

Chapter 104

From In–Person to Online Teaching: Experiences of Secondary Educators During the COVID–19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic forced many teachers across the United States to teach their students remotely using online teaching strategies. Analyzing teachers' perceptions and expectations of online teaching before and during the pandemic help stakeholders understand how to better handle the challenges of online learning. The literature review examines the traditional differences between teaching online and in-person courses, challenges faced when teaching online courses, and teacher perceptions of online learning. The survey method was used to collect data on the experiences of online teaching before and during the pandemic from ninth through twelfth grade teachers in a North Texas school district. The study results show that factors such as a teacher age or years of experience had less influence determining if they were prepared for online teaching. Rather, factors like a teacher school campus, prior experience, and access to support structures correlated more to teachers having a high level of preparedness for online teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The unexpected and rapid development of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020 has changed many daily routines and norms, including education. Schools were greatly affected by the pandemic, impacting 1.58 billion learners around the world (United Nations, 2020). School districts rapidly shuttered in-person classes and quickly transitioned to offering online-only courses. While DiRienzo and Lilly

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-7540-9.ch104

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(2014) concluded that the method of instruction, either in-person or online, does not affect student learning outcomes, the participants in their study were tenured teachers who were adequately prepared for online teaching. Gudmundsdottir and Hathaway (2020) concluded that the majority of teachers during the pandemic were not adequately prepared; many teachers were forced to change their method of instruction without much prior experience or training.

Problem Statement

As schools are continuing to navigate between offering in-person, online, and hybrid courses, it is important to examine teacher experiences to inform how changes to the learning environment currently affects teachers' experiences in the classroom. Examining the experience of teachers transitioning from in-person to online teaching can provide educators and administrators with research-based data leading to the development of new training courses designed for online teaching (De Paepe, Zhu, & Depryck, 2018; Gudmundsdottir & Hathaway, 2020). These insights can also help develop effective training for new educators who are confronting the current educational environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to understand the experiences of traditional in-person secondary educators transitioning to teaching online classes in North Texas school districts through collecting their responses to open-ended questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will discuss differences between online and in-person teaching, along with the theory, challenges, and teachers' pre-pandemic perceptions of online learning.

Comparing Online and In-Person Teaching

Traditionally, all formal learning has been conducted in face-to-face environments, where the instructor teaches the learners through a variety of strategies: lectures, group work, peer collaboration, etc. Then, with the introduction of technology and telecommunication in education, both public and charter schools began offering more online options for courses (Anderson, 2008). For example, some schools have created hybrid, or "blended," courses, utilizing a mixture of face-to-face instruction with online learning (Brodersen & Melluzzo, 2017). However due to the pandemic, many schools closed their physical campuses and only offered online learning options; face-to-face and blended classes were not an option for students (United Nations, 2020).

To understand the differences between online and in-person learning, it is critical to clearly define and identify differences between the learning environments. Outdated ideas and generalizations of online learning exist; Brown and Liedholm (2002) asserted that online courses were easier and students lacked motivation in their courses. However, in a more recent study, DiRienzo and Lilly (2014) concluded that the learning environment did not significantly alter student-learning outcomes. Furthermore, they concluded no discernible difference between student motivation and perceived course difficulty in online

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