with supporting literature in the chapter. The synthesis of supporting literature served as the foundation for the research study.

Chapter three of this research study provided an extensive overview of the methodology. The chapter began with an overview of the conceptual framework, which served as the roadmap for the research. A comprehensive methodology was provided which included the paradigmatic roots of the study’s design and data collection methods. To address the research question, a combination of online survey and interviews were utilized in the study. The chapter provided a full explanation of how the candidates were selected and how the data was collected and interpreted by the researcher.

The results of the study were provided in chapter four. The survey contained a combination of demographic and theory-based questions. An analysis was provided for
participant demographics, based on the associated questions. The theoretical framework of the study is based on transformative learning theory. The theory is comprised of ten distinct phases and each phase is associated with designated survey questions. A full analysis and interpretation of participant answers was provided in the chapter.

This concluding chapter will provide an elaborative summary of the research findings and implications for practice for this qualitative research study. Specifically, a discussion of the findings will be provided to summarize how the research question was addressed and the associated implications. Recommendations for future research will be discussed, in addition to a conclusion for the research study.

**Discussion and Interpretation of Findings**

The following research question was provided for this study: *What is the relationship between mandatory faculty development for college instructors at a proprietary institution teaching online courses and transformative learning? How can mandatory faculty development be improved to lead to more transformative learning?*

**Research Question Analysis**

A two-part research question was utilized for the study with the intention of establishing a relationship between the variables and to identify factors that could create more transformative learning opportunities. The initial hypothesis for this study was that there is a relationship between mandatory faculty development and transformative learning. Based on the findings of the research, the researcher has concluded that the hypothesis is confirmed. The following research questions analysis will provide details on how collected data was used to answer the research question and develop a conclusion.
Relationship Between Variables

The first portion of the research question focused on identifying if there is a relationship between mandatory faculty development for career college instructors teaching online courses and transformative learning. To assess the presence of a relationship between the variables, it was important to ensure that all ten transformative learning phases were directly evaluated in the survey and interview questions. A summary of each individual phase is provided, to provide support for the existence of a relationship between variables.

Phase One: Disorienting Dilemma

The initial phase of Mezirow’s theory represents unexpected experiences that are encountered by individuals that cause disruption in their preconceived expectations. Most participants identified that they experienced a disorienting dilemma, based on their participation in the faculty development training. Prior to the training, many participants undervalued the importance of focusing on student engagement practices in online learning. However, strategies that were provided in the training enabled the faculty participants to adjust their course planning and implement measures that maximize student engagement. In addition, many instructors cited the COVID-19 pandemic as their disorienting dilemma, because they were assigned to teach online courses due to necessity. The disorienting dilemma was further reinforced in the faculty development training because many of them were not aware of concepts that are associated with teaching in an online environment.

Phase Two: Self-Examination

In this phase, individuals begin to assess their personal beliefs after encountering the disorienting dilemma. Many of the participants did not disclose that the disorienting dilemma caused them to assess their previous beliefs. This was primarily due to their previous training
which introduced similar instructional concepts. However, several participants disclosed that the training served as a foundation for assisting them with their initial challenges in their online teaching experiences. In this case, the participants did not immediately make a personal assessment after the training, however, they were able to recall some of the presented information and reflect while teaching in their online courses. In doing so, they were able to troubleshoot some of the challenges that they faced during instruction.

**Phase Three: Critical Assessment of Assumption**

In this phase, participants begin to acknowledge that past assumptions may develop into obstacles for acquiring new knowledge. Many of the participants in the study did not initially acknowledge that they critically assessed their previous assumptions about online learning, in the survey. Previous experience with online learning may have supported the participants’ assumptions of online learning, which removed the need to make a critical personal assessment. However, in the interview, many participants acknowledged that the faculty development training changed their perspective of online learning. In the interview format, participants had more time to reflect on the training and how they learned more about the flexibility associated with online learning, which changed their perceptions. Prior to the training, they believed that online learning was not a sustainable modality, because of the perceived limitations. During the interview, they were able to conduct a comprehensive critical assessment of their previous assumption.

**Phase Four: Recognition of Shared Process of Transformation**

In this phase, individuals recognize their transformation and believe that others are sharing the same experiences. Participants were provided with an open-ended question that was associated with this phase, to give them an opportunity to summarize their experience in faculty
development training. The intention was that they would acknowledge the impact that the training had on peer instructors. Most participants acknowledged that they experienced transformative learning in the faculty development training and supported their answers with a collective reflection of all instructors preparing to teach online. For example, participants identified that there were innovative instructional methods provided that could be used to support all instructors that experience complacency in their general instruction. The responses revealed that the participants think of other faculty members, when reflecting on their training experience. This represents a key factor in this phase of the transformative learning theory.

**Phase Five: Exploration of Options for New Roles**

In this phase, individuals begin to envision how they could use the newly acquired information to enhance or develop new roles. In both the survey and interview, most of the participants acknowledged that their experience in the faculty development training has led them to think about implementing new ideas (in the classroom) and to explore new roles. Embedded activities in the training provided participants with the confidence to recognize their proficiency with technology. Prior to the training, several participants disclosed that they were uncomfortable with technology, which led to their concerns for online instruction. The success in completing the activities softened their concerns and strengthened their interest in online instruction. Most of the participants identified that they would be interested in new roles that could advance their experience in online teaching and learning.

**Phase Six: Planning of a Course of Action**

In this phase, individuals begin to formulate plans to implement their newfound learning. A strong majority of participants in the study identified that they created a plan to apply their learning from the faculty development training. Participants were able to learn how to
troubleshoot common issues that arise in online instruction. They were able to use the information to actively practice troubleshooting techniques in their classrooms. Some participants explained that they have formatted their course syllabi based on strategies that provided from faculty development, which can be helpful to their students.

*Phase Seven: Acquisition of Knowledge and Skills*

In this phase participants implement the plans that were created in the previous phase. For this phase, survey and interview questions were intended to enable participants to reflect on changes to their instructional approaches, as a result of the training. A strong majority of participants acknowledged that the training served as a catalyst for the implementation of innovative changes to their instruction overall (online and face-to-face). Many participants explained that they have applied their training knowledge in the classroom, with a specific focus on maximizing student engagement. The faculty development training provided modules that explained how to leverage learning technology to produce consistent student engagement in the classroom. Participants summarized how they have used those tools to improve interaction in virtual lectures and course activities.

*Phase Eight: Provisionally Trying Out New Roles*

In this phase, individuals actively apply their new learning in a new role. Participants were asked if they were comfortable with expanding their roles in online teaching and learning. A strong majority felt comfortable with expanding their roles, due to the established confidence acquired from the faculty development training. Many of them acknowledged that they learned that there is more flexibility in scheduling available in online learning, which intrigued them. Also, some participants have found ways to informally try out new roles, by assisting peer
instructors with utilizing learning technology. The provisioning of their informal roles has further supported their desire to grow and develop in online teaching and learning.

**Phase Nine: Building of Competence and Self-Confidence**

In this phase, individuals feel comfortable acknowledging their competence with the newfound learning and experience an improvement in self-confidence. A strong majority of the participants felt that the training assisted them with establishing confidence as an online instructor. To further support the establishment of improved self-confidence, interview participants were able to critically assess the faculty development training and provided suggestions for improvement. Some explained that they would not have felt comfortable with providing suggestions if they did not gain confidence in the faculty development training and their experiences with teaching their online courses.

**Phase Ten: New Perspective**

In the final phase, individuals have gained a new perspective based on their learning and become more open to innovative thinking, implementing changes, and expanding their perspectives. One component of this final phase in association with online teaching and learning is the impact that the new perspective has on others. Participants were asked if they have used their newfound perspective to assist other instructors, of which a majority agreed. Interview participants were given an opportunity to discuss if their new perspective has led them to seek advance training opportunities in online learning, in which all participants acknowledged. A consensus thought from the participants was that their newly acquired perspective has created a need for continuous learning and improvement in online instruction.

In summary, the hypothesis of the study was supported, and a clear relationship was found between the variables. The faculty development training introduced a disorienting
dilemma to the research participants, because they were not aware of the numerous concepts that are associated with online teaching and learning. The disorienting dilemma led to a delayed self-examination of the participants’ beliefs and thoughts about online teaching and learning, which was acknowledged once they experienced the challenges (that were discussed in the training) in their courses. Through further reflection, the participants were able to critically assess their assumptions of online teaching and learning, by changing their initial perspectives based on the newly acquired information received from faculty development. In doing so, the participants acknowledged that their peers had similar experiences and identified how the information provided could benefit all instructors.

As participant confidence grew with their newly acquired information about online teaching and learning, participants acknowledged a willingness to expand proficiency with technology and to explore new roles. In the study, participants also explained how they developed and implemented plans to use their newly acquired information in their online course instruction. Many participants found ways to provision new roles based on their newfound confidence and proficiency with utilizing learning technology, which also enabled them to assist peers that needed assistance. It was evident in the data collection, that the participants experienced an improvement in their self-confidence in online instruction, based on their faculty development training.

The cited matriculation through the phases of transformative learning, has created a new perspective for the participants that has enabled them to expand their perspectives and to effectively seek ways to further build upon their learning.
Faculty Development Improvement

The second portion of the research question focused on how mandatory faculty development training could be improved to lead to more transformative learning. As identified in the first portion of the question, there was clear evidence of transformative learning found in the mandatory faculty development training course. The questions were sequenced with the intention of identifying the necessary components that enhance transformative learning in faculty development.

Participants were directly and indirectly asked questions that would be used to provide this information solely based on their experiences. This approach was similar in Mezirow’s initial study, in which the phases of transformative learning were developed solely based on the experiences of the study’s participants (Mezirow & Marsick, 1978). Several key themes emerged from this research study, which can be used to develop more transformative learning opportunities in faculty development. The key themes that were identified from the data collection were: active practice, faculty involvement in the development process and implementing collaborative activities.

Significance of Study

Distance education serves as a key focal point for strategic and operational planning for higher education institutions of all sectors. Advancements in technology, rapidly changing student needs, and an ever-evolving educational landscape are factors that have supported the need for the expansion of online teaching and learning. Faculty preparation to teach online courses represents a critical topic for all institutions. According to McQuiggan (2007), there is limited consistency found in the methods used by institutions to train their online instructors. Some institutions implement mandatory training, some require faculty to conduct their own
training, and others provide a hybrid format of faculty development (McQuiggan, 2007). In some cases, faculty development initiatives are not connected to adult learning theory. Administrators must acknowledge that instructors should be considered as adult learners in faculty development training. According to Skibba (2013), teachers that participate in development activities are adult learners, that frame their new learning based on previous experience. Transformative learning represents an adult learning theory that identifies the learner’s experience as the foundation for their acquisition and application of new knowledge.

The significance of this research study is that it found and examined the relationship between faculty development and transformative learning. The implications of this are extensive and are outlined below.

**Implications for Practice**

The research identified implications for practice, specifically for Career and Technical Education (CTE) faculty development. Administrators and developers can implement the following ideas and concepts into their faculty development practices to produce more transformative learning opportunities: active practice, faculty involvement in the development process and implementing collaborative activities.

**Active Practice**

Confidence is a necessary component for individuals to matriculate through the ten phases of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. Self-confidence is built and developed through the individual’s transformation, by achieving milestones along the way. Many of the participants in this study admitted to having negative perceptions about online teaching and learning, due to their hesitancy to utilize technology. The mandatory faculty development training gave them an opportunity to learn about instructional technology and to conduct active
practice that enabled them to achieve proficiency. Based on their responses, being able to witness success with using instructional technology was a catalyst for building their self-confidence and changing their perceptions. The implication of this finding for faculty development is that instructional technology training should be delivered with opportunities for instructors to actively apply their learning within the course. An example of this could be a module that introduces virtual announcements within a learning management system, which concludes with an assignment for participants to create a mock announcement. This enables them to develop a positive attitude towards working with technology and implementing their learning into the classroom.

**Faculty Involvement in the Development Process**

According to Malone (2014), adult learners are responsible for learning and respond best when they can be involved in the process. To reinforce this concept, there is an expectation in the transformation process that individuals can establish proficiency and apply their learning to new roles. A key finding of this study was that many participants were open to trying new roles in online learning, which included the opportunity to make suggestions for improvement to faculty development. An implication of this finding would be for administrators to make a concerted effort to ensure that faculty input is implemented into the design of faculty development courses. As suggested by Austin (2010), faculty perspective must be considered, to develop unique and engaging training experiences. Developers are focused on ensuring that the content of the course can produce the desired learning outcomes for faculty members. However, faculty can contribute their feedback on the activities or content that would best assist them in acquiring knowledge from the courses. If faculty members are not able to participate in planning meetings, their feedback can be collected through online surveys or questionnaires. The potential for
transformative learning could be higher if the learners are given the opportunity to use their experiences as the catalyst for the design of faculty development training courses.

**Implementing Collaborative Activities**

Transformative learning produces several positive outcomes for the learner, which includes the recognition that personal transformation is shared with others. As discussed in the literature review of this study, there are several forms of faculty development, including many individual-based formats. According to Proper (2017), faculty development trainers for proprietary institutions are usually focused on ensuring that the individual is properly trained to deliver pre-planned courses. However, a question was delivered in this research study that asked how participants would improve faculty development and many participants acknowledged that more opportunities should be provided for instructors to collaborate with peers. In summary, participants responded that collaborative activities could assist with building comradery and support for learning. These thoughts are reinforced by the premise of phase four (transformative learning theory), in which individuals recognize a shared process of transformation, which can produce an additional perspective for the learning. Although it may be difficult to assign collaborative activities in asynchronous faculty development formats, administrators can build virtual learning communities that enable instructors to share their experiences, discuss content and collaborate on methods for implementing concepts into their courses. Additionally, faculty that are new to online teaching and learning will establish a network of instructors that have similar experiences.

**Recommendations for Research**

Although there are several areas of recommendations for future research, three specific areas of focus should be considered, including repeating the study with a larger sample size,
examining the relationship between voluntary faculty development and transformative learning, and conducting a study that is based on transformative faculty development’s impact on student learning.

**Larger Sample Study**

As discussed in chapter one, a notable limitation of this study was that it was conducted at one small institution, which limited the pool of possible participants. Repeating the study at an institution with a larger online student population would be beneficial for further understanding the relationship of mandatory faculty development and transformative learning. A larger pool of participants would expand the range of experiences which could lead to additional common themes that are shared among faculty. In addition, more conclusions could be drawn based on the impact that faculty development has on faculty members that teach at larger institutions.

**Transformative Learning and Voluntary Faculty Development**

A key focal point of this research was to understand the relationship between mandatory faculty development and transformative learning. For future research, it would be important to replicate this study with voluntary faculty development programs, serving as an independent variable. According to Sorcinelli (1997), the success of mandatory faculty development programs may be limited, due to the faculty members’ need to maintain autonomy. Therefore, it would be interesting to see if voluntary faculty development programs generated stronger relationships with transformative learning, based on the instructor’s intrinsic motivation to participate.

**Impact on Student Learning**

It would be beneficial to conduct a future study that examines the impact that transformative faculty development has on student learning. According to Condon et al. (2016),
effective evaluation of faculty development’s impact on student learning should take place using a longitudinal approach, in which the researcher can examine student progress over time. A post-faculty development longitudinal study could be conducted in which the researcher studies if the faculty member’s transformative learning experience enhances student learning in the classroom. This would be assessed over the time of a full course and would involve a review of student assessment documents and surveys and interviews with students.

Conclusion

The research question for this study addressed the relationship between the independent variable of mandatory faculty development and the dependent variable of transformative learning. The intention was to identify if for-profit teachers could develop transformative learning experiences from institutionally mandated faculty development courses. The collected data supported the hypothesis that a relationship exists between the variable, which means that transformative learning can occur in mandatory faculty development.

Participants in this research study have shown in their responses that their transformative learning experience has enabled them to change their perspectives of online teaching and learning. Their experience has produced an individual desire to acquire more learning, enhance instruction, and to try new roles. This is a representation of the culminating phase of transformative learning, in which individuals gain new perspective and become motivated to accept new challenges. This is a key factor for instructors that are new to online learning, in that they can move past potentially negative perceptions and develop a new outlook.

The future initiatives of proprietary institutions are directly tied to the successful growth in distance education. This goal can only be successful if the faculty fully embrace online learning and are motivated to develop and improve their proficiency by implementing innovative
technology into their classrooms. Transformative learning is critical in this process because the effectiveness of online course delivery is directly tied to developing instructors that can inspire students to become active and critically reflective learners.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that adult learning concepts must be embedded into the design of faculty development. Faculty tend to experience transformative learning when they participate in learner-centered courses, that promote student interaction and opportunities for them to actively practice with instructional technology.
References


Herman, J.H. (2012). Faculty development programs: the frequency and variety of professional development programs available to online instructors. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, Volume 16: Issue 5*


[https://eric.ed.gov/?q=connecting+professional+development+to+student+learning&id=EJ773253](https://eric.ed.gov/?q=connecting+professional+development+to+student+learning&id=EJ773253)


Lowenthal, P. R., Gooding, M., Shreaves, D., & Kepka, J. (2019). Learning to teach online: An exploration of how universities with large online programs train and develop faculty to teach online. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 20(3), 1–9.


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## Appendix A

### Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Demographics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How would you describe your gender?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Please specify your race/ethnicity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. What is your age?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Master’s degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. other_________</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. What certificate/degree program(s) do you teach for?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. How many years have you taught in higher education or another venue for adult education?_________</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Did you have any experience teaching in online education, prior to participating in your MCC online instructor training course?</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Development Training /Transformative Learning Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Which format of training for online instruction did you participate in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Online faculty training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you think that the training adequately prepared you to implement technology in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Were there ideas that were presented in your training course that were contrary to your previous instructional experience? a. yes b. no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Were you surprised by anything you learned in your online instructor training course? In other words, did you experience an “aha”! moment? Please explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. After the training, did you critically assess any pre-conceived assumptions about online learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Did you develop new ideas about teaching in an online environment, as a result of the training? If so, provide some examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. After participating in your training course, did you develop a plan (formal or informal) of action to ensure that you retained the information?</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Do you think that your training has served as a catalyst for implementing changes to your instructional approach?</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Currently, are you confident in your role as online/hybrid instructor as a result of the training? a. yes b. no c. neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Would you be comfortable with expanding your role in the online learning environment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Have you been able to assist other online instructors, based on your proficiency with teaching online?</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Do you believe that you experienced transformative learning, as a result of participating in the faculty development training course for online instructors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Are you willing to be interviewed further for the purposes of this study? If yes, please include your name and email address. You will remain anonymous throughout the survey/interview process, and will be able to withdraw at any time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is Tremayne Simpson and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University. You have been selected to participate in the second phase of my research, based on your interest in participating in an online interview, which was recorded from your answer to the associated survey question. Thank you for taking the time to serve as a participant in both phases of research study. The goal of my qualitative research is to identify if there is a relationship between mandated faculty development preparation courses for online instruction and transformative learning.

In this interview I will ask a series of open-ended questions that will be used as a guide to assist in answering my research question: What is the relationship between mandatory faculty development for college instructors at a proprietary institution teaching online courses and transformative learning?

This interview will take place, using a video conferencing application and will be recorded and transcribed for data collection accuracy. This interview has been planned to last for about 30 minutes. My study does not aim to evaluate your instructional techniques or faculty development participation; however, I am trying to learn more about your experience, to make appropriate interpretations of the collected data. Now, that I have provided a more clarity for the purpose of the interview and the framework of the question, would you still like to proceed with participating in the interview? If so, you can choose to end the session, at any point during the interview.
Appendix C

Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Demographics/Teaching Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you feel that your previous teaching experience had an effect on your participation in the faculty development training course? If so, please explain.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Development Training /Transformative Learning Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. When did you start teaching online courses and why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. What challenges and highlights have you encountered personally and professionally in your journey to teach online?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Describe your experience with participating in the faculty development online instructor training course?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. What is your opinion about online learning overall? Did the training change your perspective of online learning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Can you please summarize how the training course has changed your teaching practice overall?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Based on your proficiency from the training course, are you open to explore additional roles in the online learning environment (outside of teaching)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. After mastering some of the foundational, technical components in the training do you actively seek ways to advance your training and acquisition of knowledge and skills in the online environment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How would you improve faculty development?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Is there anything that was not addressed in my questioning, that you would like to add in regards to this topic?</td>
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</table>
Appendix D

Recruitment Email

Greetings Prospective Research Participant,

You are being asked to participate in an online survey for a dissertation research project carried out by Tremayne Simpson, a doctoral student at National Louis University. The study is called “Assessing the relationship between mandatory faculty development for online career college instructors and transformative learning,” and is occurring from ______ to _________.

Please understand that the purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to evaluate the experiences of instructors to identify the possibility of a relationship between online teaching preparation and transformative learning. Further, the information gained from this study could assist in the enhancement of faculty development for online instructors serving career college institutions and other sectors of higher education. Participation in this study will include: Completion of an online survey which primarily consists of open-ended questions, is expected to take approximately 25 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. At the conclusion of the survey, you will be invited to volunteer for an interview as well.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please reply to this email, with your acceptance of participation. Once your emailed acceptance has been received, a separate email will be sent to you with a formal informed consent form and electronic survey instructions. There are no known risks involved in this research study. To ensure proper data collection, the online survey must be completed by __________. Participation in this study has no bearing on future course staffing decisions, nor any performance evaluations.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may opt out of any question in the survey. All of your responses will be kept confidential. The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported at conferences, however, please rest assured that the participants’ identities will in no way be revealed (data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants).

If you have any questions, please contact the researcher.