2015

Faculty preparedness for transition to teaching online courses in the Iowa Community College Online Consortium

David Muturia Lichoro

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Faculty preparedness for transition to teaching online courses in the Iowa Community College Online Consortium

by

David Muturia Lichoro

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

Program of Study Committee:
Larry Ebbers, Major Professor
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Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2015

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DEDICATION

To my beloved parents: Isaac and Zipporah M’Lichoro and my brother who inspired me to study all the way, Jacob Gitonga M’Lichoro.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Larry Ebbers, for his support, advice and guidance that he generously provided throughout the course of this research. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Soko Starobin, Dr. Connie Hargrave, Dr. Sharon Drake, and Dr. Andrew Manu, for their guidance and support.

In addition, I would also like to thank my friends, colleagues, the department faculty and staff for making my time at Iowa State University a wonderful experience. I would like to single out my dear friends Ron and Dee Matthews, and George and Mary Engstrom, for their wisdom, kindness and encouragement. Other friends include Father Nicholas Kinyua: you predicted that one day I would become a scholar and now I am, Patrick Muriithi a brother who gave me an accommodation during of one the holidays in Kenya so that I could fully dedicate myself and concentrate on pursuing a track career: You made my dream come true when Iowa State came calling and offered me a full athletic scholarship start spring of 1997. This is what enabled me to secure a scholarship at Iowa State University. Special thanks goes to Agnes Muthanje and other great kids Muthomi, Rose and Bene: Agnes you are great mother and a kind soul who knew I was bright and would one day succeed even when I was full of doubts about my abilities during my time at Kangaru High School. My special thanks go to my track coach at Iowa State University, Kevin Bourke and all the support staff in athletic department. I wish also to thank my father-in-law Lawrence Ngururia, and mother-in-law Miriam for their lovely support.

Special thanks also to my colleagues and co-workers in the Department of Residence at Iowa State University in particular Larry Olofson for his motivation and encouragement to complete my doctoral degree while working fulltime.
I want to also offer my appreciation to those who were willing to participate in my surveys and observations, without whom, this dissertation would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their encouragement: my children Zippy and Isaac for cheering me on. You are great, wonderful and lovely kids. I am grateful for your cheerfulness and lovely smiles. I reserve special thanks to my brothers and sisters from the entire Lichoro family. You are the rock of my soul and your prayers and encouragement have enabled me to reach where no other Lichoro has ever reached. You all told me to shoot for the stars and I have done that by completing this doctorate and becoming the first person in Liburu village to get a PhD: This is for you Munjiru, Akou, Mithika, Mbaabu, Gitonga, Kanyenyu, and Selina, as well as my nephew Samuel Mwithali. I preserve special thanks to my dear wife, Faith for being there for me throughout my journey even before I began this doctoral journey. This scholarly journey started in Kikuyu Campus, at the University of Nairobi, where we met and has continued up-to-date. Thank you for your patience, support, encouragement, and respect: Thank you for your unconditional love.

I also reserve special thanks to a man who made my trans-Atlantic trip possible, my great uncle Fredrick Ntongai. Thank you for funding my air ticket to fly to USA to start my undergraduate studies. Even with all the training and conditioning I did to secure a track scholarship to Iowa State University, my coming to America and consequently my academic success couldn’t have been possible without your incredible support. You are a truly special Man and this is for you.

To my brother Jacob, thank you for your encouragement and making sure I crossed those rivers especially when it rained on my way to Kangeta Primary School. Then you took me to Kangaru High and bought me the first book so that I could learn how to write. Thank you!
ABSTRACT

The recent growth of the internet has had a large impact on education and caused a growing demand for online courses at community colleges. There has also been a demand for hybrid courses, which offer a compromise between the flexibility of online courses and the personal interaction of face-to-face courses. Online and hybrid courses provide new educational opportunities for students who are unable to attend traditional face-to-face classes because of conflicts due to work and other responsibilities. This is particularly true of community college students, who are often nontraditional adult learners. Although students and institutions can clearly benefit from increasing online offerings, many issues such as faculty preparation to teach online courses still remain.

The purpose of this dissertation was first to look at the experiences of community college faculty members who first started teaching in face-to-face classroom format and transitioned to teaching online, and secondly to conduct an analysis of their reported experiences. Considering the importance of bringing teachers’ voices to the discussion of transitioning to online teaching, a phenomenological qualitative research, involving the use of semi-structured interviews with eight faculty members drawn from four Iowa community colleges that belong to Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC) was conducted.

Participants were asked to describe their experiences in transitioning from teaching in a face-to-face classroom environment to teaching online. Interview questions focused on their prior assumptions about online education, their preparation for online teaching and the identification of information they would recommend as vital for successful online teaching. Participation was voluntary and participants were selected by both criterion and network sampling. Interviews were conducted in person, audio-taped, transcribed, and analyzed using
Nvivo software for recurring themes. Data were validated using member checks and peer reviews.

An analysis within each and across the eight community college faculty member interviews yielded several themes that emerged from the faculty experiences of transitioning to online teaching. The categories included: (a) Faculty preparedness to teach online and transitioning to teach online, (b) Teaching in the online environment, (c) Mentors and mentoring, (d) Institutional support and resources, (e) Faculty role as facilitators of learning, (f) Time and effort required to teach online, (g) Student-Teacher Communications and online Relationships, (h) Schedule flexibility, (i) Student Evaluation of Teaching, (j) Role of the Iowa Community College Online Consortium.

The findings of this study seem to lead to the conclusion that making the transition from face-face teaching to online instruction experience is considerably time consuming and changes faculty’s role and teaching responsibilities. Most of the participants in this study, both the seasoned faculty members and the relatively inexperienced, unanimously seemed to concur that they did not feel adequately prepared to teach in the online setting. All faculty members interviewed cited mentorship as being one of the benefits of being a member of the consortium.

This study revealed the depth of the problems and opportunities associated with transitioning to online teaching in a rapidly changing environment.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The growth in online education participation has astounded many and as of 2013 had risen to 6.1 million students, representing an increase of 560,000 students over the previous year (Allen & Seaman, 2013). Nationally, the primary forces of economics and access are driving the explosive growth of online education, which is rapidly transforming postsecondary education. The busy worker has less time to pursue traditional education, yet the need for formal education remains crucial (Wang, 2010). The phenomenon of online education has become a popular choice for continuing professional education, midcareer degree programs, and lifelong learning of all kinds (Moller, Foshay, and Huett, 2008).

Online education provides the flexibility needed by today’s student at community colleges. The courses that are offered through online medium provide students the opportunity to do coursework from home while still working full-time jobs, raising children, and dealing with the day to day demands of their time. Students want online courses and this online environment has far exceeded the actual overall enrollment increase. Allen & Seamen (2014) note that over the past decade, enrollment in online courses has grown faster than the entire student body throughout higher education.

Community college administrators keen to capitalize on this demand and boost the much needed revenue in their institutions have declared the expansion of online learning as paramount to their institution’s future (Instructional Technology Council, 2013). From community college administrators’ perspective, online courses can potentially attract new students, boost enrollment, increase revenue, and utilize instructors from remote locations all without further taxing limited physical space (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008).
Combined with the trends of increasing transportation and university tuition costs, growth in online learning will likely continue. According to the Sloan Consortium report (2014), “Future growth in online enrollments will no doubt flow from those institutions that are currently the most engaged; they enroll the most online learning students and have the highest expectations for growth” (p. 2). Accordingly, more of the established two year colleges offering online courses may begin to develop competing online programs. This growth of online education has and will continue to provide a number of opportunities for students and faculty members alike. For nontraditional students, particularly adult learners, barriers inherent in traditional learning such as time, space, and location are eliminated with asynchronous Internet courses (Morris, 2009). Students enrolled in community colleges are particularly attracted to the flexibility of online learning because when compared to four-year students, they tend to be older than the traditional age of 18–22, declared financially independent, work at least 35 hours a week, and have family commitments beyond the classroom (Horn & Nevill, 2006).

As the demand for more online classes increase, the need to ensure that online education is at least as effective as education delivered by “live” classes at community colleges also becomes an issue. One of the popular tools employed by most community colleges to facilitate learning and teaching in the online environment is the Learning Management System (LMS) and sometimes referred to as Course Management System (CMS). There are many options to choose from including Blackboard, Angel, Moodle, WebCT, Sakai, and eCollege among others (Eitzman 2011). Decisions about selecting a LMS are not taken lightly. Institutions look at many factors including cost, functionality requirements, available support, and compatibility with other college systems such as registration and billing, and reliability (The Transition to Moodle, 2014).
Often times institutions make a decision to change their Learning Management System which is not a simple process as each course management system is proprietary software with differing features. Changing does not mean that the instructor’s course can be “uploaded” and will automatically work in the new LMS. Therefore, it is imperative that faculty members as well as community college administrators who are transitioning their faculty members to teach in an online environment become aware of the inherent challenges and the needs that should be addressed to ensure quality of learning and adherence to accreditation standards (Eitzman, 2011).

Teaching online requires an integrated knowledge of content, technology, and pedagogy beyond that expected of faculty members who teach only live classes (Koehler & Mishra, 2005). Koehler and Mishra contend that without understanding how these factors can effectively integrate, online instruction is less effective than it might otherwise be if all factors are integrated. The current literature shows that most faculty members do not receive significant preparation when transitioning to the online format and, therefore, must rely instead on their education and experience as classroom teachers to develop and implement online learning experiences (Johnson, 2008).

Currently, institutional professional development tends to be aimed at best practices for the online classroom and instructors tend to develop and teach courses in isolation (Duncan & Barnett, 2009). Part of the problem stems from ambiguous perceptions faculty still possess about online education (Allen & Seamen, 2011). In community colleges, budget constraints may limit and dictate the type of resources that are extended to faculty members during this transitioning period (Community College Advancement News, 2012).

Learning, creating and implementing successful learning systems, ones that actually enhance learning, requires a thoughtful blend of educational philosophies, new technology, and
solid instructional design (Major and Levenburg, 1997, p.97). According to Levy (2003), faculty members are faced with a number of new situations when teaching in an online environment as opposed to teaching a traditional class. These includes: assuming the responsibility of administering or managing online courses; the course layout and design; the best delivery method for the content, such as text, graphics, audio, or video; the communication various methods that are used by students such as email, discussion boards, and chats; ways to increase and retain student involvement; appropriate assessments by the students for online learning; and, a working knowledge of all the technologies being implemented in the online course (Passmore, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Although students and institutions can clearly benefit from increasing online offerings, many issues—such as faculty preparation to teach online courses still remain.

Faculty members who are transitioning from teaching in face-to-face classrooms to online courses are forced to keep up with the technology upgrades and in the process, shifting pedagogical changes. Changing or upgrading Learning Management Systems (LMS) for instance, changes the independent variable the course management system content, and faculty members are left with materials in electronic formats that may or may not transition into the new course management system. Faculty members also have to learn and familiarize themselves with a new system. Faculty members have to spend time converting and revising their courses in the new course management system (Riddell, 2013). Moreover faculty members will have to answer many questions from students about the new system once it is live. This transition is a big process and takes time. The amount of time varies from instructor to instructor depending on
how many courses and how much content each instructor has in each course, the type of files, and the instructor’s technology savviness.

Converting a traditional course to an online course is not simply a matter of typing lectures and posting them on the Internet. Instructors must discover new ways to engage the learners and encourage them to be active in the class instruction. For many, this is a major change from the way they were taught and trained to teach. Community college presidents and educational policy makers need to be aware of the major modifications involved in converting a traditional face-to-face course to online instruction and challenges the instructors tasked with teaching these online courses face as they make the transition from teaching live face-to-face classroom to teaching in an online format. Community college faculty members also need a solid structure of support on which to rely on when implementing this curriculum change. It is vital that this support be continuous from the planning stage through implementation.

**Purpose of the Study**

The demand for online education opportunities means that colleges must add more online faculty and more online courses. The existing courses that were once offered in a live face-to-face classroom setting in community colleges are now being migrated to online and offered through various software tools and technology systems. This fast moving adoption of online courses and new way of delivering instruction has certainly changed the way in which faculty teach at community colleges.

The purpose of this study was to apply phenomenological research strategies in the examination of experiences of community college faculty members who transitioned from face-to-face classroom to online teaching, and to analyze the reported experiences. The intention was to develop a portrait of themes of the participants’ experiences in order to gain an understanding
of the phenomena they experienced as they transitioned as well as insight into how faculty members perceive their role in the online teaching environment. For purposes of this study, “online faculty members” refers to full-time faculty members in a community college based program who, having begun their career in classroom teaching, have taught online for at least one year.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions provide the framework for this study.

The central research question was:

1. What are the experiences of community college faculty members transitioning from live, face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching?

Additional research questions were as follows:

2. What challenges do community college faculty face, as they transition from face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching?

3. What assumptions do community college faculty members have about the role of faculty members in online education prior to their initial experience in online teaching?

4. To what degree do institutional support and infrastructure impact faculty members’ experiences transitioning to teaching online?

**Theoretical Framework**

In many ways, online learning has created a new paradigm with respect to the way in which people experience the teaching and learning process (Lipman, 2003; Palloff & Pratt, 2007; Sonwalkar, 2009). The theoretical framework for this study is transformative learning. The research addressed faculty members’ assumptions regarding online teaching and whether their experiences led to the construction of new beliefs and understanding and deconstruction of
existing perceptions. This study, through the means of reflective discourse, looked at the experiences of transitioning to an online teaching venue to discover whether transformative learning occurred. Drawing from the work of Mezirow (1991), transformative learning occurs when adults experience a disorienting dilemma, such as the move from live, face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching.

In this study, faculty members reflected on their experiences in transitioning to the role of online instructor. Faculty members’ knowledge of teaching and their perceptions of their role as teachers from a traditional cultural perspective were examined to identify whether their self-concept had been altered in the transition to online facilitator of learning. Mezirow states that only through critical reflection of previously held beliefs and assumptions will adults go through the process of building new roles and acquiring new skills that integrate into the individual’s life as it was prior to the disorienting dilemma.

Memory is the key to the reflective process. Remembering is impacted by how well the new experience fits into an individual’s meaning perspectives or whether the memory of the experience evokes anxiety. If the experience evokes anxiety, memories may be distorted and more difficult to assimilate. Reflective discourse can enable adults in the process of integrating new information and creating new meaning perspectives.

**Significance of the Study**

This phenomenology study is significant to college administrators, information technology (IT) departments in community colleges, instructional developers, instructional designers, and faculty. The study helps these groups to better understand the faculty reaction and experiences of transitioning from teaching in a face-to-face classroom setting to teaching online. If administrators, IT support personnel, instructional developers, and instructional designers
understand the faculty experience during this phase of transition from teaching “live” face-to-face classroom to teaching online, then they will be in a position to facilitate a more smooth transition into this new online environment. Faculty members for instance are initially affected by constant changes and improvements made to the course management system by the software providers. Without adequate training to assist faculty members to bridge the gap in terms of knowledge, the faculty members are left struggling since their main focus is a teaching aspect. Therefore it is vital to understand faculty experiences as they go through the transitional process since they are the ones transitioning and are most affected by the changes involved.

This study describes the experiences of full-time community college faculty who have taught online for at least one year. The researcher in this study sought to provide rich qualitative data identifying the needs and challenges of transitioning community college faculty. The findings, it is hoped, will prompt institutions to better prepare faculty members and to create a model for faculty member development that can be implemented and further researched upon. Better preparation and institutional support will result in improvements in the quality of online education and greater satisfaction among faculty members as well as students.

The study also sought to understand the experiences that faculty members go through when they are tasked with teaching a course online. Having a better understanding of faculty experiences will help provide data for distance learning departments, administrators, instructional designers, and instructional developers, to properly support faculty as the transition happens. For all those involved, if they can better understand faculty experiences then they can prepare a smooth transition process for faculty. They will be in a better position to understand what faculty members go through, the support and assistance they may need help with, how the
process can be worked in a timely fashion, and understand the critical role faculty members play as stakeholders in online learning so that they can facilitate a smooth transition process.

**Research Setting**

The Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC), which consists of seven community colleges, is the base of the study population. The community college faculty members featured in this study were recruited from colleges who are members of the consortium in the state of Iowa. They all deliver online courses through the consortium. The ICCOC combines the expertise and resources of each consortium member to provide all ICCOC students with innovative lifelong online learning opportunities.

The ICCOC was founded in December 1999 when representatives from each partner college participated in a comprehensive planning process to design and implement the consortium’s technical infrastructure as well as establish objectives, policies, and procedures. The initial objectives were to establish resources and applications, train online instructors, develop online courses, coordinate student services support, and implement an informational website. The ICCOC was able to obtain these objectives through the commitment of all consortium partners to provide quality online educational opportunities to students.

Today the ICCOC continues to assist their seven partner consortium colleges to deliver quality online education to students within and outside the state of Iowa. They provide training, communication, standards of quality, a collaborative working environment and a variety of learning opportunities (Iowa Community College Online Consortium, n.d)

**Limitations**

Because of the relatively narrow focus of this study, the following limitations of this research are recognized:
The study was limited to colleges that are members of Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC). Even though ICCOC provides online instruction to students living in the state and even occasionally to students residing in other states, as well as in other parts of the world, the data collected was primarily from the state of Iowa. In addition, since the data were collected in one-on-one interviews, the researcher looked at community college programs that are located within the limited and accessible geographic region of Iowa (Creswell, 2013) as a matter of logistical convenience.

This study included faculty members who teach in associate (2 years) or diploma (3 years) level community college programs. The study included only community college faculty members who originally began their teaching careers in live classroom situations and who taught online courses for at least one year.

This study is limited to faculty and not focused on other stakeholders in distance education like students and administrators.

Definitions
Terms that are unique to this research, technical in nature, or subject to interpretation are defined below:

**Distance Education:** is defined as “courses offered to students who would otherwise have difficulty participating in traditional face-to-face system of instruction (students who work, students who care for families, students who live in remote areas) without being present on campus” (Allen & Seaman, 2007, p. 67).

**Distance Learning:** It is the type of instruction that is delivered from a distance and can include videos, teleconference courses, and online instruction. For purposes of this study,
distance learning will refer to online and Web-based learning, which is identified as any course that is delivered at least 75% of the time via the Internet.

**Community College**: is defined as “any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree” (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 5).

**Transition**: This research looked at the term to mean the full process of change including the training of faculty, the actual conversion of each course, and the faculty finalizing their courses in preparation to go ‘live’ with students and then migrating to the new online environment.

Other specific terms are used in this study, the following definitions are provided:

**Online Faculty Member**: A member of a community college-based program who, having begun his or her career in classroom teaching, has taught online for at least one year.

**Online Courses**: This phrase is often used interchangeably with eLearning and internet courses. An online course is defined as a “course that meets asynchronously through course management software and email” (Neuhauser, 2002, p. 103).

**Hybrid or Blended Classes**: These are classes in which part of the content is presented online and part in a live face-to-face classroom setting. Hybrid courses are those which meet face-to-face regularly but also deliver a significant portion of the instruction (typically 50%) through online distance learning methods using computers and the internet. Because this format uses computers to supplement face-to-face instruction, it is sometimes known as Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI) (Spradlin, 2010). Students using CAI receive the benefits of regular interaction with the instructor and peers as well as the flexibility of pursuing the online portions of the class when it is convenient for them.
**Live Classes:** These are traditional face-to-face classes in which all of the course content is presented in a classroom setting.

**Transformative Learning:** An adult learning theory, associated with Jack Mezirow, purporting that adults learn new meanings through reflection and discourse after their basic assumptions are challenged by a disorienting dilemma.

**Web-Enhanced Classes:** Traditional face-to-face classes in which the majority of content is presented in a live classroom setting and is supplemented by online material.

**Information Technology (IT):** Involves use of computer hardware, software and web based technologies, asynchronous learning tools, video streaming, etc.

**Learning Management System (LMS):** A LMS is comprehensive, integrated software that supports the development, delivery, assessment, and administration of courses in traditional face-to-face, blended, or online learning environments. The learning management systems are known by various names, including course management system (CMS) or learning content management system (LCMS).

**Consortium** is a formal association of institutions in a state or region choosing to pool their human and financial resources to offer collaborative programs for all member institutions (Korbel, 2007, p. 48).

**Organization of this Paper**

Chapter 1 introduced the statement of the problem regarding faculty transition from face-face teaching to online teaching in Iowa community colleges that are part of ICCOC, the purpose and significance of the study, and the theoretical framework. The specific terms used in the study are also defined.
Chapter 2, is a review of literature that provides an overview of online education with a specific look at community colleges. Faculty roles were reviewed starting with those within the traditional higher education models specifically the community college, and the impact of online education on faculty roles is discussed.

Chapter 3 describes the research approach used in this qualitative study. The chapter covers the assumptions and the rationale for choosing a qualitative study. It covers the research design adopted, research settings, and the research participants. The chapter also details the process of data collection and the role of the researcher and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the study findings. It provides an in-depth look at the outcomes of the research. Included is research site, the participants and themes that emerged from the study. The chapter also provides detailed explanation of the participants’ experiences about their transition from face-to-face classroom environment to teaching online.

Chapter 5 answers the research questions. It offers recommendations for further research and recommendations for colleges considering transitioning faculty members from teaching from face-to-face to teaching an online environment. Finally, there are implications for Iowa community colleges and suggestions for practice.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature begins with a review of the mission of the community college, and then provides an overview of distance and online education with a specific look at community colleges. Faculty roles were reviewed starting with those within the traditional higher education models, specifically the community college faculty, and the impact of online education on faculty roles is discussed.

Background: Online Education at Community Colleges

Community colleges fill a unique role in American education, providing a transition to four-year universities, terminal education for semiprofessional, mid-level positions, like medical secretaries, dental hygienists, and electrical technicians, non-credit lifelong learning opportunities, and industry-specific training to support business growth (Avery & Henderson, 2008, p. 5). The result of these varying roles is a very wide range of needs, expectations, skills, and life experiences among the student body.

The Community College mission gives shape to the institution. Vaughn (1995) describes the community college mission as being, “the fountain from which all of its activities flow” (p.3). Although many community college mission statements have evolved with time, “most community college missions are shaped by the following commitments:

- a commitment to serving all through open access admissions
- a commitment to a comprehensive education
- a commitment to serve the community
- a commitment to teaching and lifelong learning” (p. 3)
It is critical that comprehensive programs are offered to meet the needs of individuals with a variety of educational background and career related goals. By offering such programs via online course offerings “American students are offered an affordable, convenient means of improvement through local community college distance learning programs” (McCrimon, 2005, p. 19). Distance education, commonly referred to today as online or elearning, is a method of delivery used to reach every student in any location beyond geographical boundaries and continues to grow at a phenomenal rate.

Online education has emerged as a favorable teaching and learning method due to recent technological advancements (Donavant, 2009). During the past two decades, online education at the community college level has experienced phenomenon growth and challenges (Bambara, Harbour, Davies, & Athey, 2009). This growth of the internet has had a large impact on education. Online enrollment in postsecondary colleges and universities increased 16.9% during the fall semester of 2008 despite only a 1.2% growth in total enrollment (Picciano, Seaman, & Allen, 2010). Clearly there is a growing demand for online courses. In the United States, 97% of community colleges offer courses in an online format (Parsad & Lewis, 2008). While problems have arisen from this newfound growth, opportunities are now available for management to exploit.

In 2009, the Instructional Technology Council (ITC) conducted its sixth survey of online education at community colleges. The ITC has provided 30 years of service to a network of eLearning experts by advocating, collaborating, researching, and sharing outstanding, innovative practices and potential in learning technologies. As an organization affiliated with the American Association of Community Colleges, the ITC serves higher education institutions in the United States and Canada that use online education technologies. As a result of the ITC 2009 survey,
they reported some of the following observations. First, the student demand for online education at community colleges continues to grow at an accelerated pace. This increased demand has progressed at a double-digit rate for several years.

Second, online education administrators are challenged with the constant need to address course quality and design, faculty training and preparation, the need to provide course assessment, and to improve student readiness and retention. Some programs are faced with resistance from individuals opposed to online education, while some programs do not have the staff and resources to conduct and maintain a quality program. Third, the gap between online learning and face-to-face student completion rates has greatly narrowed. The completion rate for online learning courses has increased to 72%, which is an increase of 22%, since the beginning years of online learning.

**Distance Education**

Although distance learning seems to be a recent phenomenon, some form of distance education has existed since the mid 1800’s. Satellite technology became available for education in the 1960’s and fiber optic systems became available in the 1980’s (Bower and Hardy, 2004).

Distance education has been around since the days of correspondence courses with assignments mailed back and forth through the post office, or designated television stations, offering demonstrations of course concepts and the occasional video tape to watch. This type of distance learning may be all but a memory. The current online universities offer entire degree programs with interactive curriculum, state-of-the-art features like simulators, and professors standing by with knowledge and tools to address every learning style (Roman, Kelsey & Lin, 2010). Online Teaching Faculty (OTF) is now a source of interaction and facilitation of instruction in the course room (Dunlap & May, 2011; Roman, Kelsey & Lin, 2010). For this
reason, the Online Teaching Faculty has become the instructional face of the online university and the administrator depends on them to provide quality interaction in order to build a quality reputation for the university (Bedford, 2009; Wickersham & McElhany, 2010). This is not only limited to four year institutions but also is a common practice in community colleges.

As community colleges move into the distance education arena, institutions have quickly found out that there are many details to be worked out. There are several factors that must be addressed for successful teaching and learning to take place online at community colleges: developing a strategic plan is and still remains very important; policies need development; money dedicated to the cost of implementation is very much needed; and the stakeholders including faculty need to buy into the idea of online education.

Over the past ten years, a significant increase in courses and programs taught via distance has occurred. Online enrollments have been growing by double digits yearly for more than 6 years (Allen and Seaman, 2010). The growth generally is a good outcome for most colleges. With this large population of online learners, it is important now that online learning is delivered successfully at the community college level. While creating a positive learning atmosphere for all students has always been a challenge within the diverse community college setting, creating a positive learning atmosphere online presents additional challenges that must be addressed for online learning to occur (Johnson & Berge, 2012).

**Online Education**

Online education is defined as a process by which students and teachers communicate with one another and interact with course content via Internet-based technologies (Curran, 2008). The Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C), a national consortium of organizations and institutions committed to online learning, defines online courses as “any course where at least 80% of the content is
delivered online” (Allen & Seaman, 2014). Live courses have no more than 30% of their content online, and courses that fall in between those two percentages (30% -80%) are referred to as hybrid or blended. Asynchronous courses are identified as “instruction that is time and space independent 75% or more of the time.” This definition encompasses Web-delivered content (New York Board of Governors, 2007).

Online learning via the internet is the latest mode available to students and has become very popular. It has broadened educational opportunities for many students since its start, which is identified as being sometime in the 1990’s (Chao, Saj, & Tessler, 2006). The United States Department of Education reported in 2003 that more than 56% of all post-secondary institutions, public and private, offered online courses (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2003). The greatest numbers of students were enrolled in two-year institutions, but 89% of all public universities and colleges had some online offerings. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (2002) states that of 5,655 accredited institutions, 1,979 offer distance education programs. In a 2006 study of 2,200 institutions, Sloan-C reported that 3.2 million students were enrolled in at least one online class (Allen & Seaman, 2006) and majority of these were undergraduate students attending community colleges; however, the proportion of online graduate students was greater than that of online undergraduates. Ninety-six percent of institutions with enrollments of more than 15,000 had some online course offerings. This was twice the number of smaller institutions. To continue making inroads in online education, academic administrators must believe that it is critical for the long-term success of the institution to do so (Allen & Seaman, 2006).
Online Education at Community Colleges

In 2009, the Instructional Technology Council (ITC) conducted its sixth survey of online education at community colleges. The ITC has provided 30 years of service to a network of eLearning experts by advocating, collaborating, researching, and sharing outstanding, innovative practices and potential in learning technologies. As an organization affiliated with the American Association of Community Colleges, the ITC serves higher education institutions in the United States and Canada that use online education technologies. As a result of the ITC 2009 survey, they reported some of the following observations. First, the student demand for online education at community colleges continues to grow at an accelerated pace. This increased demand has progressed at a double-digit rate for several years. Second, online education administrators are challenged with the constant need to address course quality and design, faculty training and preparation, the need to provide course assessment, and to improve student readiness and retention. Some programs are faced with resistance from individuals opposed to online education, while some programs do not have the staff and resources to conduct and maintain a quality program.

Third, the gap between online learning and face-to-face student completion rates has greatly narrowed. The completion rate for online learning courses has increased to 72%, which is an increase of 22%, since the beginning years of online learning. Overall, online course quality is continuously improving as more institutional resources are allocated for that purpose (Institutional Technology Council, 2010).

Quality of Online Education

The quality of online education is often questioned, and the ability to validate that outcomes of online education are similar to those of live programs is paramount. Without
adherence to quality, online education programs cannot successfully compete with traditional classes (Chao et al., 2006). In a survey of managers (n=101), only 41% reported that they would give equal consideration to students with online degrees, and 58% stated that while an online degree was acceptable, it was not as credible as a degree obtained through traditional means. Passmore (2000) shares a common concern that many online courses are little more than “shovelware,” incorporating a syllabus, old notes from live classes, a few visuals, and some URLs (universal resource locaters). Learners need active learning with opportunities for feedback in order to increase their understanding to ensure their online experience is equivalent to that obtained in face-to-face classes.

According to Chao et al. (2006), a meta-analysis of the literature relating to online quality standards revealed the following criteria as most important in evaluating online course quality: “Institutional support; Course development and instructional design; Teaching and learning; Course structure and resources; Student and faculty support; Evaluation and assessment; Use of technology; and e-learning products and services” (p. 33). A consistent review of course materials and their quality should be undertaken by an interdisciplinary team (instructors, web designers, and instructional designers). The quality review is also an important part of the course development process, which may include providing faculty members and course developers with a checklist of standards to be evaluated. Though many institutions and organizations develop their own standards based on the literature, there are several nationally recognized rubrics that provide a framework for evaluation of individual courses or entire programs. Sloan-C identifies “five pillars” that are necessary for a quality online program (Lorenzo & Moore, 2002).

The first pillar is learning effectiveness. This includes factors such as active learning and higher order thinking. Without evidence of learning effectiveness, distance education cannot be
considered comparable to live education. Pillar two, student satisfaction, recommends that institutions investigate whether students feel their learning needs have been met by online courses and whether they would enroll in another such class. Support services and a high level of interaction are usually factors that enhance student satisfaction. The third pillar addresses faculty satisfaction. Though many faculty members report increased satisfaction with flexibility and student interactions, they often need recognition and assurance that their efforts are valued. The fourth pillar focuses on the need to ensure that distance education is cost effective. The fifth pillar is access. Students need to be able to access the online programs regardless of location or variations in available technology. Access requires universities to ensure that their technical infrastructures are reliable and accessible by potential students.

**Evaluating Online Education**

Can all community college teachers become online teachers? Not all current community college teachers will embrace online learning, and not all teaching styles adapt well to the online environment. (Johnson & Berge, 2012) ‘‘Faculty acceptance of online education has been consistently cited as an important issue for academic leaders . . . Only one-in-three academic leaders (33%) currently believe their faculty ‘accept the value and legitimacy of online education.’ There has been little change in acceptance over the course of the research (28% in 2002, 31% in 2004, and 28% in 2005)’’ (Allen & Seaman, 2007, p. 18).

According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (2010) the nine national and six regional accrediting organizations use a platform of standards to review the quality of distance education programs. Though the nine national organizations all utilize varying standards, there are seven key areas common to all: institutional mission; institutional
organizational structure; institutional resources; curriculum and instruction; faculty support; student support; and student learning outcomes.

Accreditors identify three major challenges when evaluating distance education programs: alternative design of instruction, alternative providers of higher education, and expanded focus on training. “Alternative design of instruction” relies on the institution’s ability to provide resources, including instructional design specialists. “Alternative providers of higher education” refers to new institutions that may deliver all education online; accreditors compare these institutions to existing brick-and-mortar institutions by scrutinizing their ability to provide comparable services. Finally, accreditors look at “expanded training” which needs to be in place in order to prepare and support faculty members and students embarking on distance education.

Battin-Little (2007) evaluated standards that addressed individual online courses rather than entire programs. These standards are important for program consistency and quality, as they ensure the effectiveness of each course. Battin-Little’s study reviewed online courses utilizing two standards, or rubrics, for course evaluation based on current research. One set of standards was produced internally, and the other was a nationally recognized standard known as Quality Matters. Quality Matters was developed by Maryland Online, a consortium of universities and colleges in the state of Maryland, as a faculty peer review rubric. Results of the study showed that the Quality Matters’ standards were easier to follow than the internally-developed standards and results of the course review were more consistency between multiple reviewers. Battin-Little recommended utilizing the national standards and training faculty members to do peer reviews, which, in turn, would aid faculty in the development of their own courses.

Though there is general agreement that standards for courses and programs are important for ensuring quality, there has been little actual research reporting on the effectiveness of
utilizing standards. Dietz-Uhler, Fisher, and Han (2008) introduced online standards to improve the quality of their courses, and at the end of six months student retention rates improved by 11% in the classes where standards were incorporated. Success was attributed to the fact that standards ensured that policies and expectations were clearly stated and students were provided with rich interactive experiences. Quality and cost effectiveness were addressed in a course redesign project initiated in 1999 and supported by the Pew Charitable Trust. In the project, 30 colleges and universities went through the process of redesigning and evaluating their online learning programs (Twigg, 2003). Based on evaluation of student assessment and outcomes, results as of 2003 showed increases in student learning at 20 of the institutions that instituted the program; the remaining institutions showed no significant difference. Additionally, schools showed improved retention and student satisfaction, better student attitudes, and cost savings averaging 40%.

Although the types of schools ranged from research universities to community colleges, and the projects encompassed entire programs as well as supplemental online offerings, Twigg reported six characteristics shared by each of the institutions. The first characteristic was whole course redesign. Participants looked at redesigning the entire course rather than just a portion, even if the course was not online in its entirety. The redesign included an analysis of activities by each of the team members involved in the effort. This exercise enabled the schools to streamline work efforts and to avoid duplication. Active learning was the second characteristic identified. All courses worked to replace lectures with activities that engaged students in the coursework. Computer based learning resources, characteristic number three, enabled students to practice and receive immediate feedback for their efforts. The fourth characteristic, mastery learning, allowed pacing for students based on mastering objectives in a progressive manner. On demand
help provided support for, and increased a feeling of community among, students. *Alternate staffing* was the final characteristic identified by Twigg (2003). Analysis of student needs indicated that highly trained professional staff members, such as faculty members, are not necessary to meet many of the students’ needs. The use of support staff and teaching assistants minimized the time faculty members had to spend in answering questions.

With the increasing population of college-age students, plus the number of nontraditional-age students returning to school, combined with declining tax revenues, Meyer (2008) predicts that higher education will turn to the cost-efficiencies of online education. However transforming the curriculum to be more cost-efficient while continuing to provide acceptable student outcomes, can take time and resources as well as a willingness by institutions and faculty members to embrace new methods and means of delivering education. According to Meyer, investing the time and resources could result in greater access to higher education as well as increased revenues for colleges and universities.

To identify processes to ensure that online programs are financially sustainable, Meyer, Bruwelheide, and Poulin (2007) investigated the practices of nine project directors who had received grants to create higher education online programs. Despite the diversity of the projects, there were several overarching principles that were utilized by each of the project directors. *Knowing the market* was identified as the most important principle by all the directors. Advisory boards with content expertise can assist in providing this information. The next step involves *identifying the anticipated costs of the online program* before setting the price. The program needs a sound marketing plan, including a web identity, in order to recruit students. *Hiring faculty members who have a genuine interest in online teaching* is a crucial principal in program sustainability. *Ongoing training in technology as well as pedagogy* needs to be in place, as well
as mentoring and assessment, to improve student outcomes. Measures need to be enacted to enhance retention. These measures should include a good technological infrastructure that creates community among distance education students. Finally, ongoing program evaluation and improvements need to be a part of the process to ensure quality. Meyer, Bruwelheide, and Poulin caution that these principles are evolving as changes in technology, costs, and knowledge evolve.

Despite predictions that online education might enable students to have better choices when identifying where to study, students often choose online education because it is seen as a less expensive, easier option (Schwarzman, 2007). For example, many students who enrolled in an undergraduate oral communications class did so because they did not believe that there would be actual public speaking assignments associated with the experience. However, once enrolled, students discovered that requirements were the same as those for the live class; the only difference was that projects were presented online instead of live. In another example, though there is a plethora of quality information available through online databases such as EBSCO, students still frequently turn to Google or other popular search engines that do not provide quality control of content. This indicates that, as students become more experienced with technology, they are still unsophisticated users of that technology (Schwarzman).

Demand for online education is not likely to abate in the foreseeable future (Crawford & Gannon-Cook, 2002). The number of students and institutions who participate is growing yearly. As institutions develop online programs, it is important that they address issues of quality and cost effectiveness. Quality standards such as Sloan-C’s Five Pillars, or Maryland's Online Quality Matters have the potential to ensure that programs are comparable to face-to-face programs, but more research is needed to verify the comparability of learning effectiveness. Controlling costs to ensure that the program is sustainable is also an often overlooked component
of the online course development process. Online programs have the potential to reach students for whom an education would otherwise not be possible, but institutions need to ensure that their costs, as well as students’ costs, are managed and that standards are in place to assure employers that graduates from online programs are as educated as those from face-to-face programs.

**Role of Faculty in Online Education**

The role of higher education faculty (which include community college faculty) in an online environment differs from the traditional role in that the online instructor is expected to become a facilitator of online learning (Frese, 2006; Jaffee, 2003; Steiner, 2001). Consequently, online faculty members must adapt to a new way of teaching and relate in different ways to their peers, students, and other professionals with whom they previously had little contact. Frequently, all of this must be done without significant preparation or training. The active learning strategies required in an online setting alter how teachers teach and how students learn (Jaffee, 2003). The role of online faculty members requires skillful manipulation of discussions and learning activities in order to engage online learners and ensure they are interacting sufficiently with the content (Frese, 2006). McCrory, Putnam, and Jason (2008) also concluded that students control the learning in the online environment. Students have the ability to interact with the content and with their peers in their own ways without instructor intervention or control. Consequently, faculty members need instructional design competencies in converting face-to-face courses into an online venue so that students will receive guidance in their interactions. Other instructional skills necessary for effectively teaching online include designing authentic assessments and dealing with plagiarism and cheating. Despite well-developed content, instructional design implementation, and other factors, student interactions were the determining factor in how the
class went. In live classes, faculty members can control the information flow of the course, but in online classes, students may not follow the direction identified for them.

Not all traditional teaching methods are lost once faculty members move to online teaching. Johnson (2008) looked at faculty members transitioning to online teaching; these faculty members were part of a consortium of six universities receiving grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to create online curriculum for higher education online programs. Participants reported concerns that they would not be able to transfer any of their traditional teaching methods to the online venue and were more comfortable once they discovered they could utilize some of their previous methods such as testing and issuing writing assignments (Johnson, 2008). Faculty at the University of Wisconsin also reported that while some of their methods were transferable, they had to rethink other teaching methods, such as preparation of handouts and communicating at a distance (Diekelmann, Schuster and Nosek, 1998). Of major concern to all faculty members in several studies was the inability to read students’ faces when covering course content; faculty members expressed concern over how they would be able to gauge whether students understood the content (Diekelmann et al., 1998; Frese, 2006; Johnson, 2005; Ryan et al., 2004). New pedagogies, such as interactive multi-media and online synchronous classes, were instituted to compensate for this lack of face-to-face contact, but these took time and training, both of which were often reported as missing by online faculty members (Frese, 2006).

One hundred percent of community college members surveyed by Ryan et al. (2005) felt the need for development and mentoring when embarking in online teaching. In a 2006 study by Frese, only 25% of faculty members strongly agreed that they received adequate training from their institutions prior to beginning to teach online. Others reported that rarely did training
include pedagogical methods for online teaching; although 74% stated that having a mentor was important, only 15% had one. The technical training most desired but lacking, according to faculty members, was content management system training, which addresses subjects such as how to create online assignments and tests (Frese 2006). Despite having had an orientation to technology prior to beginning teaching, faculty members at the University of Wisconsin expressed concern about the lack of thorough technology knowledge as well as an insufficient overall understanding of the process of teaching in an online venue (Diekelmann et al., 1998). Changes in familiar ways of working and scheduling their time was a concern faculty members reported in a number of studies.

In a study of faculty at the University of Wisconsin, members reported that as they began teaching online, they found the experience disrupted the schedules they had for many years (Diekelmann et al., 1998). Primarily, faculty members perceived there was an increase in the amount of time it takes to teach when instruction is online (Hopewell, 2007). Study participants stated that communication and the grading of assignments were more time-consuming than in face-to-face courses. Specifically, faculty members reported that answering questions via email is more time-consuming than verbally answering a question in the presence of other students who may request the same information. Faculty members in this study felt compelled to respond to emails as soon as they were received and, consequently, this was seen as an interruption that occurred throughout the day. Monitoring discussion boards to ensure students were interacting with the content, as well as providing additional assignments, factored into the increased time spent teaching online, though this opinion was not universally held by all faculty members within the study. Several participants indicated that once faculty members became familiar with these new methods of grading and communicating, the activities would not be as time-
consuming. Responding to students’ emails and discussions once or twice a day provides consistency and reliability for the students and enables faculty members to be able to structure their time so they are not feeling the need to respond continuously to student emails (Boyle & Wambach, 2001).

Johnson’s (2008) study of graduate faculty members also revealed that, while some faculty indicated there was an increased time commitment, others identified a restructuring of time that was initially unfamiliar, and all agreed up-front time to develop an online class was extensive. Maintaining courses and designing multimedia components increases the time to develop online courses. This factor is not often accounted for in faculty workload assignments, as Schwarzman (2007) concludes. Over 80% of faculty members reported that teaching online was more time-consuming than teaching face-to-face, partially because courses were frequently rotated; therefore, compensation, workload, and ownership of online content needed to be addressed prior to delivering online education (Ryan et al., 2005). The number one concern of faculty members at Mississippi State University was time for faculty course development and revision (Gammill, 2004).

**Faculty Preparation**

One of the issues facing institutions of higher education that are interested in offering online education is addressing faculty preparation to teach online. Yang and Cornelious (2005) state that instructors are concerned about adapting to the change in their role from professor-centered lecturer to student-centered facilitator. By virtue of being content experts in their field and knowing the institution’s online learning management system (LMS), faculty are not necessarily equipped to deliver quality distance education. Bates and Watson (2008) state that many faculty, without formal training and basically on their own, have simply adapted their face-
to-face teaching methods to accommodate online education demands. Likewise, Oomen-Early and Murphy (2009) state that institutions have pushed faculty into the role of online educators rather than transitioned them via preparatory training. And finally, Palloff and Pratt (1999) feel it is important that faculty are trained in the process of online learning if they are to move into the arena of online education.

**Administrative Support**

The need for administrative support was expressed by all faculty members interviewed in multiple studies (Gammill, 2004; Johnson, 2008; Ryan et al., 2004; Schwarzman, 2007). Administrators frequently believe that faculty members can manage larger numbers of students in online courses, not taking into account the additional number of assignments that will be submitted for grading in performance-based courses (Schwarzman, 2007). In a study of Mississippi college faculty members who taught online courses, administrative support and faculty workload were rated high as important elements when teaching online (Gammill, 2004). Though questions surrounding intellectual property ownership may create reluctance for some faculty members to embark in online education (Passmore, 2000), faculty members at Mississippi State University did not consider this issue particularly significant. Online courses are often created by teams, as opposed to individual faculty members, and these courses designed for the web could be marketed, exposing instructor content to venues outside the classroom. Also of concern is that universities will replace faculty members with less expensive course facilitators once the online content is developed. Frese (2006) learned that many faculty members felt there was a lack of incentives to teach online, as well as few limits in the size of classes, and almost all lamented the lack of technical support. A lack of incentives was also reported by Gammill (2004) as a major barrier to faculty members’ willingness to teach online.
In Hopewell’s study (2007), faculty members reported risks to the traditional role of educators. These risks included increased time commitment, low student evaluations due to technical issues, and lack of time to do research. Faculty members expressed concern about how this disruption impacted their nonteaching activities, such as research and writing, and how it required them to adjust schedules, as new course development often required them to work over breaks between semesters. Student expectations are different in online courses. All faculty members surveyed by Ryan et al. (2005) indicated that students expected communication within 48 hours of posting a question. These expectations, reported faculty members, required them to make adjustments in the ways they work, and 65% of faculty members felt that their relationships with students had changed. Faculty members also expressed concerns that students were not aware of their responsibilities as online learners. The importance of students having a thorough understanding of the technology before enrolling in online courses was an important factor identified by faculty members (Diekelmann et al., 1998). Once students and faculty members feel comfortable with the technology, classes move along at a more appropriate pace. Faculty members reported the need for new relationships with technical support professionals, as they have had to rely on expertise other than their own to develop and support their classes.

Faculty members at University of Wisconsin recommended that partnerships with media specialists and technical training/support staff be in place and well established before undertaking the development and delivery of a distance education program (Diekelmann et al., 1998). They reported that it is important for faculty members to be involved in decisions made about the technology used, but that these individuals should not become too mired in learning all about how everything works; instead, faculty members should use their limited time to focus on distance education pedagogies. Sharing insight with other faculty members was found to be an
expedient way of educating themselves on the ever changing landscape of online education (Diekelmann et al.). Faculty members at Mississippi State University also identified the importance of having a technical infrastructure and support in place but found technical expertise to be of little significance (Gammill, 2004). Conceicao (2006) advised the use of instructional designers to reduce the time of development and maintenance of new courses.

Concerns that online faculty members might not receive evaluations comparable to those in face-to-face classes were explored by Kelly (2007). Kelly compared evaluations of 41 faculty members who each taught one online and one face-to-face class and identified 20 topical categories of responses including rapport, attitude, ability, workload, and preparedness, and three appraisal categories identified as praise, constructive criticism, and negative criticism. The MANOVA conducted on student perceptions of overall effectiveness of course and faculty showed no statistical difference between online and face-to-face courses and faculty (p = .321, Kelly). Hopewell’s (2007) study, however, provided a less positive outlook of online evaluations. Response rates to online evaluations were usually less than 20%. This raises concerns about the validity of the evaluations and how they would be used to determine promotion, tenure, and retention of faculty members. In addition, faculty members in this study stated that online students were more vocal in their complaints than students who did live evaluations, and some of the negative remarks were based on student frustration with technology rather than on faculty performance. Peer reviewers, though, were more likely to indicate a higher level of competence for those faculty members who taught online. Additionally, faculty members who teach online have the added benefit of being able to print the course content to provide evidence of activities and teaching innovations for performance reviews (Hopewell 2007). Advantages of online teaching were expressed by 97% of faculty members who enjoyed the
ability to schedule their time and work from varying locations (Ryan et al., 2005). Flexibility was seen as a significant advantage by all faculty members interviewed by Hopewell (2007). “Flexibility” refers to scheduling and the freedom to work in nontraditional areas.

**Faculty Reaction to Online Teaching**

Not all faculty members have bought into the idea of distance education. Instructors often perceive that online courses take more time than traditional classes. That is one reason faculty turn away from teaching online. Many faculty members feel that the extra time will take away from related duties such as research. Another reason is that many universities do not include online teaching as a priority when considering tenure (Lorenzetti, 2004). Faculty members want to follow the path to tenure. If that does not include distance education then those faculty members are not eager to teach online classes. The end result can be a smaller pool of instructors to teacher online courses. Other barriers mentioned by faculty include less face-to-face time with students, lack of planning time to deliver an on-line course, and lack of support and assistance to plan and deliver an online course (McKenzie, Mims, Bennett, & Waugh, 2000). For faculty who did buy into the concept, they learned online courses cannot be taught in the same way that instructors teach in the classroom.

Whereas many faculty members have reported concern at the loss of physical presence, some have embraced new opportunities for interacting with students not available in the traditional face-to-face classroom (Diekelmann et al., 1998). Faculty and students reported feeling that distance education allows them to be more open and to feel less stifled when expressing their views and opinions. Some faculty members have even reported that they have revised their beliefs about their face-to-face classes based on their online teaching experiences; they no longer believe that they always understand how students are reacting to classroom
experiences. Getting to know learners in this venue offered a new experience and challenge that enabled them to increase their own knowledge. One faculty member reported that meeting more frequently in an online venue allowed for creating a greater impact on how students learned and provided an increased personal connection with students (Hopewell, 2007).

Faculty members have reported a high degree of satisfaction with being involved in designing and delivering an online course, as this has provided them with the opportunity to enhance their own skills in a new area of study (Conceicao, 2006). As a result of their personal analysis on teaching differences, some faculty members have even reported enhancement of reflective thinking (Diekelmann et al., 1998). The flexibility has also included having more time for research and writing and time away from campus that faculty members could use to collect data. Faculty members reported that online tools were more efficient for gathering data, and teaching online offered a wealth of opportunities for research. By offering online classes, higher education institutions were viewed by faculty as furthering their outreach to students who might not have previously had access to higher education.

Faculty members who choose or are required to teach in online venues are faced with challenges to their traditional methods of teaching. They must learn to collaborate with peers, students, and other professionals in ways that were previously not part of their roles. Often, they are expected to do all this with little training or support. They are expected to work in new ways but are not given time to learn which pedagogical methods are most effective or applicable to their roles. However, there are perceived rewards, such as flexibility and acquisition of new skill sets.
Summary

The literature indicates that online learning is a growing concern in higher education and in various fields of study, though it is still in its infancy. At this time, most public and many private universities as well as community colleges offer at least some of their course work online. The need for online education, particularly in community colleges, is evidenced by the growing non-traditional populations who are unable to attend traditional college classes but who have an individual need, as well as a community need, to obtain an advanced degree. As administrators in institutions of higher learning decide whether to implement or support existing online programs, the need for standards and quality programs should be addressed at the onset of an online program. Financial and marketing assessments are also an important component that enable an administration to effectively and judiciously plan, identify the needs of the community, and ensure that the infrastructure to support this endeavor is in place.

The needs of faculty members are also an important piece that is often overlooked in the rush to implement online education. Not only must traditional faculty members still fully participate in the mission of the universities at which they serve, but they must also teach in ways that are new to them –ways for which they have never been prepared pedagogically or technologically. As addressed in the literature, community college faculty members face the same challenges as higher education traditional faculty. Online community college programs are becoming increasingly popular in order to address the growing shortage of qualified workers and to provide trained practitioners to serve in rural and other underserved communities. Preparing community college faculty members for online teaching is vital to the success of these programs. This study addressed the needs of higher education faculty members who are faced with
transitioning from traditional faculty to online facilitators and were examined through the framework of transformational learning.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Study

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding that explores a social or human problem. The researcher is an observer and key instrument in the study. They collect data in natural settings and use inductive reasoning to establish patterns or themes. The final report uses the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a description or interpretation of the problem, and recommendations or a call for action (Creswell, 2013). The rationale for choosing a qualitative study was to use an exploratory method to examine the phenomena.

Exploring the issue of what faculty experience as they transition from “live” face-to-face classroom setting to online was the purpose of this study and made it a candidate for a qualitative study. Another justification for the choice of qualitative methodology was that qualitative methods allow the researcher access to “thick descriptions of the phenomenon under study” (Merriam, 1998, p.27). According to Merriam, these thick and rich descriptions render a lateral and complete picture of the phenomenon, enabling the researcher to accurately interpret meanings. Patton (2002) echoes Merriam’s thoughts on the necessity of obtaining thick, rich descriptions.

Rationale for a Phenomenological Study

This study employed a phenomenological study approach to explore the research questions. The reason a qualitative study was chosen was that there needs to be a better understanding of what faculty go through when they are tasked with teaching a course online and the transition that they have to go through. Faculty members are one of the stakeholders in a transition and this qualitative study explored their experiences in the transition process. The
setting and the participants are appropriate for a qualitative study. One of the reasons for doing a qualitative study is to better understand a topic (Maxwell, 2005, & Creswell, 2013). This study, through the interview process, provided the opportunity to better understand what faculty experience as they transition to teaching from classroom settings to teaching online.

The type of problem best suited to a phenomenological study is one that it is important to understand several individual’s shared experiences (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, phenomenological interviewing is employed by social science researchers who focus on generating data to examine participants’ lived experiences (Seidman, 2013). In this study it was important to understand the experiences that faculty go through when they are expected to make a change from teaching in one format to another. Having a better understanding of faculty experiences will help distance learning departments, administrators, instructional designers, and instructional developers to properly support faculty as the transition happens. For all those involved in the transition process, if there is a better understanding of faculty experiences then they can prepare a smooth transition for faculty. They will be placed in a better position to understand what faculty members go through, may need help with, how the process can be worked out in a timely fashion, and understand what faculty, as one of the stakeholders, need for a smooth transition. The importance of this understanding is why phenomenological approach was chosen for this study.

The term phenomenology was used as early as 1765, but it was Hegel who defined phenomenology as knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one’s immediate awareness and experience. The process leads to an unfolding of phenomenal consciousness through science and philosophy “toward the absolute knowledge of the absolute” (Kockelmans, 1967, p. 24).
The word phenomenon is constructed from the Greek word *phaino* and means to bring to light, to become evident, and to appear. Thus the experience in a phenomenology should become evident during the process and become the basis for acknowledging the experience and understanding the phenomena experienced. Edward Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, saw it as a technique to examine the essences that serve consciousness itself (Moustakas, 1994). The four processes of phenomenology are Epoch, Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Processes Synthesis.

Epoch- The researcher must eliminate suppositions and the raising of knowledge about every doubt. The researcher should practice Cartesian doubt in regards to commonsensical beliefs and the researcher should put them along with all things of the natural empirical work in “brackets” suspending them in transcendental suspension. There is a “suspension of judgment” by the researcher. The researcher must let go of preconceptions and prejudices and be receptive of consciousness unbiased.

Phenomenological Reduction- Now the researcher must describe what one sees in text not only externally but internally, the experience between the phenomena and the self. The researcher must look and describe repeatedly referencing the textual qualities, focusing on the object itself allowing our consciousness to direct us meaningfully toward something. Phenomenological reduction includes pre-reflection, reflection, and reduction aimed at explicating the essential nature of the phenomenon.

Imaginative Variation- Describing the essential structures of a phenomenon is the major task of Imaginative Variation. Any perspective can be allowed into the consciousness. Imaginative Variation seeks meaning through the utilization of imagination, varying frames of reference, approaches from different perspectives, and different roles and functions. The goal is
to arrive at a structural description of an experience answering the question, “How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is?”

Processes Synthesis- This is the final step in a phenomenological study. The researcher intuitively integrates the textual and structural descriptions into a statement of the essence of the experience as a whole.

These processes allowed this study to bring to life the experiences of full-time community college faculty members going through the transitioning from teaching in a live face-to-face classrooms format to online teaching and pull from their stories the essence of the phenomena.

Research Questions

The following research questions provide the framework for this study.

The central research question was:

1. What are the experiences of community college faculty members transitioning from live, face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching?

Additional research questions were as follows:

2. What challenges do community college faculty face, as they transition from face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching?

3. What assumptions do community college faculty members have about the role of faculty members in online education prior to their initial experience in online teaching?

4. To what degree do institutional support and infrastructure impact faculty members’ experiences transitioning to teaching online?
Research Design

A phenomenological method was used to explore the meaning of faculty members’ experiences around a specific phenomenon, ‘transitioning to online teaching’. Phenomenological research is also conducted into an issue or problem where there are few or no earlier studies to refer to. The focus is on gaining insights and familiarity for later investigation. According to Creswell (2013), when doing phenomenological research there should be one overarching central question that speaks to the issue being studied, followed by topical questions that anticipate the information needed. The central question should focus on a greater understanding of the human experience and is qualitative, rather than quantitative (Moustakas, 1994).

In this study, question one is the central question and questions two through four are the topical questions, anticipating the data analysis process. Through one-on-one interviews, faculty members were asked to describe their experiences, lessons they learned, and their feelings about the role of being an online educator. Interviews were analyzed using Nvivo software.

Mezirow (1991) states that research in transformative learning is difficult because the investigator does not have access to the meaning schemes or perspective of the participants. One of the methods recommended is the open-ended interview, which enables participants to convey additional information that may help the researcher when attempting to understand the participant’s perspective.

Research Setting

The membership of the Iowa Community College Online Consortium was the base of the study population. Participants were recruited from four Iowa community colleges to participate in the study. These colleges are members of the Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC) that is made up of 7 community colleges within Iowa. In phenomenological research,
all participants do not need to be at a single location but all must have similar experience and must be able to articulate that experience. The sampling strategies that were used to identify participants are criterion-based; participants were selected by snowball sampling, in which individuals are identified by peers familiar with the criteria. Sampling in qualitative inquiry is based on gathering the most information possible, not on statistical inferences or generalizations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, participants were selected from the ICCOC online directory. The faculty members from the selected institutions were contacted via email, and these members were requested to participate in the study. Some members recommended potential participants within their network that they thought were more experienced and could be helpful in the study.

**Research Participants**

Eight participants were recruited from amongst the target population of faculty members from seven Iowa community colleges that are members of the ICCOC, who have both taught face-to-face classes as well as online classes during the past one year. In order to recruit the participants, volunteers were drawn from the Iowa Community College Consortium online directory and sought through networking and were contacted via email to confirm their willingness to participate (see Appendix C). Iowa community college faculty members who volunteered and also who had previously taught face-to-face were recruited and interviewed.

**Data Collection**

The researcher followed qualitative phenomenological steps for this study. In a phenomenological interview the process is informal and interactive with open-ended questions and comments. The phenomenological interview may begin with social questions or discussion to get the participant to feel comfortable and more willing to open up freely (Moustakas, 1994).
Interview questions were designed to allow faculty to talk about their experiences during the transition process. Probing questions were used as needed to gather more detail and keep the interview on track.

The interviews took place during the early part of fall 2013. All interviews were conducted face-to-face on each of the four campuses. One interview was conducted with each participant, and an interview protocol was used to keep the interview process the same. The interview questions were pre-specified. However, there was probing beyond the answers given to obtain clarification and/or to provide opportunity for elaboration. All interviews were digitally recorded using Apple italk app on Apple iPod and then transcribed verbatim.

The list of participants came from the Iowa Community College Online Consortium website online directory. The list was verified by the Director of the ICCOC to ensure accuracy. Once the final list of potential participants was collected, an e-mail invitation (see Appendix C) was sent to all potential participants asking them to volunteer for the study. There were 12 possible participants who met the criteria. A phenomenological study should include interviews of between 5 to 25 participants (Polkinghorne, 1989, Moustakas, 1994). The researcher contacted all twelve participants who met the criteria of the study and 8 participants volunteered for this study. There were also some observations of some of the participant’s courses to better understand the online phenomena. Any additional data collected was identified in this study. The study followed Moustakas (1994) methodology of conducting phenomenological research.

The researcher followed Moustakas model of preparing to collect data, and he started by formulating (Creswell 2013). Questions about the participants experience were developed and will help to narrow down the central research question (Creswell, 2007). In developing participant criteria, the researcher chose criterion sampling. All participants were full-time
faculty who had taught an online course for the past one year. The criteria of who would be a possible participant were approved through both the Institution (Appendix C) and the IRB (Appendix A) granting permission to do the study. The researcher then developed instructions and guiding questions for the interview; he developed a script to follow as each interview began.

During the data collection phase, Moustakas recommends a model of engaging in the Epoche process to assist in creating an atmosphere and developing rapport for conducting the interview. The researcher in this study took about 10-15 minutes prior to each interview and relaxed. During that time the researcher reviewed the Moustakas book to get mentally into the mode of conducting the interviews. Since the researcher works at a four-year higher education institution as a faculty-staff IT specialist, the researcher bracketed the questions and was conscientious not to answer any questions or volunteer personal comments. The focus was on the interviews and the faculty experiences. In conducting qualitative interview, interviews were conducted and prompting questions were asked as needed to hear the faculty experiences.

In organizing, analyzing and synthesizing data model, Moustakas recommends developing individualized textural and structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher started with significant statements, coded them and grouped them into themes. Each theme has quotes to support the participant’s experiences. Faculty involvement was the essence of this study. Faculty should be represented in all phases of the transition: the selection, the timeline development, the training, the actual transition, and any follow-up analysis after the transition. This was the essence of the study.

Moustakas summary, implications and outcomes data model involves summary of the study. This research study yielded several themes that arose from the faculty experiences of transitioning to online teaching. The categories included: (a) Faculty preparedness to teach
online and transitioning to teach online, (b) Teaching in the online environment, (c) Mentors and mentoring, (d) Institutional support and resources, (e) Faculty role as facilitators of learning, (f) Time and effort required to teach online, (g) Student-Teacher Communications and online Relationships, (h) Schedule flexibility, (i) Student Evaluation of Teaching, (j) Role of the Iowa Community College Online Consortium. The model also calls for the researcher to relate study findings to and differentiate them from findings of the literature review. In this study, the researcher found that very little existing research is currently available on community colleges; furthermore, there were several higher education institutions especially four year colleges where faculty have transitioned from teaching face-to-face to online and maximum support has been extended to faculty.

Additionally, in Moustakas methodology, the researcher needs to relate the study to personal/professional outcomes. In this case the researcher as an IT support person in a four year institution, he supported faculty and staff through the transition and constant changes and upgrades to LMS system. And as a college administrator, he had the privilege of experiencing first hand that whenever a LMS change was made, there was need to adjust the time and number of projects that faculty members were working on to allow them as much time as possible to finish their course conversions. After the conversions were done, there was still a learning curve once the new LMS went “live” as faculty fixed errors, made modifications, and learnt more about the system and its functions.

In Moustaka’s model, there is need for the researcher to state future direction and goals. As an instructor and administrator I will continue to have an interest in online education. I truly believe my daughter, age 11, will be affected by online learning throughout her K-12 education and certainly more so into college. I want to better understand online learning and teaching. I
want to discover ways to make it better, find ways to make transitions to online education easier, and ensure that students continue to learn along the way while meeting the goals and objectives of their courses. I expect to continue working in higher education throughout my career. I want to continue working in online education as an instructor.

**Procedures and Analysis**

Once the interviews were conducted, the researcher proceeded into Moustakas’s organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data and used a modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of Data analysis. This method is recommended by both Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2013).

There are six steps involved in the modified version of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of data analysis (Creswell, 2013). First the researcher provides a description of personal experiences with the phenomenon. This is to help get the researcher’s personal experiences set aside and then focus on the participants’ stories. Secondly the researcher develops a list of significant statements (horizontalization of the data and groups significant statements into larger units called “themes”). Next the researcher writes a description of what the participants experienced in the phenomena (textural description) and then writes a description of “how” the experience happened. This is a structural description and should include the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced. Lastly the researcher writes a composite description of the phenomena incorporating both the textual and structural descriptions. This passage is the essence of the experience.

The researcher used QSR NVivo Software to analyze the transcripts. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package produced by QSR International. It has been designed for qualitative researchers working with very rich text-based and/or
multimedia information, where deep levels of analysis on small or large volumes of data are required. NVivo 10 software was used to code, organize and analyze interview results data. The transcribed interviews were imported directly to Microsoft Word. These interviews were then coded on screen. The coding process involved the researcher identifying themes as he read through the interviews. He then coded text according to similar themes, also referred to as nodes. For example, the researcher found several instances in the text where participants referred to online teaching, and thus he created a node called Online Teaching. Consequently, whenever the researcher came across the word ‘online’ or ‘online teaching’, when reading through the interview transcripts, he highlighted the text and coded it in the online teaching node.

**Validation**

Creswell (2013) recommends at least two validation strategies be used for qualitative research studies. This phenomenological study used various forms of validation. Included was member checking, triangulation, and rich thick descriptions. Once the themes were extracted from the data, the researcher sent the themes pages back to the participants to get their feedback on the outcomes, and all the participants responded that they were quoted correctly.

Interviews are the primary source of data for phenomenological studies. Data for this study was collected through semi-structured conversational interviews, which offered a forum to interact with each individual to discuss the phenomenon of interest, which was transitioning from teaching face-to-face to online. It was the responsibility of the researcher to make the interviewee feel comfortable. Moustakas recommends doing this by beginning with a brief social conversation. This was accomplished in this study by asking each of the participants how they came to be an educator, since being an educator often times is not often an initial goal of most individuals attending college at an undergraduate level. This gave individuals an opportunity to
describe their early experiences prior to teaching and their perspectives on education. The researcher compiled interview questions that were open-ended and left open room for flexibility of responses (see Appendix B). This provided opportunities for new or unexpected information to emerge as well as questions needed to provide an opportunity for participants to explore the meaning of the online teaching experience and to describe their lived experiences (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

Once the researcher was able to schedule at least one faculty interview from each of the institutions, he contacted other faculty members, informed them of his time on campus, and worked out a schedule to do the additional interviews. This applied to cases where the researcher had to have more than one participant volunteering from the same community college. Locations for the interviews were identified by the participants prior to beginning of the interview. Most of the participants preferred meeting in their offices while others chose conference rooms to conduct the interview. I mapped out all the places where I would be meeting the selected faculty members so I could be on time for each interview. Each participant was then informed that the interview was to be recorded and any concerns of confidentiality were addressed. They all signed a consent waiver (See Appendix D). After the interview most of the participants asked whether the researcher would like a tour of their distance education center and the researcher agreed.

External Validity

Merriam (1998) states that qualitative researchers are not attempting to generalize but to understand specific cases. Generalizability, however, can be improved by selecting multiple cases from multiple sites as described above. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe transferability, which includes rich, thick descriptions of the phenomenon that enable readers to evaluate the information and reach their own conclusions. Other methods included the use of predetermined
questions and a specific procedure for analysis of data plus rich, thick descriptions of participants within their context and the selection of cases that closely represent the phenomenon of interest. All of these strategies were applied to this study. In the reporting of data, specific quotes and descriptions were used to support the identification of themes and patterns. A specific set of criteria was applied in choosing each participant.

**Internal Validity**

Techniques to improve credibility in qualitative research were utilized. Using thick, rich descriptions can help to accurately convey the findings and provide readers with a sense of sharing the analytical experience (Creswell, 2003). An audit trail was maintained, linking themes to corroborating evidence, that is, actual quotations that validate the themes. Another technique that the researcher applied was peer examination of findings to further strengthen internal validity. Peer review consisted of the researcher disseminating interpretations and conclusions to three peers, including community college and education faculty members not directly related to the research but familiar with the phenomenon being investigated (Johnson & Jacktensen, 2004). Peers are expected to challenge the researcher’s findings, require evidence for interpretations or conclusions, and identify whether the researcher’s reflections impacted the data analysis.

**Dependability**

Qualitative research is not an attempt to isolate human behavior; instead, it seeks to describe and explain the world as experienced by those individuals of interest. Rather than using reliability as a measure, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest evaluating the findings in terms of dependability and consistency in reference to the data collected. Techniques such as qualitative software, peer reviews and audit trail were utilized to strengthen the research design. In this study, the use of qualitative software and peer review and audit trail were employed. All data
collected by the researcher were stored in a CyBox account (a secured, cloud-based file storage service).

From the onset of the study, participants were treated with the utmost courtesy and respect. They were informed that their identities and specific sites would be kept anonymous. A simple coding would be used to identify the participant. The researcher used fictitious pseudonyms. Also, in interviews, all participants were informed that the data gleaned from the interviews would be used in the researcher’s dissertation and that the dissertation would be published. Participants were given the opportunity to clarify or correct any discrepancies in written transcripts and they were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. No one withdrew from the study. Patton (2002) adds, “Validity and reliability of qualitative data depend to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity necessary to conducting viable research without harming the participants or the participating institution in any way.”

**Role of the Researcher and Ethical Considerations**

The researcher in qualitative methods is the primary instrument for data collection (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 20013). This creates a situation where data are related to context and subject through ongoing analysis as it is collected. As a data collection instrument the researcher lends a certain fluidity that allows for adaption to circumstances as data is collected that is not available when using inanimate instruments. The researcher conducted all interviews in person at the institutions of the interviewees or other mutually agreed upon site and transcribed, coded, and analyzed interview transcripts. Since the data are collected by the researcher it is also subject to the filters and biases of the researcher (Merriam, 1998). The researcher brings one interpretation of reality to the study while each subject brings another and the combination of these
interpretations produces the final product which is yet another reality. The researcher must be aware of the many potential shaping forces, the interactions of those forces, and be able to account for those as the study develops (Merriam, 1998).

**Researcher’s Reflexivity**

Researchers must be aware of the phenomenon they are studying and how their own assumptions and behavior may impact the inquiry. They must be able to reflect upon their own experiences and the phenomenon. Moustakas suggests the researcher must be “…completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22). Through reflection, researchers become aware of what allows them to see and what may inhibit their seeing (Russell & Kelly, 2002). Each research project is unique and ultimately dependent upon the interpretation of the researcher who is the primary ‘instrument’ of data collection and analysis.

I kept a journal which was an additional tool I used to jot down information that I thought was relevant to my research undertaking and may not have been captured during the interviews. My journal was probably not as complete as it could have been but it was a start. Most of my journaling was about the participants.

Before conducting interviews with the participants, I refreshed my knowledge on how to conduct phenomenology interviews; I got into the mode of being a researcher and away from whatever else had happened that day. I tried to keep an open, understanding mind throughout the process.

During both conducting of interviews and analysis of the data, I set aside any preconceived ideas about online learning and upgrading of learning management systems. I also made every effort to prevent introduction of my personal views regarding online education into
the interview process. One way this was done during the interview process was to refrain from making personal comments as the interviewees described their experiences. This kept the interview focused on what the interviewee said and did not lead the participant in one particular direction.

An additional ethical consideration is confidentiality of participants. I addressed this ethical consideration by giving each participant a pseudonym to offset easy identification and promote open and honest discussion over interview questions.

I’m a PhD student in the School of Education with an interest in online education. I was introduced to online education when I began taking online classes for my master’s program several years ago. Some of the classes were hybrid version but others were conducted online throughout the semester. Back then the technology to deliver online instruction was at the infancy at least in my opinion. Since then the delivery of online instruction has grown by leaps and bounds. The world has become more networked and connected. Tablet and other smartphones have lately been the preferred devices for accessing classroom instruction. There are more asynchronous tools in the market and the widely used Online Course Management software has undergone several upgrades.

Throughout my education, from elementary education to secondary, as well as my undergraduate education, I was schooled in a face-to-face classroom environment. I have always appreciated the live face-to-face classes and I appreciate the human interaction and the learning that takes place when humans converse in one-on-one in an open space but I also appreciate the convenience and flexibility offered by the sophistication of the modern wired world. As a technology professional and a technology support enthusiast I have always appreciated the way technology continues to help faculty as well as students share information in a timely manner.
From a student perspective, I have grown to see how the use of technology today provides an interactive learning environment and extensive utilization of asynchronous tools in higher education to deliver classroom instruction.

Professionally, I have been a computer specialist who over the years has been in charge of supporting faculty and staff and at one point was tasked with administration of a course management system. I managed WebCT learning management system and was among the group of IT staff in charge of supporting staff as they migrated their courses from WebCT to Blackboard.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTING DATA: FINDINGS

This chapter presents an in-depth look at the outcomes of the research. Included are the research site, the participants and themes that emerged from the study as well as detailed explanations of what the participants, in their own voice, went through as they transitioned from teaching in a face-to-face classroom environment to teaching in an online setting. The purpose of this study was to apply phenomenological research strategies to examine experiences of Iowa community college faculty members who transitioned to online teaching, and to analyze the reported experiences. The intention was to develop a portrait of themes of the participants’ experiences in order to gain an understanding of the phenomena they experienced as they transitioned. For purposes of this study, “online faculty members” refers to full-time faculty members in a community college based program who, having begun their career in classroom teaching, have taught online for at least one year.

Research Questions

The following research questions provide the framework for this study.

The central research question was:

1. What are the experiences of community college faculty members transitioning from live, face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching?

Additional research questions were as follows:

2. What challenges do community college faculty face, as they transition from face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching?

3. What assumptions do community college faculty members have about the role of faculty members in online education prior to their initial experience in online teaching?
4. To what degree do institutional support and infrastructure impact faculty members’ experiences transitioning to teaching online?

**Background of Participants**

For this study, eight faculty members from four Iowa Community Colleges were interviewed. Interviews were conducted at the participant’s location, mostly in their offices but also sometimes in nearby conference rooms. The interviews lasted from 55 minutes to 1.5 hours. The interview questions were open-ended, allowing the researcher to follow up on what interviewees said in their responses (Seidman, 2013). Data for this study was collected through semi-structured conversational interviews, which offered a forum to interact with each individual to discuss the phenomenon of interest, which was transitioning from teaching face-to-face to online. It was the responsibility of the researcher to make the interviewee feel comfortable. Moustakas recommends doing this by beginning with a brief social conversation. The researcher accomplished in this study by starting out asking each of the participants how they came to be an educator, since being an educator often times is not often an initial goal of most individuals attending college at an undergraduate level. This gave participant an opportunity to describe their early experiences and their perspectives on education. Interview questions were open-ended and left open room for flexibility of responses (see Appendix B). This provided opportunities for new or unexpected information to emerge. This method of questioning also provided an opportunity for participants to explore the meaning of the online teaching experience as well as describe their lived experiences (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

All the faculty members that participated in this study came from colleges that are partners in Iowa Community College Online Consortium. The Iowa community colleges that have independent distance education programs and are not partners to the consortium were
eliminated from this study. Table 1 shows the number of faculty members who participated from each community college.

Table 1. Number of Participants from Colleges/Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community College</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community College 1 (CC1)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College 2 (CC2)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College 3 (CC3)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College 4 (CC4)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four of the participants were male and four participants were female. To allow them time to talk about themselves and to feel more comfortable with the research, all participants were asked at the beginning of the interview how they came to be community college faculty members. Only two of the participants responded that they had set out to be educators. All participants taught online classes using the eCollege Learning Management System that is provided by Iowa Community College Online Consortium.

Two of the participants had taught online using a different Course Management System prior to joining their present education institutions and two others had taken course work that were offered online as graduate students. One participant had no formal training online teaching prior to joining the present institution and began teaching online by adapting existing courses and relying on peers for support. Two of the participants’ research projects related to online education. Though many participants volunteered personal information such as age, marital status, and number of children, this information was not included in this study.
In order to preserve anonymity each of the participants was been given a pseudonym. Participant’s background information on the participant’s gender, the number of years one has taught online, and the general subject area they taught is provided.

**Table 2. Participant Description**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community College</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Experience Teaching Online</th>
<th>General Subject Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC 1</td>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC1</td>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC2</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC2</td>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC2</td>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC3</td>
<td>Rachael</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC3</td>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC4</td>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Biology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faculty members from CC1 indicated that they normally attend workshops within their colleges that are put together by their distance education programs in collaboration with their IT department. The workshops have been instrumental in getting them prepared to teach online courses. All the faculty members benefited from mentorship that is facilitated by the ICCOC. Both Jack and Jennifer cite this mentorship a key to their motivation to continue teaching online courses. Jordan taught online course at CC2 before the age of the ‘internet’ when the learning management system was not available and before his school joined the consortium in 1999. Olivia and Megan had to rely on the consortium to link them up with a mentor and attend
their workshop and training since they had little training teaching online courses. The workshop organized within their community college by their distance education program helped them upgrade their skills.

Megan struggled at first to keep pace with the training and workshops as she was busy with ‘so much going on in her life’ at the time but through the encouragement of her colleague she seemed to catch on. Joshua also took advantage of the monthly training and workshops provided by the Iowa Community College Online Consortium. Rachael and Jack work together at CC3 College and taught face-to-face classes prior to teaching entirely online classes. They attend occasional training within their college as well as the ones coordinated by the consortium.

Faculty members at CC4 currently receive technical and support training provided by the college in addition to the help from the consortium. This was a recent development when Joshua started teaching online. Before then they relied only on the workshops organized by the consortium which was not enough. The IT unit is housed in the Distance Education Program and was the only one tasked with providing this service. Ryan at CC2 is one of the techno savvy faculty members and takes prides in knowing a lot about technology. He relishes mentoring others and likes to present in consortium workshops.

**Key Themes**

Based on data analysis, the researcher identified ten themes about faculty transitioning from face-face classroom setting to teaching online. The following are the themes identified: (a) Faculty preparedness to teach online and transitioning to teach online, (b) Teaching in the online environment, (c) Mentors and mentoring, (d) Institutional support and resources, (e) Faculty role as facilitators of learning, (f) Time and effort required to teach online, (g) Student-Teacher
Communications and online Relationships, (h) Schedule flexibility, (i) Student Evaluation of Teaching, (j) The role of the Iowa Community College Online Consortium.

The ten themes, with the quotes from the participants, are described and discussed in detail below.

**Description of Themes**

1. **Faculty Preparedness to Teach Online and Transitioning to Teach Online**

Several faculty members admitted that they had little idea on how to get started teaching and had to rely more or less on guess work on what they believed would work. Jordan at first thought online courses at CC2 didn’t offer students room to interact and get engaged like in a regular face-to-face classroom setting. He assumed that it would be easier to transition from face-to-face environment and help students learn content within a short time. This proved tougher than he thought. He had to relearn how to do PowerPoint presentations that had enough content to be useful in an online environment. He mentioned that “this was way different from what I was used to doing in class, just a couple of slides and I will explain the rest … it really wasn’t what I was used to doing.”

Jennifer reported “having no idea how to teach online. I didn't know how to put content together. It was trial and error. Sometimes it worked, other times it didn’t but I learned along the way though.” Ryan recalled “I would tap into my wide experience of teaching English courses and I thought I will transition without much headache. It didn’t turn out the way I thought and I had to ‘relearn’ all over again. What I thought ‘would be a piece of cake turned to be a learning curve’. Besides, my slides from face-to-face classes didn’t seem to translate in an online environment. I had to recalibrate.” Transitioning was not as simple for Joshua either. He described his experiences:
I thought it would be straight forward but it turned out to a lot more work than I expected. I was thrown off-guard, I found myself in unfamiliar territory. The program structure was different and I had to get used to the discussion on the computer screen rather than in the class where I interacted live with students and there was a human conversation going back and forth.”

Jennifer thought all what was required of her to teach in an online environment was “to upload her slides presentation into the ECollege learning management system and that would be it.” She thought she could re-use materials from her face-to-face classroom but after attending workshops and training organized by the consortium she had to “start all over again”. “One of my colleagues who mentored me correctly advised me to work with someone from IT department”. She continued:

When I called on our distance education department seeking help, one of the IT person came to work with me, I thought I had all my work down. But he walked me through the entire process. There were a lot of changes that I had to make. I had to re-orient myself with administrative side of eCollege software. This meant learning new stuff that I had covered in training one more time. I didn’t have much choice but I had to follow along. Eventually I had my entire online environment presentation prepared and ready to go. I was all set with my slides, discussion section, grading section and so on and so forth. It was totally different from what I was used to in class. I would advise someone not to make assumptions that I did. Consult first with a mentor if you can or seek help from people who know around your college. Your IT department is the first place to start.

Rachael was requested to teach a course online at CC3. “I didn’t know where to start. I had taught face-to-face classes for a long time but the idea of interacting with students I don’t
know or will not see face-to-face throughout the semester scared the heck out of me.” She thought that the online teaching would also place additional responsibilities that she wasn’t ready to assume: “I didn’t feel prepared to transition and like most people I needed a lot of help. First to be comfortable in the online environment and secondly to be familiar with all the technical terms used to the extent that I would be comfortable in teaching online without embarrassing myself.” She regularly attends ICCOC workshops organized every month and also participates in regular training organized by her college. “That’s how far I have come in a relatively short order, even myself I couldn’t believe it,” she added.

At CC4 Joshua reported that there weren’t many resources available for him at his college before they partnered with the Consortium. He noted, “The distance education program manager did what he had to do but was limited and the geography of our campuses didn’t favor us either. But of late he has made several changes that favor us and I feel very equipped right now. It’s a far cry from where we were in respect to the online teaching and training when I started teaching online classes in this institution.”

Jordan at CC2 who had taught Math for three years thought he was polished after attending training and workshops as well as educating himself using webinars on how to use technology on the internet. “It takes a bit of courage to venture into unfamiliar territory especially when it comes to teaching math online. I wasn’t prepared for the transition so to speak but I have since adopted,” he reported. Olivia, at CC2 thought that modification of the content was far beyond what she thought it would be. She thought inclusion of videos and other modules proved to be a challenge especially if you take into account the extra work involved. “In training it is easy for the presenter to cover this and that topic but when you are left alone you have to
look for ways to tie loose ends together. This is where you will need help by the course designer for sure to save time,” she noted.

At CC3, Jack shared his experience this way, “Our Community College has done a lot of work in terms of helping those of us who are tasked with teaching an online course in this college, but as I went through the course material with some of my students I felt as if they were not adequate. More was needed to be done in the actual preparation and communication of the requirements and challenges ahead of time.”

At CC1 they paired the faculty members with the mentors. They had an elaborate system on how they did it. The distance education program preferred the faculty member to contact one of their representatives who was assigned to handle the initial contact and log in a complaint. Then the distance education coordinator worked with ICCOC to find a mentor to guide the faculty and look for the best resource to provide as well. Jennifer thought sometimes the assistance she got was short-lived and felt “sort of embarrassed to ask for the help beyond the basics all the time.”

Megan from CC1 echoed Jennifer’s comment and she too felt the assistance they sought took a while and was not adequate to meet their constant demand especially when it came to course conversation and the processes involved, and when it arrived it didn’t cover broadly the concerns they had and had to figure a lot of things by themselves.

At CC2, faculty members are very big into mentorship. Joshua reports that at CC4 they now “have training offered by the college internally in addition to utilizing workshops organized by the consortium. This is a recent development and wasn’t the case three years ago.”
2. Teaching in the Online Environment

Teaching online can be challenging as reported by most of the faculty members. Jennifer explained that “while I try to introduce a whole range of activities that will foster students’ academic growth, integrating hands-on experience has proven particularly challenging for me. I feel like I focus so much on preparing the lecture content and other elements of online environment that there is no space or medium to focus on the learning. Or I don’t have a way of gauging this.”

Joshua concurs with Jennifer though he has a slightly different take on the challenges of teaching in an online environment. “I try my best to create my online class content that mimics the real classroom situation. I create my discussion groups and include YouTube video links and other visuals. But I am not sure how this content gets digested beyond finishing the assignments, doing homework, and getting through the class to fulfil the credit requirements. I can’t gauge since I don’t interact with my students in person.”

Megan edits and creates her class on the ECollege Course Management System knowing full well who her students are “these are students who have typically elected this mode of learning because they have busy, demanding schedules. These are adults who are not likely to seek extracurricular involvement because they have other things important in their lives. Therefore when I design a course I take into account that this is not a face-to-face course. When I create my PowerPoint presentation, I highlight the most important points and materials to concentrate on.”

Joshua doesn’t agree with Megan’s paradigm. He advises online faculty to “look for ways to make learning a great experience for their students and know who their students are. He suggested including asynchronous learning tools to make class lively as well as improve
relationships with the student. If they could see your face once in a while they will appreciate and relate to you better.” But he admitted that this may be difficult for some of the faculty members who may not be as motivated as he is. He also cited the limitation of the ECollege Learning Management System provided by the consortium: “Down the road when the software will have the capability of doing video conferencing then this will be a norm rather than the exception.”

Olivia also felt the inclusion of online asynchronous tools will go a long way in establishing relationships online with her students and keep them engaged in learning process: “Even using a simple thing like using videos on the internet and YouTube click will suffice.” Ryan introduced activities that made his English course more interesting at CC2, stating that “throughout my five years of teaching online courses I have mastered ways to make my students interested in the course. You have to be creative and fortunately for me I teach a creative course. Therefore I tend to include supplemental materials here and there like cartoons or jokes that are relevant to the course and I think my interest my students love it.”

Faculty members like Jennifer integrates the use of videoconferencing applications like Skype along with other means of collaborating but I check with my students first to make sure to see if they are willing to give it a try. “I try not to give students too much technology and strife to stay with the eCollege LMS but I have found that this very helpful,” Jennifer stated.

Joshua reported that early in his career when he began teaching Biology at CC4 he utilized technology tools that were not being provided by the consortium.

_I found the LMS very limiting and wanted to spice my class by making it interesting. A lot of students I was teaching were taking this course to mostly end up somewhere in the medical profession of some kind and since science can be a bit boring, I made sure I_
bring a lot of interactivity to the class as possible and it has worked over all these years. I would always investigate the latest technology tool to help me accomplish this. I also created slides with very catchy, great graphics to complement my modules and as the technology has advanced my task has gotten easier, nowadays I can easily make videos available to my students using variety of tools.

Joshua advises faculty to be careful when making the selection of the appropriate collaborative tools needed to teach a course. One has to be careful not to be “too overwhelming.”

The issue of assigning homework was brought up time and time at again by the participants interviewed. This was particularly meaningful to Jordan who teaches Math at CC2 “since learning Math calls for a different approach unlike other subjects, I start out by making sure that I start slowly by not assigning a lot of questions all at once. From my experience math is a building blocks type of subject and I try to put this into account when assigning the course.”

Jennifer thought otherwise. She suggests viewing homework an “an assessment tool” to assess where the students are in terms of course content. “I make these quizzes count for about 50% of the course grade, so there is ample motivation for the students to be prepared. And the best way to become prepared, they quickly see, is to do the homework,” added Jennifer. Jordan agrees with Jennifer that he too finds that “giving so much credit to the quizzes is exactly what motivates the students to do a lot of homework on their own.”

Rachael mentioned that “even though discussions are not graded by some of the instructors, I try to include this part because that’s where the learning takes place. When ideas are exchanged then learning is taking place. Of course I give grades but I try to balance between grading, quizzes and overall students’ participation in the class.
Joshua reported that he takes into account that the learning is taking place in an online environment and not face-to-face therefore “I am very specific. In a face-to-face class I can assess the situation by observing what is going on but in online class I have to deal with it differently.”

3. Mentors and Mentoring

Using mentor was mentioned by most of the faculty members who participated in this research study. Joshua believes that “people need a mentor. They need someone who has taught in an online environment before. I think it’s a good idea to co-teach an online course with someone who knows his or her way around that way you can get a sense of how it’s done.” When Jennifer went through the faculty development program at CC1 she thought “Effective mentoring holds great promise to enhance the teaching and learning process in community colleges and stated that in her case most of the experienced faculty members are well suited to be mentors and in a position to help out.” Now that Jennifer has taught online courses for some time she is in a position to “mentor others and pass on the experience she has accumulated from others over the years.”

Joshua, also an advocate of mentoring, appreciates the roles and responsibility that mentors are able to bring to the table. He further advises faculty members transitioning from teaching in face-to-face classroom to online to seek out “someone who can play a mentorship role.” Joshua reflected on time at CC4 and stated that “having taught online for the last 5 years, I feel that I have identified areas that will be useful to a faculty member who is starting out to teach in an online environment. One area he would highly recommend would be to seek mentorship. “Fortunately the Iowa Community College Online consortium does a good job of linking mentors across the member colleges.” He reported.
Megan, at CC1, also reported having had a mentor: “I benefited greatly from my mentor when I first started teaching online. I feel more comfortable and confident with my abilities. I now have more insight into exactly what to expect and I feel as if I have friends I can reach out to as a support group. I don't feel as if I am doing this alone which would be terrifying.” Mentors provided feedback as needed to faculty members within the consortium. Megan added that she has benefited greatly from mentorship provided by consortium both formally and informally. Jordan too believes that mentorship plays a critical role in ICCOC and “that she calls on the help of the mentors from time to time”

Jack recommends faculty members involved in teaching in an online environment to seek mentors who are qualified and have taught in this online because the environment is so different from face-to-face classroom environment “you get better advice if you go this direction as opposed to someone whose concentration has been teaching primarily in a traditional face-to-face classroom.” Jordan too thinks one can benefit from a highly skilled online instructor because they “will give you better feedback and this will make life a bit easier.”

4. Institutional Support and Resources

Most of the institutions were fully supported both internally and also through the partnerships established with the consortium. Joshua reported that his institution is fully staffed with quite a number of IT professionals who do their job very well: “I can’t complain, these guys try to help me and others as much as they can and where they can’t help they are able to direct me to someone who can. This is a very good support mechanism they have established here. I am lucky to have all these resources around me.”

The course designers’ assistance was cited by several faculty members as one of the resources that tend to be utilized by faculty members most. Rachael reported that “it helps when
I know I have someone to assist me when I am stuck. This has happened a few times in the past and I learned to be ready to consult and get the necessary help when I need it.” Megan reported that her institution played a key role when she was transitioning her course to ECollege Course Management System. “I didn’t know where to start since there was an upgrade in LMS and I had not taken the training to familiarize myself with the new stuff. Therefore my course designer did all the work for me and that really helped me to concentrate and teach that particular course without worrying too much.” She thinks if she were to choose, this is one of the single best resources she would thank the administration for providing.

Jack appreciates what the course designer can bring to the institution as a resource:

*The technical support is important but since we teach and deliver a course, I would place these ones higher. Course designers are very talented folks. Like the one assigned to m. She is very special and I appreciate the contribution she makes for me and on behalf of the institution here very much. Having her around has made my work definitely easier and more manageable.*

At CC2 Olivia remarked that “the college has made the availability of resources a key priority to this institution recently. Therefore the faculty members are benefitting not only from the course designer supporting the faculty internally but also providing the help desk that is open most of the time. Just in case we ran into issues and need help they are able to promptly meet our needs.” At CC2 the institution has got its own IT support personnel, reports Jordan. “We don’t have to rely solely on the consortium help desk all the time, we have our own resource.”

Jack described the faculty development they have going on in their college, CC3. He laments though that this support is not enough “when you compare the amount of questions they receive on a regular basis”. He added that the personnel employed know their stuff very well and
they avail themselves whenever they are needed. The only concern is you need more than two
because that’s now what we have.” Rachel also concurs that as far as technical support goes “at
my college were fully staffed and supported with the rights folks. We have our own distance
learning technology people here and CC3 is known as one of the most wired colleges within the
consortium.”

Olivia described the harmonious work environment facilitated in her college through
partnership with the consortium and the distance education program. She reported that “our
technology support personnel are extremely supportive and responsive to our immediate needs as
faculty. Little is more frustrating to a faculty member who teaches an online course, than the lack
of support or slow responsiveness of technical support.” Jordan admitted that that even though he
is somewhat independent when it comes to technology, he requests help from and assistance of
“tech folks” from time to time depending on the obstacles he encounters.

Ryan believes that support for online teaching is dependent on how the institutions decide
to provide the support needed to make a smooth transition and even after that, continued support
throughout the semester on a need by need basis. Jennifer concurs, “Support and services
needed to help faculty make a smooth transition should be made a priority prior request faculty
to teach a course online.” Joshua thinks staff and faculty development is essential to the strength
and effectiveness of any online program development on any campus: “The expense of proper
training pales in comparison to losses of time and energy that results from staff and faculty who
lack proper training. I am glad the decision to provide this kind of continues support at our
institutions has resulted in these types of successes we’ve experienced over the years in our
institutions.
5. Faculty Role as Facilitators of Learning

Joshua feels his role has completely been redefined. Since the role of faculty member was changed in an online environment to one of a facilitator, most of the participants felt that they were in turn forced to change their attitudes towards technology and new teaching style to meet the challenge. “You have to redefine yourself as well or you won’t survive very well in this online medium,” adds Joshua. Jennifer also sees online faculty member role as being “more of a facilitator than sage on the stage” as she put it. Megan stated that “I see myself as being the facilitator and a person who could be the resourceful and I tell my students from the beginning of online course that we are in it together and that I am there to support them and help them learn.” Megan sees herself not as a transmitter of knowledge but rather as a facilitator of learning “I tell students upfront at the beginning of the course that I am there to be their guide, that I am their equal and they seem to like it when I present myself in that light.”

Jack thinks it is quite a challenge, to make the change from face-to-face teaching to online learning, but says that he has since adopted to the new online model of interacting with students who are taking his course online and not in front of him in a face-to-face classroom setting. Jack adds: “An online instructor must be able to compensate for the lack of physical presence in the online classroom by creating a supportive environment where all students feel comfortable participating and at the same time foster a climate where know that their instructor is accessible”…failure to do so would make leaning very weak for students.”

Ryan explains that “Today’s online students are busy especially when we factor in the fact that we teach in a community college, and that these students are busier and are balancing so many things in their lives. Besides, they are mostly made up of adults and are expecting to be treated as customers. Therefore being sensitive, open and flexible is not an option, it is a
requirement.” Olivia thought, “Because it is online learning, the face-to-face classroom strategy is rendered useless. I believe if one has to be successful in the online environment one has to be a good communicator. And I don’t mean this in a traditional sense.” She added that “One has to have the ability to verbally communicate using online tools. The communication is intense and demanding. The faculty must feel good about communicating in writing because that is a base element in the process.”

Joshua at CC4 described how to prepare a course for presentation in an online environment “It is totally a whole different ballgame! Besides being knowledgeable on the use of the tools used in facilitating online programs, the appropriate methods used in communicating with online students, and the ability to manage an online classroom, faculty members must feel comfortable with LMS and the technologies needed to facilitate, and this boils down to whether one is prepared to handle these demands of being an online faculty. In order to prepare himself for this change he made sure he enrolled in as much training as he could. He undertook some of the learning by himself on the web and took advantage of the workshop and training that was extended his way either by the consortium of his college. He mentioned that he had “always been motivated to teach online.” He added that he began preparing to teach online back in the days when he was teaching face-to-face, “that’s when the interest kicked in… have just adopted well in an online environment and I am glad I am now able to be resourceful to faculty members here and within the consortium”

According to Olivia there was very little similarity between teaching online and teaching a face-to-face classroom. This was different from Joshua who thought that there was. “In an online environment students have to be responsible for their own learning,” added Olivia. Lack of instant visual feedback from students and knowing when to facilitate and when to teach is
something that concerns Rachael: “I can’t tell instantly when my students are struggling, because I can’t visually look at them. I have to rely on their discussion posts in the board. There are obviously things you can’t catch up in the discussion board but if you do, this is when my role as a facilitator kicks in and I encourage my students to read more; sometimes I assign them more reading.”

Jack found the online environment being very interactive and thought that it encouraged better participation than the face-to-face classroom situation:

*Since you are not standing in front of the class, but instead you are teaching through asynchronous learning and LMS, you can shift more responsibility to the students to take ownership of their own learning. The traditional face-to-face classroom has got its own downside like students would show up in class but spend most of their time in social media during the class time. But the discussion board in LMS forces them to adjust and learn and contribute. They know very well that they will graded based on their participation and this forces them to interact with one another.*

Rachel now feels different after teaching a History course online at CC3 for the last 5 years. “I feel like I have been changed and transformed in a way. Even if I were to teach a face-to-face class again I would never be the ‘sage on the stage’ ever again. I have learnt a lot of facilitative techniques that I think I can employ both in the classroom as well as in an online setting.” Joshua thinks that many of the online methods, like debates or group discussions, could be modified for the face-to-face classroom setting. “I am officially a facilitator of learning and have been the last 5 years I have taught in this environment and intend to continue this way. The method of instructing suites my style and I am a different instructor now,” he added.
6. Time and effort required to teach online

The amount of time and effort it takes to teach online was brought up time and time again by the faculty members. This was more so when faculty members factored in the amount time required to structure content for online usage. Most of the faculty members thought it takes a considerable amount of time to teach an online class as well as prepare for it. Megan thought “it takes much of my time to prepare for the class, get my materials ready, upload my materials on the ECollege Learning Management System and then go teach a class.” As compared to a face-to-face classroom, Ryan also thought it took a lot of his time to teach an online course. As for Jack he pointed out that his time was consumed by looking for help when he started teaching online: “I spent more time than was necessary looking for help either from mentors, course designers or the IT folks in college. But this has levelled off now. I am now somewhat independent and don’t always call for help as frequent as I used to”

Other faculty members like Megan reported that face-to-face classroom situation was way easier than teaching in an online setting when you because of the work involved in structuring and delivering an online class. She reported how “my mentor reminded me that teaching an online class will take most of my time when compared to teaching face-to-face.” Therefore I was somewhat prepared.” She continued:

Unlike teaching a face-to-face classroom setting, it takes a lot of time to generate content especially when you don’t have the guidance and help. In my case I was lucky that I had a mentor who was prepared to go the distance with me in terms of guiding me. But despite all the help I got, the fact that I students expected feedback from me all the time anytime, even when I was done teaching a class session put additional responsibilities on my side that I had not anticipated.
“One has to prepare to put more time than one is used you are used to,” explained Joshua: “Despite the training on LMS you still have to put time to structure content and make sure everything works before you present in your online class. The average time it takes to create content and repurpose materials to be used online was more than I thought.”

Jennifer states that classroom management and all what goes on in terms of classroom strategy in online setting is totally different from what you would encounter in a face-to-face class. “I was surprised by the amount of work involved, because unlike face-to-face classes that I have taught in the past, I put more time preparing for my online course especially during the weekend and holidays. This was quite involving as I had to through the content that I had already created before uploading. Sometimes I would re-edit it and revise it over and over again... developing a course online takes more time” she concluded.

Joshua also thought that some of his time was consumed by creating course content when he should have been doing other projects. “I put more of my time than I have ever done in my face-to-face classes in terms of getting the structure down and even after I was done doing this, there is tech stuff I have to deal with.” Jennifer reported that because of how her time is spent, developing a course and the time it takes to do so, this had affected her other personal projects she had going on around her life. “As an instructor there are no guidelines on how to apportion this. We are not paid to put time to do all this preparation on the side before we teach a course online and we don’t get reimbursed for it,” Jennifer stated. She had advice for faculty members who are preparing to structure a course and teach online “Be ready to put a lot of work into it therefore I would advise someone to get started earlier. If you put materials together divide it into chunks and do one part at a time.”
In addition to the time it takes to teach in an online environment, most of the participants also reported that their students demanded more time than they would offer. Rachel mentioned that “there is an assumption on the side of the online students that you are there for them all the time, anytime. They assume that if they send you an email in the middle of the night that you are supposed to answer it right away before morning. I guess it is a reflection of the time we live in.”

Joshua also had the same take on it “there is more pressure to reduce the response time and keep the communication going with students until you get all their questions answered and this is not limited to general messages but it also extends to discussion section on the LMS. I have realized most of the students want a response once they post their comments and some get frustrated if you don’t. Imagine commenting on all the students in my class. This means that I don’t have a life.” Joshua reported that the comments he often hears from the students is that they love the chat room because of the level of interaction and this makes them feel as if they are in a real live classroom but what they don’t seem realize is that it takes a lot of his time. “Even though this is fun I have to set boundaries no doubt,” Joshua added.

Jennifer recalled at one point when one of her students thought that keeping the discussion going allowed her to feel that she was in a real classroom setting. “Sometimes this is what you get,” noted Jennifer, “students want to have fun and go beyond what is expected of them in a classroom setting. I feel compelled to respond to all the comments but on the other hand I feel that it is taking most of my time”. Megan added that the feedback she prefers to post to in her classes was mostly for assessment purposes and for general communication: “In my opinion, the feedback that comes from daily assessment can serve two important purposes. First, the faculty member gains insight into how students, both individually and collectively, are doing in the course. And secondly, and the most important reason, the student can see tangible
evidence of how he/she is performing. But sometimes they don’t seem to get where the instructor is coming from.”

Some of the faculty members came up with a creative ways of approaching online teaching and making sure they were not overburdened. Ryan for instance had to come up with a strategy of telling his students to limit conversation to a paragraph or so and to summarize their work. Joshua and Megan employ the strategy of “explaining to students what is expected of them in an online discussion in terms of quantity or length of response, supporting evidence or links, citing resources, how to respond to others, referring to and drawing upon contributions.” I tell them this is what is expected of them and emphasize that they should adhere to it. Olivia used a similar strategy to Joshua and Megan only that she was a little bit more general and didn’t break it down what should be done as far as group interaction is concerned.

Both Olivia and Jack recommended time management techniques that had allowed them to be effective as online teachers in a community college. Olivia advised faculty members to “consider a small group assignment, where a large class is divided into small groups. Also creating an activity where group members engage in discussion, and rate each other’s contributions at the end of the given time period.” Jack added that another option would be to create teams of two or three students act as discussion facilitators for a given week. Each group would have to take turns at being responsible for guiding the class discussion for an assigned week. This approach, they both echoed at different times of the interview, “would help students to somewhat grade each other and at times to focus on each other areas of student assessment and teaching.”

Jennifer stated that:
Since grading and evaluating student assignments appear to take up much of the instructor’s time, and that providing quality and constructive feedback is a critical component to online learning since this is one of the only ways students receive personal feedback from the instructor, faculty should adopt a different paradigm. Faculty should consider using a screen capture program for giving feedback on assignments, or record an audio clip of verbal feedback that one can email to students. This may be a time-saver. Also ensuring that your time is spent grading efficiently and that you are using all of your grading tools available through your eCollege learning management system.

7. Student-Teacher Communications and online Relationships

“It’s very hard to know the students when you can’t see them” is a concern expressed by Ryan. Jennifer feels the same and mentioned that, “I would think this is one big disadvantage of an online class, you have never seen your students therefore relationships are hard to cultivate.” Jennifer felt, there was no connection without a face to put to a name to “Even if I exchange emails with my students on regular basis, it is still hard to build relationships online.” Jennifer reported that “You don’t get to hear from everyone who is enrolled in your course because not all of them post on the discussion board. Some do frequently but most don’t reveal the personal information online.” Jordan was concerned that the online environment doesn’t render itself to developing and fostering relationship with classmates. He however thought that there are approaches that a faculty member can employ to help out with the relationship building. He said that “I encouraged my students to share their biographies so that their classmates can know them better.” He included his own bio in the beginning of the class to encourage his students to post theirs and set example for them to use. “Sharing their world would help student relate to one another” he reported.
Megan on the other hand thought that it was very difficult for a faculty member to develop relationships online “Most of these students don’t want to engage in relationships outside of teaching.” Megan thought that some of her students “have taken my class yet I have never met them and don’t expect to meet them unless circumstance or coincidences happen...Even though they were in my class I have never seen them in person,” she added.

Most of the faculty members made an effort to cultivate some sort of relationship with their students online. Joshua reported that, “you have to work hard to establish relationships since the online format negates the advantages of live face-to-face classroom. Setting up and maintaining successful online relationships, calls for one to be willing to put in more time to connect with students in an online environment.” He advised. To make better connections with students, Joshua also noted that he employed the technique of being an “active participant” by staying “attuned to learning from them while they are learning from me. “Stay engaged.” He advises students to think of ways of how and where one can interact with individual students and the class as a whole within the course site, “this helps make connections and build working relationships.”

Most of the faculty members used the first day of class to introduce themselves by going more in depth in terms of sharing their hobbies, family members their pets and other topics that they deemed necessary and that was meant to spark interest was incorporated. These were meant to help students “know who you are” Jack pointed out. Jack thought that there were other students who didn’t want to be known too much. “You can tell the ones that are a bit reluctant with their personal information,” he added. Ryan mentioned that “I wanted very much to know the faces of my students that I had in my online class. It’s too bad I don’t know their faces, we could meet in the same restaurant and I wouldn’t know them.” Several faculty members
mentioned that the introductions seemed to help and that more students were willing to reveal themselves.

Most of the faculty members thought that they got to know their student better using this approach. “First the introduction seemed to ease things and made them interested in wanting to share more, and throughout the course of the semester, I noticed, the way they write about themselves on the discussion boards and the level of online interaction they seemed to develop revealed their personality,” noted Olivia. She added that that this is crucial and helpful to one’s role as a faculty member.” Jack thinks that it’s much easier to know students online “because you can go back and link them to what they have written unlike the face-to-face classroom situation “I get to know them by what they’ve said about themselves.” He added.

Rachel reflected that “By following their communications you can pretty tell the one who is discussing what and is always fun to follow their discussion and I thoroughly enjoy this. To some extent, discussion boards and the nature of writing are a reflection of who they are. So I feel like I get to know them better the more they write.” Jennifer reported that “often, I would share my personal telephone number with students so that “if they would like to give me a call to discuss personal matters then I would be there for them.” And this, she noted, seemed to cut off the dropout rate. Joshua too thought that this approach of sharing personal contact was helpful and effective, “I have more and more of my online students come up to me throughout my career and thanked me for helping them solve a certain personal crises, and being there for them when they were about to drop the course. I think this should be encouraged more and more often and I didn’t wait until students dropped out of the course to intervene.”

Joshua said that, “reaching out to the struggling students and counselling them in some way has been made easier nowadays because of instant communication and social media”
According to Ryan, social media can play a role in getting to know your students better: “I have befriended quite a number of my students and they seem to like it. In this forum they are able to know me in detail and likewise I get to know their hobbies and their favorites stuff as well.”

Rachel of CC3 also believed communicating through social media platform had afforded her the ability to interact with some of her students out of class because “now I am in a position to know my students a little since they have befriended me on the social media and allowed me into their world so to speak.” “Of course this level of interaction doesn’t have to happen for a faculty to be successful in a classroom setting, but I find it useful myself. Therefore it depends on what the faculty prefers in his or her class.” Rachel pointed out that she has since discovered the usefulness of the social media like Facebook and she thinks of someday incorporating it in classroom setting as an additional digital tool to use alongside the ECollege Learning Management System.

Jordan and Olivia recommended that faculty members create appropriate forums for the students to express themselves as this helps with student retention especially when it comes to teaching online. Jordan reported that when the “students feels like no one cares about them, they tend to withdraw to themselves and try to not become part of the conversation of things going on in their lives…outside of the class.” He too cautioned that if students express no interest in ‘going this far, faculty should not insist.’ Olivia had created an opportunity in an environment online that seemed to help students discuss topics outside of class if they chose to.

This is helpful because you are creating an environment where there is interaction among the students themselves. They can see what their colleagues are writing about and they can communicate back and forth. I for one I can participate in this as well. Therefore discussion boards can be utilized in this manner.
Jack who is a proponent of these types of discussion thought that still compared with face-to-face class, the online students were less interested in communicating and “you can’t really assess the level of authenticity involved since you can’t see their faces.”

8. **Schedule Flexibility**

Most of the faculty members regarded their schedule flexibility as being one of the advantages of teaching online. The ability to work from anywhere as long as there was internet connection was cited as one of the big advantaged of teaching in an online setting as compared to teaching in a face-to-face classroom setting. Jordan mentioned that “with the type of connectivity we have today, I am able to manage my schedule very well. All what I need is my laptop or my Ipad and the ability to connect to the internet. And most of the open places like the coffee shops or restaurants offer free Wi-Fi. Therefore I can do the grading and participate in classroom discussion on the fly.”

Megan too thinks the ability to “work on the road” is a huge benefit as it affords “the ability to be a teacher on the road is a plus and this is one reason why I like this this type of teaching. Therefore it is probably easier to teach online because I could put it in my schedule the way I want to and the flexibility nature of my schedule also enables me to attend workshops, meetings or even take vacations.”

Ryan who has also taught while on the road reported that, “I have worked on the road for the most part and have taught my course online while in a hotel and out of town attending personal events. The key is to plan and make sure you prepare ahead of time,” he advised.

Jennifer liked the idea that “She can be somewhere else outside of her campus in CC1 and log into the LMS and interact with her students as long as there is connectivity. “I have weekly discussions boards where I reply to almost all the posts with additional input and send
them back to my students and I am not anywhere near my town”. She further adds that students get the valuable participation time as they would in a traditional face-to-face classroom, and they too get to respond at their own time. Jack, who travels a lot, also concurred, “One of the things I like about the online teaching is to be able to travel and still get work done. I can be online wherever I am at especially nowadays with my cellphone and respond to my students.”

Jordan is active in a number of national and state community college organizations and felt teaching online afforded him the flexibility to attend meetings that he wouldn’t otherwise have been able to in a traditional classroom “I started out by travelling to East Coast and at that I had my lesson planned and soon I found out that I could sit there and communicate with my students as if I am communicating from my house. Over time it just evolved from there and it now works out fine for me.” Several faculty members felt that they were more fulfilled by taking advantage of online teaching. Ryan reported being able to attend to personal matters during the day while responding to some of his students inquiries online.

Olivia too thinks online teaching has afforded her the opportunity to pursue other interests and she is thinking for enrolling in a doctorate program in the near future: “I have a lot of free time and I can do some reading while monitoring students’ discussion online.” Rachael and Jack thought that one has to plan wisely so that you don’t get bogged down by work when you are supposed to have fun. Even though faculty members thought teaching online took a lot of their time, there was a unanimous agreement teaching online had some benefits like “schedule flexibility and the ability to communicate with your students anytime you wanted”

9. Student Evaluation of Teaching

Several faculty members felt that evaluation of teaching in distance education should be tailored differently from the one in the traditional face-to-face classroom setting. Joshua
mentioned that “in their school a committee to explore best practices related to student
evaluation of online teaching in their was been set up and the group was tasked with identifying
and offering a set of guidelines for effective student evaluations of faculty members who teach
online courses. At the end of the committee sitting he anticipates that they will report their
findings to the college dean.” Joshua further added that there was a need for these types of
committees set up in his opinion and stated that he was honored to be invited as a member in
their college committee. He reported that “findings and the recommendations the committee will
come up will be useful and beneficial to all stakeholders involved in distance education in his
school including student, faculty, and administration.” Jordan mentioned that “the expression of
give and take that is so common in live, face-to-face classroom setting and that seems to engage
students is often lost in the online setting. Therefore faculty evaluations are solely based on the
interaction students have with faculty members online and this is highly limiting ‘No wonder the
evaluations of teachers were low as compared to traditional face-to-face classroom,” reported
Ryan.

Because traditional methods have proven insufficient in addressing the breadth of
instructional delivery and course design methods as Jack put it “We need to reevaluate the whole
process of online student evaluation of teaching to make it fair to teachers tasked with online
course delivery and this should take into account the recent developments in technology and the
obvious limitation of digital tools like popularly used LMS.” Jordan concurs and thinks this is a
big problem “since even colleges that make up the consortium differ in their approaches to the
student evaluation of online teachers in distance education courses.” His main concern was that
“in some cases, based on his experience, the consortium was responsible for conducting
evaluations; in other cases, the distance education program director coordinated with
administration to develop the instrument and in other cases evaluation of teaching via distance education was not found to be mandatory by the colleges or were not that emphasized as you would expect. It is just a mere formality,” he said.

According to Joshua, evaluations were taken very seriously by the administration at CC4 and this created concern, particularly for online faculty members who generally had lower evaluations than the traditional face-to-face classroom instructors. Joshua added that “the administration keeps track of faculty’s evaluations and there is usually concern to us.” He admits that metrics of gauging what to shoot for in these types of evaluation is often not established. Jordan reports that “the student evaluations in his school are less favorable to faculty teaching distance courses and he blames this partly due to the fact the discussion and interaction with students are taking place over digital medium and there is limitation to what can be expressed by the faculty when facilitating discussion.”

Megan also thought that student evaluation of teaching in an online environment was critical for the continued improvement and success of distance education courses offered.

10. The Role of the Iowa Community College Online Consortium

All the faculty members like Jordan appreciated the role the consortium played in collaboration with their community college IT department and characterized it as essential “having someone available at 2:30 a.m. When I’m actually getting around to working on my course, I can call and get a live person if I’m having a problem with the system.” The format of the Pearson ECollege learning platform that is supported by the consortium was particularly welcome to those like Jack, who claimed that “my computer skills are not my forte at all” but found the system to be a “really very user-friendly format.” Joshua was migrated a course to the new platform and had some issues in the in the process, “but they were just a phone call away
and when I reached to them ‘they were there like boom boom boom it’s done. Problem solved
and on top of that they knew what I wanted”. They responded to me as a consumer,” he said,
smiling.

Jennifer reported that the ICCOC has a “help desk that is open throughout the business
hours that is manned by an Information Technology person.” There is also “faculty support on
weekends I can call; I have their number that I can call, on the weekends.” Jennifer reported that
in addition to technical support, ICCOC assigned faculty members an instructional designer to
offer support needed whenever it was requested:

I mean they’re always there. Anyway, if you have a question about designing or re-
designing your course, they provide or link you up with someone who is a designer and
who is pretty much in charge of your courses. ... They do have classes all the time and
tailored training most of the time; it’s just about finding the time to go do it. They have
live and online classes as well as tutorials. I do prefer live one-o-one sessions because I
don’t know what they’re talking about if they show me over the web. I’m more of a visual
learner than some of the younger ones. They will offer the support necessary to succeed
as long as you ask.

Olivia and Megan concurred that during the initial stages of their transition to online
teaching, the ICCOC was more than happy “to help you out, make things easy for you or to show
you different ways if you have a problem and they showed you how to do it… “They were
resourceful” Megan added.
Transformative Learning

Transformative learning occurs when adults experience a disorienting dilemma that challenges one of their assumptions. In this research study, faculty members faced the experience of being told they were going to teach online. In some cases, the faculty members initiated the move to teach online, but most of them, when asked what prompted them to teach online, replied that they were requested to. While many had not anticipated that the transitioning to teaching in an online setting would make much difference in their roles as community college faculty members, they soon discovered that was the case. When asked to describe their experience, many found that their previous assumptions and beliefs they had about teaching online were being challenged. “It is very different from what I was used to during face-to-face classroom setting,” reported one of the faculty members. Another participant reported that, “You are thrown in a format that takes time to get used to. It wasn’t easy on my part. It took a while even to appreciate the new eCollege Learning Management Software.” Another faculty member recounted the transformational experience he went through when he transitioned to teaching online from face-to-face. This is when he was preparing to begin teaching his first class:

*I found the LMS very limiting and wanted to spice my class by making it interesting. For a lot of students I was teaching, most of them were taking these courses to end up somewhere in the medical profession of some kind and since science can be a bit boring, I made sure I bring a lot of interactivity to the class as possible and it has worked over all these years. To complement the modules, I created slides with very catchy, great graphics and as the technology advanced, nowadays I can easily make videos available to my students.*
Participants reflected on the assumptions they had before they transitioned to teaching online. “Looking back, I had a lot of assumptions on what teaching online entails and had completely overlooked the limitations involved in the teaching format and was forced to re-invent the wheel.”

Another area that was transformational for faculty members involved in this study was when they discovered that they had to shift responsibility of learning to the students and assume the role of being a facilitator of learning and not the custodians of knowledge. One faculty member reported, “Since you are not standing in front of the class, but instead, you are teaching through asynchronous learning and LMS, you are forced to shift more responsibilities to students to take ownership of their own learning.”

Another one concurred that “The learning in an online environment called for a different approach than face-to-face classes.” Faculty members were forced to shift paradigms on what would work in online teaching rather than relying on what worked or did not work in classroom settings.” Several participants stated that online teaching lends itself to more of a participatory approach on the side of faculty and less reliant on the faculty to “disseminate knowledge.” “I see my teaching role now as a guide by the side and not the sage on the stage. I am completely transformed from a teacher in the traditional sense to a facilitator,” One of the participants reported. Other faculty members were forced to adopt a completely new model of interacting with students in an online environment to compensate for lack of classroom interaction. One faculty member noted:

*I had to result to social media so that I can get to know my students at least. During face-to-face classroom teaching you get to know your students during the first day of class. But in this case it’s online and it is difficult, but you have to reach them somehow.*
Therefore I was forced to sign up for a Facebook account and learned how to use skype so that I can foster interactivity.”

Several faculty members felt that they had to start all over in order to structure and develop content that is more conducive to online environment. This was transformational and required attending training sessions and participating in workshops to get oriented with a new way of creating content and maintaining an online course.

Some of the faculty members came up with a creative ways of approaching online teaching and to make sure they were not overburdened. One faculty member for instance had to come up with a strategy of telling his students to limit conversation to a paragraph or so and to summarize their work. Other faculty members employed a strategy of “explaining to their students what was expected of them in an online discussion in terms of quantity or length of response they were supposed to post on the threaded conversation or generally how to respond to others.” This was quite transformational on the faculty’s side.

Most of the faculty members had to make quite a bit of adjustments when it can to teaching and interacting with student online. Some of the participants went beyond what was expected of them in terms of teaching using eCollege course management system and incorporated the use of technology tools to make learning and teaching exciting in an online format. The intent was to try and mimic the face-to-face classroom setting. Most of the faculty members who tried this approach thought they were completely transformed by the learning involved on their part and reported that they plan to try some of these creative solution when they blended learning classes.
Summary

The goal of this chapter was to compose a composite textural description of the experiences of community college faculty members who transitioned to teaching in the online environment. Some of the themes identified were addressed based on direct questioning, and some emerged as part of the conversations that ensued. The issue that all faculty members addressed, and addressed most frequently, was the time and effort it takes to teach online. Participants addressed this in reference to not only the development of the course, but also the time it takes to teach a course in an online environment. Included in the discussion was the lack of time that a faculty member had to participate in other activities, such as taking trainings workshops, and other activities related to professional development. Other faculty members were concerned about how the time necessary to teach online would impact their ability to conduct their number one priority in their role as faculty, which is teaching.

The next most frequently addressed issue that came up during this study was faculty preparation for online teaching. As this was a question posed by the researcher as part of the interview protocol, it is not surprising that it was mentioned so often. Faculty members described available options at each of the community colleges. CC1 offers an extensive training program that incorporates assistance from within their distance education program in their college as well as then offered by ICCOC as a result of their partnership. The importance of mentors and mentoring programs were addressed frequently and a number of faculty members identified this as the method they used to learn online teaching especially when they initially started out teaching.

The ability to have relationships with students in an online environment was also frequently mentioned by faculty members. Some faculty members were concerned with the fact
that students whom they taught had in turn evaluated them yet they had never met them in person. Others felt that without a face-to-face communication that wasn’t a possibility in this kind of environment, which inhibited their ability to have classroom relationship with their students was inhibited and therefore affected their evaluation as online teachers. On the other hand, a number of faculty members felt that that their relationships with online students were much greater than they had ever had with students in face-to-face classes. Faculty members attributed this to the use of biographies and the students’ seeming lack of inhibition, which enabled them to share deeply personal thoughts and feelings. Finding different methods to make the information interactive and engaging to students was frequently described by participants. Creative ways of presenting the material were among the methods utilized in the online setting. However, the most frequently mentioned tool in online teaching was the use of the discussion board. Discussions were seen as valuable in terms of teaching, communicating with, and building relationships with online students.

Though faculty members, either through prompting or through ensuing discussion, mentioned the same themes, there was frequent slight disagreement and differing opinions for instance regarding the value of the training and resources offered by ICCOC came up during the interview. In addition to questioning the efficacy of the training, some felt that adequate time was not given for attending the training sessions that were facilitated by ICCOC. Faculty members also expressed different opinions as to what types of content they believed could be taught successfully online.

Although most community college faculty members felt that the time and effort involved in online teaching were significantly greater than in face-to-face teaching, many enjoyed the flexibility of scheduling that the online environment afforded them. Some even stated that it was
worth the extra time to have that flexibility in their lives. Some of the faculty members attempted
to set very strict boundaries as to when and how often they would respond to students, several
felt that they needed to be available most often and answered students questions frequently in
order to encourage students who were struggling. Since most of the students taught by the faculty
members in this study were working adults, the need to provide support was thought to be
especially important and necessary.

Some of the faculty members interviewed for this study incorporated other digital
technologies in order to be able to interact and have a meaningful conversation that mimicked
the face-to-face classroom interaction. Some of the most popular tools that were cited as being
useful were Facebook and the use of skype. Popular video streaming software tools like
YouTube were popularly cited by faculty members interviewed as being useful.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides answers the research questions. Conclusion of this research study is presented as answers to the research questions. Implications for practice are presented following the conclusion. Finally, recommendations for further research are identified.

The purpose of this study was to apply phenomenological research strategies in the examination of experiences of community college faculty members who transitioned from face-to-face classroom to online teaching, and to analyze the reported experiences. The intention was to develop a portrait of themes of the participants’ experiences in order to gain an understanding of the phenomena they experienced as they transitioned.

Research Questions

The following research questions provided the framework for this study.

The central research question was:

1. What are the experiences of community college faculty members transitioning from live, face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching?

Additional research questions were as follows:

2. What challenges do community college faculty face, as they transition from face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching?

3. What assumptions do community college faculty members have about the role of faculty members in online education prior to their initial experience in online teaching?

4. To what degree do institutional support and infrastructure impact faculty members’ experiences transitioning to teaching online?
Research question one is the overarching question for the study and results presented here are a summary of the experiences of the participants as a whole as described by the analysis of the themes in chapter 4.

**Answering my Research Questions**

1. “*What are the experiences of community college faculty members transitioning from live face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching?*”

The study enabled faculty members to describe first-hand what is involved in the preparation and transitioning to teaching an online class. The study revealed ten themes that arose from faculty member descriptions of experiences teaching in a face-to-face classroom setting and then transitioning to teaching in online environment as listed in chapter 4. These are (a) Faculty preparedness to teach online and transitioning to teach online, (b) Teaching in the online environment, (c) Mentors and mentoring, (d) Institutional support and resources, (e) Faculty role as facilitators of learning, (f) Time and effort required to teach online, (g) Student-Teacher Communications and online Relationships, (h) Schedule flexibility, (i) Student Evaluation of Teaching, (j) The role of the Iowa Community College Online Consortium.

Through these descriptions, faculty expressed concerns on the level of preparedness on their part before they transitioned and others cited the benefit that comes with teaching in an online environment. Most of the participants agreed that it takes a lot of time to teach in an online setting as compared to live face-to-face classes and the literature seems to support this (Hopewell, 2007; Ryan et al., 2005; Gammill, 2004). Several faculty members admitted that they had little idea on how to get started teaching online and had to rely more or less on guess work on what they believed would work. Others assumed that it would be easier to transition from face-to-face environment and help students learn content within a short time but this proved
tougher than they thought. Most were not at first aware that creating content in PowerPoint presentations in an online setting was vastly different from what they had experienced during their live, face-to-face classes. Most were forced to re-learn how to prepare slides and upload a course all over again and sought help from their designers or assigned mentors in order to be successful. It took a bit of adjustment for the faculty members to get used to the eCollege Content Management Software that is provided by the Iowa Community College Online Consortium, and some of the faculty members pointed out that not until after attending the workshop did they get comfortable teaching in an online environment though these types of training seemed to place additional responsibility on their side than they were prepared to assume.

As the faculty members went through the transition from face-to-face teaching to online teaching they expressed varied emotions. Familiarity with the technical jargon was cited as one of the limitations which necessitated seeking more help from the distance education department or the ICCOC help desk. Some of the community college faculty members thought that it takes some improvisation to be successful teaching an online course and chose to include additional asynchronous tools such as Skype and video conferencing to facilitate classroom discussion as well interaction with their students.

Even though there were difficulties encountered by the community college faculty members as they transitioned to online teaching, there were benefits that most of the participants mentioned. The ability to work from anywhere as long as there was internet connection was cited as one of the big advantages of teaching in an online setting as compared to teaching in a face-to-face classroom setting. Most of the faculty members mentioned that the difficulties and complexities of transitioning to online teaching were offset by the fact that once they became
comfortable in the new medium they seemed to relish the flexible scheduling that came about with teaching online.

Several faculty members felt that evaluation of teaching in distance education was not fair to them and should be tailored differently from the one in the traditional face-to-face classroom setting. They thought that their evaluations were not a reflection of who they were, or of their teaching, given the fact that their evaluations were solely based on their interactions with students. They reported that these interactions were somewhat limited and very different of face-to-face.

Faculty members also thought that it was very difficult to cultivate student-teacher communication and build relationships online that are equivalent of the face-to-face classroom interaction. Participants also expressed concerns regarding whether students understood the concepts being taught online and how to effectively communicate content in a medium where students and faculty are not seeing each other face-to-face (Diekelmann et al., 1998; Frese, 2006; Johnson, 2005; Ryan et al., 2004). Additionally faculty members reported that they had to turn to innovative ways like requiring students to write their biographies and share them with the rest of the class, grouping students and encouraging them to share information with one another, or using social media. Some of these strategies seemed to work for most of the faculty members interviewed for this study and there was an agreement that this kind of approach might have helped with student retention in taking their online courses.

There was some frustration expressed by some of the faculty members after their roles were completely redefined when they moved to online teaching. All the faculty members who participated in this study had to change and adopt their course materials to the new online medium. Most were surprised by the lack of similarities between teaching face-to-face and
teaching in an online environment. Another area of discontent that was brought up by faculty
members was the time and effort it took to teach online. Even though support and training was
provided by the individual colleges as well as the consortium, these workshops and trainings
didn’t seem to answer most of their questions or ease some of their concerns, most of the faculty
members thought that this wasn’t enough given the amount of work required of them to
successfully teach as well as structure and deliver content online.

2. “What challenges do community college faculty members face as they transition
   from face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching?”

Teaching online was reported by most of the participants in this study as being very
challenging. One of the faculty members in this study cited the lack of the translation of all the
experiences they had accumulated during their years of teaching in a face-to-face classroom
environment to an online setting. This was a hard lesson for most of the community college
faculty members to take as they came to the realization that what they had taught in a classroom
setting wasn’t going to work or translate well in an online Medium.

Most of the participants cited the environment as ill-equipped to foster students’
academic growth since the medium itself lacks face-face interaction. Some of the participants
doubted whether they impacted knowledge to their students beyond finishing homework and
assignments or fulfilling the credit requirements.

Another challenge for the community college faculty members who participated in this
study was lack of adequate preparation when they first started teaching online. One of the
participants reported having no idea how to teach online, “I didn't know how to put content
together. It was trial and error. Sometimes it worked, other times it didn’t but I learned along the
way though.” Another one recalled reported “I would tap into my wide experience of teaching
courses in the past and I thought I will transition without much headache. It didn’t work and I had to ‘relearn’ all over again. What I thought would be ‘a piece of cake’ turned to be a real learning curve. Besides, my slides from face-to-face classes didn’t seem to work with the new Content learning Management System that we were supposed to use. I had to recalibrate.”

Even though most of the faculty members interviewed for this study appreciated the amount of help they got from their institutions in terms of training and support, some of the participants thought that it didn’t go far enough. Several participants thought they still struggled with technology issues especially with the eCollege Content Management System deep into the semester. Other faculty members reported that they did not get to choose when to go for training; this was decided by the administration and wasn’t tailored to their needs. “Some of the trainings were scheduled in between the semester and didn’t fit my schedule” one faculty member reported. “I was embarrassed to insist on getting help on simple questions that I had and that no one was asking,” another participant noted.

The college administration and distance education centers seemed to use faculty evaluation metrics that left many faculty members feeling frustrated with the process. The challenge was how to persuade the administration on how to adopt evaluation approaches that were tailored solely for online teaching. The concern most participants expressed regarding this issue was that they were getting evaluated by students whom they had never met face-to-face. This aspect of evaluation most faculty members thought did not credit them with a lot of work they were undertaking outside of the actual online classroom teaching like preparing contents, grading, interacting over the LMS or posting the feedback to students on discussion boards.

Most participants found teaching online more challenging than face-to-face teaching due to the increased time demands in online teaching (Lorenzetti, 2004) and other activities related to
online facilitation. One faculty member reported that “I have put more of my time than I have
ever done in my face-to-face classes in terms of getting the structure down and even after that
there was tech stuff I have to deal with.” Despite the training they received on the learning
management system, they still had to curve out time to structure content and make sure
everything worked well over the web before they presented content in an online class. Some
faculty members also thought that some of their time was consumed by answering students’
questions online and communicating with students who were “falling behind” the class course.

3. What assumptions do community college faculty members have about the role of
faculty members in online education prior to their initial experience in online
teaching?

Several of the community college faculty members assumed that it would be easier to
carry on the experiences that they had accumulated over the years teaching face-to-face classes
into the online environment. It didn’t work out that way as the duration of getting used to the
online environment turned out to be longer than most had anticipated. Faculty members had to
relearn how to do PowerPoint presentations that had enough materials to be useful in an online
environment and some relied on the designer to help them accomplish this task. What they
thought would be easier turned out to require a great deal of learning. Besides, materials meant
for face-to-face classes didn’t work in an online environment. “I had to recalibrate,” was the
sentiments expressed and echoed by several community college faculty members. Furthermore,
many of the participants didn’t anticipate the learning curve involving in mastering the eCollege
Management System to be that stiff. They had to rely on mentoring program and their IT
personnel to help them catch up.
Other faculty members expected that the actual teaching online would be easier (Diekelmann et al., 1998) and others thought teaching online was similar to teaching face-to-face, while others were concerned with how they would begin teaching online. “I didn’t have a clue of how to teach online. I struggled with how to put slides together. I have to call on a mentor to assist me and relied heavily on our IT staff. I wasn’t easy for me.”

Some other faculty members had assumed that communicating with students online will be easy and most of the faculty members made an effort to cultivate some sort of relationship with their students online but it wasn’t easy and was unlike anything they had experienced in a face-to-face classroom setting. One participant reported that, “you have to work hard to establish relationships since the online format negates the advantages of live face-to-face classroom. Setting up and maintaining successful online relationships, calls for one to be willing to put in more time to connect with students in an online environment.” He advised. To make better connections with students, another participant noted that he employed the technique of being an “active participant” by staying attuned to learning from his students while they are learning from him.

To what degree do institutional support and infrastructure impact faculty members’ experiences transitioning to teaching online?

Majority of the participants were appreciative of the fact that they came from institutions that fully supported them both internally and also through the partnerships established with the consortium. The community college faculty members featured in this study all attributed their success in transitioning and getting established as online instructors for the most part due to the support they got ICCOC. Since the courses were delivered online through the consortium, the expertise and the resources provided by the consortium were instrumental in building their
confidence level as the planned to transition from teaching in face-to-face courses to the online environment.

In addition, the consortium provided opportunities for member community colleges to link with mentors who were helpful in getting most of the faculty members adjusted to teaching online. The ICCOC commitment to all consortium member colleges in terms of providing quality training, communication, and the collaborative environment as a resource were reported as helpful when it came to faculty transitioning from teaching in a face-to-face classroom setting to online teaching. Several faculty members stated that they tapped into some of the support services that the consortium was offering in addition to the internal distance education programs their colleges were providing. Use of mentor and mentoring was also cited as one of the areas that institutional support and infrastructure impacted faculty members’ experiences transitioning to teaching online.

Most of the faculty members benefited from the help and guidelines that were made available to them through the consortium as well as their individual colleges. Faculty singled out course designers as very talented folks who made faculty work easier and more manageable. Faculty reported that “staff and faculty development is essential to the strength and effectiveness of any online program development on any campus.”

The community colleges in this study all provided technical support as well as faculty development programs. However, the degree of that support varied at the institutions and also among campuses. Faculty members who technical support reported being satisfied with the online teaching experience, as opposed to some of the other colleges where faculty reported being disillusioned with the experience (Frese, 2006; Gammill, 2004). Since many enjoyed the
flexibility of the schedule provided by online teaching, the ability to get help when they needed it was seen as invaluable.

**Implications for Practice**

In this study, community college faculty members reported on their successes and issues related to transitioning from teaching in face-to-face classroom settings to teaching online. Description of lessons learned from analyzing the collective experiences of faculty members who participated in this study is provided. The lessons may contribute to the knowledge base to improve community college faculty members transitioning to online teaching. Furthermore the implication of this research may not only affect community colleges but also traditional four year institutions that support faculty migrating courses online. A number of implications for practice emerged as a result of this study.

Community college faculty members who participated in this study described their journey captured in experiences of transitioning from teaching in a face-to-face classroom setting to teaching in an online setting. One of the issues that featured prominently and was brought to the surface was lack of preparation during the transition process. Community college faculty members described what worked for them, the institution support they received for the consortium as well as their member colleges. They described what was needed, what they wished they had known before starting to teach, and what they advised new faculty members to consider before they began teaching online. The most important lesson to take away from this is the need to include faculty voices in all aspects of preparing online programs. Faculty members’ needs should be identified and acknowledged by administrators, faculty development groups, supporting staff, and technology departments. When online education is approached as a team effort, results can be more satisfying to faculty and students, and student learning outcomes can
be addressed more effectively, ensuring that online education is at least as rigorous as face-to-face courses.

Secondly, the training offered to community college faculty members to allow smooth transitioning to online teaching should be adequate and should be tailored to address their needs. The participants interviewed for this study exhibited different ranges of technological proficiency. The experienced faculty members who had online taught for a number of years seemed to handle training easier and were able to successfully navigate the environment. It wasn’t the case for the beginners, some of whom lacked motivation and experienced a stiffer learning curve. Therefore the model offered by ICCOC of ‘one size fits all’ to the entire faculty involved in distance education within the consortium as described by the participants can be improved upon. The ICCOC can tailor their professional development (including training and workshops) extended to the faculty members according to their needs and level of technology proficiency.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

If more research is done in the area of faculty transitioning from face-to-face to online teaching outside of the consortium and the findings reported, there will be more cases to compare and more overall recommendations may be made.

There needs to be additional research at community colleges that looks into the level of preparedness by faculty members before transitioning to teaching online. There is need for more studies about the impact on faculty during the transition from face-to-face to online taking into account the requirements such as training and technology issues during the actual transition process. Looking at the impact on the faculty in relation to the time spent learning new skills that are necessary to keep up with changes in technology are good research topics.
Additional comparative studies between colleges that are partners to the consortium and the ones that don’t belong to the consortium or are linked to any of the national or regional consortiums could provide additional data as to the benefits that come with being a member of the consortium outside the economies of scale benefits that consortium often provides. The study could be designed to look into the level of preparedness of the involved institutions.

Another area to study would be looking at institutional support and resources needed in community colleges to facilitate a smooth transition of faculty to online teaching. In particular, a study that looks at the distance learning staff and the requirements to provide the necessary help to transition community college faculty members from teaching from face-to-face to online could provide important data that would be beneficial to ensuring a smooth transition to online teaching.

**Personal Reflection**

Twenty years ago I enrolled in the University of Nairobi to pursue my post-secondary education. I was studying to be a secondary school teacher (equivalent of high school here in United States). My dream and ambition was to become an educator and make a contribution in this field in a positive way. But my dream was short-lived or rather was put on hold by positive circumstances not foreseen that would take me to a distant land away from my home and transform me for good. First I realized I had a gift of running when I entered different track meets to compete and represent my college. I began to excel and beat stiff competition. One of the coaches discovered my talents and suggested that I would be well served if I applied for scholarship in US colleges so that I could pursue both my education as well compete and pursue sports at a higher level. The idea, though foreign, was appealing to me.
Growing up in rural eastern Kenya, I had never encountered someone who had pursued a similar path. Nonetheless, I was so happy to hear there was such an opportunity and welcomed it wholeheartedly. I didn’t hesitate and I began preparing to apply to several Division one US institutions and was glad to get a response from the Iowa State University track coach who needed someone to compete in spring season. I hurriedly sat for my required exams, processed my travel documents, and left for United States and with that, the dream of becoming an educator was put on hold for the time being. Upon arriving in United State as a transfer student, I changed my major and decided to pursue a bachelor degree in IT (Management Information Systems). I decided to pursue a field at the time that was relatively new and the one that I didn’t have the opportunity to pursue in Kenya since it wasn’t technologically developed.

Settling to a life of student athlete in US was not an easy task but just like any new immigrants I adjusted slowly. My transition was not straight forward and not certainly helped by being a student athlete. I lived a busy student life which meant being out of town on most of the weekends and being constantly on the road, which also meant missing some of the classes. I had to make up for these absences once I returned to campus; that took most of my time leaving very little time for socializing and attending cultural events that would have helped me assimilate faster. Either way I endured and got accustomed to a way of life in a foreign country, I learnt the norms and cultural expectations. I eventually graduated with my bachelor degree. I worked for a while and three years later after I graduated I decided to come back to Iowa State University and pursue a master’s degree in Business and IT and eventually enrolled for my doctorate in Education Leadership.

Returning to obtain graduate training was motivated by my desire to become a better practitioner and at the same time fueled by a deep love of ideas, learning and growth. I finally
felt I had arrived at a place I had dreamt of once before in my boyhood years – back to education discipline where it all started. As I took my Ph.D courses and went through the program I couldn’t have been more proud. I felt transformed in ways I had never thought of. My work experience as an IT professional became the bedrock of my academic life – supporting me in concrete ways, shaping it in practical ways and grounding it in a fundamental way. The constant support from my family, my mentor and advisor, classmates and one teacher after another throughout my course work helped me stay motivated and find ways to overcome the financial and psychological hurdles that presented themselves along the way.

As I continued to work fulltime and study at the same time, I forged a strong sense of the importance of practice and lived experiences. It is from these paradigms that I slowly started refining the ‘thinking involved’ in my dissertation my topic. I reflected on my work over the years in Information Technology field and tried to connect it with the role of being an educator moving forward. At one point during my career in IT practice I was tasked with developing IT solutions geared to assisting faculty members and students in higher education. While working with faculty to solicit their input on projects it dawned on me that there was a learning curve involved in learning as new tools were constantly being deployed in an academic environment that also called for time commitment and resource allocation.

I sensed that between the academic and staff assistants tasked with providing technology help there was a gap involved in figuring the workings of these digital tools by the faculty members and given the time constraints it wasn’t feasible. Then I began to wonder whether there was a way to address the situation in more practical ways by bringing it to the attention of the administration who allocate resources. I thought to myself that perhaps conducting a thorough
investigation in form of research and proposing recommendations would be the best way to go. And that is how my dissertation topic came about.

Throughout my dissertation journey I came up with several ideas and proposals that I presented to my fellow students during class projects and dissertation seminars. I agonized hard on how to carry out my research. I knew what I wanted to investigate but settling on the best approach proved to be a daunting task. I debated whether to carry out a quantitative study or settle for qualitative inquiry. Coming from a science background I entertained the idea of pursuing a quantitative research but as I took more coursework that exposed me to qualitative methodologies, I was persuaded that the right way for me was to investigate lived stories of faculty members in the field.

I was interested in hearing stories and lived experiences of the main actors – the faculty members who have the lived experiences of transitioning from teaching in a live classroom setting to teaching online. This is how I settled on phenomenological study and completely immersed myself in investigating the phenomena of online learning. The study took me to areas I never thought I would visit and I encountered and interacted with educators who loved what they do and it has been a privilege.

I encountered faculty members who are technologically savvy and who live in wired campuses. As I walked down the hall of the colleges where I was meeting some of my participants for this study, I was struck by how many of the students I noticed were carrying digital tools like Smartphones and Ipads. This is a testament of the age we live in and it certainly looks like today’s students are coming to campuses with widely varying degrees of technological knowledge and armed with many different mobile devices. I couldn’t help but think that tomorrow’s world will be even more complex with everything wired and everyone
communicating over the digital medium. This will certainly call for educators to make necessary adjustments to accommodate the millennial generation and beyond who have grown used to consuming anything digital. Their education will have to be tailored differently even when they are adults attending community colleges. This is a question everyone including faculty, faculty developers, instructional designers, instructional technologists, multimedia specialists, and content developers who want to learn how to use mobile devices as instructional tools to improve their teaching will have to wrestle with. This made feel that my research is very relevant.

When I began this research project as part of my doctoral journey, I began to acquire researcher sensibility like the importance of adequate preparation in conducting research, the role of the researcher, preparedness to work with uncertainty, and achieving authentic rigor. The attributes have made me a better person both professionally and on a personal level. This qualitative research project also enabled me to “get close” to participants, to “penetrate their internal logic and interpret their subjective understanding of reality” (Shaw, 1999, p. 60). I would admit before I started on this journey I didn’t know much about qualitative research coming from the world of numbers but I do now have a greater appreciation of qualitative research “quest for meaning and significance” (Marshall, Lincoln and Austin, 1991, p. 74). I further appreciate the meaning of social experience that can mostly be captured by conducting a qualitative inquiry and I intend to carry on with these insights learned as I move forward and mature as a researcher, educator and a scholar.
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Instructional Technology Council. (2013). 2009 distance education survey results: Tracking the


APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)
Exempt Study Review Form

Title of Project: Faculty Preparedness for Teaching Online Courses at Iowa Community Colleges

Principal Investigator (PI): David Lichoro
University ID: 611634023
Phone: 515-296-8190
Email Address: muturiad@iastate.edu

Correspondence Address: 54B Schillieger Village
Department: Education Leadership and Policy Studies

PI Level: □ Tenured, Tenure-Eligible, & HTER Faculty □ Adjunct/Affiliate Faculty □ Collaborator Faculty □ Emeritus Faculty
□ Visiting Faculty/Scientist □ Senior Lecturer/Clinician □ Lecture/Clinician, w/Ph.D. or DVM □ P&S Employee, P37 & above
□ Extension to Families/Youth Specialist □ Field Specialist III □ Postdoctoral Associate □ Graduate/Undergrad Student □ Other (specify: )

FOR STUDENT PROJECTS (Required when the principal investigator is a student)
Name of Major Professor/Supervising Faculty: Dr Larry Ebbers
University ID: Phone: 515-294-8067
Email Address: lebbers@iastate.edu
Campus Address: N221A Lagomarcino
Department: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Type of Project: (check all that apply) □ Thesis/Dissertation □ Class Project □ Other (specify: )

Alternate Contact Person: Email Address:
Correspondence Address: Phone:

ASSURANCE
- I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and accurate and consistent with any proposal(s) submitted to external funding agencies. Misrepresentation of the research described in this or any other IRB application may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct.
- I agree to provide proper surveillance of this project to ensure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are protected. I will report any problems to the IRB. See Reporting Adverse Events and Unanticipated Problems for details.
- I agree that modifications to the approved project will not take place without prior review and approval by the IRB.
- I agree that the research will not take place without the receipt of permission from any cooperating institutions, when applicable.
- I agree to obtain approval from other appropriate committees as needed for this project, such as the IACUC (if the research involves animals), the IRB (if the research involves biohazards), the Radiation Safety Committee (if the research involves x-rays or other radiation producing devices or procedures), etc.
- I understand that approval of this project does not grant access to any facilities, materials or data on which this research may depend. Such access must be granted by the unit with the relevant custodial authority.
- I agree that all activities will be performed in accordance with all applicable federal, state, local, and Iowa State University policies.

Signature of Principal Investigator Date 8/22/13

Signature of Major Professor/Supervising Faculty Date 8/22/13

(Required when the principal investigator is a student)

I have reviewed this application and determined that departmental requirements are met, the investigator(s) has/have adequate resources to conduct the research, and the research design is scientifically sound and has scientific merit.

Signature of Department Chair Date 8/22/13

For IRB Use Only □ Not Research Per Federal Regulations □ No Human Participants Review Date: September 10, 2013
□ Minimal Risk EXEMPT Per 45 CFR 46.101(b): 9/10/13

IRB Reviewer’s Signature
Office for Responsible Research Revised: 03/12/13
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions/Guide

- Tell me how you came to be an educator and about your current teaching role.
- Taking your mind back to before you commenced teaching at X community college, could you tell me what online learning experiences you may have had?
- Do you teach both face-to-face and online courses?
- How long have you been teaching online courses?
- What assumptions regarding technology use in the classroom did you have before you began teaching online?
- What training have you attended or acquired to familiarize yourself with technology before transitioning to teach online classes? And were you forced to seek training or it was out of your own volition?
- What was your motivation to teach online classes?
- What kind of technology do you use in teaching online classes?
- How familiar are you with Wiki’s, Blogs, and Online Chat, video streaming software like YouTube, Skype, and social media like Facebook, etc.?
- Have you incorporated any of the above technology in your online teaching?
- In what ways have you found online teaching beneficial both to faculty and to students?
- How do you feel about teaching online?
- From your perspective what are some of the positives of teaching online?
- What do you believe are some of the negative aspects of teaching courses online?
- How confident are you about your ability to utilize technology tools in teaching online courses?
- What problems have you encountered while teaching online?
- What institutional support have you received since beginning to teach online courses?
- What institutional support would you recommend a faculty member seek before transitioning from teaching face-to-face to teaching online?
- What are the biggest differences that you have found between teaching face-to-face classes and teaching online classes?
- Do you think online classes will replace face-to-face teaching in future?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add that might help in understanding your experience transitioning to online teaching?
APPENDIX C

Email Invitation to Participate in a Research Study on Technology Use in Higher Education

Participant,

My name is David Lichoro. I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Iowa State University. I am currently working on my dissertation research project on technology use by faculty at Iowa Community Colleges. I was given your contact by the director of the Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC). I am currently conducting a research study on Technology use in Higher Education and he thought you would be the right person to talk to and have a conversation with on this particular subject. Also you may be in a position to point me to the right contact as I am in need of more faculty participants. Basically I am looking for faculty members who have taught online classes in any of Iowa community colleges for at least a year.

Again the purpose of this study is to investigate how community college faculty members incorporate technology in their daily work as faculty. I am hoping that the outcome of my study will facilitate a better understanding of faculty experiences with technology in the classroom, and establish the institutional or administrative support that needs to be extended to faculty members to help them succeed in their work. Your participation in this study will involve answering a few questions related to your use of technology in classroom as well as sharing your perspective on the faculty support that is needed in order to make a smooth transition from teaching in a face-to-face format to teaching in an online setting.

Please let me know your willingness to participate in this study by replying to my email (muturiad@iastate.edu). I will follow up with further communication regarding the best time to conduct the interview.

Thank you.

David Lichoro
APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent:

INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE WHO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY

The following information is being presented to help you decide whether or not you want to be a part of a minimal risk research study. Please read carefully. If you do not understand anything, ask the Person in Charge of the Study. Please also feel free to ask questions at any time.

TITLE OF THE STUDY: Faculty’s experiences in transitioning from a classroom to an online teaching role in Iowa Community College Online Consortium (ICCOC)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: David Lichoro, Doctoral Candidate

STUDY LOCATION(S): Iowa community college that is a member of ICCOC

You are being asked to participate because of your experience teaching both face-to-face classes as well as online in your institution.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH
The purpose of this study is to apply phenomenological research strategies to examine the experiences of community college faculty who transitioned from face-to-face classroom to online teaching and to analyze their reported experiences. The intention is to develop a rich, thick portrait of the participants’ experiences to gain greater insight into how faculty perceive their role in the online environment and whether there were significant differences from their role as classroom teachers. For purposes of this study, online community college faculty refers to fulltime faculty in a community college-based program who having begun their career in classroom teaching, have taught online for at least one year.

PLAN OF THE STUDY
You will be asked to participate in a live face-to-face interview at your location. Depending on the depth you choose to provide; interviews will be completed in 1–2 hours. If needed, you may be contacted by telephone or email after the interview to clarify any questions that may arise.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION
You will not be paid for participating in this study.

BENEFITS OF BEING A PART OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY
By participating in this research study, participants will have the opportunity to discuss their perspectives on topics related to the field in which they are considered experienced. Their perspective will provide valuable insight for preparing faculty for the role of online facilitator.

RISKS OF BEING A PART OF THIS STUDY
There are no foreseeable risks at this time from participating in this study. If you decide to participate in this study there will not be direct benefit to you other than the opportunity to share your experiences as an online faculty and what it means to be an online faculty.
CONFIDENTIALITY
Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.
To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: The researcher is the only person that will have access to the data. The data and resulting transcriptions will kept on secured Cybox account. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential.
The results of this study may be published. However, the data obtained from you will be combined with data from other people in the publication. The published results will not include your name in the body of the paper.
All interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed. Audio tapes, transcriptions, and researcher’s notes will be maintained by the researcher both during and after the completion of the study.

QUESTIONS AND CONTACTS
You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

If you have any questions about this research study, contact David Lichoro muturiad@iastate.edu

Your Consent—By signing this form I agree that:

I have fully read or have had read and explained to me this informed consent form describing a research project.
I have had the opportunity to question one of the persons in charge of this research and have received satisfactory answers.
I understand that I am being asked to participate in research. I understand the risks and benefits, and I freely give my consent to participate in the research project outlined in this form, under the conditions indicated in it.
I have been given a signed copy of this informed consent form, which is mine to keep.

Signature of Participant____________________
Printed Name of Participant ________________
Date________________
Investigator_____________________________