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Faculty Perceptions of Condensed Online Learning in Higher Education

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FACUTLY PERCEPTIONS OF CONDENSED ONLINE LEARNING IN HIGHER
EDUCATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development

by

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To my family that has believed in me every step of the way. I was blessed to be the youngest in a group of awesome individuals that make the greatest collective of talents and knowledge I have ever witnessed. My parents were the foundation and the driving force behind this excellence. Harold taught me to be a scientist before I even realized how important the home experiments would become in life. Sheryl taught me to work within the system to get the most out of every situation I may encounter. Early on I realized I was blessed with 3 of the most amazing sisters on the planet. They have been in my corner since day 1 and I could not have asked for more. Francesca showed me the path as a young scientist and professional. Jessica gave me the confidence and the soundtrack to handle any situation. Kristin taught me to follow my dreams no matter how difficult it may seem. They have all played an instrumental part on my journey to success and my continued growth and for there blood, sweat, and tears I say thank you.

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Abstract

In the past 10 years the realm of distance and online education has been expanding very fast. With the help of the Internet, it has cut the need for a student to be in the same space as the instructor in order to receive information and be assessed for learning. As more universities are using distance-learning platforms, faculty members are having issues adjusting and being successful. While the educational landscape continues to be reformed with technology in the United States, there are individuals and institutions that are engaging in distance learning to better serve a larger population of students. It is agreed that faculty support is necessary for a successful distance program and it is up to the administration to make this happen. One of their biggest suggestions is that instructors join and communicate in professional networks and organizations to continue to push the field forward.

The purpose of this study is to explore faculty perceptions of online learning in condensed degree programs at a traditionally “brick and mortar” campuses. This research will seek to consider the context of online learning no longer being considered the exclusive right of ‘virtual universities’ and how faculty feel it will influence the future of higher education.

Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used in this case study with interviews being conducted with each participant. Rogers’ (2003) Change Theory guided the interview questions.

The findings of the study indicated that faculty members’ perceived online education to be valuable when used to help people that would otherwise not have the ability to receive an education. Also, they agreed that online education would continue to grow as more universities see its value in educating the masses and expanding their brand. Although this study is based on

perceptions of current faculty members, the findings also provide data on ways to support faculty members in the online environment in the condensed format.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

As we move further into the era popularly known as the Information/ Digital/ or New Media Age, the definition of distance education has taken on new life and meaning with broad globalized implications. Distance education is simply, just as it seems, learning a subject at a distance. Distance learning was once conducted through the traditional mail system, conference calls, or faxes between student and instructor; the Internet is the main tool at this time (Anderson & Dron, 2010). Rogers (2003) stated “the Internet greatly speeds up an innovation’s rate of adoption” (p.215) and this is true when it comes to distance learning. By way of this interconnected worldwide computer network system, more people are taking advantage of this technology to further their education and to even improve their status in and for the workforce. Indeed, there is distance education available across a wide variety of traditional educational contexts, ranging from elementary to post-secondary institutions and even to corporate entities for professional development opportunities and initiatives.

Prior to venturing heavily into the realm of distance education, universities typically looked to success stories of faculty and students to determine the feasibility of taking on such a large task. Distance education has transformed to the degree that there is now a conceptual idea of the Mobile Revolution (Beckman, 2010). This specifically relates to mobile learning (m-learning) where learning occurs through mobile devices such as smart phones. Additionally, electronic learning (e-learning) where people use laptops, tablets, etc., to learn while on the go has grown significantly over the past few years (Gold, 2014). It is not expected to decrease in the near future, but to morph into even more sophisticated learning systems.

Over the last decade, there has been the progressive incorporation of eLearning in university education systems even among on-campus universities (Gonzalez, 2010). This

research considers the context of eLearning no longer being considered the exclusive right of ‘virtual universities’ and to explore faculty perceptions of distance education at traditionally ‘brick and mortar campuses’ and how viable they feel it will be in the future. The findings of the study can help practitioners prepare to be successful in the field of distance learning by overcoming challenges and ensuring their students are actually learning. This is particularly relevant in the context of online courses both offered in the traditional semester-long format, but also in the accelerated modular format.

Today’s students are quite different from 10 years ago and even from those 5 years ago. Most online programs have a history of serving adults as its most popular consumer base and they are mostly self-directed learners who like to be in control of their learning (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). They are taking advantage of learning at home in their spare time while taking a slight detour from normalcy. With over 270 million Internet users in the United States alone in 2014 (Internet World Stats, 2014), the pool of learners is growing. Students are no longer whom most instructors and educational systems were designed to teach (Prensky, 2001). They are entering institutions with an increased knowledge of technology and interested in ways to use it daily.

These students are most commonly referred to as part of the “net generation” because they have grown up with some type of technology (Tapscott, 1998; Prensky, 2001; Jones, Ramanau, Cross, & Healing, 2010). This term is often used interchangeably with “digital natives” and “millennials” (Prensky, 2001; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). Digital natives (Prensky, 2001) are taking over the realm of education and changing the ways information is presented and taught to them. Researchers suggest that digital natives are students born after 1980 and have grown up immersed in technology most, if not all, of their lives (Prensky, 2001;

Jones, Ramanu, Cross, & Healing, 2010; Helsper & Eynon, 2010; Margaryan, Littlejohn, & Vojt, 2011). Most of these students have grown up surrounded with computers, cell phones, and videogames with technology ingrained in their daily lives (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008). It is now up to the universities and instructors to adapt to these students with the help of technology.

These trends are not going unnoticed by the masses as more people are trying to take advantage of learning any and everywhere. Academic leaders finding online learning critical to the long-term strategy has grown from 48.8% in 2002 to a high of 70.8% in 2014 (Allen & Seamen, 2015). Rovai and Downey (2010) observed that more universities and institutions are acknowledging distance education and the opportunities it provides and have begun transforming themselves from strictly on-campus mode to dual-mode. In a survey published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (Parsad & Lewis, 2008), of the 4,200 institutions in the U.S., 65% offer a combination of undergraduate and graduate courses at a distance for credit. Also, with 500 institutions serving over 10,000 students each, 96% offer undergraduate and graduate courses at a distance for credit (Parsad & Lewis, 2008). At the undergraduate level, participation in distance courses rose from 8% in 1999 to 20% in 2008 (Radford, 2011). During this time of transformation, it is important that the quality of instruction must mirror if not exceed that of the classes on-campus (Ulmer, Watson, & Derby, 2007) with communication and interaction becoming very necessary (Usluel & Masman, 2009) to still engage online students at similar levels as those students in traditional face-to-face classes. This ensures that students are having the same opportunity for a quality learning experience at all times, regardless of the mode of learning and instruction.

The issue with educating these digital natives is speaking the language, and for some it is overwhelming. Prensky (2001) coined the term “digital immigrants” (p. 2) to identify those facing this challenge. Instructors and faculty members are met with the task of teaching these digital natives and giving them quality instruction. At times they are met with a variety of challenges with little support to overcome them. Instructors have the ability to use their students’ skills with technology to improve their deeper learning skills and aid with the conundrum of using technology (Barnes, Marateo, & Ferris, 2007). Digital immigrant characteristics include: “not going to the Internet first for information, printing out work instead of doing it on the computer, and reading manuals rather than working through things online” (Prensky, 2001, p. 2). It seems as though this digital divide will be a main issue for many institutions because they will have to find a way to reach students and make sure they are grasping the necessary information to succeed.

Following a first year quantitative study of five universities that surveyed 596 students across 15 courses and 14 disciplines with 72% of respondents being female in England where the objective was to explore first year student experiences with e-learning, Jones, Ramanu, Cross and Healing (2010) found students often look to their own available mobile technology, like smartphones and tablets, to enhance learning. The study found that these students tend to use this technology to search, receive, and apply information almost instantly. In research on educational change caused by the generation of technology savvy students, Bennett, Maton, and Kervin (2008) found that the approach used for learning by students could change depending on the tasks with which they are faced and the adjustments they need to make to be successful. In some cases, instructors assumed using the same teaching methods they have used for years to teach digital natives with no success (Prensky, 2001). Helping instructors to understand how

useful the Internet can be can ease their worries once they understand how it works and what it offers.

The capabilities of the Internet have brought online learning to its current status because students can login to class or download materials from any location. In a recent study released from the Babson Research Group and Quahog Research Group surveying over 4,000 institutions of higher education, about 7 million students take part in fully online courses (Allen, Seamen, Hill, & Poulin, 2015). With this opportunity, education can reach people having geographic, time, or other barriers with technology that is available today (Crawford-Ferre & Weist, 2012). Obtaining a quality education online or via distance has also been a concern for the United States Department of Education (Casey, 2008) which established the Distance Learning Education Demonstration in 1999 to help the Secretary protect unsuspecting individuals from fraud and abuse. Allen et al. (2015) found total enrollment in distance education courses at public institutions in 2014 increased over 160,000 students, which is a 4.6% increase from the previous year (Allen, Seamen, Hill, & Poulin, 2015). The desire to reach interested students is what will keep these programs moving in years to come.

Moving to web-based learning offers students more resources to help them understand the material and gain knowledge on their own (Schunk, 2012). Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are also becoming prevalent in education because they allow students to be in a session with subject matter experts (SMEs) sharing knowledge pertaining to a specific topic and collaborating on issues. A MOOC is defined as “a course of study made available over the Internet without charge to a very large number of people” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015). In some cases MOOCs are free of charge, which allows a variety of individuals from students to

professors to participate. Depending on the course, credit is not typically given but students still have the ability to learn with people across the world.

On the other side of the distance education coin are the instructors and faculty members that have to change from traditional ways of teaching and now integrate technology in a variety of ways they have never done before. The design and delivery is important in distance education because without it the courses lack interactive and engaging opportunities that will aid learning (Boling, Hough, Krinsky, Saleem, & Stevens, 2012). Successful faculty will include new and creative avenues to help their students. Ulmer, Watson and Derby (2007) surveyed 137 distance education faculty about their perceptions of the field and stated experienced faculty had positive distance education experiences but agreed “distance education caused the quality of education to decline” (p. 67) which was an interesting finding because they also concluded that those same faculty members “promoted and recommended engagement in distance education” (p. 69) but these contradicting views often make it hard for administrators to make a decision on the impact of a distance learning program.

On a positive note, in a study to identify factors to enhance student and instructor experiences, Roby, Ashe, Singh, and Clark (2013) surveyed 49 of a possible 161 faculty members and observed that a variety of teaching delivery modes, while facilitating the online or blended courses, is what instructors like and also found that when adequate provisions are made available, the instructor perceptions could be affected. In a phenomenological study Gonzalez (2010) looked at 18 faculty members from two Australian universities, found that faculty members are now responsible for “Creating the online space for knowledge and serving as a facilitator of information (p. 69)”. It is important to make sure those responsible for teaching via

distance have what they need to ensure they have positive attitudes and work just as hard as they would for a traditional course.

Faculty perceptions can often determine the rate of adoption for an innovation (Rogers, 2003) except when it is in control of administrators. This can push them to adopt faster than they would on their own and cause frustration. A variety of studies show the best perceptions of distance education come from faculty members who have had some experience with using it and the necessary technology (Howell et al., 2004; Ulmer, Watson, & Darby, 2007; Roby et al., 2013). In some situations, these faculty members need a “transformative learning experience” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 144) to change the way they view distance education. If faculty members are assured by their administration that distance education is a viable means to teaching, some of their worries may be calmed (Mills, Yanes, & Casebeer, 2009). Faculty should not be left to figure out things alone, there should be assistance provided to them in some form. In most situations, the decision to proceed with distance learning is placed in the hands of the administration. This has probably kept growth steady because they see where more people are looking to use this technology and willing to pay the costs for this form of education.

Statement of the Problem

As more universities are using distance-learning platforms, faculty members are having issues adjusting (Presnky, 2001; Helsper & Enyon, 2010; Kolikant, 2010). The purpose of this study is to explore faculty perceptions of quality of online learning in condensed degree programs at a traditionally “brick and mortar” campus and how they saw this kind of learning influencing the future of higher education.

While the educational landscape continues to be reformed with technology in the United States, there are individuals and institutions that are engaging in distance learning to better serve a larger population of students. In *Leading the e-learning transformation of higher education*, Gary Miller et al. (2013) detail the highs and lows of distance education from the lens of leadership. The authors push for the leader to educate others on the concept of e-learning and be there in times of need. It is agreed that faculty support is necessary for a successful distance program and it is up to the administration to make this happen. While Miller et al. (2013) detail distance and online learning in its present form while looking at the future of the field, it is deemed necessary for support systems to be available for not only students but the faculty members and instructors facilitating these classes. One of their main suggestions is that instructors join and communicate in professional networks and organizations to continue to push the field forward.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore faculty perceptions of online learning in condensed degree programs at a traditionally “brick and mortar” campus and how they see this kind of learning influencing the future of higher education.

Theoretical Framework Summary

The framework guiding this study was Change Theory (Rogers, 2003). Using this lens to design the study, to collect and to analyze data helps in our understanding of how faculty are motivated to adopt change and their perceptions of teaching in accelerated online programs and to develop these kinds of courses for their students.

Change Theory (Rogers, 2003) offers a way to see how small deviations in daily life can change the perspectives people have on specific subjects. The advancements in technology and

the Internet have brought distance learning to its current accessibility status because students can login to class or download materials from any and everywhere. The Internet decreases the cost of communication across the barriers of time and space with email, for example, being able to reach a person almost instantly (Rogers, 2003, p. 216). Now materials can be delivered with learning taking place anywhere at almost any time (Renes & Strange, 2011). Without the advancements in Internet technology it would be difficult for such effective distance education to be possible.

Those who find distance education to be most useful are the students who take advantage of programs that are available to them by the different universities (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Hostetter & Busch, 2006). Recognizing a need is often the beginning of the “innovation-development process” (Rogers, 2003, p. 137). Distance education can contribute part of its success to the need created mostly by working professionals who are seeking advancement or trying to build their next career (Harper, Chen, & Yen, 2004). In truth, distance education is mostly used by an underserved population of students (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006) that have never been afforded the opportunity to learn in a situation that is best for them to be successful.

With some universities offering accelerated-degree programs to reach working professionals, the courses must be planned appropriately to ensure students are learning. As Boyd (2004) researched effective instruction in accelerated programs, he found the key was to incorporate the entire brain in the learning process. These degree programs look to offer a certain level of rigor and degree of difficulty so their students can be taken seriously upon completion (Husson & Kennedy, 2003). These accelerated programs are designed for students to take a course in a shorter time period, typically 5-8 weeks, versus traditional 16-week semesters

(Boyd, 2004). Most programs have students begin in a cohort so they take all the same courses with the same people to help them develop a support system. The compatibility of the innovation to the student is the key (Rogers, 2003). For a person to be interested and take advantage of this opportunity, they have to believe that distance education will help them reach their goal where other avenues have failed.

Faculty members must decide where they fit in the quest that numerous universities have set forth to make waves in the field of distance education. Howell, Saba, Lindsay, and Williams (2004) observed how uncomfortable faculty could feel with the ever-changing university landscape because their roles are not as they were 10 years ago and this is where the “change agent” (Rogers, 2003, p. 368) needs to step in and help with the transition. Change agents are there to impact the decisions of others as it pertains to an innovation. It is important for instructors to realize they must change to become effective in this new area.

Faculty roles are being transformed by their interest in distance and the non-stop integration of technology while at the same time leaving some faculty stuck at a crossroads of what to do and where to go (Howell et al., 2004; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Some of them may need to have a positive experience or with their ideas and values for this to occur. As distance learning is sometimes forced upon faculty members they are left in a complex situation where they feel the innovation is difficult to understand and use because a problem occurred during the implementation stage (Rogers, 2003, p. 179). This can push them to adopt faster than they would on their own and cause frustration within faculty units and at times lead to discontinuance of the innovation which is “the decision to reject because a person becomes dissatisfied with an innovation” (Rogers, 2003, p. 21). In higher education, the change

agent must keep faculty members on the path to combat discontinuance and help the innovation become successful.

In order to overcome barriers facing distance and online education, it will take a joint effort from faculty and administration since they are in control of what is produced. One idea that may help with the diffusion to wary faculty members would be the “trialability and observability” (Rogers, 2003, p. 258) of the particular distance platform they will soon use. The “observability”, will give them the opportunity to see successful courses and programs in action and the ways the technology can be manipulated to improve a course. The trialability will give them an opportunity to experiment with the technology and get a feel for what it is capable of in order to “dispel uncertainty” and where they may need assistance before it goes into full production (Rogers, 2003, p. 258). If the barriers are not tended too, they can lead to resistance by the faculty members to accept teaching distance courses and cause more issues (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). These faculty members are being met with a new way of teaching and will need support to be successful (Bennett & Bennett, 2002). For the administration, being able to use faculty from the trial period to speak with late adopters can still help because they can learn about the innovation and tips to contour it to their needs. Even if the faculty members are not fully supportive of teaching in an online environment, this will aid in the innovation-decision process.

In today’s society most administrative leaders do not have the luxury to fail, especially when it comes to education. As more students venture into online education, more schools are working to accommodate them with 70.7% of public institutions offering some distance courses or programs (Allen, Seamen, Hill, & Poulin, 2015). It is an absolute necessity to make sure students accept online education because they have the knowledge of what it will take to succeed

in this environment. “Overadoption” (Rogers, 2003, p. 231) is cause for concern because soon, numerous universities and institutions will have distance and online programs and putting extensive money and other resources into development may lead to failure for those who are late to adopt or naive to think developing a distance program is easy. With its extensive growth, this research will aid administration in the decision making process on how a distance learning program may work in their particular university or department.

With developing an online education program, the positives are always visible but what about the consequences? Rogers (2003, p. 440) stated, “Consequences are difficult to measure” and especially in this case because they are not often put in the spotlight. If a program does not fail, and continues to produce graduates is it actually a success? Are the students receiving a proper education? Is any real learning ever-taking place? These questions are hard to answer but it is important to cut the distance in distance education. Communication, collaboration, and engagement are needed to provide quality learning experiences and it is in the hands of the providers to make sure it happens.

Significance of the Study

The rationale for the study is described in the following section with information about the study’s significance in terms of its implications for theory, practice, and policy.

Although most people are excited about the possibilities of distance and online learning, the literature has not covered this topic as extensively as other teaching methods. Most literature has been published on student perceptions and effectiveness of online versus traditional courses but not much on how faculty members perceive this innovation that they are, in some cases forced, to use. The purpose of this study was to explore faculty perceptions of online learning in condensed degree programs at a traditionally “brick and mortar” campus and how they see this

kind of learning influencing the future of higher education. This research will seek to consider the context of eLearning no longer being considered the exclusive right of ‘virtual universities’ and to explore faculty perceptions of online education at a traditionally ‘brick and mortar campuses’ and how viable they feel it will be in the future. The data provided would increase the literature base that aid programs in supporting faculty teaching online courses.

Studying distance education, as a phenomenon of the past decade, will aid in understanding the road that faculty will face in the future. It will continue to evolve and become a very viable means of education for numerous people. This research will allow for educators to better prepare in cases where they have little to no experience in the distance environment and are looking to see how their colleagues deal with certain situations. By focusing on the instructor, the way they approach distance courses will be documented and help others incorporate new tools into their course design. While the field of distance education is growing vastly, there is a need for this research to help administrators decide if pushing this type of education will benefit their institutions in the long run or cause some of their most effective faculty members to burnout too soon.

In relation to adult and higher education, this study is significant because in the United States for example, more and more adults are looking to return to school to finish a degree or continue their education to advance in their current job. It reaches those students who previously had issues with access to education because of time, distance or personal matters (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). With the increase in universities offering degrees via distance, it is important to know how faculty members who have to teach these classes feel about taking on these tasks. The concern is that not all programs are giving the students quality-learning experiences in these online environments and the degrees they receive are semi

worthless. These programs should be responsible for helping students with lifelong learning goals to aid with their development. While exploring lifelong learning in Jamaica, Robinson, Rice, Stoddart, & Alfred, (2013) connect it to improving the workplace and the economy. Students taking part in distance courses are looking to improve their status as contributing members to society by increasing their knowledge.

While navigating the field of distance education, having the perceptions of faculty will help to see the role it is having on the educational landscape. This study will provide such information and also contain information on other issues that faculty face when designing and teaching distance education courses at the university level.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How are changes in online and distance learning, particularly in accelerated formats, influencing the perceptions of faculty members in higher education?
2. How do experiences of faculty members in online settings influence their approach to teaching in a digital environment?

Organization of the Report

Chapter one presents the introduction and background for the study covering distance education. It also includes the statement of the problem, the purpose, and the significance of the study.

The relevant literature is reviewed in chapter two. This includes information on mobile learning, e-learning, students' perceptions, and faculty perceptions of teaching in the online environment, with particular attention to the accelerated online course format.

The methodology and procedures that will be employed in the study are covered in chapter three with techniques for analysis of the data. Findings of the data are covered in chapter four. Emergent themes are presented and their relation to the literature. Implications for theory, practice and research are covered in the chapter five.

Delimitations of the Study

The results of this research seek to provide a small glance at the field of distance and online education at institutions of higher education in America while focusing on only one. The results of the study are limited to data gathered from the area of the country, and also to the particular university in which the study will be conducted.

Definition of Terms

The terms presented here are for the purpose of this study:

Asynchronous- “The use of computer and communication technologies to work with remote learning resources, including coaches and other learners, but without the requirement to be online at the same time.” (Hiltz & Goldman, 2004)

Digital divide- “A Social gap between the information rich and the information poor” (Bonfadelli, 2002)

Digital immigrant- “Those of us who were not born into the digital world but have, at some later point in our lives, become fascinated by and adopted many or most aspects of the new technology “ (Prensky, 2001)

Digital literacy- “Variety of technical, cognitive, and sociological skills needed in order to perform tasks and solve problems in digital environments” (Eshet, 2004)

Digital natives- “native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet (Prensky, 2001)

E-learning- “learning facilitated and supported through the use of information and communications technology” (Corbeil & Valdes-Corbeil, 2007)

M-learning- “the intersection of mobile computing and e-learning (Corbeil & Valdes-Corbeil, 2007)

Net generation- “generation who, in profound and fundamental ways learn, work, play, communicate, shop, and create communities very differently than their parents.”(Tapscott, 1998)

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore faculty perceptions of online learning in condensed degree programs at a traditionally “brick and mortar” campus. This research will seek to consider the context of online learning no longer being considered the exclusive right of ‘virtual universities’ and how faculty feel it will influence the future of higher education.

Chapter II is organized this way: first, literature related to the digital environment including the natives and immigrants. Second, a brief history of distance learning, mobile learning, and the use of MOOCs in higher education are presented. Third, literature related to faculty perceptions of distance and the use of accelerated/condensed learning degree programs in adult learning is detailed.

Living in a Digital Environment

What we like to refer to as a typical day for most people has changed over the past few years. Where people once woke up, went to work, and came home to spend time with their family, something new has been added. They are taking advantage of learning at home in their spare time while taking a slight detour from normalcy. Online education has afforded people the opportunity for learning wherever they are, and in some cases whenever they choose. As society continues to advance, distance and online education gives people the opportunity to advance themselves while being able to maintain their regular lives.

Distance education is just as it seems, learning a subject at a distance and is typically for self-motivated learners. Online education involves more interaction and group discussion by the learner. These two are often confused because they both use the Internet to deliver information to students (Bejerano, 2008). The difference of students not having to sit in a classroom with a teacher at the front is what sets it apart from typical in-class learning and instruction

(Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). With this opportunity, education can reach people having geographic, time, or other barriers with technology that is available today (Crawford-Ferre & Weist, 2012). While the doubters of distance education believe “true learning can only take place in a classroom” (Renes & Strange, 2011, p. 210), others are branching out and reaching students who are willing and motivated enough to learn.

The educational landscape has been evolving for years and now some instructors are working to play catch-up. The digital natives (Prensky, 2001) are taking over the realm of education and changing the ways information is presented and taught to them. Researchers suggest that digital natives, similar to millennials, are students born after 1980 and have grown up immersed in technology most, if not all, of their lives (Prensky, 2001; Jones, Ramanu, Cross, & Healing, 2010; Helsper & Eynon, 2010; Margaryan, Littlejohn, & Vojt, 2011). Most of these students have grown up surrounded with computers, cell phones, and videogames and now technology is ingrained in their daily lives (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008). It is up to those at the university level to meet these students where they are and help them to advance in education instead of trying to push them to fit in the box of traditional education. The traditional four-year degree is no longer a uniform fit for all students and institutions are venturing into other avenues to meet these non-traditional students (Spaid & Duff, 2009). Most students are coming from educational systems where technology was used in some type of way in all of their classes and as they enter institutions of higher learning they are looking for that trend to continue.

The issue with educating these digital natives is speaking the technology-based language and for some it is overwhelming. Prensky (2001) coined the term digital immigrants to identify those facing this challenge because the language of technology is something extremely different and in some cases, difficult for them to learn. Jones et al. (2010) relate to digital immigrants as

being a step behind the natives who have grown up with new technologies, which is the reason why the digital divide must be dealt with successfully.

Students go about processing information in a much different way than before which makes it difficult for them to learn in the standard educational systems (Prensky, 2001). They are not accustomed to sitting and listening to constant lectures and the typical computer presentations are also uninteresting to them because they need more interaction and engaging activities. Natives expect to receive information exceptionally fast at all times because they have grown up with the technology at their fingertips (Prensky, 2001; Barnes, Marateo, & Ferris, 2007; Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008). These digital natives are seen by older generations as educationally advanced because of how they deal with technology. The pressure to advance in educational settings is presented to natives as early on as freshman year of high school where they are encouraged to become goal-oriented and begin thinking about possible careers (Barnes, Marateo, & Ferris, 2007). Instructors are there to direct the natives so they can focus on the technology and the information.

The instructors play a large role in the success of digital natives and immigrants in educational systems and are sometimes overwhelmed with the task of teaching and dealing with the technology. Prensky (2001) identified one of the main problems the education systems are facing is the amount of digital immigrants who struggle to teach with technology effectively because they do not take the time to understand the new learners and adjust their teaching methods to accommodate the learners. It seems as though some instructors are met with the task of teaching online and tend not to rethink their process of teaching because it takes a considerable amount of time and they sometimes are not compensated. It would benefit instructors to adjust their pedagogies from on-campus to online courses to benefit the new

learners and incorporate as much technology as possible to help students advance their learning (Waycott, Bennett, Kennedy, Dalgarno, & Gray, 2010). This can also push some instructors to look at technology in a new way to enhance their courses.

In some cases, instructors are the gatekeepers for quality instruction. As Helsper and Eynon (2010) observed, they can sometimes speak the same language as digital natives if and when they want depending on how they perceive the benefits. Kolikant (2010) interviewed 25 students on their use of Internet for school and learning purposes and observed that some instructors were worried about using too much technology for learning because they did not want students to abuse it even with the educational landscape progressing towards more technology. Most institutions of higher learning are working to implement as much technology as possible to satisfy the needs of their students. Those universities and institutions that fail to stay on track with this progression will soon be outdated to those students who are accustomed to using technology in every aspect of education (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008). Instructors have to become flexible and work with students to become successful in education. It is up to the instructors to help students develop the necessary skills whether they take courses on-campus or online (Barnes, Marateo, & Ferris, 2007). This will help ensure students are receiving a quality education in both environments.

The gap between the digital natives and digital immigrants is sometimes referred to as the digital divide. This term is also used to describe the gaps between socio-economic groups or nations and their access to technology (Bonfadelli, 2002; Waycott et al., 2010). As more institutions move to increase the amount of technology used, one of the main issues will be access to connectivity. It seems that a sizeable portion of Americans are still offline and others have issues with basic connectivity while those with Hispanic and African American

backgrounds display lower internet skills than others (Hargittai, 2010). Those students with better skills tend to engage in online activities more than those with sub par knowledge. It will be important for instructors to work with students to overcome these challenges to help them be successful.

Distance education has branched off into online learning programs, which are becoming a popular means of education in-lieu of traditional brick and mortar courses (Bejerano, 2008). Most, if not all, instruction takes place through the Internet in online courses with learning being synchronous or asynchronous depending on the instructor. As Bejerano (2008) reviewed the evolution of online degree programs, the research identified three factors to identify such programs including: “online education involves computer-mediated interaction, online learning is independent of a location, online courses are time-flexible” (p. 409). These courses and programs are available to all but self-directed learners are typically most successful in this environment.

With the rise of online degree programs and the amount of people looking to take advantage of enhancing their education at their own convenience, Adams and Defleur (2006) conducted a study of 269 hiring managers to understand their perceptions of hiring applicants with fully or partially online degrees. Online degree acceptance by employers is a concern among administrators across the country (Allen & Seamen, 2015). The idea of diploma mills and lack of rigor are what most people expect when these online programs are involved. In the study 96% of managers preferred employees with traditional degrees while relaying concerns of lack of group interaction and interpersonal skills from those with online degrees (Adams & Defleur, 2006). These managers valued classroom interaction and experiences that were not available in the online environment. Adams and Defleur (2006) and Bejerano (2008) suggest

students use caution when enrolling for an online degree because everyone may not view them as acceptable or comparable to traditional degrees. It is important to select accredited programs from universities with good reputations.

Mobile Learning

With all of the technology that is available, students are taking advantage of things like smartphones and tablets to enhance their learning (Jones et al., 2010). They tend to use this technology to search, receive, and apply information almost instantly. Bennett, Maton, and Kervin (2008) found that the approach student's use for learning can change depending on the tasks they are faced with and the adjustments they need to make to be successful. Older instructors have been characterized as always being a step behind with the technology and assuming that they can use the same methods they have used for years to teach digital natives (Prensky, 2001; Jones et al., 2010).

Mobile learning, also known as m-learning, is beginning to become common practice for students with everything they have at their disposal. Smartphones, laptops, tablets, and MP3 players are a variety of instruments that were developed for one use and have gradually moved into the sector of education but are the students, faculty and administration ready? Corbeil and Valdes-Corbeil (2007, p. 56) asked a question "what does it mean to be ready for mobile learning?" Although people have these devices, they may not know how to use them properly for learning. Is anyone ever ready for a change similar to this? Being that the value of m-learning is not easily confirmed (Frohberg, Goth, & Schwabe, 2009), those in favor feel it is important to take advantage of this trend. In 2005, Duke University made waves by supplying all incoming freshman with iPods to be used for classes (Fuson, 2006; Corbeil & Valdes-Corbeil, 2007). With the university moving ahead, the professors used it to their advantage. They made

materials accessible to students that would work on these devices to use them when needed outside of class.

With an increasing number of students who try to take advantage of higher education while having full time jobs, there was a need to see how to get the information to them (Rogers, 2003). At some point, students realized that they had all of the technology necessary to learn while on the move. Educators saw the opportunity to engage students who were using these devices to keep them interested in the learning process. As the definition of mobile learning remains unclear (Rossing, Miller, Cecil, & Stamper, 2012), it has been described as the “intersection of mobile computing and e-learning” (Corbeil & Valdes-Corbeil, 2007, p. 52). This is one of the better definitions in the literature because it gives a precise image of what is happening in education. People are beginning to use their technology for learning purposes (Park, 2011) as well as social functions.

M-learning has been recognized to support a social constructivist theory (Rossing, et al., 2012), because the factors of social and educational concern are shaped by the technology, which agrees to the “social construction of technology”, defined by Rogers (2003, p. 147). When iPods and MP3 players became popular they were designed to listen to music digitally. With the ability to have podcasts and videos uploaded to these devices they have now turned into educational tools. Educators recognized that students had this technology, which they found more interesting than the traditional class, so they developed ways to use it to their advantage. Students can now be more effectively engaged in classes because they are intrigued about all of the different ways that their entertainment tools can be used for learning.

While students and the technology are on the move, learning and instruction can take place anywhere (Corbeil & Valdes-Corbeil, 2007). Frohberg et al. (2009) observed m-learning

should be geared to more advanced students. This is due to younger students not taking the opportunity as seriously and not gaining knowledge from the innovation. It is important for students to be motivated enough to use the technology responsibly to study and collaborate to enhance their knowledge (Beckman, 2010). More advanced students are seen to be capable of this because they have jobs, families and other priorities that help keep them focused on the task at hand without being distracted by other venues.

What m-learning has done is take away the need to be plugged-in to a single location for learning to take place (Park, 2011). Now with the ability to view course materials on smartphones or tablets with some form of Internet access, the student can gain access to the information outside of a traditional classroom setting. The diffusion of m-learning seems as serendipitous (Rogers, 2003) as can be because most of the technology used was designed for entertainment or business purposes until it reached the hands of the public. It is possible to see the evolution of some of the technology because most of them are capable of using an assortment of applications (apps) that can support a variety of information to be used without any problems. Most of these apps can be downloaded in minutes and offer its consumers trouble free access; sometimes with a small fee, and most free of charge.

Research shows, that in most cases, owning a mobile phone is ubiquitous among students, and educators have begun to incorporate it into their teaching styles to enhance learning (Harley, Winn, Pemberton, & Wilcox, 2007; Park, 2011). They have taken notice that students have this technology and instead of letting it cause a distraction, they have re-purposed it into something beneficial for everyone. Text messaging is one of the more popular technologies among educators because it allows sending messages of up to 160 characters that can be used in a variety of ways (Brett, 2011). This can be used for quizzes, in-class discussions, and private

communication between student and instructor. Using the technology in this fashion can increase classroom discussion and appeal to the tech-savvy students because they are getting to use what's new on the market in a way that enhances learning (Corbeil & Valdes-Corbeil, 2007; Brett, 2011). It is important that educators realize that using the technology needs to be a two-way street (Rogers, 2003). Although the technology is becoming necessary, it should remain as a tool for teaching and not stand-alone. Therefore pedagogy is still necessary to have effective learning environments and the use of technology should only be used to enhance them.

While technology is critical to m-learning, it is the portability of the devices that distinguishes it from other avenues (Park, 2011). Phones can fit in a pant or jacket pocket and laptops and tablets are now small enough and light enough to be taken anywhere. With the technology that some smartphones possess, they can even be used as all three devices while maintaining the same mobility and functionality. It is also necessary for educators to realize that for m-learning to work and become adopted across the world, there is a need for high-quality Internet access (Rogers, 2003; Beckman, 2010). Without the Internet and the progress it has made to be accessible almost anywhere, m-learning would not be possible. Limited access can cause some of the applications and mobile tools to work improperly and cause frustration for both educator and student. This can be overcome because of Wi-Fi capabilities of devices and network cards from wireless providers, but then cost becomes an issue to certain students.

Various students of today are not what most people would classify as traditional with the variation of age, lifestyles, and professions. In a variety of situations, m-learning may be the only way for someone to learn because of job, family duties or a variety of other factors (Beckman, 2010). New students to higher education are the real variables to this new way of learning. They have grown up in an environment so rich with technology, now it is ubiquitous to

them because they already have access to things that some people would consider to be technology (Corbeil & Valdes-Corbeil, 2007; Park, 2011). For them the use of the Internet, smartphones and e-mail is an essential part of everyday life so educators have to adapt to engage them on a higher level.

The compatibility of m-learning with new age students is just what some people need to keep them interested (Rogers, 2003). They already have the tools necessary; they just need the instruction as to how to use them for learning. With technology use, students are now given the ability to locate knowledge (Dale & Pymm, 2009) and add to classroom discussion in ways that they may not have done before (Rossing et al., 2012; Geng, 2012). Mobile devices can give a voice to a student who otherwise has none because they are too shy to speak in class, but now they have access to information that can make them become a critical component to the conversation. Students currently have the ability to exchange thoughts and ideas with like minds to increase their knowledge and social skills (Beckman, 2010). The ability for online collaboration and discussion outside of the classroom is now available where before that was not possible.

Faculty members at an institution also play an important role in m-learning because in a way, they are the gatekeepers (Rogers, 2003). In a sense, they have to be willing to change how they do things normally and adapt to this new style of teaching. While some are given a choice of whether or not to adopt, those that are not given such options are facing increasing pressure and demands (Dale & Pymm, 2009) from administrators and students. Their integration of m-learning into courses has to be successful because students are counting on them to provide a quality course. Not having the option is a major deterrent to some individuals and they can become trapped in a complex situation. Rogers (2003, p. 257) suggested, “the more complex an

innovation is perceived by some members negatively affects its adoption rate”. This is important because some people may make the adoption more difficult than it has to be for no other reason than they do not want to change. In these situations it is obvious how a person’s awareness-knowledge can have negative effects on their how-to knowledge and principle knowledge (Rogers, 2003). Their negative attitude towards the innovation from the start will cloud their judgment and hurt their how-to and principle knowledge to a degree where they will not succeed with the technology.

Times are changing and so is the field of higher education. Students are looking for more from education and with the knowledge they can gain almost instantly from the Internet educators have to adapt. These same educators must understand how students use their mobile environments (Sølvberg & Rismark, 2012) and how prepared they are for new technologies and applications (Rossing et al., 2012). All of the different technology available may scare some educators but they must find tools they are most comfortable with and that their students can use effectively. Podcasting may work in one course because it gives students a way to gain the knowledge whenever and wherever while using what is available (Dale & Pymm, 2009). Ken Fuson (2006) noted that in a face to face course professors saw an increase in class attendance and discussion after the use of iPods and MP3 players because the students became more engaged in the learning material.

While mobile learning as a field is still considered to be in its beginning stages, it is not unreasonable to speculate that changes and technology improvements will occur and it will no longer be the new pedagogy on the block. It is not uncommon to think that it will soon be a part of everyday life to a variety of people across the world. In order for this to work and to reach a full scale adoption by faculty and students, m-learning will have to become efficient to the

people who use it the most (Corbeil & Valdes-Corbeil, 2007). As the technology continues to grow, improvements will and must be made that will benefit those participants of m-learning.

Technology has become ubiquitous in the educational landscape and as instruction continues to progress it will only increase its importance in the future. Every student will need to have their own devices to give themselves a sense of pride (Dale & Pymm, 2009) and to avoid having to share, which can cause problems (Rossing et al., 2012). Certainly as society progresses, this should not be a problem because technology is becoming more and more affordable to the masses. While m-learning has been seen as relatively new in some circles, it can actually be seen as an evolution of e-learning (Sølvberg & Rismark, 2012). This comparison is functional because when e-learning was developed it was because more people had access to the internet and now m-learning has come along with people having the ability to access the internet while being mobile.

For m-learning to have the ability to stand the test of time, it must quiet the critics. As new learning techniques arise, it is necessary for them to prove they can work in a variety of situations with a variety of clientele. M-learning has the opportunity to move forward because technology keeps advancing and there are always a new crop of students looking to take advantage of a new way to learn without having to sit, listen and take notes. The field of education needs to embrace m-learning and work with the creators of these new devices to have them able to access software that students can use during their pursuit of education in the 21st century. With the introduction of massive open online courses (MOOCs) to higher education, the use of m-learning will continue. MOOCs are used to reach large groups of people using the Internet to deliver materials and information. They are sometimes free of charge and are often

taught by subject experts. With the help of m-learning, these courses reach millions of people across the world and increase their ability to learn.

Massive Open Online Courses

As more people move to web-based learning, massive open online courses (MOOCs) are making waves in education. In some cases MOOCs are free of charge, which allows a variety of individuals from students to professors to participate. In some cases, MOOCs can be taken for credit, but most offerings are free and allow participants access to access and information for them to use on their own.

Online learning has given the opportunity of education to a variety of non-traditional students. It is no longer necessary for them to quit their jobs and be on a college campus at random times in a day because in most situations they can log on using their personal computer. This makes education accessible to a new population of students whom did not have the time or the ability to make it on a campus. Over the years, distance education has advanced from being done through mail correspondence, to television, and now web-based and interactive conferencing (Anderson & Dron, 2011). With this new way of learning, there is a need for a proper pedagogy to establish distance and online education as a viable means of learning.

Learning is the knowledge or skill acquired by instruction that can be applied to real life situations, but it is important that the principles and processes are described to reflect what is happening (Seimens, 2005; Anderson & Dron, 2011). One theory used for online learning is connectivism, which is a succession from cognitivism, constructivism, and behaviorism (Bell, 2011). George Siemens (2005) is seen as the father of connectivism and believes learners are actively attempting to create meaning and is driven by the thinking that decisions are based on rapidly altering foundations. The ability to seek current information and the ability to filter

secondary and extraneous information are two important skills needed in connectivism (Kop & Hill, 2008).

Seimens and Downes were credited with developing MOOCs, which aimed at exploring a pedagogy that uses Web 2.0 for learning and instruction because one did not exist (Clara & Barbera, 2013). Blogs, social media, and wikis are various Web 2.0 tools that are used for communication and sharing (McLoughlin & Lee, 2008). MOOCs are increasing in popularity because of their ability to reach a wide range of people in a single space. They are often publicized to present specific topics and are conducted by experts in the field that offer commentary and discussion with the participants. MOOCs rely on successful formations of learning networks to assist people studying specific topics (Kop, Fournier, & Mak, 2011). While Ravenscroft (2011) averred that dialogue is most important for maintaining connections and developing knowledge, it is imperative an appropriate technology is designed for MOOCs so learning in using this platform can be validated.

As education continues to move forward it is important that it is used to benefit students instead of making them fit into one particular mold. Anderson and Dron (2011) suggested the key to connectivism is the building and maintaining connections that are flexible enough to be applied to existing and emergent problems. This allows students to adjust how they use particular information to combat certain situations. It is an issue when students do not know how to organize material on the Internet and think everything is important (Schunk, 2012). Being that most courses that would use connectivism are online, it is important for students to be self-directed in their learning. They must learn independently and be able to synthesize skills and information and be able to engage in activities with other students (Kop, 2011; Kop, Fournier, & Mak, 2011). For the students, that may have low confidence levels it is seen as a deterrent to

manage time, set learning goals and find resources (Kop, 2011). In most circumstances, whether in-class or online, students must be responsible for their learning. At times looking for other resources and deciding what will be learned is on the shoulders of the students. It is possible that learning in this way is not best for young students but more experienced learners who are more disciplined. Having these large open networks of learners allows for people to have access not only to other knowledgeable people, but information and videos that can be used to help learning (Kop, Fournier, & Mak, 2011).

Being a new pedagogy for distance education also brings attention to how things are done and developed. The notion of connectivism as a learning theory was first developed in 2004 and updated in 2005 by Siemens. This opens up the conversation for traditionalists to poke and prod and find leaks. Clara and Barbera (2013) suggested that connectivism as a learning theory, should be abandoned altogether because it was not effective when working with MOOCs and online learning tools. This is a harsh idea even while the pedagogy is being re-designed and transformed as time progresses.

As education continues to advance towards the future it is important to look at all variables that can make it better for students. Massive open online courses are not going away any time soon and it is important that those in charge show that learning is taking place with the proper theories. Schunk (2012) and Rogers (2003) agree that learning by distance saves time and effort for students and these variables are enough to keep people interested for a long time. For emerging technologies and pedagogies to be accepted by institutions it may be necessary for a change in thinking to occur (Kop, Fournier, & Mak, 2011). Moving to these online communities will not be easy for every person in education but as the techniques become validated it will help the process. For traditional practices that will soon be outdated, they must be replaced with

engaging, socially based models for teaching and learning (McLoughlin & Lee, 2008). The vast number of networks and communities that choose online learning will continue to expand and develop and MOOCs will still be around. Although they are not accepted by some universities, others are making the transition and at times without consulting faculty. As the landscape continues to change they are sometimes left out of conversations as to what direction instruction will be going. This leaves them to deal with policies and procedures set forth by the administration with little to no voice and how they feel about moving forward.

Condensed Courses

As adults are heading back into the classroom, they are looking for avenues to help them get in and out with quality degrees from traditional universities. With the influx of online programs promising degrees in a shorter timeframe, traditional universities are now trying to service a market of adult learners in ways that may have eluded them before. They are offering condensed degree programs to business professionals to offer them degrees similar to what is available in an on-campus version.

These condensed programs are designed for students to take a course in a shorter time period, typically 5-8 weeks, versus traditional 16-week semesters (Boyd, 2004). With all of the for-profit online institutions that offer these degrees, it is important that the student does research before enrolling. Condensed programs should be filled with rigor and a degree of difficulty that students can trust is worth their time (Husson & Kennedy, 2003). Marques (2012) observed how the intensive programs are more correlated with workplace demands because of how they are developed and the foundation used to design them.

When people think of condensed programs, most think quick, easy and expensive. The supposition that quick degrees are of lesser quality is common especially with the large number

of for-profit universities that market towards working adults (Sampson, Brogt, & Corner, 2011). As Wlodkowski (2003) reviewed condensed degree programs in universities, he observed some are designed to attract adult learners (i.e. University of Phoenix). Traditional academics may not to recognize degrees from these organizations because they deem there is a lack of difficulty in obtaining those degrees.

As Scott (2003, p. 30) detailed the attributes of high-quality intensive courses, she found four that help determine the quality of a program “instructor characteristics, teaching methods, classroom environment, and evaluation methods.” These attributes can be found in quality programs that are looking to educate students the best way possible.

Kucsera and Zimmaro (2010) used 130 course instructor surveys to understand the differences between traditional and intensive courses and found most faculty make adjustments when switching teaching formats to create more effective courses. Students in these courses seemed to have a higher motivation level for intensive courses compared to traditional courses.

While Spaid and Duff (2009) researched the best practices for working adults in accelerated courses, they found how purposely formed cohorts are used with 10-30 learners that advance through the program at the same time. These groups are purposely formed to allow students to become familiar with their colleagues while improving interaction and communication in the courses. This is also an acceptable size for instructors to interact with all students and not feel overworked (Spaid & Duff, 2009). Developing cohorts may be time intensive on the administration but it may be beneficial for the overall success of the program.

When Carrie Johnson (2009) interviewed 18 faculty members on their views of reduced seat time in condensed courses, she found many students came to class prepared and faculty members noted a higher level of energy for the duration of the course. Some of the instructors

believed accelerated courses enabled more efficient learning and expectations should not be lowered to enhance student satisfaction.

Faculty Perceptions of the Digital Environment

Over the past decade, more people in higher education have been paying attention to online education and how it can be used by a variety of individuals to enhance their knowledge. Learning online has enabled numerous people to continue their education beyond the classroom, but it is still seen as a novelty by some people. Of all things, online education gives people the opportunity to learn in a variety of settings and at most times when it is convenient to them (Crawford-Ferre & West, 2012). This is the chance some need to better themselves and their situations and they are taking full advantage. With the advancement of technology, there are no limits to where education has to take place (Renes & Strange, 2011). What is important for those participants in distance education is that the quality and quantity of instruction must mirror that of students in traditional classroom settings so there are no questions about the effectiveness of this style of learning (Ulmer, Watson, & Derby, 2007). It will take serious effort by the instructors and administrators but it will be beneficial to the success of the program.

A reason for the invention of education at a distance or online is to reach students who are otherwise unreachable. Potential students can become unreachable for a variety of reasons including time, location, professional or private life, etc. Online education seems like a solution to a lot of people but it is important to note that to be successful in most settings, you must be self-motivated. In some situations students are lacking “knowledge management and self-regulatory skills” that will help them to make the most of online education courses (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012, p. 7). This is why most programs were geared towards older individuals who were looking to enhance their education but were deterred because of having to sit in a

classroom or being too far from the campus. With advancements in technology, students now attend class using synchronous and asynchronous communication tools (Harper, Chen, & Yen, 2004). The numerous students who participate in distance education and online learning are trying to advance in their current career or build up to their next opportunity.

In a world with many different options of where to enroll and how will specific courses benefit their future lives, most students have preferences. In many cases, knowing what is expected in the course before enrolling is important to students (Roby, Ashe, Singh, & Clark, 2013). Students have small demands like this because those who enroll in online courses like to feel in control of their learning. It is important to make sure those responsible for teaching via distance have what they need to ensure they have positive attitudes and work just as hard as they would for a traditional course.

As Santilli and Beck (2005) documented graduate faculty perceptions of online teaching, they surveyed 47 faculty members that taught 701 doctoral students and observed discussion boards where necessary to build learning communities with 51% of faculty with 34% stating it aids in student communication. One of the major obstacles in the study was how 65% of faculty members take issue with the lack of technology skills by students that impede their communication. Most of the faculty in this study took on the role of facilitator instead of instructor in the online environment.

Yick, Patrick and Costin (2005) observed 28 faculty members in an asynchronous discussion board to discover experiences in an online program while within a traditional university where some accept online learning but everyone does not embrace the technology. Faculty members felt a large student population, accreditation, and research are three main topics to access the credibility of an online program. While the faculty in this study had mixed feelings

about online education, Yick, Patrick and Costin (2005) suggest the online and distance programs should be integrated into the delivery system of the institution to fight barriers of technical difficulties and change.

Conceição (2006) used the phenomenological approach with 10 faculty members to understand their online teaching experiences and found the major themes in the study being work intensity and rewards. This research found that more time is needed to design and deliver online courses while maintaining course continuity compared to traditional courses. The rewards for faculty came when they were able to reach learners of different abilities in an online course and simultaneously able to enhance their skills in the online environment (Conceição, 2006).

In order to improve the credibility of online programs, it must be designed into the program. In a qualitative study of fifteen faculty members and their experiences of effective teaching online, Bailey and Card (2009) observed the need for fostering relationships, engagement, timeliness and good communication being helpful to instructors in this environment. Also, it is important for instructors to use the technology properly and become flexible and adapting to different situations.

When Marek (2009) surveyed 296 instructors on their adaption to online teaching environments and showed 63% had no support available and only 24% had financial support and 13% were allowed leave time for course development. This study looked at how the curriculum was delivered by the instructor. The researcher suggested it is the responsibility of the institution to make sure that online courses are delivered properly through the necessary infrastructure to provide learning (Marek, 2009).

When Oomen-Early and Murphy (2009) conducted a study of 101 faculty members about their perceptions of factors that impact online teaching and found most participants, 87%, felt

there was a lack of support from administration and the institution. With administrators focusing on increased enrollments, faculty workloads are not a top concern. Other issues identified in this qualitative study were lack of pedagogical and instructional support and the increased time commitment it takes to teach in an online environment which the participants dealt with by taking advantage of training when available was the best way to overcome these barriers (Oomen-Early & Murphey, 2009). It is up to the administration to address the concerns of the faculty members and help them create a better environment for teaching.

To examine institutional efforts at addressing barriers of planning and delivering online courses, Orr, Williams and Pennington (2009) conducted a qualitative study with ten faculty members about their perceptions. The research showed it is important to have the institution both motivate and support faculty members working in the online environment. The participants in this study were motivated for teaching by the concern for their students needs (Orr, Williams, & Pennington, 2009). After conducting qualitative interviews with eleven faculty members to understand their experiences in the online environment, Hsieh (2010) observed how the faculty members played a major role in education and expressed a commitment to teaching online through their interests and personality and not monetary compensation. It is important faculty members have intrinsic motivation to be successful in this environment.

Wasilik and Bolliger (2009) surveyed 101 faculty members to understand their satisfaction while teaching online courses and reported 91.3% of faculty looked forward to another online course even though others were moderately satisfied with 38.2% favored the online environment over other teaching environments. With the growth of online education, it is important for faculty members to have positive experiences to share with colleagues who are also teaching distance courses.

In order to understand training, preparation and actual teaching in an online environment Batts, Pagliari, Mallett, and McFadden (2010) surveyed 108 faculty members that responded how off-campus training was decreased due to budget issues. In-turn, 59% attended group sessions and 48% attended some type of training to enhance their online teaching effectiveness. This self-motivation exhibited by instructors demonstrates their willingness to enhance their skills in the online environment.

With the increase in online courses, faculty members are being asked to teach more courses with less interaction time with students (Hislop & Ellis, 2004). Most have the opinion that online courses require more time due to the necessary change in pedagogy and constant use of technology necessary for a quality course. Hislop and Ellis (2004) researched the amount of effort and time faculty members spend in the online environment compared to traditional courses and discovered the upfront work caused the increase in workload. This is because information had to be uploaded months before in an online course where in the traditional course it could be passed out when needed and developed the day-of if necessary.

With any new ideas, there are barriers to adoption that may not be overcome with words but with actions from those in control. In some situations, instructors are met with increased class size because the course is online. However, Roby et al. (2013) discovered that instructors prefer class sizes of 30 or less to have a quality course they can control. Harper et al. (2004) researched how distance learning was impacted by communication technologies and found that faculty can experience other barriers that add to the negative idea of distance education including: frustrations with malfunctioning technology, disproportionate amount of effort by instructor, instructor preparedness, student attitudes, less time for research and added costs to have the technology in the office and at home. After analyzing a survey on instructor

experiences in blended and online courses, Roby et al. (2013) stated the disincentives include the time necessary for student monitoring, facilitating courses, and tracking. All of these things can build on a faculty member and have negative effects on how they approach distance education classes and the way they portray their workload to others.

In cases of distress, the faculty needs to know they have support and are not alone in their journey of developing and delivering online courses. Communication is an important variable that is often overlooked. If faculty members are assured that distance education is a viable means to teaching by the administration, some of their worries may be calmed (Mills, Yanes, & Casebeer, 2009). Faculty should not be left on an island alone, there should be assistance provided to them in some form. Mills, Yanes, and Casebeer (2009) discovered the fears that some faculty members express are often related to inaccurate perceptions of technology and institutional support both of which can be eased with open communication channels. Bennett and Bennett (2002) found that institutions provided little more than technical support, but that is not enough. When faculty members are transitioning into a new way of teaching it is important to provide as many resources possible to show everyone is a part of the team.

In education, there are always necessities the faculty needs addressed to have a functional work environment. In the case of distance education and online learning, some faculty are often put in a situation where they have to learn on the job and their frustrations can build up to extreme levels. Administrators understand that these distance and online courses are necessary but they rarely check with the faculty to see what they need. In some cases, faculty members need different types of support when transitioning from in-class to online teaching (Bennett & Bennett 2002). What this calls for is money that is not always available and leaves a gap. Renes and Strange (2011, p. 210) stated, “For quality classes to take place, it is necessary there is time

and training support available.” To maximize the integration and training, a trainer could be used with small faculty groups to help them gain the most information (Georgina & Olson, 2008). This would take time, but it would help in creating successful courses.

There is a need for this support to come from administrators but they have to recognize it is necessary (Roby et al., 2013). It is not always possible for an administration to allocate added time and resources for support if they are under budget constraints. Crawford-Ferre and Wiest (2012, p.13) affirmed, “instructors need support beyond training in the pedagogy” of online instruction and adequate technology to avoid wasted time and frustration. These things would go a long way and help instructors to not have to deal with issues other than preparing and delivering lessons.

At times faculty members can feel overworked in the online environment because of constant barriers and increased time. Hogan and McKnight (2007) surveyed 76 instructors on burnout in the university while teaching online courses. With more schools implementing online programs the instructors are more apt to burnout with the symptoms including reduced feelings of personal accomplishment, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion. Female instructors had more feelings of burnout symptoms than males but this finding was not significant (Hogan and McKnight, 2007).

It is also important for instructors to realize they must change to become effective in this new area. Their communication skills must be redefined in order to be successful and they must understand how to get that accomplished (Boling, Hough, Krinsky, Saleem, & Stevens, 2012). Instructors have to become comfortable with using technology on a daily basis and in most cases they will have to do it on their own time because their schedules may already be full. For universities to develop and sustain distance education programs, they must be aware of the

instructors' willingness to participate in distance education as it relates to their experiences and opinions (Lee & Busch, 2005). The more information that can be gained on the instructor, the smoother the transition can be for everyone involved. Tabata and Jonhsrud (2008, p. 635) observed that instructors gained skills in distance education from a variety of variables including: "Technology, attitude, adoption of innovation and age, ethnicity, and institutional affiliation." Instructors were more likely to have these skills if they had distance education experience, which made them more likely to participate in distance education in the future. As distance education continues to grow, it must involve all hands on deck to make it successful at all levels.

It is probable the rate of adoption (Rogers, 2003) has not been as affected because in most situations the decisions to proceed with distance learning is placed in the hands of the administration which has probably kept growth steady because they see where more people are looking to use this technology and willing to pay the costs for this form of education.

In a study from Beets et al. (2008), the researchers used a Change Theory (Rogers, 2003) framework to assess the school climate and teachers' beliefs and attitudes associated with implementation of a school program. A survey involving teachers from 10 elementary schools was conducted and results were presented from year 2 and 3 of the mutli-year longitudinal trial. Beets et al. (2008) found that support of the teachers was a key element in the school climate and amount of the program used.

While doing a review of research, Durlak and DuPre (2008) used results from over 500 quantitative studies to determine the influence of implementation on programs. What they found was the process, outlined by Rogers (2003), is impacted by different variables (community, providers, training, etc.) depending on the circumstances. Therefore, an innovation can be successful depending on the environment in which it is introduced and the way it is presented.

As Rice and Pearce (2015) looked at a comparison of the digital divide and diffusion of innovations perspectives on mobile phone adoption, they analyzed data from an 8-year Armenian study where most participants face economic and social inequality. They concluded the adoption of the innovation (mobile phones) was dependent on the demographics of participants and contained varying adoption levels.

Theoretical Framework

The framework that guided this research was Rogers (2003) Change Theory. From data collection to analysis, this body of literature presented the lens through which this study was conducted.

Condensed online degree programs were developed to provide working individuals the ability to enroll into institutions of higher education and complete courses at a faster rate than a traditional degree program. In most cases, condensed courses range from 5-7weeks; traditional courses range from 14-16weeks. Faculty members targeted to teach condensed courses face an array of challenges as they adapt from the traditional semester and course design but maintain a commitment to reaching students. Rogers (2003) introduced the stages of the innovation decision process (p.170) as a way to show how a person is met with a new idea and the process they go through to either accept or deny. With some instructors already having experience in the online learning arena, they must be persuaded to either accept or reject an innovation by the administration. In most situations, they do not have the opportunity and move straight to the implementation and confirmation stages of the process. The use of Change Theory as a framework will look at how the faculty member's deal with the sudden changes they are faced with in academia and whether or not they have the ability to succeed with various amount of support.

Summary

An in-depth review of the relevant literature on distance learning in higher education has been presented in this chapter. The topics covered included students and how they use technology at a distance, learning behavior of those taking distance courses, history of distance and its evolution, and the impact of MOOCs on the future of education. Interactions between students and instructors, faculty and administration, and faculty and the technology were other aspects covered in this review of pertinent literature. A review of mobile learning and its continued impact on education was also provided. Faculty perceptions of technology and distance were also discussed and provided a glimpse into how issues are faced from the instructor point of view and how they deal with the administrations on various matters including training and support in online environments. It was just as important to see how faculty members try to gather these digital natives in the common place of technology and work to meet their needs the best way possible while maintaining real learning in the online environment.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore faculty perceptions of the quality of online learning in condensed degree programs at a traditionally “brick and mortar” campus and how they view this form of learning influencing the future of higher education.

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological framework of this study, as well as to articulate research design, methods and data sources to evaluate faculty perceptions of distance education. The methodology will be presented first, followed by a discussion on data collection, analysis and management.

Research Design and Methodological Approach

The methodology or methodological approach is determined by the nature of the research problems being investigated. Since the study sought to explore faculty perceptions of online courses, it took on a naturalistic inquiry (Patton, 2002). Qualitative methods were used in this research study because it was the best fit. An identified feature of qualitative research from Rossman and Rallis (2012, p. 5) is “the purpose is to learn about some facet of the social world.” This qualitative design is naturalistic because the research would take place in a real world setting with subjects interviewed with open-ended questions under familiar and comfortable conditions (Patton, 2002). As Merriam (2002) explains:

The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. The world, or reality, is not the fixed, single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomenon that it is assumed to be in positivist, quantitative research. Instead, there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time (pp. 3-4).

Allowing faculty members to voice their opinions and concerns about online education makes this an ideal study to use a qualitative approach. It was important they share the experiences related to online learning and their outlook on the future.

Creswell (2003) documents five strategies associated with qualitative research including: ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenology, and narrative research. The basic interpretive approach will be used for the purposes of this research because it aids in understanding the perspectives of the participants involved (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The participants of the study were instructors at an institution located in the southern region of the United States that teach in both the on-campus and fully online version of the Master's degree program in Human Resource and Leadership Development. Interviews, observations and documents are the best source of qualitative data; open-ended interview questions will be used to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people (Patton, 2002).

With qualitative inquiry being richly descriptive, words convey what has been learned (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The study sought to outline the perceptions of faculty members that teach in an online environment of regular and accelerated-degree programs to gain a comprehensive understanding of the efforts put forth to teach and be effective as educators.

Setting and Sample

The setting for this study was at an institution located in the capital city of a state in the southern region of the United States. Faculty members selected taught in both the face-to-face and online versions of their respective courses in an accredited Master's degree program.

Purposeful sampling was used for the study with criterion sampling being the focus. The criterion sampling method will be used because only specific members of the faculty will be selected for interviews (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). For the purpose of this study, participants were required to: 1) teach a combination of traditional and semester-long online courses, 2) teach in the Master's condensed-degree program, 3) be willing to engage in the interview process and be audio recorded. Ten (10) participants were invited to participate in

face-to face or virtual (Skype, Google hangouts, etc.), in-depth interviews to discuss their experiences with online learning with five (5) accepting. These experiences related to designing instruction and assessment in condensed modular format online courses with the focus on course outcomes and effectiveness.

The program selected for this study is a condensed Master's degree at a traditional research university. It offers the online degree in as little as 12 months compared to the traditional degree that takes approximately 18 months. The rationale for site selection was due to the advertisement of the program to professionals, and the diverse population of students it attracts. Additionally, there was ease of access to the selected program.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected using the researcher as the primary instrument that allows "entry into another person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Interviews were audio-recorded and conducted face-to-face at a site of comfort for the participant. Patton (2002) presents three possible approaches researchers can take to conducting interviews being: the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. For the purpose of this research, there was a combined approach to interviewing subjects involving the standardized format and the guide approach. This allowed the researcher to ask certain key questions while allowing other topics to be explored at the researchers discretion. Rossman and Rallis (2012) reveal the design of the open-ended technique is to encourage the emergence of important observation as the project unfolds. The assistance of audio-recorded interviews helped capture the raw data.

The focus of the interviews was to determine how faculty members teaching in an online environment perceive its quality and effectiveness. It sought to determine how they believe

instruction in an compressed degree program compares to traditional, full term courses, both in the semester-long and accelerated formats. Questions of potential benefits were also addressed in the interview.

Data Analysis and Management

The foundation of analysis and interpretation according to Patton (2002) is thick description that “generates insights that lead to identifying patterns and can suggest or hint at intentions and meaning” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 270). Accurately describing the perceptions of faculty members teaching in an online environment is imperative to this study. Providing a thick description will allow for the presentation of information and details to audience.

Data analysis in a qualitative research study is not linear in that data analysis does not asynchronously occur after data collection. Patton (2002) inferred making sense of the massive amounts of data is the challenge of qualitative analysis. Data analysis will begin in the field with notes being taken during the interview to record information about the environment and the interactions that occur. This is described as a “running record” to help capture as much detail as possible (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Each interview will be audio recorded with analysis being formally done in three stages: transcribing, profiling, coding and categorization.

In qualitative research it is important to have trustworthiness of the data. It is the responsibility of the researcher to keep all data confidential with only the academic advisor having access. It is also necessary to request and receive Internal Review Board (IRB) approval from the university to ensure the study is ethical. To enhance the credibility of the study outside sources of data will be used in this study (Merriam, 2002). The researcher will look to compare

the syllabi of courses taught by the same professor to understand how they are structured differently to ensure quality of learning.

Interview Procedure

The first step in preparing for data collection was to develop an interview protocol based on the review of literature. While conducting the open-ended interviews, research questions were used as a guide. Introductions and simple conversations started each interview to develop a comfort level with each participant. Pseudonyms were randomly given to each participant to ensure anonymity and also aided in gaining their trust. Upon receiving signed consent and after preliminary introductions, interviews with each participant were voice recorded. Transcription followed each interview. The data was simultaneously analyzed for emergent themes throughout collection process. Field notes were taken during and after each interview and included many observations of behavioral cues, facial gestures, etc.

Role of the Researcher

As a student in higher education it is interesting to see how many institutions offer fully online post-graduate degrees. At first, it was only a few schools but now their presence has snowballed in the number of options for students and added to that is the increased amount of traditional universities offering similar degrees. Being in graduate school for the past six years it is amazing how many people are using degrees from online-institutions to complete or continue their education and enhance their value in the work place.

Having a hard science-based background, degrees from mostly online institutions are frowned upon because there is the belief of a lack of rigor and accountability. With traditional top-tier universities involved in this avenue of educating students, there will no longer be the stigma of a person with an online degree because their resume will resemble a person who has

matriculated the traditional route. People often ask my opinion of online degrees but it depends on the person, the program and what they want to achieve. Also, some people are acquiring these degrees to show themselves it is possible even with the many barriers they may face in their personal lives.

Throughout the research, there is information about student acceptance and satisfaction but I am interested in the faculty members that teach these courses. Some, if not most, of them gained their credentials from traditional universities but are now teaching courses in programs that may have been frowned upon in years past. Understanding how the faculty feels about teaching accelerated courses in an online environment will help to determine if they feel quality learning is occurring for the enrolled students. My interest in this research is based on the rise of online learning in higher education. Soon, the online course will hold as much power and credibility as a face-to-face course but it is important to understand the perceptions of quality that exists today.

Chapter 4 - Findings

This study was designed to explore the faculty perceptions of the quality of online learning in condensed degree programs at a traditionally “brick and mortar” campus and how they view this form of learning influencing the future of higher education. Research questions were addressed by participants based on their experiences in the online environment and served as the basis for the study.

The primary instrument for the data collection in the investigation used by the researcher was interviews. This chapter was divided into three main sections including: participant profiles, emergent themes from the data, and an overall summary.

Participant Demographic Profiles

Demographic profiles of the study participants will be detailed in this section providing background information for each participant and allowing the reader to get to know and understand the participants. These study participants had differing demographic profiles. Five faculty members teaching in the condensed online degree program were interviewed where they reflected on experiences of teaching and functioning in the unique online environment. Important data were collected along with personal insights on their feelings and how they approach guiding students and facilitating courses in the online environment. Pseudonyms were assigned randomly to each participant. Three participants were female (Jacy, Stacy, Haley) and two were male (Shaun & Tyson). Three participants were White and two were African American. All five of the participants had taught in both online and on-campus formats. Teaching in the condensed online format requires instructors to manage asynchronous courses that allow students to complete assignments on their own time. In comparison to on-campus formats where courses take place at a certain time of the day and instructors present information to students who are required

to be in the room for that period of time. Most students in the online or asynchronous formats are non-traditional students that have other obligations during the day that do not allow them to sit in a course. These online courses allow them the freedom to obtain information and complete assignments. For instructors, the on-campus course allows them to develop as they see fit because students do not receive the information until they present it in the course. In the online/asynchronous format, the instructor is expected to have all of the information and assignments loaded online from day one to allow students to work as fast or as slow as they please. All of the participant demographics are presented in Table 4.1 including the number of condensed courses they have taught held.

Table 4.1 Participant Demographics of Professors Teaching Condensed Courses

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Gender	Highest Level of Education	# of Condensed Courses Developed
Haley	White	Female	Ph. D.	3
Shaun	White	Male	Ph. D.	5
Stacy	Black	Female	Ph. D.	2
Tyson	Black	Male	Ph. D.	10
Jacy	White	Female	Ph. D.	2

Presentation of Findings

The following section presents the emergent themes associated with the interviews of all participants. This section is divided according to themes that emerged from the interviews with each of the participants. The themes that emerged from the study were (a) organization, (b) communication methods, (c) time constraints, (d) varied training, and (e) perceptions.

Theme 1: Organization

During the interviews, one of the most covered topics of the participants was the amount of organization necessary to be successful in the online environment. It was a recurring topic and emerged as a key theme within the research. All participants agreed that it was necessary to have superior organization skills while instructing online courses especially in the condensed degree program.

Haley is a White female professor in the condensed program. She has taught three courses in this format since being hired at the university. Her primary duties involve mentoring graduate students and conducting research. Whilst keeping a full schedule, Haley explained how she functions in the digital environment and also said:

As far as I can tell there is not all that much that is really unique to online its just the medium but its more, from what I'm hearing in these courses is that you have to be a little more organized, a little more conscientious about testing and assessment, its, you have less room for forgiveness I think in the online venue than you do when teaching in person.

She went on to describe why organization is important when she stated:

Organization is essential because the information has to be clear and well organized, any glitch or confusion requires a communication exchange and a communication exchange slows the process down, and it can derail a student entirely especially in a compressed format.

Shaun is a White, male professor that teaches only in the online format. When he was first hired, he was a traditional face-to-face professor but after a series of events, he took his classes online. He has been using this format for course delivery for the past 10 years and has been able to maintain consistency in his courses. He began at a time when online was still a novelty at the university. As time has passed, he has seen the evolution of digital and online learning first hand. When discussing organization he stated:

When setting up the technology, the flow of the course, making sure that students are comfortable with the materials, can find the materials, know when assignments are due, really involves more effort and work than face-to-face, you know face-to-face you hand out the syllabus- any questions the first class you answer and you're done. It seems continually in an online course you're getting questions about certain assignments and what not so setting that up to make the experience as smooth as possible takes a lot longer.

Being an early adopter of the technology, Shaun also has extensive experience in course design as well. Ten years ago when he started, he did not have access to instructional designers or extensive support to develop all aspects of his online courses. When asked about course design, he said:

I think the main consideration is making sure the student can easily go through the course and know what's due, when it's due, what they have to do expectations of the course, all that stuff and that just doesn't come in the syllabus umm that comes in how the course is laid out week to week in a compressed module.

Tyson is an African American professor that has experience teaching in both formats but now focuses on the condensed degree program. He started his teaching career at the high school level and worked his way up to a university professor. Over the years, he has seen people take advantage of online education to improve their current jobs and situations. When speaking on his experience Tyson said:

It causes you to really know your calendar and your availability. It also causes you to be more organized because the courses are only 7 weeks and they go pretty fast ok, and you're asking a lot from your students in those 7 weeks because you look at a traditional 14 week semester compressed into a 7 week asynchronous environment, it takes a little while to get use to it, it almost gives you the feel that you're non-stop because you know students can turn in anything at any given time.

He also explained how he was able to get his bearings in the condensed setting. It seems that most professors go through an adjustment period. Being his first time teaching in the shortened format he stated:

It took me probably two 7-week sessions to get a grasp of the schedule but after a while, you learn to budget your time even though those assignments are coming in, "hey, I'm

only going to look at them from 9 to 11 on Monday and Tuesday” or things like that so you use your schedule.

Organization skills rose as the key skill for instructors to have in the online environment, especially in the condensed format. Participants in the study agreed that having good organizational skills was a necessity to stay on top and moving in the proper direction. Being that most of them are teaching more than just online courses, they have to stay organized in order to help students and not get backed up with other tasks that they may have throughout the semester. It seems that all participants have become more organized the longer they have taught in the online environment, which helps them teach multiple courses in different formats.

Strategic organization is necessary to be successful in the online environment and is a decision that the professors need to make similar to the stages in the innovation-decision process from Rogers (2003). Once they reached stage three, decision stage, they have begun to use the innovation and seek out additional information to aid them on a daily basis. Being able to easily access information and other tools is beneficial for professors who have multiple commitments to keep stress levels at a minimum.

Theme 2: Communication

When describing the different ways to interact with students in the online environment, communication methods emerged as a theme. Most of the professors felt they reached students because they used multiple methods to not only communicate but to also engage students. They learned that communication strictly through the campus learning management system was insufficient and looked to other methods.

Jacy is a White professor with sufficient experience in condensed course instruction. Having taught in condensed and full-semester online courses she had more experience than other

participants when she began teaching. She felt there was no main type of communication but further explained:

I think in a compressed online environment, you have to almost say the same thing in different ways, like a syllabus is great, if students read the syllabus that's all they would need to know, but in actuality they need it in each week of the course.

Tyson also uses multiple ways of communication with students and takes it a step further because in his courses, he offers an introductory conference call to give expectations of the course or program and give students a chance to see and talk with everyone. What he found from this is that:

Really that's the start and what that does is springboards everything else and 1) gives them the opportunity to know that someone is on the other side of the screen, somebody is going to be there with them every step of the way and that basically opens the door for communication where they know how to contact me whether its email, telephone, text etc., that's when it starts.

Stacy is an African American professor with experience in both the face-to-face and online environments. Similar to Haley, she has administration and recruitment duties on top of her teaching workload. She uses a variety of communication methods with her students to ensure the information she is trying to give them is received and understood. In regards to communication she stated:

For me most effective is the mass emails and the posting things on Moodle, I would say the students would say it's the individual communication whether that's the individual email exchange between myself and him or her or or feedback that's exchanged on discussion boards between myself and the students for example generally in the online class there will be a discussion and the prompt they'll post and folks'll respond and they're required to respond to a peer and their response and so and then of course I chime in and give feedback and information, I think they would say those two pieces are valued most but for myself efficiency so I wish it would just be those mass emails you know and the large posts.

Through the years, Stacy has found that multiple methods may be time consuming in the beginning but help students to stay on track in the course. Stacy continued to speak on her methods of communication by saying:

I have virtual office hours, which no one has dinged on while I'm online, and I would think that was it but really and truly once I took the course and I added in this little thing called voki, uhh v o k I, and you can add a little avatar you know and deliver messages that way so its like your uploading a video but its you, a little cartoon version of me, and and so then there's a couple other things you can do so I actually uploaded a video, a welcome video like I actually went and they had someone in communications video a message about what to expect in the class so I think what I've learned is what's truly effective for both myself and the student is so that no one really gets bored and it just feels like they're reading online and posting is to try and have them create a video, have them respond to things and I think that definitely helps.

Other professors found weekly email reminders and postings to the learning management system to be helpful but also were available for students in a one-on-one basis when requested.

The next theme to emerge within the research was how instructors communicated with students. All of the participants in the study used email but they also incorporated other methods of communication to reach students and keep them engaged. With the abundant tools available via the internet, the use of survey polls, group discussions, and avatars aided in transferring information from the professor to the student. All of the professors agreed that there is no "best method" of communication in online courses, it is important to find what works best for your audience.

Communication is a large part of success in the online environment with instructors having to share information with students constantly. Most instructors open multiple communication channels to reach students and be accessible (Rogers, 2003). Most of these options are provided via the Internet but it seems they also offer the option to use phone-calls as needed. Being that courses are conducted in this virtual world, timely communication lets the

professor share information with students almost instantly to help them stay on track and complete courses in the condensed format.

Theme 3: Time constraints

During the interview process with the professors it was obvious that some of them felt they weren't able to teach and offer feedback as much as they would like because of time constraints or an excessive amount of students. The pace of the courses is not only a challenge for the students but for the instructors as well. All of the participants interviewed spoke on the pace of the course and how it is an adjustment for instruction. Shaun, having the most experience of the participants, has had to make adjustments because he teaches in both the condensed and semester long online format. He elaborated on dealing with time issues in the condensed sessions when he said:

Its really quick, its fast paced and before you know it you're done. Its kind of nice that it doesn't just lag on like the full traditional semester does, its more intense because like I was saying more content, more assignments are crammed into a shorter time period which is ok you just gotta be on top of it, I find with the online condensed version I'm doing a lot of my work in the evening because it seems that students are working full time hence the reason for taking probably an online course so I'm doing more work in the evenings versus a more traditional class.

Similarly, Haley has found the pace to be an issue. Having a full slate of duties on top of teaching in the condensed format she has had to adjust. When dealing with student communication and assignments, she noticed everything needed to be sort of pre-assembled to keep students on track to finish in 7-weeks. While adjusting to the needs of students in her course she realized she could not teach classes in the condensed format the same way she did semester long courses. Her hands seemed to be tied with the need to finish the course on time and make sure students got as much information as possible before they started the next course. When speaking on the pace she stated:

The compressed format is umm very fast paced, its condensed information, very highly coordinated communication and assignment exchange, you know you have to make sure its sequenced just right because any small glitch can cause the whole thing to spiral, has to be highly structured, doesn't allow for a whole lot of time for feedback and bidirectional communication from student to instructor becomes kind of a cookie cutter highly scripted machine that runs on its own but the machine has to be perfect in order for it not to collapse.

Stacy had similar feelings about the situation as she said:

Online it's the 7week module and you're condensing 14-16 weeks of information into 7 weeks because legally we are bounded to whatever is taught in the face to face format, that exact same material has to be covered in the online program and students tend to think online is easier and in my experience that's where the disconnect is because they are surprised when they are held to the same standards.

It seems that in the beginning of the process for some professors, they felt they were not reaching students with enough material and feedback as they did in the face-to-face courses because of the decreased time and lack of communication. As they have continued teaching in the online format they have become more comfortable with their position in educating the students because they have maximized the amount of useful information that can be absorbed in such a short timeframe. The passion to keep pushing the limits of education is what keeps them in the online environment helping students.

The study participants seem to be acclimated to the intense pace of the condensed courses in the online environment. They all agree that it forces them to be more organized during the modules but once they become comfortable it is not as difficult as it was. The professors understand that it can strain their lives but they also understand that the students have to put in just as much if not more time than them to get assignments completed in a timely manner so they are often readily available to answer questions and concerns.

While teaching in the condensed format, professors must distribute a large quantity of information to the students. Although, they run the risk of an information overload, this is the

only way the course can be completed in a short period of time (Rogers, 2003). It seems that the guilt rises because some professors don't know how much knowledge is transferred and used at a later time. They push through by being available to students as necessary to answer any questions or concerns to help them understand and succeed in the class.

Theme 4: Diverse Training

While training to teach in the online environment is necessary, it seems that all of the participants had diverse levels from most formally trained all the way to self trained. Stacy had the baseline training required by the university but due to her other duties, was unable to take more courses. She uses what she learned in her initial course with her own working knowledge of her content area and the digital environment to develop and deliver her courses. She spoke on the training she received when she said:

It's outsourced to and they changed the name but it was originally called Sloan-c or Sloan consortium and they provided online training for instructors but the amount of online training you obtain is really kind of varied. So there was 1 training course that all instructors who were teaching an online class had to take, but they also offered a certificate program if you will and that was free it was covered by the institution and that included several additional professional development courses that were into that certificate.

With Shaun, who has been teaching online for 10 years, having the most experience in the online setting he bypassed the training course. As the only person using an online learning management system to conduct full courses when he started he was on an island. At the time there was no university trainings or assistance for teaching online because some administrators saw it as a novelty. Having to work solely from his own understanding he stated:

No I didn't receive any training, I had to figure it out on my own, not to say that it wasn't available, I wasn't asked to do it, it wasn't a suggestion, I just went and did it myself.

There was really no benchmark of training for teaching in the online environment. The quantity varied from extremely trained with Jacy all the way to self-trained with Shaun.

Although there was this large variation, all of the professors only used particular tips and tricks from the training sessions they attended. They found that if they used everything, it would be too cluttered and they would not be able to function. It seems as if they all have their own formulas to get tasks completed that work best for them.

Although the professors had different experiences in training for instructing online courses, it seems they all had specific take-away points to use in their courses. Similar to “selective perception” from Rogers (2003), most of what the professors used from trainings were related to their attitudes and beliefs. While they were teaching online, the professors did not change their philosophy and continued to incorporate tools to improve their courses. Most of the tips and techniques used by professors were “how-to knowledge” of how to use the learning management systems properly and effectively for their needs.

Theme 5: Tensions

While analyzing the data it became clear that the perceptions of the instructors impacted the way they went about managing their courses. When asked about her experiences, Haley took a deep breath before answering. The condensed format had forced her to change the way she taught courses because she was no longer able to give the proper feedback and assignments she felt would help her students succeed. Although she felt online learning was good and promoted learning to all types of people she commented:

I feel very guilty about teaching online and especially the compressed courses because I feel that students may not be learning as much as I think they should and I know that I am not being as good of an instructor as I would like to be so I would have to say its been kind of an intrinsically demotivating process in terms of my experience but there are some benefits to it uhh the compressed allows my work schedule to be a little bit more compartmentalized so if I get one course out in 6-7weeks that means I have 7weeks to do the things that I do get evaluated on, you know that I get measured for my job performance because really teaching you don't get measured for your job performance as long as your doing an ok job everyone leaves you alone at the end of the year they wanna know how much did you publish, how much money did you bring in, and so the benefit

of that it allows my work schedule to be more compartmentalized so I can make sure I'm hitting those performance metrics that the university is tracking, but in terms of intrinsic motivation its pretty, I feel pretty sad about the whole thing kind of.

As the somewhat newcomer to the condensed format at the university, Jacy did her best to keep students on track during the course. She found that once the course started she had to put in a large amount of time to make sure her students were able to find information and complete assignments in a timely fashion. Jacy expressed similar feelings to Haley when she said:

My focus is solely on supporting the students from start to finish the instructional design part the course production part is also intense but umm our timeline starts 14weeks prior and I think that the activities, its not so much about developing quality course materials in the compressed format given our course production timeline of the 14 weeks, its about ensuring that your linking too or you can certainly read the book, there's text books with every course that we suggest e-books just because students may be registering right on time and it takes a couple of weeks for them to get their text books in so it would be nice if they could just purchase a e-book and have their textbook ready, its about linking the student to important publications that will help them achieve their activities and their assignments.

As Stacy has been in academia for some time now, teaching online was not her first option. As a graduate student and former employee of a similar program, she noted how much help she and other professors had when it came to administration duties which gave them more time to teach courses and guide students. With her extensive duties, she often times gets overwhelmed with trying to meet the needs of her duties and her students. Although she enjoys teaching and interacting with students she explained:

For myself I didn't want to teach online so I'll say that very casually, I love teaching online that doesn't bother me but I was a brand new junior faculty member umm and of course I'm trying to you know get my research and my footing off the ground and so umm I didn't do it for the extra compensation I did it because basically it was like (laughs) we need someone to teach and here you go and so I think that it I think now they are being a bit more thoughtful in approaching people to teach the courses.

Shaun had a different take on the compressed format as he has been teaching online the longest. His years of experience in the online format have guided his perceptions of online learning. He was very upbeat and optimistic when he said:

Off the top I really like the compressed format, from an instructors point of view because its really quick, its fast paced and before you know it you're done its kind of nice that it doesn't just lag on like the full traditional semester does, its more intense because like I was saying more content, more assignments are crammed into a shorter time period which is ok you just gotta be on top of it, I find with the online condensed version I'm doing a lot of my work in the evening because it seems that students are working full time hence the reason for taking probably an online course obviously anecdotal in my experience working with the various students so I'm doing more work in the evenings versus a more traditional class.

Tyson has also had positive experiences because he uses the format as a delivery tool but does not make alterations to his instruction. He was the only professor that has certifications connected to his programs so therefore he has to teach the same information whether its 7-weeks or 16-weeks. He has rearranged assignments and updates the research literature often to keep his students with proper information. When speaking on the condensed format he stated:

Online is the delivery method so when you step out of the delivery method its about educational leadership and what it means to get that masters in educational leadership ok so what are you trying to do my program is primarily for those individuals trying to be a principal and other administrative positions outside of the principalship so with that being said there are licensure requirements that we have to put in there are accreditation requirements that we have to put in so basically when I look at the courses I have to take into consideration all of those guidelines are holding this particular program together such as the ones from the board of regents the ones from SACS the ones from the LCC you know also the standards that we have to make sure we have all of that encompass the program so that's the foundation of the program all of the resources that I use you know basically fill in the blanks I like to I like to call that two different ways you know the skeleton and I put the meat on the skeleton or it's a tree and I fill in the branches and leaves so with all those guidelines take the instructional strategies that I use online and kind of put it together so that's kind of how I do it. And that's what I did those guidelines that I have to follow because that's most important because everything I teach they're still going to have to go out and pass the licensure exam and you're still going to have to be accredited to be able to provide this particular program so I know that doesn't sound good but that's basically what it boils down to.

With the compressed format that the instructors use, they are often faced with the idea of modifying how they teach courses and the way to grade assignments. Haley has modified the way she goes about handling this in the online environment to make it more conducive for her students and herself. Having other classes and duties during the condensed 7-week courses, she

has to be realistic about the assignments she gives and the time she has to grade them. She addressed the issue by saying:

Umm to be just perfectly, brutally honest about it, there's not a lot of time to build in reflection, rhetorical learning, umm more in-depth kind of assessments of learning so the way it affects the actual design and delivery is I feel that it lends itself more to a umm busy work kind of, you're judging effort and participation than quality of learning or accuracy of learning or depth of learning, umm and so I have to put a lot of faith in the self-lead process of the student that he or she is getting out of it what they want or need and umm because I really don't have the time or the capacity to assess where that person is, to help them develop an individualized plan to get there where I can do that more in the in-person class.

As a full-time instructional designer, Jacy often works with other instructors and encourages them to think outside of their normal ideology to better work with their students and get improved results. Jacy also noted how change is necessary to continue progress when she said:

Faculty members seem to think that the course is not of quality, some do not all of them, not of high quality if they are not offering students everything they would offer them in their face to face class and interestingly enough those would these beliefs, the faculty members with these beliefs are also umm use to using lecture to accomplish what they need to accomplish in a face-to-face class, so it takes a shift in philosophy in order to be successful.

Stacy felt the confusion she was experiencing with students involved how they felt the courses and grading would be handled. Although she has modified what she does in the compressed environment, she still pushes for a quality product that she can put her name on. She went on to explain how the expectations of students in online courses is often an issue when it comes to assignments and grading:

I think when online education and distance learning education really took off you know about 15 to 20years ago umm or started rather more prominently 15 to 20years ago it really took off in the past decade I think that generally the assumption and concept is that its more easier so I think that students begin an online program regardless of the institution that its associated with thinking that oh it will be less challenging, so I will say that in my experience that's what they think and then when they find out that no, they are being held to the same standards there can be a bit of a disconnect there.

As Stacy further explained:

I'll be very frank, um grading is the, I have to figure out umm while the same material is covered the same amount of assignments don't have to be covered so for me its really reducing the type of assignments that are covered and really being strategic about umm about when they're due and about how much time I have for feedback. I'm a very feedback giving person, I believe that a person is in a graduate program to learn and to be challenged and to get information and feedback to grow, to grow as a future professional or academic or whatever and so I believe in you know lovingly marking up a students paper umm and what I have learned though again at a research I umm with certain tenure track and promotion expectations and umm honestly and that's honestly in comparing myself to my peers and colleagues and when I see that they do not and I don't base off what I do off what other people do or not do but I do have to realize when people are getting tenure and unfortunately, that's my own personal struggle that I'll maybe get into at some point later, but I think for me it is people unfortunately is people perform less quality in their teaching because your not evaluated as strongly on your teaching, so I think for me in the online format what I had to learn was ok first of all this is not really part of my tenure and promotion process I'm just doing this because there is no one else and you know B therefore I need to be more efficient about when and how I give feedback, for me the management is fewer assignments and trying to turn around those results quicker.

Shaun described the changes he makes to his instruction technique and grading because he has to get the information in front of the students. He also has to allow himself time to review and evaluate their work in the condensed setting. Through the years, he has figured out he has to be reasonable to get things accomplished in the condensed setting when he said:

You've got to get the same amount of material across in a shorter period of time so you're using more bite size pieces of information or content versus you know uhh like extensive levels of content because you know I realize only students can retain so much during a 7-week module you know with the traditional semester you know 14-15weeks they got a little more time to take it in where as in the condensed obviously they don't. Even with papers I'm not asking you know a 20-page assignment I'm asking for a 5page assignment and I want them to be as precise as possible which I've found over the long run is probably more beneficial because they have to kind of condense their understanding of what the assignment is and put it into their words which is a lot more difficult than writing more pages and I hear that all the time from students but it's a good practical skill when they move on to their career or continue with their career, so I'd probably say it influences it greatly, my decision how I would kind of approach the course.

With the standards and certifications attached to the program in which Tyson teaches he is the only professor that has not changed his techniques. Being that students have to meet a specific set of requirements in order to complete his program and graduate, he has to make sure they are receiving the same information as those in the face-to-face course. Most of what he changes in his courses is the relevant research to guide students. Tyson said instead of modifying his assignments for online he takes a different approach by stating:

I guess there's really no alterations that I've made from the face to face to the online things that I've taken out there've been things added in their place so the whole premise of the face to face and the online is that uhm they're mirror images of themselves so what you're getting face to face you're gonna be getting online but I've tried to hold true to that so this is a rigorous program a rigorous 7weeks so that's the expectations so that's voiced to everyone its not gonna be watered down we're not cutting down on anything were you to look at the syllabus for online and face to face they're the same and like I said the only things that I've taken out you know the reason being is because they've been replaced with more up to date research so that's really not an issue not an issue.

In this theme, the perceptions of participants were explored in relation to their time spent teaching in the online environment. While they come from different backgrounds and teach in different departments, there are a few similarities in their experiences. They have all dealt with the pressure of course design and implementation under a time crunch because of other commitments. It is important to note that all participants agreed that if more tasks were added to their current job description, the time they spend teaching online would decrease dramatically just because of the time they must dedicate to providing a quality product on a daily basis. Also, the participants also agreed they would still enjoy teaching in the online setting but it would need to be monitored if class size began to rise in the future.

Addressing the Research Questions

The first question addressed by the research was; how are changes in online and distance learning, particularly in condensed formats, influencing the perceptions of faculty members in

higher education? From the data, faculty members are making changes to be successful and distribute information to students in the online environment. Most of these early adopters of online learning are not given the option to teach in this environment but make the best of their situation (Rogers, 2003). Although most of the instructors do not think favorably about not being able to give as much feedback to students due to the time constraints, they are delivering courses and believe students are learning. Teaching in this condensed format forces them to make their assignments more concise to allow student's time to finish and instructors time to grade. They tend to become more organized especially when they have obligations other than teaching.

Faculty members in the study agree that online learning will continue to grow as long as institutions and administration continue to include it in their mission. This is similar to the finding from the survey conducted by Allen, Seamen, Hill and Poulin (2015) of over 4,000 institutions of higher learning. It seems that as long as institutions and administrators make an effort to provide education to the masses, faculty members will need to be prepared to meet the challenge and deliver information to students.

The next question that guided the research was; how do experiences of faculty members in online settings influence their approach to teaching in a digital environment? From the interviews, it seems their perceptions are influenced by the positive or negative experiences they may have had in the online environment similar to the study from Ulmer, Watson and Derby (2007). Those professors that have positive experiences believe online learning is successful and gives students the knowledge they need to succeed. Those that have negative experiences believe students may not be on the same level as students in full semester length courses that benefit from interaction with classmates and extensive feedback from instructors.

The diverse training of the instructors also impacted their approach. For those that had training before their first class, they seemed to be ready for the challenges and obstacles. Faculty members that were thrust into the online environment often struggle early on, especially in the condensed format, because they are always trying to get ahead of the work and if they have other commitments besides teaching it presents a problem. Bennett and Bennett (2002) noted the need for faculty support to be successful in the online environment. All faculty members of the study agree online learning fills a void and allows an avenue for people interested in improving their own education or advancing in their career.

Summary

This chapter included an analysis of the data collected in this study and details the findings of the research. It also presents the demographic profiles of participants using pseudonyms. Four participants had similar experience in the online environment except for one that had been teaching strictly online for 10 years. Participants' narratives were utilized to best explain each of the five emergent themes that were discussed in this chapter.

Although some participants become frustrated at times, they agree that online education is good to serve a population of people that are in need of education. Digital and online education allows for institutions to reach a variety of students no matter their distance or time zone. They agree that they are making a difference but at times need assistance regulating their teaching duties with other tasks of higher importance in their careers. Shaun was the only participant in the study who maintained strictly teaching duties while the others also had administrative duties as well. If more tasks were added to their schedule they agreed teaching in the condensed format would be the first thing they let go in order to perform their jobs at a high level.

Chapter 5 - Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the case study and to present discussions and conclusions drawn from the findings in Chapter IV. Furthermore, recommendations for further study are made and a discussion of the implications of accelerated distance learning courses for practice, theory and policy are presented.

The purpose of this study was to explore faculty perceptions of the quality of online learning in condensed degree programs at a traditionally “brick and mortar” campus and how they view this form of learning influencing the future of higher education. This exploration focused on their perceptions of teaching in the online environment, training preparation, and personal work overload.

As more universities are entering the territory of online education, this research looked to explore the feelings of faculty members who teach in these programs. With the growth of the Internet, more universities have increased their course offerings to reach students at a distance. The research was guided by the following questions: How are changes in online and distance learning, particularly in condensed formats, influencing the perceptions of faculty members in higher education?; and How do experiences of faculty members in online settings influence their approach to teaching in a digital environment?

Following inquiry and analysis from the research questions, the following conclusions were drawn. First, perceptions of faculty members in the online setting are a result of the experiences they have with administration, students, and content. Second, faculty members use a variety of methods to reach students and promote learning in the compressed setting. Finally, participants agree that digital education will continue to grow especially with more traditional universities seeing its value and implementing programs and technology.

Implications

As it relates to the field of online learning, this study has several implications to assist the advancement of gathering support for instructors teaching in the condensed online environment. This study provides a useful contribution to the understanding of both how instructors prepare to teach in this unique environment and the perceptions they have about students and courses. It also has implications useful for administrators to understand if their faculty members need support to be successful in the online environment.

Implication for Theory

Based on the findings of the case study, it seems that most instructors have gone through Innovation-Decision Process model by Rogers (2003) as it relates to them teaching in the online condensed environment. Most people use the steps of knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation in some way when they are faced with changing the way they once performed a task. This process accounts for previous knowledge and experiences of an innovation and how they play a part in adoption. The Internet has also sped up the rate of adoption (Rogers, 2003) for condensed courses because universities are able to deliver them across the country at a minimal cost. It seems that institutions need to improve their communication with faculty members to make the transition to the condensed environment less stressful and assist them in becoming successful early on in their career.

Implication for Practice

Implications that can be drawn from the findings of this study relate to the need for administration awareness of the duties faculty members currently have prior to assigning them to teach in a condensed course. Specifically, the process it takes to develop a course that can be presented to the masses and students can learn from without extensive communication with the

instructor. It is important those faculty members on the tenure track are credited for teaching online courses along with their current workload for example. It seems that for participants in the study, teaching in the online environment was not weighted equally when it was time to discuss promotion. This could be accomplished by the administration holding forums with faculty members to determine the most effective way to deal with already hectic schedules and deadlines throughout the year. Allowing faculty members to vent their worries or frustrations as well as their successes would aid institutions in knowing exactly where the gap is that may be causing issues in the process.

Another implication of this study concerns unprepared students in the condensed digital environment. Some of these students are under the impression the courses are easy and do not prepare or put forth the necessary effort to succeed early only because of myths. It is important for the rigor and expectations of the program to be discussed prior to taking any courses. Additional research is needed to determine if students fully understand what it takes to succeed in these courses and the amount of effort they put forth to gain an education in this unique format.

Implication for Research

A research implication of this study is the need for additional research on the perceptions of a larger selection of faculty members from different universities. With data collected from this larger sample size, it will be possible to see the similarities or differences in perceptions from faculty members who have different levels of support from their administration. Researchers should also consider studying the differences in sex, age, and other demographics as it relates to experiences in the online environment. Studies could also be done to investigate students' perceptions of the condensed environment and the instruction they receive to determine

if they feel the instruction is more or less strenuous. The impact on tenure and promotion for faculty members could also be studied to determine if that impacts their perceptions of the online environment.

Summary

Included in this chapter are conclusions and implications for future research. The purpose of this study was to explore faculty perceptions of the quality of online learning in condensed degree programs at a traditionally “brick and mortar” campus and how they view this form of learning influencing the future of higher education. This exploration focused on their perceptions of student readiness, training preparation, and personal work overload. Findings of the case study indicate a need for additional information and support to be distributed to those faculty members targeted to teach in the digital environment to ensure they are successful. The findings also indicate participants feel online education will continue to grow, including the condensed format, because of the amount of people looking to obtain degrees and advance their current situations.

Chapter 6 - References

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Appendix A - Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol (Guide)

Faculty Perceptions of Teaching in Online Learning Environments

Participant Background, Educational History, & Employment Status

Pseudonym: _____

1. How did you come to begin teaching online courses at LSU?
2. Did you know you would be teaching online when you were hired?
3. Were you compensated differently for teaching an online course?
4. What type of preparation/training did you receive before your first course?
5. What type of support would you like to receive from the institution?
6. Do you have the opportunity to take advantage of training opportunities?
7. Was there a “change agent” to help you with your transition to online learning?
8. How often do you implement techniques from training sessions to help improve your course?
9. Do you belong to a professional network focused in online education? Does it help course delivery?
10. How long does it take to develop an online course compared to a traditional course?
11. Describe your experiences with teaching in accelerated online degree programs?
12. How many classes have you taught in this format?
13. Describe how difficult it is to teach in this format. What are some of the challenges?
14. How much does decreased time for instruction influence your decisions in accelerated courses?

15. How does teaching in this format compare with teaching traditional face-to-face courses and to online semester-long courses?
16. What is the most effective way of communicating with students in these courses?
17. Describe your motivation to deliver courses.
18. How does your motivation differ when teaching a traditional course compared with an accelerated course?
19. What do you think are the most important pedagogical considerations for teaching online?
20. How do these considerations change based on the accelerated format?
21. What are some of the best practices you have used or seen in terms of teaching online?
22. What are some types of support that would be helpful as you teach online?
23. What specific strategies are you using or have you used in the past to meet the needs of diverse learners in face-to-face as well as online classes?
24. What are the major considerations to consider when designing instruction and assessment in modular formatted (7-week long) online classes?
25. How do you feel teaching in an accelerated degree program at a traditional university influence its credibility?
26. Do you feel students in the accelerated program are as prepared as those in the traditional program upon graduation?
27. Does your timeframe to tenure decrease with teaching accelerated courses?
28. Do you feel overworked teaching in an online environment?
29. How does teaching in these courses affect your work-life balance?

30. How long can you continue to teach online courses if more tasks are added to your current workload?
31. What would be your ideal teaching workload? Why?
32. What do you see in the future of online courses?

Appendix B - Initial Email to Participants

Faculty Perceptions of Teaching in an Online Environment

c/o School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development

294 Coates Hall

Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Date: Current Date

Subject: Exploring Faculty Perceptions of Teaching in an Online Environment

To: Potential Participant

From: Harold I. Mellieon, Jr., Doctoral Candidate,

Louisiana State University

hmelli2@tigers.lsu.edu

Dear *Instructor's Name*:

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Harold Mellieon, Doctoral Candidate, and Dr. Petra Robinson, Assistant Professor in the School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development in the College of Human Sciences and Education. The purpose of is to explore faculty perceptions on quality of online learning in accelerated degree programs at traditionally “brick and mortar” campuses. This research will seek to consider the context of online learning no longer being considered the exclusive right of ‘virtual universities’ and how faculty feel it will influence the future of higher education.

You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face, telephone, or Skype interview which is expected to last up to two hours (maximum). Interviews will be audio-recorded with your consent. The recorded interviews will be transcribed and stored in a locked cabinet and on a password-protected computer. There will be no identifiers on either the recordings or the

transcripts and I will be the only one that will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts. **Your participation is voluntary and of no cost to you. You may stop participation in the study at any time.**

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Your participation will have the potential benefit of increasing the understanding of instruction and assessment in online programs as instructors seek to meet the needs learners in accelerated-degree programs. However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study.

This research is confidential. The research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes your position, length of service at your institution, gender, and program/department in which you work. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. Electronic files will be password protected and hardcopies will be stored in a locked and secure cabinet.

If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for five years.

If you have questions about participants' rights or other concerns, you may contact Jason Pasqua, LSU Institutional Review Board, at 225-578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, or www.lsu.edu/irb.

Thanks very much for your time and help in completing this research. Please advise of your availability and willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Harold I. Mellieon, Jr., Doctoral Candidate, Principal Investigator

Petra A. Robinson, Ph.D., Co-Investigator

Appendix C - 2nd Email Notification to Research Sample

Faculty Perceptions of Teaching in an Online Environment

c/o School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development

294 Coates Hall

Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Date: Current Date

Subject: Exploring Faculty Perceptions of Teaching in an Online Environment

To: Potential Participant

From: Harold I. Mellieon, Jr., Doctoral Candidate,

Louisiana State University

hmelli2@tigers.lsu.edu

Dear *Instructor's Name*:

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Harold Mellieon, Doctoral Candidate, and Dr. Petra Robinson, Assistant Professor in the School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development in the College of Human Sciences and Education. The purpose of is to explore faculty perceptions on quality of online learning in accelerated degree programs at traditionally “brick and mortar” campuses. This research will seek to consider the context of online learning no longer being considered the exclusive right of ‘virtual universities’ and how faculty feel it will influence the future of higher education.

You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face, telephone, or Skype interview which is expected to last up to two hours (maximum) depending on the conversation. Interviews will be audio-recorded with your consent. The recorded interviews will be transcribed and stored in a locked cabinet and on a password-protected computer. There will be no identifiers on either the

recordings or the transcripts and I will be the only one that will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts. **Your participation is voluntary and of no cost to you. You may stop participation in the study at any time.**

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Your participation will have the potential benefit of increasing the understanding of instruction and assessment in online programs as instructors seek to meet the needs learners in accelerated-degree programs. However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study.

This research is confidential. The research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes your position, length of service at your institution, gender, and program/department in which you work. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. Electronic files will be password protected and hardcopies will be stored in a locked and secure cabinet.

If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for five years.

If you have questions about participants' rights or other concerns, you may contact Jason Pasqua, LSU Institutional Review Board, at 225-578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, or www.lsu.edu/irb.

Thanks very much for your time and help in completing this research. Please advise of your availability and willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Harold I. Mellieon, Jr., Doctoral Candidate, Principal Investigator

Petra A. Robinson, Ph.D., Co-Investigator

Appendix D - Institutional Review Board Approval

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST



TO: Harold Mellieon
SHREWD

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: April 23, 2015

RE: IRB# E9324

TITLE: Faculty perceptions of accelerated online learning in higher education

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 4/22/2015

Approved X **Disapproved** _____

Approval Date: 4/22/2015 **Approval Expiration Date:** 4/21/2018

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 1: 2a,b

Signed Consent Waived?: Yes for online interviews. No for in-person interviews

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable): _____

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman 

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:**

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE:** If mass emailing, make sure to use the bcc line.

**All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

Vita

Harold Mellieon, a native of Plaquemine, Louisiana, received his bachelor's degree from Southern University and A&M College in 2005. Thereafter, he completed a master's degree from Kansas State University. As his interest in online learning and leadership development grew, he made the decision to enter graduate school at Louisiana State University focusing on Human Resource Education.