

## Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

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Responding to a Pandemic: Using Instructor Experiences to Transform the Next Decade of Teaching and Learning

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**Research Domain:** Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

**Abstract:** The pandemic of 2020-21 posed many challenges to teaching and learning in higher education. Our interprofessional team of investigators from a mid-size, midwestern liberal arts university in the United States examined pedagogical shifts of 27 new and experienced faculty in a qualitative study. The aim of this phenomenological investigation was to explore the experiences of faculty members as they made the rapid shift to emergency remote teaching followed by planned distanced learning techniques during the pandemic. Five major themes emerged from this research which include technological, psychological, and pedagogical considerations. These themes are then translated into elements for consideration in teaching and learning in the future. Our research helps to fill the gap of post-pandemic practices by examining the lived experiences of faculty from multiple domains and considering how their practices may inform new models of teaching, learning, and assessment in the next decade.

**Paper:** The spring of 2020 brought sudden changes in higher education. From closed university doors to sudden remote, almost instantaneously-created online courses, college faculty rapidly revised their practices. Some faculty had online teaching experience (Ghazi-Saidi, et al., 2020), yet early indications suggested moving faculty online “overnight” exacted a “human toll,” particularly with regard to learning new “skills” to “keep pace with ongoing technology advancements” (Pelletier, et al., 2021, p. 28; p. 16). There was serious “cognitive overload” with “multi-tasking” and “toggl[ing]” (Miller, 2021, para. 11). During this sudden change, many questions arose for those of us who study teaching and learning since faculty and students became part of the “largest-ever nontraditional teaching experiment” (Glantz, et al., 2021, para. 1). Problems with “infrastructure” and “staff readiness” only made the shift more difficult (Ali, 2020, p. 19-20). Quick funding and infrastructure investment was needed, as well as training (Pelletier, et al., 2021). Certainly “resilience” was a requirement of both faculty and students (Ghazi-Saidi, et al., 2020, p. 380). The opening of the academic year 2020-21 came quickly, but at least with more knowledge of the pandemic that had ravaged our society and a few months’ time to assess and refine our previously-arranged emergency remote teaching practices.

Our interprofessional team of investigators, including three faculty and one graduate health professions student from a mid-size midwestern liberal arts university in the United States, examined pedagogical shifts of 27 new and experienced faculty in a qualitative study. The aim of this phenomenological investigation was to explore the experiences of faculty members as they

made the rapid shift to emergency remote teaching followed by planned distanced learning techniques during the pandemic. Discussion will compare this shift to past literature on pedagogical change, and will consider how the pandemic will change both present and future pedagogical practices.

The faculty were divided into two groups: those with less than two years' experience at our institution and those with more than two years' experience. Given that our new faculty had spent the majority of their time with us during a pandemic, we stratified the group, predicting their perceptions might vary. This purposive sample included faculty from all colleges across the University.

Data consisted of "video tours" of participants' learning management system course sites. Next, investigators conducted semi-structured interviews with participants. Investigators used constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Straus,1967) to identify concepts or features of the faculty experiences. Then, investigators used open and selective coding (Straus & Corbin,1990) of interview transcripts and videos with Dedoose (version 8.3.47b) and multiple readings/viewings until investigators reached agreement.

Our data yields several key themes which include: 1. Student struggles in the midst of multiple stressors indicate the need for instructor flexibility and understanding, 2. On-the-fly innovation occurred rapidly and in surprising ways to make emergency remote teaching possible, 3. There was a serious re-thinking of teaching methods which included the impetus to try new elements which many instructors heretofore had only considered in theory, 4. Mixing asynchronous and synchronous modalities yielded positive results for communication, student learning, and community-building, and 5. There were tangible and unexpected silver linings and challenges amidst the period of lockdowns and rapid social change.

To translate our data into future considerations of teaching techniques and methods in online, hybrid, and face-to-face modalities we consider: 1. Recasting empathy, grace, and flexibility to help students with multiple stressors; 2. Taking less rigid responses to innovation, which includes an openness to experimentation and feedback (and, additionally, consequences to be considered in faculty promotion), 3. Making adjustments when new technologies and resources become available, 4. Rethinking how synchronous and asynchronous modalities can be used to push the limits of both teaching and learning, and 5. Considering how social practices of teaching and learning can lead to multi-modal participatory methods in a post-pandemic world.

The insights gained in this study regarding the sudden shifts to emergency remote teaching and then more purposeful teaching techniques during the mitigation efforts in the 2020-21 academic year will translate into actionable elements in the coming years. Our research helps to fill the gap of post-pandemic practices by examining the lived experiences of faculty from multiple domains and considering how their practices may inform new models of teaching, learning, and assessment in the next decade.

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