Examining Faculty's Transition to 100% Online Learning During a Pandemic: A Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) quickly emerged as an unprecedented pandemic that has impacted communities at every level. Although online teaching is not a new concept, many faculty entered new territory as they transitioned into the online learning environment at the onset of the pandemic. This qualitative, narrative inquiry sought to capture the unique experiences of on-ground faculty during the rapid transition into online learning. Through these twenty interviews, some emerging themes included the instability and usage of technology, changes in engagement and participation, and the need for additional student and faculty support. Emerging themes provide insight to future implications related to transitioning to 100% online for faculty. Future research related to students' experiences is recommended to gain a thorough understanding of both sides.

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The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) quickly emerged as an unprecedented pandemic that has impacted communities at every level. Although online teaching is not a new concept, many faculty entered new territory as they transitioned into the online learning environment at the onset of the pandemic. This qualitative, narrative inquiry sought to capture the unique experiences of on-ground faculty during the rapid transition into online learning. Through these twenty interviews, some emerging themes included the instability and usage of technology, changes in engagement and participation, and the need for additional student and faculty support. Emerging themes provide insight to future implications related to transitioning to 100% online for faculty. Future research related to students' experiences is recommended to gain a thorough understanding of both sides.

Keywords: faculty support, teaching, Covid-19, higher education, engagement, flexibility, student support, narrative inquiry

Introduction

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) became an unprecedented pandemic that has affected communities at every level. In January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a "...public health emergency…" (Tabari et al., 2020, p. 136). This declaration then resulted in a nationwide quarantine period starting in March 2020 in the United States as a measure to slow the progression of the disease. This quarantine caused most colleges and universities to close campuses and to switch all classes to an online learning format. Although online teaching is not a new concept, faculty were experiencing unfamiliar territory as COVID-19 impacted students and faculty differently. Additionally, many on ground faculty did not teach in an online system. Like many individuals, faculty were also coping with the pandemic while providing more support to struggling students (Mickey et al., 2020). Evanoff et al. (2020) reported that faculty were experiencing anxiety, stress, and work exhaustion due to the pandemic. The onset of the pandemic occurred abruptly, limiting the transition period. This resulted in a multi-faceted impact on the education system; not only did it influence higher education, but it also impacted faculty and students. There is a need to understand the impact and to bridge the gap in understanding how to mitigate this and provide a direction for future educational planning.

Literature Review

Covid-19's Influence on Higher Education

Undoubtedly, COVID-19 influenced higher education in many forms. When the World Health Organization mandated the quarantine measures, the education system moved through

a period of unusual transitions (Tabari et al., 2020; Vaskivska et al., 2021). In particular, the model of on-ground practices was sustained through a tumultuous period. The sudden cessation of on-ground activities developed into a topic of worldwide concern. However, the ability for academic institutions to scale up might have been impacted by the resources the institution had at the time of this event. The need to incorporate distance learning became a significant issue for most institutions that did not have some form of an online learning platform. As a result, many institutions adopted technology platforms extemporaneously, leading to turmoil (Gawanmeh et al., 2021; Vaskivska et al., 2021). Rashid and Yadav (2020) highlighted the shortcomings of the education system, including the need to train faculty and the incorporation of eLearning platforms moving forward. Additionally, as Zuo and Miller Juve' (2020) noted, faculty needed staff development to rise to the challenges of teaching in an online learning system, but this was not always readily available. Staff development was defined as "new skills…to perform the necessary tasks of restructuring lectures from in-person to online, staying up to date on frequently changing health care guidelines and continuing activities important for career advancement" (Zuo & Miller, 2020, p. 105). It was clear that adjustments needed to be made so colleges and universities could continue providing students with higher education.

Impact on Students

While acknowledging the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education learners not only demonstrated high levels of commitment and perseverance, but many were also negatively affected in ways that impacted their learning experiences (Serrano Sarmiento et al., 2021). In research done by Šimić et al. (2021), they found there was a moderate stressful impact on students because of the pandemic, with women having a higher impact. Elevated stress levels were brought on by the sudden change in the learning environment and training process. Šimić et al. (2021) reported that students were "more prone to depression, more tired, and more prone to emotional exhaustion," as well as depersonalization leading to burnout (p. 114). Additionally, Liu et al. (2022) found that certain groups of students were affected at a greater rate than others and that the pandemic impacted students' mental health. These groups tended to be female, sexual minority, and individuals with disabilities. Additionally, Babb et al. (2022) also looked at nontraditional students and found that issues concerning mental health increased and well-being decreased during the pandemic. This is important to understand because students interact with faculty, and faculty are often influenced by the behaviors of students in a classroom. If we know that students are struggling, then we can infer that faculty would need to respond to this struggle.

Impact on Faculty

Most campus-based colleges and universities closed their campuses around March 2020 when there was a call for a quarantine period to slow the progression of COVID-19 as it was declared a public health emergency in January 2020 (Tabari et al., 2020). At that time, faculty had to make a pivot to adjust for ongoing learning, especially if they were not already teaching using an online learning system. research has been conducted to examine this dynamic and clearly shows some of the complexities of having to adjust to changing instructional modalities. In research conducted by Gottenborg et al. (2021), they found that faculty experienced stress and anxiety, required a higher level of flexibility, and worked more during this time. Additionally, research by Kirk-Jenkins and Hughey (2021) further discussed the challenges faculty faced as they transitioned to instructional modalities, such as challenges with finding a balance between work and personal life. These findings highlighted flexibility as a necessity,

as faculty revised course materials to adapt to the modality, and this introduced them to a different teaching dynamic (Kirk-Jenkins & Hughey, 2021; Zuo & Miller Juve', 2020).

The shift to online learning became a challenge for faculty who were less familiar with online teaching and learning. In research conducted by Kerr-Sims and Baker (2021), they examined the perceptions of faculty during the online transition period. This case study assessed the faculties' level of satisfaction and found that faculty experienced less engagement and lower performance from their students during the pandemic. Additionally, most faculty agreed that the level of satisfaction during the transition period was low (Kerr-Sims & Baker, 2021). Taylor and Frechette (2022) focused on faculty outcomes such as burnout and perceived social support during the pandemic. Findings from the research study concluded that faculty experienced heavier workloads leading to fatigue and burnout (Taylor & Frechette, 2022). During this unprecedented event, many faculty were provided with little to no directions as to how to move forward within a pandemic, and faculty were forced to address their own struggles, as well those of the students within their classes Kerr-Sims and Baker (2021).

Purpose

The purpose of the research study was to capture the unique experiences of on-ground faculty during the rapid transition into online learning. What were the experiences of faculty supporting students who were working either primarily online or on-ground between March and December 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic? Was the primary research question throughout the study. The objectives of the research study were to understand the impact of COVID-19 on faculty and capture the experiences of faculty supporting students during the transition.

The authors of this research are all affiliated with teaching in a higher learning environment. Dr. Christa Banton is an educator, mental health counselor and researcher in the field of workplace diversity and inclusion. Dr. Jose Garza is a faculty recruiter for a medical school and researcher in the field of healthcare. Interest in this topic came from the direct experience of having to also make this pivot to online learning during the pandemic. The intention is to show how this event impacted faculty as they tried to keep their classes together and mitigate the impact on their students.

Methodology

Method and Design

Researchers within this study utilized a qualitative, narrative inquiry approach to capture the unique experiences of each participant. It is through a narrative inquiry that we can explore how the individual life is impacted through the experience (Bruce et al., 2016; Caine, et al., 2013; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). This also allows for a natural flow through participant stories without the control that is often used in other research designs that might limit the data obtained. Additionally, because of the topic under study, the story of the experience contains the richness of data needed to understand the emerging themes. As described by Bruce et al. (2016), "Our discussion of emergence calls for research designs that are open ended and by necessity fluid…" (p. 2). In this study, flexibility created an open pathway for greater depth of knowledge and understanding of the topic under consideration.

Our understanding of the emerging themes in this study were also grounded in Dewey's theory of how experience can be educational, unique, and of such value as to be used in a framework of continuity and interaction (Hutchinson, 2015). Dewey's theory was used to focus the alignment of the research to the theory that educational experiences can be rooted in the

narrative of that experience for the teacher and the learner. Hutchinson (2015) argues that "...as complex beings in complex contexts, we can see how previous experience has shaped current experience" (p. 8). When we apply this to our research, we can see how the experience of COVID-19 was so outside of the range of prior experience for students and faculty that this could not prepare them for the novelty of a pandemic.

In addition, narrative inquiry gets to the heart of the subjective story of lived experience such that it provides a richness of information that cannot be obtained using other methods. According to Kim (2016) narrative inquiry allows for a detailed analysis at a microlevel as it is based upon the story of experience and the novel-ness to the subjective participant. It is used here to give a voice to the stories of the individuals who were impacted by this event.

The researchers developed interview questions specifically for this study. The following principles were followed in the development of the questions: open-ended questions, questions to elicit memorable experiences, avoid "why" questions, and follow up with reflective questions (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). Additionally, there were two sets of questions, one for faculty who primarily worked on-ground and another for faculty who worked primarily online during the study period. These questions were used to elicit responses from the participants to answer the research questions and to get a depth of understanding regarding their subjective experiences. All demographic information was obtained through personal interviews.

Participants

Participants were recruited from a university in the Midwest that had both on-ground and online courses at the onset of the pandemic. Participants were required to meet the following selection criteria: employed as a part-time or full-time faculty, have at least one year of teaching experience, and taught either online, on-ground, or both during the timeframe between March 2020 and December 2020. The demographic data obtained revealed diverse results from the twenty (20) participants interviewed.

Demographic information within this study includes male faculty (80%), female faculty (20%), taught on-ground during this time (70%), taught online during this time (30%). Individuals have been teaching for 1-10 years (35%), 11-20 years (50%), 21+ years (15%) at this institution, individuals have been teaching in higher education 1-10 years (20%), 11-20 years (45%), 21+ years (35%). Faculty worked part-time (85%), full time (10 %), and unknown (5%). They worked in business (35%), technology (10%), criminal justice (5%), general studies (35%), law (5%), public administration (5%), and multiple (5%) programs. Faculty also teach between 1-5 courses (40%), 6-15 (45%), and 16-20 (15%) courses per year, teach synchronous classes (75%), asynchronous (15%), or both (10%) during this time.

Data Collection

Prior to data collection approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to protect the participants in the study and to ensure ethical considerations were followed. Following the recruitment process, twenty volunteers were identified as participants. Participants reached out to the research team once they received the recruitment flyer. Participants needed to meet the following inclusion criteria: they must teach in higher education either full or part time and they must have been teaching during the period from March 2020 and December 2020. Researchers determined eligibility through these contacts and scheduled interviews for those meeting the research criteria. In addition, informed consent was received by everyone prior to conducting any research.

Each participant was then interviewed via Zoom conferencing platform, in a one-hour, semi-structured interview. The interviews began with a brief introduction of the research, and then each participant was asked a series of demographic questions. These were followed with a specific set of questions associated with their teaching status (primarily on-ground or online) during the research period from March 2020 to December 2020. The names of participants were removed from the data to protect their right to confidentiality.

Online Faculty Questions:

- While your classes have been 100% online, did you note any changes within the learning environment following the onset of the pandemic? If so, can you please provide some specific examples?
- What challenges, if any, did you face during this time? Please provide some examples.
- What successes, if any, did you experience during this time? Please provide some examples
- How do you believe your students progressed during this time?
- How, specifically, did you support your students during this time? Can you please provide some examples?
- Were there instances where you felt students needed additional support during this time? If so, please provide some examples.
- As a faculty member, how did you fare as an instructor during this period? What were your coping strategies?
- As a faculty member, what support did you have during this time? What additional support, if any, would have been helpful?
- Is there anything else you feel we did not cover that is important for us to know?

On-Ground Faculty Questions:

- What was the process for transitioning your students from face-to-face learning to 100% online instruction at the onset of the pandemic?
- What challenges, if any, did you face during this transition period?
- What successes, if any, did you experience during this transition period?
- Following the transition, was your class synchronous or asynchronous? How was that experience?
- How did your students acclimate to this online learning environment during this time?
- How, specifically, did you support your students during this time? Can you please provide some examples?
- As a faculty member going through this transition process, how did you fare as an instructor within this process and in following months? What were your coping strategies?
- As a faculty member, what support did you have during this time? What additional support, if any, would have been helpful?
- Is there anything else you feel we did not cover that is important for us to know?

During the interview process, each video was recorded using Zoom video conferencing. All interview videos were transcribed using the *Temi* transcription application so that themes

could be pulled from the data set. *Temi* is a computer software program that digitally transcribes audio into text transcripts and is easily compatible with most audio files. Transcripts were analyzed for any errors and specific names, locations, and other identifying information were coded to protect participants' identities and provide anonymity. Upon completion, participants were provided an opportunity to revisit their statements for accuracy, and interview transcripts were emailed back to participants for a final review (member checking). After seven calendar days, researchers assumed passive consent in this process. Once all transcripts were approved, each researcher reviewed the transcriptions and identified narratives, stories, and expressions that were further classified into overarching themes. Transcripts were reviewed by all researchers to reach credibility and reduce bias.

Data Analysis

Upon analysis of the interviews, themes, and patterns were drawn from the data once saturation was obtained (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). Saturation is the point where there are no new emerging themes from the data, which allows us to analyze the data as a complete picture of the phenomenon under investigation (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). In this study, saturation was obtained with twenty (20) participants as they all had a shared experience even though their individual experiences differed in detail.

Researchers analyzed transcripts using a thorough thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). King (2004) noted that thematic analysis is useful in investigating different perspectives, emphasizing similarities and differences, and finding outlying themes within participant responses. The first step in our data analysis process included the development of a code manual. When using a code manual within data analysis, researchers must first develop the codebook before commencing with an in-depth analysis of the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Thus, utilizing the first five interviews, the research team participated in the development of a code manual that included definitions, descriptions, and exemplar text. Within this process, each researcher labeled narrative information that matched specific code words which were then categorized into themes, such as technology, flexibility, participation, transition, chair/leadership support, student personal issues, and engagement. Upon completion of this task, the team discussed each transcript for accuracy and agreement. We resumed creating subcategories with corresponding codes for each category and associated phrases and behaviors. This codebook was utilized to code all remaining interviews. Subsequent coding at this stage was conducted with two researchers coding each interview for reliability. Finally, once all data were coded and organized, coded data were organized into the major themes presented within this report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results

This study focused on the experiences of faculty in providing support for students during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 to December 2020. From the interviews conducted certain themes began to emerge from the data. These themes were technology, flexibility, participation, transition, chair/leadership support, student personal issues, and engagement. These themes were further compared between the two identified groups, faculty who worked primarily on-ground and faculty who worked primarily online during this period. This comparison was conducted to identify the differences and similarities between groups.

Table 1
Differences Between on Ground and Online Faculty Perceptions (by theme)
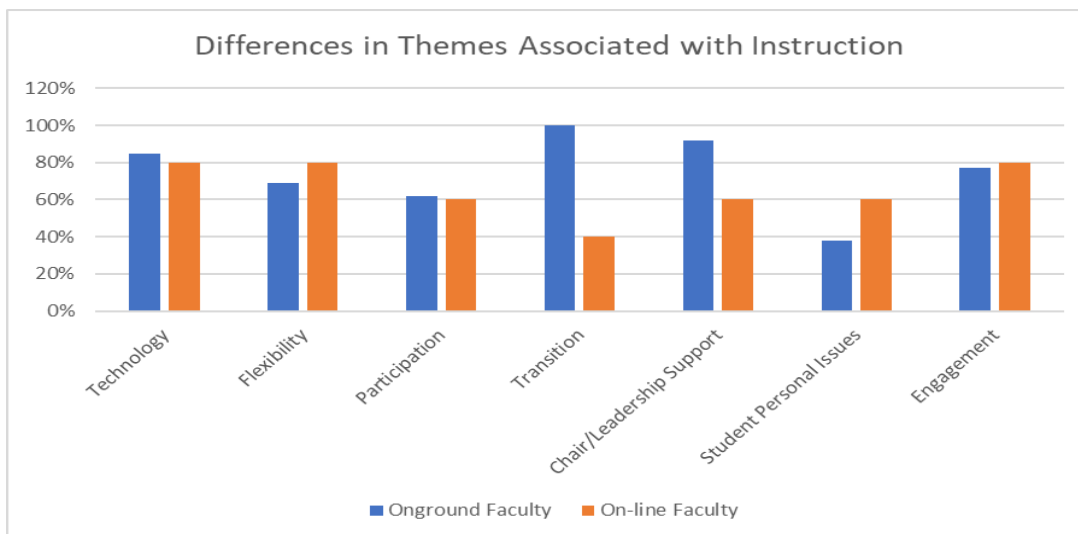
Technology

When analyzing this specific theme, both groups were similar in their responses and outlined this as an area of reflection. This theme was found in the responses of 86% on-ground faculty compared to 83% of online faculty. The faculty that primarily worked on-ground noted concerns with technology being confusing or difficult to use for a synchronous classroom due mostly to the rapid pivot from on-ground to online learning. One on-ground faculty noted, "I rushed to buy a webcam and I didn't know how to use it. It was a horrendous process… there was some confusion among the students. The online learning platform had two different ways for students to enter into the classroom… Most of them were able to figure out how to get into the class but some could not."

Shared challenges noted by both groups included the instability of the internet and bandwidth issues. However, many participants noted that faculty and student challenges could be negated through the existence of a strong technology department (IT). For example, participant 16 stated the following:

> I have to applaud the IT help desk and the facilitators and departments for helping students overcome these challenges, as students needed to quickly learn more advanced computer literacy skills… more than required in on-ground courses.

For those faculty who primarily worked online during this time, we see similar experiences. However, we also see a more positive interaction with technology when used by students. This also was apparent in that online faculty worked primarily in an asynchronous format and were remarkably familiar with the online system prior to the pandemic. It is suggested that the pivot from an on-ground classroom to online learning format would be easier for them due to their prior teaching experiences. Additionally, many within this group did note that technology accessibility and computer literacy among students were lacking. This created an additional challenge, as students who usually attended on-ground classes were now entering an online learning environment for the first time. For example, participant 1 stated the following:

I did notice a twofold change. One is obvious that I had some students that were campus-based joining the online platform and with that came some people with technical challenges… That's number one, and then number two, I had a number of students who were in the online all platform already that were also having personal issues, family issues, struggles… I don't want to say their classes were less of a priority, but health and family became an immediate priority, and so I had to navigate with them through that. I had some students that had COVID… So, it definitely changed the interaction level, their focus level, and just overall concerns of what's going on.

Flexibility

When analyzing this specific theme, both groups were comparable in their responses and outlined this as an area of discussion. This theme was found in the responses of 71% on-ground faculty compared to 83% of online faculty. The on-ground faculty noted that they needed to be more flexible with students during this time and more sensitive to the needs of the student. This also meant being there for the student and putting in more time and effort to assist students with passing courses. Certainly, in the data it was shown that students needed more from faculty during this time just to navigate and remain enrolled in courses. For example, participant 5 stated the following:

It was a growing experience. I will say that it pulls on that string of measuring how flexible you can be. And it taught me that, I guess I am a lot more flexible than I thought I might've been. Homework assignments were very flexible. Coming in and out of the class, like I understood was flexible and because we didn't have our cameras on, that made it flexible too.

For those faculty who primarily worked online during this time there are similar experiences. They noted things such as giving students more time to turn in work and patience as ways to help students. There was a concern with needing to set some rules for the synchronous classrooms so that it could have some order, rules such as raising hands, not talking over others, and putting on cameras when speaking helped to mitigate some issues in this area.

Participation

When analyzing this specific theme both groups were similar in their responses and outlined this as an area of consideration. This theme was found in the responses of 64% on-ground faculty compared to 50% of online faculty. The on-ground faculty noted things such as having homework assignments that were flexible, using screenshots to show attendance, and giving encouragement to students as being important. However, they also noted that it was harder to recognize when students needed help, as some students were just logging into class and were doing something else, and it was difficult to see non-verbal cues. For example, participant 5 stated the following:

Some students just sign in and sit there with their camera off or it is clear they are doing something else… I told them that if you want to earn your participation points, you have to be physically present in front of your webcam, the whole four hours of the class.

For those faculty who primarily worked online during this period, we see similar experiences. This group expressed the need to continue to encourage physical presence in the synchronous classrooms and engagement. One online faculty offed this strategy for engagement, "Obviously, you can't see what's going on in the background. But you could still randomly call on them, so everyone knows to pay attention because at some point, they're going to be called on... So. that's a way to kind of keep them engaged." Many faculty also noted the difficulties of conducting student collaborative teams in real time, and there was a lack of student communication of specific needs in the synchronous classroom.

Transition

When analyzing this specific theme, both groups were different in their responses but outlined this as an area of further examination. This theme was found in the responses of 93% on-ground faculty compared to 50% of online faculty. The on-ground faculty found the transition to be a more critical issue when compared to the online faculty group. Some positive aspects of transitioning from a fully on-ground classroom to an online classroom were faculty used a collaborative model, students and faculty were in this together, and for some, there was truly little transition. On the other hand, some difficulties that were noted in the experiences were there was no real transition, there was no plan to address this issue, the learning was not the same, and it was an unpleasant experience for some. For example, participant 19 stated the following:

> Actually, I hated teaching virtual classes… I prefer meeting face-to-face than a virtual class because I want to see my students. I want to see their reaction when I am teaching them something. I can see their eyes light up, that they understood something. Something new. To me that is an inspiration… That interaction, that intimacy was gone in the virtual class. And towards the end, like this year, the students wouldn't even turn on their web camera. They would tell me that they are having problems or "I don't have to with my other instructor" … You know, the students became more and more uncooperative, less enthusiastic.
>
> I did not like teaching virtual courses. And I tried my very best to come up with my own strategies to make things easy for myself and for my students, but it's still not the same. And I really, really want to get back to face-to-face teaching for my own good, and for my students good. Because I know that my students did not enjoy being in a virtual class.

For the online faculty, they found this to be a less critical issue when working with students. Many of the online faculty noted that they were already doing this type of work, and they already knew it was going to be online, so they were prepared for the change. Many online faculty members even enjoyed the transition and created new ways to instruct students using technology. As one online faculty with several years of experience proclaimed, "I am in my element… We're basically on the cusp of education changing. And if we don't adopt a model that is more interactive and collaborative with the students in the online classroom, I think we're going to run into a problem."

Chair/Leadership Support

When analyzing this specific theme, both groups were different in their responses but outlined this as an area of further consideration. This theme was found in the responses of 93% on-ground faculty compared to 67% of online faculty. The on-ground faculty found chair or leadership support to be a more critical issue when compared to the online faculty group. The on-ground faculty reported things such as support was always available to faculty in quick meetings to address issues, everyone helped with the transition, and the support was the same as what was available when on campus. However, some concerns that were noted in this area were there was no instruction for some faculty, and there was much less information coming out in the beginning of the transition from on-ground to online learning. For example, participant 20 stated the following:

> Well, the university had a lead instructor that had done the work to provide a lot of training tips and sessions. And if I needed any assistance, they were always just a phone call or email connection or Zoom meeting away. I'd say I don't understand what I'm supposed to do here. For example, like, okay, I don't know how to share a PowerPoint. It's like, okay, John, here's how you do this, click over here in the corner, then click on this link and then you download it, and then there you go, like, oh, okay. So, those resources were all available. I really can't think of any situation where additional support would have been beneficial. I think it was very well, very well covered throughout, and then that resource continues too today.

For the online faculty, they found this to be a less important issue during the change from on-ground to online learning because of the pandemic. In fact, there were no negative responses to this area. Online faculty noted that leaders were supportive, they were there when they were needed, and that support overflowed. For example, participant 16 stated the following:

> Um, I was, super-duper pleasantly surprised by the professional level of the, um, help desk, the one 800 number. And they were really cool.

> There were lots offered. I didn't feel at all that it [leadership support] wasn't there.

Student Personal Issues

When analyzing this specific theme, both groups were different in their responses but outlined this as an area of further consideration. This theme was found in the responses of 42% on-ground faculty compared to 67% of online faculty. The on-ground faculty found student personal issues to be a less important issue when compared to the online faculty group. The on-ground faculty noted things such as students knew they would support them if they had any personal issues, COVID+ students were given more time, and even students in emergency crisis were able to complete the class. Additionally, faculty in both groups noted the need to address student isolation within this period. For example, participant 8 stated the following:

> A lot of communication is needed now, in this online environment because you're not getting that physical contact and you're not reading nonverbal cues, and you're just not around that connectedness with the students… A strategy

that I use is just a lot of written communication, just "how are you doing?" or "If you're feeling isolated, if there's a problem, just reach out." So, a lot of encouragement and just reminding them that it's not face-to-face, but communication is absolutely possible… you're not out there on your own.

For the online faculty, they found this to be a more critical issue during the change from on-ground to online learning because of the pandemic. One faculty member had a student die from COVID-19 during their course. Additionally, students were experiencing additional stress due to their personal life and childcare concerns during this time. Students also had family members die from COVID-19 or they came down with COVID-19 during the course. For example, a faculty member reflected on a student in her class:

There were, one student that contracted COVID. So, I offered the opportunity to turn in assignments late provide any kind of assistance I could to help. Unfortunately, that student had to undergo hospitalization, and dropped the course because they weren't able to recover… It was more stressful because my students were in pain in many cases. I'm an empathetic person and it was hard to see them struggle and feel overwhelmed and deal with severe illness and in some cases, death. It was hard to see them have disruption in their lives, not just academically, but professionally.

Engagement

When analyzing this specific theme, we can see that both groups were similar in their responses and outlined this as an area of discussion. This theme was found in the responses of 79% on-ground faculty compared to 67% of online faculty. Faculty who was working on-ground at the start of the pandemic noted things such as engaging the student more by providing personal email and cell phone number so they could contact the instructor, having set office hours to discuss difficult concepts, and having increased written communication were seen in their engagement with students. However, they also noted that the classroom intimacy was missing in interactions, engagement was more difficult due to family distractions, and students needed better communication and critical thinking skills. For example, participant 13 stated the following:

One of the things I did during the pandemic. was being more lenient in terms of assignment submissions. Students have four days after the weekly assignment deadline to submit papers and I do not deduct points for late submissions. Sometimes, when students totally missed the target for assignments, I would return them and point out the issues. I would provide a day or two for them to make corrections and resubmit the paper. I would penalize them 10% of the points because they were getting a second go on the assignment. These are some of the things I do to ensure student success during the pandemic.

For those faculty who primarily worked online during this time, we see similar experiences. Faculty noted things such as engagement with students took extra time and patience, used private messaging and extra time to connect, and students did interact more even though they were not turning on their cameras. On the other hand, for some online faculty it was harder to connect to students because everyone was in a different location and courses were now synchronous.

Discussion

When COVID-19 presented a risk to the health and safety of students, universities, and colleges had campus wide closures and on-ground classes were quickly changed to online classes. Considering the data obtained from these personal interviews, there was a significant impact that occurred during this time. The disruption to faculty as they sought to assist students with this pivot varied depending upon the type of faculty and what type of teaching they primarily focused on, either on-ground or online. The ability for faculty to quickly adjust and support students to adjust to this system wide change had to do with a variety of things, but technology was one of the key factors as this was the primary platform to continue courses through this period. However, technology is only as good as the user in relation to the technological system. If faculty or students have limited accessibility or are not comfortable with technology, then this transition might have been a bit more difficult.

There were specific examples that showed the ability of faculty to show support and flexibility in instruction that also impacted the success or failure of students to continue even though they were experiencing the pandemic. The research found that the flexibility of faculty included things such as extending deadlines or allowing for alternative methods of work. The goal was to keep students in the classroom, but to also have some supports in place for faculty. In many ways this was achieved as most colleges and universities continued to work despite the global pandemic even considering unforeseen issues (Deloitte, 2020).

We must also consider the skills needed to conduct online courses and that some faculty might have needed to develop these skills to be successful. Albrahim (2020) identified these skills as "...(a) pedagogical skills, (b) content skills, (c) design skills, (d) technological skills, (e) management and institutional skills, and (f) social and communication skills" (p. 9). In the research we found a variety of skills sets which contributed to the overall ability for faculty to continue classes even though they had to change teaching methodologies. This then supports the argument that faculty also needed to take on a coaching role to support students through this pandemic while also dealing with the effects of the pandemic themselves (Fazel, 2013).

Implications for Future Research

For future research there may be some indication that the type of discipline in which someone teaches might be a factor in how well they were able to integrate into an online system of instruction. This would be a way to fully flush out the dynamics of this event. As we are aware that certain disciplines already have a robust teaching style that might be more comfortable online as it is something they may use more frequently. Research would be beneficial to show the variances in teaching styles in relation to faculties prior knowledge of the online system to see if this impacted our research.

Furthermore, it would be beneficial to focus on the perspective of the student regarding how they perceived faculty support during this same time. If what we were seeing was faculty increasing support efforts, then we would also want to know if those efforts were beneficial for students. This would certainly allow for a more robust conversation and more strategic planning should another such event occur. It would also be beneficial to try and understand the limits of accessibility to technology for students and how those limits can be mitigated by educational institutions to broaden the availability of online learning to students who might not otherwise seek it out as an educational option. More information on these issues would be crucial for a robust understanding from multiple perspectives. In addition, this research could benefit the academic community including faculty and administration as they develop courses and future programs to address the needs of students.

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