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Exploring Experiences of Diverse Faculty With Diverse Students in Distance Education

by
Theresa West

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University
2019

Approval Page

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Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

Where another author's ideas have been presented in this applied dissertation, I have acknowledged the author's ideas by citing them in the required style.

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Theresa West

Name

April 17, 2019

Date

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Abstract

Exploring Experiences of Diverse Faculty With Diverse Students in Distance Education. Theresa West, 2019: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. Keywords: faculty, diverse students, distance education

This study aims to explore faculty's experiences regarding teaching methods and student-teacher interaction. The interaction between the majority groups and diverse (minority) groups on the college and university campuses needs to be addressed in order for colleges to achieve the universal goal of education for all (Akombo, 2013). Such interactions can be achieved through a curriculum that fosters cultural perspectives within the college communities (Akombo, 2013). Due to the diversity and pluralism of educational environments, academic faculty must be able to discuss multiple cultural perspectives in the classroom (Akombo, 2013). For this reason, the Roger's Diffusion of Innovation Theory will be used to explore the experiences of diverse faculty with diverse students. Moreover, this diffusion of innovation will empower faculty to establish a platform that advocates cultural competence as well as adopts best practices for cultural awareness and inclusion. In view of that, the purpose of this study is to explore the following: (a) faculty experiences with diverse students in an institute of higher learning, (b) faculty experiences cultivating student learning, and (c) instructor's resources and best practices that are available for diverse faculty in addressing student learning. The target population of this study will consist of administrators, faculty, instructional designers, and online success coaches from business technology program at the institute of higher learning.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of Problem

The problem to be researched in this study is the gap between experiences and interactions of culturally diverse faculty with culturally diverse students in distance education. According to Tuncel (2017), effective teaching of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds requires more than special teaching methods. It requires a new perspective that understands the role of language and culture learning (Tuncel, 2017). In particular, six features stand out as necessary to create a consistent framework for professional development initiatives in schools which seek an effective solution for the increasingly diversifying student population (Tuncel, 2017). These features include understanding how learners construct knowledge, learning about the lives of students, having sociocultural awareness, refusing stereotypes related to differences, using appropriate teaching strategies, and being fair to all students (Villages & Lucas, 2007). For example, the cognitive dimension provides information about different cultures, the affective dimension teaches about responses to problems during the process of adaptation to different cultures and what needs to be done to overcome these problems, and the behavioral dimension improves the potential of the individual for effective communication with different cultures (Tuncel, 2017). Therefore, with this diversity, there is the potential for development of cross-cultural understandings and tolerance, as well as inequities and conflicts between groups of students (Gunn, 2016).

Schellen and King (2014), believe that as student population in U.S. public schools becomes more diverse, teachers must be ready to face the demands of educating these students. According to Vespa, Armstrong, and Medina (2018), despite slowing

population growth, particularly after 2030, the U.S. population is still expected to grow by 78 million people by 2060, crossing the 400-million threshold in 2058. Consistent with national and international diversity trends, K-12 classrooms in the United States reflect these shifts toward increasing levels of diversity and continue to grow with students who represent a rich abundance of cultural and personal experiences (Gunn, 2016).

Phenomenon of interest. This phenomenon is of interest to the researcher because there is a gap between diverse students and diverse faculty representation in the distance education environment. Moreover, there are potentially greater gaps between the cultural experiences of teachers and students, which, without the cultivation of imagination, could hinder participants' abilities to learn with and from one another (English, 2016). For this reason, it is important to explore how the role of faculty cultural values, beliefs, communication styles, and teaching styles impact student learning in distance education. There are two kinds of teaching styles that impact student learning such as teacher-centered and learner-centered teaching styles. First, teacher-centered teaching styles are driven by the assumption that the learner is naturally passive and is turned active after being stimulated (Kovačević and Akbarov, 2016). In other words, the teacher is engaged in designing an atmosphere where desired behaviors are stimulated and the undesired behaviors are discouraged (Kovačević & Akbarov, 2016). Second, learner-centered teaching styles are driven by the assumption that every learner has an unlimited potential for personal growth. Therefore, the learner's experience is of great importance, and the learner is responsible for her/his own actions (Kovačević & Akbarov, 2016).

Even though curricula are designed to inspire, engage, challenge, and prepare diverse students for a future, meaningful content is yet to be determined with any accuracy Madden, Wilks, Maione, Loader, and Robinson (2012). In the past, the school's curriculum programs had comprised teacher-centered units based on chronological Key Learning Areas (KLAs) (Madden et. al., 2012). Moreover, the focus in education was centered on the role of teachers (by way of "teacher-centered" or "direct instruction") in enhancing student learning.

Today, the process of education has significantly changed due to the technological advancement Willis, Kestell, Grainger, and Missingham (2013). Moreover, advanced technologies, render distance learning as an excellent alternative to traditional education, thereby leading to the creation of virtual learning approaches (Alalshaikh, 2015). According to Soomro, Zai, and Jafri (2015), faculty is the key stakeholder in educational system that can introduce technological innovation in teaching-learning processes in a fast, effective, and sustainable manner. In addition, higher education faculty need not only to be familiar with emerging technologies such as Web 2.0 tools in order to become enough so that they can utilize such technologies meaningfully and efficiently to enhance their teaching practices (Soomro, Zai, & Jafri, 2015).

Specifically, Web 2.0 functionality and tools are becoming commonplace in the lives of students with school administrators becoming increasingly pressured to offer engaging and collaborative technologies to enhance this phenomenon (Madden et. al., 2012). Even though it is expected from teachers to utilize emerging technologies in their instructional practices, it is still not clear whether teachers have the skillset to integrate these tools into their instructional design (Kale & Goh, 2014). Murray, et. al. (2016),

suggest that higher education especially those of lacking in faculty diversity have exposure to content and teaching methods that are conducive to understanding critical concepts related to diversity. For example, a curriculum provides teachers with a legitimized canon of knowledge, perspectives, values and interactions between people (Hollins, 2013). One approach involves studying the different stances that are present in a multicultural society (Broadbent & Brown, 2012). Another approach includes introducing more courses of diversity into the curriculum at every college and university in the global institutions that will enable students and faculty to view issues and concepts from a variety of perspectives (Akombo, 2013). Based on recent research, designing a curriculum that recognizes a plurality of religious and non-religious worldviews has not been straightforward (Billingsley et. al., 2014). Consequently, as teachers play a salient role in delivering the curriculum to the students, their internal dilemmas and views are of increasing interest—especially regarding issues in dispute, where conflicting narratives debated outside the classrooms coexist (Yemini, et. al., 2015). Particularly, the demand for educators that are aware of diversity needs across the curriculum is on the increase in many parts of the world (Akombo, 2013).

Background and justification. The issue of faculty acquiring cross-cultural awareness is not a new phenomenon. For instance, cultural diversity in the classroom may refer not only to the students but also to the teacher; for example, a teacher is exposed to cultural diversity when teaching students in a different region or country (Turner, 2013). Even though recognition and celebration of cultural diversity is important, cultural awareness begins with knowledge of cultural diversity, respect for that diversity, and the general recognition that ethnic groups have different values (Evans &

Gunn, 2011). According to Skinner (1971), culture is a collection of the contingencies of reinforcement into which individuals are born and to which they are exposed throughout their lives. The contingencies are part of both the social and the physical environment and may not be readily observable, especially in the case of social contingencies in which the reinforcers are values and ideas that generate the behavior. Different cultures offer unique contingency environments that shape and influence individuals' behavior (Glenn, 2004; Skinner, 1971). Likewise, Zivkovic and Zivkovic (2017), believe that culture is a set of shared values, beliefs, and procedures that guide the members of a certain society and differentiate them from members of other societies. Particularly, world history demonstrates cultural differences often lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, oppression, and even genocide—particularly for individuals and groups that differ from mainstream society in their ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic background (Gunn, 2016).

According to Walker (2013), a review of the relevant literature shows a number of studies on raising culturally responsive teachers. For instance, Walker (2013) investigates how prospective teachers can learn about culturally responsive teaching, and stating that culturally responsive teaching is a central component of teacher training programs and requires serious effort in the preparation process. Next, Ebersole, Kanahale-Mossmon, and Kawakami (2016), go beyond theoretical study, examining themes such as conducting culturally responsive activities, moving toward culturally responsive teaching as a perspective and being a culturally responsive teacher and conclude that it is necessary to reconceptualize culture based courses to deepen teacher perspectives rather than merely enhancing teaching activities which support culturally responsive teaching and learning (Ebersole, et. al., 2016). Moreover, supporting students in understanding and

valuing culture requires engagement in deeper and more meaningful experiences (Gunn, 2016). Unfortunately, teachers often adopt a “tacos and eggrolls” approach to multicultural curricula, in which students learn about cultural difference through celebratory holidays and cuisine (Gunn, 2016). However, teachers should adopt a multicultural curricular approach aimed at building bridges of understanding regarding diverse linguistic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds (Gunn, 2016). Particularly, by empowering teachers to use a critical lens to view curriculum choices, books, and materials, schools must move beyond the perspective of celebratory multiculturalism to a critical multiculturalism (Gunn, 2016). Specifically, one of the most important factors influencing teacher knowledge and growth is on-the-job training and experience, the phrase “faculty teach the way they were taught” has become an unexamined maxim in higher education research and practice (Oleson & Hora, 2014).

According to Singh (2014), a teacher’s professional learning orientation consists of not only beliefs about learning, but also how these beliefs interact with his experiences and his practices as teachers and learners. Furthermore, the intersection of teacher’s values, their learning practices and their specific experiential contexts creates a powerful combination that determines decisions on teaching (Singh, 2014). As a matter of fact, values represent not just what a teacher thinks to be true about teaching and learning, but what they give high priority to their own practices (Singh, 2014). According to Li (2013), a cultural approach to professional learning treats culture as a vital source for reshaping the politics of identity and difference through the redesign of teaching practices in ways that enhance Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students’ learning experiences and school success. This approach emphasizes building teachers’ knowledge base in

language and culture, their ability to recognize their own cultural practices and relate to those of their students, as well as enhancing their performance and action in empowering their students to work against cultural dominance and bias (Li, 2008). According to Li (2013), this cultural approach to professional learning consists of three interrelated stages. Stage one is the cultural reconciliation stage which addresses how to support teachers as they come to know themselves and others as cultural beings and reconcile with CLD students' diverse home literacies and cultures (Li, 2008). This approach emphasizes building teachers' knowledge base in language and culture, their ability to recognize their own cultural practices and relate to those of their students, as well as enhancing their performance and action in empowering their students to work against cultural dominance and bias. (Li, 2008). Stage two is the cultural translation stage which identifies the strategies, skills, and competencies that teachers need to translate this knowledge into powerful tools useful in instructional design and practice to bridge students' literacy and cultural discontinuities in and out of school (Li, 2008). This approach emphasizes building teachers' knowledge base in language and culture, their ability to recognize their own cultural practices and relate to those of their students, as well as enhancing their performance and action in empowering their students to work against cultural dominance and bias (Li, 2008). Stage three-is the cultural transformation stage that involves providing effective ways to develop critical abilities that can transform teachers from mere cultural translators into change agents who can redesign school practices that enable CLD students to become successful border-crossers who engage in syncretic or hybrid literacy practices that constitute different cultural codes, values, traditions, experiences, and languages (Li, 2013).

According to Li (2013), professional learning programs for teachers must start with teacher personal inquiry and change to help them reassess their own cultural beliefs and social positioning, and to rearticulate their own expectations for the students. Moreover, many formal and informal reform-oriented professional learning activities and programs can guide teachers into contexts and situations that offer them opportunities to acquire authentic experience and knowledge about cultural diversity, and to develop competence in validating and linking home and school literacies in their instructional designs (Li, 2013). In the same way, there are many strategies that can help teachers explore their personal histories and value systems and develop respect and value for other cultures and practices (Li, 2013). For instance, group discussions and dialogues about teachers, themselves, as cultural beings is a crucial step in teachers' cultural self-discovery as such forums provide opportunities for teachers to self-reflect and respond to questions raised by colleagues (Li, 2013). In addition to knowing themselves, professional learning programs must help teachers find effective ways to collect student social and cultural data outside of school. In addition to learning basic information about students' cultures, origins, languages, prior schooling experiences, and exposure to English, teachers of CLD students must also engage in asking critical questions such as: Who are the learners? What stereotypes exist about their cultural group? What are their cultural views of learning? What are their expectations of learning? What do learners and their families do outside school? In view of that, teachers' capacity to teach CLD students in different ways is connected to their views of themselves, their beliefs about their roles, and their perceptions about their students in classroom activities (Li, 2013). As a matter of fact, only through such self-exploration, can teachers of CLD students make

meaningful improvements in their understanding of cultural and racial diversity, as well as in developing empathetic dispositions toward their students (Li, 2013). For this reason, teachers must design online courses that requires cautious study of how people learn, what people learn and what people perceive as important to learn, depending on their culture (Gómez-Rey, et al, 2016). In the same manner, teachers should integrate new technologies in the design and delivery of online courses (Ley & Gannon-Cook, 2014). As online course design matures, more research into how instructional designers select graphics and online learner perceptions of graphics becomes increasingly relevant (Ley & Gannon-Cook, 2014). Therefore, these professional learning activities can provide an effective structure (such as common planning time, shared opportunities to examine student work, or tools for self-reflection) and a wide range of authentic experiences that can increase teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and change their instructional practice in ways that address cultural differences and support student learning (Li, 2013).

Deficiencies in the evidence. Although cultural diversity leads to individual and collective enrichment, several confrontations and misunderstandings between people can result from cultural differences, which also affect the education discipline (Gómez-Rey, et al, 2016). After an extensive review of literature by this researcher, little material could be found on how the diversity of faculty effects the student population served in campuses globally. Particularly, little empirical work exists on how faculty acquire knowledge and experience in their roles as teachers as well as how it relates to the degree these repertoires of pedagogical approaches influence classroom practice (Oleson & Hora, 2014). Consequently, the diversity of faculty has yet to reflect the student population served in campuses globally. More importantly, the current gap between

diverse student and diverse faculty representation in campuses is very concerning for higher education institutions as it is well recognized that diverse faculty are critical in the retention and productivity of diverse students (Bond et al. 2015).

Audience. The following individuals will benefit from this study are administrators, instructional designers, subject-matter experts, k-8 and high school teachers, and college professors.

Definition of Terms

Cultural competence. Cultural competence means the ability to understand the needs and norms of populations different from one's own Kumasi and Hill (2013).

Diversity. Diversity means the inclusion of different types of people (such as people of different races or cultures) in a group or organization Merriam-Webster (2018).

Emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional meanings, and to regulate emotions reflectively to promote both better emotion and thought Mayer and Salovey (1997).

Empathy. Empathy is the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Multicultural. Multicultural is of, relating to, reflecting, or adapted to diverse cultures (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Philosophy. Philosophy means the most basic beliefs, concepts, and attitudes of an individual or group (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her own ability to complete a task or reach a goal Honmore and Jadhav (2017).

Teacher self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy refers to the teacher's beliefs or convictions that they can influence how well learners learn, even to those learners who may experience barriers to learning Guskey and Passaro (1994).

Technology self-efficacy. Technology self-efficacy is the belief that one has the sufficient and correct abilities and skills to be successful when dealing with a technology related task (McDonald & Siegall, 2001).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how the diversity of faculty (culture, gender, values, beliefs, language) impacts business technology online students at the institute of higher learning. Additionally, this study will explore multicultural awareness for students from different cultures. For instance, it will focus on student's experiences, expectations, perceptions, learning preferences, and attitudes regarding teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction.

Significance of the Study

This study attempts to bridge the gap in the literature since there is lack of evidence in the literature on Hofstede cultural dimensions in relation to the diversity of faculty impacting student learning in distance education. Therefore, the significance of this study is to get students engaged thoroughly with the diversity of teachers' skills, creativity, and teaching styles (Madden, Wilks, Maione, Loader, & Robinson, 2012). In other words, understanding the set of cultural and learning/teaching features will help the educational community provide culturally sensitive instruction (Gómez-Rey, et al, 2016).

Research Questions

To study this phenomenon, the goal is to answer the following research questions:

How does the diversity of faculty impacts business technology online students at the institute of higher learning?

1. What impact does cultural backgrounds have on faculty roles at the institute of higher learning?

2. What impact does gender have on faculty roles at the institute of higher learning?

3. What impact does language have on faculty roles at the institute of higher learning?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences, behaviors, and knowledge of diverse faculty and how they interact with student learning in the distance education environment. The literature review that follows includes an extensive overview of relevant research to discuss findings and gaps in research. Conclusions and shortcomings when paired with a critical consideration of the study, establish the credibility and a framework for the design of this study is Roger's diffusion of innovation paradigm. Therefore, the literature review centers on the experiences, behaviors, and knowledge of diverse faculty and its adoption of Web 2.0 tools.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is the Diffusion of Innovation Theory. According to Rogers (2003), an innovation is an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by individuals or a social system (p. 12). According to Blumberg (2016), this bottom-up change theory postulates that there are stages leading to the adoption of innovations, starting with awareness of the need to make a change and moving forward to making the decision to adopt (or reject) the innovation. During this process, Rogers (2003) articulated five factors or intrinsic characteristics that influence an individual's decision to adopt or reject an innovation: (a) relative advantage, (b) compatibility, (c) complexity or simplicity, (d) trial ability, and (e) observability. According to Rogers (2003) the term relative advantage is the degree to which the innovation is better than what it is replacing. Furthermore, compatibility is the degree to which the innovation is consistent with the values and needs of the potential adopters (Rogers, 2003). Next,

complexity refers to the degree to which the innovation is perceived as difficult or easy to adopt (Rogers, 2003). Trial ability is the degree to which the innovation can be experimented before being adopted (Rogers, 2003). Moreover, Rogers, (2003) defines observability as the degree to which results of adopting the innovation are observable to the adopters. As a result of these intrinsic characteristics, institutions of higher education are among a growing number of industries and organizations that are continuously developing initiatives that focus on expansion Shellman and Hill (2017). As Rogers and Lucas (2016) pointed out, “We are increasingly seeing universities around the world take on the challenge of moving beyond only measuring outcomes related to academic and career success and expanding the scope of their responsibility to include students’ wellbeing and their capacity to build lives of vitality, resilience, purpose, and engagement.” For this reason, Roger’s Diffusion of Innovation Theory will be used in this study to raise multicultural awareness. More importantly, Roger’s Diffusion of Innovation will give faculty a platform that advocates cultural competence by enhancing connectivity and embracing empathy between diverse faculty and diverse students in the distance education environment. Equally important, this diffusion of innovation will strengthen institutions as well as increase student-teacher interaction around the world.

According to Kunnari and Ilomäki (2016), whenever significant changes takes place, the locus of innovations in practice can be traced to insights and initiatives by individuals and to the fact that the changes were achieved through collective negotiations and actions. Whereas, Torrance & Murphy (2017), found that it is through collaboration and mutual accountability, teachers take professional responsibility for enacting changes to practice, enhancing self-esteem and work satisfaction, increasing motivation levels, as

well as performance and retention levels (Torrance & Murphy, 2017). Therefore, to successfully make lasting changes, an on-going culture of change needs to be created at educational institutes (Kunnari & Ilomäki, 2016).

Diversifying Faculty

According to Holley (2013), increased diversity has the potential to facilitate innovation by bringing together a broad range of perspectives, insights, and ideas that can be applied across the academic disciplines. Likewise, Abdul-Raheem (2016), considers diversifying faculty equips an institution with several educators from different cultural backgrounds who have specific insight that can be shared with others regarding cultural experiences. Meaning, diversifying faculty brings a unique perspective of personal, social, and professional experiences and information that can be merged together and used to strengthen higher education (Abdul-Raheem, 2016). For this reason, studies of diversity and related educational outcomes within higher education typically focus on one or a combination of three categories such as structural diversity, interactions with diverse others, and curricular or classroom diversity (Andrew et. al. (2015). Park, Denson, & Bowman (2013), suggests that structural diversity includes socioeconomic strata that may be less apparent among demographic data, but brings students together across class lines. Next, Andrew et. al., 2015 indicate that interactions with diverse others include both formal and informal associations (e.g., as part of friendship groups, on residence hall floors, in the classroom). Afterwards, Denson's definition of curricular diversity as "intentionally structured and purposeful programmatic efforts to help students engage in diversity in the form of both ideas and people" (p. 806) includes service learning, required diversity courses, and other pedagogical practice that introduce diverse

perspectives and explore controversial issues (Andrew et. al., 2015). Consequently, faculty members' broad range of academic and socializing responsibilities invests them with unrivaled influence in determining the campus climate for learning (Reason, 2013). Specifically, when faculty foster a climate for learning that students perceive as valuing the exploration of diversity and diverse perspectives and advocating for the respect of people and issues of difference, the climate for learning will be positively related to student's openness to diversity and challenge (Andrew et. al., 2015).

According to May and LaMont (2014), much of the literature in the social and behavioral sciences over the last 30 years indicates that culture (and cultural difference) is a characteristic only of African Americans, Asians, immigrants, and Latinos. Karadağ, Kilicoğlu, and Yilmaz (2014), defines culture as a significant concept for organizations as it influences them in terms of balance, loyalty, unity, and ability. Likewise, McDevitt & Ormond (2013), agree that culture has been defined as “the values, traditions, and symbol systems of a long-standing social group that give purpose and meaning to children's daily activities and interpersonal relationships” (p. 5). According to Atilas, Gresham, and Washburn (2017), beliefs and values assist individuals in making sense of the world by shaping how new events or pieces of information are viewed. In order to create supportive environments for children, teachers need to consider how their own cultural experiences affect the way they respond to children in the classroom (Atilas, Gresham, & Washburn, 2017). As a matter of fact, when a teacher's beliefs change—from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach, for instance—it is not always reflected in their classroom practices (Miranda & Damico, 2015).

In striving to recruit diverse faculty members to serve as role models for a diverse student population, there are many studies that compare and contrast Western and Eastern (Chinese, Japanese) cultures of learning, mostly from a unilateral perspective- native of teachers on host cultures (Iftimie, 2015). Traditionally, Confucian-based cultures tend to be family-centered, hierarchical, collectivist, and value harmony—different to most Western values (Penfold & van der Veen, 2014). Specifically, the traditional Confucian educational environments tend to have large classes with a focus on passing examinations and with the teacher as the central, authoritarian figure (Penfold & van der Veen, 2014). Meaning, Confucian culture stresses the authority of the lecturer or teacher, who should not be questioned or interrupted, as these are signs of disrespect (Iftimie, 2015). As a result, Confucian way of thinking emphasizes hard work and modesty; while, the Western way of thinking places value on individual development, self-confidence, and self-expression (Iftimie, 2015). As pertaining to the Western culture, the teacher is mainly the facilitator and a guide, in which questions, comments or opinions are welcomed, as they are signs of interest (Iftimie, 2015).

Role of Online Faculty

According to Konst and Scheinin (2018), teaching is no more sharing knowledge and skills but guiding and encouraging students in lifelong learning and in a communal and collaborative way of working. In other words, teaching is getting close to coaching, being interprofessional by nature. Interprofessional teaching is a coaching approach, where the teacher is not an information provider, but more like a guide ensuring that the group searches information, shares it and examines it from viewpoints of several professions (Konst & Scheinin, 2018). In view of that, the role of the faculty is to use

dialog with students to explore the learned behavior and to be able to inspire them to learn and change (Konst & Scheinin, 2018). Although true, the role of the teacher is never uniquely defined, and its definition is influenced by many factors (Makovec, 2018). For instance, it is defined by cultural and social events and the environment, and both influence the differences that occur in the conceptions of the roles of teachers within different cultures and societies, including the geographic environment (Makovec, 2018).

The factors that influence the role of the online teacher are internal and external. Internal factors include those that influence a teacher's own perception of their role (Makovec, 2018). Therefore, internal factors that influence the role of the online teacher can be classified into two categories (a) teacher's own beliefs about which role is important and (b) teacher's expectations for their specific role (Makovec, 2018).

However, external factors include the views and expectations of the role of the online teacher, which arise within other stakeholders, such as pupils, parents, colleagues, school leaders, and the public (Makovec, 2018). For this reason, more and more universities expect teachers to meet societal demands, the demands of the professional field and to deal with a diverse new generation of students (van den Bos & Brouwer, 2014) Moreover, teachers have to adapt the teaching practices bearing in mind that the next generation is constantly in multimodal social environments (Scheinin, 2016, p. 18). To be able to adapt to these teaching practices, teachers must be redefined and connected to a plethora of diverse names such as professor, associate professor, faculty developer, instructional designer, facilitator, and subject-matter expert. According to Luo (2014), professors are academic experts who are responsible for academic matters including teaching and research and are directly responsible for related matters such as enhancing

their academic discipline; formulating teaching plans; planning curricula; teaching content research; evaluating teaching; setting standards for teaching qualifications; knowing the rules for granting of degrees; funding applications; conducting academic research; and doing academic evaluations. Additionally, professors and associate professors are the only permanent teachers and either have tenure or are on the tenure track; all other faculty (including permanent clinical faculty) are fixed-term staff whose employment is of either long or short duration; there is a high turnover of such staff (Luo, 2014). As a matter of fact, tenured professors can take a semester or a year's sabbatical leave every seven years to focus on research work and publication; this actively creates the conditions necessary for strengthening international exchanges and cooperation (Luo, 2014). However, as a faculty developer, the experience of teaching and being in the classroom has a direct effect on one's role and changes one's own way of teaching (Gregory & Burbage, 2017). Rather than completely leaving the classroom, Sullivan, et al. (2016), argue that it is important to continue to teach while in the role of faculty developer. For this reason, Butler et al. (2014) identified a reciprocal relationship between teacher and teacher educator in that each role informed the identity development of the other, a relationship that could similarly be experienced as faculty developers. For instance, working collaboratively with colleagues, faculty developers can reflect upon their teaching philosophy to unpack their practice, recognize any gaps in their teaching, and then identify changes for future teaching practices (Hegarty, 2015).

Subsequently, instructional designers are established as integral to successful design through their role as active, influential change agents, who bring their own experiences, perceptions and interpretations to the situation, and who recursively refine

both the design problem, potential solutions, and their own perspectives through the transactional process of reflection (Tracey & Boling 2013). In fact, design knowledge emerges from the accumulated episodes in an individual's history of design choices and consequences, both directly experienced and observed; these episodes have been conceptualized as design precedents (Tracey & Boling 2013).

While instructional design (ID) has traditionally viewed itself as a process-driven field, design thinking has assumed an increasingly prominent role in the discipline's discourse over the last several years (Luppicini 2003; Tracey & Boling, 2013). For instance, in previous decades, school instruction tended to focus only on course designs as well as instructional strategies that teachers will apply (Alalshaikh, 2015). Meaning, it was generally believed that such insights were sufficient for the promotion of effective learning (Yu-Chih et al., 2013). Many times, it could be challenging for an online instructor or for instructional designers to determine the specific learning styles and preferences of online students (Alalshaikh, 2015). Nevertheless, the importance of discerning these specific learning preferences must be emphasized because failure to do so could lead to too many dispersed learning styles, or assessment tools adopted inappropriately for e-learning environments (Yu-Chih et al., 2013, p. 242). In other words, as more studies were conducted in the field of learning, it became evident that teaching quality is positively associated with the characteristics of students, teaching styles, as well as the teaching environment (Yu-Chih et al., 2013). For instance, Yu-Chih et al. (2013) reported the results of a study conducted among Armenian, African, Hispanic, Hmong, Korean, Mexican, and Anglo cultures as well as Mexican-American high school and university students; all ethnic groups preferred learning that is

kinesthetic, auditory, and tactile (Yu-Chih et al., 2013). According to other studies, Asian learners are more of visual learners than verbal learners (Alalshaikh, 2015). Moreover, Armenian, Korean, and Anglo students tend to not like cooperative learning, and university-level students are more conscious of their own learning preferences in comparison with secondary school students (Yu-Chih et al., 2013). As a result, Alalshaikh (2015) maintains that it is important to note that including students from different cultural backgrounds in an online classroom can significantly impact teaching and learning styles and preferences. Also, teachers and instructional designers need to develop online course content that is culturally appropriate and culturally sensitive (Alalshaikh, 2015). Furthermore, Alalshaikh (2015) emphasizes the need for online teachers to also have the ability to deal with different cultures. Moreover, this may require that teachers and instructional designers attend culture seminars so that they will exercise prudence in terms of how they handle classes (Alalshaikh, 2015). In addition, Alalshaikh, (2015) believes that online teachers and instructional designers need to harness learning style assessment tools that are suitable for online learners considering that this could facilitate effective learning. Therefore, being culturally sensitive would also involve knowing about students' beliefs and practices so that the teachers refrain from offending them with careless instructions and examples (Alalshaikh, 2015). Likewise, Honebein & Honebein (2015) recommend that novice instructional designers need opportunities to develop reflective thinking skills that are important for professional development in alignment with design thinking. Not only is there merit in the knowledge constructed as consequence of reflection, but developing the skill of reflection is, in and of itself, a valuable learning outcome, especially for novice designers who will rely on

reflective thinking to navigate their professional practice (Honebein & Honebein, 2015). For instance, reflection (before, during, and after the design situation) serves as the dialogic bridge between the problem and the designer's knowledge derived from their personal set of precedents and in doing so, provides a springboard for design judgments, decisions, and actions (Honebein & Honebein, 2015). In a like manner, teachers are more likely to have a connection with the role of a facilitator. During the in-class activities, the role of the online teacher changes from being the conveyer of content to the class facilitator (Schwartz, 2014). Although true, more than 30% of four-year college students and over 60% of community college students will take at least one online course (Wladis et al., 2014). As a matter of fact, one of the ways that an institution can meet the growing demand for online courses is by hiring instructional designers and instructional facilitators (Shaver, 2017). Particularly, instructional facilitators (IFs) are largely graduate students with teaching experience who work under the supervision of the lead instructional designer (Shaver, 2017). Specifically, instructional facilitator's primary responsibility is to guide instructors through the course development process and support them throughout the semester (Shaver, 2017). For instance, one of the guiding principles for responsibilities for the IFs is to listen to the instructor's goals and vision for the course (Shaver, 2017). Second principle is to allow online teacher's experience and opinion to drive the course development process because it leads to a more congenial working relationship (Shaver, 2017). Third, create a relaxed atmosphere infused with humor and understanding because it disarms even the most resistant or reluctant participant (Shaver, 2017). Therefore, in the world of distance education this can be accomplished by enhancing the cognitive process of distance learning by instructional

facilitators, instructional designers and subject matter experts (Crowe et. al., 2017).

Finally, subject-matter experts (SMEs), or as they are sometimes called, subject matter specialists (SMSs), are individuals who possess knowledge (often technical or procedural in nature) that technical communicators must tap into to compose such texts as user guides, reference guides, online help, and training materials (Rice-Bailey, 2016).

Specifically, people who typically work as SMEs consist of engineers, computer programmer/analysts, technicians, and tradespeople (Rice-Bailey, 2016). According to IBM Institute for Business Value (2015), there is already a belief among subject matter experts that current computer architectures and programming paradigms must advance to take cognitive computing to the next level; including natural language processing that is a part of knowledge based/artificial augmentation systems. In the same way, it may be time for instructional designers, information technology (IT) professionals, and subject matter experts (SME) to take distance learning to a new level by incorporating what knowledge based systems have to offer in the way of administrative, tutoring, feedback and research support (Crowe et. al., 2017).

According to Lou (2014), the redefining of faculty names, online teachers have four responsibilities such as: (a) teaching, (b) conducting research, (c) establishing a model of academic life, and serving on various committees.

Teaching, includes developing and teaching curricula; participating in curriculum and program development as well as course selection, degree requirements, and discussion of students' research proposals (Luo, 2014). In consideration of these cultural learning and teachings, culturally relevant teaching aims to unfold all the learning potentials of diverse students to the fullest by validating and affirming their cultural

identity (Dwyer, 2016). Therefore, to enhance learning, online teachers must understand the importance of taking account of the background knowledge of all the cultures represented in their classrooms (Dwyer, 2016). For instance, Knowles et al. (2011) suggest that online teachers “engage in a process of mutual inquiry with adult learners rather than to transmit his or her knowledge to them” and then assess students “conformity with them” (p. 40). In addition, Penfold & van der Veen (2014) suggest that online teachers need to understand the cultural traditions of their learners and seek to develop suitable learning strategies to bring out the best in their students especially in a multicultural environment. For this reason, King and Butler (2015), recommend that online teachers co-teach diversity courses as they relate to their specific fields. Specifically, the co-teaching method would provide preservice teachers an opportunity to be exposed to more perspectives, voices, and expertise on such subjects as exceptional children, immigrant populations, English as a second language, and historical factors informing education (King & Butler, 2015). As online teachers explain these aspects of diversity, students will receive more specific understandings of diverse populations as they relate to education, and portions of the course will not be eliminated based on bias or additional time spent on a single subject (King & Butler, 2015). In addition to co-teaching, it is important for online teachers to interpret student behaviors in light of different cultural beliefs and traditions. In the same manner, teachers also need to know appropriate strategies to elicit students’ prior knowledge (Li, 2013). In fact, to become effective teachers of CLD students, online teachers need to be able to recognize students’ strengths (e.g., languages used by the students and their family members, the students’ cross-cultural experiences, and their first and second language history) in areas often

excluded from monolingual contexts (Li, 2013). The reason is that different cultures have different literacy expectations, traditions, and practices as well as different oral and written skills. These diverse traditions, practices, and skills can go unrecognized if teachers do not know how to integrate them in instruction (Li, 2013).

Equally important, translating cultural differences in instruction is a demanding process that requires teacher reflection and inquiry, formal training and informal learning, and extensive support (Li, 2013). According to May and LaMont (2014), culture is certainly not confined exclusively to ethnic and racial minorities. In fact, Ho, et.al (2013) acknowledge that cross-cultural studies indicate that culture shapes the style, content, accessibility, and emotionally expressiveness of memory for an event over the long term. For this reason, classrooms are changing by including students of various races, backgrounds, religions and abilities (Moore & Hansen, 2012). Furthermore, Morgan (2006) confirms that social or ethnic groups may provide experiences showing differences in norms and behavior of other cultures. Meanwhile, Abdul-Raheem (2016), maintains that a learned experience based on multicultural interaction with colleagues develops a knowledge based of cultural encounters. Next, continually and actively conducting research and publishing the results; seeking research projects and funding to provide research opportunities for doctoral students (Luo, 2014). Afterward, setting an example in order to establish a model of academic life for students (Luo, 2014). Finally, participating in services that assist departments, schools, the university, and society such as serving on various university committees and faculty bodies; occasionally online teachers will also be responsible for academic-related administrative duties (Luo, 2014).

Therefore, the role of the teacher is ever changing to meet the demands of the 21st century.

According to Van de Putte and De Schauwer (2013), inclusion is argued to be a difficult and multifaceted process and should be interpreted in different ways in different contexts. Even though much research has been done on inclusive education, the voice of online teachers with experience in an inclusive classroom is often not heard (Van de Putte & De Schauwer, 2013). Through shared leadership and decision-making, principals can include the voices from those closest to the core work of schools (Flood & Angelle, 2017). Although principal appointment of online teachers to a leadership role is not reflective of the philosophy of shared leadership or shared decision-making, principal selection is a common path to leadership for many teachers (Flood & Angelle, 2017). Although true, the key role of leadership originates from faculty teachers who ultimately must create and implement innovations in order for change to be accomplished or for vision to become reality (Venance, et. al., 2014). Furthermore, the extent of teacher leadership in a school depends largely on a principal's openness to shared leadership (Flood & Angelle, 2017). Meaning, this kind of teacher leadership practice may help develop a learning community, building networks of support and expertise to strengthen school organization (Torrance, 2018). For that reason, the understandings of teacher leadership are continuously evolving, in formal and informal leadership roles in different schools' contexts (Szeto & Cheng, 2017). Particularly, a number of definitions of teacher leadership focus on pedagogy in which teacher leadership influence is exercised largely in the classroom or learning context, through relationships with peers, identifying areas for improvement through critical reflection in and on practice (Torrance & Forde, 2017).

With that being said, teacher leadership, often linked to school reform and improvement, has become an expectation of teacher preparation (Scales & Rogers, 2017). As a matter of fact, incorporating teacher leadership into hierarchical management systems can be seen as a way of harnessing the potential flexibility and creativity of fluid forms of leadership, while mitigating the risks of unpredictability in teacher leadership (O'Brien, 2016). Specifically, teacher leadership has been viewed as a list of roles and responsibilities, as a process within the school or within the classroom, and as mediating construct between the principal and student outcomes (Flood & Angelle, 2017).

According to Shillingstad et. al. (2015), teacher leaders who step into the role of mentor face significant responsibilities. For instance, many teachers are released from their full-time teaching responsibilities to serve in the role of mentor to new teachers in their buildings or districts (Shillingstad, et. al., (2015). Whether their roles are assigned formally or informally, mentors assist in shaping the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of their mentees and colleagues (Shillingstad, et. al., 2015). Furthermore, mentors step up and accept the responsibility for the learning of each and every student, act as role models for their colleagues and mentees, and guide and support them in the quest to improve school culture and achievement (“Teacher leadership: New roles for teacher leaders,” 2013). In view of that, effective teacher leaders draw upon their extensive knowledge of curriculum, best practices, and current research and courageously share their experiences and expertise with their mentees and peers (Shillingstad, et. al., 2015). Therefore, teacher leaders are often considered to be those with formal leadership roles (King, 2017).

Expectations of Online Faculty

According to Makovec (2018), teachers' expectations are influenced by the experience and knowledge they acquire during their education for the teaching profession, as during this period teachers begin to build their professional image of themselves as a teacher. Meaning, teachers' expectations for their role are often associated with the environment's expectations for their role, and finding a distinction between what actually influenced a particular role—the teacher's expectations or the expectations of the surroundings (or the important others)—is difficult (Makovec, 2018). For this reason, faculty expect to create lesson plans, develop online courses, and facilitate online courses. Even though faculty are expected to perform instructional duties such as design, develop, implement, and evaluate instruction, they are also expected to implement non-instructional duties such as recruitment, enrollment management, and career placement. According to Dick and Carey (2015), "because learning in the constructivist view is student-centered, students are engaged in active learning rather than passive learning. On the other hand, the teacher's role is more facilitative rather than instructive (p. 4). As a matter of fact, the key to the whole process is that teachers commit themselves, which means that they allow a changed view of their role, and above all, in particular, they allow themselves to be changed (Makovec, 2018). Although true, faculty and student beliefs about the purpose and outcome of education may differ widely (Gates et. al., 2015). For instance, online teachers sometime expect that online students will organize their daily lives around being a student, prioritizing their identity as 'student' above all other identities (Gates et. al., 2015). Additionally, online teachers may expect that students will do the work that needs to be done in order to 'earn' their degree (Gates

et. al., 2015). Some online teachers argue that this generation of modern day youth insists on immediate gratification and high rewards regardless of performance (Miller, 2013). Moreover, some online teachers believe that students have this feeling of entitlement that influences gaps in services enhancing uncivil and disruptive behavior among the student population (Kopp & Finney, 2013). However, when looking at student perception of their individual role in academia, success is measured based on receiving what is expected not earned (Kopp & Finney, 2013). As a result, “faculty are often forced to make decisions based on their experiences, and may be forced to choose one aspect of the faculty role over others” (Richards & Levesque-Bristol, 2016, p. 7).

Experiences of Online Faculty

According to Makovec (2018), beginner teachers start to build their image based on the knowledge they acquire at the faculty (knowledge of the profession and pedagogical-psychological knowledge), as well as based on their own experience gained through their schooling with different teachers. Conversely, the emergence of experience is pronounced when teachers find themselves in a new and unknown situation, and they have not gained any knowledge to react in such situations Makovec (2018). In view of that, personal goals have the potential to influence career behaviors as they relate to the determination to engage in activities Berei et. al., (2017). Meaning, goals help regulate energy expenditure, promote task persistence, and direct attention toward important outcomes and aspects Berei et. al., (2017). In fact, faculty behavior is influenced by the organizational norms and culture in which they interact and work (Emil & Cress, 2014).

Working from these ideas, online teachers are no longer only content experts but experienced learners and mentors who ask questions that lead to critical thinking and

deeper learning, and who arrange their online courses in ways conducive to active student engagement (Czerkawski & Lyman, 2016). Meaning, teachers with expert and intensified technology use are more tended to use technology in their teaching practices (Czerkawski & Lyman, 2016). Similarly, pre-service teachers with intensified use of online social network showed more positive attitudes toward instructional use of social networking sites (SNS) (Soomro, Kale, & Zai, 2014). Past literature indicated that online teachers' experience with Web 2.0 technologies were heavily surrounded by its social or emotional applications (Balkan Kiyici, 2012; Kale & Goh, 2014).

Administrative Staff Experiences

According to Maguad (2018), stakeholders in higher education may be classified as internal or external. First, internal stakeholders are people or units that receive goods and services from within the organization (Maguad, 2018). Particularly, academic leaders, especially presidents and chief academic officers, have an important role to play in efforts to better integrate collegiate learning (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014). As a matter of fact, principals are largely responsible for teacher selection, retention, and dismissal; they drive the instructional agenda, selecting school priorities for faculties to pursue; they allocate resources within the school in order to achieve the kinds of change initiatives important in the district and system Lambersky, (2016). For this reason, academic leaders need to articulate the importance of a well-integrated collegiate learning experience and advance this goal in their speeches and other communications with the institutional community (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014). Likewise, central executive leaders need to spearhead any serious attempt to coordinate the segmented elements of an institution's learning environment (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014). Clearly, without

administrative moral and resource support, the vision of a well-integrated learning environment is unlikely to become reality (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014). For this reason, institutional leaders are required to conduct fact-finding missions and support minority faculty research in order to determine the factors that desegregate their campuses, reduce racial hostility, and create racially inclusive environments. More importantly, institutional leaders must initiate educational reforms that make higher education institutions more accountable for student learning outcomes in order to prepare a new highly skilled generation of workers who can sustain their nation's economic development (Mohamad Karkouti, 2016). Secondly, external stakeholders are those individuals or organizations which are not part of the organization in question, but are nevertheless impacted by that organization's activities (Maguad, 2018). For instance, community outreach and programs strengthen overall institutional effectiveness in preparing tomorrow's student for lifelong involvement (Maguad, 2018). As a matter of fact, colleges and universities are expected by their communities to contribute to the development of a competent workforce, the training of leaders and followers, and the nurture of politically active and civic minded citizens (Maguad, 2018).

According to Mohamad Karkouti (2016), leaders are role models for all around them where they should earn trust of others by consistently demonstrating integrity, dedication, and loyalty even when they think nobody is looking. For this reason, leadership should bring the best in each teacher on their team, so that the sum of the whole is even greater than the sum of its parts (Mohamad Karkouti, 2016). Meaning, leadership should motivate others toward the successful realization of shared vision (Mohamad Karkouti, 2016). In view of that, transforming the existing culture necessitates

senior leadership commitment, professional leadership practices, and outstanding collaboration between institutions of higher learning, governmental agencies, and non-governmental organizations (Mohamad Karkouti, 2016). Additionally, stakeholder-oriented organizations are successful because they have a unified focus on what they do and who they serve (Maguad, 2018). Meaning, institutions have enacted diversity policies, implemented aggressive minority recruitment plans, created multicultural centers, and hired additional staff to program multicultural events for the entire campus community Wilson (2013). As a matter of fact, previous additions to the higher education organizational structure include chief communications officer, chief information officer, and chief student affairs officer (Wilson, 2013). While the evolution of a new administrative head within higher education is not necessarily novel, it is new to have an administrative head whose sole responsibility is diversity, even for higher education (Wilson, 2013). Therefore, educational leaders are required to inform policymaking through studying the factors that promote equality and decrease the disparity between all social classes (Mohamad Karkouti, 2016).

Institution Experiences

More than ever, institutions of higher learning are required to engage in a pervasive, deep and intentional change that transforms espoused institutional values into enacted ones (Mohamad Karkouti, 2016). With that being said, colleges and universities also have their own policies that govern the diversification efforts (Akombo, 2013). In other words, the college and university policies are determined by the objectives preset by the institution as well as those reflected in the college mission and in their curriculum (Akombo, 2013). In most cases, the college policies are formulated with an eye to the

expectations and the demographics of the states in which they are located and the communities and the consumers they serve (Akombo, 2013). For this reason, embracing principles of customer service are the for-profit sector of colleges and universities (Gates et. al., 2015). As a matter of fact, this paradigm shift can be explained in part via the growing competition between institutions (Tight, 2013). It is argued that this idea embraces deservingness among student populations, putting emphasis on appeasing the student rather than preparing for future success (Mark, 2013), which may be contradictory with what faculty believe about their role in providing higher education. Therefore, there are three functions of universities, namely instruction, research and extension, are considered to be systematically interrelated Quimbo & Sulabo, (2014). For instance, instruction is the primary function of most academic institutions (Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014). Particularly, given the emphasis of knowledge generation, the availability of local and international competitive grants for research, and the corresponding incentive structure of colleges and universities which puts a premium on publication, research is the second major function, if not the primary function especially of research universities (Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014). Next, research plus teaching – juggling between these two academic activities is a delicate balancing act for most college faculty (Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014). Meaning, faculty in higher education institutions are scholars and need to be actively engaged not only in teaching but in research and extension activities as well (Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014). In fact, faculty must also publish, to achieve promotions and tenure. For many, the strong demand on their time for teaching, however, leaves little time for research (Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014). Afterward, given the lack of available funding and lack of recognition and incentive structure, the extension function is

normally relegated to the background, unless the faculty is inclined towards this function (Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014). For instance, extension uses the findings of research to share new technologies and innovations to target extension clients like farmers, while research requires guidance from extension on providing solutions to problems that farmers face. Despite the challenges, both research and extension initiatives provide important inputs to curriculum design to make instruction more relevant and responsive (Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014). In view of that, higher education is increasingly coming under pressure from both external and internal forces (Maguad, 2018). Signifying, the environment is changing rapidly, however, the management structure and culture of colleges and universities make change difficult to accomplish (Maguad, 2018). As a matter of fact, universities and colleges are expected to develop and implement community-based programs that reach out to underserved communities and actively engage minorities in diversity-based initiatives (Mohamad Karkouti, 2016). Specifically, creating diverse racial climates requires institutional leaders to develop new admissions and hiring policies that promote an equal representation of socially oppressed groups (Mohamad Karkouti, 2016). Particularly, developing institutional policies and teaching practices that enhance diversity is essential in terms of creating a cohesive social fabric in the society (Mohamad Karkouti, 2016).

According to Bendermacher, oude Egbrink, Wolfhagen, and Dolmans (2017), quality culture implies a collective responsibility: it is considered to coincide with management commitment to quality as well as a grass-roots involvement of academic and administrative staff and students. Meaning, quality culture can be regarded as a specific kind of organizational culture which encompasses shared values and commitment to

quality (Bendermacher, et. al., 2017). With the growth in online learning, the demand for quality in online learning has also increased (Martin, Polly, Jokiahho, & May, 2017). Additionally, according to Kumar and Johnson (2017), the rapid increase in online learning opportunities and enrollments at institutions of higher education in the United States in the last decade (Allen & Seaman, 2014) has been accompanied by the launching of several new online doctoral programs for professionals in various disciplines. Slimp (2014) points out: “Perceptions of quality in online learning are as complex as the various models and delivery methods available” (p. 8). Nevertheless the quality of online learning course materials is an important issue that should be taken into account during the conceptual design of an online course (Martin, et. al., 2017). Daniel and Uvalic-Trumbic (2013), in their report with Academic Partnerships titled a guide to quality online learning, list institutional support (vision, planning, and infrastructure), course development, teaching and learning (instruction), course structure, student support, faculty support, technology, evaluation, student assessment, and examination security as elements essential for quality online learning. These authors also add that to assure quality online learning in higher education the most essential requirement is institutional vision, commitment, leadership, and sound planning (Martin, et. al., 2017). Next, Ossiannilsson, Williams, Camilleri, and Brown (2015), reviewed more than 40 quality standards models or guidelines from organizations based on their functions and uses (certification, accreditation, benchmarking and advisory framework) for quality assurance of open, distance, flexible and online education, including e-learning. The most common structure included aspects of institutional management, curriculum design, student support, and other elements of educational provision (Martin, et. al., 2017).

According to Maguad (2018), accreditation provides public notification that an institution or program meets standards of quality stipulated by the accrediting agency. Meaning, accrediting agencies expect accreditation-seeking institutions to comply with their established criteria and standards (Maguad, 2018). For this reason, many accrediting agencies have used input measures to measure quality like the quality of entering students, number of books in the library, quality of graduate degrees held by faculty, number of square feet of classroom space, student-faculty ratio, and others (Maguad, 2018). More importantly, the input criteria focus on the nature and level of resources available to the institution like the characteristics of incoming students, credentials of faculty, size of library, structure and availability of physical facilities, and the amount of financial reserves (Maguad, 2018). Equally important, accrediting agencies have used output measures to stress “the nature and extent of institutional products, characteristics of graduating students, success of alumni, research and scholarly publications, and public service” (Maguad, 2018). As pertaining to value-added to the learning community, “these criteria focus on the differences that an institution has made in the growth of all of its members: intellectual, moral, social, vocational, physical, and spiritual” (Maguad, 2018). Specifically, service learning/community-based learning involves students with community partners in direct experiences that offer students opportunities to apply knowledge from the curriculum in real-world settings (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014). More importantly, teacher education programs have used service-learning as a means to bridging the gap between theory and practices, helping preservice teachers build confidence toward teaching, and contributing to the community of teachers (e.g., Hildenbrand & Schultz, 2015). Equally important, a learning community that explores

demographic diversity from the perspectives of sociology and economics could ask students to reflect on their observations of diversity issues on campus, in the local community, and from their own work history (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014). Therefore, higher vocational school culture refers to the material and spiritual products formed and created in the educational activities of teachers and students in higher vocational schools and the process of their formation and creation (Hui, 2017). As pertaining to the process of formation and creation, these criteria include the level and manner of participation of all appropriate constituencies (or stakeholders) in the educational, administrative, and governance processes of the institution, including the defining and assessing of quality (Maguad, 2018).

According to Maguad (2018), it is not about performance only that indicates quality; rather it is about academic integrity intertwined with performance that differentiates high-quality education. As a result of these criteria, an institution would be judged by the extent to which it is effective in developing the talents of its students from whatever level they are at when entering (Maguad, 2018). Consequently, the institution or program is committed to self-study and external review by one's peers in seeking not only to meet standards but to continuously seek ways to enhance the quality of education and training provided (Maguad, 2018). Meaning, higher education must be more intentional in helping students to connect their varied experiences and the learning that occurs within them (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014). In fact, many institutions of higher learning are preparing their graduates to be more diversity conscious and to be able to work with individuals from many cultures by increasing opportunities of exposure to and interaction with diverse populations (Wilson, 2013).

Additionally, higher vocational school learning organization culture and enterprise learning organization culture play basically the same roles in their respective learning organizations, and their functions and roles boil down to guidance, improvement, education, congregation, encouragement, restriction, radiation, and stability (Hui, 2017). For instance, in the United States, higher education reforms have been initiated during 2013 with the objective of introducing a rating system for colleges that will help not only the stakeholders to identify how much value a college truly offers but also link public funding to these colleges (Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016). Among the prevailing themes, boosting institutional performance tops the list with the focus to maximize HEIs' ability to achieve state goals such as student retention and degree completion (AASCU, 2013).

Similarly, in other countries such as Australia, Germany and Japan, investment and reforms are designed to support high-quality teaching and learning, to improve resources for research and infrastructure and to reward institutions for meeting agreed quality and equity outcomes Ponnuswamy and Manohar (2016). In view of that, universities, similar to other industries, face tough competition and hence they strive to achieve competitive advantage by updating their practices, services and competitiveness through several methods (Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016). Specifically, higher vocational education has general concepts and objectives of higher education, it infuses enterprise personnel capabilities, character requirements, and professional work standards, and it is higher and professional (Hui, 2017). From the perspective of the relationship between higher vocational education and the economy and society, it is also local and industrial (Hui, 2017). From a school perspective, higher vocational schools are

important sites for educating people, important sites for students to gain knowledge, skills, and values and to cultivate behavior (Hui, 2017). In particular, such schools are also special sites for transmitting culture; they are organizations that apply, transmit, and innovate knowledge (Hui, 2017). Therefore, higher education institutions (HEIs) are the foundation for building the intellectual capacity of a nation where knowledge can be produced and utilized (Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016).

Diverse Teaching Philosophy

According to Gregory and Burbage (2017), a teaching philosophy represents who one is as an educator, what his or her beliefs about teaching and learning are, and what his or her practice looks like in and out of the classroom. Specifically, teaching philosophies provide a space for faculty to explore their practice and identify their beliefs about teaching and learning (Gregory & Burbage, 2017). Additionally, as one's role changes in the context of the classroom and institution, teaching philosophies must be revised to reflect one's new identity (Hegarty, 2015). In fact, a teaching philosophy "...serves as a silent mentor guiding faculty toward continuous improvement" (Hegarty, 2015, p. 29), allowing faculty to recognize their changing role as a teacher while also considering the changing students, changing classroom, and changing field of education (Gregory & Burbage, 2017). In other words, the role of the teacher is to promote class discussion of the content reviewed by moderating individual or group discussions, incorporating case studies/clinical scenarios, and reviewing an evidence-based journal or research article on a current practice change (Matsuda, et. al., 2017). For this reason, teaching approaches that go beyond the traditional lecture format are considered the most effective in engaging students and promoting learning Ferreri and O'Connor (2013).

Accordingly, teachers' beliefs about education help teachers choose instructional content, set teaching objectives, develop instructional materials, engage in interaction with learners, and evaluate overall outcomes of both teaching and learning processes (Kovačević & Akbarov, 2016). For this reason, teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of preparing the students of this nation for the future (Maguad, 2018). Along with teaching philosophies, instructor preference and student learning style typically drive styles of teaching Bonnici, Maata, Klose, Julien, and Bajjaly (2016). For instance, instructional styles include lecture, passive (reading), observation (shadowing projects), and active learning through laboratory or practical tasks (Bonnici et. al., 2016). To support teachers in a change of philosophy associated with their teaching style and their teaching approach, it is important to reflect on teacher needs Valdman, and Rannikmae (2016). In fact, there are several approaches to teaching such as teacher-centered, learner-centered, climate-building, experiential-oriented, and participatory-oriented teaching styles. First, teacher-centered styles are driven by the assumption that learner is naturally passive and is turned active after being stimulated to do so. Accordingly, a teacher-oriented teaching style favors lecturing and does not base objectives on individual motives and abilities (Kovačević & Akbarov, 2016). As a matter of fact, if an educator determines the objectives for the students before the program starts and does not abandon or change them until the end of it and if the disciplined class is found stimulatory for learning, the educator displays a teacher-centered style (Kovačević & Akbarov, 2016). Second, a learner-oriented teaching style lets the lesson and process of learning pace itself – older students are allowed more time to complete the tasks when they need it (Kovačević & Akbarov, 2016). For example, if an educator takes into

account a learner's prior experience and tries to make the learner relate new learning experiences to the prior ones, the educator is practicing a learner-centered approach.

Particularly, a learner-centered teaching style stimulates learner's independence in the learning process and organizes learning tasks in the way they could be encountered in everyday life (Kovačević & Akbarov, 2016). Third, an experiential-oriented teaching style takes into account the learners' goals and helps them see the gaps between their goals and the current performance. Through experience-oriented teaching, this style helps learners develop both short-range and long-range objectives (Kovačević & Akbarov, 2016). Fourth, the climate-building teaching style enables the teacher to foster and develop a friendly and informal atmosphere in a classroom and dialogue among the students (Kovačević & Akbarov, 2016). Lastly, participatory-oriented teaching style identifies if a teacher provides a chance for learners to participate in developing the criteria for evaluating their performance in class (Kovačević & Akbarov, 2016). With the participatory-oriented teaching style, students can participate in making decisions about the topics to be covered (Kovačević & Akbarov, 2016). Therefore, a teaching philosophy represents one's educational beliefs, practices, and identity, this identification of the components of the teaching philosophy can help faculty developers better understand their new identity as a faculty developer (Gregory & Burbage, 2017).

Emotional Intelligence

Even though online teachers are responsible for teaching students social and emotional skills (Cefai and Valeria 2014), there is surprisingly little research on online teachers' perceptions of their own social and emotional functioning. According to Mjeski, Stover, Valais, and Ronch (2017), emotional intelligence can be incorporated

into course design and instruction in a variety of ways. Moreover, through course design and instruction, instructors can use aspects of their own emotional intelligence (e.g., emotional perception, emotional understanding, and emotional management) to help learners become more aware of and able to effectively manage their own emotions in their relationships with others (Mjeski, et. al., 2017). Furthermore, online teacher's awareness of the opportunities to make connections between emotional intelligence and the content provides a way to transition into class discussion about relational topics (Sung, 2015). For example, the online teacher can show emotional perception and understanding of learners' need for emotional safety by creating clear guidelines for the respectful discussion of sensitive class topics and for managing differences and possible conflict (Mjeski, et. al., 2017). Meaning, the goal of these guidelines should be to create a safe classroom environment which welcomes and engages a wide range of viewpoints, maintains respect for all, and promotes collaborative learning (Mjeski, et. al., 2017). Particularly, it aims to facilitate learning by helping learners to enlarge their capacity for empathy and manage their own emotions when discussing sensitive class topics (Mjeski, et. al., 2017). Specifically, it is important when discussing controversial issues related to age, gender, gender identification, and race/ethnicity (Mjeski, et. al., 2017). Consequently, by asking the right kinds of questions, students' awareness and constructive thinking may be increased (Sung, 2015).

Furthermore, the online teacher can use emotional facilitation to engage learners in learning activities and to support self-regulating with their own learning (Mjeski, et. al., 2017). For instance, written assignments can be designed to help learners develop emotional intelligence (Mjeski, et. al., 2017). Meaning, online teachers could use mastery

and/or performance learning goals to promote emotional intelligence as it relates to learning (Mjeski, et. al., 2017). For instance, implementing reflection papers can help learners cultivate perception, understanding, and management of emotions related to the process and content of learning (Mjeski, et. al., 2017). Incorporating a reflection paper heightens learners' awareness of feelings about their own and others' social identities. Online students better understand how their own emotions may influence judgments, and how others may define effective leadership (Grant, Kinman, & Alexander, 2014).

In higher education, emotional intelligence need not be a particular program or method (Sung, 2015). As a matter of fact, it may limit the delivery options to certain themes or designs, which may not meet the professor's needs (Sung, 2015). According to Sung (2015), the academic culture promotes emotional intelligence when the provost, dean, and directors value social and emotional intelligence learning. For instance, the following are the specific areas of emotional intelligence teaching:

- Self-acceptance—change self-defeating thoughts and enhance personal power.
- Recognizing feelings—be aware of defense mechanisms and own your emotions.
- Beliefs and behaviors—identify values and self-defeating behavior.
- Problem solving/decision making—use problems as opportunities and put things in perspective looking at the bigger picture.
- Interpersonal relationships—recognize the connection between negative feelings toward others and irrational beliefs (Sung, 2015).

Thus, the online teacher's ability to demonstrate aspects of emotional intelligence in different elements of course design and instruction is key to helping learners cultivate

emotional intelligence, an important competence in management and leadership (Mjeski, et. al., 2017).

Online Teacher Self-Efficacy

According to Kass (2013), previous studies have pointed to various factors in the teaching domain that interact with the teacher's sense of self-efficacy, such as the pupils' achievement, the sense of belonging to the professional community, the amount of collaborative work with colleagues and the leadership style of the principal. In view of that, there is a positive relationship between teachers' creativity fostering behaviors and their self-efficacy beliefs (Ozkal, 2014). Teaching for creativity requires teaching creatively (Cayirdag, 2017). Meaning, to be able to teach creatively, the one who teaches would have to utilize his or her creative potential (Cayirdag, 2017). On the other hand, self-efficacy is defined as one's belief in one's ability to effectively direct one's actions to achieve the set goals and succeed in completing a specific task (Malinauskas, 2017). Meaning, self-efficacy refers to a person's perceived capability, as distinct from functional ability, to perform a particular action or course of action (Malinauskas, 2017).

More importantly, self-efficacy expectations relate to the belief that one can successfully employ the behavior needed to achieve the outcome, while outcome expectations relate to a person's estimate that a given behavior will lead to a certain result (Berei et. al., 2017). For instance, "teachers' self-efficacy in the educational process expresses the degree of their confidence in their own abilities and skills to teach effectively and solve problems" (Veronika et. al., 2018). Equally important, the construct of self-efficacy emerged from Bandura's social cognitive theory. For example, Bandura (1997) enlisted four sources which influence people's self-efficacy beliefs such as

mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal or social persuasion, and physiological arousal or emotional state. For this reason, Bandura (1993), pointed out that people with high self-efficacy tend to have greater cognitive resourcefulness, strategic flexibility, and effectiveness in managing their environment, and set motivating goals for themselves. In the same manner, Meristro et. al. (2013), believed “teachers with a higher sense of efficacy exhibit greater enthusiasm for teaching, are more open to new ideas, are more willing to experiment with new methods and exhibit a greater commitment to teaching.” Likewise, Aziz and Quraishi (2017), believed “teachers with (HSE) high self-efficacy feel that they can instill knowledge in the apathetic and lazy students by providing them additional support and by using a variety of effective teaching strategies such as group discussions. Meaning, teachers with strong efficacy judgments, make harder efforts, work for longer periods and steer their students in the direction of valuable and advantageous horizons of learning (Aziz & Quraishi, 2017).

On the contrary, teachers with (LSE) low self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate behaviors that are considered harmful to their quality of teaching, such as pessimism regarding pupils’ ability to improve, refraining from acknowledging responsibility for pupils’ failures, a tendency to use traditional teaching methods rather than collaborative ones and resistance to new ways of teaching Kass (2015). According to Kass (2015), these teachers tend to have difficulty dealing with discipline problems, and focused mainly on scholastic achievements and less on pupils’ personal development. Likewise, Bandura (1997) pointed out that teachers with low self-efficacy are not confident about their abilities, and assume that they cannot perform well if the students are not self-motivated and in condition when the inspiration by teachers on students’

achievement and performance is badly affected by adverse impact of societal atmosphere. Meaning, teachers with low self-efficacy may possibly feel exhausted due to limited resources to impart knowledge into their students. Due to a perceived feeling of threat, these individuals will experience anxiety that will decrease their ability to concentrate on the task, which will, consequently, have deleterious effects on their level of performance (Kass, 2015). For this reason, empowering teaching experiences can support teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, whereas negative experiences may have a detrimental effect (Meristro et. al, 2013). For instance, the more the teacher exudes self-confidence in the classroom, the more the students are likely to recognize the education provision as promoting a coherent learning package, befitting the goals of education and acquisition of the key competences (Valdmann & Rannikmae, 2016). Therefore, the self-efficacy of teachers plays an important role in their behavior (Meristro et. al., 2013).

Technology Self-Efficacy

According to Smaldino, Lowther, Russell, and Mims (2016), Bloom's Digital Taxonomy's definition of "the teacher's role as a learning guide is emphasized, as is the idea that technology and media are essential tools to facilitate student learning" (p. 26). For instance, the digital era along with the inundation of technological tools has reengineered contemporary higher education service Green (2015). In other words, the introduction of technologies to facilitate video-recorded lecture content that can be made available ahead of time in the flipped classroom approach, students are able to pursue self-directed learning at their own pace (Green, 2015). Meanwhile, online students who partake in a flipped classroom education experience are expected to familiarize themselves with new and unfamiliar class content in their own time, so that in-class

lecture time can be used to complete hands-on task-based activities with their peers and educators Crews and Butterfield (2014). In addition, based on online student's level of preparedness, lecture time would be solely for interactive discussions, question offerings and problem-based activities, problem solving, group work, and other hands-on activities reflective of a social constructivist approach to learning (Green, 2015).

Along with the innovation of flipped classroom, instructional benefits of emerging technologies such as Web 2.0 tools are widely recognized by educators and researchers Soomro, Zai, and Jafri (2015). For this reason, online teacher's in higher education need not only to be familiar with emerging technologies such as Web 2.0 tools, but they also need to be competent enough so that they can utilize such technologies meaningfully and efficiently to enhance their teaching practices (Soomro et. al., 2015). Consequently, the popularity and certain features of Web 2.0 tools, particularly its collaborative aspects and interactive ways of information acquisition are affecting the ways of teaching and learning positively (Soomro et. al., 2015). Moreover, Web 2.0 has become unescapable and dictate the everyday personal and professional life of its users (Baro et. al., 2013). More importantly, faculty is the key stakeholder in educational system that can introduce technological innovation in teaching-learning processes in a fast, effective, and sustainable manner (Soomro et. al., 2015). Equally important, in a learning process where all aspects are known, faculty can comfortably compensate for shortages and make corrections (Efe, 2015). For this reason, learning and teaching activities supported by Web 2.0 technologies are being added to higher education programs worldwide (Efe, 2015). For instance, Web 2.0 is the second generation of Internet based devices on the

World Wide Web, namely social networking services, web-based free encyclopedias, forums, podcasts and other online association and sharing media (Efe, 2015).

Specifically, Web 2.0 refers to applications such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, video sharing sites, instant messaging and social networks (Efe, 2015). For instance, a blog writer can easily create a blog and can create a new topic by writing a header and content text and sharing it with Internet users (Efe, 2015). Specifically, blogs can be used for self-expression, persuasion, and discussion in an academic setting (Efe, 2015). In a learning environment, teachers and students can broadcast their audio blogs, statements and writing results for listeners or can create a new interactive learning experience (Efe, 2015). Next, wikis are websites that allow teachers and students to add, edit and delete content. In an academic setting, wiki pages might make use of picture and text editing, tables, lists, links, archiving, formatting, spell checking, and emoticons (Efe, 2015). Afterwards, podcasts technology is used extensively in education, and they are appropriate for students learning with audio material and are economical compared to verbal presentations. Podcasting is not a simultaneous activity but still enables the students to relate to the learning environment by interacting with information (Efe, 2015). Successively, instant messaging relates to applications enabling cooperation and communication between two or more individuals in real time.

There are several types of audio and video application tools that provide real-time communications such as Join.me, GroupMe, Zoom, and WhatsApp. Sequentially, video sharing is based on sharing and publishing content in any video format (Efe, 2015). For instance, video sharing sites provide services to publish a variety of videos prepared for different purposes, including education, on the Internet, which these sites allow educators

to provide audiovisual learning facilities in an active manner (Efe, 2015). Both teachers and students can utilize video sharing sites for educational purposes and the most common type of video sharing site is YouTube. Particularly, teachers can publish an entire learning activity for a particular class, and share information about the learning objective using video sharing tools. For instance, teachers can observe the entire process through which the students conceive, structure and solve a concept, an event or a learning problem using YouTube (Efe, 2015). Finally, social network sites allow individuals to create personal profiles, which are either open to the public or semi-open to the public, in a recorded system (Efe, 2015). In an academic setting, Facebook is one of the most commonly used social network sites. As a result, Web 2.0 tools have changed and provided new methodologies of teaching and learning (Efe, 2015). For example, when individuals want to learn about a subject, their online search frequencies increase (Efe, 2015). Accordingly, informal learning approaches have increased along with formal learning approaches such as classes and special educational software (Efe, 2015). Moreover, individuals looking for information can reach experts via e-mail, instant messaging, wikis or web blogs and thereby obtain information (Efe, 2015). More importantly, the use of Web 2.0 technologies in education and instruction enhances teachers and students' technology self-efficacy. As a matter of fact, web-based learning technologies strongly impact learning environments at higher education, regardless if these technologies are being used in traditional face-to-face, hybrid or fully online environments (Czerkawski & Lyman, 2016). Therefore, with the rapid and progress of globalization and technological development, new learning outcomes such as the

development of creativity and innovation have become major driving forces in competitive societies (Engelbrecht & Ankiewicz, 2016).

Professional Development

Within the framework of professional development, teachers change, improve in the professional field, as well as change, improve, and complement their pedagogical competences and behavior, and change as a person (Makovec, 2018). In other words, professional development is concerned with a broader subject matter of a conceptual or theoretical nature and the development of personal attitudes (Engelbrecht & Ankiewicz, 2016). Meaning, the Professional and Organizational Development Network Executive Committee (2016) describes the scope of higher education faculty development as efforts to enhance teaching and learning by facilitating faculty growth as a scholar, teacher and professional, as well as supporting course, curriculum, and organizational capacity improvement. Even though development is a larger canvass which envisages modification of behavior and personality, growth refers to one's own "becoming a better person" and includes aspects of life not necessarily part of professional development (Engelbrecht & Ankiewicz, 2016). In a like manner, training is a formal classroom learning activity, and it is concerned with the teaching of specific, factual, narrow—scoped subject matter and skills (Engelbrecht & Ankiewicz, 2016). For example, the use of digital badges is relatively innovative in higher education, and made possible by recent technological advances, particularly in the area of professional learning development (Dyjur & Lindstrom, 2017). Additionally, digital badges are a form of micro-credentialing, which provides a way to recognize and evidence accomplishments acquired through informal learning experiences at a more granular level than is captured

by courses or degrees (Gamrat et al. 2014). As a matter of fact, digital badges provides a visual record of achievement that can be shared through social media and professional networking sites (Dyjur & Lindstrom, 2017). In higher education, digital badges are useful in capturing learning that might otherwise go unrecognized through formal academic accreditation processes (Devedzic & Jovanovic 2015). Within the context of higher education, digital badges represent a change in approach to how accomplishments in professional learning development are appraised (Dyjur & Lindstrom, 2017).

Traditionally, digital badges have been measured by the amount of time spent in training, or perhaps by participation in a program (Dyjur & Lindstrom, 2017). In fact, digital badges represent a shift from attendance-based certificates to criteria based accomplishments (Dyjur & Lindstrom, 2017).

There are advantages for offering digital badges to professional development attendees. For example, digital badges can provide a list of competencies attained, the date, and an expiry date for each attainment as applicable. In addition, digital badges can document informal learning accomplishments received outside of credit programs in a way that is more flexible than traditional methods such as paper certificates and transcripts (Devedzic and Jovanovic 2015). Additionally, Finkelstein, Knight and Manning (2013) claim that digital badging optimizes the reward pathways of the brain; however, they warn that there is a very real risk of alienating otherwise well-intentioned, self-motivated learners by holding a badge in front of them as the reason to pursue a learning opportunity (p. 19). Abramovich et al. (2013) found that badges in which both participation and skill are recognized may be more effective in increasing overall learner motivation.

As with most educational innovations, there are potential disadvantages in offering digital badges to professional development attendees. A barrier associated with digital badge usage is determining how to make them more authentic since they may not appear as credible to potential employers as a paper credential from a recognized post-secondary institute (Glover, 2013). Likewise, Hart (2015) states that because there are few higher education institutions currently implementing digital badges for the purpose of professional learning development, it is unclear if digital badges are effective, and if so, what constitutes good practice.

According to Glazier et. al. (2017), teacher education has a history of engaging its students in some form of experiential education through school-based activities and formal student teaching, highlighting the role of experience and follow-up reflection on that experience. In view of that, experiential education requires the learner to make sense of new experiences in light of his or her past experiences and in anticipation of his or her future experiences (Glazier et. al., 2017). While in the process, knowledge and understanding (of self and subject) get transformed, becoming something new to carry into future contexts and experiences (Glazier et. al., 2017).

In view of that, many teachers who immigrate to the United States consider themselves educated professionals who possess teaching credentials and qualifications obtained in their countries of origin (Abramova, 2013). Based on research, it demonstrates that immigrant teachers encounter difficulties entering the teaching profession in countries with large immigrant population, in which these teachers hope to regain professional status upon arrival in the United States (Abramova, 2013). Additionally, in order for teachers to understand students from different cultural

backgrounds better and not have communication problems, taking multicultural education courses and applications will help them in their professions (Gürso & Akyniyazov, 2016). Particularly, in terms of education and teaching effectiveness, it is required for teachers to have a positive attitude and treat every student with their needs doing no discrimination in multicultural education environments (Gürso & Akyniyazov, 2016). More importantly, multicultural education structure aims in academic success and personal development for every student by giving equal education rights (Gürso & Akyniyazov, 2016). As a result, professional development training will enable faculty to become more skillful and knowledgeable in their profession. At the same time, faculty will be more empowered, engaged, and enthused with innovative ideas.

Research Questions

To study this phenomenon, the goal is to explore the experiences of faculty:

How do diverse faculty interact with culturally diverse students at an institute of higher learning in distance education?

1. What experiences do diverse faculty have with diverse students at an institute of higher learning?
2. How do diverse faculty experiences cultivate student learning?
3. What instructor's resources and best practices are available for diverse faculty in addressing student learning?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Aim of the Study

This study aims to explore distance education faculty's experiences regarding teaching methods and student-teacher interaction. The interaction between the majority groups and diverse (minority) groups on the college and university campuses needs to be addressed in order for colleges to achieve the universal goal of education for all (Akombo, 2013). Such interactions can be achieved through a curriculum that fosters cultural perspectives within the college communities (Akombo, 2013). Due to the diversity and pluralism of educational environments, academic faculty must be able to discuss multiple cultural perspectives in the classroom (Akombo, 2013). For this reason, the Roger's Diffusion of Innovation Theory will be used to explore the experiences of diverse faculty with diverse students. Moreover, this diffusion of innovation will empower faculty to establish a platform that advocates cultural competence as well as adopts best practices for cultural awareness and inclusion. In view of that, the purpose of this study is to explore the following: faculty experiences with diverse students in an institute of higher learning, faculty experiences cultivating student learning, and instructor's resources and best practices that are available for diverse faculty in addressing student learning.

Qualitative Research Approach

The qualitative research method specifically the ethnographic design will be the central methodology in this study. This ethnographic design is characterized by a culture-sharing group that consists of two or more individuals who have shared behaviors, beliefs, and languages (Creswell, 2015, p. 473). Meaning, there are four types of

ethnographic designs such as (a) realist, (b) ethnography, (c) case study, and (d) critical ethnography. For example, a realist ethnography is an objective account of the situation, typically written in third-person point of view, reporting objectivity on the information learned from participants in the field site (Creswell, 2015, p. 468). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), realist ethnography approach reflects a particular stand taken by the researcher toward the individuals being studied (p. 92). Next, a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection (Creswell, 2013). Bounded means that the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries (Creswell, 2015, p. 469). According to Creswell (2015), there are three types of ethnographic case studies such as (a) intrinsic case study, (b) instrumental case study, and (c) collective case study. For instance, the intrinsic case study includes a case that has merit in itself, and it is of interest (p. 469). However, the instrumental case study is used to illustrate the issue because it serves the purpose of illuminating a particular issue (p. 469). Lastly, a collective case study consists of multiple cases which are described and compared to provide insight into an issue (Creswell, 2015, p. 469). Finally, critical ethnographies are a type of ethnographic research in which the author is interested in advocating for the emancipation of groups marginalized in our society (Creswell, 2015, p. 471).

Of all the four types of ethnographic designs, the realist ethnography is the most appropriate ethnographic design for this study because it reports objective data in a measured style uncontaminated by personal bias, political goals, and judgment (Creswell, 2015, p. 468). Therefore, the intent for conducting this research study is to empower, enlighten, and engage diverse faculty in sharing their experiences with diverse students.

Moreover, the problem relates to understanding cultural themes such as socialization and institutionalized education (Creswell, 2015, p. 480). Additionally, this study will receive approval from the institution review board. Equally important, this study will include a gatekeeper. For instance, a gatekeeper is an individual who has an official or unofficial role at the site, provides entrance to a site, helps researchers locate people, and assists in the identification of places to study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Participants

This study will be conducted at a public two-year institution in the southwestern region of the United States. The purpose of selecting this institution of higher learning is to promote cultural awareness, enhance cultural competence, and embrace cultural sensitivity between diverse faculty and diverse students in the distance education environment. Moreover, the target population of this study will consist of early, middle, and senior teachers who have taught online at least twice and who represent a variety of disciplinary backgrounds Mansbach and Austin (2018). Based on the online teachers' experiences, this design will address understanding teaching presence, social presence, cognitive presence, and online presence with diverse students in the distance education environment. For example, teaching presence focuses on teachers' planning, structuring and conducting of teaching and interventions in online environments (Bolldén, 2016). Next, according to Bentley, Secret, and Cummings (2015), social presence refers to the extent to which persons are perceived to be real and are able to be authentically known and truly connected to others in mediated communication. Particularly, for online teaching and learning environments, scholars agree that social presence is a particularly powerful concept because of its seemingly central influence on teaching and learning

success (Bentley, Secret, & Cummings, 2015). Afterwards, cognitive presence concerns students' ability to create meaning through communication in an educational setting (Bolldén, 2016). Lastly, online presence is important for students, and there is a specific focus on social, emotional and cognitive presences, as well as on teachers' planning and intervention (Bolldén, 2016). For that reason, this study will consist of administrators, instructional designers, and online success coaches from business technology program at an institute of higher learning. For that reason, this study will utilize a non-probability approach because the researcher chooses 15 participants because of availability and convenience (Creswell, 2015).

Data Collection Tools

In this ethnographic design study, primarily interviews will be achieved through audiovisual materials such as phone or computer based messages. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), an interview is where “knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee” (p. 4). Moreover, a variation for one-on-one interview is for both the interviewee and interviewer being physically located in the same room, talking face-to-face using technology, or talking over the phone (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 164). For this reason, interviews will be accomplished through web-based application tools that provide real-time communications such as Join.me and/or Zoom. The similarities between Join.me and Zoom video communications is that they both allow screen-sharing, recordings, conference calls, and online conference meetings. According to Koehler, Newby, and Ertmer (2017), these Web 2.0 tools are based on the specific affordances offered to participants such as sharing ideas and initiating discussions among online teachers. In view of that, these Web 2.0 tools affords

visibility, persistence, association, and ownership at varying levels (Koehler, Newby, & Ertmer, (2017).

Additionally, open-ended Internet interviews will be utilized to collect qualitative data regarding the faculty's experiences with diverse learners. Meaning, these open-ended questions will allow teachers to elaborate on different issues and experiences related to diverse learners. Specifically, the interview will explore the background experiences of culturally diverse faculty in relationship to the approach and use of interaction with culturally diverse students in distance education. More importantly, online teachers will be introduced to Web 2.0 tools through short videos sent via email. For instance, these videos will provide an overview of the tool as well as its specific features (Koehler, Newby, & Ertmer, (2017). Equally important, this instrument is valid because it was piloted and reviewed by other experts. In view of that, data will be collected via interviews, and the researcher will ask participants the following research questions:

1. What type of interaction online teachers will experience with diverse students?
2. What will online teachers bring from their diverse background that complements learning for culturally diverse students?
3. What resources will online teachers access to help them meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students?

Moreover, the interview will include practical issues such as teaching methods, available resources, equipment issues, and time scheduling. Therefore, an interview protocol or interview guide will be used to ask five to seven open-ended questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The purpose for utilizing the interview protocol is that it

helps the researcher organize thoughts on items such as headings, information about starting the interview, concluding ideas, information on ending the interview, and thanking the respondent (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 169-170). More importantly, this approach is useful when participants are geographically dispersed (Creswell, 2016, p. 127). Equally important, the researcher will interview 15 participants in this study.

Procedures

Once (IRB) Institutional Review Board approval is obtained, initial interaction will begin with participants. The ethnographic design will adhere to the following step-by-step process:

1. Receive IRB approval
2. Locate research site
3. Identify a gatekeeper
4. Send a consent form to participants
5. Establish appointments to conduct interviews
6. Inform participants that they must be in a distraction-free place
7. Send participants meeting requests to remind them of their appointments
8. Inform participants that the interview is expected to last 30-45 minutes
9. Reiterate the purpose of the interview
10. Utilize an interview protocol form to record information
11. Verify results with a second interview
12. Utilize a password encryption to protect data for five years

In the realist ethnography design, the researcher will begin by identifying the gatekeeper, who will assist with recruiting participants for interviews. Next, the

researcher will send a consent form to request participant's permission to partake in the study. Afterwards, the researcher will establish an appointment to conduct interviews through audio/video application tools that provides synchronous (real-time) communications such as Join.me and Zoom webinars. Likewise, the researcher will inform participants that they must be in a distraction-free place where a private conversation can be held for audiotaping or videotaping (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 165). Once interview appointments have been established, the researcher will send participants meeting requests to remind them of their appointments. The advantage of using a meeting request over an email message is that participants will receive a meeting invitation, as well as be given an option to accept, tentative, decline, or propose new meeting time. When participants accept the invitation, the scheduled meeting is automatically added to the participant's Outlook calendar, and a response is sent to the researcher.

At the beginning of the interview, the researcher will inform each participant that the interview is expected to last approximately 30-45 minutes, with all sessions recorded and transcribed. In addition, the researcher will reiterate the purpose of the interview as well as remind each participant that he or she has the right to withdraw from the study. Subsequently, the researcher will ask each participant approximately five to seven open-ended questions as well as use an interview protocol form to record information compiled during the interview. For consistency, the researcher will ask each participant the same set of structured research questions.

At the end of the interview, the researcher will thank each participant for his or her participation as well as ensure that all information recorded and transcribed during the data collection be kept confidential (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 167). Following, the

researcher will offer each participant a copy of his or her transcription to review for accuracy and validity. Afterwards, a second interview will be scheduled to verify the results as well as resolve any discrepancies. Once all data has been collected, the researcher will utilize a password encryption to protect, store and file documents electronically in a secure location for five years.

Data Analysis

In this study, qualitative data will be collected. The procedure for qualitative data analysis consists of six steps such as prepare and organize the data for analysis, explore and code the data, code to build description themes, report the qualitative findings, interpret the findings, and validate the accuracy of the findings. For instance, the qualitative researcher would prepare the data for data analysis by transcribing the interview and developing a database. Therefore, in accordance with Creswell (2016), the researcher will take field notes, create a text file, and create a digital copy of the document. Next, the researcher will analyze and code patterns of online faculty experiences. Afterwards, to promote credibility, the researcher will use techniques such as member checks with research participants to confirm conclusions Kearns (2016). For transferability, context-rich descriptions of online teacher's experiences and teaching background will be sought and recorded (Kearns, 2016). Therefore, to enhance dependability and confirmability, triangulation of data sources will be achieved by means of online surveys and web-based interviews (Kearns, 2016). The duration of the open-ended interviews will last between 30 and 45minutes, and will be transcribed verbatim.

Ethical Considerations

To gain support from participants, participants will be informed that they are participating in a study, and that their confidentiality is of utmost importance (Creswell, 2015, p. 231). Specifically, participants will be informed that the data gathered will cause them no harm, preserve their dignity, and ensure privacy (Creswell, 2015, 478). As a result, to comply with ethical publishing practices, the researcher will create reports that are honest and trustworthy.

Trustworthiness

According to Creswell (2015), validating findings means that the researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the findings through strategies such as member checking or triangulation (p. 258). For internal validity, credibility can be established by using multiple approaches such as checking the data and interpretation with participants in a project or through developing themes and codes using multiple data sources (Creswell, 2015, p. 258). For external validity, transferability from one setting to another can be established by establishing the context of a study and giving detailed descriptions of the procedures (Creswell, 2015, p. 258). For reliability, dependability enables one to repeat a study by using overlapping methods and in-depth methodological descriptions of the procedures (Creswell, 2015, p. 258).

Potential Research Bias

Since personal views can never be kept separate from interpretations, personal data about the meaning of the data will be included in the research study. This will allow the researcher to offer new questions that may need to be answered (Creswell, 2015, p. 258).

Limitations

Due to the limitations with the purposeful sampling of individuals in this study, recommendations for further research is needed.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This qualitative research study explored the experiences, behaviors, and knowledge of diverse faculty and how they interact with student learning in the distance education environment. Additionally, Roger's Diffusion of Innovation Theory was used in this study to raise multicultural awareness. Meaning, Roger's Diffusion of Innovation gave faculty a platform that enhanced interaction and embraced empathy between diverse faculty and diverse students in the distance education environment. During the Spring 2019 semester, the researcher presented the study to 15 faculty as well as administrators at an institution of higher learning. The consent forms were sent via email attachment to all participants. Prior to the interviews, all participants signed the consent form and submitted to the researcher. Even though all participants were asked the same interview questions, each participant told a unique story about his or her experiences, which allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of their cultural awareness. Meaning, the data for this ethnographic study design was gathered through interviews with 15 participants. Additionally, the interview questions that guided the qualitative study were as follows:

1. What types of interaction have you experienced with diverse students?
2. What do you bring from your diverse background that complements learning for culturally diverse students?
3. What resources have you accessed to help you meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students?

4. What instructional strategies have you implemented to meet the needs of diverse students?

5. What type of methods have you utilized to maintain a positive learning experience for diverse students?

Additionally, prior to each of the scheduled interviews, the researcher obtained the signed consent forms necessary to proceed within the study. Next, at the start of each interview, an explanation of the study was provided, and each participant had the opportunity to ask questions for clarification. Afterwards, the open-ended interview questions gave participants the opportunity to provide more details related to their experiences with interacting with diverse students in the distance education environment. Moreover, each interview was conducted using Zoom web application tool. For instance, Zoom web application tool provides synchronous (real-time) communications via audio/video conferencing as well as allows one to record meetings, share screens, and download transcripts. At the end of the final interview, transcripts were submitted to each participant for review. Once accuracy was established, the interviewee responses were coded, filtered, and analyzed to identify faculty experiences.

Participant Descriptions

The target population of this study consisted of early, middle, and senior faculty who have taught online at least twice and who represent a variety of disciplinary backgrounds Mansbach and Austin (2018). Due to availability and convenience, the researcher selected 15 participants based on a non-probability approach (Creswell, 2015). Additionally, based on the online faculty's experiences, this design focused on understanding teaching presence and social presence with diverse students in the distance

education environment. To protect the identities of the participants, each participant was assigned pseudonyms. For instance, a number was assigned to the following participants to ensure confidentiality:

Participant 1: Pseudonym PN1. PN1 is a male administrator who teaches Introduction to Computers online course. He holds a master's degree in the field of Library and Information Technology from Florida State University.

Participant 2: Pseudonym PN2. PN2 is a male instructor who teaches math online courses. He holds a double master's degree in the field of Mathematics from Georgia Southwestern State University and Tribuvan University.

Participant 3: Pseudonym PN3. PN3 is a male instructor who teaches accounting online courses. He holds a master's degree in the field of Accounting from Georgia Southwestern State University.

Participant 4: Pseudonym PN4. PN4 is a female instructor who teaches courses in the field of Computer Information Systems (CIS). She holds a bachelor's degree from Albany State University, and she is certified in Comptia A+.

Participant 5: Pseudonym PN5. PN5 is a female instructor who teaches online courses in the field of Electrical and Computer Engineering. She holds a specialist degree in the field of Instructional Technology from Georgia Southern University.

Participant 6: Pseudonym PN6. PN6 is a male instructor who teaches online courses in the field of Civil Engineering Technology. He holds a double master's degree from Georgia Institute of Technology and Nova Southeastern University.

Participant 7: Pseudonym PN7. PN7 is a male instructor who teaches math online courses. He holds a bachelor's degree from Albany State University.

Participant 8: Pseudonym PN8. PN8 is a female administrator who teaches online courses in the field of Business Technology. She holds a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership from Argosy University.

Participant 9: Pseudonym PN9. PN9 is a female instructor who teaches online courses in the field of Psychology. She holds a master's degree from Argosy University.

Participant 10: Pseudonym PN10. PN10 is a male administrator who teaches online courses in the field of Operations Management. He holds a Doctorate of Ministry in Theology from Trinity University (TEDS).

Participant 11: Pseudonym PN11. PN11 is a male administrator who teaches online courses in the field of Business Logistics Management. He holds a doctorate degree from North Central University.

Participant 12: Pseudonym PN12. PN12 is a female instructor who teaches online courses in the field of Health Information Technology. She holds a Doctorate of Ministry in Theology from United Theological Seminary.

Participant 13: Pseudonym PN13. PN13 is a male instructor who teaches online courses in the field of Computer Information Systems. He holds a bachelor's degree from Georgia Southwestern University.

Participant 14: Pseudonym PN14. PN14 is a male instructor who teaches online courses in the field of Design and Media Production Technology. He holds an associate's degree from County College of Morris.

Participant 15: Pseudonym PN15. PN15 is a female instructor who teaches online courses in the field of Practical Nursing. She holds a master's degree in Nursing from Walden University (See Table 1).

Table 1

Study Participant Demographics

Participant #	Ethnicity	Gender	Years of Teaching
PN1	African American	M	10 years
PN2	Nepalese	M	1 year
PN3	Caucasian	M	20 years
PN4	African American	F	5 years
PN5	African American	F	10 years
PN6	African American	M	6 years
PN7	African American	M	18 years
PN8	African American	F	20 years
PN9	Caucasian	F	8 years
PN10	Caucasian	M	17 years
PN11	Haitian/American	M	15 years
PN12	African American	F	10 years
PN13	Caucasian	M	20 years
PN14	Hispanic	M	5 years
PN15	African American	F	5 years

Interview Data

The data collected from the participants during interviews were synthesized into like categories according to emerging themes. Meaning, the themes are arranged according to the interview questions listed below, and the pseudonyms were used to identify participants.

Interview Question 1: What type of interaction have you experienced with diverse students? During the interview, PN14 responded that he interacted through

instructional materials. Likewise, PN15 stated that she interacted through audio/video lecture, discussion boards, and question and answer forum such as the Café. However, the other 13 research participants commented that they interacted through emails. PN1 reported “I like to interact asynchronously through Blackboard so that I can connect with my students.” PN2 reported that “I interact with the discussion board to engage students.” PN3 reported, “I like to use online media to interact with my students.” PN4 reported, “I like to interact through virtual office appointments to create dialog with my students.” PN5, PN6, PN7 and PN8 reported that they like to interact through conference calls and emails. PN9 reported that she likes to interact through Blackboard learning management system. PN10 and PN11 reported that they like to interact through personal interviews during advisement and emails. PN12 and PN13 reported that they like to interact through Blackboard and email conversations. Likewise, PN14 reported that he likes to interact through instructional materials. Lastly, PN15 reported that she likes to interact through Q&A forums such as the Café and video recordings. Therefore, the researcher posed the following questions to the participants: “What type of interaction have you experienced with diverse students?”

PN1 responded:

“As a librarian, I have taught many online students and interacted through email, Blackboard LMS, and asynchronous meetings. However, I have not interacted through many phone calls.”

PN2 responded:

“I interact with online students through lecture and discussion. The discussion is used to enhance student’s understanding of the discussion topic.”

PN3 responded:

“I interact with a multitude of diverse students such as African Americans, Caucasians, and Hispanics. I interact through classroom conversation, classroom instruction, emails, and online media such as Blackboard platform.”

PN4 responded:

“I use individual virtual office meetings as my way of connecting with students and getting them familiar with Cengage and Mindtap software. Also, the virtual office meeting allows me to develop a relationship with my online students. More importantly, when I get the students one-on-one, it opens dialogue and enables them to become more interactive.”

PN5 responded:

“Since the students have different dialects about Electrical and Computer Engineering, most of our interaction is done through discussion or through email.”

PN6 responded:

“When interacting with students within the field of Civil Engineering Technology, I have experienced a very wide range of diversity that includes women, African American, and Hispanics. For that reason, I interact through instruction and emails.”

PN7 responded:

“With distance education, I do not exactly know our online students socio-economic status so most of the interaction is with students of different age levels. Therefore, I interact through phone calls and email messages.”

PN8 responded:

“I have had interaction with all ages, genders, and ethnicities of students. Specifically, students who are in traditional and online courses. With that being said, I have interacted through phone calls and emails.”

PN9 responded:

“I have experienced helping a student, who was from South America, understand the Blackboard elements and assignment due dates such as holidays, so I was able to interact with the student through Blackboard learning management system to help her understand our procedures.”

PN10 responded:

“I interact with diverse students through my remarks on their assignments and feedback in the discussion board. Also, in terms of advisement, I interact through emails and personal interviews.

PN11 responded:

“The interaction that I have with my online students is through phone and email. However, for advisement, I interact through personal interviews or face-to-face.”

PN12 responded:

“For my online students, I interact through Blackboard platform, discussion boards, and emails.”

PN13 responded:

“I have had phone calls and email conversations that relate their topic assignments.”

PN14 responded:

“I have a whole assortment of students, and the interaction is through explaining the content and instructional materials that relates to the Design and Media Production Technology program.”

PN15 responded:

“I have implemented recordings and Café forums which is place where students post questions and the instructor answers them. Also, I have interacted through video lectures where everyone has to dial-in at a certain time for attendance to be documented. Lastly, students would upload their assignments for me to grade at a certain amount of time.”

More importantly, the results revealed two themes as the key components of the instructional process such as social presence and teaching presence in Interview Question 1 (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2

Supporting Statements of Theme Related to Question 1- Social Presence

Theme	Supporting Statements
Social presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interacting through email, discussion board, and Blackboard enables me to connect with my students (PN1) • Interacting through lecture and discussion board helps diverse students understand better (PN2) • I am able to create dialog through online media, classroom instruction, and email (PN3) • Interacting through lecture and discussion board helps them get engaged (PN5) • Utilizing classroom instruction and emails increases participation (PN6) • Interacting through Blackboard and emails helps them understand (PN9) • Interacting through assignments, discussion boards, emails, and conference calls benefits students (PN10) • Interacting with diverse students via Blackboard, discussion board, and emails provides answers to student's questions (PN12) • Interacting with diverse students via instructional materials and discussion increases student-teacher interaction (PN14)

Table 3

Supporting Statements of Theme Related to Question 1- Teaching Presence

Theme	Supporting Statements
Teaching presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to provide virtual office appointments allowed me to connect and have open dialogue with diverse students (PN4) • Scheduling phone calls or conference calls creates meaning through communication (PN7) • Interacting through phone calls and conference calls benefited my students (PN8) • Interacting via conference calls enabled me to connect with diverse students (PN10) • Interacting through conference calls helped me get to know my students (PN11) • Interacting with diverse students via conference calls, Blackboard discussion board, and emails (PN13) • Utilizing different media such as the Café (Q&A forum), discussion board, and audio/video lecture enabled me to meet the learning needs of diverse students (PN15)

Interview Question 2: What do you bring from your diverse background that complements learning for culturally diverse students? In response to the second interview question, PN1 and PN4 reported that they learned from people who had different ethnicities and different backgrounds. Following PN5 reported that she learned about different cultures from attending conferences and meeting people with different backgrounds. Next, PN10 and PN11 reported that their military experiences enabled them

to relate to culturally diverse students. Afterwards, PN14 reported that his native country and diverse background complimented learning for diverse students. Lastly, PN15 reported that she comes from a multicultural family, which complimented learning for diverse students. On the other hand, the other eight participants reported that they only bring knowledge of the materials within their respective fields of study. For that reason, the researcher posed the following questions to the participants: “What do you bring from your diverse background that complements learning for culturally diverse students?”

PN1 responded:

“Attending (FSU) Florida State University has helped me learn from other cultures. The more people that I interacted with helped me understand their culture. For instance, I learned what was considered respectful and disrespectful. One thing about the African American culture is that it is infused with so many cultures. Meaning, the African Americans culture is very diverse in a sense that it is community based. Being community based, the African American culture is considered a mingling of all cultures so it depends on the surroundings.” Within the library world, I meet so many different people so their culture somewhat becomes a part of mine. This interaction helps me in my teaching practices, and it removes some of the barriers.”

PN2 responded:

“From my prior trainings, I try to explain difficult questions by breaking it down into small parts so that students understand better. I also, place students into small groups for group discussion so that they understand better.”

PN3 responded:

“I bring knowledge of the field of study, materials, workforce expectations, and work hours in the field.”

PN4 responded:

“Being that I came from K-12 school system for 15 years, I discovered that if I treat people the way that I wanted to be treated, it does not matter what nationality or background. In my experience, I learn from diverse students which helps me bring real-world situations that compliments their learning.”

PN5 responded:

“Being an African American woman in the engineering field, I bring an understanding to the field that includes predominantly males and other nationalities. Basically, my experience compliments the experience of others.

PN6 responded:

“Being an African American male, I bring a rich experience to the field of study as well as passion for building and designing structures that fits the environment.”

PN7 responded:

“Since my age level falls between the traditional and non-traditional students, I can relate to both categories as well as bring insight to gaining a competitive edge in the workforce.”

PN8 responded:

“When I first went to college many years ago, I went to college that was predominantly all Caucasians. Meaning, there were many times that there will be no one in the class that looks like me. I learned how to interact with all types of people, and sometimes, I felt a bit overwhelmed because there were no one in the class that looked like me. However, you have to realize in that time or era, it was rare for someone like me to be in a course like that or in a college setting like that. So it allowed me to grow and develop to the type of person or instructor that I am today. Also, I could actually understand and feel that some students might have a different comfort level with subject matters, online learning, and traditional learning. Based on that experience, I try to make my students feel comfortable with their subject area, with me as an instructor, and with other people that they interact with regardless if it is traditional or online.”

PN9 responded:

“In my class, we talk about socializing and interacting. Meaning, we focus on conflict, communication barriers, stereotypes, biases, culture, gender, race, economic level, and educational level. From my perspective, I share my background experiences that I grew up in a poor family or housing project, and I had to work to become employable or have a job, which it is an ongoing struggle, but with pleasure. Therefore, my socio-economic background experience helps my students focus and realize that if I can come from that type of background and make it, anybody can do it.”

PN10 responded:

“Well, I have been involved for 50 years with different cultures, different backgrounds, and different ethnicities. All of those experiences have influenced me, and enabled me to have the ability to interact with diverse students.”

PN11 responded:

“Well, I have a very diverse background. For one, I was not born in this country. Secondly, I am a former military. Especially, the military, I have dealt with many people from different backgrounds and different cultures. So, I bring the experience from the military and being born outside of the United States help me interact with my online students.”

PN12 responded:

“From teaching in the University System of Georgia, I recognize that diversity is not about judging a certain group, but about having balance, appreciation, and understanding.”

PN13 responded:

“Well, I grew up in a very small town where everyone knew everybody. My mother raised four children by herself, so I started from nothing and worked my way up. Typically, my students have that same way of life. Therefore, my experiences compliment them.”

PN14 responded:

“Well, I try to treat everyone with the same level of interaction by presenting the information. So, my focus is always on the content, and trying to communicate it the best that I can. I do not really focus on diversity.”

PN15 responded:

“Well, I come from a family that is full of different types of cultures and diversity, but all of my experiences have been multicultural. Meaning, I have not just dealt with one type of people, different cultures, different backgrounds, and different needs. As a matter of fact, having taught here has made me deal with that. For instance, my interactions with nursing students who have different ethnicities, nursing teachers when I was coming through nursing school, and with patients and coworkers are all part of my multicultural background.”

Consequently, the results revealed two themes as the key components such as cultural awareness and cultural competence in Interview Question 2 (Table 4).

Table 4

Supporting Statements of Theme Related to Question 2

Theme	Supporting Statements
Cultural awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending Florida State University helped him learn from people who had different ethnicities and different backgrounds that complemented learning for diverse students (PN1) • Working with diverse students in K-12 helped her learn from people who had different ethnicities and different backgrounds that complemented learning for diverse students (PN4)
Cultural competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending conferences and meeting diverse people complimented learning for diverse students (PN5) • Being in the military enabled me to learn different customs complimented learning for diverse students (PN10) • Being a veteran and my native language complimented learning for diverse students (PN11) • Being from a multicultural family provided a plethora of multicultural experiences that complimented learning for diverse students (PN15)

Interview Question 3, Themes 5 and 6. What resources have you accessed to help you meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students? In response to the third interview question, PN5, PN6, and PN8 reported that they accessed professional development courses, conferences, seminars and webinars to meet the needs

of culturally and linguistically diverse students. In the same manner, PN7 reported that he accessed Photomath mobile application, which is a camera calculator that helps students understand mathematical equations. Next, PN9 reported that she assessed library resources such as Films on Demand, which consists of educational documentary films and curriculum focused videos that includes 15,500 video titles (77,000 segments) in Humanities & Social Sciences, Business & Economics, Health, and Science. Likewise, PN11 and PN15 reported that they accessed Computer Assisted Language Learning software, which is a Dictaphone app that allows students to hear conversations in their native language. In the same manner, PN12 she reported that she accessed the instructional design to ensure that the required components meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Similarly, the other seven research participants reported that they accessed instructional media such as streaming videos, eBooks, interactive content, and learning management systems (LMS). As a result, the researcher posed the following questions to the participants: “What resources have you accessed to help you meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students?”

PN1 responded:

“Well, one of the resources that I use is Films on Demand which is a video collection. If there is someone in your online course that is from a different country and you want to learn a little more about them, it is just as simple as going to the Encyclopedia or watching a video to learn about their culture. The reason is that it helps you gain a better understanding of the culture as well as increase the effectiveness of your teaching. To bridge the gap, it is helpful to watch videos and read articles about their culture.”

PN2 responded:

“Most of the time, I use media, images, and equipment.”

PN3 responded:

“The textbooks are now developing the materials. For instance, it has the old school media such as PowerPoint and lecture notes. Also, it includes eBooks for students to access from any location. Next, it has videos with live instructions/tutorials that demonstrate how to do the work. Lastly, it has links to tutor.com as well as other resources for students to learn the subject matter.”

PN4 responded:

“I use Google to learn about other cultures. For instance, I had a student who is from Cuba which he was explaining the different traditions, so I used Google to learn about the traditions of Cuba, and we were able to interact. Therefore, I encourage my students to use Google to learn about different cultures.”

PN5 responded:

“I believe the resources that I use the most is attending conferences that are in our field that supplies the resources to teach us how to give that differential teaching style. Because with a diverse group, you have to have a differential teaching level to be able to actually cultivate all the different cultures. For instance, attending online learning consortium meeting or the society of information technology and education. A lot of their sessions are on integrating technology for the differential student and things of that sort. So that assisted me a lot to really learn the differential learning styles. Actually being able to interact with different people not only just my students, but with different people, period. So, it goes beyond teaching because people react based on how you make them feel.”

PN6 responded:

“I have done a lot of research, and I have taken classes. I am currently enrolled in a doctoral program in higher education leadership at Nova Southeastern University. Being enrolled in that program has given me access to the many resources on how to understand my culture perspectives. I have also explored resources outside my job as well as my studies, and these resources include personal development courses. Lastly, I use myself as a tool to understand what the other person is going through.”

PN7 responded:

“Well, I am in general education and math. The biggest resource is technology which it helps our students, but it can also be a crutch. For instance, there is software that is on the Internet that can provide the answer, and the student really does not need to know how to get the answer. As a math instructor, it is my hope that the student would want to know why and how the answer is determined. Meaning, students do not know the background and steps to get the answer so technology can help them as well as hurt them especially when they get on the job.”

PN8 responded:

“Well, I try to keep abreast of technology and any kind of assistance to help my students become better learners and help my students learning progress. For instance, I try to take advantage of staff development opportunities, and use those opportunities as tools in the classroom to help students. I do some self-training by taking a class or a brief short course which helps me as well as my students.”

PN9 responded:

“When it comes to resources, I use the Internet to locate books and articles that relate to our topic of discussion. For basic psychology, I have to teach the brain and human development. So, when students ask questions that relate to gender, I try to help them understand the chromosomes by researching the Internet for scientific resources.”

PN10 responded:

“Well, I try to keep up with what is going on in the world by getting viewpoints from friends who live in other parts of the world such as England and New Zealand. Meaning, I try to learn more about the customs and cultural differences from my friend’s vantage viewpoints of their world.”

PN11 responded:

“We have many resources at the institution. Being an online instructor, one of the resources that I have accessed is accessibility. For example, I use accessibility to try to make sure that the courses are accessible to all students. No matter if they are blind. As a matter of fact, I have a student who speaks broken English, and he is a foreigner. I am able to work with him because I understand the issues that he is dealing with. We do not have too many resources to help him with his language except for my background. As a result, I am able to understand the student’s language because I speak Creole language.”

PN12 responded:

“I have taught both traditional and online students so the resources are accessed according to the instructor’s style.”

PN13 responded:

“The resources that helps me meet the needs of diverse students include their socio-economic level (such as their home environment and work experience) and educational level (such as their prior schools).”

PN14 responded:

“The resources would include the equipment and the content within the program. Meaning, it is designed in such a way that that students can understand, learn, and develop the skills needed for this program. Therefore, I present the material equally to all students.”

PN15 responded:

“I do not have more than one language, but I have learned how to use Dictaphones. There are apps available that are amazing. For instance, if I say something in English and I want to deliver it in Japanese, I can just hit a button on my phone and the student can hear it in Japanese. Also, there is this software called (CALL) computer assisted language software for distance learning, where you download the software for the student to hear it in his or her dialect. I thought that was really good.”

Therefore, the results revealed two themes as the key components such as instructional materials and professional development in Interview Question 3 (Table 5).

Table 5

Supporting Statements of Theme Related to Question 3

Theme	Supporting Statements
Instructional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessed Photomath mobile app which is a camera calculator that displays step-by-step solutions to assist me with meeting the needs of diverse students (PN7) • Assessed library resources such as educational documentary films and curriculum focused videos with the use of Films on Demand (PN9) • Assessed computer assisted language learning software which enabled me to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners (PN11, PN15) • Assessed the instructional design to ensure that the required components met the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students (PN12) • Assessed instructional materials such as streaming videos, web-based eBooks, interactive content, and learning management systems to meet the needs of diverse students (PN1, PN2, PN3, PN4, PN10, PN13, PN14)
Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessed professional development conferences to meet the needs of diverse students (PN5) • Assessed professional development seminars and webinars to meet the needs of culturally diverse students' perspectives as well as meet their needs (PN6) • Assessed professional development courses to meet the needs of culturally diverse students (PN8)

Interview Question 4, Themes 7 and 8. What instructional strategies have you implemented to meet the needs of diverse students? In response to the fourth interview question, PN4, PN5, PN9, and PN15 reported that they implemented differentiated instruction to meet the different learning styles of diverse students. Subsequently, PN1, PN2, PN3, PN8, PN10, PN12, and PN13 reported that they implemented Web 2.0 interactive tools to meet the needs of diverse learners. Conversely, PN6, PN7, PN11, and PN14 reported that they utilized collaborative learning activities such as group discussions and case scenarios to enhance student participation and student engagement. Consequently, the researcher posed the following questions to the participants: “What instructional strategies have you implemented to meet the needs of diverse students?”

PN1 responded:

“One strategy that I would like to implement is to include a language interpreter built into the platform. Regardless of which platform that you are using, the information will automatically transcribe into the student’s native language. If the learning management system has the capability to transcribe information in a student’s native language, I think that it would be helpful to make sure that the students are all aware of the features in their learning management courses.”

PN2 responded:

“I provide instructional materials such as lecture notes, quizzes, and hands-on activities.”

PN3 responded:

“The best thing is to be willing to work around the student’s schedules, and that requires the use of the campus and online media. Also, make sure that they have access to work on the materials seven days a week and 24 hours a day. For instance, I try to make myself available by having my email open in case a student needs to contact me. Also, I look into the discussion boards.”

PN4 responded:

“Since I been here, I have never taught the same every semester, and it is so exciting to me. Meaning, I never taught the same way is because of the students. Even though the curriculum and projected learning schedule provides structure, I teach on the level of the students’ knowledge of the content then I move towards what will work better for the student. Since students are on different levels, it helps me teach differently each semester because I able to meet all levels of the students.”

PN5 responded:

“I believe that learning the differential learning styles and putting that with the project-based learning and problem-based learning has been most effective for me in teaching. My main vision or mission is to help people be better than who they were before. In doing that, you have to relate things to things that they already understand. If you relate it to that, then they have a better chance of understanding the new knowledge that you are presenting. If you can relate it to a problem or a project that they have completed before, it is best to give students a project that they can actually see the results, hear the goals, know the objectives, and set mini-goals throughout the project. As a result, they can see that they have the big project at the end which makes it tangible. At the same time, you also build their critical thinking skills as they build the project.”

PN6 responded:

“Well, my field as well as other engineering fields are known for their math, so I have a two-prone approach for students. First, I tell students that math is finite compared to English language or the spoken language. I tell students that math may look intimidating with the square roots and Greek symbols, but it is an approach that you can count on compared to understanding the different meanings of a word. With that, I try to lower their intimidation of math compared to English. The second approach is that I try to explain these math problems by using scenarios that relate to my personal life and current events.”

PN7 responded:

“One of the biggest things that I found is that you have to stay in communication with them. Especially with the diverse students, when they can see that you actually care and concern with a simple phone call or email, it helps a lot. However, when you do not stay in communication with them and when they do not think that you really care, those students are bound to fail. Therefore, staying in communication is very important.”

PN8 responded:

“Well, some of the instructional strategies that I use consist of group projects and group discussions so students can interact with each other. I try to make sure that the online students realize that they have the same learning tools and resources as the traditional students whether it be library services or engagement opportunities. We know that students who are engaged are more likely to succeed, sustain, remain, and complete their courses.”

PN9 responded:

“I usually introduce the lecture and incorporate a strategic method. For my psychology class, I break the lessons down into small pieces on Monday and Wednesdays. However, on Fridays, I implement hands-on activities so that they can be able to understand better. This method meets the needs of auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners.”

PN10 responded:

“In an online environment, I try to have an open attitude towards students. The strategy that I use enables me to give diverse students an opportunity to express themselves, which I try to understand them first because I am more concerned about their understanding.”

PN11 responded:

“The strategy that I use is giving feedback within the assignments, and it does not matter if it is a discussion question or an assignment that they have to submit. Basically, the feedback that I give the student is helpful for understanding the assignments. For instance, I give online students an opportunity to revise and resubmit their assignments for a grade that is no higher than a 90.”

PN12 responded:

“The instructional strategy that I utilize consists of giving examples and posting newsfeeds to publish blogs, podcasts, and articles.”

PN13 responded:

“Well, the instructional strategy that we use in our program allows us to provide the necessary training. If students do not have Internet or software, we encourage them to access it from the library or one of our five different campuses.”

PN14 responded:

“I try to make myself available one-on-one. Meaning, I try to create an environment that makes it easy for students to approach and ask questions.”

Therefore, my instructional strategy focuses on presenting myself in such a way that I am easy to approach.”

PN15 responded:

“As educators, we are taught that people learn differently. You have the people who need audio, visual, and hands-on. Being that I am a nursing instructor, hands-on is a little bit harder when you are teaching online. For that reason, we require students to watch videos, practice in labs, and practice on people who will volunteer. Additionally, we include audios and videos from YouTube and different media. Lastly, we use (LMS) learning management systems such as ATI and simulations.”

Therefore, the results revealed two themes as the key components such as differentiated instruction and interactive instruction in Interview Question 4 (Table 6).

Table 6

Supporting Statements of Theme Related to Question 4

Theme	Supporting Statements
Differentiated instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented differentiated instruction to meet auditory, visual and kinesthetic diverse learners (PN4) • Utilized differentiated instruction such as integrated problem-based and project-based learning activities to enhance critical thinking skills for diverse students (PN5) • Incorporated differentiated instruction such as audio for auditory learners, visual for visual learners, and hands-on activities for kinesthetic learners (PN9) • Provided differentiated instruction to meet the different learning styles such as iPods, YouTube videos, Echo360 video platform, and web-based tutorials for hands-on activities (PN15)
Interactive instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented language interpreter app in his instructional design to meet the needs of diverse students (PN1) • Integrated interactive tools such as podcasts in lectures to meet the needs of diverse students (PN2) • Embedded Web 2.0 interactive tools into the curriculum to meet the needs of diverse students (PN3) • Integrated interactive learning tools such as blogs and Wikis into the instructional design (PN8) • Implemented Web 2.0 technologies to meet the needs of diverse students (PN10) • Incorporated newsfeeds to publish blogs, podcasts, and articles to meet the needs of diverse learners (PN12) • Implemented Web 2.0 interactive tools into the course design (PN13)

Interview Question 5, Themes 9, 10, and 11. What type of methods have you utilized to maintain a positive learning experience for diverse students? In response to the fifth interview question, PN2, PN5, PN10, PN13 and PN14 reported on the importance of presenting instructional materials that builds student's self-efficacy. Likewise, PN3, PN7, PN8, PN11 and PN15 reported that it is essential to communicate and connect with students because it keeps them engaged. Lastly, PN1, PN4, PN6, PN9, and PN12 reported on the importance of repetition because it reinforces a positive learning experience. Therefore, the researcher posed the following questions to the participants: "What type of methods have you utilized to maintain a positive learning experience for diverse students?"

PN1 responded:

"One method utilized is the design of the course itself. Based upon the way the course is designed, students can be intimidated by the platform. If the course is designed properly and user friendly, students are more apt to have a positive attitude toward the course itself. Particularly, in the online environment, you can go to certain websites, and the websites itself will be inviting. However, there are other websites that consist of small print, too much content on webpage, and unknowledgeable language, which can cause students to feel uncomfortable." Therefore, the course design is important for students to have a positive experience.

PN2 responded:

"The main thing that I do is that I try to motivate and encourage them about their future goals and career opportunities."

PN3 responded:

"To keep a positive learning environment, I found that my online students need responses quickly and access to me in a timely manner. Basically, I try to respond to them in a timely manner. As a result, being timely and responsive towards them keeps them on task, and it keeps them happy too."

PN4 responded:

“I keep it all about the business. Meaning, I try to make sure that the learning environment is professional at all times, which means that we do not engage in jokes.”

PN5 responded:

“The first method would be to encourage myself. The second method would be for me to take professional development for myself. The reason is that I need to learn the different methods for diversity. For example, I need to know what needs to be added to make everyone comfortable in our diverse online learning environment. For that reason, I like to assess and get feedback from students about how the materials were presented and what they have learned. If our main goal is to teach them, and if they are not learning anything then what good are we? Therefore, if people see that you care, a lot of them will perform differently when you show that you care.”

PN6 responded:

“One of the methods that I use is humor. I try to maintain a positive experience with humor and jokes that relates to the subject matter or lesson at hand. I also tell jokes by using my past mistakes and food to relate to the learning methods. The reason is that most math problems will be related in units of measurements, and these units of measurements are broken down into basic components which consist of five basic components in engineering. If students use the components as ingredients to make a cake, they can use two parts of this and three parts of that to construct a problem by using the units. This will allow them to deconstruct the problem to understand the basic components as well as put it back together. Using this method makes learning fun and creative.”

PN7 responded:

“Just staying in direct communication with students, it shows that you really care. If a student emails me on the weekend, a prompt response to them really shows that you care. Overall, it keeps them engaged as well as let them know that you really care about their education.”

PN8 responded:

“One of the methods utilized is that I try to make students feel connected by communicating with them. Meaning, I give constant feedback, answer phone calls, and answer email messages. Any time that students have questions, I answer them because it shows that I am interested in what they are doing. Basically, I try to stay connected and engaged with the student because if they are engaged, they are likely to succeed. Just because students are learning from a distance does not signify that they do not need engagement. As instructors, we are the conduit that allows the students to stay connected with us as well as other students in the online learning environment.”

PN9 responded:

“The method that I use is repetition. For example, my online students have the opportunity to make-up missed assignments at least two weeks prior to mid-term. For that reason, I use a method of repetition because it allows them to go back and revise an assignment for improvement. Overall, repetitiveness helps them learn.”

PN10 responded:

“The method that I use is that I am open to providing and/or locating answers to student’s questions. Meaning, I am more interested in students being able to understand, apply, and grasp the concept. For that reason, I make myself available to answer their questions. Additionally, I provide encouragement, point out their successes, and give them a different way of looking at life.”

PN11 responded:

“I believe that my attitude can create a positive learning experience for the students. In other words, my approach in teaching determines the type of learning experience. Also, I try to respond to student’s email inquiries and provide feedback on assignments within 24 hours. For example, I follow-up with students if they do not submit an assignment. Therefore, my approach helps with maintaining a positive learning experience.”

PN12 responded:

“The method that I use consists of incorporating a balance approach to teaching. Meaning, I try to ensure that everyone has an understanding of the concept by breaking it down into chunks. Basically, I believe that the institution hired me because they knew that I could bring a different style of teaching.”

PN13 responded:

“First, I encourage students to take advantage of internship opportunities as well as other field related opportunities. Second, I encourage them to network with our advisory committee members within the field of study. Therefore, these methods help with maintaining a positive learning experience.”

PN14 responded:

“I try to present the materials and myself in a positive way. In the old way of teaching, students were shamed if they did not know the correct answer to a question. However, my teaching style produces positive effects that encourages students, not shame them.”

PN15 responded:

“Actually, I utilize the ten work ethics traits that the institution promotes such as teamwork, collaboration, and accountability. Therefore, incorporating the work ethics traits has been an amazing resource in the medical field. As a result, integrating these work ethics traits has increased communication and teamwork as it relates to students posting discussions and completing assignments.”

Consequently, the results revealed three themes as the key components such as motivation, communication, and retention in Interview Question 5 (Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7

Supporting Statements of Theme Related to Question 5- Motivation

Theme	Supporting Statements
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I motivate students by making the material relevant to his or her personal needs (PN2) • I attend professional development courses to motivate students and remain current with technology (PN5) • I motivate students by praising them and pointing out their successes (PN10) • I encourage students to take advantage of internship and other job-related opportunities (PN13) • I motivate and present materials that build student's self-efficacy (PN14)

Table 8

Supporting Statements of Theme Related to Question 5- Comm. & Ret.

Theme	Supporting Statements
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I clearly communicate student's expectations (PN3) • I communicate instructor's availability and accessibility (PN7) • I provide constant feedback to stay connected with students (PN8) • I communicate to foster appreciation and ensure student participation (PN11) • I emphasize the importance of communication because it helps students become more responsible for their learning (PN15)
Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I design the course to include content that is comprehensible and understandable (PN1) • I provide guided practice activities to check for students understanding and retention (PN4) • I utilize a step-by-step model as a framework for students to identify components for retention (PN6) • I incorporate real-world training activities to engage students in active learning for retention (PN9) • I provide a variety of learner activities that enables students to exercise good learning skills for memory and retention (PN12)

Summary of Emergent Themes

In this qualitative study, the interview questions enabled the researcher to gain insight on the common themes. Meaning, the research study revealed 11 emerging themes in response to the research questions. For instance, the themes included social presence, teaching presence, cultural awareness, cultural competence, instructional media, professional development, differentiated instructions, instructional technologies, motivation, communication, and retention.

Social presence. In this study, the findings revealed that social presence is important in the distance education environment. According to Bentley, Secret, and Cummings (2015), social presence refers to the extent to which persons are perceived to be real and are able to be authentically known and truly connected to others in mediated communication. Particularly, for online teaching and learning environments, scholars agree that social presence is a particularly powerful concept because of its seemingly central influence on teaching and learning success (Bentley, Secret, & Cummings, 2015). In the same manner, Phirangee and Malec (2017), believe that establishing social presence within an online course is critical in order for all identities, experiences, beliefs, and knowledge sets to be accepted rather than marginalized. For that reason, many instructors have attempted to foster a sense of community within their online courses, which encompasses trust, commonality, and interactivity among students (Phirangee & Malec, 2017).

Teaching presence. In this study, the findings revealed that teaching presence as a common theme. According to Bolldén (2016), teaching presence focuses on teachers' planning, structuring and conducting of teaching and interventions in online

environments. The research participants commented that the use of the discussion boards, Q&A forums, emails, conference calls and audio/video lectures assisted them in keeping students engaged.

Cultural awareness. In this study, the participants discussed the importance of cultural awareness. According to Ahmad and Yusof (2017), cultural awareness is defined as an awareness of one's own cultural heritage, values, and biases. Meaning, cultural awareness involves how dimensions of cultural awareness affect an interaction with a diverse group (Ahmad & Yusof, 2017). Based on the interview question, seven participants explained that their experiences and interaction with people from different ethnicities and different backgrounds contributed to their collective cultural perspectives. However, the other eight participants conveyed that their belief system, value system, socio-economic status, educational background, life experiences, and expert knowledge of the field of study expanded their global perspective.

Cultural competence. Cultural competence emerged as another theme in this study. According to Ahmad and Yusof (2017), an effective teacher is the one who is aware about the reality of different backgrounds and needs in the classroom (Ahmad & Yusof, 2017). Meaning, effective teachers are always trying something new, doing a critical review of existing practices, and sensitive in teaching methods and existing approaches to meet the needs of variety of learning needs from all students and not just based on the needs of the dominant culture in the classroom (Ahmad & Yusof, 2017).

Based on the interview question, four participants explained that their military background, multicultural background, native language, and native country contributed to their cultural competence. For instance, PN10 and PN11 stated that their military

background enabled them to learn different customs, ethnicities, and background that contributed to their cultural competence. Likewise, PN14 stated that his native country and native language contributed to his level of cultural competence. Afterwards, PN15 commented that her multicultural background and experiences contributed to her cultural competence. On the other hand, the other 11 participants conveyed that they have a positive attitude toward other cultures. In view of that, to be competent in culture, institutions of higher learning need support not only from administrators but also from other members of the school such as a teachers and students (Ahmad & Yusof, 2017). Moreover, in order to achieve cultural competence standards, administrators should establish policies that include the following aspects: developing cultural awareness, training a multicultural staff, engaging in multi-cultural communities, designing a curriculum that promotes academic and cultural competence to enact discipline that will reduce the probability of having students from minority groups engage in stereotyping (Ahmad & Yusof, 2017).

Instructional materials. In this study, instructional materials emerged as a common theme. According to Smaldino, Lowther, Russell, and Mims, (2015), instructional materials are the specific items used within a lesson that influence student learning (p. 6). Meaning, the design and use of instructional materials are critical because it is the interaction of the students with those materials that generates and reinforces actual learning (Smaldino, Lowther, Russell, & Mims, 2015, p. 6). All participants responded that they assessed instructional materials such as streaming videos, web-based eBooks, interactive content, and learning management systems to meet the needs of diverse students. Therefore, powerful, well-designed instructional materials are

experienced in such a way that they can be readily encoded, retained, recalled, and used in a variety of ways (Smaldino, Lowther, Russell, & Mims, 2015, p. 6).

Professional development. In this study, the findings revealed that professional development emerged as a common theme. According to Raulston and Alexiou-Ray (2018), there is a difference between being tech savvy and being technologically literate. Being tech savvy indicates the ability to perform technical tasks without regard for appropriateness and consequences, while literacy with technology includes the ability to determine the legitimacy of information on the Web and navigate appropriate uses of all types of technology (Raulston & Alexiou-Ray, 2018). Based on the interview question, three participants responded that they assessed professional development trainings such as seminars, webinars, conferences, and courses. As a result, these training programs supporting increasingly experienced faculty accounted for the prior experience and expertise that many faculty possessed in online pedagogy, and differentiate faculty needs based on the distinctions between online course design and delivery (Rhode, Richter, & Miller, 2017). Specifically, the self-assessment provided an opportunity for faculty to reflect on their own skills, deficiencies, and strengths, prior to beginning the learning process (Rhode, Richter, & Miller, 2017).

Differentiated instruction. In this study, the findings revealed that differentiated instruction emerged as a prominent theme. According to Roy, Guay, and Valois (2013), differentiated instruction can be defined as an approach by which teaching is varied and adapted to match students' abilities using systematic procedures for academic progress monitoring and data-based decision-making. As a matter of fact, differentiated instruction (DI) has primarily been applied to the classroom-based instruction, combining many

common instructional strategies that focus on flexibility and personalization of learning (Tomlinson, 2014). In view of that, based on the interview question, four participants incorporated differentiated instruction to meet the different learning style such as audio for auditory learners, visual for visual learners, and hands-on activities for kinesthetic learners. Therefore, to gain this knowledge of students, teachers must adopt this philosophy and teach in a way to gain understanding of their students and how they learn (Viness, Colquitt, Pritchard, & Johnson, 2017).

Interactive instruction. In this study, the findings revealed that interactive instruction emerged as a prominent theme. According to Smaldino, Lowther, Russell, and Mims, (2015), a digital teacher's includes presentations that are media rich and interactive (p. 7). Based on the interview question, seven participants commented that they integrated interactive tools into their instructional design such as blogs, audio podcasts, and Echo360 video platform. Echo360 is a video platform that allows instructors to record lectures during real-time. Meaning, it combines video management with lecture capture to make learning active before, during, and after class. As a result, media permit the educator to bring sights and sounds of the real-world into the learning environment—the classroom (Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2015, p. 81).

Motivation. In this study, the findings revealed that motivation emerged as a common theme. According to Ahmad and Yusof (2017), teachers' perception and behavior toward cultural diversity is a key motivation for education and the differences of standard of living among students in the classroom. Based on the interview question, six participants responded that they motivate students by pointing out their successes,

presenting materials that build their self-esteem, and making the instructional materials relevant to their personal needs.

Communication. In this study, the findings revealed that communication emerged as a common theme. According to Simonson, Smaldino, and Zvacek (2015), communication in a distance education environment happens when learners interact with one another and with their instructor (p. 78). Based on the responses, five participants responded that they communicate student's expectations, relay instructor's availability, and provide constant feedback.

Retention. In this study, the findings revealed that retention emerged as a common theme. According to Hodges and Coppola (2015), there has been a growing amount of evidence that people's beliefs about ability on a task affect not only current perceptions of success, but also how they learn and retain skills. Based on the responses, five participants commented that they incorporated a variety of learner activities, guided practice activities, and real-world training activities to engage students in active learning for retention.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences, behaviors, and knowledge of diverse faculty and how they interact with student learning in the distance education environment. Additionally, Roger's Diffusion of Innovation Theory provided the theoretical framework for this study. According to Rogers (2003), an innovation is an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by individuals or a social system (p. 12). Moreover, this study was intended to understand the set of cultural and learning/teaching features because it will help the educational community provide culturally sensitive instruction (Gómez-Rey, et al, 2016). In view of that, based on a non-probability sampling, 15 participants were selected (Creswell, 2015). Also, based on the literature, there were similarities in the participants' responses. For that reason, the researcher sought to answer five research questions:

1. What types of interaction have you experienced with diverse students?
2. What do you bring from your diverse background that complements learning for culturally diverse students?
3. What resources have you accessed to help you meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students?
4. What instructional strategies have you implemented to meet the needs of diverse students?
5. What type of methods have you utilized to maintain a positive learning experience for diverse students?

Therefore, this chapter presents an interpretation of the findings to the research questions, implication of the study, and recommendation for further research. Equally important, the themes that emerged from the interview data were linked to existing literature as well as the concepts of the theoretical framework in the study. In the same manner, this chapter will conclude with the limitations of the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

This section presents an interpretation of the findings to the research questions that were addressed on the interview data in Chapter 4. Moreover, this section presents the themes that emerged from the interview data as well. Next, it presents an implication of the results, and recommendation for future research. Lastly, this chapter will conclude with a summary.

Research Question 1. What types of interaction have you experienced with diverse students? The research participants identified a distinction between social presence and teaching presence. According to Armellini and De Stefani (2016), some studies have suggested that social presence is not a separate construct, but a core element within the teaching dimension. However, Kreijns, Van Acker, Vermeulen and van Buuren (2014) argue that social presence should be divided into two constructs, namely social presence, or “the degree of ‘realness’ of the other in the communication,” and social space, described as the “degree to which social interpersonal relationships are salient” (Kreijns et al, 2014, p. 5). On the other hand, teaching presence involves the structuring and direction of activities, but also entails the modelling of critical discourse and reflection (Armellini & De Stefani, 2016). Specifically, teaching presence focuses on teachers’ planning, structuring and conducting of teaching and interventions in online

environments (Bolldén, 2016). Therefore, in order to establish social presence and teaching presence, the participants reported that it is important to be present attentively, empathetically, and thoughtfully.

Research Question 2. What do you bring from your diverse background that complements learning for culturally diverse students? The research participants identified a correlation between cultural awareness and cultural competence. According to Vargas, and Erba (2017), cultural competence consists of four dimensions—cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skills, and cultural practice—which are not mutually exclusive and do not represent a linear progression in the development of a person’s competence, as learning in these dimensions can occur simultaneously. In order to increase cultural awareness, the teacher’s role as a mediator must act as an intermediary between two cultures while teaching students the new linguistic and cultural input (Niculescu & Obilişteanu, 2017). For instance, the teacher can fruitfully exploit various audio-visual means to connect students to the respective foreign language-speaking countries so that they get acquainted with the values, beliefs, norms, customs and traditions of these countries (Niculescu & Obilişteanu, 2017). Therefore, an important aspect worth underlining here is that the culture and civilization material should be presented in small, workable chunks so that the students are not overwhelmed by the great amount of information (Niculescu & Obilişteanu, 2017).

Research Question 3. What resources have you accessed to help you meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students? The research participants identified a connection between instructional materials and professional development. Meaning, in order to be able to adapt the tasks to the particular level of the group of

students, the instructor has to research and evaluate the source materials available as well as set general goals and specific objectives (Niculescu & Obilișteanu, 2017). Therefore, the teacher's role as an evaluator has to select materials, instructional methodology and other (ICT) information and communication technologies that the students will work with (Niculescu & Obilișteanu, 2017).

Research Question 4. What instructional strategies have you implemented to meet the needs of diverse students? The research participants identified a parallel between differentiated instruction and interactive instruction. According to King and Butler (2015), creating multicultural curricula undoubtedly requires a great deal of work for teachers, including reevaluating their own beliefs toward diverse populations and a re-examining of multiple histories. For that reason, teachers should become knowledgeable in operating and managing the big umbrella of the new technological tools (Negoescu & Boștină-Bratu, 2016), such as interactive whiteboards, computer, tablets, internet, videogames, smart phones, software programs for language learning, Skype messenger, blogging, television, social networks, projector, YouTube, and Power Point. Particularly, infusing (ICT) information and communication technologies into the instructional design creates a shift in the role of the teacher from being a transmitter of knowledge and instruction to being a creator of technology and media (Niculescu & Obilișteanu, 2017).

Research Question 5. What type of methods have you utilized to maintain a positive learning experience for diverse students? The research participants identified an association between motivation, communication, and retention. Based on literature, the ARCS model, which was developed by Keller, consists of four components such as motivation, attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (Keller, 1987a, 1987b,

1987c). For instance, the attention component includes strategies that stimulate and sustain learners' curiosity. Next, the relevance component includes strategies that link learners' needs and motives. Afterwards, the confidence component includes strategies that provide learners with a positive expectation to achieve. Finally, the satisfaction component includes strategies that provide intrinsic and extrinsic reinforcements for learners' efforts (Keller, 1987a, 1987b, 1987c).

In regards to communication and retention themes, the research participants iterated the importance of feedback. According to Miljković, Petojević, and Žižović (2016), there are two types of feedback such as motivational feedback and information feedback. First, motivational feedback stimulates the learner for something that has been done (praise). Meaning, it reinforces good performance and increases the probability that it will happen again in the future (Miljković, Petojević, & Žižović, 2016). Specifically, it must be given immediately after the completed task so that a person who is praised gains confidence and satisfaction of achievement (Miljković, Petojević, & Žižović, 2016). Second, information feedback advises the learner on what to correct or improve (Miljković, Petojević, & Žižović, 2016).

Relationship of Findings to the Literature

In conducting this research study, it was found that a more creative platform is needed to support Roger's Diffusion of Innovation theoretical framework. As Rogers and Lucas (2016) pointed out, "We are increasingly seeing universities around the world take on the challenge of moving beyond only measuring outcomes related to academic and career success and expanding the scope of their responsibility to include students' wellbeing and their capacity to build lives of vitality, resilience, purpose, and

engagement.” For this reason, Roger’s Diffusion of Innovation Theory was used in this study to raise multicultural awareness. In other words, Roger’s Diffusion of Innovation will give faculty a platform that advocates cultural competence, enhances connectivity, and embraces empathy between diverse faculty and diverse students in the distance education environment. Equally important, this diffusion of innovation will strengthen institutions as well as increase student-teacher interaction around the world. Therefore, understanding and respecting the opinions and viewpoints of other cultures will benefit all stakeholders such as faculty, students, instructional designers, administrative staff, and senior executive staff.

Particularly, this diffusion of innovation framework will foster a climate for learning that advocates the respect of other people’s thoughts, opinions and viewpoints, promotes cultural and learning/teaching features, and supports the learning community with culturally sensitive instruction (Gómez-Rey, et al, 2016). As a matter of fact, this diffusion of innovation addresses five elements that correlates with the AEIOU model. AEIOU stands for accountability, effectiveness, impact, organizational context, and unexpected consequences. First, being accountable to outsiders is not new for U.S. higher education institutions—such systems were in place even before the birth of the nation (Chen & Haynes, 2016). Basically, the United States has a long history of making higher education institutions accountable to an external governing body (Chen & Haynes, 2016). Not only government agencies try to ensure accountability in U.S. higher education, accreditation agencies and organizations that rank and rate higher education institutions also play the role of accountability enforcer to an extent (Chen & Haynes, 2016). For instance, the government may want institutions to enroll more underprivileged students,

whereas other internal and external constraints may dictate a more stringent admission standard (Chen & Haynes, 2016). In the same manner, the accreditation agencies may want faculty to devote more time to educating undergraduates, whereas the board of trustees wants the institution to become a research powerhouse (Chen & Haynes, 2016). Since most higher education institutions do not have the luxury to choose the priority on which they want to focus, administrators and faculty are constantly negotiating among these priorities (Chen & Haynes, 2016). Likewise, faculty and administrators must use information from assessment for different purposes (e.g., general education, professional and regional accreditation, and accountability to external stakeholders) (Guetterman & Mitchell, 2016).

Although few studies have examined faculty perspectives on and engagement in assessment efforts, further inquiry into faculty attitudes, values and motivations regarding assessment is recommended for institutions to be successful in identifying leverage strategies and increasing faculty participation (Emil & Cress, 2014). For that reason, institutional leaders must initiate educational reforms that make higher education institutions more accountable for student learning outcomes in order to prepare a new highly skilled generation of workers who can sustain their nation's economic development (Mohamad Karkouti, 2016). Next, effectiveness is an element that requires teachers to have a positive attitude and treat every student with their needs doing no discrimination in multicultural education environments (Gürso & Akyniyazov, 2016). As mentioned earlier, effective teaching of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds requires more than special teaching methods (Tuncel, 2017). Meaning, it requires a new perspective that understands the role of language and culture learning

(Tuncel, 2017). According to Garza et. al. (2014), teacher experiences and how they perceive the world may sometimes obstruct caring for students whose backgrounds are ethnically, linguistically, and culturally unique making this challenge more complex. Particularly, the challenge for teachers is to demonstrate caring behaviors responsive to students' needs (Garza, et. al., 2014). In order to demonstrate caring behaviors, faculty can use reflections to focus on the day-to-day aspects of teaching as well as future aspirations and expectations (Blumberg, 2015). As a matter of fact, using reflections should lead to changes in how and why faculty teach (Blumberg, 2015). For that reason, it is logical to begin with self-review, but if instructors consider only their own perspectives they may not adequately question their own assumptions and beliefs (Blumberg, 2015). Therefore, effective teaching requires more than teaching methodologies, it requires faculty demonstrating caring behaviors, learning from their experiences through self-reflections, and having other perspectives to help instructors gain insights into the impact of their beliefs, policies, and behaviors on others (Blumberg, 2015).

Subsequently, impact is an element that requires teachers to have high self-efficacy. As previously mentioned, Bandura (1993), pointed out that people with high self-efficacy tend to have greater cognitive resourcefulness, strategic flexibility, and effectiveness in managing their environment, and set motivating goals for themselves. In the same manner, Meristro et. al. (2013), believed "teachers with a higher sense of efficacy exhibit greater enthusiasm for teaching, are more open to new ideas, are more willing to experiment with new methods and exhibit a greater commitment to teaching." Conversely, Bandura (1997) pointed out that teachers with low self-efficacy are not

confident about their abilities, and assume that they cannot perform well if the students are not self-motivated and in condition when the inspiration by teachers on students' achievement and performance is badly affected by adverse impact of societal atmosphere.

Afterwards, organizational context is an element that reveals network development in which new employees (in this context, online faculty) initiate and sustain interpersonal relationships with others in their organization, typically for the purpose of longer-term integration and socialization (Fleming et. al., 2016). Meaning, new faculty members may seek out or form workplace networks differently than in other organizational contexts where much of the learning about specific job expectations takes place upon commencement of the job itself (Fleming et. al., 2016). As a matter of fact, the social relationships that new employees develop with organizational peers are important means for newcomer learning and knowledge development, and function as highly influential antecedents to longer-term socialization (Fleming et. al., 2016). Therefore, meetings with senior faculty, including department chairs, are found to play instrumental roles in the extent to which new faculty effectively “learn the ropes” (Fleming et. al., 2016). Finally, unexpected consequences is an element that deals with conflict resolution. According to Idris et. al. (2017), “conflict is the situation which guarantees the existence of differences between or among the interdependent persons when they try for the attainment of their aims and goals for fulfilling their requirements.” Research studies show that the main causes of conflicts are aspirations, yearnings, craving, necessities, anxieties, and drives (Idris et. al., 2017). As stated earlier, the problem researched in this study is the gap between experiences and interactions of culturally diverse faculty with culturally diverse students in distance education. To bridge

the gap between experiences and interactions of culturally diverse faculty with culturally diverse students, there is an opportunity to integrate a conflict management system which is a conduit for conflict resolution. Therefore, the findings to the literature review reveals that there is a correlation between Roger's Diffusion of Innovation framework and the AEIOU model.

Implications of Findings

The findings of this study revealed several elements such as social presence, teaching presence, cultural awareness, cultural competence, instructional materials, professional development, differentiated instruction, interactive instruction, motivation, communication, and retention which raised multicultural awareness. In the same way, Roger's Diffusion of Innovation gave faculty a platform to raise their cultural awareness, enhance student-teacher interaction, and embrace empathy between diverse students in the distance education environment. Consequently, it was evident that each research participant told a unique story about his or her experiences, which allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of their cultural awareness.

Significance

According to Ion and Iucu (2016), the use of research is influenced by a wide variety of factors and it is mediated through teachers' personal experience, collegial knowledge and organizational cultures. Based on the literature review, few studies have been conducted on how the evaluations are perceived by the teachers and, in particular, how they influence the teaching choices made by teachers (Flodén, 2017). For that reason, this research study contributes to the body of knowledge because it provides more detailed information on how diverse faculty empathize, care, and respect diverse

students' thoughts, opinions and viewpoints. As a matter of fact, teachers' views are particularly relevant to the research study because teaching is an essential profession that can generate change in contemporary society, particularly in the light of the educational paradigm based on constructivism (Ion & Iucu, 2016). Additionally, the contributions of this study will enhance the researcher's understanding, create a seamless gateway for additional research, and promote multicultural awareness between diverse faculty and diverse students in distance education. Consequently, this study is significant to the body of knowledge because it will improve the quality of cultural awareness, cultural competence, and cultural sensitivity.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to understand the lived experiences of diverse faculty as well as gain insight about their multicultural awareness. For that reason, conducting the study helped the researcher better understand the lived experiences of diverse faculty. In addition, the study offered strategies for faculty to think of the language proficiency of students that they work with and devise learning activities and tasks accordingly. For instance, teachers should adopt a multicultural curricular approach aimed at building bridges of understanding regarding diverse linguistic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds (Gunn, 2016). Particularly, empowering teachers to use (ICT) information and communication technologies is a powerful tool for improving the effectiveness of foreign language teaching within the classroom didactic activities (Yunus et al., 2013). Therefore, based on the study results, administrators, faculty, academic advising staff, instructional designers, and online success coaches should adopt best practices that foster cultural awareness and inclusion.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of diverse faculty as well as gain insight about their multicultural awareness. Meaning, the study contributed to current research that promotes multicultural awareness. Therefore, further research is recommended to infuse multicultural professional development trainings throughout the curricula for institutions of higher learning. Equally important, further research is recommended to provide valuable insight to help the institution improve enrollment, retention, and graduation placement rates.

Limitations of the Study

According to Creswell (2015), limitations are potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher (p. 197). Despite the limitations, these limitations are useful to other potential researchers who may choose to conduct a similar or replication study (Creswell, 2015, p. 197). Even though the researcher gained insight on the lived experiences of the participants, the Zoom web application experienced difficulty interpreting the language of one participant. Additionally, this study analyzed data from six females and nine males, which there were more support from the male participation. Perhaps conducting the study from other institutions of higher learning will yield a greater participation.

Contributions of the Study

This study is important because diverse faculty will be able to establish a platform that advocates cultural competence and cultural awareness. Meaning, this study will provide congruence between diverse faculty's experiences and diverse student's experiences in distance education. For instance, diverse faculty will have the insight or

perceptiveness to see through the lens of their diverse students. More importantly, diverse faculty will be able to demonstrate emotional intelligence that empowers, enlightens, engages, and educates diverse students in distance education. As previously mentioned, online teacher's ability to demonstrate aspects of emotional intelligence in different elements of course design and instruction is key to helping learners cultivate emotional intelligence, an important competence in management and leadership (Mjeski, et. al., 2017).

As with most diffusion of innovations, this study contributes to the body of knowledge because it provides a more detailed information on how diverse faculty empathize, care, and respect diverse students' thoughts, opinions and viewpoints. As a matter of fact, online faculty's viewpoints are uniquely relevant to the research study because teaching is an essential profession that can generate change in contemporary society, particularly in the light of the educational paradigm based on constructivism (Ion & Iucu, 2016). Additionally, the contributions of this study will enhance the researcher's understanding, create a seamless gateway for additional research, and promote multicultural awareness between diverse faculty and diverse students in distance education. Therefore, this study contributes to the body of knowledge because it will improve the quality of cultural awareness, cultural competence, and cultural sensitivity.

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