THE FUTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING: FACE TO FACE, HYBRID, AND ONLINE INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY MODELS

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ABSTRACT

This research study explores nuances to instructional delivery models beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. A case study that examines the redesign and reimagining of a graduate course to fit the diverse needs and preferences of students. This research was intended to provide insight into the possibilities of redesigning and reimagining graduate level courses for a master of education in educational leadership program at a state university in Louisiana. The research team engaged this case study in order to address the needs of current and prospective students regarding face to face, hybrid models, and online options for course delivery. This case study documents efforts to redesign and reimagine courses using instructional delivery models that meet the diverse needs and preferences of students and potential graduate candidates. While this case study has implications for instructional delivery at every level of education it is a work in progress. It begins to shed light on how graduate programs and course delivery will continue to evolve beyond the Covid-19 pandemic and well into the future.

KEYWORDS

Teaching and Learning & Instructional Delivery Models

1. INTRODUCTION

With the world of teaching and learning turned upside down during the Covid-19 pandemic, new opportunities and necessary changes in instructional delivery have emerged that support greater equity and accessibility to more rigorous teaching and learning possibilities. Bain (2021) stated, "We are in the midst of a profound revolution in teaching and learning. This change has come in the form of a new breed of "Super Courses" that have emerged in the humanities, social and natural sciences, arts, professional fields, and other areas." Bain (2021) went on to express the thought that "these new experiences have appeared in all stages of education" and especially in colleges and universities. Over the past two and one half years the United States of America's education system has undergone transitions from predominately face-to-face brick and mortar classrooms to a variety of fluctuating hybrid models that include synchronous virtual classrooms to online asynchronous classes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for continuous learning among students at every level. States, universities, school districts, and individual schools had to navigate the uncertainty of the pandemic, while attempting to provide continuous learning opportunities for their students. PreK-12 schools, as well as, colleges and universities all were faced with the question of how to continue providing rigorous instruction in the context of a raging pandemic. As human beings we adapted to the necessary changes and we rode the wave of uncertainty as we navigated the challenges of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) to ensure the safety needs of all stakeholders. Rapanta et al. (2021) noted that as educational professionals we quickly realized the shortcoming of overemphasizing the remote qualities while under emphasizing the dynamic carefully designed learning environment of rigorous Online Learning and Teaching (OLT). Thus we began the process of metacognition in regards to how best to meet the continuous instructional needs of our teaching faculty and our learners. Differentiated instruction 2.0 emerged as we grappled with redesigning courses of study that would be equitable within face-to-face models, hybrid models, virtual models, and online models of instructional delivery that included synchronous and asynchronous formats. Educational organizations initiated

priorities that would expand education offerings in response to student and programmatic needs. This study explores the researcher's opportunity to redesigning courses in a graduate level program in educational leadership that meet the diverse needs and preferences of current students and future candidates of the program. The significance of this research will provide program designers and educational practitioners with practical insights into creating more equitable models of instructional delivery that meet the evolving needs of current and future learners.

2. TEACHING AND LEARNING POST COVID-19

The overarching research question was, "What new opportunities in teaching and learning exist regarding instructional delivery beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and are available to teachers and learners going forward?" This question is critical because of all of the strides made by teachers and educators during the period of school closures to redesign and reimagine courses and course material in order to support the continuous learning of students. Bain (2021) wrote,

> In the traditional classroom, instructors might laud the power of comprehension, critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving but often test for memory. Only with improved understanding of evaluation can teachers from grade school to the university focus more clearly on deep learning, adaptive expertise, and the ability to take an idea and realize its implications in a large variety of settings (p.3)"

In response to the pandemic, ERT mandated that courses taught in the traditional face-to-face brick and mortar classroom setting sometimes with the infusion of technology had to be converted to virtual and online platforms. This resulted in a variety of hybrid models and online course delivery. Virtual platforms included the Google Suite and Zoom, which were used to facilitate asynchronous and synchronous course work. The Moodle platform was used to facilitate the online asynchronous aspects of course delivery, while Google Meet and Zoom were used to engage students virtually. This study explores the future possibilities and opportunities for educators to continue providing a variety of course delivery models to meet the diverse needs and preferences of the students they serve going forward.

2.1 Face to Face Classrooms

Traditional face-to-face instructional delivery has been the primary mode of instructional delivery in the United States of America since public education became a part of the fabric of our society. Face-to-face instructional delivery remains a key aspect of teaching and learning at every level of education including the graduate program for educational leadership being explored. This program is a hybrid model that employs fifty percent or more of face-to-face instruction and the balance is delivered online for each course offered within the program. During the COVID-19 shutdown every course transitioned from the model previously described to a virtual and online hybrid model. Every teaching faculty member was required to complete professional development modules in support of this transition. Furthermore, the university offered an opportunity to redesign courses that were offered in the face-to-face and online hybrid model to a one hundred percent online course offering. The researcher engaged this redesign process with one course offered within the context of this master's degree program. The obvious safety concerns of students and teachers during COVID-19 sparked the initial transition to ERT; however, as we get through and beyond COVID-19 concerns some people are excited to be back face to face, while other students and faculty are increasingly requesting the one hundred percent online option.

2.2 Distance Education (DE) Modalities for Delivering Instruction

Researchers have defined Online Learning and Teaching (OLT) as a subset of distance education that uses electronic media in a dynamic and carefully designed learning environment where students experience flexible interactive telecommunication systems which connect learners, resources, and instructors via synchronous, asynchronous, and/or blended modalities (Rapanta et al., 2021; Scoppio & Luyt, 2017). The distance education instructional modalities most often offered during COVID-19 were remote with hybrid and face-to-face as

secondary modes for instructional delivery. Table 1 provides a description of the instructional delivery formats offered at the university level during the COVID-19 shutdown. According to the Pew Research, analysis of 2015 American Community Survey Data, at least 15% of U.S. households with school age children did not have access to high-speed internet and many of these households were of a low income status. Thus, educational institutions K-16 had to quickly adapt and modify their workflow strategies while adopting new technologies in situations where students may or may not have access to technologies beyond cellular telephones (Chakraborty et al., 2020).

Table 1. Instructional Delivery Modalities

Instructional Delivery Format (Code)	Descriptions of course instructional delivery model
Face-to-Face (F)	Class is attended synchronously in a physical space.
Online (O)	Class is attended 100% online asynchronously
Virtual (V) video	Class is attended 100% virtually using an online platform with conferencing tools, such as Google Meet and Zoom; this model is synchronous.
*Face-to-Face and Online (FO)	Class is attended 50%-99% face-to-face synchronously in a physical space with the balance of the class time delivered online asynchronously.
*Online and Face-to-Face (OF)	Class is attended 50%-99% Online asynchronously with the balance of the class time delivered face-to-face in a physical space synchronously.
*Virtual and Face-to-Face (VF)	Class is attended 50%-99% virtually with the balance of time delivered in a physical space, this model is pre scheduled as synchronous.
*Face-to-Face and Virtual (FV)	Class is attended 50%-99% face-to-face in a physical space with the balance offered virtually, this model is pre scheduled as synchronous.

This table is adapted from University's course delivery formats. Courses with an * indicate hybrid models of instructional delivery.

2.3 Developing Online Courses

The researcher recognized that online course development was becoming more of a priority pre-COVID-19; however, during the COVID-19 shutdown the transition away from face-to-face instructional delivery required immediate attention. The need to address safety concerns accelerated the process of the researcher engaging in the development of a one hundred percent online course offering for a specific course within the master degree program in educational leadership. Leadership researcher Paul Hersey (Schermerhorn, 1997) stated, "Successful leaders are those who can adapt their behavior to meet the demands of their own unique situation." A four session Course Alignment Process (CAP) training workshop offered guidelines for converting courses to a fully online model. The course would undergo an initial review by a Quality Matters (QM) certified reviewer trained in CAP facilitation and a content expert before being taught two semesters to allow the course instructor to gain insight and make necessary modifications based on best practice. The course will then go through a final review and once the course meets CAP certification guidelines it can be certified as a CAP approved course. The course must have a high degree of alignment to course outcomes and objectives, while accessibility levels for students must demonstrate a differentiated approach to rigorous instructional delivery.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research study is a narrative inquiry designed to explore various instructional delivery models that meet the diverse needs of current and potential graduate students in an educational leadership program. Specifically engaging the transition of course design from a hybrid model that includes strictly face-to-face and online course delivery to more diverse models that include face-to-face, virtual, and online hybrids for instructional delivery that meet the changing needs and preferences of current and future students. The researcher uses a narrative approach in order to provide the research consumer with a logical blueprint of a conversion of a graduate level course traditionally offered in a face-to-face and online (FO) model to a one hundred percent online model. A detailed description of the four part training for phase one of this endeavor will follow.

The four workshops, which are scheduled for two hours each are described as follows:

Workshop 1- Workshop 1 focuses on federal, regional, & state accreditation policies. Specifically, federal Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), the universities distance education policy and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Additionally, the first workshop initiates the work on course component alignment.

Workshop 2- Workshop 2 delves deeper into WCAG requirements as well as the Universal Design for Learning framework and concludes with Copyright Compliance in Online Learning.

Workshop 3- Focuses on building and maintaining student engagement and interaction in Online Learning. This workshop builds on the idea that instructor presence and authentic assessment are key points in maintaining student engagement in the online platform.

Workshop 4- Focuses on the use of educational technology and specifically Moodle tools to support students in online learning.

These faculty workshops are scheduled two weeks apart and are designed with relevant assignments that are due in between each one. Faculty members complete each assignment and receive relevant feedback from the instructional design team. Faculty members are allowed to teach their newly developed course in order to receive additional feedback and make adjustments before the course is submitted for final approval.

4. CONCLUSION

What does the future of instructional delivery look like for educators post COVID-19? The immediate future of teaching and learning post COVID-19 will revert back to the predominant face-to-face instructional delivery model. However, with the proverbial wetting of the appetite of increased numbers of students and teachers during COVID-19, the researcher admonishes educators at every level to prepare for a growing demand for virtual and online instructional delivery models that will address the diverse needs and preferences of students beyond COVI-19. The researcher has worked to convert one course from a traditional hybrid model to an online model of instructional delivery. Going forward the researchers will engage in the process of developing a hybrid model that includes a balance of virtual synchronous delivery of instruction and an online asynchronous instructional delivery components that will maximize the recruitment of students. This balanced approach to instructional delivery will replace a one size fits all delivery model of courses within a graduate program in order to increase recruitment for and accessibility to the program for a broader range of students with diverse needs and preferences.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced educational practitioners to begin to reimagine an improved educational systems in the United States of America. Specifically, the redesign of instructional delivery models for education organizations at every level. Moreover, graduate level courses offered in an educational leadership program that helps to certify school principals and other educational leaders. Based on the safety needs of students and faculty during COVID-19, as well as, the continuing needs and preferences of current students and those applying to the educational leadership program there must be a greater focus on converting traditional hybrid courses in this program to more nuanced models of hybrid instructional delivery. The 50%-99% virtual delivery with the balance of class time delivered online and the 50%-99% online delivery model with the balance of the class time delivered virtually are the proposed additions for the near future. These new hybrid models would not replace the existing instructional delivery models in the educational leadership program, yet they would add additional instructional delivery models that can help to address the changing needs and preferences of students applying to the program. As educators planning for a viable future, we must elevate the

use of technology into the teaching and learning process from simple integration to a total infusion of technology into every aspect of our schools and classrooms. Going forward, the department faculty will engage the four workshops of the CAP training in the fall of 2022. It is anticipated that the first proposed cohort of graduate students to engage the Virtual and Online hybrid model will be forthcoming in the spring 2023 semester. Stay tuned!

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