

A post COVID-19 pandemic exploration of teaching strategies, attitudes,
and values of Southern California community college faculty

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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Abstract

On March 11, 2020, the COVID-19 virus unexpectedly became a global pandemic, forcing the World Health Organization (WHO) to take dramatic action to prevent the spread of the virus and disrupt education forever. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, educational institutions were quarantined to avoid spreading the virus, forcing students and faculty to move to fully online instruction. The forced transition to fully online instruction was hard for many people. Students stopped coming to class, faculty chose to retire or leave altogether, and colleges struggled to provide services to students and faculty. Further impacting faculty and adult learners were the unforeseen emergencies and crises during the pandemic, including employment and economic loss, displacement, eviction, homelessness, loss of family members due to COVID-19, and medical emergencies (Walker, 2021). Closing campuses and moving to remote learning caused a spectrum of psychological consequences, including fear, loneliness, overthinking, sleeplessness, and stress, giving rise to a heightened sense of uncertainty (Zhai & Du, 2020). All forms of in-person participation, like graduations, public forums, athletic competitions, and social organizations, were also canceled, raising concerns about how communities and leaders perceived the campus and its role as town-gown relations shifted (Bristow, 2016). Faculty who continued teaching during this challenging time needed to take extra steps to maintain communication, collaboration, and students' emotional engagement with the learning community.

This qualitative study explored the experiences of community college faculty in Southern California who taught during the COVID-19 pandemic. It examined how faculty participants adapted their teaching methods, attitudes, and educational values in response to the sudden transition to fully online instruction. Additionally, it included what new technologies faculty

used in their classes and their perspectives on teaching evolved during this unprecedented shift as well as the future of online education.

Findings from the two research questions revealed that faculty adapted to online teaching by using new technology and implementing strategies to engage students in their online classes better. They updated their syllabi with online etiquette, mental health resources, and digital tools. Many allowed late work and practiced holistic grading, valuing participation and improvement over traditional grading. Faculty used platforms like TechConnect Zoom and Canvas to increase interaction and foster connectivity in a distance education environment. The research findings also indicated that while faculty participants' core values remained steady, their attitudes and teaching philosophies shifted significantly during the pandemic, especially with those who had never taught online. Faculty became more empathetic and flexible by prioritizing student well-being and adapting their teaching practices to address new challenges such as student anxiety, isolation, and access to technology. The transition to online education prompted many faculty to innovate and reconsider their approaches to inclusivity and support for students. Despite ongoing tensions about teaching modalities, faculty maintained high standards and a commitment to professional development, demonstrating resilience and a renewed focus on understanding students' lives beyond the classroom.

Higher education has changed, become more student-centered, innovative, and online. College faculty are teaching more online and hybrid classes while new policies address distance education, generative artificial intelligence, digital literacy, and access to resources. Ongoing professional development is essential for faculty to stay current and adapt to these changes. The research also revealed several key topics that merit further investigation to deepen the understanding of faculty, students, and institutional experiences in the post-pandemic era. These

topics included disciplinary differences in teaching practices, variations in faculty adaptation, post-pandemic student retention and success, equity impacts related to gender and race, student adaptation to teaching changes, post-pandemic administrative and staff work changes, campus climate and faculty engagement, theoretical perspectives on educational change, evolution of learning paradigms, faculty employment patterns, shared governance and faculty voice, and teaching modality and student success.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my lovely family: My husband, George, and my two daughters, Solar and Nori. I am blessed that you are in my life, and I love you all beyond measure. To my mom, whose loving spirit guides me every day and always wanted me to be a doctor.

Est autem fides credere quod nondum vides; cuius fidei merces est videre quod credis.

~ St. Augustine

Chapter 1 - Introduction

On March 11, 2020, COVID-19 unexpectedly became a global pandemic, forcing the World Health Organization (WHO) to take dramatic action to prevent the spread of the virus. Also known as coronavirus, it is a contagious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It is spread by human-to-human transmission (WHO, 2020). Globally, people adapted to living with the pandemic by wearing face coverings, repeatedly disinfecting high-touch surfaces, and avoiding close contact by keeping a physical distance of six feet between persons (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). These restrictions affected all aspects of society, including the education sector (Pfattheicher et al., 2020).

As colleges responded to the COVID pandemic, numerous media outlets described it as unprecedented. However, this is not true, a historical examination of previous epidemics reminded us of earlier global pandemics of the plague, yellow fever, typhoid, and influenza as pandemics that caused educational institutions to deal with the spread of the illnesses to protect their colleges (Thomas & Foster, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic forced academic institutions to move to fully online instruction. This led to colleges struggling to provide technology to students and faculty who lacked the necessary technology and skills to navigate online learning. According to California Community College Interim Deputy Chancellor Lizette Navarette (Burke et al., 2022), "What we have seen is that higher education has been disrupted forever" (para. 4).

Learning Management Systems like Canvas and Blackboard are examples of distance learning platforms using information technology (IT) tools that facilitate interactions between faculty and students. These platforms deliver asynchronous and synchronous course content (Larasati & Santoso, 2017). The asynchronous platform refers to communication that does not

require students and faculty to engage in time-sensitive interactions in an online learning environment (Larasati & Santoso, 2017). In contrast, synchronous online learning involves real-time interaction of course content conducted via video conferencing tools such as TechConnect Zoom and Microsoft Teams (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020).

Academic institutions struggled to transition to 100% online learning during the pandemic. Faculty and students were required to rapidly adapt to substantially more difficult course delivery methods than in traditional on-campus learning environments in which faculty and students regularly met in person during a semester, widening the digital divide between faculty and students (Bryson & Andres, 2020). The absence of physical and social presence influences students' engagement, which is a significant factor in the high attrition rate of online education (Luo et al., 2017). Further impacting faculty and adult learners were the unforeseeable emergencies and crises during the pandemic, including employment and economic loss, displacement, eviction, homelessness, loss of family members due to COVID-19, and medical emergencies (Walker, 2021). Salta et al. (2022) recommend that instructors take steps to maintain their communication, collaboration, and personal interaction with their students after adopting an online (distance) learning system. Furthermore, instructors should make a concerted effort to promote student interaction. Such actions are anticipated to maintain students' emotional engagement with the learning community, resulting in a more effective and rewarding distance learning experience (Salta et al., 2022).

In addition to technology needs, many students lacked the financial resources to satisfy their basic needs, such as food, gas, hygiene, and clothing, due to the pandemic. Fortunately, community colleges could access federal emergency funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act called the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund

(HEERF) (DOE, 2021). It provided higher education with more than \$14 billion in emergency funding, of which more than \$6 billion was required to be allocated directly to students in the form of emergency financial aid grants (HEERF-student share) to cover costs associated with the disruption of campus operations caused by the COVID-19 crisis including basic needs, computer loans, and temporary Wi-Fi equipment (NASSF, 2022).

When the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) restrictions were lifted entirely in 2023, academic institutions reopened on-campus activities. They did so with trepidation and caution because of the paradigm shift in higher education—their equilibrium was punctuated (Gould, 1972). According to Tyton Partner's special report, this impact has prompted fundamental changes in higher education teaching and learning that are expected to persist (Fox et al., 2021). According to Tyton Partners' report (2021):

Faculty and institutional leaders are working to ensure that high-quality teaching and learning can continue this fall using a variety of hybrid delivery modes to address multiple potential pandemic scenarios. While much has been made in the education press about the confusion between online and remote learning, we view the primary conflict as a debate about outcomes, with one camp focused on the quality of the learning experience and another camp focused on course and degree completion. The urgent transformations of the spring 2020 term now transition to planning for a future with more online and face-to-face learning integration. This prompts faculty and institutions to explore and adopt the best components of these modalities, focusing on quality and equity. (p. 30).

There is no time in the digital age when higher education was quarantined in response to a pandemic forcing students and faculty to move to a fully online learning environment (Colfer et al., 2021).

Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 emergency transition impacted instruction and forced faculty to change their teaching practices significantly because of the move to 100% online instruction. In 2023, restrictions had been lifted, and on-campus instruction resumed. According to Al-Gahtani (2016), faculty do not actively observe students' learning activities in the online learning environment, and students do not engage in face-to-face interactions with instructors and other students during learning activities. Unless these interactions can be replicated, a disconnect may lead to a sense of isolation (Filho et al., 2021). Preparing faculty to use learning management systems takes time. Some colleges provided distance educational training for faculty on creating and delivering content, assessing student performance, and developing strategies to maintain student engagement and accessibility in an online environment (Meyer & Murrell, 2014). Making the transition to fully online instruction was a significant challenge for community college faculty. The problem reveals a gap in research literature on the challenges faculty faced and changes they made to their teaching practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background of the Problem

Community colleges are uniquely an American invention. Early forerunners were established in reaction to rapid industrialization, increased immigration, rising demand for workers with management skills, elementary and secondary school teachers (Ricketts, 2009), and to allow universities to focus on research. Community colleges were created from a transition in higher education beginning with the Morrill Act of 1862 and later from the ideology of academic

innovator and University of Chicago president William Rainey Harper. Harper's friend J. Stanley Brown introduced the first college-level andragogy into his high-school curriculum, thus creating the first public junior college in America. By 1914, there were 46 public and private junior colleges nationwide. Global events such as war, population explosion, and political and societal demands continued to transform community colleges by educating returning veterans, introducing technical education to help support a nation, and enrolling women and people of color. This new paradigm allowed many individuals who would otherwise not have been able to pursue a college education the opportunity to earn a degree and forever change America and its higher education system (Barrington, 2022). Over the next 100 years, junior colleges evolved into community colleges.

Although the community college may have begun in Illinois, it was in California where leadership supported its expansion and where innovators and visionaries built the foundation that grew into the largest sector of public higher education and the first to make it a state law in the United States (Galizio, 2019). The creation of junior colleges in California was partly due to the actions of academic leaders such as the Dean of the School of Education at California State University at Berkley, Alexis F. Lange, and the President of Stanford University, David Starr Jordan. Lange and his fellow academic leaders were strong advocates for developing two-year colleges in California that would focus on teaching lower-division general education courses (Galizio, 2019). 1907, the Upward Extension Act was passed in California (Galizio & Boggs, 2022). This legislation allowed high school districts to develop two-year junior colleges, and in 1910, Fresno High School created the first Junior College in California (Galizio & Boggs, 2022). Within 10 years, the world experienced World War I (1914-1918), followed by the 1918 pandemic, also known as the "Spanish Flu" (Bristow, 2016). Both tragic events caused high

death rates for adults between the ages of 18 and 40, which had a significant impact on enrollment at academic institutions (Bristow, 2016).

When COVID-19 was first declared a pandemic in 2020, academic institutions across the United States and the world were closed to reduce its spread (Donohue & Miller, 2020). This disruption resulted in an 18% drop in student enrollment at California community colleges (Burke et al., 2022). Closing campuses and moving to remote learning caused a spectrum of psychological consequences of fear, loneliness, overthinking, sleeplessness, and stress, giving rise to a heightened sense of uncertainty (Zhai & Du, 2020). Graduations, public forums, athletic competitions, and social organizations were canceled, raising concerns about how communities and leaders perceived the campus and its role as town-gown relations shifted (Bristow, 2016). Institutions of higher education acknowledge the advantages of community involvement and have tried assimilating into the local populace (Bruning et al., 2006). When comparing the responses to the pandemics of the 19th and 20th centuries, similar concerns of leadership expectations, medical obligations, and financial concerns that threatened their survival were experienced (Bristow, 2016).

As the effects of the pandemic eased, the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) leaders began strategizing on how returning to campus would play out. Colleges independently decided when to return to on-campus instruction, with some colleges doing so in the Fall 2020 semester while others did so over subsequent semesters. Numerous factors, including the demand for online teaching and learning, COVID cases in the region, local vaccination mandate policies, and the political climate in the district, impacted the timing of the return to on-campus instruction. (Oakley, 2021). The CCCCCO continued to provide statewide assistance to colleges as they juggled the return to on-campus instruction with the increased

demand for high-quality online and hybrid course offerings. According to a 2021 report from the CCCCCO:

Approximately 50% of the community college districts plan to offer 50% to 85% of course sections in person in spring 2022. Another 32% of community college districts said they plan to offer 10% to 49% of their course sections in person. The remaining 19% either identified some plans to increase in-person instruction in spring 2022, maintain current levels of in-person instruction, or remain fluid to meet student demand. All community college districts expressed that they are implementing a combination of online, hybrid, and Hyflex courses and adjusting instructional modalities based on student needs and enrollment. (p.14)

Hyflex refers to a "hybrid-flexible" course that combines on-campus and online learning. Each class session and learning activity is offered in-person, synchronously online via Zoom, and asynchronously simultaneously (Beatty, 2010).

On April 30, 2020, the University of Southern California Center for Urban Education presented a webinar for California community colleges' leadership, faculty, and staff on alternative techniques and strategies to understand better and deal with inequities students faced at the start of the pandemic. It encouraged reassessing their practices to promote change by being more personally responsible for the success of their students. Basic needs and care services were reinforced with a broader and stronger focus on mental health to serve the growing number of stakeholders who suffered under the restrictions. Other strategies included updating course curricula, assignments, and content. It validated, affirmed, and embraced diverse perspectives and lived experiences. These pedagogical changes are context-dependent and vary between

faculty, even those teaching the same subject. Each implementation of modalities had its own set of faculty challenges to develop a unique set of pedagogical solutions (Beatty, 2019).

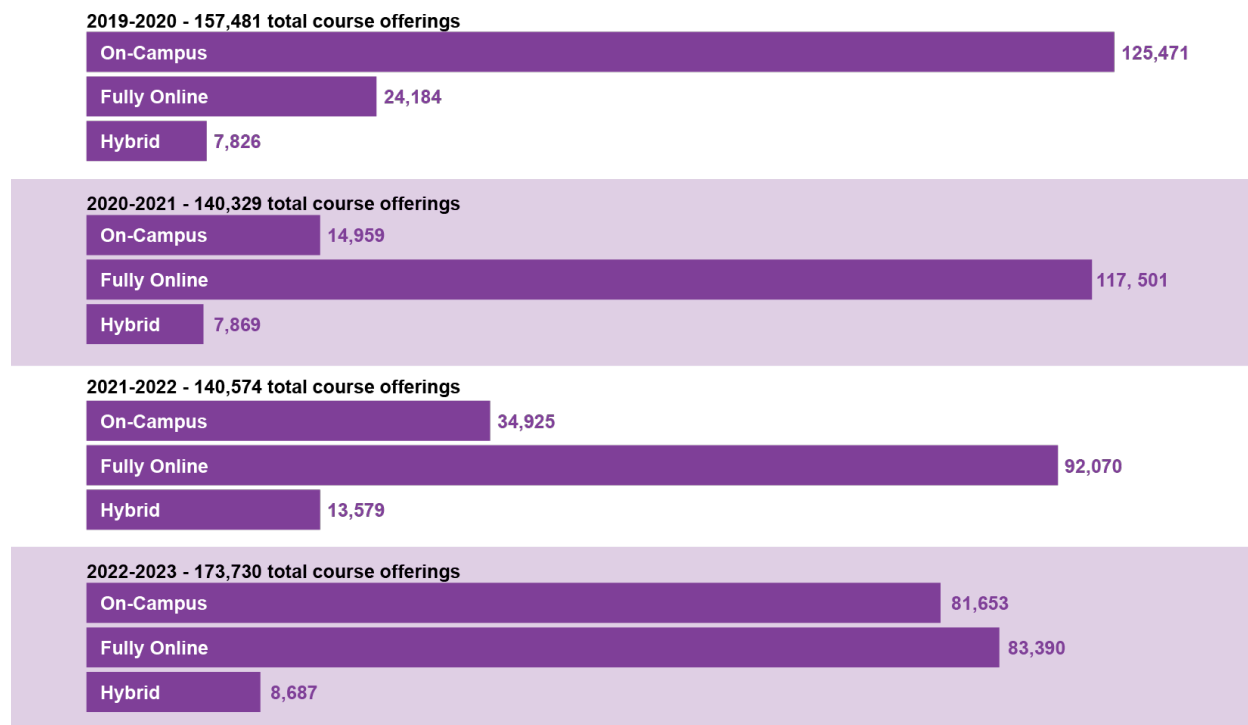
By August 2021, as the CDC restrictions were easing, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) released a "Roadmap" highlighting three "Landmark" priorities to focus on during the 2021–2022 academic year (DOE, 2021, para. 1). Those priorities included: "(1) prioritizing the health and safety of students, staff, and educators, (2) building school communities and supporting students' social, emotional, and mental health, and (3) accelerating academic achievement" (DOE, 2021, para. 2). According to Dr. Miguel Cardona, U.S. Department of Education Secretary (2021):

Over the past year-and-a-half, as a nation, we experienced struggles like never before. Schools, teachers, students, and families were challenged in ways we never imagined. However, from that struggle came resilience. Teachers, principals, school staff, parents, and – most importantly – our nation's students rose to the occasion. They demonstrated what is possible if we follow key mitigation strategies to protect our students and school communities. Now, we must use our renewed strength to focus on what matters most: winning the fight against COVID-19, getting our students back in classrooms for full-time in-person learning—together—and making our education system better than ever before so that all students receive the excellent education they deserve. (para. 2)

In November 2021, the CCCCCO reported on the *Course Section Offerings and Plans for Future Instruction* as mandated by Senate Bill 129 (Skinner, 2021) (Table 1.1). The report found that for the 2021- 2022 academic year, on-campus and hybrid course offerings were also

climbing as enrollments continued to increase. Whereas fully online course offerings decreased, they were still more available than on-campus or hybrid offerings.

Table 1.1 Total Course Offerings by Delivery Method and by Year



The Chancellor's Office submitted the Course Section Offerings and Plans for Future Instruction summary to the Legislature and Department of Finance by November 30, 2021. SB 129 required disclosure of the total number of course sections offered. This was broken down by lecture and laboratory courses and the percentage of course sections offered on-campus, hybrid, or entirely online (CO, 2022).

Recurring crises have plagued the world: the 1910 Spanish Flu pandemic, World War I, The Great Depression, World War II, the Vietnam War, and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, through all this, faculty continue to act with optimism and perseverance and do their best to improve education and bring about change within existing constraints and circumstances (Perry & Richardson, 2022). The social unrest that followed the tragic murder of George Floyd and

Breonna Taylor highlighted the educational inequities where higher education has a unique opportunity to have a considerable and lasting impact on the lives of communities of color by addressing these inequities (Clayton, 2021). Clayton believes that by promoting a diverse campus, employing an equity-focused approach to leadership, and facilitating greater inclusion, institutional leaders can ensure that our institutions fulfill the promise of higher education for all students. When COVID-19 forced institutions to reconsider their approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion and COVID-19, Clayton partnered with the American Council of Education (ACE). According to Clayton (2021):

We understood how critical it was for colleges and universities to continue fulfilling their respective missions. The spring 2020 transition to remote learning and work models exposed inequities among our students, faculty, and employees and illuminated the importance of addressing the different needs across these populations. Tackling these inequities required real-time strategies and solutions that would endure over time. As issues of inequity and COVID-19 dominated our discussions, we witnessed the murder of George Floyd, an African American man, by a police officer in Minneapolis. Nearly instantly, matters that were the core emphasis of our community became of intense global interest. (Para. 8)

Fast forward to February 28, 2023, three years after the pandemic began, California Governor Newsom signed California Government Code, Section 8629, a proclamation terminating the state emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Office of Governor, 2023). According to Navarette (2022), "We gave [them] a taste of what a flexible, adaptive education meant." (Burke et al. 2021, para. 6) Consequently, students "will no longer want something that looks like the education they received before" (Burke et al. 2021, para. 3). The

actions of community college faculty who chose an equity-minded approach in their andragogy to accommodate students' needs for flexibility and empathy during the pandemic contribute to a grander paradigm shift (Jerome, 2023).

Purpose of the Study

This study identified significant innovative changes in Southern California community college faculty's teaching strategies, attitudes, philosophy, and values after experiencing the emergency transition to fully online instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Examining the changes that faculty experienced and the adjustments that they made identified improved teaching strategies and philosophies. These improvements may increase retention and student success and provide a more inclusive classroom.

Research Questions

1. What new teaching innovations have Southern California community college faculty developed because of the challenges they faced during the emergency transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What changes in attitudes, philosophies, or values related to teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic did faculty make?

Conceptual Framework

The researcher chose Mezirow's Transformational Learning (TLT) as the lens to interpret the findings and to organize and guide the approach to the research. This conceptual approach derives significance from faculty experiences and identifies key variables and relationships by scrutinizing preconceived notions when confronted with perplexing dilemmas like the COVID-19 pandemic (Mezirow, 1978). According to Mezirow (2000).

Transformative Learning refers to the process by which [adults] transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove truer or justified to guide action.

Participants may have undergone personal development and metamorphosis. However, TLT does not expect every faculty member who has experienced online teaching to undergo growth and transformation, nor does it predict that every individual will react similarly.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher used Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) to guide and ground the research in adult learning and change after a "disorienting dilemma". It provided a way to understand, analyze and interpret changes Southern California community college faculty made to their teaching strategies, attitudes, and values while teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. By using TLT, the researcher focused on how faculty critically reflected on their assumptions about teaching online during the pandemic. This method provided a deeper understanding of the challenges and changes faced by faculty, offering insights that can inform future teaching practices and policies in similar contexts. It highlighted the importance of reflection, dialogue, and openness to change in navigating unprecedented challenges.

Methodology

Using a Generic Qualitative approach, this study sought to understand what faculty experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency transition. According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), the philosophy of an essential qualitative research study is derived from constructionism. Since the researcher wanted to understand what new tools faculty began using

and what attitudes, philosophies, and values changed during the pandemic, a pragmatic approach was employed to answer the research questions.

Rationale for Generic Qualitative Research Design

Using a generic qualitative methodology provides insights into the experiences and views of faculty participants by asking semi-structured, open-ended interview questions. This approach allows the researcher to know and understand the subject before beginning the study. It also allows the researcher the flexibility to ask specific questions that expand the data for analysis and interpretation (Kahlke, 2014, 2017; Percy et al., 2015). This research design contributes to discovering themes and patterns among the data collected, allowing participants' experiences to be reported in the context of the real-world experience (Willgens et al., 2016).

Alignment Table

The researcher provided a table (Appendix A) to show alignment of the problem, the literature findings, and the purpose in answering the two research questions.

Delimitations and Assumptions

This study is delimited to a select group of 10 faculty teaching at community colleges located in Southern California one year before, during, and three years after the emergency transition. Other delimitations relate to the study's timeframe and the ability to recruit participants. Research is focused on faculty experiences that created a possible paradigm shift in their teaching philosophy and strategy.

The researcher assumed that interviewees were honest in their responses, truthful about their experiences and actions, and that there were no hidden agendas between the researcher and interviewees. The researcher acknowledges her biases as a faculty member teaching before, during, and after the pandemic and actively set self-imposed boundaries for this study. The

researcher does not expect every faculty member who has experienced teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic will undergo growth and transformation, nor does she predict that every individual will react in the same manner.

Significance of the Study

This study contributed to current literature about the experiences and innovative teaching practices that Southern California community college faculty are implementing after they experienced the emergency transition to fully online teaching, and colleges have now returned to on-campus learning. It identified improvements and changes in teaching strategies and philosophies of faculty that advance the practice of higher education.

Definitions of Terms

Andragogy is defined as the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles et al., 2020).

Asynchronous learning provides learners with flexibility, allowing them to participate in the education process at their convenience, with time and location independent of the instructor and classmates (Francescucci & Rohani, 2019).

Blended learning also known as hybrid, describes an approach to education that combines online education with online interaction. It requires both teacher and student's physical presence, face-to-face (F2F), in-person, and on-campus. Content and delivery are combined with online computer-mediated activities (NEA, 2021).

Confer Zoom is a proprietary videotelephony software can meet with colleagues, students, family, clients, or even your physician via the Internet (Confer Zoom, 2023).

Course Management System (CMS) provides instructors with tools and a framework to develop online course content. CMS also includes teaching and administration of the course, including various interactions with students enrolled (Meerts, 2003).

Course Modality describes the way a course is delivered, whether fully online, asynchronous, synchronous, Hyflex, hybrid, fully on-campus, or by mail correspondence.

COVID-19 also known as coronavirus; it is a contagious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It is spread by human-to-human transmission, leading to a deadly global pandemic in March 2020 (WHO, 2020).

Distance Education (DE) delivers course content to students who are not physically on campus. It connects students and faculty via non-traditional modes of instruction (Schlosser & Simonson, 2009).

Equity-minded refers to actions that address equity gaps to build a holistic environment to affect institutional change (ACE, 2022).

Face-to-face instruction (F2F) is an instructive method or learning modality where course content is delivered to students in person or live over a live stream connection (SUNY, 2023).

Fully online is a learning modality delivered via the internet in synchronous or asynchronous formats. Students and faculty have no F2F meetings. All course content, learning activities, and assessments are delivered online (Watson, 2008).

Heutagogy is the study of autonomous learning established by Chris Hase and Stewart Kenyon in 2000. Heutagogical instruction places emphasizes on the learner to shape their learning experience with self-determination, focusing on developing learner capacity and aptitude to equip students for today's complicated jobs. The suggested theory guides remote

education practices and instruction utilizing emerging technologies like social media and online learning. (Blaschke, 2021).

Hybrid-Flexible (Hyflex) refers to a course that combines on-campus and online learning. Each class session and learning activity is offered in-person, synchronously online via Zoom, and asynchronously simultaneously (Beatty, 2010).

Learning Management System (LMS) is an online learning platform that enables schools, colleges, and universities to administer course content and interactions in a student centralized location. It consolidates all course materials, including daily lectures, assignments, tests/quizzes, feedback, and grading. It manages student-instructor communications, provides a virtual meeting space for instructors and students, and is a user-friendly interface accessible from a computer or mobile device (Instructure, 2023).

Online learning Internet-based courses offered synchronously and/or asynchronously. (Stern, 2016).

Online Learning Environment (OLE) A place where courses are delivered online via a learning management system (LMS) (Simándi, 2017).

Pandemic describes an infectious disease epidemic that has spread across a large region, state, country, continent, or globally (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

Panopto is a video management tool for faculty and students. While faculty can capture and edit video content and make it available via Canvas LMS, students can use the notes feature and interact with course-related videos.

Pedagogy refers to the art and science of helping children learn (Knowles et al., 2020).

Synchronous refers to a learning modality where faculty engage with students at the same time or simultaneously (Lowenthal et al., 2017).

Town-gown is a term used to describe university towns and dates to the Middle Ages when university faculty held clerical status and wore vestment robes (Glutek, 2022).

VARK refers to the four recognized learning modalities: visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic (Verde & Valero, 2021).

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the study, A post-COVID-19 pandemic exploration of Southern California community colleges' faculty teaching strategies, attitudes, and values. It also included the following sections:

- The problem was described. The problem was the gap in the literature on the challenges faculty faced and changes made to teaching practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The background of the problem was defined. When COVID-19 was first declared a pandemic in 2020, the disruption had community college faculty move to remote learning, and with this came challenges to their approach to teaching. The introductory chapter also examined historical references to education, pandemics, and governmental guidelines for educational institutions.
- This qualitative study identified significant innovative changes, teaching strategies, and philosophies that resulted in increased inclusivity, retention, and student success.
- Two research questions are presented.
- Research question one is: What new teaching innovations have Southern California community college faculty developed because of the challenges they faced during the emergency transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Research question two is: What changes in attitudes, philosophy, or values related to teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic did faculty make?

- Frameworks of this study. The researcher used Transformative Learning Theory as a conceptual and theoretical lens.
- A methodological approach for conducting the study. The researcher used a Generic Qualitative methodology – a qualitative semi-structured interview study.
- Delimitations and assumptions of the study.
- The significance of the study was explained. This study is significant because it examines experiences and innovative teaching practices that may contribute to current literature and improve student success. Lastly, definitions of terms used in this dissertation are provided for better clarification.

Organization of the Study

This study is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the framework for the study. Chapter 2 explored the topic and provided a comprehensive review of the literature. It is a collection of dissertations, articles, and websites focusing on global and historical events that caused paradigm shifts before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Chapter 3 presented the research design and methodology for the study. Chapter 4 detailed the research results and analysis, and Chapter 5 concluded with study findings and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The literature review begins with pre-pandemic experiences before March 2020, identifying adult learning and the emergence of junior colleges. The review described experiences during the pandemic when all educational instruction moved to a fully online modality. This section includes the declaration of the pandemic, teaching methodologies, and faculty challenges during the pandemic. The final section reviews the literature on the paradigm shift, professional development, equity-mindedness, and the utilization of learning management systems.

The Literature Search

This chapter represents many diverse scholarly sources the researcher examined to develop a golden thread that aims to focus on and thoroughly examine existing literature to build a strong foundation for the study. The research questions serve as boundaries driving the research introduced in Chapter 1.

Scholarly databases such as ProQuest, ERIC, Sage, Google Scholar, Elsevier, Educause, and others, along with scholarly journals, books, and other public sources, were searched to provide a thorough and sophisticated foundation for the study. The variety of sources provides a deeper understanding of what literature already exists about the dissertation key search terms included pedagogy, heutagogy, modality, distance learning, andragogy, phenomenology, community college, equity-minded, face-to-face, pandemic, entirely online, hybrid, Hyflex, student-centered, asynchronous, synchronous, and paradigm shift. The literature synthesis aims to increase the understanding of faculty experiences by transforming individual qualitative studies, reports, and articles into an overarching conceptualizing interpretation of new theory (Polit & Beck, 2013). The meta-ethnographic approach, developed by Noblit and Hare, compares

concepts with the premise that it is possible to synthesize themes from different qualitative studies (Luong et al., 2023). Synthesizing qualitative evidence in this way collectively extends beyond the meaning of the original individual studies. It interprets and leads to a more significant understanding in identifying significant innovative changes in teaching strategies, values, and attitudes for faculty participants after experiencing the emergency transition to fully online instruction by discovering explicit connections between individual studies that were not visible before (Campbell et al., 2003).

Pre-Pandemic: Before March 2020

Andragogy

“Come then, and let us pass a leisure hour in storytelling, and our story shall be the education of our heroes” – Plato, Republic, 375 BCE. Andragogy methods and practice of teaching adult learners evolved from long-established educational methods and practices for instructing children (pedagogy). Since the beginning of recorded history, cultures have educated their offspring in one form or another—formal theories of education date back to the time of Socrates (469-399 BCE). As far as we know, the term 'andragogy' was first authored by Alexander Kapp (1833), a German high school teacher. In the book entitled 'Platon's Erziehungslehre' (Plato's Educational Ideas), he describes the lifelong necessity to learn (Loeng, 2017). Adult education and continuous learning are pivotal determinants that substantially impact social progress and economic expansion (Blaszczak, 2013).

Andragogy was practiced in Egypt (2061 BC), India (1500 BC), and China (2400 BC); it was not until 350 BC (Francesco, 1976) that the foundations of Western thinking, learning, and teaching began culminating in Greece (Müller-Merbach, 2002). It is with Plato that we find theories and philosophies on andragogy that shape the educational systems of our world today

(Müller-Merbach, 2002). Based on the Athenian ideal, Plato's theory valued how education changed people (Murphy, 2015). For Plato, learning was a lifelong process beyond memorizing facts while sitting in a classroom (Through Education, 2023). In Plato's *The Republic*, learning was not limited to pedagogy nor the mind but also to the soul at all stages of maturity (Coumoundouros, n.d.).

The appearance of andragogy at Paris, Bologna, Oxford, and Cambridge during the Middle Ages—a period between the late 5th and 15th centuries—saw the role of the Roman Catholic pope, king, and emperor granting charters and approving degrees (Woods, Jr., 2005). Considered the schoolmasters of Europe from 1548 through 1773, Jesuit Priests believed that quality education was the most significant path to a fulfilling existence (Pedagogy - New World Encyclopedia, n.d.). The culture of the Jesuit teachings consisted of daily pedagogical attitudes, habits, and practices in a culture of competition by rewarding good students and punishing weak ones (Grendler, 2016). Its purpose was to educate boys to be good future leaders, which gave preference to students from more affluent families. However, faculty were encouraged to assist academically challenged and less affluent students (Grendler, 2016).

During the Middle Ages, Education was influenced by the Renaissance movement and its ideas of humanism, which were central to Renaissance education (Balsamo, 2017). It is important to note that during this time, the printing press was invented in about 1450 by Johannes Guttenberg (Hoe, 1902), thus allowing knowledge to be more easily replicated and shared. This new technology of moveable type began the printing revolution, making it possible to produce many copies for the wide distribution of knowledge, discoveries, and literacy (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2009). This new technology allowed writings critical of the Catholic Church to fuel the Protestant Reformation in 1517, starting with the publication of

Ninety-five Theses by Martin Luther (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2009). The printing press continued to revolutionize institutions across the world, specifically academia. Although the church still had control over schools, students were developing their own opinions and beliefs. The education system's movement away from the church shows humanism's power in schools in the Renaissance (Balsamo, 2017). The invention of the printing press continued to revolutionize institutions, including education, by mass-producing textbooks and other scholarly works throughout Europe and into new worlds (Marino, 2020).

Adult Learning Comes to America

With the discovery of the Americas, religious denominations began to set up learning institutions. As early as 1518, the Roman Catholic church founded the University of Saint Tomas on the island of the Dominican Republic. Farther north in the New England colonies were Pilgrims and Puritans who emigrated from England to seek religious freedom during the Reformation in Europe. Protestant enclaves often differed substantially, and the Pilgrims and the Puritans considered themselves separate from the Church of England and the Catholic Church (Lynch, 2016). These enclaves resulted in diverse forms of education across the colonies, each tailored to suit the requirements of the community it served (Lynch, 2016). Teachers were educated in England at Oxford and Cambridge, which led to the creation of Harvard College in Massachusetts in 1636, followed by William & Mary College in Virginia and Yale College in Connecticut in 1701. Their teaching methods followed a Protestant doctrine. These colleges gave great importance to studies with a humanist orientation and even used the same lessons. However, Protestant colleges were more autonomous, providing a wider choice of authors from the classics with far greater importance given to biblical texts in the studies. They also taught Greek, Hebrew, and Latin compared to the stricter religious curriculum at Catholic colleges that

restricted reading lists and only taught Latin. These American colleges were founded on religious ideals, were private, and too expensive for many Americans to attend. The establishment of public universities such as the University of Georgia and the University of North Carolina in the late 1700s was the result of community decisions by individual parishes and communities (Lynch, 2016).

Traditionalist Education

By the nineteenth century, requirements for graduating from college were relatively low. Students spend much time socializing and exert little effort in their studies. However, between 1865 and 1910, educators advocated for a traditionalist education and attempted to raise university standards by imposing more rigorous academic requirements that demanded exceptional scholastic performance (Encyclopedia.com, n.d.). They believed mental activities were necessary for developing a sharp intellect, so they encouraged frequent drills, memorization exercises, recitation, and a strict academic environment (Encyclopedia.com, n.d.). Although Traditionalist educators dominated the period from 1900 to 1909, Progressive Education Movement ideals have become more dominant (Encyclopedia.com, n.d.).

Progressive Education Movement

The origins of progressive education are found in the 18th-century philosophical writings of John Locke. According to Locke, truth and knowledge arise from observation and experience rather than manipulation of accepted or given ideas (Hayes, 2006). He further discussed children's need for concrete learning experiences (Hayes, 2006). Locke is considered the Father of Liberalism and was responsible for influencing many Enlightenment thinkers, such as Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as well as the authors of the Declaration of Independence (Hayes, 2006). In his PBS documentary about Thomas Jefferson, filmmaker Ken Burns discusses this

philosophical premise of particular interest to American Enlightenment thinkers of the late 18th century (Brooks, 2022). Most famously, Thomas Jefferson declared the pursuit of happiness an unalienable right in the Declaration of Independence and was considered our nation's first happiness professor (Ward & Burns, 1997). In the United States' founding document, the "pursuit of happiness" statement implies that education is not limited to people of a certain age, religion, or social standing, nor to a particular time and place—adults, as well as children, could continue their education if further education increased their "happiness" (Barnes, 1984).

Adult education is self-improvement, liberal and progressive education. Liberal adult education for the middle class seeking mental refinement and programs for the retired are also concerned with quality-of-life issues (Chugai, 2014). The core of the progressive education movement is that governments exist to help people resolve social and economic problems (Chugai, 2014). United States founding father, president, and author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, believed society could improve and renew itself through Education (Jefferson, 1762). He advocated for creating a government-run educational system that would be secular, accessible to all, and without prejudice of social standing (Black, 2020). This idea led to the development of the State and Federal adult education movement that included evening schools for adults, part-time education, citizenship, or Americanization classes for immigrants (DOE, 2013). The most visible manifestation of this connection was from the Wisconsin Idea, a progressive movement operating under Governor LaFollette's belief that the university campus extended to the state borderlines. (Thelen, 2023). It was an effort to combine the resources of state government, the University of Wisconsin, and citizens' groups to partner in solving social, political, and economic problems by combining research, teaching, and real-world problem-solving (Drury, 2017).

The Progressive Education Movement evolved into a modern, post-industrial pedagogical movement that began at the beginning of the twentieth century and came to dominate U.S. public schools. Contrary to the classical preparation of traditional curricula from the 19th century, progressive education emphasized learning by doing, focusing on thematic models, project evaluation rather than rote knowledge assessments, and de-emphasizing the use of textbooks to promote problem-solving and critical thinking. This movement also incorporates cooperative learning through working in groups to collaborate and develop social skills. Writing a curriculum with progressive educational goals encourages understanding, action, and social responsibility. Integrating community service into service learning prepares students with the skills needed to support future societies with an emphasis on lifelong learning (Encyclopedia.com, n.d.). This idea became the foundation for passing the Morrill Act (Edelson, 2000).

Emergence of Junior Colleges

The idea of adult education outside the university system began as a movement in the late 1790s in Britain (Smith, 2004). Progressive ideals led to significant new trends, including the expansion of junior colleges—later renamed community colleges in the 1960s. Junior colleges prepare students for graduation, earning certificates, associate degrees, and the ability to transfer into four-year universities (Koos, 1924). They are uniquely an American invention. Early forerunners were established because of rapid industrialization, increased immigration, and rising demand for workers with management skills, elementary and secondary school teacher training (Ricketts, 2009), and allowing universities to focus on research. With the influx of immigrants to the United States, a focus on Americanization and vocational preparation was driving funding and curriculum in the education of adults. Junior colleges provide various objectives and curricula to prepare a growing population for a rapidly changing world. It was in 1901 that the

first junior college began as an extension of Joliet High School. (Joliet Junior College, 2023). A few years later, in 1907, Fresno City College in California began instruction at a local high school with three faculty members and 20 students (Fresno City College, 2023). At the same time, evening school legislation was approved, leading the way for developing the first adult school in San Francisco, St. Mary's Cathedral, in 1856 (Thurmond, 2021). It was not until the 1960s that junior colleges were considered a separate educational entity between K12 and the university systems. They offer open enrollment, low-cost tuition, and focus on career preparation and general education. They appeal to a poorer, older, less prepared adult learner (Kisker et al., 2023).

Adult education provides educational opportunities and services to equip adults with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively as citizens, workers, parents, and community members. Instructional programs ensure that adults have the education and skills required in a competitive economy for a better quality of life (CADOE, 2023). Educators recognized the need for an appropriate pedagogical curriculum that was different from pedagogical materials intended for children, which were supported by the State Department of Education (Attebery, 1992). This idea included advancements in delivering instruction using new technology and tools to assist faculty and students in actively participating in learning.

Teaching Methodologies

Educational materials and new technologies provide better ways for learners to participate in learning. In the 1900s, blackboards and chalk at the front of the class allowed for a visual interpretation of the spoken lecture, and smaller, handheld, individual slates for individual use provided students with a more tactile interactive learning experience. The first significant progressive movement in educational technology in the classroom was the introduction of

educational films in the 1900s. They were silent films in black and white on a variety of topics. The invention of radio broadcasting in the 1920s provided a new way to deliver content. By 1923, higher education institutions owned over 10% of all broadcast stations. The 1930s institutions tried integrating newly invented radios into classrooms but found aligning broadcasts with curriculum difficult. Then, in 1934, the University of Iowa began broadcasting courses by television. The 1950s introduced television shows in classrooms across America beginning in 1957, when CBS-TV began airing "Sunrise Semester" with support from New York University's Washington Square College of Arts and Sciences. The college program, which included lectures and visual aids, premiered in the greater New York City area (Walther, 1981). By 1963, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) established the Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS), which established 20 television channels for educational institutions. The California State University system was the first higher education system to subscribe (Sleator, 2010). By the late 1970s, radio and film were barely used in schools. With the invention of the Apple personal computer in 1975 by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, education took a giant leap forward with the introduction of computerized educational games.

Technology can assist in building new experiences for a deeper exploration of content by empowering educators to become co-learners with their students (Hannafin & Land, 1997). Andragogy contrasts quite sharply with pedagogy, which is the teaching of children, allowing adult learners to engage in heutagogy and self-determined learning. Heutagogy is based on the humanistic theory that meets the requirements of learners in the twenty-first century, especially in terms of the development of individual ability for higher education, technical training, and vocational Education (Hase & Kenyon, 2000). Technological advancements continued into the 1980s when satellite transmissions, employed in 1985 by the National Technological University

(NTU), delivered both degree and postgraduate courses using live broadcasts and archived video. Further advancements in satellite technologies led to the development of the World Wide Web in the 1990s. This invention launched many learning opportunities for educators and students with connections worldwide via the first internet browser, Mosaic, using Hypertext Markup Language (HTML). The University of Hawaii had one of the first websites, and a few graphic design students from California State University, Long Beach, displayed their design portfolios through an online virtual gallery in 1993. By the 2000s, nearly 97% of educational institutions had an internet connection, and students of all ages had access to handheld tablets, computers, and mobile phones. This access to technology brought the world of knowledge to the classroom in a whole new way. As the Internet grew and expanded, so did learners by connecting people worldwide—and even into space.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to teaching with technology because it depends on the types of technology and courses being taught (Orlando & Attard, 2015). Learning environments have varied over the centuries, from the caves of Lascaux in Northern Spain to the outdoors of the Kalahari Desert in Africa to medieval monasteries of Europe. Alternative ways to learn a new skill were introduced in 1728 by Caleb Phillips, who created the first correspondence course in Boston, MA, where he provided weekly training lessons in shorthand sent through the U.S. mail (Sleator, 2010). The Pittman Shorthand program, established in Cincinnati in 1852, allowed students to mail in their work and, upon completing the course, receive a certificate of expertise (Sleator, 2010). In 1865, the University of London provided the only remote degree program in the world without attending a university (University of London, 2023). In 1890, the Colliery School of Mines created a correspondence course on my safety. Over the three decades, it evolved into the International Correspondence School, which offered courses by mail for iron

and railroad workers and miners. By 1923, it had 2.5 million students (Sleator, 2010). Distance learning evolved from the correspondence course system that provided a cursory framework syllabus, where students sourced their readings, evidence, and learning in preparation for summative assessments, which were completed locally and then returned to the institution for grading. The idea of distance learning over the Internet brought limitless potential to education.

Teaching Modalities

The way a course is taught, on-campus, online, or a combination of both, is determined by the faculty who teaches the course. According to the ACCJC (2021):

The Accreditation Standards require that all learning opportunities provided by accredited institutions have equivalent quality, accountability, and focus on student outcomes, regardless of mode of delivery. This policy provides a framework that allows institutions the flexibility to adapt their delivery modes to the emerging needs of students and society while maintaining quality and promoting equitable outcomes. Any institution offering courses and programs through distance education or correspondence education is expected to meet the accreditation requirements in each of its courses and programs and at each site. (“Policy on Distance and Correspondence Education”) This policy reflects the following definitions of the federal regulatory requirements regarding distance and correspondence education.

Various course delivery methods were developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to offer flexibility during a crisis. In-person instruction, in which the teacher and students are both physically present in the same classroom simultaneously, is a traditional way of instruction. Blended courses allow students to attend in-person courses with asynchronous activities,

synchronous meetings, or a mix of both. Community college faculty have been resistant to online learning before the pandemic, citing a variety of barriers to embracing technology as an instructional aide, such as the time required to develop new programs and the perception that online education does not provide the same quality as on-campus instruction (Garza, 2014). Even though digital learning has the potential to be beneficial, faculty and administrators report that it has not been used consistently at their institutions.

Traditionally, faculty were content experts, choosing which content to be delivered to students through lectures. Faculty had little knowledge of the pedagogical value of the transformative innovation of online learning (Vaughn et al., 2013). This new learning environment created new ways for students and faculty to interact through asynchronous, blended, and synchronous modalities. Synchronously, where students are learning at the same time or asynchronously, where the time and location of a student's learning are independent of the instructor and classmates, is also known as a fully online learning environment is supported by using a Learning Management System (LMS) that allows users to communicate via email, online discussion, and blogs. These forms of communication are sometimes supplemented with synchronous components, including text and voice chat, telephone conversations, videoconferencing, and meetings in virtual spaces where discussions can be facilitated between groups of students. ("eLearning FAQs - Pacific College") Synchronous learning occurs when faculty and students meet online simultaneously using TechConnect Zoom or a similar videoconferencing link. You get a blended learning environment when you add an on-campus element to an online course.

Between 2000 and 2010, postsecondary enrollments in the United States increased 41% (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2012). This increase forced traditional brick-and-mortar colleges

and universities to develop course delivery options. With technology improvement, these institutions began implementing hybrid learning approaches that combine in-person and synchronous online components. The hyflex (hybrid, flexible) model, initially developed by Dr. Brian Beatty (2010) for his graduate courses at San Francisco State University, is an example of a prospective hybrid learning model. Dr. Brian Beatty, who used the term “hybrid-flexible” to refer to the hyflex model (Beatty, 2022), provided graduate students the flexibility to complete their degrees. Each implementation of hyflex experiences its faculty challenges and develops a unique set of solutions to them (Beatty, 2019, para. 2). HyFlex modality melds the terms hybrid and flexible. Hybrid learning integrates face-to-face (synchronous) and online learning (asynchronous) experiences. All students in a hybrid course are expected to undergo the same combination of online and in-person activities. (“Hybrid/HyFlex Teaching & Learning - Columbia University”) Adding the “flexible” aspect to a hybrid course gives students a choice in how they participate and engage with content in whichever mode works best for them. In hyflex courses, students can choose from one of three ways to participate: (1) In-person, face-to-face, synchronous class sessions; (2) Face-to-face via video conference; and/or (3) Fully online, asynchronously via Learning Management System with the option to watch a recording of the live, in-class session. HyFlex modality makes class sessions and content available so students can access them online anytime.

In the study “Student Choice, Instructor Flexibility: Moving beyond the blended instructional model,” Risser and Griffiths investigated issues and trends in educational technology in response to the need for large lecture environments (2013). They evaluated an on-campus, large-scale iteration of the hyflex instructional model, including pre-recorded lectures. Students were provided with the choice between synchronous online and in-person attendance.

The instructor enabled backchannel communication through a discussion room, live streaming of lectures, and polling at minimal cost to both the students and the department to facilitate these attendance options. Students' overall learning and individual grades were not adversely affected by the modified hyflex instructional model. Students reported that the integration of technology significantly increased their participation in class and comprehension of course material, and they were overjoyed with the educational options, in addition to describing the classroom model. This study of 161 undergraduate students from a Midwestern university found that the data favorably supported the hyflex modality.

In the Swedish study “Connecting physical and virtual spaces in a hyflex pedagogic model with a focus on teacher interaction” (Lejion & Lundgren, 2019), the researchers set out to connect teacher interaction using a hyflex model with four types of learning environments: physical, representational, interactional, and liminal. Data was collected by streaming and recording film material. The findings revealed that teaching is constantly changing, especially in the spaces in which the hyflex modality is used to deliver course content. Teaching is also enhanced by technology and experience, but who is designing these hyflex spaces? It takes a multi-skilled person to teach in this environment within the confinements of the camera’s view while letting go of control.

Even though numerous technologies are available for online integration, it still needs to be considered how these technologies can enhance learning (Kirkwood & Price, 2014). Although faculty generally appreciate the benefits of educative technologies, concerns revolve around perceptions of barriers to student success and equity, access, technical support, and opportunities for online professional development (Johnson et al., 2016). They also believe there needs to be more time during class for their lectures and to teach students how to use the technology

(Kirkscey, 2012). Other perceptions about barriers to students using technology in the classroom are the lack of funds, students limited technical ability, mental health with feelings of isolation when learning, difficulty interacting with peers, distraction with other applications, time management skills, and setting boundaries between academic and personal life responsibilities (Sun et al., 2016). It also is essential that teachers feel comfortable and confident about their ability to use the technology effectively. Even before the pandemic, many faculty members grew up with limited access to personal computers and the Internet while their students were born into them. Faculty can also feel that they need to gain the necessary skills when using technology and can feel less in control of the class. Consequently, they may use less technology and be unlikely to explore new possibilities that employ technology when designing their classes (Hughes, 2005; Rakes & Casey, 2002) unless they are forced to do so. Students can access interactive online courses that offer flexible and blended modalities to earn academic credit, which leads to certificates and degrees. According to Linda Harasim (2000):

“The 21st century thus begins with a paradigm shift in attitudes towards online education. So far, the signs are subtle, but the changes will ultimately be profound. Our new understanding of the nature of learning has affected education's definition, design, and delivery. It will alter global civilization as educators and learners adopt and adapt networked collaborative learning” (2000) p. 42.

A qualitative exploratory study titled “Adopting HyFlex in Higher Education in Response to COVID-19” investigated the perspectives of nine postgraduate students who were asked about their experiences taking a 6-week hyflex course. A different theme emerged from each of the five questions students were asked. Equal access was required when moving to online learning

and being actively involved in learning paid off for students who made the extra effort to be prepared for their courses. The Zoom video conferencing was enhanced with a polling function that checks if students are paying attention periodically, thus keeping students engaged. My motivation to attend hyflex courses in the future was enhanced by experiencing them firsthand. Communication among students was challenging because of the disconnect many felt when no one would speak up.

How a course is taught, in-person, online, or a combination of both, is determined by the faculty who teach the course. Various course delivery methods were developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to offer flexibility during a crisis. In-person instruction, in which the teacher and students are both physically present in the same classroom simultaneously, is a traditional way of instruction. Blended courses allow students to attend a course in person and replace some in-person elements with online ones, like asynchronous activities with synchronous meetings or a mix of both. In the study of 161 undergraduate students from a Midwestern university, survey, and focus groups, the data favorably supported using the hyflex modality in this environment.

In the book *Hybrid-Flexible Course Design – Implementing student-directed Hybrid Classes* (2019), Brian Beatty explores the many considerations an institution needs in implementing a hybrid learning model. HyFlex is defined and examined on its need in today's classroom. The costs and benefits of hybrid-flexible course design are discussed. Examples of Hybrid-flexible implementations from around the world are discussed. Course design and support of student-directed learning paths are examined. The purpose of this qualitative study, "Teacher and student perspectives on a blended learning intensive English program writing course" by A. Larsen, is to explore three important components of blended learning. They are:

1. How to use blended learning to prepare ESL teachers to create a blended learning environment.
2. What is the best way to train faculty in using blended learning technology?
3. How instructors delivered content in a blended learning course affected students' perceptions.

The findings show the need for faculty training and technological and course design support; students were more responsible for their learning, allowing teachers to assist better and track student's progress to cover more content. Faculty behavior did not have much influence on the perceptions of students.

The study “3-in-1 Hybrid Learning Environment” by Holly Hapke, Anita Lee-Post, and Tereza Dean was a response to the COVID-19 restrictions placed by the government to control the virus. It allowed 829 Marketing Management students to take a fully online, face-to-face, or hybrid course. The researchers collected objective data using university records and surveys to understand students' attitudes and perceptions. The study measured emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagements and assessed learning using the prior literature. According to the study, students preferred to have the flexibility to learn anywhere “while engaging with the professor and peers in real-time.” Delivering this type of learning environment requires instructors with the ability to manage technologies while engaging with students and delivering the course content.

“Design and implementation factors in blended synchronous learning environments: Outcomes from a cross-case analysis” (Bower et al., 2015) study collected data from seven cases of blended synchronous learning environments. The analysis found 27 emergent design and implementation factors. It also discovered that students felt they learned the same or more than traditional classes and experienced more learning activities and greater flexibility. Data was

collected throughout this study by combining student, teacher, and researcher observations. All seven cases had technology and performance issues. The study emphasized that to gain the most from hyflex learning, institutions must provide faculty with support, technical help, teaching assistants, professional development, automated teaching spaces, and prep time.

A national survey conducted by Tyton Partners in 2016 of 3,500 faculty and administrators shed light on the obstacles impeding the expansion of digital learning, thereby preventing its benefits from being fully realized. In numerous institutions, the planning and execution of digital learning initiatives fall short of "strategic" (Tyton Partners, 2016). While institutions typically portray their digital learning programs as a strategic lever for achieving institutional objectives, perceptions of digital learning's execution and effects vary considerably. This disparity presents significant challenges to the effectiveness of digital learning in terms of stakeholder buy-in and impact measurement. The study found that faculty are central to digital learning success, yet they are under-supported. The inconsistent quality of infrastructure and support services, when they were accessible, resulted in an inconsistent experience for students. Although many faculty members indicated that their institutions offer instructional technology support and a center for teaching and learning, nearly 25% of respondents stated that these functions or services are non-existent or are unaware of their existence. The faculty members noted that inconsistent technological and instructional practices hindered the progress of students engaged in remote learning. One respondent stated, "The inconsistency between courses has been the greatest obstacle for my students." Another responded, "Among their five courses, my students have described a wild variation in approach, tools, format, communication, and quality." "It was extremely stressful and overwhelming." (Tyton Partners, 2016). Most surveyed administrators agreed that faculty are crucial to the success of digital learning initiatives –

serving as advocates and protesters to implementation success. However, reports from both administrators and faculty suggest that the resources to support faculty to implement digital learning are lacking. (“Lack of faculty time and training limits digital learning more than ...”) Digital learning decision-making is decentralized, and only through peer recommendations are distance learning techniques and products considered. Opportunities exist for all stakeholders in the postsecondary ecosystem to dismantle the impediments to broader, more effective digital learning adoption and its impacts on student and institutional success.

During the Pandemic: March 2020 – July 2021

Declaration of a Pandemic

When COVID-19 was first declared a pandemic in 2020, academic institutions followed the CDC and the WHO guidelines to reduce the spread of the virus (Donohue & Miller, 2020). When comparing the responses of higher education institutions from the pandemics of 1878 and 1918, similar concerns in the 2020 pandemic arise from leadership about expectations, medical obligations, and finances that threaten their survival (Bristow, 2016). In 2020, the United States had more than 830,000 full-time higher education faculty members teaching nearly 20 million undergraduate and graduate students annually (Hussar et al., 2020). Beyond this, the act of diverting on-campus instruction to entirely online caused a spectrum of psychological consequences of fear, loneliness, overthinking, sleeplessness, and stress, which has given rise to a heightened sense of uncertainty (Zhai and Du, 2020). K12 school districts had a more difficult time than community colleges or universities because of the pandemic. They struggled to maintain pre-pandemic academic standards, experienced elevated rates of absenteeism and quarantines, and continuous school closures. Students, educators, and parents faced mental health issues and increased rates of violence and misconduct. Concerns regarding lost

instructional time to complete the 2020 academic year and guarantee that students would be able to graduate were the goal of all stakeholders (Taylor & Francis, 2023).

More disconcerting during the 2020-21 academic year was the disparity in test scores between elementary students attending high-poverty and low-poverty institutions. Test results disparity was 20% in mathematics (0.20 SDs) and 15% in reading (0.13 SDs). These figures can potentially undermine morale, particularly considering the extraordinary endeavors of students to acquire knowledge and instructors to instruct during challenging periods. The adverse effects of learning disruptions after the spring 2020 school closures persisted well beyond the initial shocks that have passed.

California also has two other public higher education institutions besides community colleges. They include the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU). Collectively, they provide education to approximately 80% of the state's nearly three million college students, with UC providing instruction to ten percent of undergraduate and graduate students, CSU educating 18% of graduate and undergraduates, and California Community Colleges enrolling 84% of students into credit and noncredit certificate, associate for transfer, and associate programs (PPIC, 2019). The coronavirus pandemic has had diverse effects on universities and students in California. Students are forgoing the college experience, and the UC system has incurred losses amounting to \$2.2 billion because of additional COVID costs and revenue loss. Although undergraduate enrollments decreased by 3.6% nationwide for the 2020 fall semester, with freshman enrollment falling 13% compared to the previous fall (Sumida, 2021), for the fall 2021 term, UC schools have received an unprecedented number of applications, especially from Black, Latino, and other underrepresented students (Watanabe,

2021). The decline in enrollments at community colleges directly affected the other two institutions with the decline of transfer students.

There is a lack of literature on what faculty members experienced during previous pandemics. When comparing responses to the illnesses that confronted institutions of higher education in 1878 and 1918 with 2020, similar complex issues of legal definitions, campus expectations, medical obligations, and the social life of the college—graduations, public forums, athletic competitions, and social groups—were canceled or delayed. (“Higher Education Institutions Respond to Epidemics”) The yellow fever epidemic of 1878 only delayed the opening of colleges and saw the spread across the southern part of the United States controlled with quarantines (Nuwer, 2009). Colleges were ill-equipped to combat the epidemic in the mid-1800s while remaining open. Some students were required to travel away from their homes to attend college, which included crossing quarantine lines. During this time, colleges lacked a protocol to address the impact of student travel and social contact expectations on their ability to respond. Although colleges were considering their students' and faculty's health and wellness, many lacked the system or personnel to monitor or care for them while remaining open.

Contrary to this, the influenza pandemic 1918, also known as the Spanish Flu, saw fewer deaths. Colleges protected their communities by being more responsive to the threat, applying their expertise, and following health board and governmental guidelines. College leadership also engaged faculty, students, families, and the community about the outbreak (Nuwer, 2009).

Teaching Modalities During the Pandemic

A March 2020 California community college survey conducted by The RP Group found that more than half of the faculty in their survey of 65,000 respondents had no distance education experience before March 2020 (CCCCO, 2020). It was also discovered that maintaining a

work/life balance and increased job demands was the most challenging for faculty. Moreover, one-quarter of the faculty cited their discomfort with technology required to work entirely online. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, most faculty members who were not already teaching online shifted from traditional face-to-face to an online instructional model, according to research (Kerr-Sims & Baker, 2020). Traditionally, faculty responsibilities center on teaching and teaching-related activities, advising students, serving on curriculum committees, and professional development activities, all of which contribute to a heavy burden, but teaching is the primary responsibility. Faculty in this study were less confident that their online instruction met the same quality standards as their face-to-face instruction than their senior colleagues (Kerr-Sims & Baker, 2020). The way a course is taught, on-campus, online, or a combination of both, is determined by the faculty who teaches the course. Various course delivery methods were developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to offer flexibility during a crisis. On-campus instruction, in which the teacher and students are both physically present in the same classroom simultaneously, is a traditional way of instruction (SUNY, 2023). Blended courses allow students to attend a course in person and replace some in-person elements with online ones, like a live lesson or content delivery (NEA, 2021). Asynchronous activities, synchronous meetings, or a mix of both (Francescucci & Rohani, 2019). The Kerr-Sims & Baker research reported that 1) faculty members felt that quality remained roughly the same in comparison to the traditional face-to-face setting, 2) faculty members felt their engagement and interaction with students were limited when teaching online, 3) tenured faculty were significantly more likely than nontenured faculty to assume that the transition from face-to-face to online classes negatively impacted student engagement, 4) faculty perceptions of students' engagement and performance during the pandemic had declined (Kerr-Sims & Baker, 2020).

During the 2020 pandemic, about 90% of faculty members in higher education utilized digital andragogy for at least two full semesters. A Tyton Partners (2020) national survey called “Time for Class” of 1,102 community college faculty during COVID-19 found that faculty faced many challenges during the transition to remote learning, including the following:

- It is keeping students engaged.
- Providing additional support/remediation to students.
- Administering secure tests and exams.
- I am transitioning instructional content to a remote environment.
- Adjusting instructive practice to teach online.
- We are using video conferencing technology.
- Ensuring I had reliable Internet access.
- Grading homework/practice and monitoring student learning.
- Selecting new digital resources.
- Becoming comfortable with digital tools.

The study found that the transition also brought to light significant obstacles, such as the preparedness of institutions and instructors, the consistency of student experiences, the lack of readiness and access for students, and confidence in the institutions' capacity to resolve these problems (Tyton Partners, 2020).

The rapid transition to online teaching and learning found that faculty were not adequately engaged in assimilating the massive pedagogical and technological changes during the COVID-19 pandemic (Epps et al., 2021). Furthermore, scholarly research documents the impact that inadequate technical support has on instructional quality deficiencies in the technological infrastructure of the educational institution, including obsolete audio and video

systems, restricted bandwidth, and frequent Wi-Fi disconnections (Sidi, Shamir-Inbar, & Eshet-Alkalai, 2023). These elements diminish faculty motivation to implement the change in their work and impact their perception of technology utility and usability (Barua & Urme, 2023).

Switching classes from on-campus to online, faculty realized a paradigm shift is much greater than simply delivering course material into a webcam rather than in front of the classroom with course materials delivered in smaller pieces of about 10 to 15 minutes of information (Wasmer, 2021). Supplemental content was acquired through PowerPoint presentations, LinkedIn Learning, TedED, YouTube, and other social media videos that are less than 10 minutes long. Govindaarajan and Srivastava (2020) referred to a digital divide among faculty, in which some are comfortable utilizing course management systems, web conferencing tools, presentation software, and technologies for facilitating student learning, while others have never used tools and were previously reluctant to teach them. The faculty lacked knowledge regarding the critical importance of technology and faculty presence in fostering an active learning environment conducive to creating a community of inquiry (Garrison, 2017).

In addition to reducing the digital divide gap, a 2020 Canadian mixed-methods study titled *Transitioning to Online Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Exploration of STEM Teachers' Views, Successes, and Challenges*, also found that other professional development opportunities were needed including managing personal and professional obligations, maintaining and fostering student engagement, navigating technical and technological obstacles with an eye toward equity, locating suitable digital resources and teaching methods, assessing practices and plagiarism, collaborating with families, and overcoming leadership and administration ambiguity (DeCoito, 2022). Fifty-one percent of study participants stated that the primary obstacle pertained to managing time limitations and personal

circumstances because the challenge of maintaining professional time boundaries while instructing online during the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected participants' mental health and experiences as educators. Community college instructors often have a substantial workload (Grubb, 2002) and have articulated a duty to maintain constant availability and believed that creating and evaluating online learning materials demanded extra time outside of the standard workweek (DeCoito, 2022).

Integrating technology into pedagogical frameworks was prioritized during the pandemic (DeCoito, 2022). According to DeCoito (2022), 42% of educators encountered difficulties in resolving a range of technological challenges while implementing online learning, including the following: 1) unable to provide synchronous instruction due to a lack of high-speed Internet access for themselves or their pupils, 2) equipment shortages that necessitated the purchase of equipment by teachers themselves, and 3) teachers also felt obligated to assist families with IT issues because of students' difficulties in accessing the online learning environment. Adjustments and adaptations to digital resources were required to accommodate both the curriculum and the requirements of the learners. According to DeCoito (2022), 29% of educators reported that locating free, high-quality digital resources and effective teaching strategies was difficult, especially with the language immersion programs that had difficulty locating bilingual materials (DeCoito, 2022). A total of 27% of educators encountered difficulties when evaluating their students' work online, with the possibility of plagiarism being recognized as an element that compromises the authenticity of the assessment (Yeung et al., 2018).

Furthermore, these obstacles had to be overcome to guarantee seamless transitions and positive online teaching experiences, including opportunities to develop their self-efficacy and shift their perspective (DeCoito, 2022). The duration that educators devoted to acquiring

proficiency in technological tools or conducting resource searches diverted attention from instructional periods and posed a challenge to the objective of assessing student learning. This emphasizes the need for ongoing professional development for educators, including in-service training and development, that focuses on online teaching tools and equips instructors with the required technological competencies (Davis et al., 2007; Jung, 2005; Smith et al., 2016; Stoetzel & Shedrow, 2020).

Professional Development

Institutions must consistently evaluate their employment practices and maintain policies to advance and enhance mission fulfillment, diversity, and fairness. They also need to support and sustain educational services and enhance student success by employing qualified faculty, staff, administrators, and other personnel. Supporting faculty is a critical investment in integrating technology into higher education; it can stimulate generational innovations in learning (Moore et al., n.d.). According to both Lowenthal et al. (2018) and Zhang and Lin (2020), academic leadership can resolve significant obstacles by expanding professional development and access to high-quality teaching resources (DeCoito, 2016). Community colleges do not adequately utilize their institutional resources to improve the quality of instruction and pay little attention to teaching (Grubb, 2002). Professional development supports alignment between andragogy and technology in the classroom when faculty use these opportunities to develop curricula that systematically and explicitly incorporate technological integration to avoid future difficulties associated with online instruction (Chaipidech et al., 2021).

In a 2013 survey by the Academic Senate's Distance Education Task Force, 53 respondents answered questions on how California community college faculty are being prepared to teach online (Frietas & Gold, 2015). The findings are as follows:

- 59% of California community colleges require faculty training to teach online.
- 58% of the 59% who provide training include principles of andragogy in online teaching and technical training in a CMS.
- Those colleges surveyed that do not require training have opportunities available to faculty.
- 23.1% of colleges permit faculty to select their Course Management System (CMS).
- 87% of colleges do not provide support for all CMSs.
- 81% of the colleges surveyed provide faculty online training at their campus.
- Other forms of training are provided by a third-party vendor, through @ONE, or the CMS vendor.
- 59% of colleges require faculty training.
- 78% of colleges do offer professional development credit for completing training.
- 21% of those offering unit credit will be applied towards the salary scale.
- Another 12% are given stipends or reassigned time.
- 12.5% responded that their faculty collective bargaining agreements allow additional mandatory training beyond the CMS training.
- 64% of campuses reported providing ongoing training and supplemental training materials.
- 41.5% of respondents answered that their academic senate reviews and approves training policies and guidelines.

- 36.6% replied that their senators played no role in professional development training.

It is vital to the quality of instruction and student success that faculty partake in professional development opportunities to prepare and continue to teach in online environments (Freitas & Gold, 2013). California Title 5 §53200 identifies policies for faculty professional development activities as an academic and professional matter under the purview of academic senates (COAL, n.d.).

Although ACCJC standards do not require DE certification for faculty teaching online, it expects institutions to consider the qualifications of faculty selected to teach online and that colleges with online programs must include professional development for online faculty in their professional development offerings (ACCJC, 2021). Review criteria of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) explained in Standard 3: Infrastructure and Resources (2023),

The institution supports its educational services and operational functions with adequate infrastructure, qualified personnel, and stable finances. The institution organizes its staffing and allocates its physical, technological, and financial resources to improve its effectiveness and promote equitable student success. The institution actively monitors and assesses resource capacity to inform improvements to infrastructure and ensure long-term health and stability. Faculty development for online instruction enhances student success and retention and is encouraged and required by federal and state agencies (p. 10).

The California Community College Chancellor's Office provides funding for the collaborative, system-wide network of California Community College faculty, staff, administrators, and @ONE—the Online Network of Online Educators (CCC, n.d.). This alliance is coordinated by the professional development team of the CCC California Virtual Campus-

Online Education Initiative (CVC-OEI), allowing @ONE to provide professional development content that can be accessed via the Internet at any time and from anywhere (@ONE, n.d.).

Course offerings support the effective use of digital tools by providing learning paths appropriate to a learner's skill level (@ONE, n.d.).

Faculty Challenges During the Pandemic

In October 2020, a study was conducted by The Chronicle for Higher Education that set out to find what was driving faculty to leave academe. Mental exhaustion, disparate effects, and institutional response to the pandemic restrictions were cited as reasons for departing by 1,122 higher education faculty across the United States, including two-year institutions. The results found that 35% seriously considered changing careers and resigning, 31% wanted to change jobs in higher education, 38% considered retiring altogether, and 31% did not consider the options. One faculty shared anonymously, "(I) Feel like giving up and leaving my career. With so much uncertainty and responsibilities, managing a career and my family has become overwhelming, leaving me questioning whether it is worth continuing my academic career" (Tugend, 2020).

Community college leaders began to rethink how education has traditionally been delivered. A possible solution was Hybrid Flexible, or hyflex (Adams, 2022). Offering hyflex was transformative because it could change modalities at any time during the course but may also leave faculty teaching an empty class. A 2021 survey of 183 York College faculty found that techniques and strategies used during the pandemic were still used when they returned to on-campus instruction (de Abruna, 2021). Techniques and strategies include break-out rooms, screen sharing, direct messaging via chat in Zoom, whiteboard in Zoom, e-books, lab simulations, virtual reality, augmented reality, gamification, electronic portfolios, course

systems, artificial intelligence, adaptive digital courseware, Zoom, Canvas quizzes and similar features (de Abruna, 2021). LMS applications may include:

Boom Cards facilitate a gamified learning environment in the classroom. Collect information to monitor progress and pinpoint areas of weakness in learning (boomlearning.com).

Cam Scanner is a mobile application that enables Android and iOS users to scan and distribute documents and images in PDF or JPEG format (camscanner.com).

Camtasia is a collection of software applications that generate and capture video tutorials and presentations through screen casting or a Microsoft PowerPoint direct recording plug-in (camtasia.com).

Canva is an online portal that provides graphic design solutions that facilitate the creation of presentations and social media graphics.

Cleanfeed is an online recording and live audio studio.

Educaplay enables instructors to develop free educational gamified activities (technologyeduc.com).

Flipgrid is a free mobile and web application developed by Microsoft that enables educators to establish secure virtual communities where students can asynchronously exchange ideas via concise audio, text, and video messages (flip.com).

Flippity is a practical application that converts Google Sheets into valuable resources, including flashcards, exams, and more (flippity.net).

Honorlock is an online test proctoring service that integrates the advantages and features of live test proctors and AI software (honorlock.com).

iMovie is an application developed by Apple for the Mac, iPhone, and iPad that functions as a free video editing tool (apple.com).

Jamboard is a digital whiteboard that lets you collaborate in real-time using a web browser or a mobile application (jamboard.com).

Kahoot! is an online, user-friendly, game-based learning portal. Multiple-choice assessments called "Kahoots" are available for access through the Kahoot! App or through a web browser (kahoot.com)

Nearpod is a web app for student engagement designed to simplify technology-based instruction while managing what students see and obtaining immediate feedback (nearpod.com).

Padlet is a cloud-based software-as-a-service that facilitates real-time collaboration through a web portal so users can publish, organize, and share content on virtual bulletin boards (padlet.com).

Plickers is an educational assessment application administered through card-play activity (plickers.com).

Proctorio integrates online proctoring, identity verification, plagiarism detection, and content protection tools into your assessment platform (proctorio.com).

Redshelf is an app that provides interactive access to textbooks whether the reader is connected online or offline (redshelf.com).

VisGrid is for in-video inquiries, integrations, video API customization, recording, and hosting.

As the spring and summer semesters of 2020 progressed, many community colleges began planning to reopen their campuses gradually. College leadership intended to allow faculty teaching courses in designated programs, notably those with required on-campus laboratory or experiential learning components, to instruct students on campus because they require clinical interactions with patients, such as nursing degrees and or hands-on training for auto technician

diplomas, it can be difficult or impossible to convert these courses to online delivery due to state licensing mandates. Faculty in these programs needed to figure out how to deliver instruction so students could complete coursework, especially for frontline workers (Crespín-Trujillo & Hora MT, 2021). In addition to the swift transition to online teaching that many faculty members and institutions made in response to the pandemic, the modifications to how in-person courses were taught were also practical and, at times, innovative institutional responses to an unfortunate situation (Trujillo & Hora, 2020).

Post-Pandemic - After July 2021

The world has changed, and a paradigm shift has occurred in higher education regarding how faculty deliver course content. There is no return to pre-pandemic college culture, and as faculty return to campus, they face decisions that will alter the future of higher education. The 2020 pandemic disrupted teaching and learning, leaving colleges to rely on synchronous and asynchronous modalities during the pandemic lockdown. Teaching online, pre-pandemic, was optional, and few faculty members chose to do so. Faculty who had never taught online had to adapt to new ways to deliver course content in this online learning environment. This experience led many faculty members to consider or choose early retirement soon after that. Many of the pandemic's lessons pertain to the fundamentals of effective education rather than technological advancement (Lewis, 2023).

Paradigm Shifts

Emergency disruptions to higher education due to pandemics, such as COVID-19, encourage faculty to innovate, strategize, use new technologies, and create out-of-the-box thinking to provide meaningful and engaging learning experiences. Support for professional development for faculty so they become more familiar with online learning approaches, e-

learning tools, and innovative technology to facilitate teaching and learning, including resource allocation to support faculty with mental health challenges and additional training in andragogy methods. Faculty need to build relationships and work towards enhancing social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence, no matter the modality, to improve quality and allow faculty to think about changes that could be made to enhance teaching and learning further. They must also share innovative tips and strategies with other faculty and administrators to adopt as a college educational plan (Singh, 2021). Community college faculty can now choose from various learning modalities: on-campus, hybrid, online asynchronous, and entirely online, to provide greater flexibility for students to earn college credit. They make learning relevant, differentiated, and appropriate for each student (Department of Education, 2023). To best serve students, administrators must explore the perspectives and needs of community college faculty to learn what technologies, tools, andragogy, and modalities are best to meet current and future academic needs of delivering course content to students (Santos & Pinheiro, 2022).

The pandemic was the most significant disruption to education in history, and the magnitude of the change left many bewildered. While the pandemic exposed voids and vulnerabilities in our structure, systems, and practices, Tandon (2023) developed a narrative for the future on how faculty transition from survival mode to thriving mode. This narrative is accomplished by becoming lifelong learners who embrace change and are comfortable with and adapt to new technologies. Lessons learned from the pandemic provide colleges and faculty opportunities to incorporate the following for a better future:

- Closing equity gaps and addressing technological disparities
- Putting Maslow before Bloom with more holistic student support
- Using technology to engage students in on-campus and hybrid learning.

- Expanding professional development for technology integration and better teaching practices to develop innovative strategies for improved student academic experience.
- Responding to the requirements of faculty and students for social and emotional wellness
- Making contingency plans

Professional Development

The faculty development community in higher education was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with numerous positive innovations emerging. Insights gained from remote faculty support can be incorporated into future institutional support that includes good teaching, including a sense of belonging and academic confidence, which are more frequently reported by students whose instructors employ a more significant number of evidence-based teaching practices. Teachers are more inclined to implement these practices and consequently enhance student outcomes if they indicate that their institutions place a premium on education (e.g., offer training on course design and incentivize effective instruction). To guarantee support for effective teaching and experimentation, institutions need to evaluate their policies and professional development (Tyton Partners, 2023).

Continued mentoring and training opportunities improved the perception of teaching abilities, mitigated the negative impact of the pandemic on teaching effectiveness, and promoted a positive outlook on future online teaching (Herbert et al., 2022). Equipping instructors with effective and equity-promoting teaching practices is one of the highest-impact methods to help students learn more and succeed. Using modular micro-credentials includes Distance Learning teaching practices that faculty can immediately implement. There is data to show how ACUE-certified faculty retain more students, measurably improve student achievement, and close equity gaps. More than 24,000 faculty have earned Association of College and University Educators

(ACUE) credentials, a nationally recognized professional distinction that has been independently validated and endorsed by the American Council of Education (ACE) (ACUE, 2023).

Reflective Practice

Beyond equipping faculty with credentials, a more profound reflective practice is vital to improving andragogy (Womack, 2022). Reflective Methodology Teaching (RMT) practice represents a process of faculty thinking about their teaching before, during, and after instruction activities (Maksimovic & Osmanovic, 2018). What is good, what could be better, and what needs to be changed and improved? These thoughts represent the key to planning for positive changes in future classroom activities. Faculty members who practice RMT become more self-aware of themselves and what surrounds them. They reflect on their beliefs, values, and prejudices and contemplate how they affect their work and students (Maksimovic & Osmanovic, 2018). Reflective practitioners are more open-minded and freely share ideas, opinions, and experiences to promote positive change in education and teaching (Womack, 2022).

Equity Mindedness

Community colleges have gradually incorporated an equity-minded approach to teaching and supporting students as institutions design pathways to enable greater access to the postsecondary system. Since the tragic death of George Floyd in May 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, according to Clayton (2021),

We understood how critical it was for colleges and universities to continue fulfilling their respective missions. The spring 2020 transition to remote learning and work models exposed inequities among our students, faculty, and employees and illuminated the importance of addressing the different needs across these populations. Tackling these inequities required real-time strategies and solutions that would endure over time (2021).

Embracing equity in all aspects of institutional functioning has become “an urgent leadership imperative” (McPhail & Beatty, 2021, p. 2), and community colleges once again have an opportunity to modify structures and practices that have historically precluded economic and social mobility for marginalized groups. Colleges quickly pivoting to virtual instruction in March 2020 has hastened this evolution. However, years of experimenting with innovative and sometimes entrepreneurial approaches to serving students and communities provided a foundation for this new openness to change. According to Kisker, Cohen, and Brawer (2023),

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare what many in higher education already knew: that unconscionable numbers of students suffer from basic needs, insecurities, or mental health challenges, and the most vulnerable are low-income learners. LGBTQ+, transgender, and nonbinary students living in rural areas and those from races and ethnicities that have historically marginalized in both society and higher education. Although colleges have ramped up their provisions of wrap-around services, supporting these learners in life and their educational journeys has become a defining challenge and one in which community colleges cannot afford to fail (Kisker et al., 2023).

Greater Use of Learning Management Systems

For decades, faculty have been hesitant about online and digital instruction quality. However, much of the reluctance has been overcome by being forced to adapt to the new environment and discovering that it can be on par with on-campus instruction in terms of quality. We are all familiar with high-impact practices, also known as active learning practices. An examination of data is presented in Time for Class 2023 from Tyton Partners, comprised of insights from 306 administrators, 1,748 instructors, and 2,048 students who responded to three large-scale surveys conducted in the spring of 2023. Respondents demographically

representative of these populations provide insight into the evolving and contradictory perspectives of contemporary learners, instructors, and university administrators (Tyton, 2023). The study highlighted opportunities to better assist faculty in effectively employing digital teaching and learning tools. Traditional lecture formats are not optimal for remote learning environments. The study found that tool selection is tailored to individual courses; instructors must select efficacious core digital materials from various alternatives. Approximately 25% of faculty members utilize a blend of courseware, e-text, and open education resources in their instructional endeavors.

Furthermore, educators integrate digital tools into the classroom to facilitate student collaboration, proctoring, and assessment, among other functions. Various faculty use cases must be considered when selecting digital materials, including content inclusivity and workload management. These use cases are crucial in determining the extent to which courseware and Online Education Resources (OER) are adopted, respectively. The more you use them, the more effective they become, and learning improves while engagement rises. This fact is more important in a digital than an on-campus learning environment. The following list illustrates the benefits of using an LMS for on-campus learning environments:

- Increased modularization of content and learning outcomes
- Use of digital tools to foster collaboration.
- Use of digital tools for direct outreach to students
- High-impact practices—active learning—the more, the better
- Importance of organization and clarity
- Data Analytics
- Reflective learning practices

- Inclusive learning environment

Using an LMS in an on-campus learning environment serves to be more efficient in communicating course content. Hence, students have continuous access to the class without interacting with faculty unless they cannot find the information or have further questions beyond what is available in the LMS.

Technology & Andragogy

The relationship between technology and andragogy in higher education supports a self-directed teaching and learning approach, as well as research into the effectiveness of the approach in higher education and creating lifelong learners who can successfully translate competence standards. Education systems and post-compulsory education must cultivate more engaged citizens whose thinking is proactive rather than merely reactive. This practice will only occur if we modify how faculty help adults learn (DOE, 2022). It is necessary to transcend the potential self-interest of academics and educators, the status quo, and the interests of dominant institutions (Pérez-Ibáez, 2018). Andragogy and heutagogy address questions of human adaptation that will enable the learner to assume control of learning more appropriately and facilitate a substantially more imaginative approach regardless of context. Educational systems and post-compulsory education can cultivate adult learners who think proactively rather than merely reactively. This practice will only occur if faculty alter how they assist adult learners in learning (DOE, 2022).

Heutagogy is experiential learning where students benefit from active engagement, increasing their motivation and desire to learn. It empowers students to apply their knowledge and skills in contexts that promote career development. Through experiential learning, adult learners acquire transferable skills such as creativity, innovation, teamwork, problem-solving,

and critical thinking. These abilities are beneficial for professional development and career advancement. Experiential learning also allows students opportunities to engage with challenging real-world problems, which can help them develop confidence, resiliency, and self-awareness. Through application and reflection, these practical experiences aid students in expanding their knowledge. Experiential learning is significant because it creates environments where the learner can use prior knowledge while acquiring new knowledge and skills in a practical setting. These experiences allow students to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter and cultivate skills that can be applied in various employment settings. Experiential learning is a type of educational philosophy in which educators allow students to implement the curricular knowledge acquired from their academic coursework to real-world situations and challenges. Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) created the Higher Education & Real-World Training (HEaRT) model to transform student learning and increase access to experiential learning opportunities for all students. HEaRT provides an environment for experiential learning in which students relate to industry employers to address industry challenges through problem-solving.

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to create a golden thread of a collective new and deeper understanding informing the study. Its aim focuses on significant innovative changes in teaching strategies, values, and attitudes from CCC faculty after experiencing the emergency transition to fully online instruction by discovering explicit connections between individual studies that were not visible before (Campbell et al., 2003; Suri, 2011). As universities responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous media outlets called it unprecedented. This is not the first-time higher education institutions have responded to an epidemic. A historical examination of college and

university responses to epidemic diseases, such as yellow fever and the 1918 influenza pandemic, provides examples of prior institutional responses to epidemic diseases. We learned that during the COVID-19 pandemic, as faculty faced a sudden transition from on-campus to fully online instruction, they were required to learn new ways of teaching using new technology unfamiliar to them. Not all faculty remained to teach this way. They decided to leave or retire rather than teach through a pandemic. Their success depended on professional development, institutional support, prior experience, and resilience.

Andragogy continues to be a prevailing instructional approach for adults despite considerable challenges, constraints, and disruptive events (Błaszczak, 2013). Recurring disruptive events and crises plague the world. However, faculty continue to act with optimism and perseverance to do their best to improve education and bring about change within the existing constraints and circumstances (Perry & Richardson, 2022). Since 1901, community college faculty have been making a difference in the lives of students who may otherwise not have the opportunity to earn a college education. From educating farmers who learned better ways to feed a nation (Eddy, 1957) to teaching war veterans to re-enter the workforce (Levesque, 2017), from a diverse population of students whose hopes and dreams move us toward a better future, this literature review explores the story of how community college faculty have provided an excellent and competitive education in an ever-changing world of pandemics, wars, civil unrest, and technological advancements.

Since before the global COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a paradigm force moving community colleges to adopt new ways of delivering courses and technologies and meeting the needs of a diverse student population, but these colleges have, up until the pandemic, been slow to act (Yang & Huang, 2021; Santos & Pinheiro, 2022). Although much has been studied and

written about the effects on student outcomes and learning during the pandemic, only some sources discuss faculty perceptions and preparedness. More specifically, what strategies did they gain from it? The foundational challenge for this research is comprehending what community college faculty experienced. This study is designed to address the gap in the literature on innovative changes in teaching strategies, attitudes, philosophy, and values of California Community College faculty after experiencing the emergency transition to fully online instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This chapter identified the methods used in the research study. It begins by identifying the purpose of the study and listing the two research questions. This is followed by describing the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, research design, study setting, study participants, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, study quality, reflexivity statement, limitations, and chapter summary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify significant innovative changes in teaching strategies, attitudes, philosophy, and values of Southern California community college faculty after experiencing the emergency transition to fully online instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Examining the changes that faculty experienced and the adjustments that they made may identify improved teaching strategies and philosophies. These improvements may result in increased retention and student success and provide a more inclusive classroom.

Research Questions

1. What new teaching innovations have Southern California community college faculty developed because of the challenges they faced during the emergency transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What changes in attitudes, philosophies, or values related to teaching during the COVID-19 did faculty make?

Transformational Learning

Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) is a widely recognized framework in adult education that explains how individuals change their perspectives through critical reflection. In this study, TLT was used as the theoretical framework to examine how

community college faculty in Southern California adapted to the sudden shift to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The theory emphasizes that transformative learning occurs when adults encounter a “disorienting dilemma” that challenges their existing beliefs and assumptions. The pandemic served as such a dilemma, forcing faculty to reconsider their teaching methods, attitudes, and values. By applying TLT, the researcher was able to analyze not only the practical changes faculty made, such as adopting new technologies or redesigning course materials, but also the deeper shifts in their thinking about teaching, learning and student’s welfare beyond the classroom.

The conceptual framework was also guided by Mezirow’s Transformational Learning Theory. Using his 10-phase process was relevant to this study when considering the challenges faculty faced during the COVID-19 pandemic when they were abruptly required to transition to fully online teaching. This framework helped to explain how the pandemic, while disruptive, also served as a catalyst for deeper professional growth and transformation among faculty. The process follows a sequence of phases that faculty participants experienced. This transformation unfolded over time as a series of discoveries through exploration, planning, learning, and building confidence to transform their understanding their roles as community college faculty (Mezirow, 1991). These phases include; (a) a disorientating dilemma, (b) self-examination of assumptions, (c) of alternative, (d) recognition of dissatisfaction, (e) exploration of alternatives, (f) plan for action, (g) acquisition of new knowledge, (h) experimentation with roles, (i) build confidence and competitions, (j) reintegration of new perspectives in one’s life (Mezirow, 1978). Mezirow also theorized that not everyone will follow the same process in the order he perceived nor will every individual complete or go through every phase.

Methodology

A generic qualitative approach was used to collect and analyze data in this study. This methodology allowed for the purposeful selection of participants and the exploration of experiences and views by asking open-ended questions. According to Tenny, Brannan, and Barannan (2022):

The benefit of this approach is its ability to explain processes and patterns of human behavior that can be difficult to quantify. Furthermore, phenomena such as experiences, attitudes, and behaviors can be complex to capture accurately and quantitatively. In contrast, a qualitative approach allows participants to explain how, why, or what they were thinking, feeling, and experiencing at a particular time or during an event of interest. Quantifying qualitative data certainly is possible, but at its core, qualitative data is looking for themes and patterns that can be difficult to quantify, and it is essential to ensure that the context and narrative of qualitative work are not lost by trying to quantify something that is not meant to be quantified.

The methodology was key to linking the theoretical philosophy and research methods of the study. This allowed the researcher to learn what faculty went through during the pandemic and how their teaching innovations, attitudes, values, and philosophies have evolved after the governmental restrictions were lifted.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted via TechConnect Zoom. The 10 interviews were recorded, lasted approximately 60 minutes in length and consisted of 14 questions. The researcher used a purposeful sampling of faculty experiences teaching before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic to gain a better insight into the study. The interviews collected were

transcribed for analysis and interpretation using generic qualitative methodology. Interviews were first transcribed verbatim and then compared to the video recordings to ensure accuracy. This involved careful reading and rereading of the transcripts, identifying emergent themes, and interpreting the meanings behind participants' responses. By using generic qualitative methodology, the researcher aimed to capture both the unique perspectives of each participant and the shared patterns across interviews, providing a deeper understanding of what faculty participants experienced while teaching during and after the pandemic.

Study Setting

According to the California Community College (CCC) website, as of Fall 2019, there were 116 community colleges that employ 18,500 full-time faculty and 42,550 adjunct or part-time faculty that serve over two million students. The researcher selected faculty participants from community colleges in Southern California, keeping in mind that not all colleges provided the same level of support to their teaching faculty. The system boundaries were limited to California community colleges in the Southern California areas of Los Angeles, Orange County, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Ventura counties.

Participants

Participants were recruited at the 2023 Online Education Conference and by an announcement on the California Community College Distance Education (DE) listserv. Special conditions were identified and requested to develop a purposeful sampling of participants who met the following criteria:

1. Currently teaches at least one community college in Southern California.
2. Teaches full or part-time.
3. Taught at least one year before March 2020.

4. Taught during the emergency transition to fully online instruction.
5. Taught after their college returned to on-campus instruction.
6. Teaching in 2024.

Those who responded to the announcement were then emailed an invitation to participate along with instructions on completing an intake form (Appendix F).

Once SurveyMonkey® results were returned, the researcher selected a variety of faculty who meet the criteria. Faculty who meets the criteria were invited to participate (Appendix D). The number of participants were less than 10 so the researcher reached out again to DE coordinators and asked faculty participants who consented to participate to recommend additional potential participants who meet the criteria. Once 10 participants were recruited, they were sent an email containing a letter of consent and a request for a convenient time and date to schedule their interviews.

Participants Demographics

Potential participants completed a pre-interview intake form via SurveyMonkey to identify faculty who met the criteria for this research study. The intake form data collected identified 10 faculty members who met the criteria. The intake form also identified employment location, employment status, teaching modality before and after the pandemic, and online teaching experience and training. The participants represent a distribution of 70% part-time vs 30% full-time faculty reflecting the California community college hiring practices for the past 40 years. (Klein, D., 2024). According to Klein (2024):

Part-time and full-time faculty have the same qualifications and teach the same courses and students. Nonetheless, part-time faculty do not have job security, often teach at several different colleges, struggle to earn a living wage, are

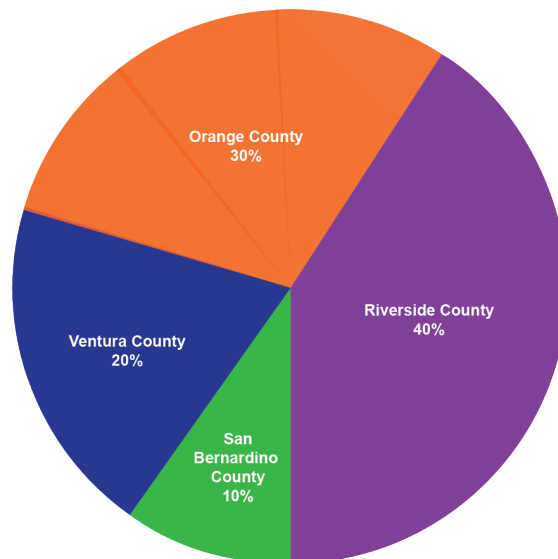
generally not paid for office hours, and are not compensated equally for the same work as their full-time counterparts. This two-tiered structure was never meant to be permanent. It has deprived students and colleges of having a fully supported faculty and has mostly remained hidden from the public.

Demographic data collected from the surveys are included in the following tables.

Faculty Participant Teaching Location by County

Table 4.1 below represents the Southern California county location distribution in percentages of where each of the faculty participants were working at the time the intake form was completed.

Table 3.1 Participants by Southern California County



Community College Representation

Table 4.2 below reflects the specific Southern California community college distribution in percentages of where each of the faculty participants were working at the time the intake form was completed.

Table 3.2 Participants by Southern California County and Institution

County	College	Participant
Orange County	Coastline Community College (CC)	10%
	Fullerton College (FC)	10%
	Santiago Canyon College (SCC)	10%
Riverside County	College of the Desert (COD)	40%
San Bernardino County	Victor Valley College (VC)	10%
Ventura County	Moorpark College (MC)	20%

Employment Status

Table 4.3 below shows the employment status comparison in percentages of the full-time and part-time Southern California community college who participated in this research study at the time the intake form was completed.

Table 3.2 Participant Employment Status

Full-time	30%
Part-time	70%

Faculty by Discipline

Table 3.3 below displays the percentage distribution across college disciplines faculty participants were teaching at the time the intake form was completed.

Table 3.3 Participant by Discipline

Discipline	Participant
Accounting	10%
Digital Media	20%
Graphic Design	10%
Marketing	10%
Nutrition	10%
Photography	10%
Physical Education	10%
Sociology	20%

Faculty Participant Online Teaching Experience Prior to March 2020

Table 3.4 below represents the percentage distribution how many faculty participants were teaching online prior to March 2020.

Table 3.4 Participant Teaching Online Prior to March 2020

Online Teaching Prior to March 2020	Participants
Yes	60%
No	40%

Faculty Participant Teaching Modality

Table 3.5 below shows the specific modality that faculty were teaching at the time the intake form was completed.

Table 3.5 Participant Modality Currently Teaching

Current Modality	Participants
Fully Online	60%
Hybrid or On-campus	40%

Distance Education Certified

Table 3.6 below reflects the percentage of faculty who earned a Distance Education (DE) certificate. This indicates that the faculty participant received DE training at some point before the time the intake form was completed.

Table 3.6 Participants Currently Distance Education Certified

Currently DE Certified	Participants
Certified	90%
Not Certified	10%

Instrumentation

Using a combination of structured, unstructured, and non-directive interview questions for this qualitative research allowed the researcher to retain the holistic and significant aspects of real-world events while concentrating on a detailed examination of the participants' experiences within a limited system (Lochmiller and Lester, 2017). Before recording the interview began, the researcher asked faculty participants the following two questions:

1. What alias would you like to use during this interview?
2. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Guided by a TLT framework, the two research questions led to the development of interview questions (Appendix G) to investigate significant innovative changes in Southern California community college faculty's teaching strategies, attitudes, philosophy, and values after experiencing the emergency transition to fully online instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Examining the changes that faculty experienced and the adjustments that they made identified improved teaching strategies and philosophies. These improvements may increase retention and student success and provide a more inclusive classroom.

The pandemic posed a perplexing dilemma that prompted faculty to reevaluate their previous beliefs and teaching practices. According to Dirkx and Smith (2009):

There is a mystery to the idea of transformative learning, which expresses the creative and artistic dimensions of our being rather than the rational, literal, and scientific. Like the unfolding and metamorphosis of the caterpillar into a beautiful, majestic, and soaring butterfly, the process of transformative learning touches on and reminds us of the fundamental mystery of being human.

The interview questions were asked to reveal whether the faculty made innovative changes to their courses and/or teaching philosophies.

Method and Validation

The researcher employed Generic Qualitative (GQ) methodology to explore the lived experiences of Southern California community college faculty during the COVID-19 pandemic. Patton (2015) described Generic Qualitative inquiry as a practical approach that involves use of qualitative methods that aim to answer questions about relevant topics in a real-world setting (pp. 154–155). This approach enabled the researcher to collect rich descriptive data for thematic coding without strictly adhering to a specific qualitative paradigm such as phenomenology or grounded theory. The researcher developed a rapport with participants and encouraged them to speak openly about their experiences. Semi-structured interviews, conducted via TechConnect Zoom video conferencing software were recorded and automatically transcribed. The transcripts were reviewed and formatted into one document, grouping participant answers into separate interview questions, and were verified against the video recording for accuracy.

The researcher used inductive reasoning to identify emerging themes and interpret patterns in the data without the constraint of a particular methodology (e.g., grounded theory, phenomenology). It was a pragmatic, adaptable approach that enabled the researcher to concentrate on the data and its implications rather than predetermined theories or models. For small data sets, according to Sarah Weise, “by making sense of the deeper insights that qualitative research is so good at finding and transforming them into actionable strategies, humans are still in the driver's seat. Only humans can clearly understand that context, those emotional cues, and the connections between themes.” This approach allowed the researcher to use a Manual Qualitative Coding process to analyze the qualitative data and gain valuable

insights into the data analysis by engaging in hand-coding, where the researcher was able to discover subtle nuances while using reflection that enabled a deeper understanding of participant responses (Isangula et al., 2024).

Interview Process

The researcher used a GQ approach to analyze the interview transcripts collected from the 10 faculty participants who answered the 14 interview questions. Prior to beginning the analysis process, the researcher further verified the transcripts against the recordings for accuracy. Then, she separated the 14 transcripts into two groups. Each research question group represented one of the two research questions. Transcripts from interview questions (IQ) #1-7 reported the findings for research question #1, while transcripts from interview questions (IQ) #8-14 reported the findings for research question #2. After the researcher grouped responses, she analyzed the data collected by concentrating on the responses and reviewing the interview transcripts several times. Each group presented a summary of the findings from the interview questions separately and was supported by specific responses from the faculty participants.

Data Collection

After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix B), the researcher commenced with data collection by emailing potential participants by sending a Recruitment Email (Appendix C) inviting faculty to participate in the study. Faculty who wanted to proceed were instructed to click on a link to answer preliminary interview questions to determine if they met the criteria for the study. Once the faculty accepted the invitation by completing the intake form preliminary interview questions (Appendix F), they were sent a Participant Letter (Appendix D). It also included an Information Sheet (Appendix E) describing the study. This email also included a list of Interview Questions (Appendix G).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain more detailed and deeper responses from faculty participants. The moderate sample size of 10 participants is ideal for this to see patterns in the responses and not too difficult to manage all the detailed information. Interviews were conducted separately. At the time of each interview and before the recording begins, the researcher got to know each participant through casual conversation, beginning with a thank-you for participating and asking questions about their background, education, and location. To elicit unique and relevant information from each participant, the researcher encouraged faculty participants to elaborate further on their answer providing rich and honest responses. The researcher encouraged faculty to elaborate so responses could flow freely and naturally. Interview questions came from a prepared list for consistency and flexibility of expanding further on faculty participant responses (Austin & Sutton, 2014). For example, faculty who never taught online before the pandemic may have had the most significant challenges in acclimating to teaching fully online had more to share than those who were already teaching online prior to the pandemic. Encouraging these faculty participants to elaborate further provided deeper and more detailed responses. The interviews were conducted using TechConnect Zoom which provided video, audio and transcripts of each interview. The transcripts generated from the interview recordings were encoded to safeguard the participants' identities (Saunders et al., 2015).

Data Coding and Analysis

The researcher used open coding and inductive reasoning to interpret patterns and identify emerging themes. It was a pragmatic, adaptable approach that enabled the researcher to concentrate on the data rather than using predetermined theories or models. Using a moderate size of 10 faculty participants made sense in allowing the discovery of deeper insights. Approach

is best done by the researcher who remains an essential part in interpreting the rich and deep insights from the responses of faculty participants. It is human empathy and judgement that can fully grasp the context, recognize emotional undertones and identify meaningful patterns across different themes (Stige, et al., 2024). The transcripts were reviewed and formatted into one document, grouping participants' responses into separate interview questions, and were verified against the video recordings for accuracy. Data were analyzed through the lens of a generic qualitative conceptual framework. This approach began with no preconceived codes or theories. Instead of using a preexisting framework or previous research, theories are discovered from scratch as the transcribed data is analyzed in the entire data set. The researcher read through the responses, divided the text into logical segments, and grouped into themes. This approach offered flexibility to adjust groupings as needed.

Study Quality

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are four ways to assess the trustworthiness and rigor of this qualitative study. 1) Credibility. All data collected from participants was done by one researcher who disregarded personal biases and relied on the participants' own words. 2) Transferability. This research study has the potential to be extended to other populations in other locations because of the typical emergency shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 3) Dependability. The decision-making process by the researcher can be traced through an audit trail of documentation. 4) Confirmability. The researcher used an informal checking process to validate the accuracy of the interview transcripts by verifying them against the recordings.

The researcher followed procedures specified by Kansas State University (KSU) ethics approval process to obtain access to participants for a qualitative research study. Additionally,

the researcher received CITI training to ensure that any information received will not violate the privacy rights of the participants.

Before the interview process began, the researcher obtained approval from Human Subjects and Informed Consent from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) and Kansas State University. Initially, potential volunteers were contacted through email, and as soon as candidates were interested in participating in the study, they were informed about the purpose of the study. Each of the participants signed an IRB-approved consent form. It informed the participants that their decision to participate was voluntary, that they could remove themselves from the study at any time, and that their identities would be protected by using codes to identify faculty participants. The codes and data are safely kept on a password-protected personal home computer and an external private, password-protected cloud drive, and all research-related data will be kept safe for five years before being deleted.

Reflexivity Statement

Creswell (2018) stresses the significance of reflective practice throughout the research process and how scholars must know how personal experience, background, and possible prejudice can influence research. The research topic is familiar and enjoyable to the researcher, a current chair of the Education Technology Distance Education committee, and the full-time faculty member, who also taught before, during, and after the CDC lifted restrictions. Teaching for 28 years has taught the researcher about teaching and learning. Sharing this information with participants makes them aware of the researcher's role as a full-time faculty member at a California community college and doctoral candidate. It provided complete transparency throughout the study and in any correspondence sent to participants.

According to Lochmiller and Lester (2017), "reflexivity is the process of intentionally accounting for your assumptions, biases, experiences, and identities that may impact any aspect of your research" (p. 95). The researcher brought their own experiences, beliefs, biases, influences, and assumptions about the topic. Teaching during the CDC-mandated restrictions forced faculty to teach fully online immediately even if their class was not set up as an online course. Fortunately, for the researcher, who began using Canvas in her face-to-face class before the CDC restriction, it was an easy shift but not so for her students who needed technology or who never took an online class before. This realization of the situation allowed the researcher to explore other teaching strategies that support students and improve their participation in the course. The researcher continued using these strategies because enrollments indicated that students wanted to continue learning online and were actively engaging in the course content.

Limitations and Transferability

In pursuit of collecting and analyzing research data, a researcher may have to contend with issues over which they have little or no influence (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The faculty of California's community colleges are diverse and complex, and the campuses where they teach differ greatly in terms of geography, size, available resources, and student and faculty demographics (CCC, 2020). To minimize constraints in the research, well-designed interview procedures, consistent data gathering, field notes, and reflective writing, a thorough evaluation of the data for consistency, and aggregation of the data through analysis using numerous classification methods were all used. Issues concerning the response rate and timing of the study are potential limitations. Faculty may be restricted in their eligibility to partake in the study due to the scheduling constraint.

Transferability is defined as the degree to which the results obtained from qualitative research can be implemented into another context (Trochim, 2016). The concept of transferability, as defined by Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), assists readers in assessing the applicability of a study and its potential for replication. The researcher utilized detailed descriptions to foster a sense of connection with the reader. This research has the potential to be applied to numerous communities and contexts. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread suffering on a global scale (Chriscaden, 2020). According to the United Nations (2021), this crisis was unprecedented it affected every aspect of life, including public health, food security, and employment, according to Chriscaden (2020). COVID-19 has not only affected educators, but all demographics and populations who collectively experienced similar events that transpired during the pandemic globally.

Transferability

Summary

This chapter began with defining the purpose of the study. Two research questions were then identified and followed by interview questions supporting each of the research questions. The conceptual method for this study used Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory. Generic Qualitative was chosen for the theoretical framework. Methodology was guided by Generic Qualitative approach. Strategies for data collection, analysis, and verification were also discussed. The researcher's role, including their status as a participant-observer, and ongoing reflexive approach to this study was explained. Finally, under the topic of dependability, this chapter discussed credibility, transferability, dependability, and limitations.

Chapter 4 - Findings and Analysis

This chapter revisits the research questions and provides a detailed analysis of the data collected. It focuses on significant changes in teaching practices, attitudes, educational philosophies, and values among community college faculty in Southern California following the transition to fully online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis incorporates direct quotations from faculty interviews to illustrate key points and identifies 10 major themes. A summary of the findings and analysis concludes this chapter.

Research Questions

The following two research questions guided this study.

1. What new teaching innovations have Southern California community college faculty developed because of the challenges they faced during the emergency transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What changes in attitudes, philosophies, or values related to teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic did faculty make?

Themes Addressing RQ1

The following five themes emerged from an analysis of the interview transcripts, taking note of repeated terms related to RQ1. It focused on how the challenges faculty experienced changed the way they conduct their classes. Interview questions 1 – 7 revealed that the transition facilitated online learning, active engagement, and technology-driven teaching strategies while highlighting improvements to course content and grading practices.

Adapting to the Online Environment

Faculty were initially skeptical of online teaching but adapted by embracing flexibility, creativity, and student-centered approaches. Many improvised with available resources, accepted

diverse assignment solutions, and integrated new technologies such as recorded lectures and LinkedIn Learning to reduce student costs. The shift prompted instructors to reconsider grading, inclusivity, and student well-being, and to better understand students' lives outside the classroom. While some faculty participants struggled with the transition, most found meaningful ways to support students and improve their teaching practices, recognizing the potential of online education to reach non-traditional learners.

“I think the most valuable thing was how to be creative with the situation rather than thinking you had to use a person to light something, we used so many different subjects so what I learned to improvise and how helpful that was to the students for different reasons they might not be able to get exactly what I am asking for, but they could improvise. I am more than willing now to look at different techniques for the assignment that they came up and improvisations that I would not have accepted prior to the pandemic” (P1).

“I think that a lot of that it's mostly to maintain flexible student center teaching approaches is really what is most important. But we already had, and we continuously practiced becoming better at our online teaching” (P4).

“Well, one is names, you know like teaching synchronous classes on Zoom. You see, everyone's name I made students do that. So now I use name tags in classrooms like physical name tags” (P9).

“Yes, pretty significantly, because not only did we move from an in-classroom situation to online, but we've also tried to move away from textbooks that are so expensive for students that cannot afford them to a LinkedIn Learning videos and more lecture content recorded” (P3).

Before the pandemic, skepticism about the effectiveness of online education was prevalent among faculty participants, especially those who had taught exclusively on-campus for

years. However, as they were teaching fully online, many came to see the potential to reach non-traditional students and those with barriers to attending on-campus classes. While many struggled, some faculty found the online teaching environment could align with their skills and interests. Many faculty participants discussed how they were already prepared to transition during the pandemic because they were already teaching online. They discussed how the transition made them more concerned for their students. They realized how transition to fully online modality was a positive innovative way to incorporating technology in the classroom. However, not all faculty transitioned easily to online teaching, but they found the strength to adapt in a positive way that was meaningful for them and their students. Several faculty participants discussed how they prioritized improving how they teach and highlighted the importance of understanding their students' lives beyond the classroom. They re-evaluated their approaches to grading, online teaching, inclusivity, and student well-being.

Increased Use of Technology

Faculty adapted to new technologies to enhance student engagement and learning during the pandemic. Many began using learning management systems (LMS) for the first time, integrating tools such as Canvas, Blackboard, Microsoft Teams, and Google Sites. Video conferencing platforms like Zoom became central for synchronous and asynchronous interaction, while applications like Panopto and Studio enabled the creation and sharing of pre-recorded lectures. Faculty also incorporated gamification tools like Kahoot and adaptive learning resources such as McGraw-Hill's SmartBook. They used open educational resources (OER) and zero textbook cost (ZTC) to reduce costs for students. Personalized feedback was delivered through audio, video, and text, fostering increased student engagements. Additional innovations included the use of digital syllabi, LinkedIn Learning, green screens for engaging video

backgrounds, and flipped classroom models. Even after returning to campus, faculty continued leveraging these digital tools to support flexible, interactive, and accessible learning environments, demonstrating a sustained commitment to technological integration in teaching.

“I became more accessible by using text messaging to help resolve student issues quickly, which improved engagement. I also used audio responses instead of text to provide more personalized, encouraging feedback, which led to better engagement from students” (P9).

“Zoom was an extension of what I had used it for previously, and when the pandemic hit. I kind of extended the time, whereas it was more of a 45 min type” (P2).

“I did utilize Kahoot and for more engagement, and to make it a little bit more fun to gamify my course. I was using Canvas as well” (P5).

“Online teaching didn't change except the tools have. I mean, I've used Blackboard. I use Canvas. I've used Google sites. But I still think there are gonna be innovative tools that are coming. You know, particularly as new technology like VR, becomes affordable. I think there's gonna be new ways to really kind of engage in content” (P7).

“I do encourage students to upskill whatever skills they have using AI. I don't believe AI should do the work or replace what you're doing, but it should complement it” (P7).

“I use a lot of publisher materials, and one of the things I like is an adaptive learning program with McGraw-Hill. They use one called Smart Book. and it's an adaptive learning and interactive reader” (P8).

"We moved from expensive textbooks to LinkedIn Learning video courses, which provided all the resources students needed without additional financial burdens" (P3).

"I bought a green screen. I would do silly things like use different backgrounds. It kept students interested” (P9).

“There's so much new stuff in, you know, the online arena, or even in the classroom arena. You must realize when I started teaching, I think it's about 44 years ago there was a whiteboard, and you know the markers. Then there were slides, and then there were overheads, and so on. I feel like I've come a long way, baby, you know, and I'm experimenting more with smaller recordings, you know, like in Panopto and Studio” (P10).

Faculty participants discussed adopting new teaching technologies for engagement, assessment, and collaboration. Many faculty participants were new to using a learning management system (LMS) to manage their courses. Even though it was initially difficult, they began using it with their on-campus courses once they returned to campus. Faculty invested in new equipment, such as green screens and Microsoft Surface Pro tablets and integrated online applications that engaged students and enhanced students' learning experience. The following presents a list of tools and teaching innovations faculty participants used because of the challenges they faced during the emergency transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- OER and ZTC course materials.
- LinkedIn Learning.
- Digital syllabus
- Online engagement tools
- Used learning management system.
- TechConnect Zoom
- Personalized feedback using audio, video, and text.
- Video content
- Computer cameras to deliver lectures.
- Flipped classroom approach.
- Gamification techniques
- Adapted ACUE strategies to the online environment.
- Online group work
- Credit for learning

Even after returning to on-campus instruction, faculty participants continue to maximize their use of tools like Zoom and Panopto to capture and edit video content and make it available via Canvas to sustain interactions.

Alternative Grading Practices

Faculty adapted their grading practices during the pandemic by being more flexible with deadlines and emphasizing understanding students' individual circumstances. Many shifted their grading toward holistic assessment, valuing participation, engagement, and improvement over rigid letter grades. While some maintained high standards, others adjusted assignments to incorporate multiple ways for students to demonstrate learning. This balance between empathy and academic rigor aimed to support students facing diverse challenges in remote learning environments, while still upholding essential course requirements.

"I was not as stringent about my grading practices. I kind of relaxed a little and let them get used to being online and the fact that they had assignments, too, that they had to submit online. I was a little more lenient with deadlines. It did continue but not to the extent I did it first. I still now am a little easier on deadlines with them, I mean, if they have a reason, and it's for being late, and it's a good reason. I will listen and adjust to them. I listen more to my students now than I used to" (P1).

"Yeah, it changed because I was already going in that direction anyway, of being a little bit more equitable. So, it just really made me recalibrate some of my assignments, so that I had assignments that could demonstrate learning in several different ways" (P2).

"I place more emphasis on the student participation, engagement and improvement over time rather than just the final outcomes of like A, B or C grades. So, this approach acknowledges, like the current data, diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice is something that we add as a college and accessibility. So, the Ital acknowledges the diverse challenges students are facing in remote learning environment because they're on their own. you know, staring at a screen in a small room somewhere. And so, it helps them to know that they're showing me

hands-on projects that they've been able to complete and succeed, and then I give them feedback. and then they can go back and make those changes, and they can earn the points for just showing their participation and their engagement” (P4).

The pandemic influenced grading practices among faculty participants. They were more flexible by allowing late submissions to help students navigate hardships, particularly around health and family issues. However, they also emphasized the importance of maintaining alignment with the course outline of record (COR). Some faculty expressed a move toward a progressive, holistic grading approach, focusing on credit for learning, participation, engagement, and improvement. This shift also reflects a greater emphasis on student development rather than only traditional performance metrics. Several faculty participants refined their late work policies while ensuring students don't fall too far behind. A few faculty participants emphasized the importance of maintaining high standards, particularly given the professional implications for students in specific fields. Some faculty felt that the quality of learning and skill demonstration should remain consistent regardless of circumstances. These themes suggest that while flexibility has increased in grading practices, there remains a core commitment among faculty to maintain rigorous standards in their fields.

Student-Centered Engagement Methods

Faculty adapted to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic by implementing student-centered engagement strategies, such as fostering a sense of belonging, using interactive assignments, incorporating gamification techniques, and encouraging peer feedback through group critiques and Zoom sessions. Some faculty applied real-life situations in assignments and used technology to keep students engaged and on track. While a few faculty maintained their pre-pandemic methods, most shifted office hours and communication online, emphasizing

personal connections by calling students by name or using nametags. These adaptations aimed to reduce isolation and enhance participation, with many practices continuing even after returning to on-campus classes.

“So, I think that first semester during Covid when we were all online. I think that's when I was learning all these things about student engagement. And so now, you know, each semester I feel like after the pandemic” (P3).

“I just tried to get people to engage with each other, and you know, and makes a new friend or have somebody could ask questions to. So, belonging is probably the biggest key or the biggest change that I've probably made” (P7).

“There's a bit of the gamification like the interactive assignments. so, they earn stickers. And you know, creative, colorful things” (P4).

“We all critique as a group together, the different work that each student has done for that week. I don't think I ever did group critiques that often when I was teaching in person” (P1).

“Well, I can't see them online. So now, what I do is I, have them give each other peer feedback in certain projects during Zoom sessions. I will say, let's go around and get all your opinions on this subject matter. I might show students' work that got perfect scores and show them like, here's an example of one of your classmates that you know who did follow all the rules of this project, and did it correctly to give them inspiration, to show them examples and things like that. So, I would say, that's more of the engagement” (P3).

“No, I don't use any new or different methods. The methods that I was using before were working very well, and I did have a lot of student engagement before the pandemic, so I didn't see a big change in that, because I had been already a full asynchronous course before the pandemic” (P5).

“Before the pandemic, because most of my classes were in person, my office hours were in person cause maybe I only have one online class, maybe two, a semester. And now it's obviously reversed. I have maybe one in-person class every semester and four online. So, it's much more online oriented. My office hours have changed quite a bit. I allow them to contact me so we can schedule appointments through Zoom” (P8).

Faculty participants revealed that the most valuable things they discovered from teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic were centered around student engagement strategies for their online classes. Faculty increased their use of technology and incorporated creative techniques to help students better understand the course content. They also included more real-life and relevant content to help students grasp the subject matter. Some faculty found that they needed additional reminders to help students stay on track, but not all were happy to increase those reminders. The lockdown was so isolating and lonely that it was important for some faculty to create a sense of belonging in their online courses. One faculty participant shared that the simple recognition of a student's name was a valuable aspect of her Zoom sessions, where students' names were on the screen even if their images were not. Calling on a student by name reinforces their connection and encourages engagement. When the lockdown was lifted, faculty continued this practice on-campus by having students wear nametags to cultivate a sense of belonging.

Changes to Course Content

Faculty adapted their course content during the transition to online teaching. They became more organized and detailed oriented by enhancing syllabi with interactive elements, online etiquette guidelines, and direct links to campus resources. Others incorporated timely, relatable examples such as Covid-19 data in statistics courses to increase relevance. Many added new instructional videos, peer feedback opportunities, and mental health resources to support

student engagement and well-being. Faculty already online teaching made fewer changes, but overall, the shift led to more comprehensive, accessible, and student-centered course materials, making it easier for students to navigate and connect with support services.

“I had to take all of those and organize them and write my course content in accordance with the different lessons for each week, so I had to become more organized. I had to become, much more detailed than I was before” (P1).

“Well, it sure prioritized creating videos and instructional material that was lacking, I think, before the pandemic, I don't think they were as robust as we need to make it when we're fully online, like we have been. So, I think that's changed quite a bit” (P8).

“Believe it or not, I did not change my course, content because I had already been teaching online for 20 years” (P5).

“I have added since, though, is I teach a subject of statistics. and I've been using a lot more data about Covid. It's more relatable. So, you know my when I'm talking about samples and how we select it” (P9).

“I wanted the syllabus to be something interactive for students, so they get excited about taking the class” (P7).

“I had to add a lot more resources for them, things that they would normally be able to just go on campus and do or go on campus and find out. I had to have a section on online etiquette and how to navigate and be successful as an online student” (P1).

"My syllabus became a much more valuable tool for students, with links to services like the Veteran Center, task center, and financial aid. I wanted it to be user-friendly and comprehensive." (P9).

Some faculty participants did not need to make changes because they were already teaching online. However, those who were not, found that they needed to be more organized. Some faculty added LinkedIn Learning to their course content and direct links to online resources and campus services. They changed course content to maintain motivation and engagement with their students by including interactive discussions and peer feedback. Faculty added content to their syllabi that addressed the online learning environment with guidelines on online etiquette, emphasizing respect in discussions, especially in courses involving sensitive or controversial topics. When faculty moved to a fully digital online syllabi, their students learned how much easier they could access embedded resources and engage with the course and college more dynamically. Faculty also added information on mental health, including addendums on well-being and the importance of reaching out if struggling.

Themes Addressing RQ2

The following five themes emerged from an analysis of the interview transcripts, taking note of repeated terms related to RQ2. It focused on how the challenges faculty experienced affected their attitudes, philosophies, and values. Interview questions 8 – 14 provided a deeper understanding of faculty attitudes toward teaching online, reflection on their professional values, concern for colleagues, and their thoughts about the future of online education.

Attitudes Toward Teaching Online

Faculty initially faced anxiety, resistance, and emotional challenges when forced to transition to online teaching with little preparation. Over time, most adapted, developing greater empathy, flexibility, and student-centered approaches. They recognized the importance of accessibility, community, and equity, especially as students faced barriers like technology access and isolation. While some faculty came to appreciate the benefits of online learning, many still

preferred in-person teaching but acknowledged the necessity and value of online modalities.

Ultimately, the experience transformed their teaching philosophies, emphasizing adaptability, inclusivity, and the creative use of technology to support diverse student needs and foster engagement.

“Well, at first, we only got like three weeks to transition, and I was not an online teacher at all. Everything I did was in person for the past 14 years. So, when we transitioned to online, my attitude wasn't exactly the most positive. Then, I got to like being online once I got over the initial fear of learning how to be online” (P1).

“The emergency just made me super student focus. It made me very purposeful, and the assignments that I was assigning, just making sure that students could achieve or could demonstrate their learning in different ways” (P2).

“I love being in front of the students I loved having that interaction. However, it seems like now with being online that students really, they still want that engagement. But for whatever reason they are unable to attend in person. So at least you know a good majority of them, whether it's finances, whether they don't have transportation or whatever it might be. So, the fact that I still hold a zoom session, and I still engage with them, and I respond to their questions, and I do one on one zooms with them if they need it. It seems like they appreciate that, even though we're not physically in the classroom. It helps them know that I'm there for them” (P3).

“It makes me more adaptable and empathetic toward the students. Because when I take online classes, I'm like, oh, my gosh, this is hard. The teacher's not here. I can't ask a direct question. I might never get her response. I might never get feedback in the way that I need it quickly. So, I found that it reinforced the value of flexibility, accessibility, and the need to support a lot of the diverse learning styles” (P4).

“I cried a lot initially. It was hard. I noticed a lot of our students lost their jobs. They didn't have money for food, and here I am comfortable in my situation. I found myself getting sad, so I can only imagine how our students felt. Many students didn't want to turn on their cameras, you know. It was a lot of isolation. So, I had to really think outside the box and figure out, how do we engage students to feel safe and okay during this time. So, from that, I was able to bring to the attention of our institution to create social justice circles because during the pandemic, you know, Black Lives Matter was happening, I mean, that began years before, but the whole protest of George Floyd, it was just a mess, you know. I'm teaching race and ethnicity in between all this. We're seeing protests. It's just chaotic. We're gonna meet once a week check-in outside of class time if anyone wants to join. Now, we are starting to find our new normal, but that was hard. It was just trying to be positive” (P9).

“I think it made me more open to the idea of online teaching, because I had never considered that. I didn't know what it looked like and so it changed the philosophy in that, you know, it can't just only be in brick and mortar, an actual classroom. The classroom can exist wherever it is that I am at” (P6).

“Probably the biggest change, I guess, is the movement from memorization to experiential learning” (P7).

“My philosophies have been redefined to emphasize more flexibility, inclusivity, and integration of technology to help make my learning environment much more engaging” (P4).

“The only thing that changed was that I had to ensure they knew how to use technology and that was hard for me, because I wasn't very versed with it. But the teaching philosophy. It hasn't really changed much, because I always treat each student like this is the first time, they're ever hearing this, even though it's my 100,000-time repeating it. But I must still come in with the

same energy, as this is our first time. The only thing that continues to change is me always having to re-energize myself, to be prepared for our kids—our students” (P9).

“There was a lack of preparation, it was a unique circumstance and a unique period. But for me, that was not something I look back on fondly. I much prefer the way it is now” (P6).

“So, my attitude was very positive. I know that's not typical. I know a lot of teachers did not have that attitude, which I totally get. I understand. Especially for those classes that are, you know, like must be in person, you know, like pottery. But for me it was a very positive transition, because I was already moving in that direction” (P3).

“Initially, I wasn't thrilled about it. I've learned that this is a new normal. There is a big need for in-person, and I still teach in-person, but there's still a big need for online, too. I fought that initially, but I understand that students need this. They're at work or at nighttime on zoom or early in the morning on zoom and all their cameras are on and they're engaged. They're chatting in the chat. They feel like it's a real classroom. And it's online. So, it really changed my perspective that, hey, this could be fun, even though I still prefer that in person interaction there is still a desperate need for students to have this, because now they can actually get it done and feel like they are having that sense of community, even though they're not physically in person” (P9).

“I was worried for those students who had never well, I still have students who've never taken online classes. But I was worried that it wasn't going to be equitable for all students, and that not everyone had a computer, or everyone had a connection” (P5).

“It made me want to get my point across better. It made me want to really reach out to the students that I couldn't do because I couldn't see them or help them anymore” (P1).

Initially, the transition in March 2020, found some faculty with poor attitudes about the transition which they believed affected their teaching because of their reluctance to being forced online. They had to find a way to stay positive for their students. For the most part, their attitudes about online teaching improved once they got used to teaching online and got better at using online tools like Canvas and TechConnect Zoom. They came to understand how online learning could help bring their college back from the chaos, disruption, low enrollments, and students' access to support services. Faculty participants noticed how students also improved their ability to interact and engages with fellow students develop social circles that cultivated friendships even from a distance. They also noticed equity gaps at the beginning of the pandemic and how students were eventually provided with technology to support their academic goals during this time. They recognized Generative AI abuse and discussed how to improve the quality of education by improving how they teach. Faculty who were forced to teach online felt isolated, lost, and at the bottom. The challenges these faculty faced were traumatic yet transformational. Four of the 10 faculty participants did not have any online teaching experience or training prior to the emergency transition during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, one of the four faculty participants in this group was already using Canvas before the pandemic even though she was not teaching an online course. Yet similar experiences between this group and that of those with online training and already teaching online were learning new tools and being more student-centered as previously mentioned. The difference for this group was they had only three weeks to transition to fully online teaching. It is important to note that it is not completely know whether each of the colleges they served had the resources and infrastructure in place to provide distance education training. These faculty participants continued to teach online but do prefer to teach in person and did so once the shelter-in-place order was lifted. They rose above their situation and

adapted to a new normal of teaching online because, as one faculty participant put it, “There was nowhere else to go but up” (P6).

Teaching Values Through a Student-Centered Lens

The pandemic prompted faculty to reflect on their values toward teaching, with many adopting a more student-centered approach. While some maintained their core values, most became more empathetic, flexible, and attentive to students’ diverse needs. Faculty emphasized the importance of both online and in-person learning, recognizing the unique developmental benefits of in-person interaction. Adjustments included relaxing deadlines, offering assignment resubmissions, and considering students’ personal challenges such as mental health and family responsibilities. This shift highlighted the need for increased support, innovation, and inclusivity, as educators sought to foster growth and community while adapting to new educational realities.

“Since the pandemic, my philosophy and teaching students has changed immensely. I’ve become much more fluid in my instructional style. I’ve learned to adapt to the different needs of my different students” (P1).

“My philosophy of teaching has remained the same. I’m there for the students to learn as much as they can. That hasn’t changed. But I know I’ve become a little bit more empathetic” (P5).

“My philosophy has changed to understand that a little bit or my approach to teaching students has changed a little bit in that regard. But again, just like my professional flaw. It’s seeming to me if you have a philosophy before the pandemic or a value that’s not gonna change after the pandemic, just because we went through a pandemic. I can’t see our values changing because of that” (P8).

“I know I keep going back to the Zoom sessions, but they really are so helpful because I can see them interacting with me. I can hear them. I can answer their questions, engage with them, and get that little part that I feel like I lost, you know, when we exited the classroom” (P3).

“My philosophy has changed to give them as many opportunities for learning and growth as possible” (P4).

The pandemic prompted some faculty participants to re-evaluate their approaches to online teaching, inclusivity, and student well-being. However, other faculty expressed that their values did not change, and that the shift to online education had a greater emphasis on the need for student support and technology. While most faculty acknowledged the importance of online education, many also reaffirmed the irreplaceable value of in-person interaction for personal growth and community building. Despite the success of online education during the pandemic, many faculty still championed the developmental benefits of on-campus classes, advocating for a hybrid model rather than a complete shift to online. The social and developmental aspects of on-campus education are essential, especially for younger students transitioning to adulthood. The pandemic revealed a greater need for understanding students' diverse challenges through increased empathy, innovation, and flexibility. As faculty began to see their role as educators through a more student-centered lens they made changes to their course content, syllabus, and grading practices while incorporating innovative technology to help students succeed. They acknowledged that life circumstances outside of the classroom could impact students' ability to meet deadlines and complete assignments. Some faculty shared that they had relaxed their approach, offering students more chances to resubmit assignments or giving them the benefit of the doubt. Rather than enforcing a strict adherence to deadlines and structured learning

environments they focused their attention on considering students' diverse challenges, such as mental health struggles, family responsibilities, and lack of basic needs.

Comradery and Concern for Colleagues

Faculty described how the pandemic strengthened their sense of community and support for colleagues. The sudden move to fully online teaching required increased collaboration and resource sharing. While some maintained their core professional values, others reported a greater appreciation for peer interaction, flexibility, and student well-being. Faculty with online teaching experience offered guidance to those less familiar with digital tools, fostering empathy and teamwork. Overall, the challenges of remote teaching prompted many educators to adopt more collaborative and student-centered approaches, emphasizing adaptability, inclusivity, and holistic support for both colleagues and students during a period of significant change.

“I know that as far as professionally with my peers, it made us become much closer, even though we were far away, but we needed each other. We needed each other just to learn and to make this transition. I mean, it was just such a horrendous thing that happened. So, my values changed as to how much I needed my fellow employees” (P1).

“Professionally speaking, I think I'm a little bit more I'm more helpful now to other instructors, professionally than I was before. I saw them come to me, because I had already been teaching online when the pandemic hit, and they didn't know all the tools” (P5).

“I don't know that they've really changed. mean, I still try to attend as much training as possible to keep up with my subject matter. I still try to attend teaching conferences, whether they're webinars or anything like that to keep myself in, you know, inspired and motivated, and things like that. So, I don't know that the pandemic really made a change to that for me” (P3).

“I don't see how my professional values have changed. I take it seriously, but I've always had the value that this is serious work we're doing, and that hasn't changed before or after” (P8).

“I found that through this value changing, it became important for me to interact with everybody, and so that changed my value system as to how important it was to interact with your peers, and my value system with my students changed, too. I mean, it changed just in the way of giving them content that I valued” (P1).

“I definitely feel that my professional values now include a stronger commitment to student wellbeing and equitable access to education” (P4).

“I feel that my professional values now include a stronger commitment to student well-being, equitable access to education. I work directly with programs in Wilmington that have an underserved community there” (P3).

Faculty participants reported that the COVID-19 pandemic deepened their sense of connection with colleagues, as the abrupt shift to online teaching required increased collaboration and mutual support. The challenges of adapting to new technologies and instructional methods fostered a spirit of camaraderie, with faculty sharing resources, strategies, and encouragement despite physical separation. This period highlighted the importance of peer support, leading even previously skeptical faculty to recognize online education as a vital component of the future of higher education. While many maintained their core professional values, the experience prompted a re-evaluation of teaching philosophies, with greater emphasis on flexibility, inclusivity, and holistic student support. Faculty who were experienced in online teaching expressed empathy for colleagues facing steep learning curves, reinforcing a culture of support and shared learning. Overall, the pandemic catalyzed a shift toward more collaborative,

adaptive, and student-centered approaches, with educators embracing new technologies and prioritizing student well-being alongside academic standards.

Self-Reflection on Professional Values

Faculty participants' reflections on the shift to fully online teaching revealed both challenges and growth. While some initially struggled with technology and student engagement, many recognized the potential of online learning. The experience led to faculty recognizing student needs, especially regarding equitable access and diverse learning styles. Faculty emphasized the ongoing need for professional development and adapting teaching methods. Concerns were raised about the preparedness of students entering higher education, particularly in critical thinking skills. Ultimately, the transition prompted deeper self-reflection, renewed passion for teaching, and a commitment to continuous improvement in supporting student success.

“Yeah, it just it really changed my whole idea of teaching. I mean. I had always been an old fashioned in the classroom teacher. And when we went online it made me realize there are so many possibilities to teaching and learning” (P1).

“It really helped me understand that there's a continuous need for training to regenerate ideas and get new energy from conferences and professional development, even online professional development and LinkedIn Learning tutorials are beneficial” (P4).

“I don't really think it changed my attitude towards teaching, because, like, I said. because I did my last two degrees online my professors were so engaging that it gave me a positive attitude about online learning. And so, because I already had that positive attitude coming into the pandemic. it allowed me to use a positive attitude for my courses to my students” (P2).

“I am more aware of the student’s needs than I was before” (P5).

“Initially it was a hard transition for me. I really reconsidered other careers, because it felt like it was hard to figure out how to engage students in the beginning. One of my classes was for California Indian Nations College, which is a sister school partnership with our current institution and students either didn't have their camera on or they couldn't because of their Internet connection. These are students on reservation, right? And so, if you don't have enough Internet stability you can't have your camera on. You can't. You could barely even talk. You speak like a robot. Right? There were moments I was teaching to black boxes. I feel like I'm talking to myself. That was really hard. I had to figure out how to engage students. We couldn't force them to turn on their camera because that can be an issue, especially if students didn't have Internet access the way we did. Initially, it made me not want to do it no more. Now, that time has passed, I see the eagerness of students wanting to reconnect and engage. So, you know, my passion is sparked again” (P9).

“That's a tough one. I think our education system from kindergarten on has changed greatly. I'm more worried about my grandsons and what they are or not receiving. I asked them what he did today. He tells me that his teacher, told them to open their Chromebook and do assignments, 1-3 while she sat there and talked to a friend on the phone. That bothers me because it's affecting students when they get into college” (P10).

While the transition to fully online teaching had its challenges, it also led to a greater reflection on teaching including the need for flexibility and the importance of meeting students where they are. The emergency transition to fully online learning during the pandemic changed the attitudes of faculty toward teaching. Some faculty participants initially found the shift to online teaching overwhelming but recognized its potential. They saw value in how technology

could facilitate learning even when students and faculty were geographically apart. Many faculty expressed the importance of continuous improvement to their teaching practices and ongoing professional development. They noticed that some colleagues were not engaging in these opportunities and shared concerns about the quality of online education. Many faculty highlighted an increased awareness of student needs and a greater focus on ensuring equitable access to learning. One faculty participant emphasized the importance of adapting assignments to accommodate diverse student strengths and making learning accessible for everyone, which became more urgent during the pandemic. Some faculty shared the emotional toll the transition had on their teaching, especially with issues like poor student engagement due to technical limitations (e.g., students not having access to computers, cameras, and the Internet). The transition initially caused frustration and a reevaluation of their career, but over time, they regained their enthusiasm as students showed eagerness to reconnect. Faculty raised concerns about the quality of K-12 education, particularly regarding to how students were being prepared for higher education. They noted that students seemed to lack basic skills like critical thinking, which impacted their ability to succeed in college-level assignments.

Future of Online Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the landscape of online education, particularly within the California Community Colleges (CCCs). As Chancellor Lizette Navarette observed, higher education has been permanently disrupted, and there is no returning to pre-pandemic norms. The future of online education promises to expand opportunities for lifelong growth, adaptability, and success.

“My attitude about that (the future of online education) really hasn't changed. My philosophy again, maybe that's changed a little bit” (P7).

“Well, my attitude is, it's coming, it's here, it's not going away. It's going to be the dominant way people learn in the future. That's my attitude. So, we better get on board and understand how to make it the best experience we can deliver, because if we can't, somebody else is going to figure it out” (P8).

“I advocate for ongoing professional development for faculty to effectively use the digital tools and creating support system for online students. The students need our help. We need help. We're all students. We all need to keep learning. And I hope that we can, you know, continue to learn about these new technologies that are fantastic” (P4).

“I think online education is going to continue to grow. I've always felt that. So that has never changed. I started teaching online when it was almost like an afterthought. No one really thought about it that much and I think it's going to be something that's gonna continue to grow” (P2).

“Let's do it the best we can. Let's give them the best educational experience we can, because this is the next generation or you know, the next working-class generation for sure. Let's get them ready. Let's get them prepared. And because I think our society is dependent on that... I really think if you've got a set of values regarding your approach to teaching or your approach to life, or whatever, just because you go through a pandemic, there wouldn't have been strong values if they changed” (P8).

The future of online education will likely center on hybrid modalities that blend in-person and online strengths. Success will depend on ongoing professional development for faculty, investments in technology, and strong student support systems. Faculty participants adapted by reflecting on their teaching strategies, attitudes, and adapting to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Faculty experiences during the pandemic have been pivotal in shaping the

future of distance education. Initially, many instructors faced the abrupt transition to online teaching with uncertainty, often lacking familiarity with digital tools. Over time, as faculty adapted and gained confidence, they discovered new opportunities for flexible course design and innovative student engagement. This period also fostered a shift toward more empathetic teaching practices, as faculty recognized the importance of supporting student well-being alongside academic achievement. By embracing innovation while upholding educational values, institutions can create more inclusive, high-quality learning environments that prepare students for a dynamic future and support lifelong learning.

As campuses reopened, a discord emerged between institutional preferences for on-campus instruction and student demand for continued online or hybrid options. This highlighted the necessity of integrating online learning as a permanent component of higher education, rather than a temporary response to a crisis. Despite ongoing challenges with increased workloads and fatigue due to adapting to new technology, faculty demonstrated resilience, reflecting on their experiences and reaffirming their commitment to student success. Ongoing professional development for educators, investment in technological infrastructure, and robust support systems for students will be essential for the future of online education. By embracing innovation while remaining grounded in core educational values, institutions can create inclusive, high-quality learning environments that prepare faculty and students for a rapidly changing world.

Unexpected Findings

During this research, the researcher identified a few unexpected findings that provided valuable insight into the experiences of faculty during the transition to fully online teaching.

1. Faculty participants who had already been teaching online prior to March 2020 reported that they did not need to update their course content. This suggests that their course

materials were either already well-adapted to the online environment or that the foundational content remained relevant and effective over time. However, this challenges the assumption to maintain quality in courses it is necessary to review and update courses on a 5-year schedule.

2. The significant challenges experienced by faculty who had no prior experience or training in teaching fully online. For these faculty, the transition was not simply a matter of moving materials to a digital platform. Instead, they faced steep learning curves in mastering new technologies, redesigning course structures, and engaging students in a virtual format. This highlights the importance of providing comprehensive training and support for faculty who are new to online teaching, as lack of preparation can lead to increased stress and reduced instructional effectiveness.
3. The study revealed that many community colleges were not prepared to transition to a fully online modality. This lack of preparedness was evident in areas such as technology infrastructure, availability of online resources, and institutional support for both faculty and students. The sudden shift exposed gaps in planning and resource allocation, emphasizing the need for institutions to invest in online education systems and contingency planning.

These unexpected findings underscore the complexity of transitioning to online education. This highlights the different levels of online teaching experience among faculty and the preparedness of community colleges. It points to the necessity of ongoing support, training, and infrastructure development to ensure successful online teaching and learning experiences.

Summary

Faculty participants experienced significant challenges during the rapid transition to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including limited preparation time and uncertainty. Despite these obstacles, most faculty adapted their teaching methods to be more student-centered that prioritized engagement, accessibility, and empathy. The transition highlighted the importance of understanding students' diverse circumstances, including access to technology and personal hardships that led to more inclusive teaching and grading practices. They adopted new technologies and digital tools to enhance learning, including video conferencing, interactive platforms, and digital resources. Many redesigned assignments and course materials to be more accessible and relevant, while fostering a sense of community through virtual interactions and peer engagement. Grading became more flexible and focused on participation, improvement, and multiple ways for students to demonstrate learning. Teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic prompted many faculty to reflect on and revise their teaching philosophies, emphasizing adaptability, empathy, and student well-being. Professional collaboration and mutual support among colleagues increased, especially as experienced online educators assisted those less familiar with online teaching. While some faculty maintained their core values, most recognized the need for ongoing professional development and a commitment to continuous improvement. Faculty participants acknowledged that online education is a lasting and transformative part of higher education. The pandemic underscored the need higher quality, inclusive online experiences and reinforced the importance of adaptability, community, resources for students, and continued professional opportunities for faculty as education continues to evolve.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter revisits key parts of the research study, beginning with an overview of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the two research questions. It then connects the framework to the findings, relates the findings to the literature, and discusses implications for practice. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and concluding remarks about the study.

Overview of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic caused education to transition to a fully online modality in March 2020; it forced many faculty to adapt to a new way of teaching. This abrupt disruption forced faculty to change their teaching practices and learn new technology. While some colleges did not prepare faculty for this transition, many colleges did provide distance educational training for faculty on creating and delivering content, assessing student performance, and developing strategies to maintain student engagement and accessibility in an online environment (Meyer & Murrell, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

This study examined faculty teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic to understand their challenges, identify improved teaching strategies, and learn what new tools and technologies they used. It also sought to know if the faculty changed their attitudes, philosophies, or values because of what they experienced.

Research Questions

1. What new teaching innovations have Southern California community college faculty developed because of the challenges they faced during the emergency transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. What changes in attitudes, philosophy, or values related to teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic did faculty make?

Connecting the Framework to the Findings

Connecting the conceptual framework to the findings of this research study was based on Mezirow's transformational learning theory. This transformational theory helped to explain what many faculty participants experienced when confronted with disorientating dilemmas like the COVID-19 pandemic (Mezirow, 1978). The experiences of transitioning to fully online teaching during the pandemic was different to each faculty participants. The same situation among the faculty was transformed differently depending on their individual life experiences, needs, skills, resources, and ability to adapt. Mezirow's 10-phase process begins with phase one, a disorientating dilemma—the COVID-19 pandemic. The second phase is about self-reflection and how faculty felt about the disruption to their educational environment. Phase three involved faculty questioning their assumptions about online learning and critically assessing what they would do next. In phase four, faculty recognized that they were not alone and that others were experiencing similar challenges. Phase five is where they explored new roles, relationships, resources and sought out professional development opportunities. In the sixth phase, they planned a course of action updating their course syllabi and adopting new digital tools to improve student engagement and success. In phase seven, faculty acquired new knowledge to help them with new technology and ways to improve their teaching in a variety of modalities. Phase eight, guides faculty through experiencing new behaviors and perspectives to adapt to the new paradigm. Phase nine is about faculty building confidence and competencies in teaching in an online environment. Finally, phase 10 presented the way faculty reintegrated their new perspectives into their teaching life. It is important to note that not all faculty participants

experienced every single phase, nor did they go through the phases in the same order or intensity as their fellow participants.

Relating Findings to the Literature

In this study, the researcher examined community college faculty experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic using Mezirow's (1978) transformational learning theory 10 phase process model. Findings revealed challenges faculty participants faced, identified improved teaching strategies, and learned what new tools and technologies they used. This study also analyzed what changes they made to their attitudes, philosophies, and values because of what they experienced. This section discusses the relationship between the findings and existing literature. As previously discussed, few studies explored faculty perspectives, particularly on changes in teaching philosophies, values, and attitudes.

Community college faculty have demonstrated over the years the ability to adapt in response to societal needs, from supporting farmers and veterans to serving diverse student populations. While higher education has previously faced disruptions from epidemics, the scale and speed of the COVID-19 pandemic were unprecedented. As a result, many faculty participants encountered significant challenges transitioning to fully online teaching. This study addressed the gap in the literature to highlight the need to understand how crisis-driven change can inform educative practices.

Relating RQ1 Themes to Previous Research

RQ1 asked, what new teaching innovations have Southern California community college faculty developed because of the challenges they faced during the emergency transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Adapting to Online Education

Faculty participants faced many challenges transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, often with little preparation time and at first apprehension. As faculty recognized the varied circumstances and needs of their students, including issues of technology access, financial hardship, and social isolation, these experiences fostered greater empathy by being more student-centered through emphasizing engagement, accessibility, and recognizing students' diverse learning styles. Prior to March 2020, teaching online was optional, and few faculty members chose to do so. Faculty who had never taught online had to adapt to delivering their course content in a fully online environment. This experience led some faculty participants to consider early retirement. Many of the pandemic's lessons pertain to the fundamentals of effective education rather than technological advancement (Lewis, 2023).

There are few examples of previous research on how faculty adapting to online education however, according to a 2016 national survey by Tyton Partners of 3,500 faculty and administrators highlighted many obstacles to transitioning to distance education. Colleges claimed online learning was strategic, however, actual implementation and outcomes were varied, undermining stakeholder buy-in and making impact measurement difficult (Tyton Partners, 2016). Faculty are essential to online learning success, yet many report insufficient support and inconsistent access to instructional technology resources. Nearly a quarter of faculty surveyed were unaware of or lacked access to teaching support services. Students experienced inconsistent course quality, tools, and communication which led to frustration and stress. Administrators agreed that faculty are important advocates for the success of online learning but noted that the limited time to adapt, the inadequate training were challenging, and decision-making about digital learning remains decentralized. The study suggests that addressing these

gaps is crucial to realizing the full benefits of digital learning for students and institutions (Tyton Partners, 2016).

Increased Use of Technology

During COVID-19, many faculty struggled to learn and adopt new digital tools and technologies, such as electronic pens, green screens, and Microsoft Surface Pro tablets, to enhance remote teaching. DeCoito (2022) found that 42% of teachers struggled with technological barriers, such as unreliable internet connections, insufficient equipment, and the additional responsibility of helping students resolve IT issues. Adapting digital resources to fit curricular and student needs was also demanding. Nearly a third of educators (29%) reported difficulties finding free, high-quality digital materials, especially for language immersion programs that needed bilingual resources. The time educators spent learning new technologies or searching for resources often detracted from instructional time and complicated efforts to accurately assess student learning (Smith et al., 2016). Yeung et al. (2018) showed that 27% of teachers found online evaluation challenging, with concerns about plagiarism effecting assessment authenticity. These obstacles highlighted the need for professional development focused on online teaching tools and digital pedagogy (Davis et al., 2007).

However, faculty learned to adopt digital tools to enrich their online courses by using Canvas, Zoom, LinkedIn Learning, direct links to online resources, and campus services. They used online tools like Zoom and Panopto to record, edit, and share video content via Canvas. They also increased engagement opportunities with students through Zoom sessions, announcements, emails, and weekly reminders that helped sustain connections and support for students. To maintain student motivation and interaction, faculty participants integrated interactive discussions, peer feedback assignments, and collaborative learning opportunities. This

shift supported a student-centered and equitable approach, providing flexibility, collaboration, and engagement in the online classroom environment.

Alternative Grading Practices

During the COVID-19 pandemic, community college faculty adapted their grading practices to better support students facing unprecedented challenges. While some instructors prioritized maintaining academic rigor and consistency with the course outline of record (COR), many adopted more flexible and holistic approaches. These strategies included accepting late assignments, developing assignments in multiple ways for students to demonstrate what they learned, and placing greater emphasis on participation, engagement, and improvement. Faculty recognized students' health and family obligations, reflecting a shift toward personalized and student-centered assessment. Overall, these changes aimed to balance high academic standards with compassion, ensuring that learning and skill development remained central even as external circumstances disrupted conventional classroom practices.

There are few examples of previous research about alternative grading practices from the faculty perspective. However, according to a 2020 national survey by Tyton Partners of 1,102 community college faculty revealed that the shift to remote learning during COVID-19 posed significant challenges, particularly in grading assignments and monitoring student progress. Faculty also reported a lack of institutional and instructional preparedness, inconsistent student experiences, limited student access and readiness. They were concerned whether colleges could effectively address these issues. (Tyton Partners, 2020).

Student-Centered Engagement Methods

Faculty participants adopted creative, flexible strategies to foster student engagement, especially in online and hybrid courses. They used online syllabi that included student resources,

online etiquette guidelines, and mental health support. They used Canvas LMS tools such as discussion boards, calendars, and Zoom sessions to create interactive, collaborative learning environments. Faculty prioritized student engagement and provided personalized feedback, shifting focus from grades to student development. Assignments were created to promote collaboration and active participation among students. These approaches reflected student-centered learning, emphasizing accessibility, well-being, and active participation to support student success.

According to previous research from the “3-in-1 Hybrid Learning Environment” study by Hapke, Lee-Post, and Dean who examined how 829 Marketing Management students responded to flexible course delivery options. These modalities included fully online, face-to-face, or hybrid, some were implemented during COVID-19 restrictions. The researchers of the study used university records and student surveys, to assess emotional, behavioral, cognitive engagement, and learning outcomes (Hapke et al., 2020). The study also found that using hybrid modality required faculty to manage both technology and student engagement to ensure effective engagement and content delivery. This approach highlighted how adaptable teaching methods and technological proficiency could foster student-centered engagement in diverse learning environments (Hapke et al., 2020).

Changes to Course Content

Faculty who were already teaching online made few changes to their course content during COVID-19, but those transitioning from in-person formats needed to increase organization and adapt content. Many faculty participants incorporated LinkedIn Learning, direct links to resources, and interactive elements to increase equitable engagement. Their syllabi became a digital embedded document that students had access to 24/7. It was updated with

online etiquette guidelines and course materials and student support services. However, faculty participants in fields like nutrition, accounting, and statistics, or those already online before March 2020, reported little to no change in course content during the transition.

Lejion & Lundgren (2019) highlighted the complexity of teaching in hybrid-flexible (Hyflex) environments, where faculty must navigate physical, virtual, and transitional learning spaces. Effective teaching in these settings demanded a diverse skill set, adapting course content, and a willingness to relinquish some traditional classroom control in favor of dynamic, technology-enhanced interaction. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, online teaching was optional and rarely adopted by full-time faculty. The sudden shift to fully online modality required many faculty participants to quickly adapt to unfamiliar technologies, prompting some to consider early retirement. Research shows that the most significant lessons from this period relate to the core principles of effective teaching practices, rather than technological innovation alone (Lewis, 2023). To support student success during this time required administrators to engage with faculty to identify the most effective tools, teaching methods, and delivery modalities for both current and future needs (Santos & Pinheiro, 2022).

Relating RQ2 Themes to Previous Research

RQ2 asked, what changes in attitudes, philosophies, or values related to teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic did faculty make?

Attitudes Toward Teaching Online

Many faculty participants discussed how they were already prepared to transition during the pandemic because they were already teaching online. Faculty participants discussed how the transition made them more concerned for their students. Some faculty participants saw the transition to online as a positive, innovative way to use more technology in the classroom. Not

all faculty transitioned quickly to online teaching, but they found the strength and to stay positive for their students. Several faculty participants discussed how they prioritized improving their teaching and highlighted the importance of understanding their students' lives beyond the classroom.

According to a previous survey by the RP Group. The survey revealed that over half of the faculty surveyed had no prior experience with distance education before March 2020, and many struggled with work-life balance and increased workloads during the abrupt shift to online teaching (Kerr-Sims & Baker, 2020). Research showed that some faculty participants were less confident in the quality of their online teaching skills compared to their on-campus classes. According to Ker-Sims and Baker (2020), faculty reported feeling less confident with their online teaching. They felt that it did not match the quality of their on-campus instruction. The transition to online teaching also led to concerns about reduced student engagement and performance, with tenured faculty more likely to perceive negative impacts. In response to the pandemic, institutions adopted various instructional modalities, including traditional on-campus, hybrid, synchronous, and asynchronous online formats, to provide flexibility. Despite these, faculty reported that online teaching limited their interaction with students and posed challenges in maintaining instructional quality and student engagement (Kerr-Sims & Baker, 2020).

Teaching Values Through a Student-Centered Lens

During the pandemic, faculty maintained their core values but shifted their attitudes toward a more student-centered. They were more empathetic once they recognized the impact of anxiety, isolation, and personal hardships on students' academic performance. Many adopted student-centered practices, such as allowing assignment resubmissions and adjusting deadlines. Faculty also became more aware of inequities in students' access to technology and resources.

The return to campus highlighted tensions between institutional expectations and student preferences for online learning, prompting reflection on teaching methods, and a deeper understanding of students' lives beyond the classroom.

According to a 2020 Canadian mixed-methods study (DeCoito, 2022) found that, beyond addressing the digital divide, educators transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic required additional professional development. Important training needs to be included managing classroom environments and professional responsibilities, fostering student engagement, addressing technical challenges with equity in mind, finding appropriate digital resources, assessing student work, plagiarism, and navigating leadership. The Canadian study revealed that 51% of teachers identified time management and balancing personal circumstances as their primary challenge. They noted blurred boundaries between work and home that negatively impacted their mental health. Community college instructors, already facing heavy workloads (Grubb, 2002), reported feeling obligated to be constantly available and noted that developing and accessing online materials demanded significant extra time outside regular hours. These findings highlighted the importance of supporting faculty, recognizing both the technical and personal demands of online teaching while facilitating student-centered learning environments (Grubb, 2002).

Comradery and Concerns for Colleagues

The researcher was unable to locate literature related to faculty concerns about their colleagues. The COVID-19 pandemic deepened faculty participants' sense of interconnectedness, prompting increased collaboration and encouraging mutual support as they adapted to online teaching. While core professional values remained, educators shifted their focus toward flexibility, inclusivity, and holistic student support. Faculty with prior online

teaching experience expressed empathy for colleagues facing difficulties adapting to the abrupt transition to online teaching. The experience fostered camaraderie, collaboration and the legitimacy and value of online education.

Self-Reflection on Professional Values

Faculty participants mentioned that they maintained their core professional values while teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, some faculty attitudes and teaching philosophies changed during the transition to fully online education. At first, faculty resisted moving to fully online teaching, due to not having any online teaching experience, but they eventually learned to recognize its benefits. This shift fostered greater empathy for students, prompting increased attention to student well-being by sharing supportive practices. Upon returning to campus, faculty noted a disconnect between administrative preferences for on-campus instruction and strong student demand for online options, highlighting the need for institutions to integrate online education while upholding traditional academic values.

According to previous research, there needs to be continuous processes of evaluating teaching practices before, during, and after instruction (Womack, 2022). Through Reflective Methodology Teaching (RMT), faculty can assess what works, what can improve, and what needs to change, fostering growth in academia (Maksimovic & Osmanovic, 2018). This reflective process increases self-awareness, encouraging faculty to examine their beliefs, values, and biases, and to consider their impact on students (Maksimovic & Osmanovic, 2018). Practitioners of RMT are more open-minded and collaborative, sharing insights and experiences to drive a positive change in the classroom. Ultimately, reflective practice is essential for ongoing professional development and enhancing the quality of teaching (Womack, 2022).

Future of Online Education

Some faculty participants experienced significant changes in their attitudes and teaching philosophies during the transition to online education. At first, these faculty participants resisted the move due to the lack of online teaching experience and training, while others had prior experience teaching online classes. As they adapted, many recognized the benefits of online teaching, which helped foster more positive attitudes. Faculty became concerned for students' well-being, integrating practices to address anxiety, isolation, and stress. Upon returning to campus, tensions rose between administrative pushes for in-person learning and strong student demand for online options. This highlighted the need for institutions to balance traditional educational values with evolving preferences for flexible learning. Despite the gradual return to campus, faculty morale often remained low, impacted by ongoing challenges, increased workloads, and perceived lack of institutional support. Even so, the experience prompted reflection and adaptation, positioning online education as a vital part of the future academic landscape.

According to previous research, prior to March 2020, community college faculty were hesitant to teach online, often citing concerns about the time investment required to develop online courses and doubts about the quality of online education compared to traditional classroom instruction (Garza, 2014). Despite the potential of online learning, its implementation across institutions had been inconsistent. Historically, faculty roles focused on delivering content through on-campus lectures, with limited emphasis on online platforms (Vaughn et al., 2013). As online education continues to evolve, understanding and leveraging course modalities will be essential for faculty and institutions aiming to meet diverse student needs and improve educational outcomes (Vaughn et al., 2013).

Implications for Practice

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally transformed the landscape of higher education, particularly in the California Community Colleges (CCCs). As Chancellor Lizette Navarette noted, “higher education has been disrupted forever” (Burke et al., 2022). There is no returning to the pre-pandemic status quo, instead, CCCs must proactively adapt and innovate, drawing on the lessons learned to better prepared to serve their diverse student populations. The post-pandemic era demands that California Community Colleges remain flexible, student-focused, and technologically ready. The following recommendations present implications for practice and provide specific, actionable steps for community colleges to become more effective, equitable, and resilient institutions.

Adopt a More Student-Centered Approach

A student-centered approach means understanding and responding to the diverse needs, and challenges that students face. This approach acknowledges that students are not all the same. That many juggle work, family responsibilities, and financial pressures while pursuing their education. A student-centered approach in community colleges’ means creating an environment where all students have the support and resources they need to thrive. To create a student-centered campus, CCCs should:

- Expand mental health and wellness resources, including counseling and crisis support.
- Offer flexible course scheduling, including hybrid and online modalities as well as evening, weekend, and accelerated on-campus options.
- Provide individualized support for students balancing work, school and caregiving responsibilities.
- Improve access to financial aid, basic needs, and housing assistance.

Faculty became more empathetic towards students' circumstances. They shifted their focus to accommodating students' diverse challenges, such as mental health struggles, family responsibilities, lack of resources, and those with non-traditional schedules or life circumstances. A key aspect of a student-centered approach is expanding mental health and wellness resources. Many students experience stress, anxiety, or other mental health concerns that can affect their academic performance. By making it easier for student to get the help they need, offering more counseling services, crisis support, and wellness programs, colleges can help students manage these challenges to continue with their studies and complete their educational goals. Flexibility in course scheduling is another important factor. Not all students attend classes during traditional hours. By expanding mental health services, offering flexible scheduling, providing targeted support, and addressing basic needs, colleges can help ensure that every student has a better chance to succeed.

Embrace the Dual Importance of Online and On-Campus Education

The paradigm shifts in higher education, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted the essential roles of both online and on-campus learning in CCCs. To serve the diverse needs of today's students, CCCs should:

- Offer a variety of course modalities, ensuring that students have choices that fit their learning preferences and schedules.
- Invest in learning management systems and technical support for both students and faculty.
- Regularly assess and improve course quality through peer review and student feedback.

Faculty participants who changed their perceptions of online education have led to more online course offerings. More faculty who initially resisted online teaching still teach online even

when they returned to teaching on-campus. Online education provides flexibility and accessibility, enabling students to participate from anywhere at any time so they can manage work and family responsibilities. Self-paced learning, recorded lectures, and diverse digital resources can enhance engagement and accommodate various learning styles. On-campus classes provide multiple ways for students to learn, immediate feedback, collaborative learning, and online access to libraries and laboratories, which are crucial for academic and personal development.

To serve the diverse needs of today's students, CCCs should invest in continuous faculty training, and reliable technical support, and innovative infrastructure while maintaining strong on-campus programs. Regular evaluation of both modalities, through faculty and student feedback, ensures ongoing improvement and effectiveness. By embracing and enhancing both online and on-campus education, CCCs can deliver inclusive, high-quality learning experiences that support student success and institutional resilience in an ever-changing educational landscape.

Foster Stronger Collaboration Among Faculty

Collaboration among faculty has proven essential for sharing resources, strategies, and mutual support. To encourage this culture of collaboration, CCCs should:

- Create structured opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, such as faculty communities of practice and cross-departmental workshops.
- Encourage mentorship programs that pair experienced faculty with newer instructors.
- Recognize and reward collaborative efforts in faculty evaluations and professional advancement.

Faculty recognized the value of collaboration and the need to share resources, strategies, and mutual support. As a result, faculty built stronger professional relationships and developed new skills together. Community colleges need to make intentional efforts that promote meaningful connections between instructors across disciplines. Establishing faculty communities of practice to unite faculty from diverse departments to exchange teaching practices, discuss innovative pedagogy, and address shared challenges. Developing and offering cross-departmental workshops and collaborative curriculum design sessions can foster interdisciplinary dialogue and spark creative approaches to instruction. Implementing mentorship programs further strengthen faculty bonds. By pairing seasoned faculty with newer colleagues, institutions can facilitate the transfer of institutional knowledge, effective teaching strategies, and professional guidance. Such relationships nurture a sense of belonging and shared purpose, benefiting both mentors and mentees. Incentives such as awards or dedicated professional development funds can further motivate the faculty to engage in joint initiatives. With ongoing commitment from college leadership, this community of practice will enrich the educational experience for faculty and students, leading to improved campus culture, learning outcomes and institutional success.

Address Faculty Morale and Workload

Ongoing challenges related to workload and institutional support have impacted faculty morale. To address this, CCCs should:

- Strive for a balanced ratio of full-time to part-time faculty, increasing full-time appointments where possible.
- Monitor and manage class sizes to prevent faculty overload and ensure quality instruction.

- Provide regular forums for faculty to voice concerns and contribute to decision-making.

With ongoing challenges in workload, institutional support, and the broader impact of the pandemic, some faculty participants reported their morale remains low. When faculty are supported and their workloads are manageable, they are more effective educators and contributors to student success. Excessive teaching loads, large class sizes, and insufficient institutional support can erode morale and diminish instructional quality. To address these issues, CCCs should prioritize increasing the number of full-time to part-time faculty ratios. Full-time instructors are more available for student mentorship, curriculum development, and campus engagement, which enhances educational outcomes and college culture. Balancing class sizes is also essential. Smaller class size allows faculty to provide individualized feedback and foster interactive learning environments, benefiting both students and instructors. Providing regular opportunities for faculty to share concerns and participate in decision-making processes also strengthen morale by ensuring their voices are heard and valued. Open communication channels help identify and resolve issues collaboratively, building trust and commitment. CCCs need to create a more supportive environment that improves faculty well-being and elevates the campus culture and educational experiences for all members of the college community.

Integrate Technology Across All Modalities

Faculty participants employed innovative instructional strategies, such as technology-driven learning experiences. They use online applications, tools, resources, and content delivery options to improve online learning. Updating current technology across all teaching modalities is essential for CCCs to foster student engagement, improve learning outcomes, and prepare students for a rapidly evolving workforce. To integrate technology requires CCCs to:

- Ensure all classrooms are equipped with up-to-date technology and reliable internet access.
- Offer ongoing training in innovative educational technology and digital literacy.
- Support faculty in developing technology-driven and experiential learning experiences.

CCCs must ensure that both faculty and students have equitable access to digital tools and resources, regardless of whether instruction occurs in-person, online, or through hybrid modalities. Every classroom and learning environment must be equipped with up-to-date technologies, such as computers, software, projectors, and smart boards, as well as high-speed internet access. Faculty should be encouraged and supported to incorporate a variety of digital tools, virtual simulations, collaborative online platforms, and multimedia content into their courses. This will promote diverse learning preferences and better prepare students for the workforce. By prioritizing ongoing training, supporting innovative teaching practices, and maintaining strong infrastructure, CCCs can create inclusive, adaptable, and future-ready learning environments that meet the needs of today's students.

Expand Flexible Online Learning Modalities

Providing flexible online learning modalities are essential for meeting the diverse needs of today's students, many of whom balance academic pursuits with work and family. Offering on-campus, hybrid, Hyflex, fully online and synchronous modalities as well as short term, late start and full semester options support student. To effectively expand these modalities CCCs should:

- Develop faculty training, clear guidelines and best practices for online course design.
- Provide professional development for faculty to effectively teach in hybrid and online modalities.

- Collect data on student outcomes in hybrid courses to inform continuous improvement.

Providing options for students to participate in classes, such as hybrid, on-campus, Hyflex, synchronous, and fully online modalities give them the flexibility to meet their educational goals and handle their busy lives. CCCs should prioritize the development of comprehensive ways to guide and train faculty on the best practices for course design. This involves determining which elements of a course are best suited for online delivery and which are best for on-campus lectures. Colleges should invest in professional development programs that equip instructors with the skills to design and teach engaging hybrid courses. Training should address the use of learning management systems, strategies for fostering student engagement, accessibility, and effective assessment methods. CCCs need to implement systems to collect and analyze data on student outcomes in these courses by comparing metrics such as completion rates, grades, and student satisfaction across different modalities. This way colleges can identify strengths and areas for improvement. This data-driven approach enables continual refinement of online offerings, ensuring they remain responsive to student needs and aligned with institutional goals.

Strengthen Policies and Infrastructure for Distance Education

Distance Education has become a cornerstone of community college instruction, since the COVID-19 pandemic, making digital infrastructure and institutional policies more important than ever. Policy updates should reinforce academic integrity and accessibility. To support equitable access, CCCs must invest in reliable hardware for both students and faculty.

- Invest in digital infrastructure, including hardware, software, and broadband access.
- Update and enforce policies that promote academic integrity and accessibility for online learning.

- Expand access to digital resources, such as virtual libraries and tutoring.

Upgrading and maintaining secure, user-friendly learning management systems and communication platforms is essential for seamless course delivery, engagement, and student success. Equally critical is ensuring universal access to high-speed broadband, so that no student is disadvantaged by their geographic location or economic circumstances. Policy updates should reinforce academic integrity and accessibility. This includes implementing effective measures to prevent cheating and plagiarism, such as online proctoring and plagiarism detection tools, while also protecting student privacy. Accessibility must be prioritized by requiring that all digital content and platforms comply with standards like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), ensuring students with disabilities can fully participate. Expanding digital resources is vital for student success. CCCs should provide comprehensive virtual libraries, 24/7 access to e-books and academic databases, and online tutoring services. These resources help level the playing field for students who may lack access to physical campus facilities or need flexible study schedules. Faculty and staff should receive ongoing professional development in online education and technology use, further enhancing the quality of instruction to improve student success.

CCCs can promote educational continuity, close equity gaps, and create a more inclusive, effective online learning environment for all students by strengthening both policy and infrastructure for distance education.

Establish Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policies

As generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) becomes more integrated into educational environments, CCCs should develop and implement policies to foster digital literacy, uphold

academic integrity, and ensure that AI technologies are leveraged to promote equity and responsible innovation in education. Therefore, CCCs should:

- Develop clear policies on the use of AI in teaching, learning, and assessment.
- Train faculty and students on the capabilities and limitations of AI technologies.
- Encourage critical thinking about the ethical implications of AI in education.

Many faculty recognized the rapid growth of AI tools, such as language models and image and video generators. At the classroom level, faculty need to include policies and procedures to guide students to using AI ethically and responsibly. In addition, CCCs need to adopt an umbrella policy and procedures for using Generative AI across campus. Professional development and training sessions can help faculty understand how to integrate AI tools responsibly, while students should learn to critically assess AI-generated content, recognize potential biases, and verify information accuracy.

To address these issues, CCCs should articulate detailed guidelines specifying when and how AI tools may be used in coursework, assignments, and assessments. Policies should define acceptable boundaries for AI-generated assistance, clarify requirements for originality and citation, and distinguish between legitimate AI support and academic dishonesty.

Promote Digital Literacy for All

As technology becomes increasingly integral to education and the workforce, it is vital that all students and faculty develop strong digital skills. Hence, CCCs should:

- Integrate digital literacy into the curriculum across disciplines.
- Provide workshops and resources to help students and faculty develop essential digital skills.

- Address the digital divide by loaning devices and providing internet access to underserved students.

Community colleges play a key role in advancing digital literacy by embedding it across the curriculum. This means integrating digital tools and assignments into all subject areas, not just computer science. For instance, students might analyze data sets with spreadsheets in science courses or produce multimedia presentations in humanities classes. Beyond classroom integration, colleges should offer workshops and resources to help both students and faculty strengthen their digital literacy. These might include sessions on using learning management systems, conducting effective online research, practicing digital safety, and learning new technologies such as generative artificial intelligence. Recognizing that not everyone has equal access to technology, colleges should also address the digital divide by loaning devices and providing reliable internet access on campus. CCCs must ensure that every student can learn digital skills. Promoting digital literacy for all empowers people to thrive in a technology-driven world and supports a more equitable, inclusive learning environment.

Increase Accessibility and Affordability of Learning Materials

Ensuring that all students have access to affordable learning materials is essential for promoting academic success and equity in higher education. The high price of textbooks and required resources has long posed a significant obstacle, often forcing students to make difficult choices. These financial barriers can hinder student engagement, lower academic performance, and contribute to decreased course completion rates. CCCs can take the following strategic actions to increase the availability and use of affordable learning materials:

- Expand adoption of ZTC and OERs in as many courses as possible.
- Support faculty in developing and curating open-access materials.

- Inform students about cost-saving options at the time of registration.

Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) and Open Educational Resources (OERs) opportunities significantly improve students' access to education by easing financial costs. It also promotes equity, supports student retention, and can lead to higher student success rates. CCCs are increasingly turning to Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) courses and Open Educational Resources (OERs). ZTC courses are structured so that students incur no out-of-pocket expenses for textbooks or required materials. OERs are teaching, learning, and research resources that are freely available, allowing faculty to use, adapt, and share them without restriction. By expanding the adoption of ZTC and OERs, colleges can dramatically reduce the financial burden on students, making higher education more accessible and equitable. CCCs should invest in faculty development by offering training, technical support, and incentives to encourage the creation, adaptation, and implementation of open-access materials. This support ensures that high-quality, up-to-date resources are available across diverse disciplines. Clearly labeling ZTC and OER courses in class schedules and advising materials empowers students to make informed choices about their educational expenses at the point of registration. By systematically prioritizing accessibility and affordability in learning materials, colleges can remove significant barriers to student achievement and foster a more inclusive, supportive learning environment for all.

Commitment to Ongoing Professional Development

Ongoing professional development is essential for faculty to remain effective in an ever-changing educational environment. As new technologies, pedagogical approaches, and student needs emerge, faculty must continuously update their skills to ensure high-quality instruction and equitable learning opportunities. To facilitate this, CCCs should:

- Offer regular workshops on teaching practices, online teaching, student engagement, and new technologies.
- Provide incentives for faculty to pursue advanced training and certifications.
- Provide faculty with professional development funding to attend conferences and workshops.
- Encourage a culture of lifelong learning among all employees of the college.

Ongoing professional development for faculty has become essential to ensure effective learning by staying up to date with technology, digital tools, online education, and student engagement strategies. These sessions can also cover topics like maximizing learning management systems, creating interactive course content, and implementing inclusive teaching strategies that address the diverse backgrounds and learning styles of students. Allocating dedicated funding for faculty to attend academic conferences and external training further supports ongoing learning, allowing instructors to connect with peers, discover emerging trends, and bring innovative practices back to their campuses. Such incentives not only encourage participation but also signals the institution's commitment to faculty growth as it is important part of cultivating a culture of lifelong learning. CCCs should encourage collaboration among faculty, promote reflective teaching practices, and create platforms for sharing effective strategies. By fostering an environment where professional development is a shared responsibility and a continuous process, colleges empower educators to adapt, innovate, and respond to the evolving needs of their students and communities. Hence, CCCs should make a commitment to professional development to strengthen faculty effectiveness, advance equity and inclusion, and enhance institutional resilience

Recommendations for Further Research

As the researcher developed this study and examined the findings, a few topics arose that she was unable to address. The following topics warrant further investigation to contribute valuable insight into the profession.

Disciplinary Differences in Teaching Practices

What results would be discovered if this study's research was conducted by academic discipline? This type of study could yield more specific insights about faculty experiences and teaching practices. Data could identify trends in teaching methods, resource needs, student engagement. Findings could result in tailoring professional development and support programs to improving teaching effectiveness and student outcomes across diverse disciplines.

Variation in Faculty Adaptation

Did faculty in some areas change their teaching practices more than others? Investigating whether faculty in certain fields changed their teaching practices more than others could reveal the influence of disciplinary norms, institutional support, and access to professional development. By measuring the degree of change for each faculty member, researchers can identify patterns and better understand what motivates change within a certain discipline. This information can also reveal whether faculty who participated in professional development or received institutional resources and support were more likely to alter their teaching methods, highlighting the importance of targeted support for effective instructional improvement.

Visible Learning

Based on John Hattie's work on the impact faculty has on students, further study could identify teaching methods that evoke joy in life-long learning, recognize student success without labeling, and measure how they think, understand what is being taught, and learn to listen. What

changes can be made to grading policies that not only evaluate skills but also measure students' ability to find the "aha!" in learning. This could guide the development of more collaborative, inclusive and adaptable teaching strategies.

Campus Climate and Faculty Engagement

Are faculty more involved in campus events, committees, and student support initiatives post-pandemic? Researching this topic could reveal if there was a change to campus climate because of faculty engagement and participation after the COVID-19 pandemic. More research could suggest that when faculty actively participated in campus activities did their students feel more connected and valued? Understanding these dynamics may help institutions foster more inclusive and supportive environments.

Punctuated Theory and the Evolution of Teaching Practices

What would be revealed if research applied biologist Stephen J. Gould's punctuated equilibrium theory to the evolution of innovation in education. Gould's theory describes how species remain relatively unchanged for long periods, only interrupted by brief, intense burst of change. Research could reveal why educational institutions and established teaching practices continue to evolve slowly until triggered by unexpected, dramatic crisis (COVID-19 pandemic) or innovative technological discovery (Generative AI).

Faculty Employment Patterns

The persistent reliance on part-time faculty, particularly in California, raises questions about the effects on student outcomes and institutional culture. Why has hiring full-time faculty in California been limited over the past 40 years to a ratio of 70% part-time/adjunct faculty to 30% full-time faculty? What are the full-time to part-time faculty ratios in other states? In other countries? Why does this practice continue? Does reliance on 70% part-time faculty impact

student retention and success rates? Research could clarify the long-term impacts of these employment patterns on students, faculty, and the institution.

Shared Governance and Faculty Voice

Investigating faculty involvement in shared governance, especially in the context of regulatory frameworks like California's Title 5 "10+1" law, could shed light on how California community college faculty are participating in shared governance. How has the challenges of remote learning and rapid changes during the pandemic affected faculty voices in shaping college policies and engagement in these governance structures?

Teaching Modality and Student Success

More research is needed on how different teaching modalities (in-person, online, hybrid, Hyflex) affect student success, and how students choose modalities that best fit their learning preferences and circumstances. Does teaching modality affect student success rates? What factors do student learning preferences and circumstances determine their choice of course modality? How do students know what course modality is best for them? Special attention should be given to the effectiveness and challenges of teaching in a Hyflex learning environment post-pandemic. What's more, how effective is Hyflex as a teaching modality post-pandemic? Does it create more challenges than the other modalities? What factors contribute to this modality's adoption by faculty?

Concluding Remarks

Distance education has undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving from 19th-century correspondence courses to today's sophisticated digital learning environments. Internet access and digital technologies have made online education a global phenomenon, reaching millions of learners and reshaping traditional educational paradigms. The COVID-19 pandemic

accelerated this shift, forcing institutions to rapidly adopt virtual classrooms and invest in technology to support digital infrastructure, thereby highlighting both the potential and the challenges of remote learning.

The sudden transition caused many challenges to faculty participants. However, some faculty participants reported thriving in this environment, enjoying the integration of new technology and the ability to innovate. Faculty with prior online experience saw it as an opportunity to enhance course creativity and student engagement. Other faculty participants, with no prior online teaching experience, struggled but eventually came to adapt to teaching online. They realized that the online teaching environment could be aligned with their teaching practices. Before the pandemic, skepticism about the effectiveness of online education was prevalent among educators, especially those who had taught exclusively in-person. The urgency of adapting to online teaching created a need for faculty to share resources, strategies, and mutual support, leading to a sense of camaraderie. The pandemic caused some faculty participants to rethink their professional values, identity, and purpose, shifting their focus from content delivery to holistic student support. Faculty participants redefined their teaching philosophies to emphasize flexibility, inclusivity, and the integration of emerging technologies, such as generative artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence (AI) enables personalized learning by adapting content and feedback to individual student needs, while virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) create immersive, interactive experiences that simulate real-world scenarios. Learning analytics empowers faculty to monitor student progress and intervene proactively, and cloud computing ensures that resources and collaboration tools are accessible from anywhere. The ubiquity of mobile devices further enhances flexibility, allowing students to engage with coursework on their own schedules.

The benefits of distance education are many. It maximizes accessibility, breaking down geographic and socioeconomic barriers to high-quality instruction. Flexible scheduling allows learners to balance education with work and family responsibilities, and digital delivery can reduce costs associated with commuting and materials. Adaptive technologies support personalized learning paths, and the online format facilitates lifelong learning, enabling people to continuously update their skills. The pandemic fostered stronger collaboration among faculty participants despite their physical separation. Although the isolation of remote work reduces in-person collaboration, the urgency of adapting to online teaching created a need for faculty to share resources, strategies, and mutual support, leading to a sense of camaraderie, becoming more connected online with colleagues, and recognizing the value of shared learning during the challenging transition. Faculty participants, even those previously skeptical, recognized that online education is not only a temporary solution but has a greater part to play of the future of education. Before the pandemic, online education was often considered secondary or less effective to student success. But the forced transition eventually proved its value in meeting the needs of all types of learners.

However, many challenges remain. The digital divide persists, with unequal access to reliable internet and devices exacerbating educational inequalities. Maintaining student engagement in virtual settings can be difficult, particularly for those who thrive on in-person interaction. Ensuring the quality and credibility of online courses requires robust standards and effective assessment, while privacy and data security are ongoing concerns as more educational activities move online. Even as students began re-engaging with education, faculty participants discussed that morale sometimes remained low, with colleagues expressing frustration at institutional leadership and the transition. One might expect the return to some semblance of

normalcy to boost morale. However, ongoing challenges, workload, lack of institutional support, and the broader impact of the pandemic kept morale low for some faculty participants. Many learned to adapt to this new paradigm shift by reflecting on their attitudes, philosophies, and values after teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Rahm Emanuel (2008), “You never want a serious crisis to go to waste. And what I mean by that is an opportunity to do things that you think you could not do before.” Now, five years later, we see that higher education has changed. We find more equity and diversity-minded faculty who expand on the term of excellence by emerging from the pandemic stronger, more hopeful, and better prepared for the future (WSJ, 00:03).

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Appendix A - Alignment Table

Alignment of the problem based on the literature findings, research questions,
framework, and methodology.

Problem	Literature	Purpose	RQs
1. There is a need to understand the paradigm shift that evolved from concentrating on the material to be taught to paying more attention to each student's individual learning process.	"...making our education system better than ever before so that all students receive the excellent education they deserve" (Cardona, 2021, para. 1).	This study identified significant innovative changes in Southern California community college faculty's teaching strategies, after experiencing the emergency transition to fully online instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic.	RQ1: What new teaching innovations have Southern California community college faculty developed because of the challenges they faced during the emergency transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. Lack of existing literature regarding the pedagogical practices of California community college faculty teaching two years after on-campus learning began again could provide insight into the best practices for improving enrollments, student completions and faculty retention moving forward.	<i>"...is highly context-dependent and varies from person to person and organization to organization at multiple levels. Each implementation of HyFlex experiences its own set of faculty challenges and develops a unique set of solutions to these challenges (Beatty, 2019, para. 2).</i>	This study identified significant changes in Southern California community college faculty's teaching attitudes, philosophies, and values after experiencing the emergency transition to fully online instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic.	RQ2: What changes in attitudes, philosophies, or values related to teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic did faculty make?

Appendix B - IRB Approval



TO: George Boggs
Educational Leadership
006
Manhattan, KS 66506

Proposal Number: IRB-12168
Bluemont
Hall

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 04/22/2024

RE: Proposal Entitled, "A post COVID-19 pandemic exploration of strategies, innovations, attitudes and values of California community college faculty.."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written – and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §104(d), category:Exempt Category 2 Subsection ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 04/22/2024 10:50 PM ET

Appendix C - Recruitment Email

Hello!

My name is Mari Abril, and I am a student at Kansas State University in the Doctor of Education program. I am seeking participants for my dissertation research. To be a participant in this study, you must be a community college faculty who was teaching one year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, during the pandemic, and are currently teaching in a Southern California community college.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of community college faculty related to the teaching innovations, strategies, perceptions, and values while teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please review the attached Information Sheet that provides information regarding your privacy and confidentiality in participating in this study. If you would like to proceed with this study, please click on the following link to complete a short survey.

For this research project, I will invite you to participate in an interview through TechConnect Zoom, which will take approximately 30-45 minutes. Your interview will be recorded and transcribed, with all identified information removed and replaced with a pseudonym. Using your responses, I will find common themes from the interviews and email them to all participants for member checking to verify the accuracy of my interpretation.

Your privacy is a very important aspect of the research. As mentioned previously, your name and other identifying characteristics will be given a pseudonym. All recordings will be destroyed after transcription and transcripts will be kept in a password protected flash drive. You will be asked to provide verbal consent at the start of the interview. Thank you for your time. If you are interested in being a potential participant in this study, please email me at mabril@ksu.edu.

Thank you,

Mari Abril
Doctoral Student
Kansas State University
mabril@ksu.edu

Appendix D - Participant Letter

Dear Faculty,

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study. My name is Mari Abril. I am a Professor of Digital Design at College of the Desert in Palm Desert, CA and a graduate learner at Kansas State University working on my doctoral degree.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore what teaching innovations, strategies, attitudes, and values did Southern California community college faculty experience during COVID-19 pandemic.

Participation is anonymous. Neither your name nor any other identifiable information will be shared. It is important for you to participate to discover what changes, if any, community college faculty made to their teaching because of teaching during the pandemic.

Participation in this study involves:

- A time commitment of approximately one hour
- Completion of a 10-question pre-interview intake form using SurveyMonkey
- An interview session via TechConnect Zoom

Your participation is greatly appreciated!

For more information about this study, please contact the researcher, Mari Abril, by email at mabril@ksu.edu or phone at (619) 578-8296.

Thank you!

Mari Abril
Doctoral Student
Kansas State University

Appendix E - Information Sheet

A COVID-19 Pandemic Exploration

of Teaching Strategies, Innovations, Attitudes, and Values

of Southern California Community College Faculty.

Researcher: Mari Abril

Email: mabril@ksu.edu or mabril@collegeofthedesert.edu

Phone: (619) 578-8296

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important study. If you choose to take the survey, and I hope you will, please take your time in answering each question.

Description of the Research

This survey will be used in a research study to explore what changes community college faculty made to their teaching practices because of teaching during the pandemic. The following are a few questions and answers about participation in this study.

What will my participation involve?

You will be asked to answer intake form questions. This intake form will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Are there any risks to me?

There is no perceived risk associated with participating in this survey. This survey is voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating nor for not completing the survey once it is started.

Are there any benefits to me?

No direct benefits to you are expected. However, this study will be valuable in sharing what changes faculty made to their teaching practices because of teaching during the pandemic. You may request a copy of the study once it is published.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

This study is anonymous. Neither your name nor any other identifiable information will be recorded. The study will simply state that the participants are community college faculty.

Whom should I contact if I have questions?

Please contact Mari Abril by email at mabril@ksu.edu or mabril@collegeofthedesert.edu, or by phone at (619) 578-8296 with any questions, comments, or concerns. You may ask questions about the study before and/or after you participate in the survey.

If you have concerns about the way the research was conducted, you may also contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) office at comply@ksu.edu or at (785) 532-3224.

Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study without penalty at any time.

By accessing this survey, you consent to participating in this study.

Appendix F - Preliminary Intake Form

To determine that participants meet the criteria for the sample, this study used SurveyMonkey®, a cloud-based survey tool, to select participants to interview. A preliminary intake form was created using SurveyMonkey® and emailed to potential participants asking the following 10 questions:

1. What is your first and last name?
2. Are you a full or part-time/adjunct faculty?
3. How many years have you been a community college faculty member?
4. At what California community college(s) (CCC) are you currently teaching?
5. Are you Distance Education (DE) certified?
6. If you answered yes to question 4, when did you become DE certified?
7. Did you teach at a CCC one year before March 2020?
8. If you answered yes to question 6, was it online, on-campus, or hybrid?
9. Did you teach during the pandemic?
10. Are you willing to be anonymously interviewed about your experiences teaching before, during, and after the pandemic?
11. What is your email address?

Mari Abril
Doctoral Student
Kansas State University
mabril@ksu.edu

Appendix G - Interview Questions

Interview questions 1-7 sought to answer RQ #1 – What new teaching innovations have Southern California community college faculty developed because of the challenges they faced during the emergency transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

1. Have your current syllabi changed since the pandemic? How?
2. Have you made changes to your course content since the pandemic? What changes have you made?
3. What new tools or strategies did you use to help you during the pandemic?
4. What new teaching innovations have you adopted and continue to use since the pandemic?
5. Has your grading criteria changed since the pandemic? If yes, how?
6. Do you use new or different methods of student engagement since the pandemic? What are those methods?
7. What was/were the most valuable things you discovered from teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic that you now use in your classrooms on a regular basis?

Interview questions 8-14 sought to answer RQ #2 – What changes in attitudes, philosophy, or values related to teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic did faculty make?

8. Discuss how the experience of transitioning to online teaching affected your attitudes, values, and philosophy towards teaching.
9. In what way did the emergency transition affect your attitudes towards teaching online?
10. In what way did the emergency transition affect your attitudes towards teaching in general?

11. Did your experiences during the pandemic cause you to redefine your own teaching philosophies?
12. How have your professional values changed following the pandemic?
13. How has your philosophy about teaching students changed since the pandemic?
14. What are your attitudes, values, and philosophy about the future of online education at your college?

