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An Evaluative Pilot Study of an Online Facilitator Professional Development Program

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An Evaluative Pilot Study of an Online Facilitator Professional Development Program

by

Alana Elkins

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
with a concentration in Educational Innovation
Department of Language, Literacy, Ed.D., Exceptional Education, and Physical Education
College of Education
University of South Florida

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Dedication

To my committee members, Dr. Johnston, Dr. Park, and Dr. Cobb-Roberts, thank you for your dedication. As faculty members that I have been fortunate enough to learn from as a student, but to also work with professionally, I've appreciated your insight every step of the way.

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To my kids, Lucas, Liam, and Leila, I hope this journey that you've witnessed me on shows you that there is no limit, that "we can do hard things" (Glennon Doyle, 2020), and that being a lifelong learner (in and out of formal education) can open your mind and heart to so many wonderful things.

Lastly, to my husband, Nick who has been my biggest supporter, champion, and pillar to lean on. Your support of my dreams and goals has never faltered and you've gotten me through so many moments of guilt, frustration, and anxiety. You believed in me at times that I stopped believing in myself. Thank you for reminding me along the way why this journey was important. I love you.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

With a rapid increase in higher education online course offerings, many institutions are hiring part-time faculty to meet the demand of online learning. However, a lack of professional development in online course facilitation has proven to limit the effectiveness of facilitation and hinder the foundational quality standards the courses were built upon. An evaluative pilot study was conducted on a professional development framework provided to a group of online course facilitators that were hired to teach the course but did not participate in the online course developments. Since many course facilitators are not online faculty developers, they have limited knowledge of the online pedagogy the course was structured around. By implementing a professional development framework, I was able to determine whether or not professional development for online course facilitators positively affected the delivery of their online courses. Data was collected using a mixed-methods approach and illustrated that professional development support is imperative to the success of our part-time faculty members and how they facilitate online courses.

Chapter One
Introduction and Background

With the increase in online education, more courses are being converted to be held in a virtual space. Faculty members that may or may not teach the course (there might be multiple sections requiring multiple facilitators) are assigned to work with the Digital Learning department throughout a semester to complete an online course development. During online course development, the Digital Learning department partners with faculty to develop high quality, student-centered online courses. When partnering with faculty, we discuss and make decisions on how students will interact with each other, how students will interact with their instructor, how lectures will be delivered, what online tools will enhance the content, and how to maintain the course as a whole. These are necessary conversations that go through a revisional, iterative process. At the end of development, those involved know the "why" behind every method and tool selected for the course and the rationale for the course organization. However, "adjunct faculty rarely receive the same level of professional development and training on best practice in online instruction" (Landers, 2012, p. 1), which ultimately changes the dynamic of how the course was developed and how it will be facilitated moving forward.

This study followed the implementation of professional development framework for adjunct, graduate students, and visiting faculty who facilitated online courses they did not develop. My goal was to provide professional development and support for instructors assigned to facilitate previously developed courses. Before the online courses launched, the assigned online course facilitator was asked to complete an online questionnaire to gauge comfortability in their online facilitation and their preferred method of receiving support. The support provided

included background information needed to successfully facilitate the assigned course, as well as best practices for maintaining the course throughout the semester. Professional development topics included an overview of the methods and tools selected for the course and how these would affect student learning outcomes. We discussed how the tools and methods are supported by best practices, the specific tools that had been integrated within the course, how to use those tools, and how to facilitate and maintain the course in conjunction with those selected methods. Ideally, providing facilitators with this background knowledge would promote consistency in how the course was delivered and ensure that the course remained consistent with the university's online course quality standards.

Statement of The Problem

Online courses designed to meet the university's online quality standards are often facilitated by instructors—adjuncts, graduate students, and visiting faculty—who did not develop the courses and who often have not been trained in online pedagogy, which affects course delivery and maintenance. In 2017 online course enrollment of undergraduate students taking at least one online course was at 17.6 percent, and undergraduates exclusively enrolled in online courses were at 15.4 percent (NCES, 2019). Many of the online courses being offered are facilitated by adjunct faculty, visiting instructors, and graduate students. Data trends show that 73% of newly hired faculty within the US university system are not tenure-earning faculty (AAUP, 2018). At this time, professional development for this population of online facilitators at my institution is limited or non-existent, which affects course quality since the assigned facilitators were not involved developing the course from the outset and are thus not aware of all essential methods informing the course design. Based on observations made by the Digital Learning department, the absence of these facilitators from conversations about the methods,

strategies, and best practices that take place during the typical online course development process suggests these instructors may lack the necessary context behind the selected instructional methods, which ultimately compromises the instructional effectiveness of the course and the course's maintenance.

Purpose of the Study

As a learning designer in this Digital Learning department, I am aware that "teaching online requires the development of new skills and sets of pedagogies" (Baran et al., 2011, p. 422), which can cause faculty to feel unprepared and overwhelmed as they are immersed in teaching in an unfamiliar way. However, digital learning teams haven't taken the time to implement a way to support facilitators that are not course developers so that they feel prepared and confident in the content and tools they will be guiding their students through during their online studies. It is important to consider that "if a faculty member has not obtained the necessary competencies to facilitate and manage an online course, he or she could limit a student's ability to construct meaning and knowledge as well as develop the information and communication technology skills necessary to succeed both academically and professionally" (Lewis & Wang, 2015, p.110). Since many course facilitators are not online faculty developers, they have limited knowledge of the online pedagogy the course was structured around. Therefore, my goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of a professional development pilot developed to support the assigned course facilitators. Ideally, professional development that supports the online course facilitators would assist them in understanding the methods, strategies, and organization that were implemented within the course so that they felt confident in the online content they would be utilizing.

Model Framework

The model framework implemented within this study was a combination of Garrison et al. (2000) Community of Inquiry model, and Boller & Fletcher's (2020) LXD Framework which folloed a blended instructional design process. During a typical online course development, developing faculty become well-versed in each of the COI dimensions and courses are created with each of those in mind while following the LXD Framework. By integrating the COI model within the LXD framework, course facilitators can gain *Design Perspective*. Design perspective takes place in the early phase of the framework and is essential to not only the success of the course, but to the facilitator that was not involved in the conversations and implementations of the foundational COI dimensions and instructional design process. Assigned facilitators understand the importance behind the COI dimensions, but what they miss out on by not having developed the online course they are facilitating is the *design perspective*, which can result in a less effective course (Felber, 2020).

This piloted framework provided guidance on the best way to support an underrepresented, underprepared population: online facilitators who did not design the courses they were assigned to teach. With the number of full-time faculty having "increased by 42 percent from fall 1991 to fall 2011, compared with an increase of 162 percent in the number of part-time faculty" (NCES, 2013, p.1) we can see the trend of how adjuncts, graduate students, and visiting faculty are playing a role in our universities. The role they play within the university ecosystem is vastly glossed over because "to professionally evaluate and mentor adjuncts and graduate students would take an enormous resource commitment from full-time professors which would work against the fiscal imperatives responsible for the use of adjuncts in the first place" (Moser, 2014, p. 9). This then leaves the consistency (and sometimes quality) of online courses in a vulnerable position. Social and Cognitive learning theories will also be explored. These

learning theories affect the isolation from the online development process that course facilitators face. An analysis of how to best enable and empower facilitators to expand upon the teaching methods they currently employ to benefit an online setting and the courses they are assigned to facilitate was also integrated within this framework.

Guiding Evaluation Questions

This is an evaluative study that utilized questionnaires and interviews to investigate the following question:

1. Does professional development for online course facilitators positively affect the delivery of their online course?

2. What level of familiarity do facilitators have with online courses (have they taken/taught/developed online courses)?

3. What kind of formal online teaching and learning has been provided during the facilitator's career?

4. What level of confidence do facilitators express surrounding online teaching?

5. In what areas do online course facilitators believe they are lacking knowledge and support?

6. In what areas of online teaching and learning do online course facilitators feel confident?

7. What elements of the professional development support provided did facilitators find most useful?

Data Collection

This question was addressed through questionnaires distributed to 10 facilitators and completed by seven, as well as interview sessions with three participants. After the initial questionnaires were collected, facilitators attended a *design perspective* meeting where we discussed the quality standards the course upholds, the tools and structure selected to enhance *social, teaching, and cognitive presence*, the reasoning behind the selection of those tools and structure, and how to maintain the course to uphold consistency and quality. Once the facilitators had been teaching for roughly half of the semester, I distributed a follow up questionnaire to gauge the effectiveness of the professional development. Once that data was collected, I conducted interviews with four of the assigned course facilitators to collect data on how the professional development affected their confidence in being prepared to teach a course that they did not develop.

Data Analysis

To determine the findings of this evaluation, pilot participants were sent an electronic web-based questionnaire to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Interviews were also conducted with assigned online course facilitators. The interviews were transcribed and coded, and questionnaires were analyzed using a web-based analytic tool. Once the data from the questionnaires and interviews were received, I measured the responses using descriptive analysis to identify the mean for the quantitative data, and then used the qualitative codes to identify common themes that were present.

Potential Contributions/Implications

Through the research collected, I sought to identify the experiences of course facilitators and the level of online pedagogical support informing their teaching. This pilot data could potentially assist digital learning departments within higher education to ensure greater

consistency in course facilitation, maintenance, use of best practices, and upholding online quality standards. Facilitators would also likely benefit from online pedagogical development and support throughout online teaching appointments. The Innovative Education Digital Learning department will gain insight on improving the process in working with faculty and developing our courses not only with the students in mind, but also considering the facilitators that will teach them. Being able to provide background knowledge to the facilitators will guide their knowledge and understanding of the purposes behind the methods guiding course development, along with an understanding of the strategies that were put in place during development. The resources will provide professional development and support to benefit course facilitators, particularly given students' requests for greater online course clarity and instructional consistency (Huun & Hughes, 2014). A potential outcome may be the perceived preparation and confidence of non-developers in facilitating their online courses so that students in all sections across semesters receive an equi1learning experience.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

Introduction

   This review of literature focuses on the need for an additional layer of professional development support for adjunct, graduate students, and visiting faculty who will become facilitators in online courses that they did not develop. Looking closely at the facilitator demographics and how institutions employ and support their part-time hires will lead to further discussion on facilitator perceptions based on their need for professional development. Finally, looking closely at existing professional development frameworks, including a community of inquiry model and an instructional design framework, will support the ideas behind the much-needed support for online course facilitators.

Method

   This literature review was conducted by searching for and selecting works that focus on the adjunct/part-time faculty population, online pedagogy, professional development, institutional investment, and frameworks that support online professional development. Sources included books, dissertations, and peer-reviewed journal articles relevant to the topic. The literature is organized categorically focusing on facilitator demographics, institutional investments, need for pedagogical background, and existing professional development frameworks. Each of these categories impacts the other. Theoretical frameworks are described, and critiques, validations, and recommendations are provided.

The Facilitator Demographic

Adjunct faculty are being employed at larger and faster rates with the evolving demographics of education. A hiring increase of 27% between the years 1970 and 2007, as well as a reported 1.4 million part-time faculty, have been hired since 2011 in the United States (Dailey-Herbert et al., 2014, p.67). As the data in *Figure 1* from the Academic Labor Force (American Association of University Professors, 2017) depicts, the trend of full-time tenured faculty has slowly declined (by 15%) while the hiring trend of part-time faculty has inclined (by 15%) between the years of 1975 to 2015. These growth rates continue to increase as the demand for online learning increases; we should be ensuring that our rising numbers in adjunct, graduate students, and visiting faculty are fully prepared and supported before the facilitation of the online courses they were hired for (Bourelle, 2016).

Figure 1

Trends in Academic Labor Force, 1975-2015
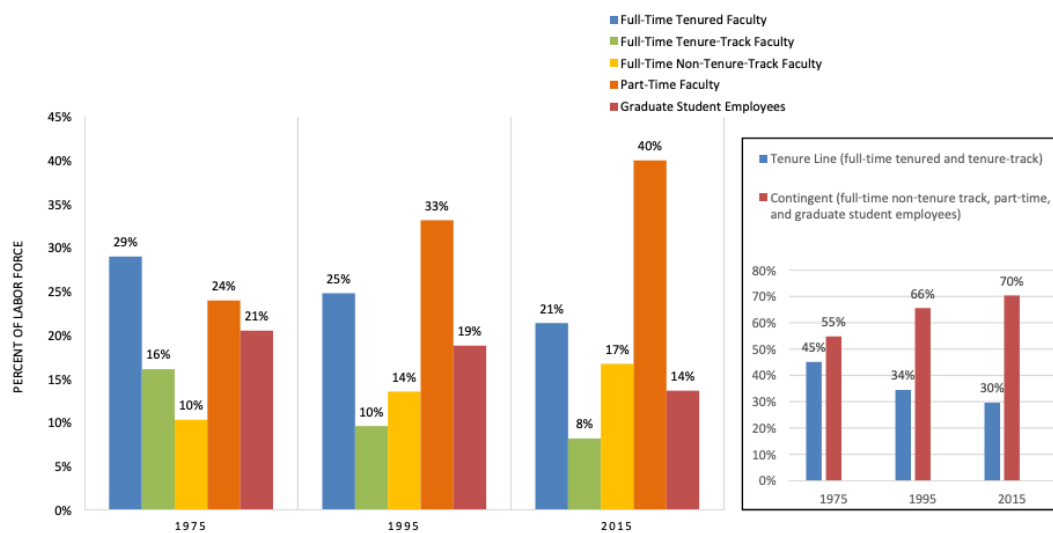
Note: Used with permission of AAUP (Appendix A)

Organizations must take enough time to provide necessary resources to professionally develop their part-time faculty. When professional development is implemented, placing emphasis on pedagogy, developing a course syllabi, content development, student engagement and collaboration, differentiation to meet multiple learning styles, university policies, and quality standards should all be considered (Dailey-Herbert et al., 2014). The opportunity to participate in professional development before facilitating an online course might not provide enough incentive for facilitators to want to participate. Institutions that do not place value, investment, support, or draw alignment between the role and mission between their institution and hired facilitators are more than likely not recruiting quality online faculty (Green et al., 2009). Surveyed adjunct faculty members responded that their hired positions often felt isolating and lacked a sense of institutional comradery, therefore they should be given the opportunity to foster a collaborative environment conducive to building and maintaining a professional learning community (Green et al., 2009). A professional development setting for facilitators to have an opportunity to review, discuss, and understand the methodologies behind the course and what is expected of their facilitation provides a great environment to foster this sense of community within such large organizations. After all, "adjunct faculty members, like the majority of their students, are adult learners who bring a variety of backgrounds and experiences to the classroom" (Wallin, 2007, p.68). The experiences and insights hired facilitators can bring to the diversity of an institution of higher learning is limitless and it can only add to the appeal and value of the courses they are hired to teach.

Institutional Investment

By providing professional development opportunities for adjuncts, graduate students, and visiting faculty, those online course facilitators will "obtain the competencies needed to facilitate

online courses to support student success and to maintain the quality and integrity of the institution's academic programs" (Lewis & Wang, 2015, p.110). If institutions want to be seen as proficient and virtually engaging in an online classroom, facilitators need to have the proper training to do so successfully. Conducting professional development specifically catered to online learning theories, strategies, and course maintenance assists facilitators in understanding the developed student-centered outcomes, activities, and assessments (Green et. al, 2009).

Implementing a professional development session to support the high population of online course facilitators would be a meaningful solution to explore online teaching needs adjuncts may have that unintentionally affect online student experiences (Scoppio & Luyt, 2015). Facilitators will then feel as though they have the support of a learning community, that will further "strengthen the caliber of teaching and promote innovative online programming" (Scoppio & Luyt, 2015, p.743), something that higher education institutions strive for. Established and growing organizations need to make an effort to encourage and empower past and future professional development opportunities so that they feel invested within their growing organizations (Rhode et al., 2017).

When hired, course facilitators certainly meet the requirements of being well rounded in their subject matter, but they might have never been trained in online teaching. Professional development focused on elevating the knowledge and community of adjunct faculty benefits the entire organization (Elliot et al., 2015). Institutions reap the benefits of well-prepared facilitators because it encourages an implementation of streamlined structure/organization, as well as improves confidence (Elliot et al., 2015). Professional development for adjuncts, graduate students, and visiting faculty could greatly benefit the success and impact of online education because there is a "correlation between faculty confidence levels and student academic success"

(Lewis & Wang, 2015, p.110). This ultimately serves the quality of the courses being offered. Although digital learning departments are the ones that partner with faculty to develop online courses while also providing training and other resources, faculty feel strongly that institutional leaders and their input in their professional development is "a key success factor when guiding lecturers through the process of learning about online learning and teaching" (Northcote et al., 2012, p.386). Without a carefully nurtured community and an investment in their contributions, meeting the outlined educational goals could be jeopardized (Rovai, 2007).

Need for Online Pedagogical Background

The term "e-pedagogy" was introduced by Serdyukov (2015) and is defined as being able to "identify the purpose of education and basic principles of online education built on research and understanding of the traditional and web-based education together with current trends and future developments; consider the processes of learner personal, cognitive, and social development" (p.70). Upon analysis, this sole term and definition could transform online education practices once adopted and implemented within universities and departments Serdyukov (2015). For many, their pedagogical background comes from how they were taught Mohr & Shelton (2017) therefore if they have never taken an online course themselves, then they have no basis on what students may deem necessary to be successful. Upon further analysis of Serdyukov's study, communication between facilitators and students is a pedagogical standard that is deemed crucial, both cognitively and socially within an online course. Online instructors need to "maintain and nurture connections" (Serdyukov, 2015, p.68) within their courses, because their courses, in turn, can become communities which can help an oftentimes isolated online student continue to strive for success. With the demand for online courses growing exponentially to meet the ever-changing needs of today's students, as *Figure 2* (AAUP, 2018)

shows, adjunct faculty members are being hired at an exceedingly high rate across all institution types. With an increase in non-tenured faculty of 73% in 2016 (AAUP, 2018) data is showing the immense need for support for this population of educators.

Figure 2

Distribution of the Instructional Faculty Workforce
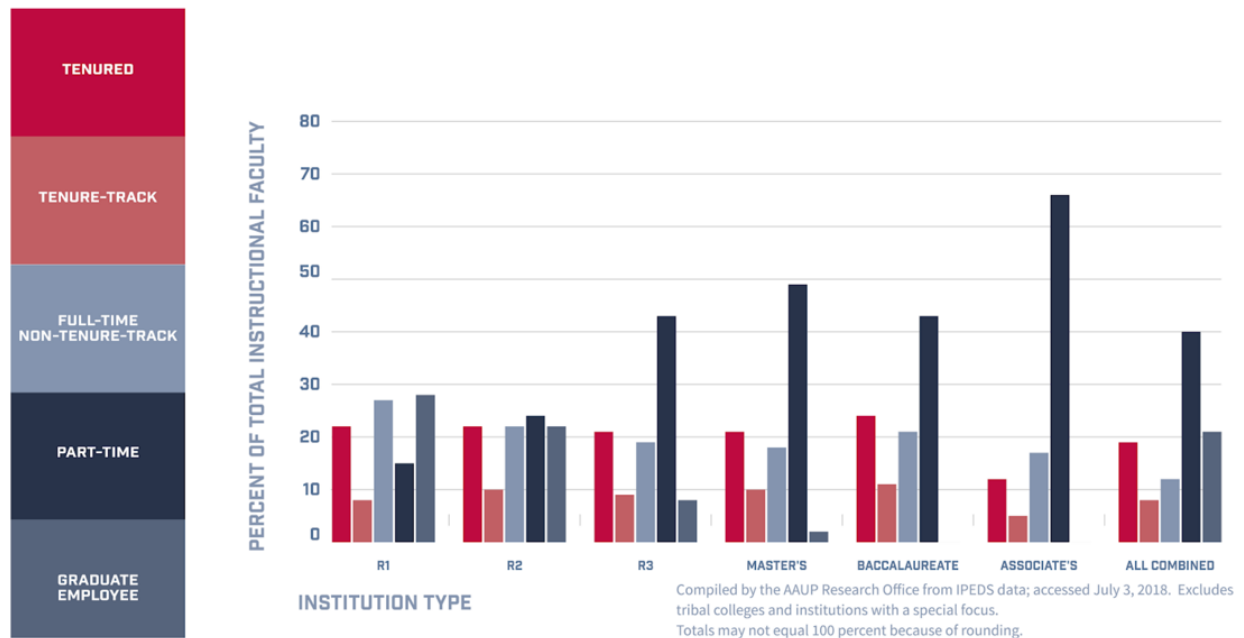
Note: Used with permission of AAUP (Appendix A)

This is problematic because online teaching already requires a specific pedagogical background (Lewis & Wang, 2015). Additionally, since adjuncts, graduate students, and visiting faculty are frequently not the developers of the courses they teach, they do not have the necessary background knowledge in the methods and strategies that the course was built on. Facilitators are then not provided with an adequate level of professional development before teaching the courses. Because pedagogical support and development are critical to the success of students and how they are taught in an online setting, a cohesive working relationship between

online course stakeholders (Landers, 2012), along with a level pedagogical support needs to become a prominent component before the start of every semester for non-developers.

The need for professional development for facilitators that are novice to online teaching was highlighted by Mohr & Shelton (2017). They cover the value of online professional development and its relation to the student, along with the reasoning behind the necessity. Online facilitator professional development is a fundamental component because, as Mohr & Shelton (2017) found, some online facilitators have not only never taught in an online setting, but they have never experienced being online students themselves. Therefore, they are less aware of the online pedagogical expectations that online students have. Having a specific plan that outlines the necessary levels of professional support that facilitators will need before the start of their semesters, reinforces the "importance of supports that should be provided to online faculty and programs" (Mohr & Shelton, 2017, p.132).

Seeing as though many instructors teach the way they were taught; online pedagogy is a new skillset for many that remains undeveloped. Facilitators are subject matter experts within their classrooms, they are not necessarily the most accomplished in the realm of online learning (Mohr & Shelton 2017). This then brings about the conversation on how effective their online teaching/facilitation skills are. By "forcing educators to emphasize the planning and instructional design elements of the online communities that they create" (Singleton, 2019, p.19) within their professional learning communities (colleague-to-colleague) they could potentially increase intentions behind their planning and foster a much-needed social element. Research shows that the best way to provide a quality online course would be to provide facilitators with the necessary skills they need to produce, facilitate, and maintain a course that promotes student success (Baran et.al, 2011). Professional development opportunities need to extend beyond

technical training and also incorporate opportunities for "critical reflection" (Mohr & Shelton, 2017). This can be achieved not only through workshops and on-demand trainings, but through building a learning community amongst colleagues to conduct peer reviews and demonstrations on strategies, and how techniques can be useful to their subjects/departments. Mohr & Shelton (2017) note that a lack of professional development in online pedagogy leads to decreased faculty participation and online courses that are lacking in design and execution.

Not having the necessary level of orientation before teaching a course is detrimental to the success of the course and ultimately, the mission of the organization (Hunn & Hughes, 2014). Although a thorough professional development session is ideal, at bare minimum providing "resources such as training materials to transfer knowledge to the participant" (Parker et al., 2018, p.117) would be fundamental progress. Observations have found that opportunities created to facilitate support and engagement of faculty members throughout the early stages of their online pedagogical inquiry are fundamental (Baran et al., 2011). Providing faculty development for facilitators would serve as an opportunity to implement "authentic and relevant training to facilitate the improvement of learning and the integration of skills into the teaching environment" (Gosselin et al., 2016, p.179).

Just as there is a difference between novice and experienced faculty members within traditional education settings (brick & mortar), it is true in the realm of online education. Pedagogical backgrounds for face-to-face teaching include a different set of strategies and best practices than those within the online realm. It is imperative to realize that the methods used within a brick-and-mortar classroom vary greatly from those on the screen of a device, therefore modifications to lectures, assignments, outcomes, and discussions need to be considered, implemented, and maintained (Baran et. al, 2011). Upon analysis, Bailey & Card's (2009)

research shows that well developed online discussions lead to more in-depth critical thinking, which then leads to a more thorough reflection. This ultimately benefits the students and their learning outcomes. It was also noted by Bailey and Card (2009) that one of the most substantial shifts in online pedagogy for faculty is transitioning from the role of a teacher to more of a facilitator. This is due to the course materials being online and being posted before the students start the course. Assigned instructors are then facilitating discussion, providing in-depth and detailed feedback, and making themselves available so that students continue to feel motivated to meet their learning goals.

Existing Professional Development/Support Frameworks

When faculty members participate in online course development, they walk away having learned a variety of new skills for online learning to enhance their students' learning in an online setting (Parker et.al, 2018). When that same course is simply handed off to an adjunct faculty member, graduate student, or visiting faculty the students then "do not reap the benefits of being taught by the most prepared instructors, as most campuses do not place professional development for adjunct faculty as a high priority" (Parker et al., 2018, p.115), This ultimately does a disservice not only to the students, but also to the adjunct faculty (Hunn & Hughes, 2014). Ultimately the benefit of providing this level of support for facilitators is that professional development "is related to instructional development and connectedness, which in turn, positively influences student academic performance and engagement, as well as student and faculty retention" (Parker et al., 2018, p.116).

Professional Development Framework

Professional development is necessary for the success of online education (Lewis & Wang, 2015). If institutions want to be seen as proficient and virtually engaging in an online

classroom, online facilitators need to have the proper training to do so successfully and effectively (Berry, 2019). Research shows that the benefits of professional development "promote quality teaching as well as demonstrate academic credibility" (Kane et al., 2014, p.12). Adopting a best practice professional development training model similar to the one outlined by Kane and colleagues (2016) that incorporates multiple methods of training, up-to-date communications on program and technological updates, organizational announcements, surveys to incorporate instructor input, and data showing student feedback. This would then inherently promote a positive learning atmosphere for faculty, which would create a positive impact on students (Trammel et al., 2018)

The transitional process for most faculty, from teaching face-to-face to teaching online can be a significant hurdle. A developed and proposed professional development framework (see Figure 3) by Baran and Correia (2014) addresses three levels: teaching (technology, pedagogy, content), community, and organization.

Figure 3

Three Level Professional Development Framework
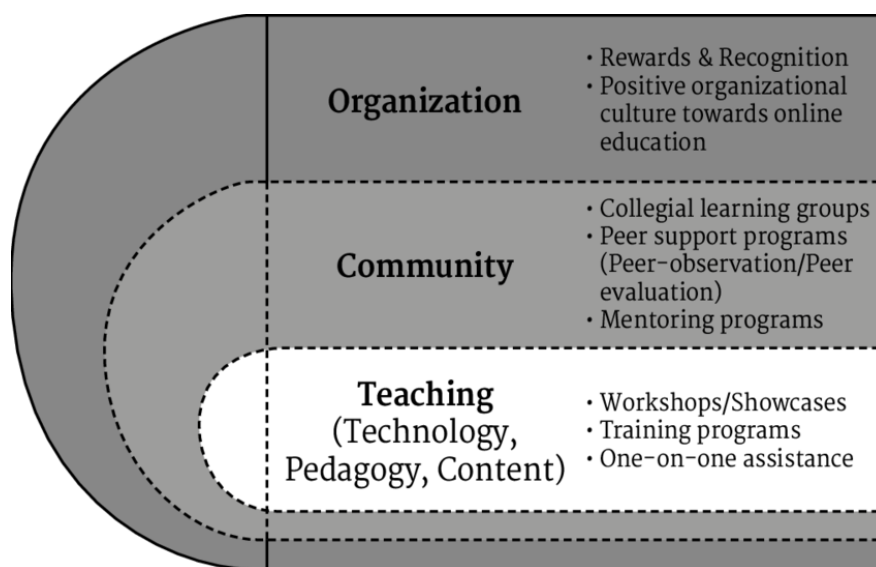
Note: Used with permission of Ana-Paula Correia (Appendix B)

These levels of support provide assigned course facilitators with the opportunity to assess where they feel the most critical areas of development and growth are needed. They are then able to participate in workshops, peer-support programs, one-on-one training, and more. Supporting instructors at the "community" level is beneficial for course facilitators and faculty who find online teaching to be isolating (Baran & Correia, 2014).

Supporting adjunct faculty before launching and/or teaching an online course is essential; however, maintaining and sustaining regularly scheduled professional development support has proven important due to rapidly changing technologies and evolving student needs (Bourelle, 2016). It was determined by Rhode and colleagues (2017) that there was an increased resistance from instructors when training or professional development opportunities were mandatory. By allowing facilitators to self-identify their strengths, weaknesses, and most essential needs/concerns before starting professional development, the literature found that instructors were more receptive not only during professional development, but in their online course facilitation and maintenance on a semester-to-semester basis (Hardy et al., 2017).

While working with online course facilitators and preparing them for the pre-developed online course they are about to teach, instructional designers would constitute "transferring knowledge about online learning theories, pedagogies, and practices to instructors and support them in preparing online courses and appreciating the complexities of technology" (Scoppio & Luyt, 2015, p.732). This gives facilitators insight into the conceptual conversations that they were not initially involved in. Having a one-on-one component of faculty development is ideal because the increase of online learning is re-shaping how traditional course learning components can be adapted for the online space (Singleton, 2019). However, a provided online module or "toolbox" that houses valuable resources in facilitating and maintaining the course such as:

setting up groups, grading assignments, providing feedback, best practices, accessibility and copyright policies, etc. would also be beneficial (Scoppio & Luyt, 2015). Positive feedback has been found in offering two-day instructional designer-led trainings in a "workshop-style session" (Scoppio & Luyt, 2015), while following up with personalized development as needed, and a module of resources for reference throughout the semester. Providing this opportunity sends the message to faculty, that participation in professional development is encouraged to ensure online course best practices are being upheld (Scoppio & Luyt, 2015).

Community of Inquiry Model Meets Instructional Design Frameworks

The Community of Inquiry model (*Figure 4*) developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) has had rapid interest within the online learning community within the past twenty years (Singleton, 2019). Its focus on "the development of higher-order thinking through inquiry-based learning in a learning community," (Kovanovic, 2018 p.45) set a precedent for inclusive learning communities, whether it be a student or subject matter expert. The three presences that Garisson and colleagues (2000) developed to compromise the COI model can all be implemented individually, however, "when united, contribute significantly to learning and learning satisfaction" (Kozan & Caskurlu, 2018, p.105). In the realm of instructional design, where a structured process is the start of online course development, the incorporation of the COI model could be a large benefit. Two of the most common instructional design frameworks are ADDIE and Design Thinking, both of which are strong in their own standalone sense (Boller & Fletcher, 2020), and are successfully combined within the LXD Framework. With the integration of COI, a broader model can be adapted to fit a multitude of professional and educational areas (Boller & Fletcher, 2020).

Figure 4

Community of Inquiry Model
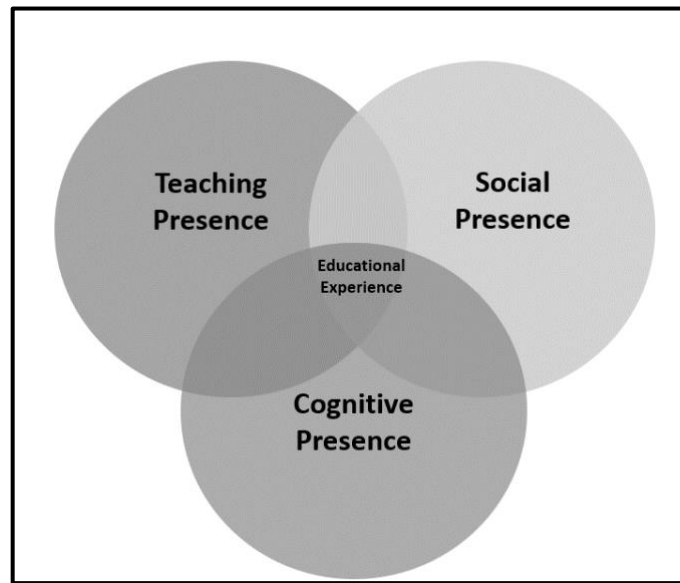
  COI - Social Presence. A learner's ability to demonstrate their personality and feel authentic in an online space is how Garrison et al. (2000) describe social presence within the context of COI. There are three indicators within this presence; *emotional expression* (finding creative means to express feelings concerning the content), *open communication* (being mindful and respectful within and in response to the dialogue amongst peers surrounding class discussions), and *group cohesion* (developing and maintaining a dynamic group atmosphere). Garrison et al. revolve their definitions of social presence around the learners; however, the instructor's social presence within a COI is just as imperative to have a fully involved online learning community (Richardson & Lowenthal, 2017).

  Proposed by Vygotsky (1978) the theory of social constructs which supports the element of social presence. By incorporating cognitive psychology methods, both during the development of courses and their implementation, "participants can identify with the community (e.g., course

of study), communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop inter-personal relationships by way of projecting their individual personalities" (Garrison, 2009, p.352). In an effort to build a community between educators and their students, and to support a foundation for critical thinking, the success of all involved (learners and educators) is evident (Moore, 2014). This element of the COI framework provides learners and educators with the opportunity to question and engage, express and respond, challenge and support (Garrison et al., 2000). A social presence amongst faculty members when it comes to the conceptualization of these communities are also necessary to create an equitable learning/community experience for all online students (Scoppio & Luyt, 2015).

      COI - Cognitive Presence. Utilizing cognitive presence speaks to "the extent to which the participants in any particular configuration of a community of inquiry are able to construct meaning through sustained communication" (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 89). Within a COI framework, the premise of cognition is described by Garrison et al. (2000), as a foundational & necessary component that fosters critical & higher-order thinking, which ultimately is what is expected at a higher education level. Cognitive presence originates from Dewey's (1993) and Lipman's (1991) methodologies and created the Practical Inquiry Model. This model is a cycle comprised of four phases: (1) Triggering—identifying a problem, (2) Exploration—using information at hand to explore the problem and providing explanation, (3) Integration—compile ideas generated from exploration and create meaning (4) Resolution—Apply outlined solutions (Liu & Yang, 2012). The triggering and exploration phases reflect lower-order thinking skills, while integration and resolution represent higher-order thinking skills. This cycle incorporates a meaningful and engaging learning experience for all of those involved in the cognitive process.

COI - Teaching Presence. In describing teaching presence, Anderson and colleagues (2001) divide it into three elements (1) *design and organization,* (2) *facilitating discourse*, and (3) *direct instruction.* The first element, *Design and organization*, focuses on developing a structure for this course. This is done by outlining content, creating measurable learning objectives, implementing timelines, and conceptualizing learning activities. Immersing the instructors and facilitators through all stages of course development brings the focus back to Anderson's teaching presence dimension (Budhai & Williams, 2016). The second element, *facilitating discourse*, focuses closely on the response times between the instructor and the student. Setting clear expectations on what constitutes a timely response, and then following that expectation, promotes participation and motivation within an online setting (Anderson et al. 2001). The third and final element for teaching presence is *direct instruction*. This element incorporates a more traditional approach to teaching by focusing on discussions, being available to step in to clarify misconceptions, redirect the discussion if it veers off-topic, and assessing student learning based on the set objectives (Garrison, et al., 2000). If the facilitators do not have a strong presence it affects the dynamics within the course and impacts the learner-to-learner and learner-to-instructor interactions (Baily & Card, 2009).

Instructional Design Framework. Instructional design frameworks serve as guiding principles throughout a development process. As professional development programs begin to increase the "transformation and sustainability of educational institutions providing high-quality teaching and learning" (Dooley, 2019, p.28) build a stronger case for the inclusion of instructional design frameworks.

By utilizing a Design Thinking framework, course facilitators are then provided a predominant view of the process it takes to get to the final product (the online course), while

being sure to include best practices, and remaining open to collaboration from all stakeholders (McGlynn & Kelly, 2019). One of the main benefits of Design Thinking is that it "packages a designer's way of working for a non-designer audience by codifying their processes into a prescriptive, step-by-step approach to creative problem solving" (McCausland, 2020, p. 59) which proves that this process is applicable across a variety of scenarios. Design Thinking requires gathering interest/demographic data on our learners/professional development participants to determine their areas of expertise within online teaching & learning to then empower them throughout their professional development and their online facilitation semester (McGlynn & Kelly, 2019).

The acronym ADDIE (analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation) outlines the "process-based approach to developing instructional content" (Hess & Greer, 2016). The unique quality of ADDIE is that it is not only an iterative process, but also cyclical, as it also incorporates review and revision (Hess & Greer, 2016). When reviewing previous studies that applied the ADDIE model for training purposes Trust and Petkas (2019) found that "using a systematic design process like ADDIE can lead to instruction that is more effective, efficient, and relevant than less rigorous approaches to planning instruction" (p. 221). When designing a professional development program for faculty, instructional designers are then able to "implement, evaluate, reflect upon, and modify" (Yeh & Tesng, 2019, p. 90) learning components, while identifying ways to create an effective and supportive learning environment.

The culmination of Design Thinking and ADDIE can be found in the LXD Framework (Boller & Fletcher, 2020) which is a combination of a traditional instructional design framework, such as ADDIE, that also looks at ways to incorporate design thinking (Boller & Fletcher, 2020). LXD is an acronym developed by Niels Floor in 2007 that stands for Learning Experience

Design and is "the process of creating learning experiences that enable the learner to achieve the desired learning outcomes in a human centered and goal-oriented way" (Correia, 2018, p.56). The differentiating factor between traditional instructional design and the LXD framework is that LXD focuses on the "destination of knowledge or the learner" (Correia, 2018, p. 56). The premise of LXD is finding ways to empathize and design with emotion to provide learners with a personalized experience (Correia, 2018).

Evaluation of Professional Development

When evaluating a professional development framework, it is necessary to consider if and how the outcomes of the framework were met, as well as gather feedback from participants (Yurdakul, et al.,2020). The success of an evaluation depends greatly on consistently meeting the needs of participants and also "reveals whether the effort put is rewarded or not and provides significant information to make rational and reliable decisions about the process and activities of PD" (Yurdakul, et al.,2020). Data is telling us that "as faculty become more aware of best practices, they are also more reflective and cognizant of not meeting performance expectations, which motivates them to change ineffective behavior" (Conklin, Hanson, et al., 2020) and later leads to faculty demonstrating more "interactive and efficacious" (Conklin, Hanson, et al., 2020) behavior. Through evaluating a professional development framework, the evaluator also has the opportunity to "observe how participants made immediate use of the material presented" (Thorn & Brasche, 2020) all and reinforce the application of skills or concepts.

Criticism

The literature surrounding adjunct populations and professional development support available to them before facilitating online courses, research shows that a critical component leading to limited understanding and "nurturing higher-order thinking" is that traditional

education methods are trying to fit the mold of modernized online education (Baran et al., 2011). A lack of urgency to develop and implement a pedagogical framework, and without one it remains difficult to establish a consistent theory or practice to encompass all of those impacted by online education was found by Serdyukov (2015). Due to an inadequate amount of data, it is difficult to determine the perceptions of online adjunct faculty surrounding their lack of inclusion within their organizations, as well as how they would feel most invested in (Dailey-Hebert et al. 2014). This is especially true within the scope of Tier I Research universities, seeing as though most collected data on the adjunct population stems from community colleges. Data also collected by Dailey-Hebert and colleagues (2014) found that the largest barrier in participating in professional development opportunities for adjuncts was a lack of time. One research participant in their study explained that although being committed to "being a better teacher, the reality of working adjunct in addition to my fulltime job is that I rarely have the time available in my schedule to participate in professional development opportunities regardless of the topic, relevance or scheduling. Simply put, I do not have time to fit professional development activities into an already overwhelmed schedule" (p.77). Professional development opportunities for faculty have been labeled "ineffective" (Mohr & Shelton, 2017) because they are not tied to any consistent/long-term institutional plan for change. If long-term support is not an institutional priority the effectiveness of any professional development or support program will deteriorate.

A critique of the COI model's *teaching presence* stating that the model's creators were not clear on their specificity within the dynamics of online leadership and that "facilitation of discourse and direct instruction are inseparable aspects of teaching" (Xin, 2012, p.9). This idea is further supported by Peacock and Cowan (2019) who rename teaching presence within the COI framework and refer to it as "tutoring presence." Peacock and Cowan (2019) made this choice

based on their critique that using the phrase "tutor" signifies more of a "facilitative role" which is better suited within an online learning environment because that *presence* is not only facilitating the learning taking place within the course, but ensuring that learning outcomes are met and enhancing and communicating the expectations within the course. In Jézégou's (2010) analysis, she critically states that the COI model "induces confusion" for it does not clearly define what a virtual community is made up of.

Validations

The literature suggests that adjunct faculty receive training prior to facilitating an online course, but that they do so online to get a fully encompassed student perspective (Landers, 2012). Data is showing a vast increase in adjunct populations, which can be tied to the popularity of online courses (Baran et al., 2011). The relationship between the growth of part-time faculty members and online courses demonstrates that "the growth in faculty involvement and acceptance has been modest, accompanied with limited change in online pedagogies" (Baran et al., 2011, p.422). While a majority of the reviewed research focuses on adjunct demographics at community colleges, it was refreshing to see a Research I institution that developed a Community of Practice Inquiry Group to "enhance professional development efforts for improving instructional practices" (Bond & Lockee, 2018). The creation of said Community of Practice Inquiry Groups led to 89% out of 93 faculty participants felt as though they were provided an effective form of professional development. Participants within the Parker and colleagues (2018) study expressed a need for professional development in the form of onboarding to feel prepared to facilitate a course. A similar finding within Mohr and Shelton's (2017) study that "professional development should provide faculty with the skills needed to produce quality-learning experiences for their students" (p.125) reiterates the need for, not only

inclusivity in professional development opportunities, but to also encourages the foundational

theories throughout the facilitation of online courses. A literary analysis conducted by Elliot and

colleagues (2015) found that the format in which professional development was delivered was a

critical focus. By providing a variety of formats, such as online (using the institution's LMS),

face-to-face, mentorship, and ongoing discussions (virtually or in-person), an established

community of practice would emerge.

Recommendations

Providing professional development with a focus on online pedagogy is what is most

needed to meet the needs of the growing adjunct and online populations (Bedford & Miller,

2013). Incorporating a level of mentorship is something that Parker and colleagues (2018) found

through their research participants would be of benefit in order to further foster a sense of

institutional investment and community. Incorporating a mentorship into a model or framework

would enhance the adjunct experience, not only as a retention strategy but to assimilate and

"enhance self-satisfaction" (Green et al. 2009). Making sure to start including part-time faculty

members in conversations is something that Scoppio and Luyt (2015) found to be essential;

being able to discuss "course goals and different strategies and techniques to shape the course

content, learning activities, disciplinary expectations, lectures, and exams. Understanding how

instructors want to engage learners in social, cognitive, and teacher presences informs these early

conversations" (p.746). When creating a community of inquiry amongst part-time faculty, being

mindful to not center the professional development solely around technologies, but to enhance

and promote the pedagogical methods behind the course would serve a productive purpose

(Mohr & Shelton, 2017).

Conclusion

The literature indicates that since our faculty/instructor demographic has changed, our methods in providing a level of support and/or professional development must evolve to fill in the gaps between faculty online course developers and online course facilitators. There are several research models and plans that provide detailed methods, along with important reasoning behind faculty development and its impact. Many of the authors discuss motivating factors for instructors, as well as the importance of organizational stakeholders to facilitate and promote this process, especially amongst the growing population of adjunct faculty, graduate students, and visiting faculty. Implementing a framework based on the COI model has many benefits, however, adapting to meet individual research and organizational needs may be essential in producing the desired outcomes.

Chapter Three
Methodology

The Setting

The purpose of this study was to explore ways to support the university adjunct, graduate student, and visiting faculty who facilitate online courses they did not develop. At my institution, The University of South Florida, our adjunct population increased from 656 in the year 2008 to 1,483 in the year 2019 (USF Facts, 2020). Although adjuncts are not the only demographic included in the broader demographic of course facilitators, they are the least supported in terms of being provided institutional guidance and support. Due to an increase in online learning, "academia must continue to change with societal demands and student needs" (Bourelle, 2016, p.2), which has caused the rise in hiring adjunct, graduate students, and visiting faculty to teach those courses and meet said needs. The experience facilitators have before, during, and after teaching every semester can be enhanced through professional development support. While the confidence levels of facilitators can vary in how they teach a course that they did not develop, it was be beneficial to explore the areas in which they identified needing more support before teaching their assigned courses. The data obtained through working with course developers and occasional facilitators assisted in inspiring the implementation of a professional development framework provided on a semester basis to course facilitators in order to provide them background, context, guidance, and support on the course they were assigned to facilitate.

In this study, I evaluated a piloted professional development for online course facilitators designed to instill confidence and familiarity in using the tools and understanding the course design. During the development of the online course, the faculty course developer and learning

designer followed an instructional design framework (Figure 5), took note of course components that the facilitator would need further guidance on (see Appendix D), and prepared to orient the facilitator on the preliminary phase of the framework.

Figure 5

LXD Framework
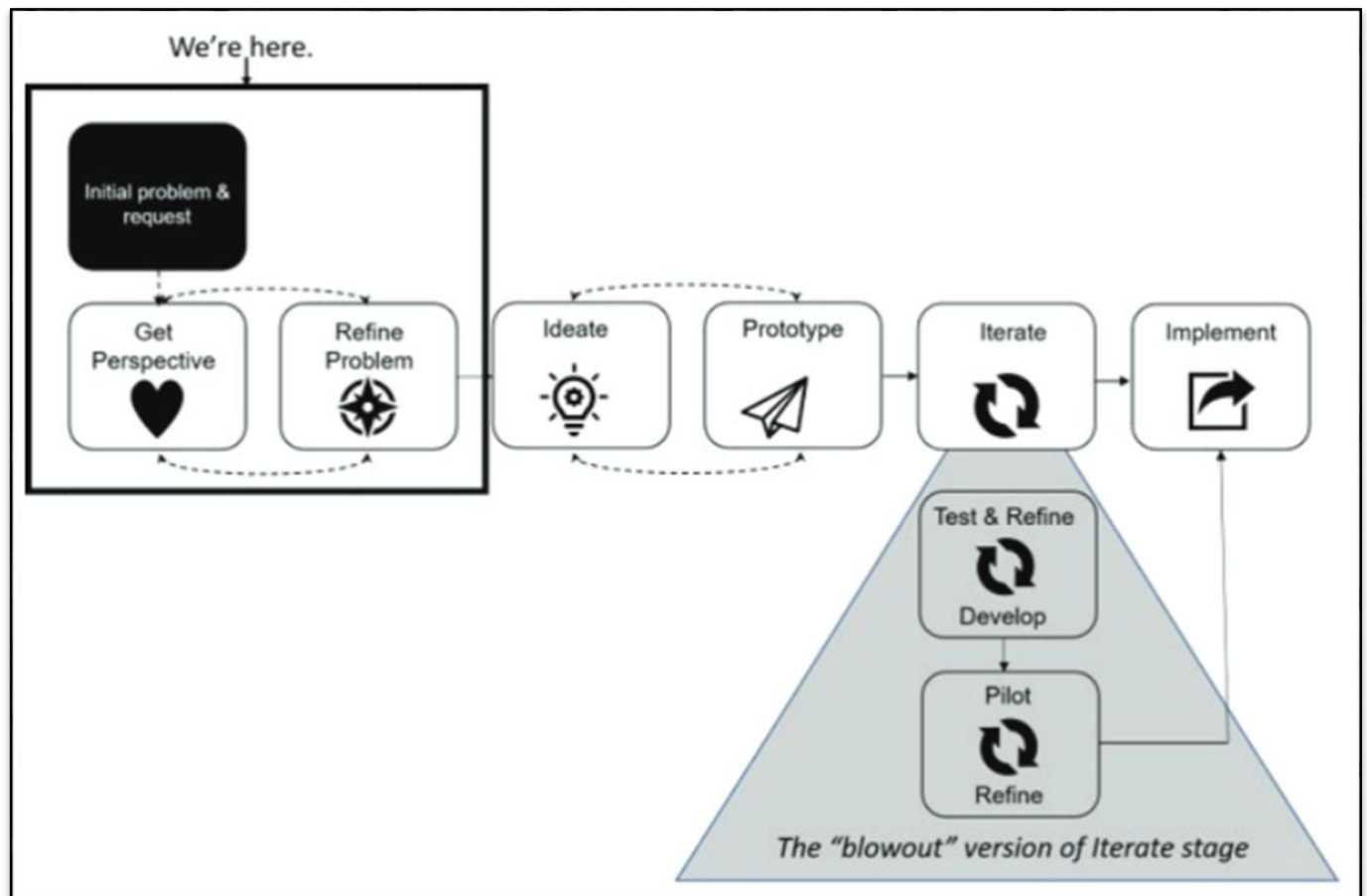
Note: Used with permission of Sharon Boller, author, Design Thinking for Training and Development, ATD Press (Appendix E)

Before the course launched, the facilitator completed a questionnaire surrounding their comfortability with online pedagogy and online tools. That data assisted me in identifying the best method of professional development for the course facilitator. Once the data was collected, a *design perspective* meeting was held with the facilitator, and was adjusted based on the level of

support the facilitator needed. The *design perspective* meeting is where the Community of Inquiry model integrates within the LXD Framework. The LXD Framework closely mirrors the process my department follows during an online course development, however by integrating the COI to support facilitators a more inclusive process is created. When looking at the COI model presences, the social presence is the dimension where we're providing institutional investment, by letting facilitators know they will have support in their teaching journey. The teaching presence ties to the need for online pedagogical background, to ensure that facilitators are prepared and feel knowledgeable with all of the components of their online course. The third presence, cognitive presence, allows facilitators to reflect on their professional development and incorporate that into their online facilitation. The *design perspective* meeting, along with the provided support resources curated for each individual course to ease facilitation, is the culmination of the offered professional development for online course facilitators.

Acknowledgement of Evaluator Bias

As a learning designer within the Innovative Education Digital Learning department, my full-time role is to partner with faculty to develop high quality online courses. Not only am I involved in the course development, but I have also been an online student. Therefore, when I review online courses and with each new course I develop, I look at it through both lenses: the designer and the student. In preparation leading up to this pilot study, one of the four courses developed that would be passed on to course facilitators was one a faculty and I collaboratively constructed. I recognize that my work with the course can may introduce potential bias during pilot participant interviews about this course as well as while analyzing the collected data. However, I do feel as though my direct relationship to the pilot study as the evaluator as well as a learning designer assists me in ensuring that I'm being inclusive of all components that tie back

to the problem statement and my research question. To acknowledge my own bias during data collection, I will be fully transparent with each participant as to what my role is, as well as what my direct involvement was in developing one of the courses as well as the pilot's evaluator.

Evaluative Questions

This study was built upon the following evaluative questions:

1. Does professional development for online course facilitators positively affect the delivery of their online course?

2. What level of familiarity do facilitators have with online courses (have they taken/taught/developed online courses)?

3. What kind of formal online teaching and learning has been provided during the facilitator's career?

4. What level of confidence do facilitators express surrounding online teaching?

5. In what areas do online course facilitators believe they are lacking knowledge and support?

6. In what areas of online teaching and learning do online course facilitators feel confident?

7. What elements of the professional development support provided did facilitators find most useful?

Evaluation Design

This evaluative pilot study used a mixed-methods approach to determine the effect of the professional development that facilitators assigned to teach a course that was designed by someone else participated in. Throughout the Fall 2020 semester as online courses were being

developed, three Learning Designers that were working with an online course developer and I filled out a Design Perspective Integration Plan (see Appendix). This document assisted me in holistically looking at each course being developed and providing as much background knowledge and insight into the selected course components with the course facilitators.

The participants consisted of adjuncts and full-time instructors that were not involved in development. Although these two subsects of facilitators can greatly benefit from professional development, it's important to note that there are differences in the existing levels of support they receive at an institutional level. Full-time instructors that were facilitating a course they did not develop may receive professional development throughout their tenure, and also have access to the support of their colleague that developed the course should questions come up during the semester. Adjuncts, however, will not have the same institutional support since many times they are not local to the university and do not have the same connections to institutional resources as full-time faculty members.

As outlined in the timeline below (Figure 6) the questionnaire was administered as the first step of the study to obtain quantitative data on online course facilitator demographics, confidence, and experience. The questionnaire was followed by a *design perspective* meeting where professional development and support resources were provided. The professional development focused heavily on the online quality standards and design principles, as well as how the course should be maintained over the duration of the semester. Once the facilitators had been teaching for roughly half of the semester, they received a follow-up questionnaire to gauge the effectiveness of the professional development. The final data collection step consisted of an interview, in which three of the ten participants discussed their initial thoughts on teaching a course they did not develop, their confidence level, and how their experience evolved over the

course of the semester due to having professional development support before teaching.

Questionnaire and interview data was examined and incorporated into the results of the study.

The use of quantitative and qualitative methods within this study expanded on the perspectives

and experiences of the participants to address the evaluative questions.

Figure 6

Design Perspective PD Timeline

DESIGN PERSPECTIVE PD TIMELINE

Date/Timeframe	Action	Stakeholder
September 2020 - November 2020	Recruitment of Facilitators	PI, Facilitator
December 2020	Demographic Questionnaire of Facilitators (data collection)	PI, Facilitator
December 2020	Professional Development Kickoff	PI, Innovative Ed Learning Designer, Facilitator
January 2021 - March 2021	Professional Development Experience	PI, Innovative Ed Learning Designer, Facilitator
March 2021	Follow-up Questionnaire, Individual Interviews of Facilitators (data collection)	PI, Facilitator

Participant Recruitment

   This professional development opportunity was presented to 10 course facilitators prior

to the Spring 2021 semester through an email in which the purpose of this evaluation was

described. Four known courses (with a total of 12 facilitators) were identified as having

facilitators at the beginning of the Fall 2020 development. The number of facilitators selected

was determined by the number of online courses being developed in the Fall 2020 semester, and

then taught by a facilitator during the Spring 2021 semester. I had the opportunity to work

through an online course development with a faculty course developer while making mindful

decisions on support resources and professional development components to share with the

facilitators prior to them teaching. Of the 10 facilitators offered the opportunity to participate,

seven accepted the invitation and agreed to participate in the pilot study.

Table 1

Online Facilitator Demographic Overview

Participant	Position	Description of Responsibilities	Prior Online Facilitation	Course Facilitation Management
1	Adjunct	Employed full-time outside of the university, hired to facilitate course(s) within their field/expertise	Yes	• Grading assessments & providing feedback • Answering student questions • Modifying specific course pages in Canvas to reflect their facilitator presence

Table 1 (Continued)

Participant	Position	Description of Responsibilities	Prior Online Facilitation	• Course Facilitation Management
2	Adjunct	Employed full-time outside of the university, hired to facilitate course(s) within their field/expertise	Yes	• Grading assessments & providing feedback • Answering student questions • Modifying specific course pages in Canvas to reflect their facilitator presence
3	Associate Director of a School, and Instructor	Oversees the school, including overseeing hiring and onboarding school adjuncts	Yes	• Creating and facilitating intermittent synchronous sessions • Communicating with students (email exchanges, announcements or during live sessions) • Grading and providing feedback (all assignments are written and require instructor feedback. The instructor can also use the detailed rubrics to provide feedback. There are no assignments with immediate feedback.) • Modifying specific course pages in Canvas to reflect their facilitator presence

Table 1 (Continued)

Participant	Position	Description of Responsibilities	Prior Online Facilitation	• Course Facilitation Management
4	Adjunct	Employed full-time outside of the university, hired to facilitate course(s) within their field/expertise	Yes	• Grading weekly assessments and unit examinations, which includes providing feedback on student work and sign production. • Hosting and leading weekly synchronous class meetings/lectures via Zoom. • Answering questions as needed • Sending out course announcements with reminders about deadlines and any updates that may occur • Creating Flipgrid Boards for three Unit Production Exams • Creating weekly Zoom Meetings o Synchronous class session pages need to be updated with Zoom meeting information. • Modifying specific course pages in Canvas to reflect their facilitator presence

Table 1 (Continued)

Participant	Position	Description of Responsibilities	Prior Online Facilitation	• Course Facilitation Management
5	Adjunct	Employed full-time outside of the university, hired to facilitate course(s) within their field/expertise	Yes	• Grading weekly assessments and unit examinations, which includes providing feedback on student work and sign production. • Hosting and leading weekly synchronous class meetings/lectures via Zoom. • Answering questions as needed • Sending out course announcements with reminders about deadlines and any updates that may occur • Creating Flipgrid Boards for three Unit Production Exams • Creating weekly Zoom Meetings o Synchronous class session pages need to be updated with Zoom meeting information. • Modifying specific course pages in Canvas to reflect their facilitator presence

Table 1 (Continued)

Participant	Position	Description of Responsibilities	Prior Online Facilitation	• Course Facilitation Management
6	Adjunct	Employed full-time outside of the university, hired to facilitate course(s) within their field/expertise	Yes	• Grading weekly assessments and unit examinations, which includes providing feedback on student work and sign production. • Hosting and leading weekly synchronous class meetings/lectures via Zoom. • Answering questions as needed • Sending out course announcements with reminders about deadlines and any updates that may occur • Creating Flipgrid Boards for three Unit Production Exams • Creating weekly Zoom Meetings o Synchronous class session pages need to be updated with Zoom meeting information. • Modifying specific course pages in Canvas to reflect their facilitator presence

Table 1 (Continued)

Participant	Position	Description of Responsibilities	Prior Online Facilitation	• Course Facilitation Management
7	Instructor	Full-time instructor within the university	Yes	• Grading weekly assessments and unit examinations, which includes providing feedback on student work and sign production. • Hosting and leading weekly synchronous class meetings/lectures via Zoom. • Answering questions as needed • Sending out course announcements with reminders about deadlines and any updates that may occur • Creating Flipgrid Boards for three Unit Production Exams • Creating weekly Zoom Meetings o Synchronous class session pages need to be updated with Zoom meeting information. • Modifying specific course pages in Canvas to reflect their facilitator presence

Facilitators were assured that their questionnaire responses and interview conversations would remain anonymous and confidential during data collection, analysis, and reporting, and that their responses would not affect their employment status within the university. All facilitators that agreed to participate and subsequently received the questionnaire were asked to

complete it before the start of the semester in order to provide adequate time for a *design*

perspective meeting. An email with context surrounding my study, participation request,

questionnaire, and request to meet prior to the semester to review online instructional support

resources was sent to 12 course facilitators, which included adjunct and full-time faculty

members. A total of seven participants (70% response rate) piloted this professional development

program.

A follow up questionnaire was sent halfway through the Spring 2021 semester to gauge

the effectiveness of the professional development. The questionnaire was distributed using

Qualtrics software and sent directly to each participant via email. Six of the seven participants

responded to the second questionnaire. Interviews to gauge the benefit of the professional

development/design perspective integration were held in March during the Spring 2021 semester.

Three participants were selected to be interviewed on the basis of variability among facilitator

demographics (college, subject, course level, online experience), as well as who fully completed

both questionnaires.

The Questionnaire

The initial step of this study included a questionnaire developed and administered

electronically using Qualtrics, a data collection platform. The assigned online course facilitators

were sent a questionnaire via email. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire prior

to the beginning of the Spring 2021 semester. This questionnaire included items that addressed

facilitator demographics, experience in online pedagogy, and confidence in online pedagogy.

These data assisted me in the compilation of necessary support materials and delivery of

professional development. Once complete, the questionnaire data were noted in the Design

Perspective Integration Plan (see Appendix) to assist me in compiling the necessary support

resources for each facilitator's professional development. In the *design perspective* meeting, learning designers shared resources and discussed information about how the course was designed and developed, ways to maintain the integrated tools/content, and online facilitation best practices.

The questionnaire consisted of eight questions that addressed experience and comfortability with online pedagogy (questions with an * next to them were re-stated during the individual interviews to revisit the concepts and probe discrepancies):

1. Have you taken an online course?

2. Have you taught/facilitated an online course prior to the Spring 2021 semester?

3. Have you taught/facilitated this upcoming course in a face-to-face setting?

4. On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most), how comfortable are you with using online learning tools?

5. On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most), how confident are you facilitating a course you did not create/develop? *

6. On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most), what level of support do you anticipate needing before facilitating this course? *

7. In what specific areas do you foresee needing support in before facilitating this course? *

8. What do you feel is the biggest disconnect between developing a course yourself and facilitating one that was developed for you? *

The questionnaire invited participants to identify basic facilitator online pedagogical demographics. Participants were then asked to respond to Likert-type scale options ranging from 0 (lowest), to 5 (highest). The questionnaire contained two open-ended questions: "What do you

feel is the biggest disconnect between developing a course yourself and facilitating one that was developed for you?", and "In what specific areas do you foresee needing support in before facilitating this course?"

Design Perspective Meeting

The *design perspective* meeting (the piloted professional development) was a meeting designed to integrate the course facilitators into the design of the online course were assigned. Those involved in the meeting included myself (the project manager of this professional development pilot), the learning designer that worked on the course (if they were available to meet), the online course developer (if they were available to meet), and the course facilitator. If the learning designer and course developer were unavailable to meet at the convenience of the course facilitator, I relied heavily on the Design Perspective Integration Plan (see Appendix). The *design perspective* meeting focused on the following topics:

1. Why the methods and tools selected for the course will benefit students and why they are supported by best practices.

2. An overview of what the facilitator will need to know, (how to use) the tools that have been integrated in the course, as well as how to facilitate and maintain the course in conjunction with the tools.

3. An overview of the organizational structure of the course, the importance behind it, and how to make sure the organizational structure remains consistent.

4. Any updates the facilitators might need to make (and where/how to make them) to ensure the course is reflective of facilitator being the students' main point of contact.

5. Available support resources including workshops, just in time resources, point of contact for the facilitator should questions arise.

Providing facilitators with this background knowledge assisted in promoting comfortability and consistency in how the course should be facilitated, while ultimately promoting student success.

Follow-up Questionnaire

This second questionnaire consisted of five questions addressing the experience facilitators had after receiving professional development, and whether or not the professional development was effective. The questions included:

1. Was the information shared during the Design Perspective meeting you attended prior to the start of the semester helpful?

2. Did you utilize any of the information and/or resources shared during the Design Perspective meeting?

3. On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most), were you with using online learning tools in your course after the Design Perspective meeting?

4. On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most), after the design perspective meeting, how confident were/are you facilitating a course you did not create/develop?

5. On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most), what level of support do you feel you need to continue facilitating this course?

Interviews

One of the most commonly used methods of data collection in education research is interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). This method of data collection provides "in-depth and rich information about participants; worldviews and their perspectives and subjective meanings" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 429). The interviews explored a more holistic conversation on how the facilitator's perceptions of the online course and confidence changed after having participated in a professional development overview before facilitating their assigned online

courses. The decision in selecting a total of three of the seven participants to interview stemmed from the allotted time to collect this data (needed to be collected while facilitating the course), facilitator interest and availability, as well as being able to dedicate adequate time to each interviewee and conduct a thorough analysis on their responses (Baker & Edwards, 2012).

Using results from the questionnaire as a basis to identify the initial insecurities or apprehensions about facilitating a course developed by someone else, the interview questions were utilized to gather more detailed perspectives from the facilitators. The purpose behind the interview was to hear directly from participants about their experiences and comfortability as well as how their comfortability and confidence evolved, stayed the same, or regressed.

The interviews took place online via Microsoft Teams on March 1st and 2nd. Interviews took approximately 30 minutes and were conducted with three of the seven participants. The prompts I prepared prior to the interview included:

- What was your level of confidence before teaching this online course?
- Would professional development focused on online pedagogy, something similar to what was included in the design perspective meeting, be beneficial for you in future semesters?
- What would be the best way to receive e-pedagogy professional development?
- What was the biggest challenge in facilitating a course that was developed for you?
- What level of support (design perspective meeting, differentiated professional development resources, access to the Digital Learning team) could have made facilitating this course more seamless?
- If you had developed this course, what are some things you would have done differently?
- What was your motivation behind facilitating this course?
- How would you advise future course facilitators teaching a course that they did not

develop themselves?

Participants were reassured that their names would not be identified within the transcripts and that their transcripts would only be used for data analysis. The transcribed documents were then coded into categories depending on their responses.

Data Collection and Analysis

Figure 7 provides a visual representation of the method in which data were collected and analyzed. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected to measure the evaluation of this study through web-based questionnaires as well as interviews. The electronic web-based questionnaire collected quantitative and qualitative data through Likert-type ordinal scales, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with assigned online course facilitators. Those interviews were recorded and transcribed using a web-based tool called Temi. Temi transcribes recordings through computer automation, therefore accuracy of results can vary between 85-99%. Thus, I reviewed each transcribed interview for full accuracy. Evaluation findings were presented as a series of recommendations on improving the professional development in future semesters.

Figure 7

Data Collection Implementation Plan
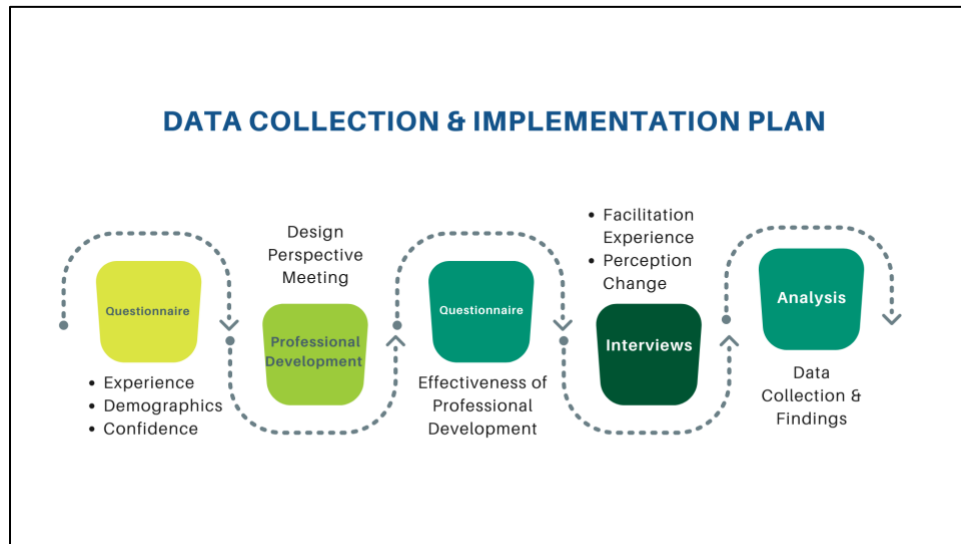
Limitations

A key limitation for this pilot study was how participants responded to the questionnaire and/or interview questions. By being aware of social desirability and response bias, I was mindful of the usage and phrasing of probing questions, and also reassured participants that all data would be analyzed and reported discreetly. I believe social desirability was the most prominent during the questionnaire portion of the evaluation because participants were asked to rate themselves on a scale of 1 to 5 several times.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the purpose and methodology of this study, which focused on the design of the evaluation. This evaluation investigated a professional development framework that university facilitators who were assigned to teach/facilitate online courses they did not develop participated in. The professional development framework expanded on the Community of Inquiry model with an added design focus to provide support and professional

development services throughout the pilot study. The piloted professional development, in addition to questionnaires, individual interviews, and analysis will be used to make recommendations on improving this piloted professional development prior to formal implementation.

Chapter Four
Results and Findings

Introduction

The main purpose behind this study was to evaluate the professional development model provided to a diverse group of faculty demographics that were facilitating an online course that they did not develop. Providing this professional development to online course facilitators was offered with the intent of bridging the gap between teaching online and the facilitators' lack of context surrounding the online course. This context included the online quality standards courses were built upon and the equity structures built into the course to allow for consistency across amongst multiple sections offered. Six questions guided this evaluation:

1. What level of familiarity do facilitators have with online courses (have they taken/taught/developed online courses)?

2. What kind of formal online teaching and learning has been provided during the facilitator's career?

3. What level of confidence do facilitators express surrounding online teaching?

4. In what areas do online course facilitators believe they are lacking knowledge and support?

5. In what areas of online teaching & learning do online course facilitators feel confident?

6. What elements of the professional development support provided did facilitators find most useful? (posed at the end of the study)

To answer those evaluative questions, I collected data using a questionnaire, conducted observations during professional development, collected follow-up data via a questionnaire, and conducted participant interviews. Within this chapter, I have compiled findings based on collected data to evaluate this piloted professional development.

Online Facilitator Demographic Questionnaire Data

Prior to teaching an online course that facilitators did not develop, seven facilitators were provided with a nine-item questionnaire. I gathered preliminary demographic data and instructional experiences in online education from seven participants. One of the participants was an associate director and instructor, another was a full-time instructor, and the remaining five were adjunct instructors. Presented below (see Tables 1-3) are the questions provided to participants, along with a summary of their responses. In conducting this evaluative study, a thorough analysis of each phase was essential to informing the evaluation. The baseline demographic questionnaire was completed by seven participants. Three of the questions were fill in the blank/short responses, three were "yes or no" questions, and three utilized a Likert scale (Strongly Disagree =0; Strongly Agree=5).

For Question #1 - *Please enter your name, as well as the name of the course you will be facilitating* – All participants remained anonymous and being able to see the differences amongst the collected data against the three courses being facilitated was a beneficial component. Two of the three courses were offered by the same college, but in different departments. Introduction to Public Policy and Community Service (PAD3003) had two participants, Basic American Sign Language (ASL2140) had four participants, and Happiness and Wellbeing (SOW3802) had one participant. Both participants facilitating PAD3003 were adjunct faculty, one of the participants facilitating ASL2140 was a full-time faculty member, while the other three were adjunct faculty,

and the participant facilitating SOW3802 was both an associate director and a full-time instructor. A valuable piece of data that was not collected in this questionnaire was communication/language preference. After I sent the participation request email, I learned that three of the four ASL participants' primary language was American Sign Language. Although this was a variable I was not anticipating, I was able to acquire a translator prior to the upcoming design perspective meeting.

For Question #2 - *Have you taken an online course?* –This was a beneficial piece of baseline demographic data to be able to gauge the participant's prior experiences with online courses. All participants responded that they had taken an online course (see Table 2), which suggests that all participants have a basic familiarity with online courses from a student's perspective.

For Question #3 - *Have you taught/facilitated an online course prior to the Spring 2021 semester?* - This question measured the experience facilitators had with teaching an online course prior to this pilot study. All participants responded that they have facilitated an online course prior to the Spring semester (see Table 2), which indicates that participants have a basic level of familiarity with a learning management system, as well as facilitating lessons, discussions, and community in an online setting.

For Question #4 - *Have you taught/facilitated this upcoming course in a face-to-face setting?* - This question measured the familiarity the facilitators had with the course content/materials. By teaching this course previously in a face-to-face setting, facilitators were at least familiar with the course learning outcomes, content, and had a general idea of how to facilitate difficult concepts/topics that arose. Four of the participants responded that they had taught this course in a face-to-face setting prior to teaching it online, while three participants

51

responded they had not (see Table 2). This question also assisted in probing to uncover the

experiential differences between facilitating this course face-to-face versus online, if participants

received more or less support/resources, and what these overall differences were.

Table 2

Online Facilitator Demographic Questionnaire Responses

Questions	*n* Responses	*M*				SD
		Yes		No		
		n	%	*n*	%	
Have you taken an online course?	7	7	100	-		-
Have you taught/facilitated an online course prior to the Spring 2021 semester?	7	7	100	-		-
Have you taught/facilitated this upcoming in a face-to-face setting?	7		57.14		42.86	0.49

For Question #5 – *On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) how comfortable*

are you with using online learning tools? – This question measured the comfort level of the

facilitators when using online learning tools. With varying levels of experience and limited

access to support resources, the responses for this question give insight into what level of

professional development/support facilitators need to be able to comfortably use the online

learning tools within the courses they will be facilitating. The collected responses yielded a mean

of 4.14 with a range of 1.0 to 5.0 (see Table 3), indicating that more than half of the participants

had average or above average comfortability levels with online learning tools.

For Question #6 – *On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) how confident*

are you facilitating a course you did not create/develop – This question measured the confidence

of the participants in relationship to facilitating a course they did not develop. By not developing the course, a potential disconnect of expectations, structure, and organization was greatly possible. The collected responses yielded a range of 2.0 to 5.0 with a mean of 3.86 (see Table 3), indicating that five of the seven participants had average or above average confidence levels with facilitating a course they did not develop.

For Question #7 – *On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) what level of support do you anticipate needing before facilitating this course?* – This question measured the anticipated need for support prior to and during course facilitation. Support comes in the form of a direct point of contact to assist with any online course design components/tools, on-demand resources (tutorials), and access to more in-depth online instructor trainings/certifications. The collected responses yielded a range of 2.0 to 5.0 with a mean of 3.29 (see Table 3), indicating that five of the seven participants felt they needed an average or below average level of support.

Table 3

Online Facilitator Likert Scale Questionnaire Responses

Questions	*n*	*M*	SD
On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) how comfortable are you with using online learning tools?	7	4.14	1.36
On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) how confident are you facilitating a course you did not create/develop	7	3.86	0.99
On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) what level of support do you anticipate needing before facilitating this course?	7	3.29	0.88

For Question #8 – *In what specific areas do you foresee needing support before facilitating this course?* – This question measured the specific support needs of each individual

participant. Responses indicated that facilitators would need the most support in the areas involving the course's technical/functional components and becoming familiar with the course design/organization. Participants also indicated that consultations that provided a walk-through of the course would be most beneficial (see Table 4).

For Question #9 – *On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) what do you feel is the biggest disconnect between developing a course yourself and facilitating one that was developed for you?* – Responses suggest that facilitators felt disconnected with the vision of the course and its overall organization. With the amount of time it takes to fully grasp the course structure and course components, facilitators indicated that participating in the course development would have been preferable to receiving the materials following development (see Table 4).

Table 4

Online Facilitator Open-Ended Questionnaire Responses

Questions	Responses
In what specific areas do you foresee needing support before facilitating this course?	- Two participants responded "N/A" - Just a quick walk through of the course in Canvas to ensure that I understand the discussion of what is required and what may be optional. - I may need assistance on the IT portion of things, if something is not working properly. - For the course, it is more of training itself which I already took a while ago. I think more of a one-on-one training would be far more ideal and time efficient for this trainee. - Ensuring I'm familiar with online discussions and assignments. - Course layout; scheduling, grading assignments; course materials, students' view

Table 4 (Continued)

Questions	• Responses

What do you feel is the biggest disconnect between developing a course yourself and facilitating one that was developed for you?	• I think when you develop a course you understand the details and have a vision for how the course will flow and how to best make use of the modules.
	• None.
	• Layout of online platform
	• N/A
	• Without printing schedule syllabus
	• Generally, I would prefer to develop my own course, however, this course works well and I think teaching it for a second time will be a smoother experience
	• You are not as familiar with the content because you didn't create yourself. So, the logic and structure of the course was created in someone else's mind. You spend a bit more time trying to understand someone else's logic.

Design Perspective Meeting

Conducting the design perspective meetings led to insights about facilitators' understandings. The meetings allowed me to share that I would be available as a point of contact should they have more detailed questions throughout the semester and to provide context surrounding the just-in-time resources I would be able to provide to further support their facilitation needs. Based on the course groups involved in this study, I discuss the design perspective meetings below.

American Sign Language 2140 Group

A few weeks prior to the design perspective meeting for the ASL course, I spoke with the developing instructor. I knew that this course was an American Sign Language (ASL) course, however I was not aware that three of the four facilitators used ASL as their primary language. The course developer suggested using an interpreter for the design perspective meeting. The developing instructor also mentioned that since she has worked on many online course developments with our department, that she hosts a training session with her adjuncts prior to the start of every semester. To alleviate scheduling conflicts for the facilitators and

potentially duplicating information, I attended the developing instructor's training (with an ASL interpreter) and incorporated my Design Perspective meeting components into this session. There were four pilot study participants within this group of seven facilitators. During the meeting the facilitators had several questions about what modifications they might make to the course. This was a very important topic to cover since making modifications to one section of the course (while there are several others being taught consecutively) potentially alters the quality of the course and can also impact the equity amongst student experiences. We also discussed online learning tools that were incorporated in the course. One of the facilitators shared his past experience with using one tool in particular--a video discussion tool-- and how it negatively impacted his students. Because of this meeting and our open dialog, I was able to provide several solutions and resources to address the concern of using that specific tool for all of the facilitators.

Public Policy 3003 Group

The design perspective meeting with this group took place more than a month prior to the start of the semester, and two pilot study participants were among this group of four facilitators. All of the facilitators were adjuncts that had worked with the developing instructor on courses in previous semesters. Out of the three design perspective meetings, I was most familiar with providing an overview of this course, as it was the course that I worked on with the developing instructor. I was able to provide all facilitators with a thorough walk through of all course components that would require modifications on their end prior to the start of the semester. Since the developing instructor was present for this meeting, he also provided insight as to the extent that facilitators could customize certain course components of the course such as due dates and selecting case studies that they had the most background knowledge on to enhance their

56

facilitation confidence. The facilitators in this group had questions pertaining to assessment rubrics, due dates, and how to incorporate supplemental videos/other course materials.

Happiness and Wellbeing 3802 Group

This facilitator group's design perspective meeting took place later than originally planned. When I contacted the developing instructor, he shared with me the names of two course facilitators. Upon contacting them, only one responded; however, that particular facilitator is also an associate director for the department offering this course. She not only agreed to participate in this pilot but shared with me that there would be several more facilitators for this course due to a high demand and course sections that had been added late. Because of the late section additions, knowing who exactly would be facilitating these course sections was still unknown; therefore, I had to wait until the facilitators were identified/hired, given university credentials, and given access to their courses. For some, this did not happen until the day prior to Spring 2021 semester, which was why the main course facilitator/associate director requested we push the design perspective meeting until the semester was a couple weeks underway. Although we had a late start, the facilitators were still very interested and eager to receive more context surrounding the development of the course. Several of their questions pertained to student navigation, accessing video/lecture analytics, and synchronous sessions. Only one of the four facilitators that attended this Design Perspective meeting was a pilot study participant.

Following all of the design perspective meetings, I sent a follow up email to all 12 facilitators (pilot participants or not) and provided them with a variety of support resources to utilize as needed throughout the semester. By having these meetings and sending the resources, an open line of communication was then created, and several of the participants utilized me as a

point of contact for online facilitation support. Common queries I received throughout the first half of the semester included:

- Extending assessment time limits for students with disability accommodations

- Adjusting course navigation features

- Creating synchronous sessions

- Adjusting the design formatting on an edited page

- Assisting students in navigating various aspects of their course

Online Facilitator Follow-Up Questionnaire Data

For Question #1 – *Was the information shared during the Design Perspective meeting you attended prior to the start of the semester helpful?* This question measured whether participants found the design perspective meeting helpful in facilitating their online courses. Six of the seven participants responded that "yes" it was helpful for them to have this meeting at the beginning of the semester (see Table 5), while one participant did not respond to the question.

For Question #2 – *Did you utilize any of the information and/or resources shared during the Design Perspective meeting?* This question measured whether or not the resources shared with facilitators were used to assist in their course facilitation. Four participants (66.67%) stated that "yes" they did use some of the resources, while two participants (33.33%) stated that they did not, and one participant did not respond to this question (see Table 5).

Table 5

Online Facilitator Follow-Up Questionnaire Responses, Part 1

Questions	n Responses	M				SD
		Yes		No		
		n	%	*n*	%	
Was the information shared during the Design Perspective meeting you attended prior to the start of development helpful?	6	6	100	-		
Did you utilize any of the information and/or resources shared during the Design Perspective meeting?	6	4	66.67	2	33.33	0.47

For Question #3 – *On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) How comfortable were you with using online learning tools in your course after the Design Perspective meeting?* This question measured the comfort level of the facilitators when using online learning tools after receiving professional development and support resources. The collected responses yielded a range of 3.0 to 5.0 with a mean of 4.17 (see Table 5); however, only six of the seven participants responded to this question. More than half of the facilitator participants had average or above average comfortability levels using the online learning tools in their courses, which in comparison to the first questionnaire that gauged comfortability using online tools, was an increase of 0.03.

For Question #4 – *On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) After the Design Perspective Meeting how confident were/are you facilitating a course you did not create/develop?* This question measured the confidence of the participants in relationship to

facilitating a course they did not develop after receiving professional development and resources to assist in their facilitation. The collected responses yielded a range of 4.0 to 5.0 with a mean of 4.4 (see Table 5); however, only five of the seven participants responded to this question. These results indicate that the five participants that responded had above average confidence levels while facilitating the course they did not develop, which in comparison to the first questionnaire that gauged confidence levels, there was an increase of 0.54.

For Question #5 – *On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) What level of support do you feel you need to continue facilitating this course?* This question measured the anticipated need for support during the remainder the semester. Support could be provided in the form of a direct point of contact to assist with any online course design components/tools, on-demand resources (tutorials), access to more in-depth online instructor trainings/certifications. The responses ranged from 0.0 to 4.0, with a mean of 2.67 (see Table 5); however, only six of the seven participants responded to this question. These results indicate that six of the seven participants felt they needed an average or below average level of support to continue facilitation, which in comparison to the first questionnaire that gauged support needs, there was a reduction by 0.62.

Table 6

Online Facilitator Follow-Up Questionnaire Responses, Part 2

Question	n	M	SD
On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) How comfortable were you with using online learning tools in your course after the Design Perspective meeting?	6	4.17	0.69

Table 6 (Continued)

Question	*n*	*M*	*SD*
On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) After the Design Perspective Meeting how confident were/are you facilitating a course you did not create/develop?	6	4.4	0.49
On a scale of 0-5 (0 being the least, 5 being the most) What level of support do you feel you need to continue facilitating this course?	6	2.67	1.37

Interviews

Participants were selected for the conducted interviews based on their participation in both surveys, and then by their willingness to be interviewed. Three of the seven participants from this evaluative pilot completed both surveys; all three agreed to be interviewed. The analysis of the interviews generated several themes, including advice for future facilitators, challenges of facilitating a course someone else developed, the importance of having a point of contact for assistance, future professional development needs.

Future Facilitators

Throughout the interviews, participants frequently mentioned what advice they would give to fellow online course facilitators. This was an interesting aspect in that it was not a question that I planned on asking initially; however, it came up organically in each interview with minimal prompting. Since the online courses had been developed by someone other than the facilitator, participants strongly advised thoroughly looking through the course before students gain access to it. They suggested facilitators "be sure and read through all of the materials in the modules to understand the flow of the course and to ensure that the syllabus is clear, and that you are clear, about course expectations" (Participant 3). Not reviewing the

courses closely ahead of time caused minor challenges for some participants as they made their way through the semester. One participant stressed that future/fellow facilitators remain flexible with not only themselves, but with students. Although components such as the syllabus are created in advance with a clear structure that includes dates, remaining cognoscente of student needs and adjusting the pacing of the course might at times be necessary, and greatly benefit the student experience. To be aware of student needs Participant 1 felt that:

"you have to see how they're reacting and you gotta realize you're there for them. You're there to give them a beneficial experience. And sometimes your ideas about what that should look like is different. So you have to kind of be, you know, willing to adjust your thinking, your thoughts and your plans. And that's where some instructors really go wrong is that they really stick to the plan. Like this was this, this is in the syllabus. This is what I said, this is what we're doing. And it just, it doesn't give a good experience to the students. And I think that's where we, as instructors have to be open-minded."

Participants suggested that facilitators remain mindful that deadlines and schedules in the syllabus do not always have to be set in stone. Participants suggested instead using a pacing guide, so that "if the students aren't ready and they're not prepared, then you can't stick to that schedule" (Participant 1). Along those same lines, participants suggested facilitators find opportunities to "personalize" (Participant 2) courses and find ways to foster "individual attention that one may devote to their students" (Participant 2); Further, facilitators can create flexible and inclusive online learning environments while upholding the "course learning objectives" (Participant 2).

Challenges of Facilitating a Course Someone Else Developed

Participants indicated they faced challenges related to lack of time and preparation. After receiving access to the assigned online course and starting the semester, one participant mentioned that she felt as though she needed to "not just be one module ahead of my students. I feel like I need to go through everything" before all students were granted access to the course. Once facilitators gained access to their developed online courses and worked on familiarizing themselves with the structured content ahead, one participant felt as though she "underestimated the amount of time that [she] would have liked to have spent preparing [herself] for that first time going through." Similarly, Participant 1 said, "I keep finding things that I've missed, that I was supposed to go back and fix throughout before the course started," which then led to that facilitator feeling slightly embarrassed because "the students will tell me and I'm like, Oh shoot. I guess I didn't spend enough time going through it" (Participant 1). Participants also mentioned finding it challenging to not have developed some of their own course materials, in particular, the course quizzes. Although it was helpful to not have to grade quizzes, Participant 2 expressed that "it's harder to keep track of really, you know, how they're doing, if that student hadn't reached out to me, I don't know that I would've thought to check on them."

The Importance of Having a Point of Contact for Assistance

Being able to identify a point of contact, foster a connection, and "reach out to somebody is really helpful" (Participant 3). The facilitators shared that having someone to reach out to with online course related questions or assistance was beneficial. Participant 2 reached out to me, the developing instructor, and another facilitator throughout the semester and felt comfortable knowing that "I can reach out too if I need to, which I've done a few times. So that's helped me. I don't know if everybody feels like they can do that, but I do it." Although Participant 2 did mention that he actively chose to alternate between who he reached out to for help because he

did not want to come across as incapable, but also knew that in reaching out to me or the developing instructor, as opposed to the campus help desk, would be more beneficial because we had more in-depth knowledge of the course. Participant 3, who is also an associate director for her department and oversees the adjuncts felt that "having the opportunity to meet with somebody and to build a relationship with them is helpful, because we pushed [adjuncts] back to IT and Canvas support. But again, when you're busy and you're an adjunct and you're making a little bit of money, we don't have a lot of time to do all those things. So, I do think that (the design perspective/PD meeting) was very helpful."

Future Professional Development Needs

When asked if continuing this level of support/professional development and how to improve it to best meet facilitator needs in the future, participants unanimously agreed that getting access to the course and course materials as early as possible would be the most helpful. Participant 1 shared that although the design perspective meeting was helpful, she would have preferred a list of everything she needed to do to make sure the course was ready, so that she could look it over, as well as look through the course, and then have the design perspective meeting where she would have the opportunity to ask questions based off what she had already seen. "I'd prefer to get the handout first and the core shell first, let me go in and see, and then we can go through and have a meeting, and I can ask my questions. Cause then I've had time to look at the content at least" (Participant 1). Participant 3 echoed the same sentiment and expressed

> having that meeting within the first week or two (of the semester), again, it establishes
> the relationship. We've gone through it (the course), then we can work in it a little bit.
> And if we need to come back, we come back. You were so helpful, and so kind by
> checking back in with me, like is everything going okay, do we need to set up a meeting?

And I think with myself, and probably with our adjunct faculty too, if you had some

regular intervals that people knew, then I might save up my questions. Oh, I'm going to

see Alana next week, so then I can ask her versus thinking that you've got to call IT.

In addition, Participant 3 shared that in her (and her department's) efforts to maintain a "high

level of quality" in their online courses because their "students deserve that," she hopes to offer

this level of professional development to all online course facilitators moving forward.

Summary

The findings show that online course facilitators appreciate and benefit from professional

development. More than half of the participants indicated that they had an above average

comfortability level with online learning tools, which assisted in their confidence in facilitating

their assigned online courses. Throughout the course of the study, both facilitator comfortability

with using online tools and confidence levels increased. All facilitators indicated that the design

perspective meetings were helpful, and four of the seven participants identified as having utilized

the resources provided after the Design Perspective meeting. Participants expressed that at the

very least, having a point of contact and a meeting to provide context pertaining to the course

that was being facilitated proved instrumental.

Chapter Five
Conclusions and Recommendations

With an increase in online course development to meet the needs of today's evolving learner, higher education institutions are hiring more adjunct faculty to meet those needs. Although some course facilitators are full-time/tenured faculty, most are part-time/adjunct faculty or graduate students. This evaluative pilot study was designed to provide professional development for course facilitators teaching online courses that they did not develop. This study utilized a mixed-methods approach incorporating surveys, interviews with the pilot participants, and observations of participants in during the Design Perspective meeting. The evaluative data showed effectiveness in providing professional development/support to online course facilitators and also provided beneficial recommendations for future iterations of the piloted professional development. As the developer, implementer, and evaluator of this piloted professional development study, a candid discussion surrounding the analysis, challenges, outcomes, and recommendations are presented in this chapter.

Discussion and Data Analysis

The participants in this study had all taken online courses as students and had also all facilitated a course prior to this pilot study. When looking at their employment data, 40% were full-time tenured university employees, while the remaining 60% were part-time faculty. When compared to the data from my institution's faculty as a whole, The University of South Florida, our full-time faculty made up 39.3%, and the remaining 60.6% was part-time faculty (USF Facts, 2020). When looking at USF's institution-wide data alongside the data collected during this

study, the full-time to part-time faculty ratio has maintained the same over the past. However, it is unclear whether the data stayed the same due to hiring freezes over the past year.

Formal professional development focused on online pedagogy is preferred among facilitators (Dailey-Herbert et al., 2014). The professional development the facilitators received throughout this pilot related to the course they would be facilitating provided participants with information surrounding course design, online tools, and how to maintain the course during the semester to assist in their course facilitation. A certification for online instructors provided by my institution is required prior to teaching online; however, this information is not widely shared with all course facilitators, especially those who are not appointed as a facilitator until the last minute. I was able to provide professional development that met the direct and specific needs of each facilitator by providing necessary, just-in-time resources specific to their courses as well as serve as a direct point of contact for those who with questions or concerns throughout the semester. Providing professional development greatly it impacts the equity in background knowledge that course facilitators may or may not be bringing into their online classrooms. Participants vented that with the amount of time it took to orient themselves with the online courses they would be facilitating, participating in the course development would have been preferable in place of being provided Design Perspective materials. This was an expected and honest reaction. Although it would be ideal to have everyone that facilitates an online course participate in development, it is not always an option due to colleges and departments not knowing who will be available based on a variety of factors, including funding, retirements, student enrollment, and courses offered on a semester basis.

When asked prior to the start of the semester what their confidence levels were (on a scale of 0-5) prior to facilitating, participants had an average response of 3.86. This shows that as

a whole, participants were neither under nor overconfident in facilitating a course that they did

not develop themselves. After approximately two months of course facilitation, when surveyed

again to inquire on the effectiveness of the piloted professional development, facilitator

confidence levels (on a scale of 0-5) increased to an average of 4.4, which literature shows has a

positive relationship with student success (Elliot et al., 2015). However, incorporating indirect

questioning in place of direct questioning (Kwak, et al., 2019) could have assisted in getting

more authentic responses.

During the initial data collection, participants were asked to identify specific areas they

anticipated needing support before facilitating their courses and what they felt the largest greatest

challenge was when it came to facilitating a course that they themselves did not develop.

Responses centered on course vision, logic and structure of the course, as well as technological

issues within the learning management system (Canvas). These responses were not surprising

given that facilitators need some level of resources and training materials to fully assimilate into

their role as facilitator (Parker et al., 2018, p.117). A limitation that I experienced in launching

this pilot was timing. Although I planned ahead by anticipating scheduling conflicts and also had

a very flexible approach in providing professional development support, facilitators expressed

that receiving access to their courses and the Design Perspective Plan (Appendix D) prior to our

Design Perspective Meetings would have been more beneficial and would have allowed them to

attend the meeting prepared with questions instead of passively listening while they were shown

their online courses and the Design Perspective Plans. To implement this change I would have to

adjust my timeline (Figure 6) so that all of the Design Perspective components (including a

review of their online course) take place once the semester is underway (perhaps within the first

week). This could cause issues with scheduling since the beginning of the semester tends to be

busy as facilitators are trying to get their students oriented to their courses while also tending to their varying professional workloads. Ideally, I would be able to use the current timeline (Figure 6) and make adjustments as needed depending on the group of facilitators. I also recognize that some facilitators are not hired until the week before, and oftentimes facilitators do not have access to their online courses far enough in advance to review it with the Design Perspective Plan followed by the Design Perspective Meeting.

The data collected from participants during the Design Perspective Meetings and interviews suggested that participants felt confident in facilitating the actual content within their courses and communicating with students. The confidence facilitators expressed aligns with Elliot et al.'s (2015) theory that facilitators are well-rounded subject matter experts and can confidently share their expertise, while still not being fully confident in the way in which that content is being delivered due to the use of new online tools. I was not anticipating all participants to have had a basic fundamental understanding of online courses, but it was a welcomed surprise, for it allowed me to assist them within the immediate context of their courses instead of having to provide significant background knowledge centered on online pedagogical standards.

The element of the professional development that facilitators found most helpful was having a direct point of contact to reach out to with questions regarding design and technical assistance. By creating a small community amongst myself and the facilitators for each course, they seemed to feel as though there was a supportive learning community available to assist them instead of having the burden of troubleshooting on their own or not knowing who to go to for help (Scoppio & Luyt, 2015, p.743). Having a supportive framework like the one in this study in place is important to provide facilitators an equitable onboarding experience to the online

courses they will be facilitating. One of the participants shared that in her role as an Associate Director she oversees the hiring of adjuncts, however more often than not, there is no time for her to orient them herself or provide resources because they are essentially starting their facilitation at the same time the semester is starting. If all facilitators were full-time or tenured faculty, I believe the experience would be different because they would have the resources of their colleagues and departments at their disposal, whereas facilitators hired outside of the university, oftentimes have little-to-no ties to fellow facilitators and/or university contacts.

By fostering this sense of connection, facilitating an online course with unfamiliar tools and a pre-set structure may have felt less isolating to these facilitators (Green et al., 2009). An unanticipated finding that I came across while examining my data was the advice that participants had for future facilitators. The advice focused on remaining flexible (with themselves and students) while continuing to uphold learning outcomes, to thoroughly review the course and make any necessary modifications prior to students having access to the course and finding ways to enhance their facilitator presence. This is extremely helpful in my evaluation, because it offered a perspective outside of my initial realm of questioning that is more facilitator focused and will assist me as I implement future iterations of the Design Perspective professional development. Incorporating their voices, experiences, and lessons learned into future professional developments would be a valuable addition.

Conclusion

To ensure and encourage preparedness, equity, and quality in online courses that are being taught by facilitators, it is imperative that professional development support and resources be provided to all facilitators. Based on the findings from this evaluation, I recommend that the incorporation of Design Perspective Plans and Meetings continue to be implemented for online

courses being facilitated by someone that did not develop the course. Learning Design

departments need to be aware of the disconnect that can be felt by facilitators that did not

participate in course development and how that can not only limit confidence and comfortability

amongst facilitators, but it could also affect the student experience.

For future iterations of this professional development, I recommend providing the Design

Perspective Plan (Appendix D) prior to the Design Perspective Meeting to provide facilitators

the opportunity to review all of the course specific intricacies, as well as a detailed list of updates

than can and cannot be made to the course. By providing the Design Perspective Plan prior to the

meeting, facilitators will then be able to attend the meeting with prepared questions pertaining to

the course (structure, organization, tools, etc.) as well as any questions pertaining to the Design

Perspective Plan. Facilitators may then feel prepared and may have a thorough understanding of

how the course was developed. With this information, facilitators may become confident in how

they incorporate their instruction into the existing structure (Elliot et al., 2015). Providing

facilitators with the Design Perspective Plan followed by a Design Perspective meeting will

ensure that the professional development is purposeful in addressing immediate needs and

questions, while also serving as an initial support available throughout their facilitating semester.

Continuing to evaluate this professional development framework would also be

recommended to ensure that the framework is meeting the needs of our facilitator demographic

as their needs evolve. In doing so, I believe that future iterations of this framework, should also

focus on the importance of relaying the pedagogical background and context of any technologies

included in the courses. By providing a pedagogical emphasis on technology while also

contextualizing it to show the correlation to the learning outcomes, facilitators will receive more

than a tutorial on how to use any technologies. Demonstrating how those technologies algin with

the course learning outcomes and how they benefit the course is critical to provide a meaningful, and engaging student experience. Throughout this study I have found and feel confident in stating that regardless of the facilitator or college, the information, support, and resources provided within this study are applicable across all colleges at the University of South Florida and would be beneficial to all colleges in supporting the university's mission of student success.

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Appendix A: Image Permissions from AAUP

Re: Use of Graphics

C ○ Communications <communications@aaup.org> Monday, November 30, 2020 at 10:43 AM
To: ● Elkins, Alana

ⓘ You replied to this message.

Hi Alana,

With proper credit to AAUP I see no problem with including graphics in your dissertation.

Rachel Larris
Communications Strategist
AAUP

From: Elkins, Alana <alanaelkins@usf.edu>
Sent: Monday, November 30, 2020 2:34 PM
To: Communications <communications@aaup.org>
Subject: Use of Graphics

Hello,

I'm seeking permission to include some AAUP created within my dissertation. Could you please let me know who to contact regarding approval?

Thank you,

--
Alana Elkins, M.Ed
Learning Designer
Digital Learning
Innovative Education
University of South Florida
813-974-4434
Click here to chat with me on Teams

UNIVERSITY of
SOUTH FLORIDA

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] DO NOT CLICK links or attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Appendix B: Image Permissions from Anna-Paula Correia

Re: Image Use Permissions

✓ Elkins, Alana <alanaelkins@usf.edu>
To: Correia, Ana-Paula

Friday, September 4, 2020 at 8:42 AM

Thank you so much!

--
Alana Elkins, M.Ed
Learning Designer
Digital Learning
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University of South Florida
813-974-4434
Click here to chat with me on Teams

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
A PREEMINENT RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

From: "Correia, Ana-Paula" <correia.12@osu.edu>
Date: Friday, September 4, 2020 at 8:41 AM
To: "Elkins, Alana" <alanaelkins@usf.edu>
Subject: Re: Image Use Permissions

Yes, you have my permission to use this image with the respective credits.
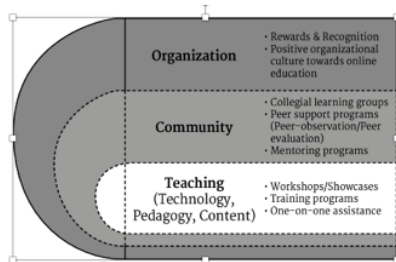All the best,
Ana-Paula

From: "Elkins, Alana" <alanaelkins@usf.edu>
Date: Friday, September 4, 2020 at 8:39 AM
To: "Correia, Ana-Paula" <correia.12@osu.edu>
Subject: Re: Image Use Permissions

Of course!

--
Alana Elkins, M.Ed
Learning Designer
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Innovative Education
University of South Florida
813-974-4434
Click here to chat with me on Teams

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA
A PREEMINENT RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

From: "Correia, Ana-Paula" <correia.12@osu.edu>
Date: Friday, September 4, 2020 at 8:37 AM
To: "Elkins, Alana" <alanaelkins@usf.edu>
Subject: Re: Image Use Permissions

Could you please send me a screenshot of the image you are referring to? Thanks,
Ana-Paula

From: "Elkins, Alana" <alanaelkins@usf.edu>
Date: Thursday, September 3, 2020 at 1:02 PM
To: "Correia, Ana-Paula" <correia.12@osu.edu>
Subject: Image Use Permissions

Hello,

I am seeking permission to use an image that you have published within my dissertation. The aforementioned image is cited as Figure 1 on page 97 within *A professional development framework for online teaching, 2014.*

My dissertation focus is on providing professional development to the university online adjunct population. The published graphic gives a great visual representation of a useful framework, supporting my claims that professional development for this faculty demographic is crucial to organizational success.

If you could please let me know whether or not you approve of this request, I would greatly appreciate it.

Best,

--
Alana Elkins, M.Ed
Learning Designer
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University of South Florida
813-974-4434
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SOUTH FLORIDA
A PREEMINENT RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

Appendix C: Image Permissions from Randy Garrison

Re: Image Use Permission

↩   ↩   →

● Elkins, Alana <alanaelkins@usf.edu>
To: D. Randy Garrison

Friday, September 4, 2020 at 8:40 AM

Thank you so much!

--
Alana Elkins, M.Ed
Learning Designer
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From: "D. Randy Garrison" <garrison@ucalgary.ca>
Date: Thursday, September 3, 2020 at 2:21 PM
To: "Elkins, Alana" <alanaelkins@usf.edu>
Subject: Re: Image Use Permission

Alana,
You have my permission to use the CoI model in your dissertation.
All the best,
DRG

Sent from my iPad

> On Sep 3, 2020, at 12:19 PM, Elkins, Alana <alanaelkins@usf.edu> wrote:
>
> [△EXTERNAL]
>
>
> Hello Dr. Garrison,
>
> I am seeking permission to use an image of the COI model within my dissertation.
>
> My dissertation focus is on providing professional development to the university online adjunct population. A visual example of the COI model gives a great visual representation of how I can incorporate it into my professional development for this faculty demographic.
>
> If you could please let me know whether or not you approve of this request, I would greatly appreciate it.
>
> Best,
>
> --
> **Alana Elkins, M.Ed**
> Learning Designer
> Digital Learning
> Innovative Education
> University of South Florida
> 813-974-4434

Appendix D: Image Permissions from Sharon Boller

Re: request to use LXD framework

↩ ↩ →

○ Elkins, Alana <alanaelkins@usf.edu>
To: Sharon Boller

Wednesday, September 9, 2020 at 10:42 AM

From: Elkins, Alana <alanaelkins@usf.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, September 9, 2020 10:40 AM
To: Sharon Boller <sk.boller@tier1performance.com>
Subject: Re: request to use LXD framework

Hello Sharon,

I'm currently fulltime Learning Designer and Doctoral student at The University of South Florida. My program of study is in Educational Program Development – Educational Innovations. I'm evaluating the implementation of professional development for our adjunct faculty that do not work with my department to develop online courses, but are still assigned to teach them. My department uses a framework very similar to LXD to complete online course developments every semester, but your framework perfectly depicts where I'd like to provide professional development/support to our adjunct facilitators (the get perspective phase). If possible, I would love to use the image, as it provides great visual context. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Have a great day,

--

Alana Elkins, M.Ed
Learning Designer
Digital Learning
Innovative Education
University of South Florida
813-974-4434
Click here to chat with me on Teams

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
A PREEMINENT RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

From: Sharon Boller <sk.boller@tier1performance.com>
Date: Wednesday, September 9, 2020 at 10:25 AM
To: "Elkins, Alana" <alanaelkins@usf.edu>
Subject: RE: request to use LXD framework

Hello Alana,

Thanks for reaching out. Could you provide me with additional details?

1) Your univeersity of study
2) Your program of study
3) A bit more context about how / where you will reference model within your dissertation. Do you intend to do more with it than reference it? You don't need my permission to cite the book and the framework within it so I suspect you want to use the image itself, but please confirm.

Thanks Alana for providing additional details. My apologies for the belated response, but I was out on PTO when your request was received and forwarded to me.

Warm Regards,

Sharon

SHARON BOLLER
TiER1 Performance
m: (317) 490-3833
tier1performance.com | Certified B Corporation | Employee-Owned

Thank you so much, I really appreciate it!

--

Alana Elkins, M.Ed
Learning Designer
Digital Learning
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Click here to chat with me on Teams

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
A PREEMINENT RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

From: Sharon Boller <sk.boller@tier1performance.com>
Date: Wednesday, September 9, 2020 at 10:41 AM
To: "Elkins, Alana" <alanaelkins@usf.edu>
Subject: Re: request to use LXD framework

Hi Alana,

Please feel free to use the framwork with a "Used with permission of Sharon Boller, author, Design Thinking for Training and Development (ATD Press 2020).

Thanks for clarifying! Good luck with your efforts.

Sharon

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Appendix E: Image Permissions from Design Perspective Integration Plan

Course #:		Course Name:		
Instructor Name:			College:	
Lead Learning Designer:				

Design Perspective Integration Plan

Design Overview

What are the expectations for the facilitator on interacting with students?	
How are students assessed in the course and how will grades/feedback be provided?	
What course components need to be created by the course facilitator?	
List any Canvas pages that need to be modified by the facitator, including what will signify a needed modification (For example: Meet Your Instructor page, modify whatever is highlighted in green)	
What course components (aside from design) cannot be modified by the facilitator in an effort to uphold quality standards and course integrity?	
What digital materials/tools were used in the course that a facilitator may not be familiar with? How will the facilitator need to utilize/maintain these tools?	
Any other components not asked about above that would be necessary for a facilitator to know?	

Course #:		Course Name:		
Instructor Name:			College:	
Lead Learning Designer:				

Will the developing instructor be available for potential questions during the semester(s) facilitators will be teaching?	