LEARNING TO TEACH ONLINE: A STUDY OF FACULTY’S LIVED EXPERIENCES IN
TRANSFORMATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Given a burgeoning focus on faculty professional development and faculty participation in technologically mediated instruction, it is increasingly important to understand how faculty members learn to teach online. It is critical to know the types of learning experiences that faculty deem as meaningful. The purpose of this study is to examine retrospectively the learning experiences of faculty who participated in formal professional development for online instruction and stated that they made an instructional change(s) based on their learning. In this study, I used the transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1991, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2009a, 2009b) as a framework for interviewing the faculty participants and interpretive phenomenological analysis to examine the data.

To understand more about the learning experiences that faculty have that transform their instructional practices, this study explores the learning experiences of higher education faculty who participated in professional development provided by Blackboard personnel at Blackboard/institution sponsored Blackboard Days and Never Stop Learning Tour events (details regarding the nature of these events are described in Chapter 3). Over 600 evaluations were collected from faculty who participated in 47 sessions at Blackboard sponsored Blackboard Days and Never Stop Learning Tour events. One of the six questions faculty participants were asked is “How likely are you to change your teaching practices based on this session?” Greater than 90% of the faculty’s responses indicated that they are “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to change their teaching practices. I arrived at a purposive sample of six faculty who stated that they did change their instructional practices. Two of the faculty participants had informational
learning experiences while four participants had transformational learning experiences. Although there were similarities, catalysts for learning varied for each participant. Prompts for faculty learning may occur during the professional development session(s); however, learning may occur during or after the event. The results of this study provide knowledge about what types of learning transforms faculty’s instructional practices and are important for online learning administrators, various academic administrators, and others who help to prepare faculty for online teaching.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to everyone who helped me and guided me through the trials and tribulations of creating this manuscript. In particular, I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, David, who stood by me, encouraged me, and prayed for me for throughout the time it has taken me to complete this work.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In May 2013, I presented a series of professional development sessions for faculty at a Blackboard Never Stop Learning Tour event in Chicago. I had served as a subject matter expert for some of the content I presented and I had delivered a few of the sessions at previous events. On this day and at other professional development events where I had delivered this content, I had the opportunity to have several exchanges with faculty between and after sessions and even over lunch. Some faculty held roles in addition to the traditional faculty roles of teaching, service and research. For example, some were informal mentors to their colleagues, some served as instructional designers, and some were leaders in online learning initiatives at their institutions.

Around lunch I noticed several faculty members’ emotions were running high with great excitement about the things they learned in the sessions where I had presented. Other faculty seemed somewhat stressed about the information they had been confronted with in the session. I even observed tears of frustration from one faculty member who shared with me that she genuinely wanted to be an outstanding online teacher, but she was overwhelmed and was unsure about where she should begin. She was also frustrated by the lack of support she perceived available to her at her institution and in her peer group.

This particular experience of leading professional development sessions for faculty who teach online and other similar incidents always makes me reflect on my own experiences as a teacher and in various roles where I have supported faculty who are learning to teach online. I
remember experiencing feelings of inadequacy and being overwhelmed by the task of learning something new and of changing my practices to incorporate the new knowledge. I remember the very first day in my classroom and how I felt confident about the subject matter. However, I was overwhelmed by the reality that I had no idea how to create a lesson plan. I did not realize that skill and knowledge in classroom management were necessary. I was unaware that I would need multiple strategies to employ for teaching my content to a diverse group of students. At that point, I was unaware of the many things about teaching that I did not know. Because I always had mentors and other supporters standing by to help me reframe situations and to consider perspectives that were different from my own, I persisted through various challenges and felt successful in helping many students to have their own meaningful learning experiences.

Through various painful incidents of learning to teach and helping others learn to teach online, I have discovered a lot about myself as a person, myself as a teacher and a learner, and my own capacity to support adult learners. Most of what I have learned is not something I was taught in a college course, but rather occurred through the lived experiences of teaching and of helping others design and implement their own online courses. After almost four years in the secondary classroom, three years in higher education in roles where I supported faculty who teach online, and three years at Blackboard Inc. supporting faculty and institutions in various online learning initiatives, I have come to think of learning to teach online as a transformative learning experience that requires various, yet specific kinds of support.

**Background to the Study**

Online learning continues to be a growing instructional form in higher education. Allen & Seaman (2013) found that since 2002, the number of higher education institutions that reported online learning as strategic, or critical to the long-term strategy of the institution, has grown from...
less than 50% to almost 70%, reaching its highest level in 2012 (69.1%). Since 2002 the annual growth rates of online enrollments have surpassed that of total enrollments. In fact in 2011, the total enrollments in U.S. higher education institutions were relatively flat (0.1% decline), whereas online enrollments grew 9.3%. From fall 2002 to fall 2011, the compound annual growth rate of students taking at least one course online is 17.3%, compared to just 2.6% for the overall higher education student body. In 2012, the number of online students taking at least one online class surpassed 7 million and represents 33.5% of total post-secondary enrollments (Allen & Seaman, 2014).

To meet student needs and demands, many higher education institutions provide more online offerings each year, with virtually all public higher education institutions offering courses online (Allen & Seaman, 2014). Moreover in 2012, 86.5% of higher education institutions provided some form of online offerings (Allen & Seaman, 2013). For many institutions, distance learning programs that began as videoconferencing courses or single online courses have now grown into programs with options to complete certificates and degrees fully online. In addition, students have increasing expectations that some portion of their studies will be completed online. For example, for two consecutive years, a study of undergraduate students and technology confirms that these students increasingly expect their professors in all their classes, whether the course is face-to-face, hybrid/blended, or online, to use a learning management system and other tools frequently associated with courses taught completely online (Dahlstrom, 2012; Dahlstrom, Walker, & Dziuban, 2013).

With this unprecedented growth in online learning, the need for faculty to have command of online teaching and learning tools together with pedagogy for online instruction also has increased. Accrediting guidelines have standards that address faculty competence in this area.
Guideline number 6 from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (2013) states for example, “Faculty responsible for delivering the on-line learning curricula and evaluating the students’ success in achieving the on-line learning goals are appropriately qualified and effectively supported” (p. 3). The examples of evidence for this guideline include statements that address the careful selection of faculty who teach online along with providing appropriate preparation and frequent evaluation. The guidelines also address the competencies of those who are responsible for online learning professional development. Specifically, the guidelines state that these individuals should possess the capabilities necessary to support course development and delivery.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (2011) sets forth standards and suggests guidelines for faculty. Those most relevant to this study include the following:

- What are the defined qualifications for faculty members teaching distance education courses? How does the institution ensure that faculty are qualified to teach those courses?
- Is there evidence that the institution has considered the differences between teaching distance education courses and teaching courses using “traditional” methodologies?
- Does the institution regularly evaluate the effectiveness of faculty members who teach distance education courses? Are the criteria clear for evaluating distance education faculty?
- How does the institution orient and train faculty for teaching in these programs?
- Does the institution make professional development activities and training available to distance education faculty members and ensure that distance education faculty members engage in that training and professional development?
- Is there evaluation of faculty members teaching distance education courses? Is there a clear understanding among distance education faculty members concerning expectations and criteria for evaluation? Does the institution publish its criteria for evaluation of and expectations concerning the teaching of distance education courses? Is there evidence in faculty files of evaluation of distance education faculty members using established and published criteria? (p. 10-11)
Despite the increasing online enrollments and institutional and accreditor attention, some faculty believe that they still do not have adequate supports in place for successful online teaching. Insufficient faculty support is illustrated in a Benchmarking Study conducted by the Babson Survey Research Group for the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)-Sloan National Commission on Online Learning. In the second volume of this study, which is an analysis of the Faculty Survey portion of the Benchmarking Study, Seaman (2009) reports several inconsistencies among the faculty views. For example, more than one-third of all faculty have taught or currently teach an online course, yet faculty members say that their institutions are below average regarding appropriate support and incentives for online teaching. Additionally, faculty have strong reservations about the quality of learning outcomes in online courses, but over 80% of faculty with experience teaching or developing an online course have also recommended online courses to students. Many institutional leaders are taking note that faculty need further support. For example, the 2013 Campus Computing Survey revealed that almost 80% of Chief Information Officers and other senior campus IT officers report that “assisting faculty with the instructional integration of information technology” is “very important” (Green, 2013).

Discrepancies in faculty views about online learning are linked to a lack of a distinct pedagogy for online learning, conflict in understanding a faculty’s role (e.g., traditional teacher, course and content creator, both of these or even something else), and faculty not receiving education about teaching (Levine & Sun, 2002). A significant challenge for faculty is the change from a “traditional teaching role…[to] faculty letting the technology become the information disseminator, while [faculty] rely on their mastery of the subject matter and their consummate skills in inducing students to discovery as a means to facilitate learning” (Lynch, 2002, p. 65).
Lynch suggests that faculty should embrace a key role change from the professor and possessor of knowledge to a learning facilitator and mentor. The faculty member is now expected to guide students through the learning process, helping students to find personal relevance in the subject matter and to integrate new information into their lives. The change of the instructional paradigm often means that the teaching styles many faculty have developed in the traditional, face-to-face classroom may not translate well to an online instructional environment. Additionally, traditional practices may fall short of accreditor and institutional standards and generally accepted best practices for online teaching and learning.

Online learning thus has experienced sustained growth for more than 10 years. Students have increasing expectations with regards to more options for completing their courses online and faculty’s use of tools commonly associated with online learning. Accreditors have set forth various principles and guidelines for accreditation as they relate to institutional provisions for online learning options. These principles and guidelines help to establish protocols for faculty preparation, which is timely since college and university leadership is becoming more aware of a need to provide better support to faculty who teach online and are looking for ways to accomplish that.

**Statement of the Problem**

The traditional role of the faculty at higher education institutions has been to convey knowledge to learners (Turoff, 2006). However, the online teaching and learning model is forcing faculty into a role change from subject matter expert to learning facilitator (Lynch, 2002). Even early advocates of online learning that “Without well-trained and equitably rewarded distance education faculty, there would be no [distance education] programs (Olcott & Wright, 1995, p. 11). Because of the nature of online teaching and learning, many faculty are
experiencing a lot of change. Some faculty feel a push to work beyond the nine-to-five, five-day work week. Faculty must also learn to teach in the online environment that at times does not allow for verbal and visual clues that often guide in-class communication exchanges and instruction. These types of challenges along with the need to use technology in a pedagogically sound way that supports student learning illustrate the need for professional development that faculty deem meaningful for supporting their online teaching efforts.

Faculty learn to teach online in a variety of ways. These methods of learning how to teach include some aspects of professional and instructional development, mentoring, peer review, overall practice including trial and error, and online social learning. Formal professional development is one of the primary modes for helping faculty learn to teach online. In 2011, 94% of institutions with online course offerings reported that they provide professional development or mentoring programs for their faculty who teach online (Allen & Seaman, 2011). Although some institutions do well to prepare faculty for teaching online, research indicates that many fail to provide adequate support for teaching in the online environment (Kang, 2012; Mitchell and Geva-May, 2009; Owens, 2012; Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008). Furthermore, over 10,000 faculty representing 69 public institutions that offer online education have shared insights that indicate there is much room for improvement in the instructional development and other online teaching preparatory offerings (McCarthy & Samors, 2009).

Many other stakeholders are getting involved in the effort of faculty preparation for online learning as well. Conferences, for example, have tracks dedicated to faculty training, such as the 19th Annual Sloan Consortium’s (Sloan-C) International Conference on Online Learning, held in November 2013. This particular Sloan-C conference highlighted the importance of faculty professional development with more than 50 sessions in the “Faculty and Professional
Development & Support” track (Sloan Consortium, 2013). Even educational technology partners, like Blackboard Inc., are partnering with colleges and universities to support faculty professional development efforts and to foster a learning community where strategies and practices may be shared among institutions. For example, in 2013, Blackboard held 17 Never Stop Learning Tour events across the United States. These are one-day teaching and learning conference-style events designed for faculty, instructional designers, and academic leadership. In addition to these events, Blackboard hosted countless Blackboard Days at higher education institutions where faculty can participate in professional development opportunities provided by Blackboard. While research exists on institutional professional development offerings, none to date has examined partner offerings, such as Blackboard training and professional learning options.

To assure faculty success in online instruction and thus to ensure its viability as an instructional form, researchers should examine the kinds of learning experiences that are most meaningful to and transformational for faculty. Furthermore, because faculty have varying levels of teaching and technological expertise, researcher should examine the experiences that transform faculty members’ previously held beliefs about online instruction. Understanding what educational partners, such as Blackboard, are doing well and not well, according to the faculty who experience it, is a key step in developing such knowledge.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine faculty experiences of formal professional development that was developed and facilitated by Blackboard solutions engineers in the summer and fall semesters of 2013. A second purpose was to determine what
aspects of faculty’s learning experiences helped to transform their assumptions, beliefs, and practices about their online teaching.

In order to accomplish my goals, I examined the lived experiences of faculty’s participation in professional development to determine the kinds of learning experiences faculty deem as meaningful for supporting their online teaching. In this study, I explored the learning experiences of faculty who participated in formal, Blackboard-facilitated professional development. In particular, I interviewed faculty who indicated that they would likely change their teaching practices based on knowledge gained from participating in the professional development. That is, these faculty members found the professional development beneficial to practice; consequently, this study represents faculty who tend to have an overall positive view of their professional development experience.

The knowledge of what types of learning faculty deem as meaningful for their professional online teaching practices is valuable to institutions and other entities that aim to develop and provide valuable professional development opportunities for faculty who teach online. Moreover, I identified what commonalities exist among faculty’s experiences with professional development for online teaching. I placed special emphasis on formal learning experiences, and I used transformative learning theory to guide the exploration. Data collection was comprised of multiple interviews with faculty who participated in a Blackboard-led professional development session(s) at a Blackboard Day or a Blackboard Never Stop Learning Tour event.

**Significance**

Researchers should explore faculty’s learning experiences for online teaching for various reasons. One reason is that faculty face a multitude of professional development options for
online teaching, and selecting the best professional development opportunities is not an easy task. A second reason is to aid colleges and universities in the planning and implementation of instructional development for faculty. Because this research involves faculty who have participated in a particular type of professional development and have stated that their learning helped them to transform their teaching practices, findings from this study can be used for the purposes of professional development programming change and overall improvement to better meet the needs of online faculty. A third implication of this research is to provide useful information to institutions that are challenged by a lack of or inconsistent quality in their online course offerings. Such institutions may benefit from a better understanding of the learning experiences for online teaching that faculty deem as meaningful. Furthermore, institutions may find value in knowledge pertaining to faculty’s learning experiences that led them to reconsider beliefs about instructional practices for online teaching.

In turn, there are potential ripple effects on improved student learning and other gains, such as student engagement and retention, which may result from students’ learning experiences in online courses facilitated by faculty who believe they have been well-prepared to teach online. Therefore, the findings of this work have significance for online learning administrators; various academic administrators, such as provosts, deans, and department chairs; faculty; and professional organizations with missions to support online teaching and learning development.

This research also fills a gap in the literature. The current literature about how faculty learn to teach is limited. Whereas there are a significant number of studies that detail various professional development models, motivators and barriers for faculty participation in professional development, professional development programming assessment, and even how professional development for online instruction impacts classroom teaching, there is a lack of
empirical evidence to support arguments about faculty learning and instructional practice transformation. This research contributes to the literature that describes how faculty learn to teach online via formal professional development. This research also provides insight into faculty members’ experiences with professional development that is facilitated by a technology partner, such as Blackboard.

Mezirow’s (1991, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2009a, 2009b) theoretical work on learning transformation provides an excellent starting point for this exploration and serves as a useful framework for discovering more about the lived experiences of faculty. Transformative learning theory is an appropriate fit for this study as transformative learning is similar to paradigm shifting that faculty experience as they transition from in-class instructional practices to online teaching and learning. As an adult learning theory, transformative learning theory is appropriate for this study because it supports the idea that adults learn best in environments that respect individual experiences, are immediately relevant and applicable, and allow for self-directed learning opportunities.

**Research Questions**

This study addresses these research questions:

1. How do faculty learn to teach online through formal professional development?
2. What formal professional development experiences (e.g., those experiences in which faculty do not determine the learning process) do faculty find meaningful for transforming their online teaching and course development?
   a. According to Mezirow’s (2000a) explanation for how learning occurs, in what ways, if any, did faculty experience a transformation of their previously held
assumptions and beliefs about teaching as a result of participation in formal professional development?

b. In what ways, if any, did their professional practice change after they completed a formal professional development program?

3. What supports before, during, and after the Blackboard professional development do faculty perceive to foster or hinder their learning to teach online?
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of my research is to examine how faculty learn to teach online via formal professional development offered by a technology partner (Blackboard) and to determine what aspects of their learning experiences helped them to transform their assumptions and beliefs about and practices for teaching online. This research addresses a gap in the literature on faculty professional development for teaching online provided by a technology partner. Faculty new to the teaching profession need support as they develop their teaching practice because most college and university faculty have had no formal education regarding the practice of teaching (Anderson & Anderson, 2012; Austin, 2002; Wise, 2011). Faculty typically teach by emulating the way they were taught or according to how they learn (Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008), which is of concern as few of today’s faculty were educated online (Barczyk, Buckenmeyer, & Feldman, 2010). Additional research explores faculty attitudes regarding online learning (Mitchell & Geva-May, 2009; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008) as well as the influence that online and web-enhanced teaching has on face-to-face instruction (Scagnoli, Buki, & Johnson, 2009; Wingard, 2004). However, few studies have directly explored faculty experiences to determine what faculty deem as meaningful learning. Also, whereas many faculty professional development efforts exist to prepare faculty to teach online (Owens, 2012), few focus explicitly on learning that helps faculty to transform their assumptions, beliefs, and practices about online instruction.

In this chapter, I have identified, summarized, and synthesized research and literature about how faculty learn to teach. I have focused my attention on any learning experiences that
are particular to faculty preparation for online teaching. More specifically, I reviewed literature on informal and formal learning to include communication networks and various forms of professional development. The formal and informal professional development includes mentoring, learning communities, peer review, reflection, conferences and professional organization memberships, and overall practice including trial and error. Furthermore, formal and informal learning opportunities take place in a myriad of ways, from institutionally-developed and facilitated sessions and online or hybrid course(s) to various types of academically-focused conferences and workshops sponsored by industry associations, institutional and professional leadership organizations, and even educational technology providers and vendors.

This chapter also provides a review of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory, which guides the design of my study and aids in the interpretation of data. Transformative learning theory is a constructivist theory of adult learning. Transformational learning is a process of exploring perspectives, questioning the formation of these perspectives, validating perspectives, and taking appropriate action to live our lives as adults.

When considering articles for inclusion in this literature review, I adhered to various criteria: 1) empirical studies conducted since 1998; 2) empirical studies involving the following populations: non-tenured and tenured, part-time, adjunct, and full-time faculty in higher education, post-secondary education, and two-year colleges; and 3) empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals.

**Ways of Learning to Teach Online**

Faculty learn to teach online in numerous ways. These ways of learning are typically categorized in the literature using terms such as “formal” and “informal” faculty development,
professional or instructional development, or faculty training. Authors and researchers, however, rarely define what they mean by these terms and the readers must determine the meaning. In some cases, the meanings of these terms are more obvious. For example, Thompson (2006) uses the terms informal and formal on the basis of the degree of formality, or the level of structure and management that exists, in mentoring relationships. Schneckenberg (2010) discusses formal and informal training models extensively, but does not provide definitions or strong context for his usage.

For the purposes of this study, I have categorized ways of learning to teach online as revealed in the literature into formal and informal learning categories based on the process of learning. Informal learning occurs when the individual faculty determines the process. Learning is formal when an entity other than individual faculty member specifies the process of learning. To support this method of categorization, I looked to a 1998 workplace learning study conducted by the Center for Workforce Development at the Education Development Center (EDC) and sponsored by Pew Charitable Trusts and the Department of Labor (Aring & Brand, 1998). In “The Teaching Firm” study, the process, not the learning goal, determines whether learning is formal or informal.

Formal learning occurs when the organization has an explicit goal (e.g., an organization wants its workers to learn to operate a new machine) and the process is formal (e.g., it sends the workers to learn about the machine in a classroom with an instructor and a manual). Informal learning occurs any time the learning process is informal, i.e., not determined by the organization, whether or not the learning is in pursuit of an organizational goal. (p. 36)

Using this definition, the same activity may be considered formal or informal depending on whether the process is formalized by the organization. For example, on-the-job training may be formal at one college or university and informal at another.
An example of formal learning for teaching online is when the College of Education wants faculty to learn about online classroom management techniques. The College organizes a one-hour webinar on the topic to facilitate faculty learning. An example of informal learning for the same goal is when faculty members are to learn about online classroom management techniques but each faculty member determines the process of his learning. One learning approach may be to pair up with a senior faculty member who is experienced at managing an online class. Another learning approach is to review various resources, perhaps an online webinar, about online classroom management. Furthermore, with informal learning an individual faculty member may determine that he wants to know more about the online classroom management without a formal directive or learning goal stated by the College of Education. A faculty member pursues his own learning goal(s) and determines how the learning will take place.

**Formal Learning for Teaching Online**

Universities create their own faculty training and instructional development programs to support online teaching and learning for various reasons. In this section, I have described nine examples of formal learning for teaching online found in the literature. Four of the examples are compulsory professional development programs, whereas the remaining five are optional. In
either case, universities determine the learning process for their organizational learning goals for various reasons.

At the University of Central Florida, the Build Your Course Project (BYCP) began to address the exceptional growth of student credit hours in online, blended, and video courses (deNoyelles, Cobb, & Lowe, 2012). The “Build a Web Course” faculty development at Kennesaw State University (Terantino & Agbehonou, 2012) grew out of efforts to fulfill the University’s five-year strategic plan, in which the first University goal was “To enhance and expand academic programs and delivery: Expand the technology and technical support available for teaching” (Distance Learning section, para. 2). The Distance Education Mentoring Program (DEMP) at Purdue University Calumet (PUC) was created as a result of a self-study of the quality and scope of distance education courses offered and an examination of current plans and other approaches to delivering quality distance education courses (Barczyk, Buckenmeyer, & Feldman, 2010). Around 2005, growing interest in distance learning caught the attention of the University of Rhode Island’s administration, specifically around the pedagogy of online learning (Kinnie, 2012). To provide greater support for faculty in teaching and learning, the Provost created the Office of Online and Distance Learning, which joined the already existing Instructional Development Program (IDP); the Office of Student Learning Outcomes, Assessment, and Accreditation; and the Instructional Technology Center. What grew out of this union in time was the Online Teaching Fellows (OTLF) professional development program.

Four examples of compulsory, formal professional development programs for teaching online.

At the University of Central Florida, faculty who wish to participate in the design, development, or delivery of online or hybrid courses must successfully complete a non-credit course, IDL6543 Interactive Distributed Learning for Technology-Mediated Course Delivery
The hybrid course, which requires a minimum of 80 hours to complete over a 10-week time frame, provides learning opportunities on pedagogy, logistics, and technology. The course serves as a model for teaching online using formats such as seminars and labs. The primary focus of IDL6543 is the Build Your Course Project. In this project, faculty design and develop a single, complete module of online instruction within the University’s learning management system (LMS). A showcase where each faculty participant demonstrates distinctive features of the course they designed is the capstone of the course.

In 2009, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Kennesaw State University established the Office of Distance Education to support the growth of online and hybrid courses (Terantino & Agbehonou, 2012). A faculty development course, “Build a Web Course,” is one aspect of instructional support provided to faculty through this office. The course is offered in a hybrid format over a 12-week period and consists of 8 face-to-face sessions and four online sessions. Each session is 2 hours in duration. Faculty participants have diverse technological skill levels. Learning activities range from creating course goals to using the latest instructional technology for designing and delivering web and multimedia courses and evaluating student performance. In addition to the topics covered in each session, faculty participate in authentic and applied learning in the role of an online student. Furthermore, the primary focus of the faculty development is for faculty to design and develop an online or hybrid course. In the last of the 12 sessions, faculty present and discuss the course they have developed. In addition to the 12 required sessions, optional sessions are offered for faculty who need extra assistance. Faculty participants also have access to the university’s Distance Learning Center instructional designers. The courses must pass a Quality Matters review process prior to student enrollment in the courses. All faculty who successfully complete the professional development by attending all 12
sessions and presenting part of the course they developed earn a certificate of participation, the Quality Matters certification, and a $3000 stipend.

The Distance Education Mentoring Program is a faculty development program created by interdisciplinary faculty and directed by the School of Education at Purdue University Calumet (Barczyk et al, 2010). The overarching goal of the DEMP is to “ensure the academic integrity of distance education while aligning the conditions for learning with the technology used to deliver courses” (p.14). This four-stage program, which adheres to an androgogical learning approach, addresses a gap between faculty instructional needs and technology services provided on campus. Participation in the program is application-based. During the initial stage, Mentoring, QM certified faculty (the mentors) and DEMP participants (the protégés) are paired to make cross-discipline pairings such that the focus is on instructional design and delivery rather than course content. Over the course of one semester, mentors and protégés have a two-day knowledge exchange on instructional design and the QM criteria. Throughout the semester there are four additional working lunches. During this stage, protégés design and develop an online course that they teach the following semester (second stage of DEMP). In addition to the support that the mentor provides, protégés participate in an online course, Distance Learning Institute. The course serves as a model course and is a repository of materials that protégés may incorporate into their own courses, if desired. At the end of stage one, protégés complete a self-assessment of their course using the QM rubric. Between stages one and two, mentors evaluate the protégés’ courses using the QM rubric and provide feedback on the course. Protégés teach to students the courses they developed only after the mentor has reviewed the course and necessary modifications are completed (stage 2, Teaching). After the teaching stage, all of the mentors evaluate the courses that the protégés taught online, but in this evaluation stage mentors do not
review the courses of their protégé(s). The mentors evaluate the courses using the QM rubric, and score each course as “pass,” “conditional pass,” or “fail.” All protégés with a passing score successfully complete the program and earn a certification to teach online at PUC. In the final stage of the DEMP, the Dean of the School of Education gives formal acknowledgment to both mentors and protégés at a luncheon. Each mentor and protégé receives a certificate of recognition and compensation in the form of quarter-time release or monetary payment that ranges between $2,500 and $4,000 (depends on cost associated with hiring an adjunct to teach the mentor/protégé’s course during their absence). Also, the mentor and protégé each receive an additional $500 in recognition of their dedication to teaching and commitment to professional development. In the subsequent iteration of the DEMP, the protégés serve as mentors, and the professional development process repeats.

Completion of the Instructor Development Program is a condition of employment for instructors in the New Brunswick Community College system (Carusetta & Cranton, 2009). The IDP has been equipping instructors with knowledge in adult learning, communication, and adult education methods since the mid-1970s. After extensive revisions to the program in 2006, New Brunswick Community College began to deliver three of the six total courses and the University of New Brunswick (UNB) delivered the other three courses. Transfer agreements are in place that allow all of the courses to be accepted for either the certificate or bachelor in adult education program at UNB. Two intensive 3-week sessions, a practicum between the two summer sessions, and three other courses from the undergraduate adult education program make up the IDP. Courses are available in online and face-to-face formats. IDP participants make presentations, create course outlines and objectives, and create student assessments. The learning experience adheres to adult learning principles, with participants having a choice of the
topics in some courses and opportunities for self-evaluation in other courses. Participates engage in collaborative and constructivist learning. Carusetta and Cranton note that faculty members’ “previously held habits of mind and social expectations about the role of educators are called into question during the program. They [faculty] learn to challenge and critically question the system within which they practice” (p. 76).

**Comparison and contrast of compulsory, formal professional development for teaching online.**

There are several commonalities among the formal professional development programs previously discussed. In each formal learning program, the faculty participant groups were diverse. The groups each contained faculty from various academic disciplines with varied online teaching experiences and technological proficiencies. deNoyelles et al (2012) included several faculty quotes in their discussion regarding the BYCP. The essence of these quotes was faculty found meaning, or value, in seeing how other faculty approached design and developed their courses. The mentoring phase of the DEMP embraced diversity among the protégés and between the protégés and mentors by ensuring cross-discipline mentor/protégé pairings (Barczyk et al, 2010).

Adult learning principles are also evident in the four formal professional development programs. deNoyelles et al (2012) note the practicality of the BYCP. Terantino and Agbehonou (2012) specifically mention that a goal of the “Build a Web Course” is to teach faculty using adult learning principles so that faculty can apply androogical theory in their own instructional practices. The DEMP (Barczyk et al, 2010) exemplifies adult learning principles throughout the program. For example, in the Mentoring stage, participants devote time to establishing mentor-protégé rapport. During the Teaching stage, each protégé receives feedback on and teaches the courses developed in the Mentoring stage. The Acknowledgement stage provides several
opportunities to review the accomplishments of the mentors and protégés. Finally, Carusetta and Cranton (2009) note that participants in the IDP regard themselves as adult educators and adult learners. The IDP itself embodies adult learning principles with options for self-directed learning, reflection, and topic selection in various courses that the program comprises.

Support for the use of adult learning principles in faculty preparatory activities is evident in Schneckenberg’s (2010) report regarding an exploration of faculty learning at 23 international universities. He emphasized the importance of the incorporation of adult learning principles, specifically noting a focus of developing faculty “eCompetence” in authentic work contexts and ensuring that all learning activities have applicability for real-life teaching. Furthermore, he asserted that integrative and participative approaches, such as placing the ownership of eLearning decisions into the direct control of faculty, are key to developing faculty members’ eCompetence.

Both the DEMP (Barczyk et al, 2010) and “Build a Web Course” (Terantino & Agbehonou, 2012) programs provide faculty with a QM certification. Those who complete the IDP earn college credit towards a certificate or bachelor’s degree at UNB. Faculty who complete the DEMP or the “Build a Web Course” faculty development programs receive compensation for their participation. The DEMP includes a stipend of $500 plus release time or the cash equivalent, which ranges from $2,500 to $4,000, and “Build a Web Course” remunerates $3000 and a laptop.

Both the DEMP (Barczyk et al, 2010) and the BYCP (deNoyelles et al, 2012) feature a model course as an additional means to support faculty learning. Because the University of Central Florida conducts the BYCP professional development program in an LMS, a repository of tutorials and other materials exists to support faculty during and after completion of the
course. The repository provides both formal and informal learning options for faculty. The DEMP model course has dual benefits of providing a model for best practices and serving as a repository for materials that protégés may wish to use in their own course(s).

deNoyelles et al (2012) attribute the success of the award-winning BYCP professional development program to other unique factors, such as peer review of online courses during the development phase. Faculty participants only meet face-to-face three times over the 10-week period. These face-to-face meetings are for peer review and additional support, if desired. Faculty learners noted peer review as a critical practice for two primary reasons: 1) the peer review process prompted faculty to engage in critical thinking and 2) exposed faculty to additional ideas for course development.

Research supports the value of peer review as a component of professional development. For example, professional development that occurs without reflective practice as a component increases the likelihood that faculty will incorporate new information and skills for teaching online only when it is convenient; otherwise, faculty tend to overlook or fully ignore new information (Layne, Froyd, Simpson, Caso, & Merton, 2004). As such, Layne et al suggest the incorporation of specific strategies in professional development, such as using a teaching portfolio or peer review process and self-monitoring techniques and reflection activities rather than participation in satisfaction surveys. Henning (2012) notes two strengths of peer learning in faculty development courses. First, peer learning allows for faculty learners to share personal knowledge and experiences with other faculty. Second, peer learning helps faculty to overcome feelings of isolation, which are often experienced when moving from face-to-face classroom instruction to online teaching. Henning notes that in her own experiences of professional development for online teaching, interactions with others through various peer learning
experiences eventually led her to transformative learning. Others agree that reflection is “the crucial driving force” for faculty learning and changing their course design and instructional practices for online learning (Torrisi & Davis, 2000).

Another feature unique to the BYCP is that faculty participants expressed a desire to be grouped with faculty in similar departments or with faculty who taught similar or complementary content (deNoyelles et al, 2012). On the other hand, programs like the DEMP are careful not to group faculty with like disciplines because of concerns that the focus would shift their focus to the course content rather than instructional design and delivery (Barczyk et al, 2010).

**Five examples of optional, formal professional development programs for teaching online.**

In 2011, the University of Rhode Island (URI) began offering an Online Teaching Fellows program (Kinnie, 2012). Although the OLTF is an optional, formal professional development program, it is sophisticated and is strategic to the institution’s ability to provide both re-designed and new online courses at the undergraduate and graduate level (University of Rhode Island, 2014a). In Kinnie’s discussion about his own experiences as a fellow, he carefully noted that both the OLTF program and the program’s facilitator modeled the best practices for online teaching and learning.

Since Kinnie published his reflective work about his learning experiences as a fellow, there have been several revisions to the OLTF program. Therefore, a detailed description of the program as it currently exists follows. According to the URI webpage for the Online Teaching Fellows program (University of Rhode Island, 2014c), the program consists of three sections: OLTF I: Teaching, Pedagogy, Best Practices for Online/Blended Course Delivery; OLTF II: Course Development/Design; and OLTF III: Mentor Program. OLTF I is focused on the faculty member’s ability to demonstrate best practices of online and blended pedagogy. The objectives
of the course are for faculty to demonstrate proficiency in “rudimentary course” design and to provide pedagogical reasoning for various online tools, such as discussions and the gradebook. Participation in this section is on an application basis. OTLF I is the pre-requisite for participation in OLTF II. Faculty, with equivalent experience, may also be approved to participate. During this section, faculty must design an online or blended course that includes at least two weeks worth of content. In addition, faculty must explain their pedagogical reasoning for the tools they choose to use in their courses. The culmination of this section is a faculty showcase of designed courses in a forum open to the university community. Faculty who design or redesign an online or blended course and share their work in the showcase earn a $500 stipend. OLTF III requires faculty to serve as mentors to peers within their academic departments. The faculty must also serve as a coach, advisor, or quality assurance facilitator to confirm adherence to best practices across campus. Acceptance into the Mentor Program requires that faculty demonstrate qualifications and/or experience. The Assistant Director of Online Learning must also give approval. Faculty who serve as a mentor also earn a stipend.

The University of Rhode Island (2014a) uses an online course approval process for undergraduate and graduate courses; both approval processes reference the OLTF. Undergraduate courses must adhere to the Faculty Senate approval process, which is carried out through individual college curriculum committees (University of Rhode Island, 2014b). The Graduate Council must approve graduate courses. The Faculty Senate and Department Curriculum Committees employ a rubric (University of Rhode Island, 2013) for undergraduate course evaluation. According to the URI webpage, faculty should use the rubric to assess the development of syllabi for online and blended courses. The first criterion on the rubric asks if faculty have completed training for teaching and developing an online course. Sub-criteria
include options for prior experience with good student evaluations, the OLTF, or training from another source such as Sloan-C or Quality Matters. The application (University of Rhode Island, 2012) for an online version of an existing graduate course asks faculty to describe their participation in the OLTF or other courses or workshops on online teaching pedagogy.

In an effort to determine the elements of an effective online faculty training program, Roman, Kelsey, and Lin (2010) described Preparing Online Instructors (POI) as a certificate program at a land-grant university. A simple web search confirmed that Oklahoma State University (OSU) offers this six-week fully online certificate program as optional, formal learning for faculty (Oklahoma State University, 2012). The program features an online course that serves at least two purposes: 1) to provide faculty with practical and relevant learning experiences that are linked to learning outcomes and 2) to serve as a model online course. Faculty learners engage in topics such as designing an online course, building an online classroom, copyright and fair use, and online classroom management (Roman et al, 2010). Various adult learning principles are applied throughout the course. OSU offers the POI twice a year, and each session allows for 20 faculty to enroll. In addition to learning about online pedagogy and technology, faculty who complete the POI earn a certificate of participation. Faculty enrollment is completely voluntary, but open only to OSU-Stillwater and Tulsa faculty, adjuncts, teaching assistants, trainers, and graduate students, as space permits (Oklahoma State University, 2012).

Creating Optimum Learning Environments (CREOLE), a faculty development program that focuses on creating a learning community, is a collaborative project between Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FCCJ, now Florida State College at Jacksonville) (FIPSE Database, n.d.; Schrum, Burbank,
Engle, Chambers, & Glasset, 2005). Sponsored by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), the CREOLE online course is made up of four modules with concentrations on learning theory, motivation research, hybrid/blended courses, and web courses. In the initial offering of the course, 22 post-secondary education faculty representing eight different community colleges across the United States completed the course (initial enrollment in the course was 30, but eight students dropped throughout the semester). According to Schrum et al, the course emphasized mastery and cooperative learning. The FIPSE Database (n.d.) on the U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education website provided more information about CREOLE. The four modules cover topics that include teaching, learning, and motivational theory. There is an expectation that faculty learners will apply their learning in their own courses. One instructor from the sponsoring university, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and one instructor from the sponsoring community college, Florida Community College at Jacksonville, taught and facilitated the course.

Member institutions of MarylandOnline created the Certificate for Online Adjunct Teaching (COAT) to ensure that adjunct faculty have access to quality training that prepares them to teach online (Shattuck et al, 2011). Designed specifically to address the training needs of colleges and universities in Maryland, COAT is a nine-week course delivered exclusively online. The course contains four modules that cover eight primary competencies that range from pedagogy and andragogy to social process and presence. The primary emphasis of the course is to teach adjuncts how to teach online, rather than how to design or develop an online course. The COAT program is paced, with instructor participants learning from a student’s perspective in the course. The COAT instructor and the course model the best practices for course facilitation. According to the COAT website (MarylandOnline, 2010), the course is open to
individuals affiliated with a MarylandOnline institution for $300. Maryland residents or those affiliated with a Maryland institution may take the course for $450. The cost is $600 for all others.

At Michigan State University, faculty participate in a Master’s level educational technology course that utilizes a “learning by design” approach (Koehler, Mishra, Hershey, & Peruski (2004). In 2001, Koehler and Mishra taught the course in which six tenured faculty enrolled in the course as students and participated on teams of 3 to 4 with other Master’s students. The primary emphasis of the course was for the teams to design an online course that the faculty member would teach during the upcoming year. The students completed the Master’s course in a hybrid environment. Students discussed class readings both online and in class and participated in peer review and feedback sessions. Various incentives were in place for the learners. For developing the course, the faculty learners each received $1000 and a laptop. They also had the opportunity to learn from other faculty and graduate students. The student learners earned 3 hours of graduate credit, furthered their learning about educational technology and online teaching and learning, and participated in an authentic project with tenured faculty.

The “learning by design” approach (Koehler et al, 2004) “attempts to make faculty members fluent in negotiating the interactions between pedagogy, content, and technology by developing their competencies with technology, and by giving them experiences with the interactions of the three components (technology, pedagogy, content)” (p. 31). Kohler et al describe shortcomings in various attempts to “develop faculty” for teaching online. By way of example, Kohler et al describe the Virtual University (VU) at Michigan State University, a unit developed specifically to support faculty who teach online. Within the VU, faculty members serve as the subject matter experts in an online course development relationship with a producer,
who is also a VU staff person. The producer generally does not have a background in education or instructional design, yet this person selects software modules and tools to represent the faculty members’ ideas and instructional content. Additionally, the technical programmers develop the software modules to be “content neutral.” The end result is a standardized or one-size-fits-all approach towards course development that is independent of pedagogy. Additionally, the faculty members experience the technological representation of their content as they teach the online course, without opportunities for reflection on the overall process. Koehler et al offer the “learning by design” approach to better aid the faculty members’ participation in “the technology to support their pedagogical purposes” (p. 31).

Comparison and contrast of optional, formal professional development for teaching online.

A few commonalities exist among the optional, formal professional development programs. All five programs emphasize adult learning principles in some way. For example, each of the programs is designed for the faculty participate as students so that faculty can apply their own learning experiences in a practical and relevant way as they teach their own courses. Kinnie (2012) noted that his online learning experience as a student helped to reinforce strategies he was already employing. He explained that he had to rethink the design of his course, which led him to break the course content into formal “chunks” with learning objectives, various activities, and a student performance assessment. The COAT program highlights relevant topics, like the Americans with Disabilities Act and varying learning styles, which have direct applicability for adjunct faculty who are learning how to teach (Shattuck et al, 2011).

All of the five programs reward faculty who complete the professional development. Faculty who complete the OLTF earn a $4500 stipend (University of Rhode Island, 2014c). Faculty in the “learning by design” course earn $1000 and a laptop (Koehler et al, 2004). The
POI (Roman et al, 2010) provides a certificate of participation to all faculty who complete the program; however, the authors note that faculty who participate in this program generally have a strong personal interest in exploring online course design, development, and delivery. The CREOLE modules were offered as a course for postgraduate credit at the University of Utah (FIPSE Database, n.d.; Schrum et al, 2005). The CREOLE entry in the FIPSE Database mentions incentives for faculty participation in the program, but details are not listed. Completion of the COAT certificate program serves as a credential for adjunct faculty (Shattuck et al, 2011) and is popular even among full-time faculty, instructional designers, and other college and university administrators (MarylandOnline, 2010).

The use of a model course is a common element among three of the five optional, formal professional development programs. The OLTF (Kinnie, 2012), POI (Roman et al, 2010), and COAT (Shattuck et al, 2011) programs employ a model course. However, the focus of the COAT model course was on the facilitating instructor because the instructor was modeling instructional best practices since the participants were learning to teach online rather than design online courses.

A final commonality among three of the four courses is the open-nature of the enrollment for the professional development programs. The four CREOLE modules were the basis for doctoral-level credit at the University of Utah, where faculty from eight institutions participated in the course (FIPSE Database, n.d.; Schrum et al, 2005). Similarly, the “learning by design” approach is represented in a graduate course at Michigan State University (Koehler et al, 2004). Furthermore, the fourth CREOLE module served as the basis for professional development at a Florida community college and a public K-12 school district in Florida. In addition, the COAT program served adjunct faculty who aspired to teach online in the state of Maryland (Shattuck et
al, 2011); however, this professional development has served academic professionals from 24 states and five countries (MarylandOnline, 2010).

Mentoring is a characteristic that is unique to the OLTF program. Kinnie (2012) indicated that University of Rhode Island was planning to utilize the OLTF program to establish a faculty mentoring program. The evolution of the OLTF resulted in one section being entirely dedicated to mentoring peers within the same academic department. Kinnie also noted that he saw the course instructor as a mentor and that the discussions in the online course provided additional opportunity for reflection and peer review. According to Kinnie, the mentor-instructor and peer review activities led to the formation of mentor/mentee relationships among the learners in the course.

**Informal Learning for Teaching Online**

Faculty members seek informal options for learning to teach online for various reasons. Some institutions may simply not have a formal professional development structure in place, leaving faculty to determine the course of their learning for teaching online (Shattuck et al, 2011; Thompson, 2006). Other faculty may prefer independent learning (Perreault, Waldman, Alexander, and Zhao, 2008). Even others may have personal desires to improve their online teaching. Regardless of the catalyst for selecting any informal learning options, research indicates a necessity for faculty engagement in both formal and informal professional development for successful online course design, development, and delivery (Lackey, 2011; Schneckenberg, 2010).

In this section, I have described means of informal learning as found in the literature. Generally informal learning includes overall practice, mentoring, trial-and-error and online social networks, which are sometimes referred to as professional learning networks/communities.
(PLNs/PLCs). Little scholarly research is available about PLNs, PLCs, or online social networks, although this is an area of interest that is appropriate for future research.

**Overall practice, informal mentoring.**

An analysis of informal mentoring approaches found in the literature (Dempsey, Fisher, Wright, & Anderton, 2008; Thompson, 2006) reveals that faculty rely on their peers for assistance in creating and designing their online courses. In one example, almost 80% of faculty report that formal preparation and support for eLearning activities (both technology and instructional methods) are important or very important (Dempsey et al, 2008). Conversely, most often half or more of the faculty look first to their faculty peers for help creating and designing their online courses rather than seeking formal professional development and support. Thompson (2006) echoes this sentiment among faculty at an institution that offered more than 100 online courses; however, the institution had no formal professional development structure in place for its faculty. Overall, faculty taught themselves and sought guidance about both technology and pedagogy from peers whom they considered to have more online teaching experience.

Similarly, Lackey (2011) documented that faculty participated in formal and informal workshops and courses, sought one-on-one assistance, and looked to their faculty peers for support and guidance during and after their first online teaching experience. Of these various support options, a majority of faculty stated that preparation with colleagues and one-on-one assistance from instructional designers or other university personnel were most helpful to them. Additionally, a majority (5 of 6 faculty) expressed that more opportunities for collaboration with peers would be helpful for enhancing their online teaching experiences.
Gabriel and Kaufield (2008) discussed their research of mentoring relationships among online instructors. Kaufield served as a mentor to five faculty members from a university and one from a community college. All participants, the mentor and the mentees, reported that they experienced various benefits that were specific to improving and supporting their online teaching. Other studies also note the reciprocally beneficial nature for faculty who engage as a mentor or a mentee in these informal mentoring relationships (Thompson, 2006).

**Trial and error.**

Other faculty choose to learn to teach online through trial and error. For example, Perreault et al (2008) examined the learning choices of faculty who taught online at AACSB-accredited colleges/universities between 2001-2006. In 2006, over 70% of faculty indicated that they were self-taught with regards to online course design and online instruction, even though their institutions provide training opportunities. Not all efforts through trial and error are positive. Badge, Cann, and Scott (2005) provide an example where only 10% of faculty within a School of Biological Sciences at the University of Leicester have received formal training on their LMS, which is Blackboard. The authors note that the rest of the faculty population is self-taught. Despite widespread adoption of the LMS (some 65% of learning modules exist on the LMS), the majority of faculty members fail to recognize and utilize the pedagogical features available in the LMS platform. Badge et al add that when technology training is separated from instructional application, technology is often used without any strategy for improving instructional methods or student learning.

In a positive example of learning to teach online through trial-and-error, a faculty member who teaches a graduate educational administration course at the University of Kentucky detailed his experiences learning to use the online discussion feature (Nash, 2011). To evaluate
the structure and design of online discussions in his course, Nash used Marcia Linn’s scaffolding knowledge integration framework (1996). Through critiques of his first and second attempts to implement online discussions, Nash reflected on his own learning and perceived improvements in his course.

**Online social networks.**

Some faculty may utilize online social networks to enhance their teaching for both the virtual and physical classroom. Veletsianos (2011) conducted a qualitative study of 45 scholars’ practices in social networks, particularly Twitter. He found that many scholars utilize Twitter to improve their own teaching by seeking the input of others, to share their work and that of their students, and to engage in conversation with others. Many scholars shared instructional practices and learning artifacts beyond the physical or virtual walls of their classrooms. Veletsianos adds that scholars’ Twitter participation and practices indicate, “that participants capitalize on the affordances of the technology to bring together distributed expertise and introduce learners to individuals who are knowledgeable about a topic of study” (p. 10).

In other research, Veletsianos & Kimmons (2012) indicate that for many faculty, their experiences using social networking sites is one of tension between “personal connection and professional responsibility” (p. 7). Veletsianos (2013) reflects on his own experiences of feeling a struggle regarding what to share and how to share on Twitter and in his own professional blog. There seems to also be concern regarding how others will perceive faculty and professionals but also as individuals with both scholarly and non-scholarly identities.

Veletsianos (2013) identifies two possible ways that faculty may use social media for scholarship. The first is to use video trailers and other aspects of social media to promote and inform others about various types of academic artifacts. In addition to learning about academic
artifacts, faculty are also able to demonstrate “(1) the ease with which individual scholars can develop and share media pertaining to scholarship, (2) the creative opportunities afforded to scholars by emerging technologies, and (3) scholars’ willingness to share their work outside of formal and institutional structures” (p. 645-646).

The second way of using social media for scholarship is to provide access to research literature via crowdsourcing. Veletsianos describes challenges faculty members may face in gaining access to a journal article that is needed for enhancing one’s personal research or for teaching. He adds that many faculty are embracing open access to scholarship and refuse to publish in journals that are not embracing open access practices.

**Theoretical Framework**

Sociologist and educator Jack Mezirow introduced the concept of transformative learning in the 1970s after his own wife’s return to college to complete her undergraduate studies (Mezirow, 1991, 2009b). Her experiences and resultant change in career and lifestyle influenced his research of female students who returned to college to continue their education after an extended break. In his grounded theory study, Mezirow identified “perspective transformation as the central learning process occurring in personal development” in which the college women became “critically aware of the context…of their beliefs and feelings…” such that “…the women could effect a change in the way they had tacitly structured their assumptions and expectations” (Mezirow, 2000b, p. xii). The findings from this study resulted in ten phases, which are now known as transformative learning (Mezirow, 2009b, p. 19):

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition of a connection between one’s discontent and the process of transformation
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action
6. Planning a course of action  
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plan  
8. Provisional trying of new roles  
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships  
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective

Mezirow (1997) summarizes transformative learning as a process that “…involves transforming frames of reference through critical reflection of assumptions, validating contested beliefs through discourse, taking action on one’s reflective insight, and critically assessing it” (p. 11).

By definition, transformative learning is learning that changes problematic frames of reference or points of view to make them more reliable and true for guiding our actions, understanding, and thoughts as adults (Mezirow, 1997, 2000a).

By breaking the process apart, Mezirow (2000a) explains that a frame of reference is a structural filter that helps individuals make meaning out of an experience. Examples of frames of reference include “rules, criteria, codes…cultural canon, ideology, standards, or paradigms” (Mezirow, 2009b, p. 22). Each frame of reference is composed of two dimensions: habits of mind and points of view (Mezirow, 2000a). Habits of mind are essentially generalizations and assumptions that may include religious practices or moral norms, emotional responses and personality traits, learning styles and preferences, and personal aesthetic values. Habits of mind are then expressed as points of view that determine how we view events, relationships, and ourselves. A person’s point of view often influences his or her actions.

According to the theory, these frames of reference are transformed through critical reflection. As such, critical reflection is central to transformative learning in adults and is simply defined as “reflection on presuppositions” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 6). Mezirow (1991) and Taylor (2009) explain that there are three forms of reflection: content (focus on underlying feelings and thoughts about a problem), process (focus on how we go about problem solving), and premise
(focus on the basis of the problem and awareness of our perceptions of the problem). Reflecting on these various components of the problem results in transformations of our meaning schemes and perspectives.

Discourse or dialogue with self and others is the means through which critical reflection takes place and ultimately how transformation is supported and advanced. Discourse requires, to some extent for complete realization, various conditions for participants that include the following:

- More accurate and complete information
- Freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception
- Openness to alternative points of view: empathy and concern about how others think and feel
- The ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively
- Greater awareness of the context of ideas and, more critically, reflectiveness of assumptions, including their own
- An equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of discourse
- Willingness to seek understanding and agreement and to accept a resulting best judgment as a test of validity until new perspectives, evidence, or arguments are encountered and validated through discourse as yielding a better judgment (Mezirow, 2000a, p. 14-15).

Mezirow suggests that fostering discourse is a long-standing priority of adult educators. Furthermore, he describes a model of adult education where the authority of the educator is transferred to the learner, with the educator becoming a collaborative learner.

“Mindful” transformative learning experiences result in an “informed and reflective decision” to take action on “reflective insight” (Mezirow, 2000a, pp.23-24). A decision to act may be immediate or delayed, or existing and former ways of acting may be validated. Deciding to take action may require new learning experiences as the learner overcomes challenges to his beliefs. A learner must have not only the will and insight to change but also the power to move towards a greater purpose.
Transformative Learning Theory as Adult Learning Theory

Transformation Theory is specific to adult education (Mezirow, 1991, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2009a) and focuses on “how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others – to gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers” (Mezirow, 2000a, p. 8). Transformative learning is unique to the adult learner in that it requires educational practices that are different from those commonly associated with child learners (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow explains that for the learning of new information to be meaningful, the learner must incorporate the information into a frame of reference that is already well developed. As children, frames of references and assumptions are likely still forming. Even as adults, learners may need help transforming their frames of reference so that they may autonomously think and critically negotiate their values, understandings, and dispositions.

Mezirow (1991) claims that there is a gulf between theories of adult learning and the practices that adult educators employ. Some practitioners rely on their own learning experiences, which are often incompatible with what is known about how adults learn. Others may look to psychology and various adult learning theories to inform and support their educational strategies. Mezirow states that the missing element in psychological theories is meaning, or more specifically, how adult learners make sense of their experiences. In his view, transformative learning addresses specifically this gap, as meaning is foundational to this theory that pertains to adult education.

Influences on Mezirow and Transformative Learning

In addition to his wife, Edee Mezirow, other primary influences of his own understanding of transformative learning include Paulo Freire, Roger Gould, Jürgen Habermas, and Harvey
Siegal (Mezirow, 2009b). Early in his professional career, Mezirow describes a disorienting dilemma when he was challenged by the writings of Paulo Freire. What Mezirow (1991) realized from Freire’s work was that his own views of adult education lacked a centrality of conscientization in the learning process (Freire defines conscientization as the process by which adults “achieve a deepening awareness of both the sociocultural reality which shapes their lives and…their capacity to transform that reality through action upon it [1970b, p. 27]) (pp. xvi-xvii).

Psychologist Roger Gould’s theory of transformation was also influential. During a sabbatical, Mezirow (1991) spent time with Gould as Gould was working to adapt psychotherapeutic approaches to an educational format for a workshop. Through his studies of the ways in which adult learners overcame various childhood learning challenges, Mezirow was able to incorporate a psychological aspect to his theory.

From Jürgen Habermas, Mezirow adopts the ideas of instrumental and communicative learning (1991, 1997, 2000b) as well as the conditions for complete participation in reflective discourse (1991). Mezirow describes communicative learning as being comprised of three dynamics: lifeworld, learning, and social interaction. Lifeworld is ordinary, everyday life that is comprised of activities that we often take for granted and participate in without question. The reproduction of the lifeworld is “based upon the understanding, coordination, and sociation functions of communicative action….” or “speech acts” (p. 69). The second dynamic of communicative action is learning and its transformative nature. Critical reflection comes into consideration here as learners critically assess lifeworld experiences, which are translated into speech acts that inform judgment and connect to our validation of truth claims. Finally, social interaction serves as a “boundary-maintenance system” (p. 71) to the lifeworld. In short, traditional cultures with closed views, public bureaucracies, and professionalism threaten the lifeworld and warp rational decision making and adult learning processes. Mezirow notes that
civil rights and women’s movements, for example, help to maintain conditions for communicative learning, critical reflection, and discourse.

**Applications of Mezirow’s Theory**

Transformative Learning Theory is represented throughout national and international higher education, in traditional and online courses, and across academic disciplines and subjects. For example, Butterwick and Lawrence (2009) each detail personal experiences regarding the use of arts-based approaches, such as creating sculptures to portray an oppressive situation or addressing issues of race and racism through storytelling and performance, to facilitate transformative learning. In an online adult learning graduate-level course, Dirkx and Smith (2009) foster transformative learning by focusing on “processes associated with the emotional and symbolic realities of e-learning” (p. 57). Various instructional strategies are used, such as group work within the context of problem-based learning and individual and group-based reflective activities. These strategies are designed to simulate real-world contexts for confrontation and working out problems in light of various interpretations of the problem. Combined with challenges of online communication, such as the absence of nonverbal cues and the uncertainty of printed words, these instructional strategies help to create opportunities for transformative learning.

The use of Transformative Learning Theory is also found outside of the realm of higher education. For example, Fisher-Yoshida (2009) describes a year-long coaching situation between herself, as a consultant, and a woman named Corinne, who was a candidate to lead a company’s European business offices. Fisher-Yoshida stated various reasons for using transformative learning principles in the coaching scenario. Corinne was considered strategically brilliant, but there were concerns about her interpersonal skills with colleagues. The
ultimate goal of the coaching was to help Corinne broaden her views of right or wrong and to considering a range of possibilities; to become more self-aware of her own assumptions (both those that have been helpful and harmful in her career); to consider valid, alternative perspectives other than her own; and to become globally minded and consider a variety of communication styles and interpersonal conduct. In a coaching situation, Fisher-Yoshida notes that the person being coached must be willing to engage in a process of change. She also notes that the disorienting dilemmas may cause emotional distress and varying states of discomfort.

**Critiques of the Theory**

Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory is not without criticism. Taylor (2000) reviews 46 studies that refer directly to Mezirow’s theory. Taylor discusses the findings of the studies but also presents critiques to the theory as appropriate. For example, Taylor notes that one of the central tenets of transformative learning is that it is an adult learning theory; however, there is little research to support the adult-only claim and transformative learning has not been researched specifically to focus on learning and the age of participants. At the same time, the age of participants in many studies is not known, as the participants’ ages were not a focal point because age was not relevant in the overarching purpose of the studies. Age as a factor in the learning transformation process is an area of future study.

Another critique is in regards to a key theme to transformative learning, which is the ten phases of transformation (Taylor, 2000). The process of change is one of the most frequently researched facets of transformative learning. Some studies confirm each of the ten phases, whereas others do not document that learners experience all ten phases of the process. Therefore, some question whether progression through or completion of all the phases is necessary for transformative learning to take place. Additionally, there is disagreement as to
whether the phases are linear and adjacent or more spiraling in nature. One in-depth study supported the idea of a less linear process. Another supported the notion that a learner must reconcile, or work through, his feelings before he is able to move on to critical reflection.

**Supports for and Challenges to Transformative Learning Theory in Educational Settings**

Of the 46 studies referencing Mezirow’s theory, Taylor (2000) indicated that twelve studies focused on transformational learning in an educational setting, such as teacher study groups. Although the 12 studies differ in focus, the consideration of the facilitation of change from a variety of theoretical perspectives, and the educational settings, the findings of each study support the notion that there are ideal conditions that foster transformative learning. Some studies emphasize the importance of a sense of safety and trust, learner-centered instructional methods, and learning activities that encourage learners to take on alternative personal perspectives through problem solving and critical reflection. Taylor notes the particular importance of time in a study of transformational learning in a higher education setting where “Kaminsky…(1997) found that adhering to the conditions outlined by Mezirow for promoting rational discourse resulted in a significant challenge” (p. 315). Other conditions necessary to foster transformative learning, such as creating an inclusive environment that promotes working through differing values and beliefs and arriving at a consensus, demand time.

Findings of these 12 studies emphasize various characteristics, skills and strategies for learning facilitators. Some characteristics include trustworthiness, empathy, authenticity, sincerity and integrity. The findings of these studies suggest that learning facilitators should foster a learning environment where learners can discuss and work through emotions and feelings before critical reflection and should provide many opportunities for feedback and self-assessment. Additionally, learning facilitators should strive to foster experiential learning.
Facilitators of learning may question how a course’s learning objectives can be achieved while also allowing time for the phases of transformational learning.

Taylor (2000) discusses with more depth a particular study of the Davis Teachers’ Study group where a group of six teachers met weekly for two years with the “intent to analyze issues and strategies related to the teaching in each participant’s classroom, student learning, and the learning and knowledge development of each participant (Saaverdra, 1995 p. 314).” This particular study revealed three factors that are important for transformative learning within a group setting. The first factor is that a safe, open, and democratic learning environment supports transformative learning by providing opportunities for each participant to discuss “issues of positionality” (p. 314), such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity, in relationship to the overall learning objectives of the group. A second factor is that conflict must be embraced rather than avoided for transformative learning to take place. By working through conflict, the group members were able to fully explore their differences. The third factor is that the teachers need the ability to take action on their new ideas, as rational discourse, critical reflection, and making a decision alone are not enough to foster transformative learning. The interactions among the teachers in the group and the interdependencies of their work settings facilitated the reconstruction of their teaching practices.

**Transformational Learning Theory and Faculty Members’ Experiences of Formal Professional Development**

Despite the challenges to Mezirow’s theory, it is an appropriate framework for examining the learning experiences of faculty in formal professional development. The transformative learning theory is fitting for this study as it supports a holistic view of faculty members as adult learners. Furthermore, use of this theory aids in the understanding of how faculty learn and transform their beliefs and instructional practices for teaching online through formal professional
development. Faculty members’ experiences of and feelings about formal professional development for teaching online, critical reflection of these experiences, and disorienting dilemmas or trigger events, are key in transformative learning. Other theoretical frameworks that are more cognitive do not support the process of analyzing data regarding the role of emotions and feelings in learning.

Some previously conducted studies (Taylor, 2000) did not give ample attention to the significance of affective learning, or the role emotions and feelings play in the process of learning transformation. To highlight the concepts of feelings and reflection, specific aspects of each were sought during data collection. Similarly, the interview protocol is designed to reflect aspects of the ten phases of transformative learning, which provided support as I identified when and how faculty members’ learning takes place.

Transformative learning theory is appropriate for this study because there are noted techniques (Taylor, 2000) that facilitators of professional development for teaching online may use to foster transformative learning among faculty. This theory provides an appropriate lens for examining ways that faculty learn to teach online. Transformative learning theory also informs the process of designing and facilitating professional development for faculty, particularly in settings where formal professional development is conducted in one- to two-hour long, stand-alone sessions that may or may not be grouped meaningfully with other faculty learning opportunities.

In summary, this literature review presents the major areas of literature as they relate to higher education faculty and professional development for teaching online. The mix of formal and informal professional development options are important for understanding the types of learning experiences that are available to faculty for supporting their learning to teach online.
Variations in requirements for participating in professional development prior to teaching online or as a condition of employment, credentials or payment earned for completing professional development, and other factors relating to the overall requirements (e.g. time required to complete the professional development) are important for understanding the context of a faculty member’s online teaching practices. These variations also help to explain a faculty member’s beliefs and practices about teaching online. These issues are relevant given the context of this study, the participant sample, and the theoretical framework.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

In this chapter, I describe the research methods and procedures used in this study. The chapter includes the following sections: statement of and rationale for overall research approach, proposed design of framework, main research question and potential sub questions, subject selection and rationale, data collection procedures and rationale, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, and quality assurance.

Research Design and Rationale

For this study, a qualitative approach is well suited for the exploration of a problem where a group or population needs to tell stories “unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). In this study, faculty tell stories of how they learned to teach online through formal professional development offered by a technology partner (Blackboard). Several characteristics of qualitative research make it the appropriate choice for this study (Creswell, 2009). First, qualitative research takes place in a natural setting where participants may experience the phenomenon in consideration. Qualitative research relies on the researcher as the fundamental means for data collection. Qualitative research is inductive, with themes emerging from the process of the researcher interacting with the data. The entire qualitative research process focuses on the meaning that the participants have rather than the meaning that I bring to the research. The nature of qualitative research is emergent and may change as I, the researcher, learn from the research participants. Furthermore,
qualitative research uses a theoretical lens to view the study. Qualitative research is interpretive, and multiple views emerge based on the interpretations that I have of what I hear and understand from the participants. Finally, qualitative research is holistic, so my charge as the researcher is to consider multiple perspectives and to identify various factors surrounding the problem to create a holistic picture of the research problem.

As the researcher, I identified how my own background shapes my interpretation of the research participants’ experiences. By positioning myself in the research, I was able to recognize how my interpretation flows from my own experiences and background. My goal was to make sense of, or interpret, the meanings that faculty hold about their experiences in formal professional development for online teaching. I selected an interpretive phenomenological strategy for inquiry on the basis that this study aims to describe and make sense of the learning experiences that faculty deem meaningful in supporting their online teaching efforts (Creswell, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2008). I also argued that this research design is appropriate for this study that relies on transformative learning as a guide because the focus of the theory is on the participants’ perspectives in the meaning-making process (Mezirow, 2000a).

**Phenomenology as a Philosophy and Methodology**

According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013), “phenomenology, philosophy and method are inextricably linked” (p. 221). The origins of phenomenology are that of philosophy and can be traced back to the early 1900s. At this time, a group of philosophers whose theoretical foundations are linked to Hegel objected to the practice of utilizing positivistic scientific models in studies of humans and their world (McPhail, 1995). These philosophers objected to the application of scientific models appropriate for research in non-human matter, such as plants and animals, to the human domain that encompasses human experiences and culture. The resultant
movement of phenomenology aimed to provide a means for studying humans and their lives as lived in the human world.

The phenomenological philosophers included Husserl, Schutz, Giorgi, Merleau-Ponty, and James, among whom Husserl is deemed the father of phenomenology. Husserl believed that the positivistic paradigm (for example, Descarte and Galileo), which assumes that there is an objective reality where real world objects are separate from the human knower, was inappropriate for studying phenomena such as values, meanings, feelings, and life experiences. Husserl and his followers believed the paradigm failed to provide a means for describing how people live in the world “because it could not consider human consciousness in its meaning-making capacity” (McPhail, 1995, p. 160).

The present study relies on the phenomenology as philosophy where the understanding of faculty learning to teach online through formal professional development is grounded in the faculty members’ individual perceptions and experiences in the professional development event (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Furthermore, as the researcher, my own experiences cannot be divorced from this understanding. To comprehend the experiences of faculty who are learning to teach online through formal professional development “requires the study of conscious experience, as it is experienced from a first-person point of view” (p. 61).

This study also employs phenomenology as a method. As I have sought to understand faculty members’ conscious views of their learning to teach online through formal professional development, I realize and embrace that each faculty’s background and experience as well as their preconsciousness, influence the overall research (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). As the researcher, my work began with a first-person perspective as I strived to describe the essence of each faculty’s experience of learning to teach online through formal professional development.
The use of phenomenology, specifically interpretive phenomenology, in this study is evidenced by the design of and approach to the research at hand. In the process of designing and conducting research for this study, there were various decisions that I made which are common to phenomenology. Figure 2 summarizes these design choices (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

**Central Research Questions and Subquestions**

This study addresses these research questions:

1. How do faculty learn to teach online through formal professional development?

2. What formal professional development experiences (e.g., those experiences in which faculty do not determine the learning process) do faculty find meaningful for transforming their online teaching and course development?
   
   a. According to Mezirow’s (2000a) explanation for how learning occurs, in what ways, if any, did faculty experience a transformation of their previously held assumptions and beliefs about teaching as a result of participation in formal professional development?
   
   b. In what ways, if any, did their professional practice change after they completed a formal professional development program?

3. What supports before, during, and after the Blackboard professional development do faculty perceive to foster or hinder their learning to teach online?

**Context of the Study: Formal Professional Development Program**

In 2012, part of my duties as a solutions engineer at Blackboard was to develop a curriculum that could be used in instructional development sessions for faculty at Blackboard Days and Never Stop Learning Tour events. At Blackboard, we referred to the overall initiative as Educator Success. The objective of the Educator Success program is to become a trusted
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Design</strong></th>
<th><strong>Specifics</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical stance</td>
<td>Philosophy is important in phenomenology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal stance</td>
<td>I provide a high degree of disclosure of my positionality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who or what of study</td>
<td>In this study, I am concerned with faculty and the essence of how they experience formal professional development for learning to teach online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research topic and question</td>
<td>The study’s concepts and research questions are directly related to how faculty as individuals collectively experience the phenomenon of learning to teach online through formal professional development provided by Blackboard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>I have included a comprehensive literature review of formal and informal professional development for faculty who are learning to teach online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/place/participants</td>
<td>I conducted my research and exchanges with faculty in a non-lab setting, specifically in a context where faculty may use the same or similar tool (Collaborate web conferencing) to experience or participate in professional development or online teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>In this study, there is an emphasis on respect for individual faculty and the presentation of data concerning faculty’s individual experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>Extensive notes were taken during the interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection methods</td>
<td>The data collection method included semi-structured, phenomenological interviews with faculty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data handling</td>
<td>I performed basic and description coding of data for themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>I utilized interpretive phenomenological analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>During and after data analysis, it is my responsibility as the researcher to explain or translate the meaning found in the data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>I rely on various strategies to ensure quality: peer review, member checking, and rich, thick descriptions to convey the findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher voice</td>
<td>My role in this research is one of observer and reporter of the essence of faculty learning to teach online through formal professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>I have written the research report in themes with a goal to involve the reader in the experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Common choices in phenomenological research design and practice. Adapted from Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice, p. 222, by M. Savin-Baden and C. H. Major, 2013, New York: Routledge.*
advisor by working directly with client institutions to drive adoption of the Blackboard products and services, both in depth and breadth, and to identify and resolve client challenges proactively. Furthermore, the aim is to build relationships with faculty and mid-level administration and to assist them with establishing and achieving their objectives. Blackboard’s regional vice presidents nominated clients for inclusion in the Educator Success program based on a variety of factors. These nominations became the target list. The solutions engineering management aligned selected client institutions to solutions engineers based on geographical territory assignments.

The Blackboard Days are typically one-day events. Blackboard account executives and/or solutions engineers work with a sponsor or primary point of contact at an institution to plan the event. Blackboard Days are most typically planned by the host institution and for the host institution, but in some cases these are consortium events. The Blackboard Days each take on their own unique agendas, but in general, a solutions engineer delivers 2-4 sessions. Faculty experts or others, such as instructional designers or even additional technology vendors, may deliver sessions as well. I have participated in Blackboard Days where all sessions are delivered in one room, one after the other, with all the faculty attendees participating in the same sessions throughout the day. In other cases, sessions are offered concurrently in various locations at a campus. Some institutions will develop “tracks” that are appropriate for different groups.

In a similar, more formal manner, Blackboard and partnering host institutions across North America sponsor the Never Stop Learning Tour. The fall 2013 tour included nine tour stops across the United States where attendees participated in peer- and Blackboard-led best practice sessions and vendor product showcases. Each host institution worked with Blackboard to tailor the agenda for each tour stop. The agenda typically includes “tracks” specific to
teaching and learning, instructional design, and technology administration. These events are regional in nature and draw attendees from various institutions.

The initial rollout of Educator Success content included eight topics/sessions. I led the development of three additional sessions during the fall 2013 semester and a peer led the development of two additional sessions during the spring 2014 semester. Subject matter experts for each session, Blackboard employees on the solutions engineering, customer success advocacy, or educational services teams, carefully used the academic literature to support the ideas presented in the sessions. An instructional designer aided in the development of session facilitator resources that included a facilitator’s guide, a PowerPoint slide deck, supporting resources such as related academic readings or recordings of the session presentation, and in some cases a demo course hosted on a Blackboard LMS demo server. The instructional designer also created a participant’s guide that the solutions engineer could distribute at the actual session or email to the sponsoring institution for electronic distribution via email or some other means.

The session titles and descriptions are as follows:

- **Authentic Assessment with Blackboard Learn** – A learning management system is a natural part of authentic assessment for blended and online learning. During this session, we will explore both formative and summative assessment and the use of wikis, blogs, journals, discussions, assignments, tests, group collaboration, and ePortfolios as elements of authentic assessment.
- **Methods for Encouraging Academic Honesty** – In this session, participants will learn about four countermeasures for improving academic honesty, pros and cons for each countermeasure, tips for implementation, and evidence that supports that the countermeasures work.
- **Methods for Engaging Your Students with Media** – In this session, we will review a sampling of free, customizable Web 2.0 tools that can be embedded in a course in 5 minutes or less. Participants will receive step-by-step instructions for incorporating their own selection of Web 2.0 tools into their hybrid or online course.
- **The Rewards of Rubrics** – Rubrics are effective tools for evaluating cognitive skills and quality of students' work. Rubrics also improve student learning as they serve as a tool for self-evaluation and communicate the instructor's expectations of student performance. In this session, we will discuss and review examples of
two types of rubrics: analytic and holistic. Participants will be able to identify when and why to use a rubric; construct a rubric within Blackboard; associate the rubric to a Blackboard assignment; select test questions; blogs, journals, wikis and discussions; and complete the grading workflow using a rubric.

- Wikis, Blogs, Forums, and Journals: Which One Do I Use and Why? – In this session, participants will learn to increase student and teacher communication in the e-learning environment through the use of wikis, blogs, forums, and journals. The presenter will highlight examples of each tool and how the tools might be utilized for various activities and learning outcomes.

- Course-Embedded Assessment: Using Goals, Alignments and Reporting – In this session, participants will learn about course-embedded assessment and related Blackboard tools that aid in the process as well as strategies for getting started with course-level assessment.

- Designing an Exemplary Course Series – Relying on the Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric as a guide, each 1 hour session focuses on one of the four criteria in the ECP rubric (Course Design, Interaction and Collaboration, Assessment, and Learner Support) identifying key elements of each criterion along with examples of a course that display exemplary course design elements.

- Flipped Classroom—Collaborate Style – In this session, participants will explore features that are used to build an interactive asynchronous “homework” experience followed by the peer learning process in the middle and concluded with a live “face-to-face” experience where instructors address specific gaps in knowledge with learners individually and/or in small groups.

- Organizing Your Content in Blackboard Learn – Within a Blackboard course there are options for setting up your course menu and organizing your content in folders, learning modules, and/or lesson plans. This session discusses strategies for setting up a course menu and reviews three folder types that may be used for structuring content.

- The Blackboard Grade Center--More than Just Grades – Blackboard Learn includes a robust Grade Center. This session discusses reasons why faculty should use the Grade Center, focusing on benefits for students and efficiencies for faculty. The Grade Center features will be covered at a high level and are broken into two groups: The Fundamentals for casual Grade Center users and Power Features for those faculty who have a deeper usage of the Blackboard course.

- What’s New in Blackboard Learn (and Why it Matters) – The latest releases of Blackboard Learn bring some exciting teaching and learning tools to faculty and students – but why should you introduce them into your own course? This session will use the Seven Principles of Effective Practice in Undergraduate Education as our lens to describe tactics in applying new and updated Blackboard tools in your teaching.

- How to Gain Efficiencies in Your Teaching – By using eLearning tools, workflows become more efficient enabling you to spend your time teaching and less time managing the processes. This increases the opportunities for competency-based engagement between you and your students. Come and learn how these tools can benefit you.
• Monitoring Student Progress to Promote Student Retention – Have you ever struggled needing more than just grades and attendance to evaluate how your students are progressing? See how eLearning tools can provide you information at your fingertips to detect when students are starting to fall behind or excelling and needing more of a challenge; enable you to provide remedial or advanced materials to engage and retain your students.

From fall 2012 to spring 2014, five of my Blackboard peers and I delivered 47 Educator Success sessions at Blackboard Days and Never Stop Learning Tour events where we were able to disseminate and collect session evaluations at the end of each session. In sum, faculty participants returned 688 evaluations. One survey question held particular importance in defining our own success: “How likely are you to change your teaching practices based on this session?” Response options were “Very Likely,” “Somewhat Likely,” or “Not Likely.” In total, 57% of faculty said they were “Very Likely” to change their teaching practices and 34% selected “Somewhat Likely.”

Faculty Participants

The higher education space is diverse, with full-time and part-time/adjunct faculty serving at colleges, universities, and technical and vocational post-secondary institutions with varying cultures and traditions. Perhaps even greater variation exists within faculty professional development as institutions, professional organizations, and technology vendors provide formal learning opportunities. These learning options are in addition to informal learning that takes place by trial and error, and in other ways. Because this study aims to explore the learning experiences of faculty who claim to have changed their instructional practices because of something learned in a formal professional development event, I used purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007) to identify a group within an overall population of 688 faculty who had participated in Blackboard-provided faculty instructional development.
Faculty participant selection procedures.

To identify and recruit faculty participants for this research, I established communication with a primary contact at institutions that hosted a Blackboard Day or a Never Stop Learning Tour event. Care was given to eliminate any institutions that had only participated in sessions where I was the only Blackboard facilitator of the professional development. I then worked with the primary contact to distribute a web survey to faculty who participated in the Blackboard-facilitated instructional development. The faculty members in the population come from research universities, community colleges, and regional institutions. In the survey, I reminded faculty about the session evaluation and the question regarding the likelihood that they would change their instructional practices. I asked them to recall their response to the aforementioned question and to indicate if they changed their beliefs or practices about online teaching and/or if they have incorporated anything they learned into their teaching practices. Only those faculty who indicated that they did change their instructional practices were invited to participate in this research study to examine further their learning experiences for teaching online. The faculty who agreed to participate volunteered their contact information. The final sample of 6 faculty represent research universities and community colleges.

Data Collection

I selected a synchronous, online interview format as the primary means for data collection. I conducted the interviews online, using the Blackboard Collaborate or WebEx web conferencing platform, which is a synchronous web conferencing solution. Similar technology includes Skype, GoToMeeing, or Adobe Connect. Blackboard Collaborate includes both voice over IP (VoIP) and teleconferencing options for audio. Conducting interviews in a web conference is the most “natural” way to collect data, given the research topic of online teaching. I
interviewed participants three times because of the depth of data that I needed to gather and the potential for participants to reflect and share their perspectives on their lived experiences. I conducted follow-up telephone interviews and email correspondence as necessary.

In preparation for data collection, various categories of information were needed to help answer my research questions that address the purpose of examining how faculty learn to teach online through formal professional development. These categories informed the development of interview protocols. Both the categories and interview protocols were inspired and adapted by another study that used transformative learning to examine first-year teacher learning experiences (Cuddapah, J., 2005). The categories and rationales for each are rooted in transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 2000a, 2000b) and are listed below. The interview protocol is included in the Appendix.

1. Demographics in order to establish rapport with the faculty;

2. Contextual information to learn more about prior learning experiences from when the faculty first began teaching online to when they participated in the Blackboard-facilitated instructional development;

3. The faculty’s indications of their own learning experiences and instructional changes in their online courses to see if the transformation theory may be connected or applied to these experiences;

4. Faculty’s perceptions of learning experiences that supported them toward or hindered them from instructional change for online teaching since transformation theory considers both supports and hindrances; and

5. Evidence of transformational learning;
a. To know if there has been a transformation of instructional practices, I needed to explore prior perspectives, practices, and assumptions about online teaching and course development.

b. A disorienting dilemma often triggers a transformation; consequently, these events need to be identified and examined.

c. Part of the transformation includes a time when the learner reflects on their assumptions to determine if frames of references are adequate; hence, it is necessary to know if the faculty had any critical reflection.

d. Affective learning is equally important to the transformation, so I examined the faculty participants’ emotions and feelings in the process of individual transformation; I was careful to look for emotions that trigger reflection.

e. Discourse is also a key phase in transformation theory; as such, it was essential to determine if the faculty engaged in dialogue with others regarding their own frames of reference; as part of the discourse, relational knowing, or relationships with others, is also vital; therefore, it was imperative to identify the establishment (if any) of trustful relationships that support open questioning and information exchange and the achievement of mutual and consensual understanding.

f. I included any additional evidence of progression through Mezirow’s ten steps of transformation (the aforementioned categories include some evidence because of their requirement for transformative learning to have occurred).

g. I reviewed any differences between prior assumptions/habits/frames of reference and current ones to provide further evidence of transformational learning.
I employed the use of semi-structured interviews to ensure that engagement with the faculty participants is conversational in nature (Creswell, 2007); however, I used an interview protocol to ensure consistency among interviews and to allow for cross-interview analysis based on each faculty member’s responses. There were times during the interviews where it was necessary to ask follow-up questions to elicit deeper responses or clarification of faculty participants’ statements or responses.

The majority of the interviews were conducted using Blackboard Collaborate with an integrated teleconference bridge. At the beginning of the first interview, two faculty members experienced some technical challenges, so we used WebEx with an integrated teleconference bridge. To provide a consistent experience, I used WebEx for the remaining two interviews with these two faculty. In both web conferencing applications, I used an integrated recording feature to capture the discussion. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim.

**Data Analysis**

In this study, I analyzed all data using interpretive phenomenological analysis in light of transformative learning theory. Smith and Osborn (2008) break down the process of analyzing collected data into stages and phases. In the first stage I identified themes in the first interview transcripts. This stage contained two phases. The first phase began with reading each individual interview transcript multiple times and noting any of the faculty’s interesting or significant comments with attention given to “similarities and differences, echoes, amplifications and contradictions in what a person is saying” (p. 67). In the second phase, I transformed the initial notes into concise phrases or themes that captured the essence of what was found in the text. In the next stage, I listed the themes chronologically as they occurred in the transcript. The aim was to identify connections between the themes, with some emerging as “superordinate” (p. 70).
The analysis continued with reviewing the second interview transcripts, followed by the third interview transcripts, taking note of themes identified in the first interview transcripts. This analysis informed or oriented the subsequent analyses of the remaining transcripts from each interview. I was careful to take note of repeating patterns and recognize new issues or themes and examine the accounts from each interview participant to identify similarities and differences.

According to Smith and Osborn (2008), after analyzing each transcript using the interpretive process, I then constructed a final table of themes from each transcript. I prioritized and selected subjects on a variety of factors, such as prevalence and richness of passages that demonstrated the themes. I took note of how the topics explained other aspects of the interview. Based on the final list of superordinate ideas, I had to re-review transcripts in light of themes that emerged late in the iterative process.

Finally, I expanded the analysis with themes by translating them into a narrative account for each faculty participant (Smith & Osborn, 2008). During the preparation of the narratives, I was careful to distinguish between what the respondent said and my own interpretation and account of it. To further analyze the data and draw out themes, I included a cross-case analysis. I divided the overall presentation into a results section (Chapter 4) that contains the individual faculty narratives and cross-case analysis and a separate discussion section (Chapter 5) that links the analysis to the existing literature and theoretical framework.

**Ethical Considerations**

I relied on the following safeguards to protect the faculty participants: 1) articulating the objectives verbally at the beginning of each interview and in writing via the informed consent to ensure that the research participants clearly understood the research objectives; 2) informing the research participants of all data collection devices, including recorded web conferences/voice
calls; 3) making the transcripts and written interpretations available to the research participants; 4) considering the research participants’ rights, interests, and wishes first when making choices regarding how to report the data; and 5) obscuring participant data that might be used to identify the faculty member and their institution. I followed institutional review board (IRB) protocol.

Quality Assurance

I used multiple strategies (Creswell, 2007, 2009) to ensure the quality and credibility of this study: peer review, member checking, and rich, thick descriptions to convey the findings. Creswell likens peer review in qualitative research to a measure of interrater reliability in quantitative research. Peer review, also sometimes called peer debriefing, is an external check and balance of the research process. This strategy entailed involving another person other than me to see if the study makes sense to other people. The peer reviewer is a faculty member at a community college where she teaches sociology and computer science classes. She has over 15 years college teaching experience and 10 years of online teaching experience.

By using member checking, I asked the faculty research participants to offer their views of the credibility of my findings and interpretations. Each participant was invited to review a preliminary draft of his or her narrative to ensure the accuracy of my interpretation of the data. Two of the six faculty reviewed their narratives and provided feedback. The other four faculty declined the invitation, and two expressed that they trusted in my ability to accurately convey their experiences in the Blackboard professional development.

Finally, by creating rich, thick descriptions of the data I am able to convey the findings to readers in a way that “transport[s] readers to the setting and give[s] the discussion an element of shared experience” (2009, p. 191).
Positionality Statement

I became interested in faculty who were teaching online-supplemented, hybrid, and fully online courses because of my own experiences as a former K-12 public school teacher and instructor at a business college and as an instructional designer/trainer and director of distance learning at a public, four-year regional university. As a K-12 teacher, I was responsible for teaching the business/marketing education curriculum that included courses in accounting, law, entrepreneurship, and various multimedia/computer courses to students in grades 9-12. I heavily integrated technology into all of my courses. As the technology coordinator for my school, I assisted other faculty with technology integration and the use of web tools for activities such as managing an online gradebook. Among my tasks, I helped to prepare faculty to have successful experiences with technology integration in their instruction. These faculty had varying skills, interests, and levels of motivation to change their instructional and classroom management practices. Part of this task included providing training and professional development that was typically required for all teachers at my school. Although everyone attended, few faculty ever changed their teaching practices or incorporated new ideas into their practices.

After four years in the K-12 classroom, I accepted a job as an instructional designer/trainer at a regional university that served over 8,000 students and 400 faculty. As the only instructional designer/trainer, I was the primary contact for faculty and staff for individual (one-on-one) and group training, and professional development and support on the Blackboard Learning Management System. I also assisted faculty with various supporting and integrated educational technologies as well as instructional design and course development. In my role, I designed, updated, and conducted all faculty and staff training and professional development activities for online instruction. Opportunities were vast, with sessions offered throughout the
year. However, faculty attendance was generally poor despite expressed needs for assistance from various faculty, academic departments, and even the provost. I did have several positive experiences with a few faculty who seemed to take advantage of every opportunity to learn more about both the technology and pedagogy that support online teaching and learning. While at the university, I accepted a position as Director of Distance Learning. In this role, I continued to support faculty both directly and indirectly and helped to bring additional technology tools to the university. I also worked to involve faculty in exemplary course reviews and to encourage their participation in professional development events. In both positions as instructional designer/trainer and director, I was always curious about how the same training and professional development was regarded as valuable to some faculty and less so to others and how some faculty’s learning experiences would help them to change their teaching practices and other experiences would not.

I now work at Blackboard Inc. as a Senior Solutions Engineer within the K-12 education sector. When I first came to Blackboard, I was a Solutions Engineer in the North American higher education sector. In both roles, I have had the opportunity to work with various faculty and administrators. In the course of my daily job responsibilities, I have similar experiences as those in my former K-12 and higher education positions. I frequently encounter faculty who are eager to learn more about how they can continue to improve as online course developers and online teachers and others who struggle, both in desire and in valuation, to meet “minimum” quality standards for online instruction. Therefore, I am determined to investigate the learning experiences of faculty who have learned to teach online, specifically the learning experiences faculty deem as most meaningful for supporting their online instruction and for fostering a transformation of their online instructional practices. The previously mentioned strategies for
ensuring quality assurance in this study will help to control for any inherent bias I may have as a Blackboard employee.

My own learning and professional experiences have shaped my worldview. Therefore, it seemed most appropriate to use an interpretivist (Creswell, 2007, 2009) paradigm to conduct my research as I attempted to understand the faculty participants’ lived experiences from their point of view. At the same time, I can position myself in the research and acknowledge that my interpretation of the faculty’s experiences stemmed from my own personal and historical experiences. Furthermore, the qualitative strategy of phenomenological research is a perfect fit for understanding the essence of faculty’s educational experiences for learning to teach online.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, I present the interview findings pertaining to faculty learning to teach online through formal professional development. In this study, the focus was on professional development provided by Blackboard. The findings address these research questions:

1. How do faculty learn to teach online through formal professional development?

2. What formal professional development experiences (e.g., those experiences in which faculty do not determine the learning process) do faculty find meaningful for transforming their online teaching and course development?
   a. According to Mezirow’s (2000a) explanation for how learning occurs, in what ways, if any, did faculty experience a transformation of their previously held assumptions and beliefs about teaching as a result of participation in formal professional development?
   b. In what ways, if any, did their professional practice change after they completed a formal professional development program?

3. What supports before, during, and after the Blackboard professional development do faculty perceive to foster or hinder their learning to teach online?

After briefly describing the formal professional development sessions the faculty participants experienced, I present a general overview of the participants’ backgrounds. This overview was gained primarily through the use of a demographics questionnaire and questions included in the first interview. I then present the results of each participant’s experience in the formal
professional development provided by Blackboard as a case and conclude the chapter with a cross-case analysis.

**Description of the Faculty Research Participants**

The six faculty in this study all participated in formal professional development provided by Blackboard in one of three contexts: a Blackboard Day sponsored by a particular college or university for its faculty, a Blackboard Day sponsored by a college or university where faculty from regional institutions were invited to participate, or a Never Stop Learning Tour event sponsored by a college or university for its faculty and those from institutions across the region. The session content developed for delivery at these professional development events is supported by academic research, faculty experiences, and feedback provided by faculty participants. The research, faculty experiences, and feedback are not shared with the professional development participants as a focal point of any particular session. Instead, this information shapes the way the curriculum and presentation materials are designed and how the professional development session is facilitated. In the web survey used to recruit faculty participants, these six faculty indicated that they had learned something at the professional development session that 1) they incorporated into their instructional practice and/or 2) led them to change their beliefs about online teaching and learning.

Four of the six faculty participated in the same formal Blackboard Day sponsored by City Community College. Three of the four are faculty teach at City Community College, and one faculty participant teaches at Big Town State Community College. The four professional development sessions delivered at this Blackboard Day make up the Designing an Exemplary Course Series. These sessions rely on the Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric as a guide to best practices for designing and facilitating an online course. Each one-hour session
focuses on a single criterion in the ECP rubric. The criteria in the rubric are Course Design, Interaction and Collaboration, Assessment, and Learner Support. The session facilitator led the attendees in identifying the key elements of each rubric criterion, guided small group discussion, and shared four examples of higher education courses that display exemplary elements.

Another faculty member helped to organize a Blackboard Day at her institution, Mountain University. At this Blackboard Day, she also participated in the two sessions planned for the faculty: “How to Gain Efficiencies in Your Teaching” and “Monitoring Student Progress to Promote Student Retention.” In these sessions, the facilitator shared information about features and functions within the context of Blackboard Learn that could be used to improve a faculty’s experience in using a learning management technology to teach and to support students in their educational experiences.

Another faculty member from Jones Community College attended a Never Stop Learning Tour event sponsored by Northern State University. This Never Stop Learning Tour event attracted faculty attendees from colleges and universities across a multi-state region. The faculty participant was unable to recall specific names of sessions in which he participated, although he did recall details about the keynote address and presentations by Blackboard’s technology partners, such as e-book vendors, and a faculty-led presentation on e-book integration into Blackboard Learn.

Six faculty who participated in formal professional development sponsored by Blackboard informed this research about learning to teach online. Each person agreed to and participated in three interviews about the professional development and their learning experiences. Demographic data were collected using a questionnaire and follow-up interview questions. In the questionnaire, participants were asked to share information about the online
courses that they taught in 2013/2014, both the number of years of teaching experience as well as the number of years of online teaching experience, and to describe any teaching preparation for online course design and instruction. During the first interview, the participants were prompted to share information about their current teaching position and other job responsibilities they have at their institution. These data were important for helping to describe these faculty participants as being unique from the stereotypically defined online teacher who is usually thought of as being the young, new teacher. An overview of participant demographic data is depicted below in Table 1. Participants are listed on this table according to the number of years online of teaching experience (least to greatest) they possessed at the time of the interviews.

Of the six participants, four are women and two are men. Other demographics such as age, ethnicity/race, etc. were not collected because they were not pertinent to the research goals of this study. In terms of both overall years teaching, two faculty have 6-10 years teaching experience, with 3-5 years of online teaching experience. Two faculty have 11-15 years teaching experience, one with 3-5 years of online teaching experience and the other with 6-10 years online teaching experience. A fourth faculty member has 16-20 years teaching experience, with 6-10 years of online teaching experience. The remaining two faculty each have 21-25 years of teaching experience, with more than 10 years of online teaching experience. Five of the six faculty teach online undergraduate courses. Of these five, one also teaches faculty within the context of her University’s online learning program and the library. One participant teaches online and hybrid courses to faculty who desire to teach online. All six of the participants have additional responsibilities other than instruction of learners, with two of the six listed as administrators rather than members of the faculty despite their teaching duties.
In terms of preparation for online course design and instruction, four of the six participants completed college or university coursework or a degree specific to online teaching and learning. For example, one participant completed a Ph.D. in Instructional Design for Online Learning. Four of the six participants have completed both online and face-to-face workshops about online course design and instruction; one of these four also completed an online teaching and learning certification program. One faculty participant also possessed student teaching experience. Another faculty member indicated that she had participated only in face-to-face workshops about online course design and instruction and was otherwise self-taught.

The next section includes narrative accounts of each faculty member’s experiences of learning to teach online through formal professional development provided by Blackboard. These portraits of each faculty’s experiences will explain how faculty learn to teach online through formal professional development and describe what experiences faculty find meaningful for transforming their online teaching and course development practices.

Rachel

Rachel is a seasoned educator with more than 20 years of teaching experience and about 15 years of online teaching experience. Rachel was drawn to teaching online through happenstance. At the time, staff and faculty at Mountain University were just beginning to acquire personal computers at their desks; however, few had any basic computing skills. Rachel and a peer were teaching a face-to-face class on how to use a computer and the Internet. She recalls, “I remember faculty members taking that class because they did not know anything about it [a computer or the Internet] and the department puts a computer on their desk and now they have to learn how to use it….I had to show people how to utilize a mouse” (Interview #1).
Rachel’s peer later decided to move the class online, and they eventually moved the class to the
learning management system once that technology was available and adopted.

Rachel’s primary job function at Mountain University is administrative. She is the
Assistant Vice President for Information Technology. Rachel has retained teaching
responsibilities, one course a semester, because she enjoys teaching and likes the students.
When Rachel began teaching online about 15 years ago, the concept of online learning was still
new and instructional technology support or learning centers for faculty had not yet been
established. As an early adopter, Rachel considers herself primarily self-taught for teaching
online. “…I had a wonderful mentor who gave me some great ideas about teaching online”
(Demographics Questionnaire). As online teaching and learning became more common, Rachel
attended face-to-face workshops about online course design and instruction.

When Rachel first began teaching online, she was “amazed that anyone could find
anything” (Interview #1). As a face-to-face instructor, she considered herself to be a traditional
lecturer. She recalls “…the first couple of times I taught online I mimicked the same kind of
format and then I was surprised when students did not do really well.” Faced with no formal
training as a teacher and no access to professional development for teaching online, Rachel relied
on trial and error methods for improving her online courses.

…I just kind of learned by accident that students do a lot better if they are forced to work
together and are asked to do hands on work [where] they produce something
electronically that we can share, we can see….have some kind of tangible result rather
than just read the lecture that I would have verbalized in the face-to-face environment.

Through practice, Rachel also found it beneficial to include multimedia to engage at-risk
students and those with varied learning preferences. The challenges Rachel faced with designing
and facilitating an engaging and cohesive online course marked the early years of her online
teaching experience. Despite these challenges, Rachel has found that over the years she has
become more aware of her students’ needs and how to meet them in an online environment. Rachel shared, “…every single semester I teach I am improving the class because something happened that I did not anticipate….from practice I have evolved as an electronic instructor the same way I have evolved as a lecturer.”

**Rachel’s critical incidents.**

Rachel was forthcoming when sharing her perspectives about the critical incidents in the Blackboard professional development. Rachel’s high points somewhat overlapped, and she noted no low points. The first high point Rachel mentioned was regarding the talent of the Blackboard presenter. “…he is a very dynamic speaker, so he was engaging and that is a critical element….you can tell [Blackboard’s] speaker had talent” (Interview #1). Through one of the sessions, Rachel learned about features of assessment tools, the gradebook, user notification options, and the calendar tool. Rachel recalled “ah ha moments” and remembered thinking “…‘oh my gosh, I have to go back and do that.’” Rachel sometimes shifted gears between being a faculty participant and administrator participant in the session.

We are always talking about best practices here. [It is] one thing for a designer who is not faculty to tell a professor that the best practice is blah, blah, blah. Even though that information is absolutely relevant and correct, for some reason members of the academy just do not listen if they do not perceive that person as a peer. The fact that he [the Blackboard presenter] had been a faculty member at an institution was also really, really helpful because faculty pay attention. They perk up when someone from the University of Nah Nah Nah is standing in front of them talking.

Rachel shared a second high point of the Blackboard professional development that centered on vendor demonstrations and workshops. For Rachel, she has found that “…sometimes when vendors come to do a demonstration or workshop at the university campus, they are presenting like they are in their booths like at a giant convention” (Interview #2).

Rachel anticipated having feelings of disappointment. “I expected to probably motivate from the
back of the room and I also brought door prizes if we hit a wall and I needed to mix it up a bit.”

Additionally as an administrator, she was concerned about the dynamics among the faculty participants in the room because of internal issues going on at her institution. These issues included a recent vote of no confidence in the University president and concerns about the budget. Instead there was “no snafu or drama, which is good.” Rachel was pleased that key people such as the Teaching and Learning Excellence Director and the Assessment Director attended the sessions along with many influential faculty who are leaders within their own peer groups. In the first ten minutes, Rachel quickly saw that the presentations were not a sales pitch. She was surprised that the professional development was truly “an opportunity for faculty engagement….I was very, very happy and I think I even texted one of my staff and was like ‘Oh my gosh, this guy is great!’”

Rachel considered these experiences as high points because of her previous experiences with vendor professional development events as sales pitches rather than customized presentations aimed to support and grow faculty. Rachel mentioned that she and the Teaching and Learning Excellence Director had a planning call with the Blackboard presenter to provide some suggestions about working with the faculty based experiences she had in her own training. She found that the presenter was “super, super cooperative. He was prepared and the fact that he was so good was a bonus. I was also impressed that he did not have an ego about the preparation process” (Interview #2). He was open to the ideas and suggestions that Rachel and her peer offered and did not force his own agenda in any way.

**Rachel’s learning.**

An analysis of Rachel’s defining moments in the Blackboard professional development reveals some of what Rachel learned. These learning experiences are summarized in Table 2.
## Table 2

Overview of Rachel’s Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was learned</th>
<th>Descriptive quote</th>
<th>Four ways of learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology vendor can provide a true instructional professional development program</td>
<td>“…I was glad that I saw how the instruction program worked and that Blackboard takes time, effort, and care to secure individuals they feel are going to represent this particular feature of our relationship in the best light.” (Interview #2)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the strategies she employs for course design and facilitation best practices in the field</td>
<td>“…I present a lot like [the Blackboard presenter does….As far as some of the things I do in my class, it was fun learning a few tricks and techniques and [to] get some validation for some things that I do that I am hearing from the experts!” (Interview #2)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various features/tools in the Blackboard LMS that improve her efficiency and productivity</td>
<td>“…for example, in the gradebook he showed us how to do a little more sorting and some of the features where you can separate groups and look at different levels of your gradebook….some of the features of the assessment tool and also the calendar. I could tell, I had been aware of these things because I work with my designer, but there were things I may not necessarily be using in my own class. There were a couple of elements that I was like ‘Oh my gosh, I have to go back and do that’…” (Interview #1)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each learning experience is categorized as one of the four ways of learning. The categorization is based on Mezirow’s definition of how learning occurs (Mezirow, 2000a). One of Rachel’s learning experiences in the Blackboard professional development is categorized as gaining a new frame of reference because she developed a new point of view about vendor-led professional development. For example, Rachel gained a new perspective on the quality and content of vendor-provided professional development. Rachel shared, “What I liked about the whole concept it was an opportunity for faculty engagement, um, that was outside of a sales pitch” (Interview #1). She shared that faculty had been critical of previous vendor presentations and professional development events because they seemed promotional in nature, like a sales pitch to purchase some new tool or product. Rachel expected that Blackboard’s presentation would be no different. However, she came to believe that Blackboard truly offers an instructionally focused professional development program that is not a sales pitch. She also commented specifically on the talent of the Blackboard presenter.

…he blew into the room, took command of the room, and had an energetic presence, and charisma, and humor. I noticed he also made eye contact with practically everyone he was talking to. Um, he projected and he had real-world examples from his own classroom experience that the faculty was able to relate to him immediately. (Interview #2)

Rachel also shared that she had paid for speakers to come in to address faculty on previous occasions and those presenters turned out “to be a dud. So I was very happy to find out that was not the case [with the Blackboard presenter].”

In two of Rachel’s learning experiences, she added to existing frames of reference. For example, as previously mentioned, Rachel described that she was able to see that Blackboard cultivates presenters who are experts and practitioners in higher education. She noted various factors to support her observations and expressed multiple times that she believed the
Blackboard presenter had genuine talent. “You can go to school to try to learn how to be a
teacher, but if you don’t have talent it is not going to matter what theory you try to employ”
(Interview #1). Like many professors in higher education, Rachel was not classically trained as a
teacher but instead is an expert of her content. By observing the Blackboard presenter in the
professional development sessions, Rachel learned that her teaching and presentation style is
similar to the Blackboard presenter’s style. Rachel expressed feeling validated regarding the
practices she employs for conveying the message of her content. This learning experience was
not transformative because her perspective did not shift. Rather, in analyzing the Blackboard
presenter’s style, she added to her existing frames of reference regarding quality instructional
strategies and best practices in online teaching and learning.

When Rachel talked about the events that unfolded during the professional development
session, she considered various tools and features that she could use to improve her teaching
efficiency and productivity. Not all the tools and features were new to her, but she remembered
feeling a “sense of urgency when I was leaving the seminar, thinking ‘I can’t wait to get home
and play with this’” (Interview #3). This learning event added to Rachel’s existing frame of
reference regarding tools and features in the Blackboard LMS that she can use to manage
grading, conduct assessments, and track students’ performance against learning outcomes in her
online course.

Rachel’s supports for and hindrances to learning.

Rachel’s learning experiences in the Blackboard professional development sessions were
supported in various ways long before the event. Rachel considers herself a librarian. “I am
librarian, a professional librarian. I started my career as a librarian and I have always worked in
the library...” (Interview #1). She considers the profession to be “the foundation for the
curriculum and research support and anything else that is happening at the university…” Rachel described her roots in the library as her “secret weapon.” She noted the support of several mentors, one with whom she lives. “…I live with a person who is an awesome teacher, who has also done critical supervision of teachers, who is always improving herself. So I have seen her model good behavior as a good teacher and have copied her.” Rachel shared that she has the support of her peers and the University administration. She finds her University an exciting place to work because we have been able to deploy different types of technology or try things and even make some mistakes and just brush ourselves off and go to the next thing. From the President on down, we have very positive reinforcement and support, and even [received] financial support many times to purchase things or convert things or to provide professional development.

Beyond the support of other people in Rachel’s personal life or in the University, Rachel likened her participation in the accreditation process to a “stunning revelation” (Interview #1). Rachel reviewed course syllabi within her academic program and participated in a process of confirming that course objectives aligned with instructional topics and assessments. This experience cemented a practice that she has employed in her own courses. She has also utilized the Quality Matters rubric for evaluating her own courses. “…I think my class is a lot tighter as a result of those two experiences…”

As the professional development sessions were taking place, Rachel shared “…what I thought was really essential to my experience was having the ability to engage with other faculty who teach online in a capacity [as a faculty member] rather than an administrator capacity” (Interview #1). It was important to her to be able to share what she does in her classes and to engage with faculty that way rather than dealing with day-to-day administrative matters.

Rachel did not indicate anything that took place during the Blackboard professional development sessions that hindered her learning. She did note some hindrances early in her
career because she began teaching online when the concept was brand new. Rachel shared that at that time she did not know what she was doing and really had no point of comparison other than the methods she employed in her traditional, face-to-face courses.

**Brandon**

Brandon has always been an educator. He has over 20 years teaching experience, with more than 10 of those years spent teaching courses online. Brandon’s bachelor’s and master’s degrees and his PhD are in education. Brandon is also a technologist. When personal computers were first generally available, he purchased one just for experimentation and discovery. “You know the real first online collaborative, interactive service that I was able to use was America Online. I started using it back in the late 80s, so really by the late 90s I was designing my own websites” (Interview #1). He was determined to integrate his two loves, education and technology, so after learning HTML he began creating online discussion forums with the purpose of supplementing his face-to-face instruction of EMTs and paramedics.

Brandon currently works at Jones Community College in a mixed administrative-teaching position. As the Director for the Center of Educational Excellence and Faculty Development, he oversees educational and instructional technology. The shift to more of an administrative role was part of his process of personal improvement efforts. As he was exposed to theories and approaches specific to online teaching and learning, it was evident to him that his College “needed someone who could oversee the guidelines, the policies, procedures and give faculty support with new ways to teach online” (Interview #1). He also teaches two to three courses per academic semester. At the time of the interview, he was teaching Orientation to the College and an eLearning Training course, which is a prerequisite for students who desire to take online courses at Jones Community College. In addition to his formal education, which includes
completing his master’s and PhD online, and his personal interest in technology, Brandon has participated in an online student teaching course and online and face-to-face workshops about online course design and instruction.

Brandon’s general approach to education is never to teach the same class the same way twice. As an early adopter of technology in education, this approach is no different in his online courses.

I have always wanted to improve something about the course; it is just not a static product to me. And that is the draw of technology as well. It changes so quickly [that] you’re always having to update and stay abreast of any changes. So with my online teaching practices, once I started figuring out ways to bring the students more information online and let them interact in different ways, um, it just was a continual cycle of improvement for me. (Interview #1)

Brandon sought to augment his traditional classes with technology even before learning management systems and other online instructional tools existed. “There were no options other than to come to the school. Anything that was distance at that point involved videotapes and mail” so he chose to create online forums. Brandon taught his students how to use the online forums so that they could continue to communicate with each other and share knowledge outside the physical classroom. He learned early on that optional participation generally meant that students would not participate. So he explored ways to make participation in the online forum part of the general course requirements and sought to incentivize students for their use of the tool.

Brandon’s critical incidents.

Brandon was candid in sharing his experiences in the Blackboard professional development. The following points are those that Brandon chose to highlight in his experience at the Never Stop Learning Tour event. He indicated at multiple times that he does not dwell on
anything that is negative, and it was evident throughout the interview process that Brandon is an extremely positive person. He experienced no low points that he wished to share.

Going into the professional development event, Brandon expected to learn new things because he always feels he learns something from every experience. However, he did admit that he expected the conference to be all about Blackboard.

But one of the things that surprised me is that they [Blackboard] really showcased their, um, their relationships with other vendors. In particular they had textbook publishers there. They had a lot of those being represented….I think that was a really, it was unexpected, but it was a really good aspect to the Blackboard professional development that I did not really think about ahead of time. But when I got there it was probably one of the most beneficial things. (Interview #2)

Brandon described this high point as good and timely and likened the experience to the way he thinks about creating optimal learning experiences for students. He described that at his college there are various services available to students and that they strive to offer a one-stop shop that provides all the services students need throughout their college experience. In a similar way, he explained that colleges rely on various companies to assist them in providing education as a service. He was impressed that Blackboard is trying to create an integrated experience between the learning management system and digital texts and related resources.

In addition to the inclusion of other vendors, in particular e-book vendors, Brandon described the quality of breakout sessions. In particular, there was one breakout session led by a peer institution that focused on the integration of e-texts. Brandon explained, “I have this vision of students just coming to class with just an electronic device and not having to carry around a bag full of books” (Interview #1). This session was important to Brandon given his vision of both textbook integration and the idea of a one-stop shop instructional experience for his students, as well as the fact that his College is discussing the adoption of various textbooks.
Brandon shared another high point, which was the value he ascribed to the high-ranking Blackboard staff that attended and participated in the Never Stop Learning Tour event.

…one of the things that really impressed me was that Blackboard sent high level people down…the fact that Blackboard, you know, saw that the…educators in our system deserved, not just ‘let’s send a couple of representatives down there,’ but they sent their heavy hitters and that was impressive. (Interview #2)

At the time of this event, Brandon shared that Blackboard had just acquired ANGEL Learning and the educators in attendance were hopeful that Blackboard’s direction with integrating ANGEL into the existing company was going to be beneficial to students and schools. He noticed that Blackboard had already taken strides to blend the two companies into one and high-ranking staff from ANGEL and Blackboard was present. He noted that attendees were asking many difficult questions and the staff was able to provide definitive answers.

Brandon considered the networking opportunities with Blackboard staff, vendors, and conference attendees a critical aspect of the professional development event. For Brandon, “Just having those contacts so you can call up someone in a moment’s notice to just run ideas by them, see how they are doing things, and integrate their ideas into what you need to accomplish…has been the greatest incentive…” (Interview #1). He also noted that Blackboard opens up their professional development events to all educators and is inclusive beyond their own customer base. For example, “…Blackboard did not just say people who are Blackboard customers come to it. They invited everyone and it did not matter if you were using a different product….they wanted you to come and gain what you could from the sessions” (Interview #2).

Brandon considered these experiences as high points for various reasons, but some of the critical incidents relate to his desire to integrate digital textbooks into courses at his institution. At Jones Community College, about 67% of students receive the Pell Grant. Brandon is
concerned because these students have to wait until the first day of class to get their textbooks.

Brandon explained that this

…creates quite a backlog at the bookstore--trying to hand out those books on the same day they [the students] need to be in class using those books. There has not been a way for us to get the students into class on time on the first day with books in hand. We end up wasting the first day. Either the instructor has to do other stuff that doesn’t involve their [the students’] learning materials, or they [the students] have to miss the class and try to go get their books. That has been a big one for me. Definitely the e-book integration is probably on the top of my list right now. (Interview #1)

Brandon also shared that various aspects of the Never Stop Learning Tour event made him feel valued and important and made his experience of the event especially good. He explained that as an experienced faculty member, he is in tune with ways he can make his students feel important. He compared the efforts he takes to make his students feel valued to the importance he felt that Blackboard had ascribed to him and the other participants at the conference. Brandon explained,

I think that [feeling valued] is a critical part of the learning process. To know that you come in there [the physical or virtual classroom] and give your very best to your students and they see that they are important to you. And they take that and that motivates them to do even more than they normally would….so when you look at that with Blackboard and their professional development, for them to go the extra step and bring in other resources….shows me that they actually care about the people that are attending the conference and want them to have the very best stuff….[Blackboard] is taking the extra step to say that you [educators] are important; we are glad you are here today. (Interview #2)

The professional development event was critical to Brandon because it provided him with numerous opportunities to network with Blackboard staff, vendors, and a diverse group of conference attendees. Brandon explained that in his experience, faculty and institutions of higher education tend to operate in silos. “We each do our own thing. We are very protective of what we do inside our institution. We don’t share ideas and we don’t share resources” (Interview #2). Brandon considers himself a social constructivist and believes that “we don’t
develop knowledge sitting here [alone]…it [knowledge] comes from interacting with other people…” (Interview #1). The networking opportunities were important to fostering his learning at the conference.

**Brandon’s learning.**

An in-depth analysis of Brandon’s three interview transcripts revealed that he learned four things, which can be categorized into three of the four ways that Mezirow (2000a) says learning occurs: adding to existing frames of reference, transforming points of view, and transforming habits of mind. It did seem that some aspects of Brandon’s transformational learning might have occurred both after the professional development event was over as well as during the interview process. The things that Brandon learned are summarized in Table 3.

From two of Brandon’s critical incidents, both good vendor presentations and breakout sessions as well as networking with others, it was clear that Brandon learned about various tools and features within Blackboard. He talked passionately about a desire to have textbook integration into Blackboard, but his college is not at that point yet. Nonetheless, he did attend a presentation from another college about e-books that was valuable to him. The presentation on e-books, along with various vendor presentations, was timely for him given his institution’s focus on textbook adoption and his personal desire to remedy the issue regarding the first day of class and students’ access to textbooks. Brandon also indicated that some of his first learning about more in-depth usage of the Blackboard gradebook occurred at Blackboard professional development events. “Some of the things [features] I just have not had the time to be exposed to…” (Interview #3) so these professional development events are important opportunities for furthering Brandon’s understanding of technological tools that make him more efficient and productive as an instructor. Learning about new tools and features of the
Table 3

Overview of Brandon’s Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was learned</th>
<th>Descriptive quote</th>
<th>Adding to existing frames of reference</th>
<th>Gaining new frames of reference</th>
<th>Transforming points of view</th>
<th>Transforming habits of mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Various features/tools in the Blackboard LMS that improve his efficiency and productivity</td>
<td>“…some of the early features that I actually learned to use at the actual [breakout] sessions were like the Gradebook, the smart views, …how to first setup a Gradebook effectively, how to calculate grades…and use early warning systems.” (Interview #2)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best practices in online teaching and learning, specifically regarding student support</td>
<td>“…I think I am a lot more in touch with that customer service mentality when dealing with students…” (Interview #3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard genuinely values education</td>
<td>“They [Blackboard] still take that personal touch and make those of us that attended the conference feel like we were important and they [Blackboard] were not holding anything back to provide that.” (Interview #2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He can use an LMS to meet any of his instructional goals</td>
<td>“I was more of a proponent of wanting a website, discussion forum, and a lot of resources in different places…I have come to see….that I can do just about anything that I want [with Blackboard]. It is not confining me to a certain approach of online instruction.” (Interview #2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Blackboard learning management system, such as creating smart views and calculating grades in the gradebook and using the early warning system, was informative for Brandon. He was able to add to his existing frames of reference because he was incorporating this new information to his current practice.

By participating in the breakout sessions and networking with conference attendees, Brandon also realized that his approach to course design, assessment, and supporting learners is in line with established best practices. This learning was inferred from different stories Brandon shared in his interviews about networking and breakout sessions in which he participated. On two occasions in the interviews, Brandon shared that he felt the Blackboard professional development was reconfirming or affirming his practice. As he was describing how he felt that his instructional practices had changed based on what he learned at the Blackboard professional development event, Brandon shared about the customer service aspect of his responsibility to students. He described that his support of students is analogous to Blackboard’s support of its customers. For example, Brandon said,

…I think I am a lot more in touch with that customer service mentality when dealing with students and I think, you know, to a large degree, kind of, dealing with Blackboard has kind of reaffirmed that for me. They [my students] are much more than a customer of an institution, but that mentality that you will do whatever it takes to reach the needs of our students….dealing with them [students] in a much more supportive manner than I have in the past and [to] some degree that is a reflection of how Blackboard treats their customers. (Interview #3)

From an initial analysis it seemed that Brandon had learned by adding to an existing frame of reference. However, closer examination of the transcripts from Brandon’s interviews revealed that he had critically assessed his assumptions about his own teaching practices and established best practices. Brandon also talked about his experience as a whole with others, primarily other conference attendees but also members of the state consortium for technology and learning.
Brandon also acted upon his new perspectives, which he described as improvements in the ways he supports his students. Brandon experienced a transformation of his point of view regarding his customer service, or support, for students.

When Brandon shared his thoughts about the Never Stop Learning Tour event before the professional development took place versus how he felt during and after the event, it became clear that he had experienced a transformation in his habit of mind or assumptions about Blackboard and how it operates. In addition to Brandon expecting the event to “be all about Blackboard” (Interview #2), Brandon revealed that his institution had piloted ANGEL Learning. Around the time of the professional development event, Brandon learned that Blackboard had purchased ANGEL Learning. He described feeling like

…Blackboard had pulled the rug out from under us. We were looking at this system and we really liked it and we were going to switch to it and Blackboard came in and bought it and took that option away from us. So I guess that it was [with] some trepidation that I went through the first one [Never Stop Learning Tour event]. But like I said, after experiencing that first one…it was great. I came away with a whole other aspect with who Blackboard was as a company.

When Brandon was faced with this new information about “who Blackboard was as a company” he examined his own views and concluded that Blackboard really cares about education. “…my opinions changed dramatically of the company as a whole by attending these Blackboard training sessions.” Brandon shared that he perceived that Blackboard sought out opportunities to demonstrate that their customers are important and that the professional development was designed to benefit the conference attendees.

During the week between Brandon’s second and third interviews, Brandon shared that he had really reflected on the value that Blackboard ascribes to their relationships with customers. In the last interview, Brandon explained, “…overall my reflection since last week has been on Blackboard’s focus on maintaining the relationships that they have….that has just really struck
me a lot this week…” (Interview #3). Brandon’s experience of the professional development seemed to be the trigger event because the change in his thinking began while the conference was taking place. At the same time, it seems that Brandon’s participation in the interviews caused him to reflect further on his experience. Although Brandon did not have a formal plan for a course of action for his new assumptions about Blackboard as a company, he did state that every aspect of the professional development “…really brought me closer in wanting to partner with Blackboard as much as possible….when you have a company that you have made a personal connection with…pulls me to want to partner with them for services” (Interview #3). Brandon experienced a transformation of his point of view about Blackboard.

Brandon also experienced a transformation of his point of view regarding his belief that a learning management system limits what an instructor is able to do in terms of course design and content delivery. He formerly viewed learning management systems as less robust than the handful of disparate tools that he would have students access in various places. As Brandon reflected on his experiences at the Blackboard Never Stop Learning event, he noted “…attending these sessions I have come to see the actual product [Blackboard Learn] as more of a blank slate, more than a product that confines what you can do” (Interview #2). He examined his former practices in terms of the tools he uses to teach and is now more comfortable relying on Blackboard Learn “to do it all.” He came to this view after seeing that Blackboard offers both a quality learning management system as well as ample support and training opportunities that help him to be successful as a professor. However, Brandon also shared that the interview process caused him to reflect critically on the professional development. Brandon shared, “Actually having you to talk to about this, I probably did not think about [it] on that level before,
but just going through this process [of interviewing with you]….I learn as much from it as [you]” (Interview #2).

**Brandon’s supports for and hindrances to learning.**

Brandon is an optimistic person. He shared that he considers every occurrence of life to be a learning opportunity. This positive outlook and his passion for technology and education have been natural supports to his learning. But early in his career, Brandon did have a few challenging experiences. For example, Brandon adopted online teaching and learning concepts into his own practice in the late 1990s. At the time, there was not wide acceptance of online learning in education. Many of Brandon’s peers and the administration at his College did not believe students could get a good education using tools commonly associated with an online class such as online discussion forums. Brandon explained

> that the students were using them [the forums he had created] and were receptive, but the college they didn’t want any association from an administrative stand point. The colleges did not want me to do it. They could not stop me from doing it, but [they said] ‘you’re not putting anything with the college name or class identifier. We don’t want you to call this [the forums] an EMS 456 or you can call it something else.’ Early on, there actually were a lot of administrative roadblocks…(Interview #1)

In time he gained the approval of his faculty peers and the administration, and today he says that he feels like he has full support. However, budgetary restraints within the College and the state limit him to in-state travel. Whereas the College generally approves any in-state travel for professional development, he has no exposure to regional or national conferences or conventions. Brandon expressed his gratitude that Blackboard is willing to have regional events in his state so that he can participate. “…I am just very appreciative of what they [Blackboard] are doing and very appreciative that they are here in [my state] – the community college system of [my state]” (Interview #2).
Brandon identified multiple supports for his learning leading up to the professional development. Brandon’s experiences as a student in his online Master’s degree and PhD programs helped him tremendously. The content of these formal educational experiences was foundational to who he is as a professor. In his master’s program, Brandon specialized in Instructional Education of Design for Online Learning. The courses he completed

…specifically addressed…designing online courses and a lot of administrative oversight for online courses….that was a tremendous amount of directed formalized education just for the online learning realm….So it is a very structured approach, um, and a very sound approach to implementing an online course. The basis of all of this is that it is never complete, it is a continual cycle of implementation, evaluation, and improving. (Interview #1)

His learning experiences in his master’s degree and PhD programs were authentic because he completed them online. The modality of the degree programs provided him with perspectives as a student of what works and what does not in an online course. Brandon was able to rely on these perspectives as he designed and facilitated his own online courses.

In addition to any formal education, “the main support that has helped me to teach online more effectively is just experience. Just do it and learning the lessons-what works, what doesn’t work” (Interview #3). The feedback and perspectives that his students share with him are a critical aspect of his own experiences as a course designer and professor. Student feedback and perspectives are a critical aspect in his cycle of improvement for his online courses.

Brandon is a self-proclaimed social constructivist, so networking is crucial to his knowledge development. Brandon discussed the value he has found in being a member of the state consortium for technology and learning. He described, “Being able to share experiences and interact with others around the state that do the same thing or similar things has been a tremendous support for me” (Interview #3). To Brandon, networking is one of the most meaningful aspects of the Blackboard Never Stop Learning Tour event. He noted that his
interactions with other conference attendees, vendors, and Blackboard staff were significant aspects of the professional development.

In retrospect, Brandon considered how his experiences at the Blackboard professional development supported his learning. As the professional development sessions were taking place, Brandon shared the realizations he had come to regarding Blackboard as a company. Going into the Never Stop Learning Tour event, he was not sure that he could place his trust in Blackboard. But what he quickly learned was that “…they [Blackboard] actually care about the people that are attending the conference…[they were] taking the extra step to say that you are important” (Interview #3). Brandon noted that Blackboard made him feel valued by “…not holding back anything to provide that [a personal touch]” (Interview #2). He also liked that Blackboard invited everyone, both customers and non-customers, to attend and learn. He explained that Blackboard demonstrated a genuine care for educators by sending high-level executives who were “…very approachable, very willing to help, very giving of their time and their knowledge.” He shared that his participation in the event led to him feeling valued and important and that feeling important “…is a critical part of the learning process.”

**Richard**

Richard has worked at Big State Community College for 18 or 19 years either as an adjunct, a federal program employee, or a full-time faculty member. He currently teaches music and English online. Like most faculty, Richard serves on various committees at the state level and Big State Community College. For example, he is on the Chancellor’s Task Force for Transitional Education. He has served as a Discipline Chair for the Developmental Studies Department and has been a member of various hiring committees and the accreditation reaffirmation committee. Richard is also one of the primary writers of the College’s Quality
Enhancement Plan. He shared that he is “…pretty much tapped for whatever else is needed. As far as faculty members, I stay relatively involved” (Interview #1).

Richard was drawn to teaching online because

I wanted to get paid--plain and simple. I knew that [online learning] was a new paradigm that was coming…I had barely been in this full time teaching position a year or so when I realized that online learning was not going to be exclusive…a new paradigm that, um, was significant and those things-you need to figure it out and do it well or get run over by it. So it wasn’t really any sense of pedagogical enlightenment that I had-‘Oh this would be a wonderful thing.’ It was just a fact that this was just a coming reality….I realized that it [online learning] was going to be a significant part of my teaching future and if I did not want to do that I probably at some point would not be as, um, what’s the term, marketable, I think, or valid as an instructor. (Interview #1)

Now that he has been teaching online 6-10 years, he feels that he and his students are successful in the environment. Richard recently completed his PhD online and has taken other online courses outside of his PhD program. Richard has also attended workshops about online instruction, but he shared that technology is not natural for him. Richard clarified,

…technology is just evolving at a very rapid pace, and, um, I hate to admit it, but I am old….a lot of the technology that my children are using that is just natural to them, there is a learning curve to me where I have to actually make an attempt to go learn it rather than…[it being] second nature to me. (Interview #1)

Having been a traditional, face-to-face instructor for several years, Richard initially approached designing an online course by recreating his face-to-face course in an online environment. He began the transition to online teaching by developing an online supplement to his face-to-face course. Over time, Richard discovered methods of his teaching that could “….originate online…rather than it [the online course] just being a translation of the face-to-face to an online environment….There are some things that, um, that I can do online that I cannot do in the classroom…” (Interview #1).
Richard’s critical incidents.

Richard participated in various professional development events around the same time as the Blackboard Day, which was sponsored by City Community College, and the details of each “…all run together in my mind” (Interview #1). He did remember some aspects of the Blackboard Day and identified critical incidents about the event. During the interviews, Richard shared examples of positive and negative experiences that he had at the Blackboard Day. The three critical incidents he elaborated upon centered on one of the Exemplary Course examples shared during the professional development, his interactions with his peers who also participated in the Blackboard Day and attendees from other institutions, and problems that Big State Community College had experienced with Blackboard in the past.

Richard’s high/unexpected point at the Blackboard Day was meeting two people with whom he had worked closely for the first time. Dr. Joy was one of his professors in his PhD program. Because his PhD program was completed entirely online, he had never met her in person. He also met a colleague named Gloria. Richard teaches as an adjunct faculty at Gloria’s institution. Despite his frequent interactions with Gloria, he had never met her in person. Richard had not anticipated these two women would be present at the event so he was excited for the opportunity to meet them both.

Richard was somewhat more detailed and frank about two low points during the Blackboard Day. Although he felt that the ideas presented during the sessions were interesting and he wished he could incorporate them into his classes, a “…low point is looking at really cool, good ideas and then feeling handicapped” (Interview #2). Richard shared that he attended the Blackboard Day with a few colleagues. He mentioned a woman named Ms. Lopez several times. Richard explained that he felt handicapped because he was seeing examples of blogs and
wikis and other collaborative tools in the exemplary courses. He explained, however, that Ms. Lopez had explored using blogs and wikis and that she had experienced “…difficulties with the technology of Blackboard not always functioning the way it is supposed to…” (Interview #1). Consequently, Richard indicated that he and Ms. Lopez were both hesitant to consider any of the session content that was related to those and other collaborative tools. Richard shared, “So some of the things I recall looking very interesting [I] discounted doing at the time…”

A second low point was an Exemplary Course Tour video that was shared in one of the sessions at the Blackboard Day. He remembered commenting during the session after seeing the video “…that my father was a non-traditional learner in his 70s finishing an online degree and with as many whistles and bells that the instructor included in that particular course would have been daunting and overwhelming to him” (Interview #1). Richard shared in greater detail about his dad’s experience using a Blackboard feature called Video Everywhere in one of his online classes.

…he is at Northern State University and one of his instructors had begun using that tool [Video Everywhere] and it just, um, was off putting to my father because he was just having difficulties with technology in general and he is not dumb. He is a highly intellectual individual, but the technology was kind of off putting to him.” (Interview #2)

Although Video Everywhere was not specifically highlighted in the Exemplary Course Tour shared in the professional development, Richard felt like the example course contained too much technology. He defending his position by saying, “I felt like it was overkill….How overwhelming would that be for the non-traditional learner…or maybe the traditional learner who has limited experience with technology?” (Interview #2).

Richard explained that as the Blackboard Day ended, he “…thought the sessions were positive. They were set up well, [the content] was applicable…It was a positive experience overall. Lots of good ideas” (Interview #2). But Richard experienced more frustration when he
returned to his office and realized “I don’t know how to do this. I really want to know how to use these [tools and features], but then again I’m not sure how much of them I would be able to implement because of the technology issues [with Blackboard].”

Although Richard did not include the following as critical incidents at the Blackboard Day, he did find value in a few things that he mentioned specifically. Richard appreciated that the event was organized to include a working lunch rather than breaking up into smaller groups to go out for lunch. To him, a working lunch “…meant my time was more on task” (Interview #3). Richard further indicated that the professional development sessions were free of “…warm, fuzzy stuff …”. He appreciated the fact that each of the four sessions included time for group discussions and opportunities for interaction without wasting time. He also noted that he valued the diversity of the faculty attendees in terms of both varied institutions and academic disciplines. He enjoyed the interaction with other faculty who have similar instructional goals.

**Richard’s learning.**

In each interview, Richard struggled to recall details about the Blackboard Day. He was articulate in describing his low points but less expressive about the high point he experienced. Furthermore, it was not obvious that Richard’s critical incidents related to anything he may have learned at the Blackboard professional development. Identifying what Richard learned and categorizing the learning within the four ways that learning takes place (Mezirow, 2000a) was challenging. Table 4 provides a summary of what Richard learned.

In the two low point critical incidents that he shared, Richard referenced seeing good courses examples and exciting instructional tools. Richard realized that online learning is truly its own paradigm rather than just a medium for transferring ideas from a face-to-face learning experience to an online learning experience. This learning was inferred from different stories
Table 4

Overview of Richard’s Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was learned</th>
<th>Descriptive quote</th>
<th>Four ways of learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online learning is its own paradigm</td>
<td>“…online, in my mind now, needs to be a separate paradigm than face-to-face learning.” (Interview #3)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New concepts and tools, such as blogs, wikis, and video</td>
<td>“…it opened my eyes and introduced me to some new concepts and tools…I did want to use….I made notes about…some of the things we [he and Ms. Lopez] would implement once we had the technology issues, the wrinkles, worked out.” (Interview #2)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online learning is academically rigorous</td>
<td>“It [the professional development]…reinforced that online learning can be, ah, as academically rigorous, and interesting, um, as face-to-face learning.” (Interview #2)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of collaborative learning</td>
<td>“I am really leaning towards doing more collaborative learning online….whether it is through videos, or blogs, or what have you.” (Interview #3)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is opportunity for him to do more in his online courses</td>
<td>“…there are opportunities and options that I would have convinced of myself and, um, in ways to integration the various tools…I regret that I have been unable to fully implement them, but knowing they are out there and moving forward to implement them.” (Interview #3)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Richard told during his interviews. For example, Richard talked about new technology and tools in terms of how “…we can go to the extreme in putting so many new gadgets out there that you lose your audience. [But] it does give the instructor some flexibility with the wikis, blogs, the video interactions and what have you” (Interview #2). During the Blackboard Day sessions, Richard was exposed to exemplary course examples in each session that confirmed for him that online does not equate to less rigorous or less interesting. He shared “…seeing the development of technology that is making that [designing and delivering an online course] easier and better kind of reinforced that feeling [high academic quality].” Richard’s data did not indicate that he experienced transformative learning but rather that Richard was adding to his existing frames of reference and meaning perspectives regarding the rigor and quality of online courses.

Richard explained, “…I think you can learn from anything even if it is a negative or a positive learning experience” (Interview #2). Although two of Richard’s critical incidents were low points that were negative, Richard gained three new perspectives. He was exposed to new concepts and tools in each session that occurred on the Blackboard Day. Richard recognized the possible application of new ideas shared in the professional development sessions despite his lack of personal experience using the tools and the challenges that Ms. Lopez had experienced. Richard also shared

I don’t know if I got the spark for this in the session or if it was one of the several things leading towards this, [but] I am really learning towards doing more collaborative learning….how I would [do] collaborative [in] face-to-face learning is a little bit different, but having these tools and access to these tools….whether it is through videos, or blogs, or what have you, is, ah, something that feeds into the idea that I’m trying to move towards… (Interview #3).

One of the four sessions presented at the Blackboard Day was a session focused on Interaction and Collaboration. Furthermore, each Exemplary Course Tour video highlighted examples of
tools used to foster collaborative learning among students. The third new perspective Richard gained was the realization that there is more that he can do to improve his own courses. Although Richard had taken no action to incorporate any of the new information he had gained into his courses at the time of the interview, he did indicate an intention to do so in the future. Richard shared that this realization was still significant for him at the time of the interview.

In all of the things that Richard learned, he did not share examples of times when he critically reflected on his assumptions. Although Richard did engage with Ms. Lopez during and after the Blackboard Day about some of the things that they experienced, it was not evident that discourse occurred. Rather than transforming his beliefs or practices about online instruction, Richard either added the information he learned into existing frames of reference, or he gained a new frame of reference for thinking about his existing teaching practice.

**Richard’s supports for and hindrances to learning.**

Richard has many supports in his life that have enabled and motivated him to learn how to teach online. Richard noted two supports from within his college that helped him to learn how to teach online long before the Blackboard professional development event. Before teaching his own courses online, he sought out an online course at Big State Community College that he could take “…just so I could experience the online environment as a student” (Interview #1). Taking this class as a student supported him because he was able to see that communication in the online environment must be more intentional. Richard also noted the support he received from a colleague who is the Dean of Instruction, Dr. Madison. Before becoming the Dean of Instruction, Dr. Madison was responsible for overseeing distance learning. Richard had many conversations with her and participated in workshops that she led about distance learning. He shared that she “…influenced my thinking…” (Interview #1) about online instruction.
Leading up to, during, and after the Blackboard Day, Richard indicated that he sought the support of his peer, Ms. Lopez. Richard shared that he and Ms. Lopez …share an office suite and we are partners in crime. I was her mentor when she came on with the college, but I easily consider her my equal…in fact, whenever I am going to propose to present at a conference, ah, I make her go with me half the time. (Interview #2)

He disclosed that he had experienced a family crisis a year or two before the Blackboard Day and was operating in survival mode. Ms. Lopez was able to charge ahead in exploring Blackboard and doing more course development, “…so I was actually leaning on her expertise…in fact she may had been leading the way for the most part” (Interview #2). As the Blackboard Day was taking place, Ms. Lopez was the primary person from whom Richard sought perspectives on the event. Even after the professional development was over, as Richard considered courses of action for change in his courses, he was influenced by Ms. Lopez’s experiences and ideas.

Richard also shared about some of his experiences as a student in his graduate program. Although the experiences were negative, they still supported his learning for online instruction in at least two ways. For example, in one class Richard took, he explained that the professor did not demonstrate that she knew her content. She also failed to connect with her students and did not have a presence in the course. Richard explained that at the beginning of the course, everyone was introducing himself or herself. As part of the introductions, Richard indicated that he does not generally go by his first name but rather his last. Whereas all of his classmates respected his name preference, the instructor never followed suit and called him by his first name for the duration of the course. This negative experience was impactful because it helped Richard to see the value of student engagement, respect for student preferences, and instructor presence in an online course. Richard indicated that overall, “…actually being an online student and
seeing the things that worked for me and the things that did not work for me, ah, the things that seemed to get in the way of learning even…was probably the greatest…” (Interview #1) support for learning to teach online.

Richard did identify a few hindrances to his learning: technology failures, time constraints, and the learning curve for new technology. These hindrances were evident for Richard even during the Blackboard Day. For example, as Richard was exposed to new tools and concepts, his learning was hindered based on the challenges Ms. Lopez had experienced with Blackboard in the past. Richard also indicated that he was hindered by time constraints, because when he saw the exemplary course examples, he knew that building a course like that would take more time than what he has available. He shared,

So I keep a busy schedule and I am a single parent with custody of my kids. So I am Mr. Mom. Um, so the time constraints it takes to explore new ideas and develop them. Of course, you have a really critical mass situation if you think about the amount of time it takes to do something and then frustration of it not working because of the technology. (Interview #1)

Richard also indicated that the technology does not come naturally to him and that he has to make a concerted effort to learn it.

Although Richard did not identify any element of the sessions during the Blackboard Day as hindrances and he stated that the overall experience was positive, it can be inferred that the Exemplary Course Tour that Richard described as “overkill” (Interview #2) was a hindrance to his learning. That particular course tour was shared as an aspect of the second of four sessions in the Blackboard professional development. The topic of the session was interaction and collaboration and some of the tools discussed were wikis, blogs, journals, and discussions. Although Richard was able to recall details from this session, he was unable to remember any of the information presented in the other sessions.
Camille

Camille teaches two online courses for members of the faculty at City Community College who desire to teach online. Faculty must complete these two courses, Technology for Teaching and Learning and Best Practices for Technology Integration, before teaching their own courses online. Although Camille has been teaching for more than 10 years with more than half of those years consisting of online instruction, she never intended to teach. She said, “Originally, I liked designing the online portions of online classes. I didn’t like teaching the [online] courses myself….I never did that part before. I taught other people how to do it. I would always provide resources to supplement the instruction, but I never put the whole course online” (Interview #1). Camille explained the path she took towards becoming a teacher. She shared,

It happened by accident….my bachelor’s degree is in business and I wound up getting a job offering from the university I had gone to as an undergrad student. I really liked the place I worked…it was the Media Services Department of the library…about a year into it [the job], they [the university] became the…center for state-wide e-learning. So where I worked, it just became e-learning. It became online education. (Interview #1).

Camille enjoyed her job even after the shift in mission. She enjoyed helping faculty design their online courses so she decided to go back to college to pursue a Master’s degree in e-learning technology and administration with a focus on multimedia design for e-learning.

Some time later, she left the university and accepted a job in information technology administration at a private college. She enjoyed her work. However, Camille missed distance learning, especially instructional design. She described, “…it was a very personal thing at that point. It had nothing to do with, I don’t know, lofty visions of improving education or anything like that. I just liked it” (Interview #1). Camille’s formal education also includes a PhD in Organization and Management with a specialization in Information Technology Management.
She has participated in online and face-to-face workshops about online course design and instruction.

When Camille first began her instructional design work with faculty, she was not providing any type of ongoing training. She would simply gather a group of faculty together and “…and we worked through it [course design] together. I would answer questions on the spot. I found it was, for time purposes, it was easier to manage that way” (Interview #1). Over time, Camille shifted her practice towards asynchronous, self-paced instruction. She believes that a fully online course is ideal for faculty since this allows them to participate in the course and complete the course requirements as their individual schedules permit.

Camille’s work as a teacher of faculty is one of her many duties as an administrator at City Community College. She is also responsible for the quality assurance of all online courses. She conducts evaluations of online courses to ensure that the courses comply with the Ten Essential Elements, which are minimum standards for online courses at the College. Camille also establishes and enforces distance learning policies and oversees academic technology for online and face-to-face courses. Camille is also the director of the state consortium for technology and learning. This consortium consists of 17 community colleges within the community college system in her state. In addition to her job at the College, Camille does research and provides training and consulting services.

**Camille’s critical incidents.**

Camille was pleasantly surprised to see “…how closely the Blackboard presentation aligned with what we do from an instructional design basis. It was nothing to do with a product. It was much more about philosophy than I had anticipated” (Interview #2). She shared that her first impressions about the professional development were formed while she was planning for the
event. It was as she was planning the Blackboard Day that she learned about the general structure and content of the professional development and decided to invite faculty outside of City Community College, including faculty who teach at institutions that do not necessarily use Blackboard products. “…I actually opened up the invitation to people outside [City Community College] to people who were utilizing other learning management systems simply because…I did realize how philosophical as opposed to product specific [the content was].” Camille explained that as the first session of the day was taking place she had a sense of relief because she knew that people outside of City Community College were coming to the Blackboard Day with the expectation that the professional development would be relevant to them. She knew that she was personally responsible for the expectations they had.

Camille was also pleased the faculty at City Community College were hearing and seeing ideas that were a restatement of what she had been teaching them. Camille shared, …I was very pleased to see how closely the Blackboard information paralleled what I have been telling people. You know, you cannot be a prophet in your own country. It’s always good to have someone else come in a say things, especially when they are the same things and especially when they are not prompted. When the faculty come back and say, ‘Oh you have been telling me that!’ I was very pleased with that. (Interview #2)

Camille considered this critical incident as surprising because of her previous experiences dealing with vendors who came to campus with the intentions of providing professional development. Their presentations were usually a form of “field marketing” or a sales pitch. “…the ECP [exemplary course presentation] didn’t have that element. There was actually very little discussion about Blackboard other than, ah, using the Blackboard platform to showcase the philosophy being discussed” (Interview #2). She further expressed that the Blackboard Day was relevant to everyone-both Blackboard users as well as those people in attendance who did not use Blackboard.
Camille’s learning.

Camille defined the Blackboard Day as a success for herself but more so for her faculty. She explained to me that she “…wasn't looking at it [the professional development] as a learning experience…for me. It was for my faculty. The information that Blackboard was providing was kind of preaching to the choir for me...it was definitely a learning experience for other faculty” (Interview #2). Nonetheless, Camille did learn. Her learning is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5
Overview of Camille’s Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was learned</th>
<th>Descriptive quote</th>
<th>Adding to existing frames of reference</th>
<th>Gaining new frames of reference</th>
<th>Transforming points of view</th>
<th>Transforming habits of mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>View her framework for teaching faculty differently</td>
<td>“…I reframed my philosophy regarding instructional design and my philosophy regarding distance learning. I was inspired, I was pleased, I was impressed…” (Interview #3)</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard’s Exemplary Course Program was better received by her faculty</td>
<td>“Because of this workshop, I was able to turn around and say to everyone ‘Don’t you want to be able to submit your course for this award?’ That became a carrot.” (Interview #2)</td>
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Camille’s surprising critical incident was that the content shared during the Blackboard Day aligned to her personal beliefs and practices in terms of content, best practices, and instructional design and was not a product-focused sales pitch. Camille’s planning for and participation in the Blackboard Day was a transformation of her point of view regarding how she teaches faculty to design and deliver a quality course. For example, Camille said,
…it [the professional development] gave me a new approach for teaching the faculty the content… it has been a Quality Matters model that we have been using and so after that Exemplary Course Program…I reframed it [her approach to instruction] and changed my direction. (Interview #1)

Camille explained that she set her mind towards using the Blackboard Exemplary Course Program and Rubric because she was able to see how receptive her faculty were to the way that the content was presented in professional development sessions. Camille shared,

   It made it more, more palatable. It was more, they could relate [to] it much better than how they were relating to Quality Matters. Quality Matters are like this huge list of stuff. They didn’t know what it meant. ‘How do I do this? How do I integrate this. I have no idea how to interpret it.’ Whereas the Blackboard Exemplary Course presentation, they [the faculty] were like ‘Oh yeah, I know what that means’ and they had the opportunity to talk to their colleagues about what it means. It was just better received. (Interview #1)

Camille also experienced a transformation in her habit of mind because she explained that she took the content of the Blackboard Day, which was four sessions focused on designing an exemplary course, and used that to create her own Exemplary Course Program at City Community College. Camille’s learning experience is a transformation of her habit of mind because her data indicated that she experienced various phases of Mezirow’s transformative theory (1991). Camille actively participated in the professional development. Part of her participation included observing other participants and talking with them about their experiences, reflecting on her own practices, and learning a new frame of reference which led her to approach her own practice differently. She reintegrated into practice the things she learned saying,

   …I was able to turn that [Blackboard’s Exemplary Course Program] around and use that to entice my faculty to become part of the internal cohort that we have and actually apply these things so that we now have a class. We now have an online class for the cohort to share ideas and everything. We go through the course redesign process as a group and you know, then it all came out of this workshop [the Blackboard Day sessions]. (Interview #2)

At the time of the interview, Camille explained that in retrospect she feels the same way because the cohort is going extremely well. She shared that one of her seasoned online faculty
who has been excelling in teaching online for years is participating in the cohort. She expressed that “…he made the comment, ‘I thought I was doing a good job. I had no idea what I didn’t know.’” (Interview #3). She provided more detail by explaining that faculty find the professional development to still be “…significant…as we go back through it and actually do the things presented originally. Everyone is inspired and excited.”

Camille’s supports for and hindrances to learning.

Camille identified several supports for and one hindrance to her learning to teach online. The one hindrance Camille noted relates to a policy within the state community college system. She explained that administrators are not allowed to teach for-credit courses to students for pay and that if they do teach such a class it simply falls into the category of other duties as assigned. She expressed,

…I can’t teach at City Community College. So, well I like to keep a foot in the classroom so I can relate to the faculty. I can teach the faculty but I can’t teach students…I think that limits me because it limits my frame of reference to relating back to the faculty. (Interview #1)

She was candid about the things that have helped her to learn to teach online. Camille discussed the value of her formal education. She shared that she experienced some frustration during the early part of her doctoral program and struggled to learn because of poor course design. She decided to change to a different doctoral program at a different institution. This move proved to be a positive change for Camille because she believed she was learning good teaching practices because she was learning in well-designed courses.

Camille also shared that she continues to learn about online instruction by reading current academic literature and by attending and presenting at various conferences. She also noted that she has a supportive work environment at City Community College because the faculty and administration are proponents of online learning. She shared that online learning is no longer
viewed negatively and that distance learning was the College’s largest mode of delivery during the summer 2014 session.

Camille’s experiences with the Blackboard Day professional development were so significant to her that she changed her approach to teaching faculty good course design and instructional practice for online courses. She established a faculty cohort that is redesigning online courses based on what was shared at the Blackboard Day. Camille explained that the newly designed courses launched in the fall 2014 session and that the faculty will submit their classes to Blackboard for an Exemplary Course Program Award.

**Teresa**

Teresa has been teaching for fewer than ten years with two of those years spent teaching online. She was drawn to online teaching after applying for a full-time faculty position and making it to the top three candidates but ultimately not being hired for the position because she did not have any online teaching experience. Teresa could not help but question why she was not selected. She shared, “I came so very close to getting the position…” (Interview #1). Teresa was told that she needed to speak to the Vice President of the College who explained that the person who was selected for the job had years of experience teaching online. The Vice President encouraged Teresa to gain proficiency in online instruction.

Teresa was already in the process of working on doctoral coursework, but her focus was on higher education leadership. Teresa decided to shift her doctoral concentration to instructional technology and distance education. About a year later, Teresa learned of a speech instructor position that was available. The position was designed for online teaching. In fact, it was the first online speech teaching position at City Community College. She applied for the position and was hired. Teresa expressed,
…it is a survival of the fittest. If you do not get in through the technical or online teaching aspect you would probably be left out….That is why I had to. In order for me to even have a job I had to go into online teaching. (Interview #1)

Despite being pushed to gain experience and credentials specific to online instruction, Teresa shared that “…I wasn’t forced. I really, really liked the change.” In fact, Teresa explained that she was not a neophyte regarding the use of educational technology and other tools commonly associated with fully online courses. Teresa had experience using multiple learning management systems and had always used them to support her face-to-face teaching; however, she had never taught speech online because “Teaching speech online is just not something that people in my academic area really embrace and they are still a little reluctant about it” (Interview 1).

In her transition from teaching face-to-face courses to online courses, Teresa has learned that communicating with students online is completely different from face-to-face communication. She explained that in

The traditional face-to-face class it is easy, or it is much easier as far as your presence is concerned because you have your non-verbal and your verbal cues to help enhance the meaning of your message. However, with your online teaching experience, it is a little more difficult because all you have basically would be the text, mainly, and video. (Interview #1)

Teresa also learned that she had to exercise restraint. She shared that when she first started teaching fully online, she wanted to add as much content and technology as possible. Teresa said, “I realized I had to back off because it was information overload….It was kind of funny. I had like thirty or forty tabs on the left side of my screen in the content area.” She then worked with the person who oversees distance learning at her college and attended a few Blackboard professional development sessions. Teresa expressed,“…that list [of thirty or forty tabs] has
been condensed tremendously and my teaching has been much more effective…as evidenced by my evaluation by my supervisors and most importantly, by my students.”

**Teresa’s critical incidents.**

Teresa shared that she had attended a few different professional development events that Blackboard had provided: a technology day at a flagship university that was put on by her state’s Blackboard User Group, a Never Stop Learning Tour event at Northern State Community College, and a Blackboard day at City Community College. The critical incidents that she shared were from her experience at the Blackboard Day at City Community College.

Teresa indicated that her first critical incident was a cluster of events that she considered to be a high point that centered on the diversity of the participant group, the manner in which the session was facilitated, and the design of the content. She shared that the way the professional development was designed with a focus on instructional design rather than content was …really, really good. So sometimes we focus so much on the content of our courses that we do not look at our pedagogy….A lot of us have never taken a course in learning theories…a lot of us are just content specialists and we are so zeroed [in] on that that we tend to overlook other areas….we are so laser fixed on the content. (Interview #2)

She valued that “…the participants in the sessions came from extremely different academic disciplines. Some of them were instructional designers, some of the math instructors, English, accounting, speech.” Because the sessions were designed to focus on the instructional design aspect of online teaching, the participant group had a common ground and “we were able to glean from each other in how to make our courses much more effective.” Teresa added that the way each session focused on a single criterion of the Exemplary Course Rubric was helpful to her. She recalled getting into smaller groups to discuss how each faculty member had implemented strategies related to the session topic into their own courses. She shared,
…I found that [group discussions] to be very, very helpful because it’s like ‘Oh I had never thought about it that way.’ I am doing it but I could do it much better or I am not doing and I will try to incorporate those into my classroom.” (Interview #1)

Teresa also described a low point that she experienced at the Blackboard Day. She recalled one particular person who was overly expressive. Teresa recognized that there are some people who participate in sessions and tend to speak out more than others; however, she considered this a low point because she felt like this participant “…hindered other people from being able to express their views and perceptions because of this person who wanted to be a little bit too controlling of the topics at hand” (Interview #2). Teresa said that she sensed that everyone in the classroom was wondering who this person was and why the person was “…chiming in all the time.” She even shared that the distance learning coordinator for City Community College had to “…give verbal and non-verbal exchanges, I guess to let her know to rein it in.”

**Teresa’s learning.**

Teresa had a few enlightening moments throughout the Blackboard Day. She exclaimed, “Ah-ha!! I get it now! Why have I been over thinking this? I think these types of learning sessions are very important…” (Interview #2). Teresa clearly and thoroughly defined the details about various things she had learned. Her learning experiences are listed in Table 6 and are categorized within Mezirow’s (2000a) framework for how learning occurs.

Teresa’s participation in the Blackboard Day totally changed her ideas about good instruction and course design. During the interview Teresa was asked to recall the details of what happened at the Blackboard professional development. She replied that before the Blackboard sessions she considered herself strong in terms of online instruction and course
## Table 6

Overview of Teresa’s Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was learned</th>
<th>Descriptive quote</th>
<th>Four ways of learning</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Four ways of learning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adding to existing frames of reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New tools and practices</td>
<td>“...we learned about different ways you can assess students’ learning and it was not just multiple choice questions.” (Interview #1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>What constitutes an exemplary course</td>
<td>“They were not all cookie cutters, you could see all the different personalities…. everyone had different types of videos that they had submitted and it went along with the disciplines they taught.” (Interview #1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not let the technology drive the design of your course</td>
<td>“Technology should be chosen based upon, first, on the content and the objectives of your course. And also keep in mind the learning styles of your students and how you will keep them engaged without allowing technology to be a barrier to that learning process.” (Interview #2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Types of interaction in her courses and tools she can use to support interaction</td>
<td>“…a great way to use journals is the private journals to interact with the student to know that they are where they need to be before the major assessments are due.” (Interview #3)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>She had a lot of opportunity to improve the quality of her courses</td>
<td>“…I remember the light bulb came on. I thought of myself as a good instructor before attending any of the Blackboard sessions…” (Interview #1).</td>
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design. As each session was taking place, Teresa’s assumptions about what constituted an exemplary course were challenged.

In two ways, Teresa became aware of tools and practices that she had never considered: participating in the group discussions and watching the Exemplary Course Tour videos. Teresa explained that the videos were meaningful to her and appealed to her preference for visual learning. She was able to see four examples of exemplary courses, and each was unique while adhering to a standard of excellence. Because Teresa could see the exemplary course examples, she believed she could “…try to put it into my way of working it out” (Interview #1). Teresa’s experiences in the group discussions provided her with an opportunity to discuss with others what she was experiencing in the professional development session with others and to consider what kinds of changes she could make in her own courses in terms of tools she could utilize and practices she could employ. She was able to evaluate her ideas and compare them to the ideas of other faculty in the sessions. The group discussions were enlightening and confirming. Teresa developed new ideas and felt affirmed in her teaching practice by other faculty. Teresa gained a new frame of reference in terms of tools and practices she could incorporate in her online courses, but she also transformed her point of view regarding what makes up an exemplary course.

Teresa shared that she learned that technology can be a barrier to student learning if it is not used carefully. She provided an example of how the technology can be used in an effective way for “…chunking material…” (Interview #2) to help students navigate the course and have an overall more pleasurable and helpful learning experience. Teresa explained student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and student-to-contact interaction in her online courses and the tools she uses to support the different kinds of interactions. She discussed aspects of social learning among
students and how she has implemented “…e-book technology, video, lectures…to make them [the content] more enticing for your students who are in your course” (Interview #3). The data indicates that with regard to technology, Teresa gained a new frame of reference for how to use various types of technology to support her online instruction. On the other hand, the data does indicate that Teresa experienced a transformation of her habit of mind regarding the types of interaction she now ensures are in her online courses and the tools she uses to support each interaction.

Teresa admitted that before the first session of the Blackboard Day began she and a few of her peers who were planning to attend had already decided that they would not stay for all four sessions so that they could fulfill other obligations. She explained,

…but because things had gone above and exceeded our expectations, we decided to stay to the very end because the information was so pertinent. It was hands-on. It was an opportunity for us to collaborate with other people. It was not a passive learning experience. It was very active and engaging. (Interview #2)

In other words, Teresa’s habit of mind regarding the quality of her own courses was transformed, and she realized she had an opportunity to improve her online teaching practice.

Teresa continued to engage others in discussions and to reflect on the Blackboard Day after the event was over. She quickly made plans to integrate what she had learned into her instructional practice. Teresa expressed,

…almost immediately after [the] session we decided that we were going to put together an exemplary course and a group of people who might be interesting in participating in it. We have gotten together a couple of times, just using the rubric that you spoke about and then applying them in our courses. We have been talking to each other and sharing those principles and concepts. (Interview #2)

She further shared, “…I have started placing them [exemplary course practices] into my classes and I am actually starting to see results from it. Students are giving great reviews at the end of the semester. One in particular…[was] about social presence…” (Interview #1). She explained
that feedback from her students is a wonderful affirmation that the professional development she experienced is truly valuable.

**Teresa’s supports for and hindrances to learning.**

Teresa received encouragement for learning to teach online years before the Blackboard Day. Teresa identified multiple supports for learning to teach online. These included her formal education, in terms of both the course work she completed as well as the encouragement she received from her doctoral peer group; various conferences and several Blackboard-led professional development events; and her faculty peers. Teresa shared an example of a way that she received guidance from a math instructor at City Community College:

> He does a great job with instructing using videos. I am not a math person at all. I did not do well at math. I hate math….however, he enrolled me into one of his Blackboard shells as just an observer and I had been able to watch his videos to see how well he puts together a video and explains foreign concepts. If I can learn concepts, I know that other students can as well because I do not consider myself well-versed in that at all. (Interview #1)

The administration at City Community College is also supportive of online teaching and learning. Teresa mentioned that various policies, such as compliance with the College’s minimum standards for quality, known as The Ten Essentials, have also helped her to learn good practice in online teaching.

Teresa explained that at times she feels hindered by some of her peers who teach speech but do not believe the discipline should be taught or learned online. For example, Teresa said “Just because they cannot do it they do not think that I should be allowed to do it. That has been the greatest barrier to me” (Interview #1). She continued by sharing that enrollments in face-to-face courses are down and that the online classes “…fill up and sell like hot cakes.” She added that the faculty who do not teach online feel threatened because their sections of speech tend not to have enough students to make the classes.
Gretchen

Gretchen has been teaching English and British and American Literature six to ten years. When she was sharing her reasons for deciding to try teaching online, she shared that her true feelings were “…going to sound so bad” (Interview #1). However, Gretchen explained that she is required to teach five classes and sometimes an overload, which is six classes. She shared that she simply needed

…some time to breathe….Halving those up, half being online gives me a little bit more time…some quiet time in my office and I can go at my own pace and do what I need to do online. That is what sort of drew me to it-was to not be so overwhelmed with face-to-face courses (Interview #1).

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Gretchen serves on various committees and frequently volunteers to participate in student activities on campus. She noted that although she does not formally have advising responsibilities, she still spends a significant amount of time advising students.

As Gretchen shared about how her online teaching practices have changed over time, she admitted that when she first started, “…I was a little nervous. Like I did not know what I was doing. I was just going for it…” (Interview #1). Just after one semester, Gretchen identified various changes she would have to make to her online courses. She explained that she

…struggled with how to organize it [the course content]. I didn’t know if I should do it by weeks. Some of my coworkers were doing modules or sections or things like that, but I found putting a date on it and opening it weekly has been, you know, the best thing.”

Gretchen relied on student feedback to guide her regarding what practices were helpful or harmful to students. Early on, she shared that she would receive many student emails asking where to find different aspects of the course. This feedback was a clear indicator that she needed to consider the organization of those sections of the course. Gretchen made changes to the course by labeling content with dates and opening the content on a weekly basis. She knew these
changes were effective when the end of semester course evaluation feedback revealed that students found the course much easier to navigate.

Gretchen also struggled with challenges in her online class management. The online environment opened up new issues regarding students missing deadlines and asking for make-up options. She explained, “…I am was [sic] kind of lenient and then I got a littler harder on them and now I am starting to be more lenient again” (Interview #1). She shared that she is still trying to find a “happy medium” in terms of her make-up policies.

**Gretchen’s critical incidents.**

Gretchen described her critical incident at the Blackboard Day hosted by City Community College as good and unexpected. For her, the Exemplary Course Tour videos were the most critical aspect of her experience of the professional development that day. She began by saying, “Well, I did not know what to expect….I was kind of surprised when I saw the different models [exemplary course examples]….because the courses were so, if I am being honest, so much better than my own”(Interview #2).

As Gretchen recalled the events of the professional development further, she remembered that each of the four sessions included a different Exemplary Course Tour video. She explained that there was one exemplary course “…that stood out the most…I was like OMG!” (Interview #2). One particular feature that the instructor of the course used was virtual office hours. Gretchen shared that she believed virtual office hours were ideal for online teaching and learning, but it was something she had never thought of before.

Gretchen explained that as she was leaving the last session of the day she was …buzzing about how it was one of the best professional developments we have ever been to. I did not feel, you know if a lot of professional development, we get distracted. We will look at our phones, talk, you know. In this session, I remember being engaged the entire time. I did not feel like I was drifting. (Interview #2)
Gretchen felt surprised by the fact that each exemplary course was so different. Each exemplary course was created by a different instructor and included different tools and features. All courses varied in terms of academic subject matter and instructional goals yet each of the courses “…had the same ‘wow’ to them.”

**Gretchen’s learning.**

Gretchen explained that seeing the Exemplary Course Tour videos was a “mind blowing” (Interview #1) experience. She described a few “light bulb” moments throughout the session presentations during Blackboard Day. Table 7 summarizes Gretchen’s learning experience, which is categorized within Mezirow’s (2000a) framework of the ways of learning.

Gretchen explained that before the Blackboard Day, she had become bored with online teaching. She expressed that the Blackboard professional development transformed her feelings about online instruction. For example, Gretchen expressed, “I think that participating in it…helped me see how much more I could be doing to help my students.” The critical incident of watching the Exemplary Course Tour videos

…made me reflect where I was in the online process and figure out how to manage my course and teach my course. So I did not expect that it would make me feel like I am inadequate…it made me feel like I had a lot further to go…

I remember saying to myself, ‘Whoa…these courses are intense in a good way!’ (Interview #2).

Gretchen was overwhelmed by the Exemplary Course Tour videos. Prior to the Blackboard Day, she admitted that she did not even know what constituted an exemplary course. She explained that she realized there were so many things of which she was not aware. For example, Gretchen shared that “…the look and the layout of what they were doing was surprising to me because I did not realize it [a Blackboard course] could look that way or function that way.”
### Overview of Gretchen’s Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was learned</th>
<th>Descriptive quote</th>
<th>Four ways of learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She had a lot of opportunity to improve the quality of her courses</td>
<td>“…that was a light bulb moment…after the session I just saw more depth that I needed to be filling in.” (Interview #1).</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of an Exemplary Course</td>
<td>“I did not even know what an exemplary course was.” (Interview #2)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capabilities of the Blackboard LMS</td>
<td>“There were so many things I did not know you could do within Blackboard.” (Interview #2)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online courses can be very rigorous</td>
<td>“…I talked a little bit…[about] the perception that online learning is not as rigorous, or as important as face-to-face….these exemplary courses, I mean, that just blows that completely out of the water. I mean, it dismantles that belief.” (Interview #2)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gretchen did not keep her feelings to herself. She and her colleagues spent time discussing their mindsets about the professional development during and after each of the four sessions. She specifically recalled “…there were a couple of us that wanted to try to create an exemplary course ourselves…” (Interview #2). Gretchen also thought about her students and whether they could handle her course if it were designed to include many of the elements and practices she had observed in the Exemplary Course Tour videos. Although she was concerned that students might be overwhelmed, she could not stop thinking about
…major things in the online courses that were sort of missing from mine. I think it was the interaction part between the students and between the teacher and the student. Those things were awesome but there was a part of me that was wondering if students could handle the-it seems the exemplary courses put a lot of responsibility on the student, which is great! (Interview #2)

Retrospectively, Gretchen shared that she still feels the same way now about the professional development as she did while she was in the sessions and after the Blackboard Day was over. The experience also stands out in her mind, even though she has participated in other professional development events since then. Gretchen explained,

…I feel that I have been enlightened....It showed me that there are lots of different things that I can use in the class that I wasn’t using before. I know I talked to you about the interactive activities that I have included from the exemplary courses and, um, just how organized and efficient those courses seemed to me. I want to bring that back into my own classroom. (Interview #3)

She further clarified that a significant aspect of the Blackboard Day was that it was so different from other professional development in which she has participated. She shared,

I felt that it was extremely useful and it was motivating….It was motivating walking away thinking ‘Okay, these are the course sessions that we need’…I felt like we were involved in it….this particular session was helpful because of the interaction and the engagement.

In all, Gretchen learned four things: three of which were informative, and one of which was transformative. Gretchen gained three new frames of reference. She learned about the concept of an exemplary course and what constitutes one. She also learned that Blackboard courses can each have a different look and feel in terms of layout and overall design. Gretchen was also able to confirm for herself that online learning is a valid way of teaching and learning. Findings about this final aspect of her informative learning are further explained in the section on Gretchen’s supports for and hindrances to learning.

Gretchen’s realization that there is so much more she can be doing in her online courses was a transformation of her habit of mind. She described her reflection of the professional
development event both during and after each session. She even highlighted different aspects of the sessions, in particular the Exemplary Course Tour videos. These video tours caused her to reflect on where she stood as an online instructor. Gretchen also shared that she discussed and vetted her experiences with the experiences of others in her small group discussions within each session and her peers during and after the Blackboard Day. Despite having experienced feelings of inadequacy, Gretchen also considered her current practices and evaluated the possibility of changing aspects of her practice and course design. Gretchen indicated that she has “…tried out chat sessions where I had open chat hours in one of my courses because I had seen that [in one of the Exemplary Course Tour videos]” (Interview #2).

**Gretchen’s supports for and hindrances to learning.**

Gretchen identified multiple supports for learning to teach online. She explained that her biggest support comes from her peers, both within and outside of her academic discipline. She shared that her immediate circle of peers all love to teach online and that she is careful to adhere to any advice they share. Even within her academic discipline, she explained that older faculty generally do not want to teach online themselves, but they are still supportive of online teaching and learning. Gretchen’s department chair also enrolled Gretchen in her course. Reviewing this course helped Gretchen to see how someone else approaches the instructional design of the same course content. She also noted that the administration of her College is encouraging about online teaching and learning because it recognizes that in many cases, students prefer and expect options to learn online. Gretchen confessed that she used to view The Ten Essentials, or minimum standards for online courses, as a hassle and an irritation. In hindsight she sees how much those standards improved her course. In addition to the exemplary course examples, Gretchen shared that her own teaching experiences prior to the Blackboard Day supported her
learning for online teaching. Feedback from students regarding their experiences in her courses helped to steer her towards identifying practices that are helpful for student learning and those that are not.

Gretchen did share about hindrances to her practice and ability to learn to teach online. She noted that City Community College does not integrate its student information system into Blackboard. This lack of integration creates a significant drain on Gretchen’s time. She explained that because the two systems do not communicate, she has to do double duty on various tasks, such as managing enrollments, absences, and reporting as it relates to financial aid verification.

Gretchen also admitted that the negative perception of online learning from a few colleagues and even friends outside of the College impacted her. She explained, “…I was afraid that I would not be any good at it and that my students were not going to be, to learn as receptively as they would face-to-face” (Interview #1). She said people would sometimes say that

…online learning is a joke and it is not valuable…and I guess I had some of that in my head….I love to teach and I know I am good at it face-to-face, um, but I have questioned myself a lot if I am good at it online…..It is a challenge and I am one of those who really care. I care really deeply for my students and I don’t want to set them up for failure.

**Cross-Case Analysis**

The research questions for this study serve as the framework for the cross-case analysis. The first section examines the themes regarding how faculty learned to teach online through the Blackboard professional development. The second section examines the faculty’s experiences of the sessions or overall event that faculty described as meaningful to their learning. These experiences were derived from the critical incidents that faculty experienced. The third section highlights common themes among the supports and hindrances that the faculty identified.
Themes Regarding How Faculty Learned in the Blackboard Professional Development

The first research question in this study centers on how faculty learn to teach online through formal professional development. I analyzed the data to determine what happened that triggered the teachers to experience informative or transformative learning. According to Mezirow’s transformative theory, a trigger event or disorienting dilemma may or may not lead a learner through a transformative learning experience. In all, the data indicates eight triggers for learning. Table 8 summarizes what each faculty participant learned, the type of learning (informative or transformative), and the trigger for learning.

The type of professional development event in which each faculty participated is critical to understanding how faculty learned. Rachel participated in a Blackboard Day sponsored by her institution for the faculty of her institution. All sessions were Blackboard-facilitated. Brandon participated in a Never Stop Learning Tour event that can be likened to a conference with various presenters. At this event the presenters included Blackboard, partner vendors, and faculty from various institutions. On the other hand, Richard, Camille, Teresa, and Gretchen participated in a Blackboard Day sponsored by City Community College. Camille, Teresa, and Gretchen all work at City Community College. Attendees included faculty, like Richard, from other institutions and Blackboard led all the presentations. The diverse types of professional development events as well as the focal point, or topics of individual sessions, make the identification of themes more difficult. Nonetheless, there are some common themes among the participants’ experiences.

By examining the 23 informative and transformative learning experiences of the faculty participant group, it is apparent that the triggers for learning are somewhat unique. Exemplary Course Tour videos were the most common prompt for learning, accounting for approximately
half (12) of the learning experiences. At the same time, only Richard, Camille, Teresa, and Gretchen were exposed to the Exemplary Course Tour videos as part of their Blackboard professional development; however, for Rachel and Brandon, Blackboard product presentations were a catalyst for their learning five times.

The second most common trigger for learning was the overall experience of the Blackboard professional development. The unique nature of each of the professional development events makes it difficult to pinpoint a specific aspect of the professional development experience that initiated learning. Nonetheless, this prompt is most significant for Brandon, but also sparked learning for Camille, Teresa, and Gretchen.

Rachel and Teresa experienced learning that was triggered by engaging with other faculty. Brandon specifically noted the value of networking as a catalyst for his learning. Camille indicated that she discussed her experience of the Blackboard Day with others. She also noted the importance of observing others. These prompts could possibly be lumped together as interaction with others, but a key difference for Rachel and Teresa was networking among other individuals in a faculty role. Networking initiated Brandon’s learning with various types of people in different roles and from different institutions or organizations.

The remaining triggers are unique to each of the faculty who experienced learning from them. Rachel was the only faculty participant who experienced learning sparked by qualities and characteristics of the speaker. Camille was the only faculty participant whose learning was initiated by observing how others were responding to the Blackboard professional development. Brandon was the only participant who experienced learning after a participating in a peer
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>What was Learned</th>
<th>Type of Learning</th>
<th>Trigger (How Faculty Learned)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Rachel | Technology vendor can provide a true instructional professional development program | X               | • Talented, qualified speaker  
• Engaging with other faculty  
• Blackboard product demonstrations |
|        | Some of the strategies she employs for course design and facilitation are best practices in the field | X               | • Talented, qualified speaker  
• Blackboard product demonstrations |
|        | Various features/tools in the Blackboard LMS that improve her efficiency and productivity | X               | Blackboard product demonstrations |
| Brandon| Various features/tools in the Blackboard LMS that improve his efficiency and productivity | X               | Blackboard product demonstrations |
|        | Best practices in online teaching and learning, specifically regarding student support | X               | • Overall experience of Blackboard professional development  
• Blackboard product demonstrations  
• Peer institution presentations  
• Networking |
<p>|        | Blackboard genuinely values education                                               | X               | Overall experience of Blackboard professional development |
|        | He can use an LMS to meet any of his instructional goals                             | X               | Overall experience of Blackboard professional development |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Online learning is its own paradigm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New concepts and tools, such as blogs, wikis, and video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online learning is academically rigorous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concept of collaborative learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is opportunity for him to do more in his online courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camille</td>
<td>View her framework for teaching faculty differently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blackboard’s Exemplary Course Program was better received by her faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Overall experience of Blackboard professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Exemplary Course Tour videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>New tools and practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What constitutes an exemplary course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not let the technology drive the design of your course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Types of interaction in her courses and tools she can use to support interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She had an opportunity to improve the quality of her courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gretchen</td>
<td>She had an opportunity to improve the quality of her courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elements of an Exemplary Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capabilities of the Blackboard LMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online courses can be very rigorous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
institution’s presentation on the use of e-books; however, for all of the other faculty participants, a Blackboard presenter led all of the sessions at the Blackboard professional development events.

Meaningful Experiences and Transformative Learning

In the previous sections of this chapter, I presented the findings for each faculty participant’s learning as individual cases. Each case included the details surrounding meaningful learning experiences or critical incidents that each faculty participant faced. In this section I focus on four of the six faculty who experienced some form of transformative learning. In all, there were nine transformative learning events. Among these four faculty, there were three transformations in previously held beliefs and six transformations of professional practice. Table 9 provides an overview of learning experiences in the context of transformative learning theory.

Critical reflection.

Mezirow (1991) explains, “Reflection is the process of critically assessing the content, process, or premise(s) of our efforts to interpret and give meaning to an experience” (p. 104). Interview data from all four faculty indicate that they critically assessed their learning experiences.

Both Brandon and Gretchen shared information specific to a reflective experience. In the second interview, Brandon indicated that his participation in the interviews had caused him to think more about his learning experiences at different levels than he had previously. The data indicated that Brandon had critiqued his own assumptions regarding his beliefs about Blackboard as a company. Brandon also called into question his practices for teaching and supporting his students.
Table 9

Overview of Learning Experiences in Light of Transformative Learning Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Transformative learning</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Point of View</th>
<th>Habit of Mind</th>
<th>Critical reflection</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>The strategies he employs in his instruction and practices he uses to support students are in line with established best practices.</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blackboard genuinely values education.</td>
<td>Belief</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He can use an LMS to meet any of his instructional goals.</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camille</td>
<td>A new framework will help her to teach her faculty.</td>
<td>Belief</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Her faculty embraced Blackboard’s Exemplary Course Program.</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>There is an accepted standard for exemplary online courses.</td>
<td>Belief</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online courses should contain support various types of interactions and Blackboard has tools she can use to support these interactions.</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She has an opportunity to improve the quality of her courses.</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gretchen</td>
<td>She has an opportunity to improve the quality of her courses.</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Gretchen’s second interview, she shared how the Exemplary Course Tour videos caused her to reflect on her own courses and seek to determine “…where I was in the online process…” (Interview #2). She specifically mentioned reflecting on her class management and instructional practice. As Gretchen considered new roles and actions as an instructor, she also considered the perspectives of her students and how they might perceive and experience her courses if the courses were more like the exemplary courses. Gretchen’s data indicate that her reflections were primarily private and occurred after seeing the Exemplary Course Videos.

On the other hand, Teresa’s and Camille’s data indicate that their reflective activities were triggered by and related to discourse. Teresa’s reflection centered on her critical assessment of her practices in course design and instruction. She shared that she considered herself to be a good instructor, but the Blackboard professional development made her question her self-assessment of her instructional and course design practices.

Camille critically reflected on her assumptions about the Blackboard Exemplary Course Program. Like Gretchen, Camille contemplated the perspectives of the faculty at City Community College and took cues from the ways that they responded to the Blackboard speaker and the content presented in the sessions. She also sought out feedback from faculty who attended the session. Camille questioned whether the faculty were more receptive to the Exemplary Course Program rubric or the Quality Matters rubric, which she had historically used as her framework for teaching.

Discourse.

Mezirow (2000a) explains, “Discourse…centrally involves finding agreement, welcoming difference, “trying on” other points of view, identifying the common in the contradictory, tolerating the anxiety implicit in paradox, searching for synthesis, and reframing”
The interview protocols included questions designed to determine if faculty engaged with others in discourse. I relied solely on the faculty’s responses to these interview questions to determine whether faculty engaged in discourse. The data indicates that all four faculty consulted other people about their ideas or feelings surrounding the professional development events and sought out other points of view. For Camille, Teresa, and Gretchen, opportunities to engage in discourse were built in to each professional development session. During each session the Blackboard presenter posed questions that centered on each Exemplary Course Program Rubric criterion. The faculty participants formed small groups and were challenged to answer the questions. Faculty were encouraged to share examples of their courses or practices that exemplified the rubric criterion in question.

Teresa specifically noted that the small groups provided her with an opportunity to examine other perspectives for instructional practice and course design. She explained that she had never thought about some of the approaches and ideas shared by the other members of her group. Teresa “tried on” the points of view of both her group members as well as her colleagues. She also allowed the discussions about the Exemplary Course Tour videos to reframe her ideas about her own courses. Although she mentioned that in some cases she felt like her own ideas and practices were better, she was still tolerant and respectful of different ways of instructing and designing online courses.

Gretchen expressed that she talked with her colleagues who attended the Blackboard Day both during and after the event. Like Teresa, she was willing to “try on” some of the ideas that were shared throughout the day. Gretchen shared that her first reaction to the Exemplary Course Tour videos was mixed. She found that the exemplary courses were “mind blowing” and “amazing,” (Interview #1) yet they made her feel inadequate. Despite these feelings, she was
open-minded. She considered the virtual office hours and open chat hours and was willing to reconcile differences in her instructional and design practices and those that were being suggested to her through the videos and otherwise by the Blackboard presenter.

Camille also welcomed new ideas. She worked with the Blackboard presenter to design a professional development session that would help the faculty participants to hear a message that she described as “preaching to the choir” (Interview #1, Interview #2). As she planned for and participated in the Blackboard Day, she also welcomed and “tried on” other points of view. She viewed the content of the Exemplary Course Series sessions as mirroring what she had been teaching her faculty but with a different framework. She searched for synthesis in her framework and the one framing the Blackboard Day sessions. Camille explained that she reframed her philosophy regarding instructional design and distance learning.

Brandon shared memories of attending the Never Stop Learning Tour event with some measure of fear of the unknown. However, Brandon possessed the will and the readiness to seek understanding of the changes surrounding Blackboard’s acquisition of ANGEL Learning and was willing to explore his options. Brandon’s data and case represent many examples of his willingness to “try on” new ideas. He was eager to hear other’s points of view. For example, Brandon sought out information and weighed evidence against his own assumptions about Blackboard as a company, his instructional practice, and his use of an LMS to teach.

Action.

Of all the overarching phases of transformative learning, action was most evident in the faculty participants’ data. For all but one transformative learning experience, each faculty participant expressed an action he or she had taken based on what was learned. The one exception was centered on Brandon’s transformation of his beliefs regarding Blackboard’s value
for education. Whereas he did express feelings of wanting to partner with Blackboard and noted Blackboard products and services that his institution does not license, he did not define a plan or course of action, and no resulting action was expressed.

In summary, Brandon is using the LMS to meet his instructional goals rather than using separate technologies. He also shared a course of action for continuing to research options for a digital textbook that integrates into Blackboard. Camille started her own exemplary course design cohort at City Community College. She is using the Exemplary Course Program Rubric as her framework. Teresa evaluated her courses using the Exemplary Course Program Rubric and is redesigning her courses. She has included new tools and practices that model best practices as defined in the rubric. Gretchen has redesigned elements of her online courses and has adopted new tools and practices, such as virtual office hours and virtual chat.

**Supports for and Hindrances to Learning to Teach Online**

The faculty in this study identified various supports for and hindrances to learning to teach online. The most common support identified by five of six faculty is other people. This was a support that the faculty identified in somewhat of an ongoing basis before, after, and during the Blackboard professional development. Richard and Gretchen noted receiving support from their colleagues. Teresa and Gretchen noted the support they receive from their administration. Rachel mentioned a mentor who had been valuable to her in her early years of teaching online. Teresa shared that her online support group in her doctoral program is a benefit to her learning to teach online. Brandon noted the support he finds in networking with others at professional development events and the online learning consortium within his state. Richard specifically identified colleague who supported him at the Blackboard Day. Rachel felt
supported by and valued the experience she had at the Blackboard Day as a member of the faculty rather than an administrator.

Three of the four most experienced faculty in terms of years of online teaching identified the academic research as a support for their continued learning to teach online. Three of four in this most experienced group also specifically called out their formal education as a support. All three of these faculty completed one or both of their advanced degrees online. The participants explained that the experience of learning online as a student was in many ways as valuable as the content that they learned as part of the academic program.

Two faculty participants with the fewest years of online teaching experience cited experience in an online course as a significant support for learning how to teach online. One of the participant’s department chair enrolled her in an online course to give her an opportunity to see how she represents the content and facilitates instruction. The other participant’s peer enrolled her in his own online course to share examples of how he uses video to teach content and engage learners. A participant with more teaching experience also expressed that he took an online course prior to ever teaching online with intentions of gaining a student’s insight and perspective towards online learning.

The two most experienced faculty relied on their former experiences in higher education. Rachel noted “a secret” weapon in her knowledge as a librarian. She indicated that in many ways she felt that she had an advantage in learning to teach online and doing a good job because of her experience as a librarian. Brandon explained that the lived experience of simply teaching and observing what works and what does not work has been helpful to his learning over the years. He often situated his lived experience of teaching and improving based on his experience and the feedback from his students as a cycle of continuous improvement.
Finally, institutional policy on minimum standards for online instruction, or The Ten Essentials, was another support to Teresa and Gretchen. Gretchen confessed that she was first annoyed by this policy and Teresa noted that there was some anxiety that came along with having her course examined for compliance. In the end both admitted that their teaching and courses were better because they were required to adhere to these standards for online teaching and learning.

There were only two common threads in terms of hindrances for learning to teach online: peers and time. Brandon, Teresa, and Gretchen all shared that their peers’ ideas regarding the validity of online instruction has hindered them in the past. Richard and Gretchen also explained that a lack of time has been a hindrance to trying out new ideas and technologies and building a polished, well-designed online course.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

As described in Chapter 1, I designed this phenomenological study to examine faculty experiences of formal professional development created and facilitated by Blackboard. Using Mezirow’s (1991, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2009a, 2009b) transformative learning theory as my framework, my research was designed to determine the following: 1) how faculty learn to teach online through formal professional development, 2) the formal professional development experiences that faculty find meaningful for transforming their online teaching and course development, and 3) the supports before, during, and after the Blackboard professional development that faculty perceive to help or hinder their learning to teach online. The following section is a discussion of the conclusions that I have drawn from the findings of this research. These conclusions are situated in the larger body of scholarship regarding the ways that faculty learn to teach online. First of all, examples or models and presentations that are given in the context of online instructional practice support faculty learning for online instruction. Faculty also learn to teach online through the overall experience of the Blackboard professional development. Finally, for many faculty, learning to teach online is helpful when the learning takes place with others. After a discussion of my conclusions, I present implications for professional development that is designed to help faculty to learn to teach online. I provide suggestions for future research that were formulated by my own critical reflection of the research. Finally, I present a discussion of the limitations of this study.
Summary of the Results

The findings and cross-case analysis presented in the previous chapter supported my three conclusions about how faculty learn to teach online through formal professional development that was designed and facilitated by Blackboard. What follows is a summary of these conclusions followed by a discussion of the results in the subsequent section. First, faculty learn to teach online from authentic examples and contextualized product-focused presentations. For all four of the faculty who participated in the Blackboard Day where the Exemplary Course Series was presented, an overwhelming majority of what faculty learned was triggered by the example courses that were shown in Exemplary Course Tour videos. For the two faculty who attended a different form of Blackboard professional development that did not include any aspect of the Exemplary Course Series, contextualized Blackboard product-focused presentations initiated learning. These findings stress the importance of purposefully designed content and the overall facilitation or presentation of the content in the professional development.

Second, some of the faculty learned to teach online through the overall experience of professional development. In this study, some faculty experienced informational and transformational learning about themselves, their students, new technologies, and new instructional approaches through a cluster of events, or integrated circumstances, during the professional development. These faculty participants’ overall experiences are unique; therefore, the identification and consideration of clusters of experiences within the professional development event supports an examination of how these encounters may serve as catalysts for learning.

Third, faculty learn to teach online by engaging with others. For two faculty, this engagement was specific to interaction with other faculty. For another faculty participant,
networking prompted learning when the opportunity to interact with others was in the context of a diverse group of people from his own and other institutions, and staff from Blackboard and various education technology partner vendors. For a fourth faculty participant, a more general type of interaction with others triggered learning. For her, these interactions included aspects of conversation with both other faculty and staff from her own and other institutions as well as Blackboard staff. Additionally, observation of others played a key role in starting her learning process. These findings suggest the importance of designing and facilitating professional development events that purposefully include opportunities for faculty to establish learning communities and social supports.

**Discussion of the Results**

Countless dollars and immeasurable amounts of time are spent each year designing and providing professional development to faculty to help them learn to teach online. But some faculty like some of those who participated in this research do not always find value in professional development offerings. One of the participants in this study described her experience with most professional development events as “frustrating,” “boring,” or unhelpful. Some faculty find that their mobile devices become a distraction and they are more interested in chatting with peers. Faculty often find themselves mentally drifting away. The participants in this research are not unique regarding their feelings about professional development. Other studies indicate that faculty are often dissatisfied with the ways they are prepared to teach online (McCarthy & Samors, 2009). Fortunately, the faculty in this study had valuable experiences in the Blackboard professional development that they believed were true learning experiences. In the following sections, I explain my conclusions about the faculty’s experiences in the Blackboard professional development and support the conclusions with literature examined in
Chapter 2. Where appropriate, I also link the conclusions to the theoretical framework used to guide the present research.

**Evidence of Faculty Learning to Teach Online by Examples and Contextualized Blackboard Product-focused Presentations**

The research about formal professional development for learning to teach online (Barczyk et al, 2010; deNoyelles et al, 2012; Kinnie, 2012; Roman et al, 2010; Shattuck et al, 2011) as discussed in the literature review chapter, complements the findings in this study. The five formal professional development programs examined in the literature review included a model course used as a component for teaching faculty about online instruction or the program and facilitator served as models for best practices in online teaching and learning. In either case, a model was used to assist faculty learning.

In a similar way, four of the faculty who participated in this study experienced formal professional development at a Blackboard Day held at City Community College. In each of the four sessions presented that day, the faculty were asked to consider one of the four criterion in the Exemplary Course Program rubric. The Blackboard presenter, a solutions engineer who had authentic experience in online teaching and learning in higher education, facilitated small group discussions by asking the faculty to answer questions about elements of exemplary course design and to provide examples of their own courses that demonstrate exemplary practice. To conclude the small group discussions, the Blackboard presenter asked a spokesperson from each group to share his or her group’s responses to the questions, and then the presenter placed the responses in the context of the details of each criterion in the rubric. Each session concluded with an Exemplary Course Tour video. These courses modeled best practices in online course design and online course facilitation and provided an opportunity for the presenter to highlight real-life examples of how the session participants could apply what they learned in their own courses.
Two of the six faculty participants in this study did not take part in Blackboard professional development that included sessions about exemplary course design or the exemplary course models. Instead, they attended various Blackboard professional development sessions that included product-focused presentations. The product-focused presentations highlighted features and functionality within the Blackboard learning management system that support faculty in becoming more efficient as teachers while also exposing faculty to best practices. The presentations did not solely focus on technology but presented the technology with appropriate pedagogy for online teaching. Furthermore, these presentations conveyed information about online teaching tools and features within the context of a typical day in the life of college faculty. Schneckenberg (2010) supports the idea that all learning activities should be germane to real-life teaching. In general, adult learning theories, including transformative learning, suggest that learning activities should respect individual experiences while also being immediately relevant and applicable.

Mezirow (1997) explains that for learning to be meaningful a person must incorporate new information, or learning, into a frame of reference that is already well developed. All of the faculty in this study currently use Blackboard to teach online and have taught online for at least three years, although some faculty have more than ten years of online teaching experience. Regardless of the type of sessions presented in the Blackboard professional development, these faculty attended the events bringing with them unique frames of reference regarding both the features and tools they use to design and facilitate their online courses as well as their beliefs regarding what constitutes good instruction and a well-designed online course. These frames of reference are rooted in years of online and traditional teaching experience. The findings in this study demonstrate ways that each faculty participant brought his or her previous traditional and
online teaching practices and ways of using the Blackboard technology into the professional development event. Each faculty’s existing frames of references shaped his or her experience of the Blackboard professional development. At the same time, varying aspects of the Blackboard professional development shaped each person’s existing frames of reference.

**Evidence of Faculty Learning to Teach Online Through the Overall Experience of the Blackboard Professional Development**

As I analyzed the data for four of the faculty participants in this study, there were times that I could not identify a singular trigger for learning. I kept returning to the conclusion that the overall experience of the professional development served as a catalyst for learning. In his review of more than 40 studies that focus on aspects of transformational learning, Taylor (2000) discusses perspective transformations that are produced by a significant event. He also explores a study by Clark where transformations are linked to a multi-factored trigger, or a prompt with “integrating circumstances” (as cited in Taylor, 2000, p. 299). In a similar way, the findings of the present study indicate that four faculty experienced learning that was triggered by the overall experience of the Blackboard professional development.

**Evidence of Faculty Learning to Teach Online with Others**

The literature reviewed in this study includes examples of both formal and informal professional development that demonstrate how faculty learn to teach online by learning with others. deNoyelles et al (2012) describe that an important part of the BYCP is the faculty interaction that exposes them to the ways others design and build online courses. In the present study, two participants valued hearing how other faculty approach design and instructional challenges in their courses. The group discussions were helpful to the participants’ learning because the discussions provided an opportunity to hear about ways that faculty from different disciplines approach design and instruction in their respective courses. The diversity of the
faculty in the groups forced the participants to move their thinking beyond the content of their own courses to the concept of pedagogy in online instruction.

The literature includes multiple examples of the value of peer review (deNoyelles et al, 2012; Henning, 2012; Layne et al, 2004). Although the Blackboard professional development in which the faculty in this study participated did not include an aspect of peer review, the opportunities for learning with others indicate similar benefits. Peer review provided opportunities for critical thinking and learning new ideas for course development (deNoyelles et al, 2012). In the present study, one participant suggested that future Blackboard professional development should include a peer review component where a Blackboard solutions engineer would sit down with faculty and review their courses. A peer review of courses would provide faculty with specific strategies that they may adopt to improve their courses by employing exemplary practices in course design.

In addition to peer review, participants valued opportunities for peer learning among faculty and other individuals with whom they shared common interests in online teaching and learning. The faculty in this study had opportunities to interact with other faculty and academic staff and with Blackboard employees and in one case, other educational technology vendors. This research suggests that the discourse that occurred as an aspect of peer learning led faculty dialogue with themselves and others about the professional development events in which they participated.

In all examples, conversation with others and reflective comprehension of the professional development event validated each faculty participant’s experience of the professional development and his or her instructional practice for teaching online. Additionally, discourse led to the development of new ideas for the faculty participants’ professional practice.
The Blackboard professional development events served as a means for building community where thoughtful exchanges could occur. One study described in the literature review, CREOLE, focused on creating a learning community (FIPSE, n.d.; Schrum et al, 2005). Furthermore, Lackey (2011) documented that in both formal and informal professional development for learning to teach online, a majority of faculty prefer to prepare for online teaching by interacting and collaborating with faculty colleagues. Veletsianos (2011) found that faculty also seek the input of others and engage in conversations about their online and face-to-face teaching practice in social networks, specifically Twitter. These examples of scholarship and the findings of the present study confirm that communicating and engaging with others supports faculty learning for teaching online.

Discourse is one of the three overarching phases of transformative learning. Mezirow (2000a) suggests that in any transformative learning experience, the learner must have dialoged with others. Mezirow explains that to participate fully in discourse, “feelings of trust, solidarity, security, and empathy are essential…” (p. 12). Even though each of the Blackboard professional development events was limited to a single day, the findings indicate that discourse occurred and that trust was established on varying levels.

One faculty participant indicated that prior to the Blackboard professional development, he was uncertain if he could trust Blackboard. But during the second interview, he shared that his participation in the event led him to feel that Blackboard valued him and viewed him as important. Another participant shared that the Blackboard presenter shared personal stories in the context of the content, was practical, and did not talk “over [the] heads” of the faculty participants (Teresa, Interview #2). Yet another faculty participant noted that the Blackboard presenter was dynamic and engaging. She added that because the Blackboard presenter had been
a faculty member in the past, the participants in the sessions were more trusting of the overall professional development experience. Some believed that the professional development content was more valid because the faculty considered the presenter as credible. These findings are significant when viewed in the context of the objective of Blackboard’s “Educator Success” program: to become a trusted advisor and to build relationships with faculty and mid-level administration by helping institutions establish and achieve their objectives.

**Implications for Professional Development**

As various studies (Kang, 2012; Mitchell and Geva-May, 2009; McCarthy & Samors, 2009; Owens, 2012; Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008) indicate, much of the professional development that faculty have received for preparing them to teach online has not been meaningful to their learning. The evidence of informational and transformational learning that occurred for the six faculty participants in this study provides recommendations for improving formal professional development for online teaching and learning. These recommendations are helpful to Blackboard or other technology vendors who desire to deliver meaningful professional development for supporting faculty who teach online. These recommendations are also valid for divisions or departments within higher education institutions that are charged to provide professional development and other support for online teaching and learning.

Although the Blackboard professional development was not purposefully designed in light of transformative learning theory, the findings of this study helped me to recognize how different aspects of the professional development fostered learning. For example, in the Blackboard professional development at City Community College, faculty learning was most frequently triggered by the Exemplary Course Tour videos. The model courses shown in the videos served as examples of how the faculty participants’ courses might look and feel if
designed to adhere to the Exemplary Course Program Rubric. Faculty were able to examine their current approach to course design and consider new approaches. Other studies incorporate one or more aspects of models to support faculty learning (Barczyk et al, 2010; deNoyelles et al, 2012; Kinnie, 2012; Roman et al, 2010; Shattuck et al, 2011).

When the learning objectives for professional development are geared towards informing faculty about or teaching faculty how to use new tools or product features, as they were at Rachel’s Blackboard Day and Brandon’s Never Stop Learning Tour event, the presentation of the technology should not be separated from the pedagogy or instructional application. Teaching new tools and features within the context of real-life online instruction helps the learning to be authentic. Research advocates authentic learning opportunities by incorporating aspects of adult learning principles in professional development (Barczyk et al, 2010; deNoyelles et al, 2012; Carusetta & Cranton, 2009; Kinnie, 2012; Koehler et al, 2004; Roman et al, 2010; Schrum et al, 2005; Schneckenberg, 2010; Shattuck et al, 2011; Terantino & Agbehonou, 2012).

Because this study’s findings indicate that faculty learn to teach online by engaging with others who share common academic goals or interests, professional development should be mindfully designed to provide opportunities for faculty to engage purposefully with one another. Each session at the City Community College Blackboard Day included opportunities for small group discussions. Discussion and networking activities have the potential to support faculty through the three overarching phases of transformative learning, which are critical reflection, discourse, and action. For example, in this study faculty were challenged to reflect on their own instructional practices in light of the Exemplary Course Program Rubric. The discussions provided faculty with an opportunity to engage in discourse, or dialogue, with themselves and others. As the faculty gained insight into the perspectives of their peers, they were able to
consider their existing frames of reference and try on the ideas and practices of other faculty. Because the professional development includes real-life examples of how to apply the learning, faculty are better supported as they formulate a plan to act on their learning. The value of faculty working with and engaging with peers is not limited to this study. The literature suggests that effective professional development programs include one or more options for engaging with peers as a means for supporting faculty engagement (Barczyk et al, 2010; Carusetta & Cranton, 2009; deNoyelles et al, 2012, Henning, 2012; Koehler et al, 2004; Layne et al, 2004; Schrum et al, 2005; University of Rhode Island, 2014c).

Disorienting dilemmas and triggers for learning may occur during or after a professional development event. These findings suggest that faculty need ongoing support for their learning during and after the professional development event; therefore, professional development should be designed to provide ongoing support. The data in this study indicate that faculty learning for teaching online is supported before, during, and after formal professional development in several ways. The most frequently cited supports were other people, such as peers, administration, mentors, and members of support groups or consortia. The faculty participants also feel supported in their efforts to learn about online teaching and through engaging in academic research. Several faculty rely on the knowledge gained from their formal educations and experiences as online students. Even still, the faculty believe their online teaching and learning practice is supported through trial and error. Finally, two faculty stated that institutional policy or quality standards for online instruction supported their learning for online instruction.

In light of the supports for learning to teach online that were identified in this study, institutions of higher education and those responsible for the design and delivery of professional development for faculty should consider ways to provide opportunities for learning with and
from other people, including faculty peers and administration within the college or university and from other institutions of higher education. Professional development should highlight and incorporate academic research related to online teaching and learning and provide faculty with opportunities to draw on their formal educations and experiences in academia. As part of learning to teach online, professional development should include opportunities for faculty to learn online in the role of a student. Institutions should also examine ways to support faculty who wish to share their online courses with or provide access to other members of the faculty. Finally, institutions should examine policies or quality standards regarding online teaching and learning in light of how they may support faculty who teach online.

Higher education institutions and technology vendors like Blackboard should consider the supports identified in this study for helping faculty to learn to teach online and identify any gaps in their strategies for fostering faculty learning. For example, Blackboard and other educational technology vendors may consider exploring ways to partner with institutions in the development of usage standards in light of established best practices for using their products or solutions. The results of this study also suggest that Blackboard should consider formalizing and expanding its Educator Success program.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

At the time that I was examining the studies about professional development programs that support faculty learning for online instruction to write the review of literature, I did not discover any studies regarding professional development designed and facilitated by a technology vendor. Additional qualitative studies of this kind are warranted. While the findings of this study are generally supported by the academic literature, I found value in looking specifically at faculty experiences of professional development provided by a technology vendor.
This approach to examining faculty experiences of professional development provides a different perspective for understanding the faculty’s needs and desires and for discovering what experiences are meaningful to their learning.

An opportunity for future research lies in an examination of faculty experiences of professional development programs that have been recognized as exemplary. For example, in addition to the Exemplary Course Program and Award, Blackboard offers a Staff Development Award that honors individuals and institutions that use various Blackboard solutions to support faculty learning and other types of professional development. Future studies should examine faculty experiences of these professional development programs using transformative learning theory as the faculty actively participate in the sessions. I would like to know more about the learning experiences of the participants in these professional development programs, if/how learning is triggered, and if learning can be designated as transformative.

Another promising area for future research lies in the examination of faculty’s learning experiences in other types of Blackboard-facilitated professional development and professional development provided by other educational technology vendors. The findings of this study indicate that all faculty will learn in Blackboard-provided professional development. However, it is reasonable to question how occurrences of learning will vary as facets of the professional development change, such as the content or presenter. More research using transformative learning theory is needed to determine similarities and differences in the learning experiences of faculty as they participate in other types of vendor-provided professional development.

The faculty participants in this study were all seasoned college and university teachers with several years of online teaching experience. Utilizing the transformative learning theory, future research should consider examining the learning experiences of faculty who are new to
online teaching and learning. Because all of the participants in this study have existing frames of reference regarding their online teaching practice, additional research is warranted to examine the learning experiences of faculty who have no existing frames of reference for teaching online.

The faculty in this study came to teach online in different ways. An opportunity for future research may focus on the reasons for why faculty begin teaching online. In this study, two faculty participants’ jobs changed into jobs that support online learning and two others pursued online teaching because they felt a need to become proficient in online teaching to get and keep a job. Future studies may extend the ideas presented in this study by analyzing how professional development programs prepare and support teachers in their first year(s) of teaching online.

Five of the six participants in this study teach in the community college setting. Future research should extend the present study by examining the learning experiences of faculty who teach at community colleges versus those who teach at universities. Additionally, some of the faculty in this study are administrators with some teaching responsibilities, whereas other participants are strictly faculty in teaching roles. Future studies should extend the present study by exploring the learning experiences of those whose primary role is teaching versus those whose primary role is administrative.

This study included faculty participants in Blackboard-facilitated professional development who stated that they changed their teaching practices based on knowledge gained in the professional development experience. Because these faculty found the professional development beneficial to practice, the results of this study highlight faculty experiences that are largely positive. Opportunities for future research lie in examining the experiences of faculty
who have a less positive view, or those faculty who stated that they did not have a change in their practice based on their experience of the professional development.

In this study, catalysts for learning occurred both during and after the professional development events. In particular, Brandon noted that his participation in this research caused him to engage in reflection and critical thinking about his experience in the Blackboard professional development. Aspects of Brandon’s learning were changed by the phenomenon of the research. Future studies should examine faculty experiences of professional development with regular and frequent interviews spaced over time.

To provide additional suggestions for future research, I have included a critique of my study to highlight the challenges that I experienced during the research process. The critique is followed by a discussion of limitations of the study. I believe the recommendations for future research, the lessons that I learned, and the noted limitations are worthy of consideration when planning or designing potential studies.

**Critical Reflection on the Research**

As part of my own learning from having gone through the process of conducting the interviews and writing the narratives, I reflected on the experience of conducting research. In preparing the interview protocols and my own mind set for the participant interviews, I was delighted to see how the transformative learning theory fit with my research goals. As the interviews took place, there were times that I was excited because I could see that transformative learning had taken place for the faculty participants. I was equally disappointed when the indication of a participant’s learning was less evident. While I analyzed the data, it was apparent that both Rachel and Richard experienced learning during the Blackboard professional development, but they did not have transformative learning experiences. I was not concerned
that the theory had in some way fallen short of helping me to discover transformative learning in these two faculty participant’s data; however, I feared that my own shortsightedness in designing the interview protocols or asking appropriate follow-up questions had in some way impeded my ability to draw out details from Rachel and Richard that would reveal transformational learning. At this point however, the interviews were over and I was left to work with the data that I had in hand.

This feeling of doubt led me to another problem. I questioned if I had prioritized transformative learning and minimized informative learning. I noticed that writing the narratives for the four faculty whose data indicated transformative learning was somewhat easy and enjoyable. Even though Rachel did not undergo transformative learning, her experiences were positive. During the interviews and in a follow-up email communication, she indicated that she hoped to plan for and participate in future Blackboard Days at her institution. Writing her narrative was challenging, but less so than writing Richard’s narrative. I struggled with seeing how Richard had learned at all. Before I began writing his narrative, I had feelings of anxiety because I vividly remembered our interviews. I recalled that Richard did not remember much about the Blackboard Day professional development event, but what he did remember was not good. He was not the only faculty participant who shared a low critical point or other negative experience during a professional development event; however, I was concerned that I would not be able to write Richard’s narrative without Richard or others feeling that I had portrayed him negatively. I felt a strong desire to make sure that Richard knew his learning experiences were valuable to me and that I hoped they were valuable to him. I thoroughly appreciated the opportunity to learn more about him during each interview. I valued his honesty and the candid way that he expressed himself. Nonetheless, I had a difficult time reconciling my own feelings
and concern about how Richard would feel when reading the narrative that encompassed the
details of his experience at the Blackboard Day.

As explained in Chapter 3, one of the ways I ensured the quality of my study involved
member checking. The informed consent form explained that if a faculty participant desired, he
or she would have the opportunity to review a three to ten page written summary that was
anticipated to be each participant’s case. During the final interview, I reminded the faculty
participants that I would contact them in a few weeks after I had completed the narrative of their
data to provide them with an option to review the narrative and share their feedback with me.
Because participation in this aspect of the study was optional, I hoped that Richard would pass
on my offer. After emailing each of the faculty participants an invitation to review his or her
narratives, Richard replied expressing a desire to read his narrative. I worried about how
Richard would interpret his narrative. I was specifically concerned about he would react when
he saw that his learning was not transformative and that he did not
progress through the
overarching stages of transformative learning. I was apprehensive that he would view his
informative learning as inferior to transformative learning, and I did not desire this view. I did
not want for Richard to interpret that his learning was somehow less valid or valuable.

Knowing what I know now, if I were to do this study again, I would more clearly
communicate to the faculty participants that part of my analysis of their learning would include
classifying their learning being either informative or transformative. I would provide more
details about the theoretical framework to help them better understand the study. I would make
it clear that informative learning is not inferior to transformative learning. I would also consider
requiring the member checking component of the quality assurance process, asking faculty to
review his or her narrative rather than leaving this as an optional aspect of participating in the
study. The faculty participants who chose to review their narratives provided meaningful insight into what I had written. The feedback was helpful to me and ultimately made the narratives better because the faculty indicated necessary edits to better capture the essence of their learning experiences. The communication with Richard also relieved my concerns because there was no evidence that my fears were valid. He assured me that he was in no way offended by or disappointed in his narrative.

Limitations

The retrospective nature of the research created a challenge I had not anticipated. I found that it was difficult to determine when learning was triggered and when the learning occurred. There were times that it was clear that both events occurred during the professional development. At other times it seemed that learning was sparked during the professional development event but that learning actually happened sometime afterwards. Whether the participants’ transformations took place during or sometime after the professional development event or over the course of the three interviews is unknown.

Another challenge I faced is that for each faculty participant, varying amounts of time had passed between their participation in the Blackboard professional development and the interviews. Some faculty participants were more thorough and candid as they shared the recollections of their experience than the others were. I wonder how each participant’s recollection of his or her experience might have been different had I been able to conduct the interviews sooner after the professional development event. Regardless, it is difficult to determine retrospectively the exact emotions or feelings of any faculty participant during the Blackboard professional development. Furthermore, I did not collect data specific to the date of a faculty’s participation in a Blackboard professional development. As a consequence I was not
able to examine similarities and differences, if any, in individual experiences based on the passage of time between the professional development event and the interviews.

**Conclusion**

Professional development for online teaching and learning is prevalent across higher education and is the primary way that faculty prepare for moving from face-to-face instruction to teaching online (Allen & Seaman, 2011, November). Some institutions have even distinguished themselves by the quality professional development programs that they offer. Yet evidence presented in this study suggests not all professional development is helpful and some faculty feel unsupported. These juxtaposed facts combined with my own personal and professional experiences caused me to pose the guiding questions of this research.

This study was my own attempt to investigate how faculty learn to teach online through formal professional development and what experiences in the professional development help them to transform their beliefs and practices about online teaching and learning. Using Mezirow’s (1991, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2009a, 2009b) transformative learning theory as a guide, I conducted a series of three interviews with six faculty to discover their experiences in formal professional development designed and facilitated by Blackboard. I examined individual faculty data and performed a cross-case analysis to determine if learning occurred. Whereas all of the faculty participants in this study experienced learning and four of the six faculty experienced a transformation of their beliefs and/or practices, the findings of this study indicate there is no simple, straightforward approach for designing the perfect professional development. The findings of this study show that each participant’s experience of the Blackboard professional development was unique. There were common themes among triggers for learning, but the
critical incidents for each faculty were unique. The entire participant group considered the professional development to be a learning experience.

In addition to professional development, the most commonly cited support for learning to teach online was learning from and with other people. Most faculty participants did not mention any hindrances to their learning. Those faculty who did experience difficulties stated that unsupportive peers and limited time were barriers to their learning for online instruction.

The findings of this study provide a few implications for the design and facilitation of professional development for online teaching and learning. Faculty find meaning in professional development that includes examples and contextualized presentations of content. Additionally, opportunities to experience learning with others provides a means for sharing information not necessarily captured in the content of the professional development. Learning with and from others also provides faculty with a potential support for transforming their own assumptions. Finally, faculty learning is triggered in different ways and learning may not begin during the professional development event. Faculty seek ongoing support for online teaching and learning after the professional development ends. The opportunities to support faculty as they learn to teach online do not begin and end with single professional development events or ongoing programs. This study confirms the complex nature of transformational learning and suggests that creating meaningful opportunities to support learning is not an uncomplicated task.
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS
Interview 1: Influences for teaching online and learning how to teach online

First, I would like to clarify any details about the research and process and to answer any questions you may have. The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze faculty member’s lived experiences of learning to teach online through formal professional development. I will use the lens of transformative learning theory to guide the research.

Today is the first in a set of three interviews. In the first interview, I will learn more about your background. I will also focus on the influences in your experiences for coming to teach online. We’ll also explore how you learned to teach online. The following two interviews will build on your responses and the discussion we have today. I expect the conversation will take 45 minutes to an hour. I will record our session today using the integrated recording feature in Collaborate. (Review informed consent process and get signature or remind participant about signature if form has already been signed).

I have some predetermined questions that I plan to ask and I have provided you with a copy of these questions ahead of time. I may ask questions in a different order than what is on your copy and I may ask some follow-up questions. Your responses to these questions will remain confidential, and if I quote you in the dissertation, I will utilize a pseudonym. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Demographics questionnaire completed in advance.
2. Tell me a little about your current teaching position.
   a. What do you teach?
   b. What are your primary job responsibilities?
3. How is online teaching and learning viewed and supported by your fellow faculty where you teach? By your administration?
4. Tell me about what drew you to teaching online.
5. Please tell me about how your online teaching practices have evolved over time.
6. What do you remember about the Blackboard professional development session?
   a. Are there any features you remember the presenter showing you?
   b. Are there any activities you recall?
7. Please tell me about anyone or anything that has influenced your thoughts or ideas about the professional development (e.g. your own learning experiences, your previous teaching experiences, other faculty, your family, your friends, etc.)?
8. Describe the preparation, both formal and informal, you have received for teaching online in general. Overall, what kinds of investments have you made to prepare for teaching online?
9. Besides professional development, what supports would you identify in your overall experiences for learning to teach online?
10. What has gotten in the way of your learning to teach online and your online teaching practices? What or who would you characterize as hindrances?
11. Looking back over your experiences of learning to teach online, what elements of learning did you look forward to? What challenges did you anticipate encountering?
12. Through online teaching and learning, what hopes and goals did you have for yourself, your students, in general?
13. How have your actual experiences learning to teach online compared to what you envisioned it to be?
14. As your teaching practices have evolved over time, are there particular experiences that have transformed your beliefs, practices, and assumptions about online teaching?
15. Please share your thoughts about online teaching and learning before and after you participated in the Bb professional development.

**Interview 2: Critical incidents at the Blackboard Professional Development**

Let me begin by expressing my gratitude for your time and answers during the last interview. Also, I would like to clarify any details about the research and process and to answer any questions you may have. As you may recall, the purpose of this study is to explore and analyze faculty member’s lived experiences of learning to teach online through formal professional development. I will use the lens of transformative learning theory to guide the research.

Today is the second in a set of three interviews. In the second interview, I ask some questions about events you felt were significant in the Blackboard professional development. I expect the conversation will take 45 minutes to an hour. I will record our session today using the integrated recording feature in Collaborate. *(Review informed consent process and get signature or remind participant about signature if form has already been signed).*

I have some predetermined questions that I plan to ask and I have provided you with a copy of these questions ahead of time. I may ask questions in a different order than what is on your copy and I may ask some follow-up questions. Your responses to these questions will remain confidential, and if I quote you in the dissertation, I will utilize a pseudonym. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Thinking back about the professional development session, please describe one high point, low point, or unexpected experience – one you recall as being particularly good, bad, or surprising. Please elaborate on what happened.
   a. How did the experience begin?
   b. How did it end?
   c. Why do you think it happened?
2. Why do you consider this to be a high point/low point/unexpected event?
3. How did you feel while this was happening?
4. As you consider this experience, did you consult other people or resources to vet your ideas or feelings? Did you seek out other points of view about the event?
5. What do you remember as being so good, bad, or surprising about the experience as it was happening? What did you learn from this experience?
6. What would you do differently if it were to occur again?
7. Do you consider the Blackboard professional development to be a learning experience?
   a. If so, what did you learn?
   b. If so, in what ways did the experience change your beliefs, attitudes, or feelings about teaching online?
Interview 3: After the Blackboard professional development and lasting practices

Thank you for your time and answers during the previous two interviews. Before we begin, I would like to clarify any details about the research and process and to answer any questions you may have. As you may recall, the purpose of this study is to explore and analyze faculty member’s lived experiences of learning to teach online through formal professional development. I will use the lens of transformative learning theory to guide the research.

Today is the last in a set of three interviews. In the second interview, I ask some questions about events you felt were significant in the Blackboard professional development. I expect the conversation will take 45 minutes to an hour. I will record our session today using the integrated recording feature in Collaborate. *(Review informed consent process and get signature or remind participant about signature if form has already been signed).*

I have some predetermined questions that I plan to ask and I have provided you with a copy of these questions ahead of time. I may ask questions in a different order than what is on your copy and I may ask some follow-up questions. Your responses to these questions will remain confidential, and if I quote you in the dissertation, I will utilize a pseudonym. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Since our last conversation, are there any thoughts that struck you about the critical incident (one high point/low point/unexpected event you had – one you recall as being particularly good/bad/surprising) in the Blackboard Day professional development that you want to share?
2. In thinking again about the Blackboard-facilitated professional development, can you describe how you viewed your experience during and in the time immediately following? What do you think about the experience in retrospect?
3. Was the Blackboard-facilitated professional development helpful for your learning? Did it hinder your learning?
4. In your opinion, would your experience with the Blackboard professional development have unfolded in the same way if it were to occur again this year knowing what you know now? How has this particular learning experience influenced your current online teaching practices?
5. What is still significant about this experience for you now?
6. Tell me about if/how you have done things differently as a result of the PD experience.
7. What, if any, recommendations would you give to Blackboard for improving learning to teach online through faculty professional development?
8. Is there anything else you want to add that we have not talked about that would help me understand more about your learning experiences in the Blackboard-facilitated professional development or your overall learning experiences for teaching online?
APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL NOTICE
May 22, 2014

Misty H. Cobb
ELPTS
College of Education
The University of Alabama

Re: IRB # 14-OR-150 (Revision) “Learning to Teach Online: A Study of Faculty’s Lived Experiences in Transformative Professional Development, by Misty H. Cobb”

Dear Ms. Cobb:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has reviewed the revision to your previously approved expedited protocol. The board has approved the change in your protocol.

Please remember that your approval period expires one year from the date of your original approval, April 30, 2014, not the date of this revision approval.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Carriamato T. Myles, MSM, CIRM, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer
Office for Research Compliance
The University of Alabama
Informed Consent

Study title: Learning to teach online: A study of faculty’s lived experiences in transformative professional development

Misty H. Cobb, doctoral candidate

You are being asked to take part in a research study.

This study is called “Learning to teach online: A study of faculty’s lived experiences in transformative professional development.” Misty H. Cobb, who is a graduate student at the University of Alabama, is doing the study. Professor Clair Major, who is a professor of Education at the University of Alabama, is supervising Mrs. Cobb.

Description of the Study

This study is being done to find out how faculty learn to teach online through formal professional development provided by Blackboard. Of particular interest is what aspects of a faculty’s learning experiences help to transform their assumptions, beliefs, and practices about their online teaching.

This knowledge is important because faculty members face a multitude of professional development options for online teaching and selecting the best option is not an easy task. Additionally, many higher education institutions spend significant time and budget to plan and implement professional development for faculty who teach online. Because this research involves faculty who have participated in a particular type of professional development facilitated by Blackboard and have stated that their learning helped them to transform their teaching practices, findings from this study can be used for the purposes of professional development programming change and overall improvement to better meet the needs of online faculty. The results of this study will help higher education institutions understand better ways to help faculty learn to teach online.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?

You have been asked to be in this study because you participated in formal professional development facilitated by Blackboard in 2013 or 2014. More than 30 higher education institutions participated in Blackboard sponsored “Faculty Day” or “Never Stop Learning Tour” events where formal professional development sessions were delivered. The investigator worked with a primary contact at a subset of these institutions to distribute a web survey to faculty who participated in the professional development session(s).

In the web survey, you indicated that you changed your beliefs or practices about online teaching and/or that you have incorporated something you learned in the Blackboard-facilitated professional development into your teaching practices. Additionally, you indicated your willingness and interest to participate in this research study to examine further your learning experiences specifically for learning to teach online.

Additional sampling may be required to reach an appropriate sample size of six to eight people. If necessary, the investigator applied additional criteria, such as a specified number of years online teaching experience.
How many people will be in this study?
Six to eight other people will be in this study.

What will I be asked to do in this study?
If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a one-page demographics worksheet and to participate in three, 45-60 minute recorded interviews that I will conduct using a web conferencing tool with integrated telephony.

How much time will I spend being this study?
Each interview should take about 45-60 minutes. It will also take you about 5-10 minutes to complete the demographic worksheet. The entire study will take less than 4 hours of your time over three to four weeks.

If you wish to be involved in seeing the data as it is being drafted for the final document, then the investigator will contact you within a few months after the third interview to provide details for you to critique a 3-10 page piece of writing. This exchange between you and the investigator is intended to allow you to share your thoughts about how the piece of writing represents your experiences and contributions. It is expected that this review of written data will require 45-60 minutes.

Will being in this study cost me anything?
The only cost to you from this study is your time.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?
You will not be compensated for being in this study.

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?
Little or no risk is foreseen. A pseudonym will be used in the dissertation to quote you or describe your learning experiences as shared in the interviews.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?
Although you will not benefit personally from being in the study, you may feel good about knowing that you have helped other faculty identify and/or higher education institutions plan and implement meaningful professional development for learning to teach online.

What are the benefits to science or society?
This study will help higher education institutions to be more helpful to faculty regarding the planning and implementation of meaningful professional development for learning to teach online. Related secondary-benefits may include improved overall online course quality and improved student learning outcomes.

How will my privacy be protected?
Conducting the interview in a private web conference that is accessible only through personal invitation protects your privacy. You will also receive a copy of predetermined interview
questions prior to each interview. The investigator may ask the questions in a different order than what is on your copy and the investigator may ask additional follow-up questions.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**
As previously mentioned, the interviews will be recorded. The recording will be secure and accessed only with the investigator's personal username and password. The investigator will transcribe the interviews for data coding and analysis purposes. Pseudonyms and/or ID numbers will be used to identify interview data and any written description of the data in the final dissertation document. All data will be stored on a personal computer accessed only through entry of the investigator's personal username and password. All raw data and other identifying information, including recordings and transcripts, will be maintained for three years after the dissertation is complete, then subsequently destroyed.

**What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?**
The alternative to being in this study is not to participate.

**What are my rights as a participant in this study?**
Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. There will be no effect on your relations with the University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board ("the IRB") is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

**Who do I call if I have questions or problems?**
If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study right now, please ask them. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study later on, please call the investigator, Misty W. Cobb at 256-463-2975 (home office) or 256-282-2763 (mobile), or the research advisor, Dr. Claire Major at 205-348-1152 (office).

If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at [http://oasp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html](http://oasp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html) or email the Research Compliance office at [participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu](mailto:participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu).

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions. I agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.
I agree to participate in recorded interviews.  _____ Yes  _____ No

Signature of Research Participant ___________________________ Date __________

Signature of Investigator ___________________________ Date __________