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Historically Black Colleges and Universities' Faculty Experiences With Online Course Design

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

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BS, University of South Alabama, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Quality online course design requires course designers to make carefully informed decisions based on current resources and considerations for the learner. Some faculty at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) design online learning without the assistance of instructional designers, training, or a technological infrastructure that supports online learning. To date, there is a shortage of scholarly research about how HBCU faculty design online courses and what supports or barriers exist for them. Thus, this basic qualitative research study aimed to understand faculty's online course design experiences at HBCUs. Instructional design, adult learning theory, and the HBCU context formed the conceptual framework and influenced the research questions. Semistructured, open-ended interviews were conducted with nine HBCU faculty who had participated in an online course design project, followed by open coding and thematic analysis. Four common themes emerged from the interviews: macrolevel factors, collaboration and experience, time and tools, and student-centered design. All themes highlighted the considerations unique to HBCUs but are also similar to broader online learning contexts. This study extends the educational technology and design field of research and may contribute to positive social change by helping faculty and administration consider the influences and resources needed for designing online learning for nontraditional diverse online learner populations. As institutions address concerns faculty observe as risks to student success in online learning, students can receive a higher quality education.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to those who love and work on behalf of HBCUs and online learning, and especially to those advancing the two. Without your willingness, this study would not have been possible. Additionally, this study is dedicated to the influential educators in my life who have planted seeds for me to grow my love of learning and education:

To my maternal great grandmother and grandfather who were educational pioneers, I never met you, but you passed on the importance and value of education.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Effective online learning can be a challenging and complex task when considering the content, audience, and delivery format, such as that of online or distance education (Bright, 2020). Creating online courses requires intentional design because online learners typically need to interact with the learning content without instructor guidance or an in-depth review (Torun, 2020). University faculty tasked with designing an online course implement a formal or informal instructional design (ID) process (Baldwin et al., 2018). The ID of online higher education courses uses systematic models, learning principles, and strategies that focus on learning events and human learning processes, which involves analyzing course design decisions around the audience, course objectives, content, assessments, and structure, to name a few (Baldwin et al., 2018; Hodges et al., 2020). Quality online education depends on careful ID decisions that impact learners' cognitive experience (Bright, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020). In short, ID is the science of developing and organizing instructional material and content to meet learning outcomes (Halupa, 2019).

Many sectors apply ID, including higher education, K-12, government, military, businesses, and healthcare (Nworie, 2022). The primary function to elicit learning for knowledge transfer and skill development is predominately the same regardless of the sector ID is applied, although the process employed and for which audience may vary (Uzunboylu & Kosucu, 2020). Many instructional designers in higher education work primarily with faculty to develop and design courses taken by students (Ritzhaupt & Kumar, 2017). However, a course's ID can be the faculty's sole responsibility (Baldwin et al., 2018). The variability, use, and nonuse of a science-based ID approach in online

courses impact the learning experience for students (McCurry & Mullinix, 2017). Suppose a course designer does not properly design an online course. In that case, learning barriers can arise for students that include but are not limited to a faculty's experience in developing or teaching an online course, the online course design approach, the use of appropriate technology for delivery, and student readiness and motivation (Abdous, 2019; Baldwin et al., 2018; Bryant, 2017).

The online learning community has acknowledged the educational inequity related to learner access and success due to the systemic racism and lack of resources faced by historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs; O'Keefe et al., 2021). Southern states created HBCUs to teach Black, freed, enslaved people in the early 1800s, and today, they lag technologically compared to their non-HBCU counterparts in online education (Cole Martin, 2017; Taylor, 2019; Thurgood Marshall College Fund, n.d.-a). HBCUs tend to suffer financially due to much of the student population relying on scholarships and federal loans, low graduation rates, and insufficient funding (Anderson, 2017; Clay, 2016; Mitchell, 2013; Williams & Davis, 2019). Funding and budgets dictate whether, if, and how universities can expand their courses and programs to online formats. Funding impacts the adoption of technologies, resource allocation for staff and faculty for course design and development, and implementation of online learning best practices training (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; O'Keefe et al., 2021). For HBCUs that offer online courses and programs, it is unclear what the experiences of the faculty responsible for designing online learning courses are.

I explored online course design at HBCUs through faculty interviews in this study. The findings of this study may provide a broader understanding of the practices

and influences of HBCU faculty who participate in online course design. The findings may give institutions a vantage point of the online course design experiences of faculty. Lastly, the results may assist course designers and other online course support staff in understanding faculty experiences with online course design at HBCUs. University administrators can consider faculty design processes juxtaposed to their student learning experiences and success.

The remainder of this chapter includes the study's background, problem statement, and purpose. It also consists of research questions, conceptual framework, the nature of the study, and definitions. The final sections include assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance, and summary.

Background

Instructional design is essential to online course creation (Kumar et al., 2019; Nworie, 2022). Faculty who design courses may implement various ID processes and have unique online course design experiences based on their university structure and resources (Croxford et al., 2019; King et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020). Online learning can be designed for a full or partial online experience (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Online course design decisions directly impact learner agency or a learner's ability to control and evaluate their learning process (Code, 2020; Stefaniak, 2020; Tannehill et al., 2018).

Due to structural racism, a lack of funding and resources is a reality for HBCUs (Anderson, 2017; Crawford, 2017; Williams & Davis, 2019). This lack dictates HBCU systems' ability to adopt and afford innovative technological structures and human capital to support online learning advancements (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). Online

learning has made its stake in society as many organizations moved to online methods of collaboration and exchange due to COVID-19, but prior, HBCUs in large were slower adopters of online learning (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Thomas & Spencer, 2020). In addition, scholars have cited faculty hesitations about online learning, given their institutions' traditional nature (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Weissman, 2022). Further, many HBCU institutions lack adequate training or exposure in this educational space (Smalley, 2020).

HBCUs tend to rely on a family-like culture to welcome, encourage, discipline, and facilitate on-campus learners' educational and social experiences (Bush, 2021). Many online learners are nontraditional students, while many HBCU learners are first-generation, low-income students (Paulsen & McCormick, 2020; Thurgood Marshall College Fund, n.d.-a; Vinson, 2017). This provides a clear impact in terms of instruction. As supported by a UNCF staff member in a recent interview, these are "first-generation, low-income students, who for the first time reached their ultimate goal. Their ultimate goal was to get to college, and now they get lost" (Seltzer, 2022, "Is this something that could have an effect at institutions that aren't HBCUs?" section). Retaining this population has its challenges and explains HBCUs' reason for connection with students beyond the classroom (Bush, 2021; Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). Although online learning presents retention issues, engagement and connection are essential aspects of student success at HBCUs (Bush, 2021; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Understanding the online course design experiences of HBCU faculty can assist in explaining the decisions made for online learning experiences.

Academic literature does not provide a standard for online course design to which all higher education institutions adhere (Alston et al., 2017; Tannehill et al., 2018). Nevertheless, quality course design for online learning is described as a time-intensive, complex, multifaceted process in which an expert team of teaching and learning professionals analyze, plan, design, redesign, and develop online courses (Croxford et al., 2019; King et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020). Quality online instruction varies depending on who is asked (Smidt et al., 2017). However, generally, a quality online learning experience includes determining learning goals and objectives, considering the audience and delivery format to align activities and content to learning goals and objectives, locating or developing relevant learning content and materials, meaningfully organizing learning content, creating performance-based assessments, and giving consideration to learner engagement strategies (Kumar et al., 2019; Martin, Budhrani, et al., 2019; Martin, Ritzhaupt, et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020; Ornelles et al., 2019; Shriram & Burton, 2021). In addition, institutions with standards and accountability for online course design practices typically have higher student satisfaction (Tannehill et al., 2018). Therefore, I sought to understand HBCU faculty experiences with online course design.

HBCUs are often known for financial strain due to the unique population of learners, lower graduation rates, and limited funding (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Williams & Davis, 2019). Despite this unique position, 30% of HBCUs offer online courses (Affordable Schools, 2019), yet little to no research is available on online course design or faculty experiences with online course design. Including the results of this study in academic literature may provide an opportunity for online learning proponents

and HBCU supporters, staff, and administration to understand HBCU faculty experiences with online course design. Learning what online course design practices HBCU faculty implement may help the broader ID and online higher education communities develop an awareness of the processes implemented by and experiences of this faculty subset. Although the scholarly literature on online course design is available (Baldwin et al., 2018; Beirne & Romanoski, 2018; Drysdale, 2019; Hairston et al., 2018; Karchmer-Klien et al., 2019), additional research on the HBCU sector of online higher education will expand the literature to include this population's experiences with online course design for the HBCU learner.

Problem Statement

Some faculty at HBCUs design online learning without the assistance of instructional designers, training, or a technological infrastructure that supports online learning (Cole Martin, 2017; Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Samayoa et al., 2016; Williams & Davis, 2019). Unlike more financially stable institutions, HBCUs may experience these challenges and others. Many HBCUs experience a shortage of funding and faculty support for online learning (Broady et al., 2017; Coverley et al., 2014; Gasman & Commodore, 2014). HBCUs have been slower to adopt online learning because of their delayed acceptance of online learning (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). HBCU institutions have been encouraged to take a slower route to adopt online education because of their learners' unique needs and the learning curve for designing and facilitating online education (Evans-Bell, 2015). Moreover, HBCUs do not have the same infrastructure to design, develop, and maintain quality online courses (Samayoa et al., 2016), affecting their adoption rate further despite increases in online offerings. In

addition, to date, there is a shortage of scholarly research on how HBCU faculty design online courses for their learners.

Mohr and Shelton (2017) found that universities can better support online faculty by focusing on online course design. University support can include staffing instructional support positions, such as instructional designers, and providing learning opportunities on course design (Nworie, 2022). Comparably, Villarruel et al. (2019) found that faculty attitudes were increasingly positive about online instructional strategies after attending a workshop about the ID for online courses. However, much of the scholarly literature about online course design in higher education and faculty experiences has predominantly not included the experiences of HBCU faculty (Croxford et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2019). Further, researchers have recommended evidence-based practice for creating online courses (Stefaniak, 2020). Thus, in this study, I sought to understand HBCU faculty members' experiences with online course design.

Purpose of the Study

This basic qualitative study explored faculty experiences with online course design at HBCUs. Because of the need to learn about methods of online course design in various contexts, the study used a qualitative approach to understand the HBCU faculty's experiences with the phenomenon. These experiences may provide the broader higher education community, online learning professionals, and online faculty with an awareness of faculty practices with online course design, including the process, ID strategies, and other considerations as determined from the data.

Research Questions

1. How do HBCU faculty describe their approach to online course design?

2. What is the faculty's understanding of their students' online learning experience?
3. How do HBCU faculty learn how to design online courses?

Conceptual Framework

I used the analyze-design-develop-implement-evaluate (ADDIE) ID model (see Lee et al., 2002; Molenda, 2015), adult learning theory (see Houle, 1961; Knowles, 1980; Mezirow, 1994), and HBCUs as a context (see Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Walker, 2018) to provide a conceptual framework to align the research questions and methods. In addition, the model-theory-context triad allowed me to explore faculty experiences with online course design at HBCUs.

ADDIE ID Model

Instructional design is the systematic process of designing learning content and experiences, and multiple models, theories, and strategies guide the process, with the ADDIE model being the most common and generic in the learning and education industry (Bond & Dirkin, 2020; Matthews, 2022). ADDIE is an acronym for the steps typically incorporated in most ID models, although the order and combination of steps may vary (Matthews, 2022). ADDIE is implemented by learning professionals using a linear and iterative application and includes the following phases: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation (Molenda, 2015). Each stage or step contains substeps that require the designer to deeply analyze the learning need, content focus, audience, delivery, technology, assessment, and evaluation (Castro & Tumibay, 2021). Considering these ID steps, I included the ADDIE ID model to explore participants' experiences with the online course design process.

Adult Learning Theory

Successful online learning cannot occur without adult learning theory as the foundation (Yarbrough, 2018). More specifically, determining and addressing adult learners' needs is viewed as critical to instructionally designing the appropriate learning experience (Diep et al., 2019). Intentional ID for adult learners in an online space is necessary because of the learner-centric nature of ID (Kara et al., 2019). When faculty and other course designers create online courses for their diverse online learning population, ID models such as ADDIE tend to inform their process (Lim et al., 2021). Although there is no agreed-upon process or model to address the needs of adult learners in online learning, several theories and principles build the growing understanding of adult learning, including andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformative learning (Diep et al., 2019; Merriam, 2017).

The andragogical approach uses a model of assumptions about adult learners. These assumptions for adult learning are categorized as self-concept, learner's experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn (Knowles, 1980, 1984). As learners mature, their reason for learning is predominately application-based, be it formal or informal, that is, career-based learning and hobby-based learning (Knowles, 2012). Adult learners are assumed to be self-directed, autonomous, and independent; to learn by drawing on past experiences; to have a readiness to learn for immediate application; to have a problem-centered learning orientation; and to be internally motivated (Knowles, 2012).

Alternatively, Houle (1961) described adult learners as either goal-oriented (problem-focused), activity-oriented (about the experience itself and social interactions),

or learning-oriented (having an enthusiasm for learning). The idea of self-directed learners describes individuals who can take initiative and responsibility for their learning (Rothwell, 2020). Mezirow's (1994) theory of transformative learning in adult education includes three core elements, critical reflection, dialogue, and individual experience, which Schnepfleitner and Ferreira (2021) found to be essential components of adult learning but lacks the contextual aspects for online adult learners.

The ability to interact with online content from a universal design perspective is emerging for online course designers and developers to think in-depth about all learners served through the digital medium (Rogers-Shaw et al., 2017). Course designers are developing a growing interest in evaluating the emotional state of the adult learner population because emotions can positively or negatively impact learning (Kara et al., 2019; Merriam, 2017; Yarbrough, 2018). Couse designers consider holistic views of the online learner, such as socioeconomic status, technological abilities, epistemological diversity, age, and gender, among others (Kara et al., 2019; Merriam, 2017; Rogers-Shaw et al., 2017). Overall, adult learning theory encompasses the theoretical perspectives of andragogy, self-directed learning, transformative learning, and holistic inclusion, with the goal of customizing a unique, intentional learning experience for a diverse population of learners.

HBCUs as a Context

Because of the applicability of these assumptions to the online learning experience, I used the adult learning theory as a lens to explore the online course design experiences of HBCU faculty. HBCUs produce 20% more low-income graduates than predominately White institutions (PWIs; Chiles, 2017). Overall, the student population at

HBCUs is often “low-income, first-generation, and academically underprepared” (Thurgood Marshall College Fund, n.d.-b, para. 2). This student profile decreases the likelihood of students graduating as some may have stressors beyond the classroom, such as financial or family (Taylor et al., 2021). A low-income student's emotional and mental health requires specific attention and care (Walker, 2018). HBCUs also receive less money from endowments, private gifts, grants, and auxiliary funds than non-HBCUs (Williams & Davis, 2019). The systematic workings of funding can make it difficult for HBCUs to progress financially (Adams & Tucker, 2022). The fewer government and tuition dollars they obtain, the less they may attract donors, resulting in decreased opportunities to provide innovative, quality education experiences for students (Kenyon, 2019).

Although HBCUs have lagged in adopting distance learning, some institutions were early adopters. While there has been a slight increase in online courses for HBCUs in response to COVID-19 (Chang, 2020; Straumsheim, 2015), there has yet to be an examination of these institutions’ online course design process. Some researchers have explored aspects of the design process, such as student satisfaction with online learning, faculty perceptions of online learning, and barriers to successful online implementation (Buzzetto-Hollywood et al., 2018; Gilbert, 2020; Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018).

Still, the literature lacks insight into how HBCU faculty experience their institution’s online course design process. This literature may add to the educational technology and design body of knowledge by discovering faculty perspectives so institutions can understand the nuances of faculty online course design experiences and provide support to faculty who are necessary to the success and satisfaction of students’

experiences (Haywood & Murty, 2018; Stefaniak, 2020). Not all institutions require the support of online learning offices or course development teams, while other universities with extensive online course production staff these positions to provide continuous development support (Watts, 2019). Consequently, faculty can be left to undertake the course design and development process unguided, lacking evidence-based online instructional strategies to build quality online courses successfully (Cole Martin, 2017; Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Samayoa et al., 2016; Williams & Davis, 2019).

Nature of the Study

The design of this study was a basic qualitative design using interviews and open coding to extract themes from the interview data. The primary goal of basic qualitative design is to explain and understand how the participants make sense of their lives and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A basic qualitative approach was the best method for this study to explore the faculty experiences and learn about the consistencies and irregularities of faculty designing online courses at HBCUs. Because of the sparsity of scholarly literature on this topic and the ability of researchers to work closely with their data (Sandelowski, 2000), a basic qualitative methodology was ideal for the research design. Additionally, a basic qualitative design is not bound by distinct characteristics or guided by assumptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

ID is a process that uses strategies to plan, organize, and structure learning content to yield the best learning experience for the audience (Matthews, 2022). Online course design experiences at historically Black higher education institutions are of particular interest because these schools are a small percentage of primarily brick-and-mortar institutions. They fight to stay competitive and existent in the education sector,

where online learning options steadily increase (Smith & Kant, 2021). Because of their limited finances, resources, interest, and infrastructure, most HBCUs have not adopted online learning opportunities for students (Adams & Tucker, 2022; Williams & Davis, 2019). As of Fall 2022, no accessible documentation demonstrated the number of universities that adopted online learning after COVID-19. It is unclear what instructional design experiences HBCU faculty have, although more have recently adopted online learning (O'Keefe et al., 2021).

Participants for this basic qualitative study consisted of nine online faculty who had participated in at least one online course design project at their current or previous HBCU institution. Using semistructured interviews, I explored faculty members' experiences of the online course design process at their institutions. The data from the faculty's interviews were coded and analyzed considering the conceptual framework involving the ADDIE i ID model, Knowles's theory for adult learning, and HBCUs as a context.

Definitions

Distance education: For many, online learning is synonymous with distance education and educational technology. The Higher Learning Commission (n.d.) defined distance education as follows:

> Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include: the internet, one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable,

> microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing, or video cassettes, DVDs and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed above (Accreditation section).

Educational technology: Januszewski and Modela (2008) defined educational technology in Educational Technology: A Definition with Commentary as "the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources" (p. 1). Although people use educational technology and instructional design interchangeably, Reid (2018) elaborated on their distinctions with EdTech's focus on technology and instructional design's focus on designing the learning experience.

Historically Black college and universities: HBCUs are defined by the Higher Education Act of 1965 as

> any historically Black college or university that was established before 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., para. 2)

These institutions are open to all races, although African American students are the most served population.

Instructional design: Instructional design is a systematic process of developing learning content (Januszewski & Modela, 2008). Organizations use ID for multiple learning contexts, including online, corporate, military, K-12, and postsecondary education (Kenny et al., 2005). However, for this study, the ID context was postsecondary HBCUs.

Instructional designer: The Association of Talent Development (n.d.), an organization catered mainly to the development and creation of learning content in the workplace, defined an instructional designer as someone who "applies this systematic methodology (rooted in instructional theories and models) to design and develop content, experiences, and other solutions to support the acquisition of new knowledge or skills" (para. 2). Depending on the institution, a faculty or staff member may assume this role regardless of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Online course design: Online course design is not an official phrase or term. Instead, it is a specific area of ID. In this study, however, online course design refers to HBCU faculty ID processes for online courses (see Mintz, 2020).

Online learning: In their 30-year literature review study of 46 online learning definitions and 19 terms that were used to define online learning, Singh and Thurman (2019) suggested that online learning is defined as follows:

> Education being delivered in an online environment through the use of the internet for teaching and learning. This includes online learning on the part of the students that is not dependent on their physical or virtual co-location. The teaching content is delivered online and the instructors develop teaching modules

that enhance learning and interactivity in the synchronous or asynchronous environment (p. 302).

Assumptions

This study was based on several assumptions. My initial assumption was that participating faculty would respond openly and honestly to my interview questions. To develop a deep understanding of the faculty's experience with course design, it was essential that participants felt comfortable sharing their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives without censorship or fear of repercussions. My second assumption was that participants may or may not have possessed the ID verbiage to describe their experiences. I also needed to stay close to the data and ensured I asked probing questions to confirm my understanding of their experiences.

The third assumption was that all participants may not have implemented a specific ID process. This assumption required me to be open and flexible to how participants described their formal or informal processes, which may or may not have aligned with current ID models. However, I sought out participants who could generally speak about creating an online course. To facilitate this, only individuals who met the following inclusion criteria were allowed to participate: (a) currently employed at an HBCU institution, (b) had assisted in at least one online course design project at an HBCU institution, and (c) had the role of instructor or similar. Interview data would not address the research questions appropriately if the faculty did not possess online course design experience. To ensure the validity of the protocol for addressing the research questions, two online course design professionals reviewed the interview questions before data collection. Lastly, I assumed that the COVID-19 global pandemic of 2020

had impacted postsecondary institutions' online delivery offerings as many pivoted to online to remain operational.

Scope and Delimitations

I explored faculty experiences of online course design at HBCUs in this study. The faculty's instructional course design processes were explored to learn their experiences in designing and developing an online course. Online learning literature about HBCUs is limited, even more so for the online course design and development processes. I conducted a basic qualitative study to gather information about online course design from faculty interviews. I did not use quantitative or mixed methods as a qualitative study was more aligned with the study's goal to learn about faculty experiences with online course design at HBCUs.

Qualitative research focuses on "understanding meaning people have constructed" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). This focus mirrored the goal of this study. A quantitative study could provide vital information regarding online course design at HBCUs. However, a quantitative study begins with a hypothesis rather than interpreting the data from an individual's unique experience. It tests a theory using deductive research for many participants (Burkholder, 2016). Additionally, qualitative research has been historically used in education, among other fields (Burkholder, 2016).

The goal was to recruit participants using purposeful sampling, which elicits information-rich data sources for interview participants, documents, or artifacts (see Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Participants were identified through important contacts within the university, such as program coordinators, academic deans, instructional technologists or designers, inquiring with relevant, published researchers, or reviewing

biographical information on university websites. Most faculty contact information was in the public domain on university websites. The inclusion criteria for the current study's participants required higher education faculty/instructors who were previously or presently employed at an HBCU. Participants could either have full-time or part-time/adjunct status. Finally, participants must have assisted in designing at least one hybrid or fully online course at their current HBCU institution. Reversely, the participants could not solely have another role/title other than that of a course instructor or synonymous title. The participants could not have currently or previously been employed solely at an institution other than an HBCU. Further, participants could not solely have experience developing traditional, face-to-face course curricula.

Limitations

Using participants from the same university could result in similar responses due to organizational structure and similar onboarding experiences. I chose to recruit individuals from more than one HBCU to ensure faculty experiences were not parallel due to collecting data from participants at the same institution. Further, locating enough participants for data saturation was a challenge as I was neither an HBCU faculty nor worked at an HBCU and did not have existing access to this community.

Significance

This study provided insight into HBCU online course design practices to better understand how faculty create online learning experiences for adult learners. The results of this study can inform the broader faculty community of the expectations and knowledge of online teaching through exposure to faculty course design experiences as they relate to designing for adult learners. The research could encourage faculty to

metacognitively analyze their processes and implement strategies for online course design, conduct related studies, and disseminate results in their academic discipline. This study's final social change impact aligns online course design best practices across higher education and mitigates some opposition to online learning in more traditional sectors.

Summary

An increase in online learning opportunities at brick-and-mortar institutions, specifically HBCUs, prompted the desire to understand how these institutions maneuver through the online course design process. This basic qualitative study aimed to understand faculty experiences with online course design at southeastern HBCUs. This study addressed a minimally researched area of faculty's online course design practices and provided knowledge about faculty approaches and experience in creating an online learning environment.

For this study, I used a conceptual framework to ground the study using an ID model, theory of adult learning, and HBCUs as a context. All framework components provided insight into a faculty's mindset approaching online course design, how they conduct online course design, and what influences their online course design. I developed the following research questions: How do HBCU faculty develop their online courses? What is the faculty's understanding of their students' online learning experience? How do HBCU faculty learn how to design online courses? To answer these questions, I conducted semistructured interviews with faculty. The study addressed how a subset of minority-serving postsecondary institutions implement online course design processes. Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to online course design in higher education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Faculty are subject matter experts in their fields, but they are not always experts in instructional best practices (Baldwin et al., 2018). Online course design processes vary by institution, and researchers have expressed these variances in processes as one of the most significant challenges in serving adult learners online (Greene & Larsen, 2018). This challenge is significant because ID principles and models may not be implemented by faculty if they develop courses as solo practitioners without training or knowledge of online course design (McCurry & Mullinix, 2017). Course designers with ID knowledge are better equipped to align course materials and activities with the intended course objectives resulting in a more satisfactory student learning experience (Uzunboylu & Kosucu, 2020). Although scholars have studied faculty in various contexts, such as a team-based design approach, perceptions of their readiness to teach online, and faculty undergoing the design process without assistance from instructional designers (Baldwin et al., 2018; King et al., 2019; Martin, Budhrani, et al., 2019), little is known about the ID approach faculty take to design and develop online courses at HBCUs. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the online course design process for adult learners at HBCUs.

The variances of online course design processes are affected by institutions' timing and adoption of online learning, faculty resistance or acceptance to online teaching, faculty training and support, and technological infrastructure (Glenn-Jones & Davenport, 2018; Kelley, 2017; Villarruel et al., 2019). Each design process plays a factor in how institutions approach online learning development. The COVID-19 pandemic required many educational institutions, including faculty, staff, and students, to

accept, adopt, and utilize online and distance learning options despite a long-running debate on the effectiveness of online learning (Johnson et al., 2000; Paechter & Maier, 2010). Based on the literature, this chapter provides the literature review strategy, conceptual approach, and context about ID, online learning, and HBCUs online.

Literature Search Strategy

The primary means of the literature search strategy was to select articles relating to online learning, ID, faculty online course design practices, and HBCUs. I often searched broadly using the Thoreau multidatabase search. After citation-chaining articles by locating relevant articles in reference sections, I searched for ID and eLearning-related journals to search for peer-reviewed articles. Additionally, I used Boolean phrases to narrow the search results further when searching the databases and journals. I used Zotero and Windows File Explorer to save relevant articles. The keywords searched were *online course design, faculty perspectives, instructional design, higher education, online learning, eLearning, faculty development, faculty training and support, Black schools,* and *HBCUs.*

Conceptual Framework

The ADDIE ID model, adult learning theory, and HBCUs as a context provided the conceptual framework for this study. The ADDIE ID model connects faculty members' approaches to the online course design process (Lee et al., 2002; Molenda, 2015). Adult learning theory draws attention to the learner and their needs during online course design decisions (Houle, 1961; Knowles, 1980; Mezirow, 1994). Finally, HBCUs provide contextual insight into their campus culture, teaching philosophy, attitudes towards online learning, and feasibility of adopting and developing online learning

(Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). Together, each have helped shed light on the phenomenon of studying online course design at HBCUs.

ADDIE ID Model

Online course design, or online ID, was a central phenomenon for this study. Online course design is a systematic process of designing and developing online learning experiences for a targeted audience (Bond & Dirkin, 2020). The design of the instruction determines what the learning experience consists of, making the field of ID important for end-users: the students (Dick et al., 2009). Online course design describes an instructional creation process that university faculty and center staff follow to develop and design online courses (Rodrigues et al., 2019).

Faculty and staff who develop and design online courses use learning theories and strategies to create learning experiences (Baldwin & Ching, 2019). The ID uses systematic models (Dick et al., 2009) that focus on learning events and human learning processes. A systematic approach involves considering the subparts that belong to a whole and incorporating each for the goal of the whole (Dick et al., 2009). Some systematic ID models include the ADDIE model, Dick and Carey model (2009), and backward design model (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), with the ADDIE model being the most widely used (Bond & Dirkin, 2020; Matthews, 2022).

Branson (1978) cited that the ADDIE model was developed initially at Florida State University for military training. However, the original model's steps were analysis, design, develop, implement, and control. Hence, the formal formation of ADDIE as a model is not well-documented, and scholars have believed ADDIE to be more of an oral tradition than a founded and proclaimed model by some practitioners (Molenda, 2015).

Despite this, scholars and practitioners across the field of learning and development have used the ADDIE model extensively. Kumar and Ritzhaupt (2017) interviewed eight higher education instructional designers to understand the role of instructional designers in higher education. After semistructured interviews, instructional designers in their study shared that they primarily use the ADDIE model over other models.

Other scholars have extended these findings. In their study using a web-based questionnaire to survey 247 higher education instructional designers (and various ID-related roles), Bond and Dirkin (2020) found that 41% of survey respondents used ADDIE over other ID models. The backward design model emerged as a frequently used model with 30% of responses. Therefore, including ADDIE in the conceptual framework helped to conceptualize and identify the steps faculty at HBCUs take to develop and design online courses.

ADDIE is an acronym for the steps typically incorporated in most ID models, although the order and combination of steps may vary (Matthews, 2022). ADDIE stands for analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation and is linear and iterative (Molenda, 2015). Each step contains additional granular substeps, causing the designer to deeply analyze the learning need, content, audience, delivery mode, assessment, and evaluation. In a survey of 73 course developers, Wedman and Tessmer (1993) found that designers do not use every ID step for every project. Each project has unique needs and may require contextual considerations, emphasizing the flexible nature of the ADDIE model.

In the analysis stage of ADDIE, a course designer determines the learning need and the qualities of the learner audience. Defining the learning objective and the audience

is essential for any design project because it determines the purpose and learning experience (Lee et al., 2002; Lohr, 1998). Additionally, designers confirm a learning gap to justify designing and developing a new learning experience by clarifying the learning need. During the design phase, designers determine how learners will consume content by considering various instructional approaches for the learning experience while considering the learning objective and the audience. The design phase includes identifying and defining the content scope and determining the structure of learning activities and assessments (Peterson, 2003).

During the development stage, designers create all learning content and add it to the learning management system (Nworie, 2022). The planning/analysis, design, and development phases of ADDIE and other ID models require faculty or instructional designers to carefully consider the learning experience's outcomes, the student's experience, and the online course or learning experience structure. The implementation stage is the act of delivering the learning experience to its intended audience. In this stage, a designer considers how to train the learners to approach or complete the learning experience for the implementation phase. Finally, the evaluation phase is the process to measure the effectiveness of the delivered learning experience. For evaluative measures, many institutions provide course surveys to students at the end of a term (Norris & Conn, 2005).

The Dick and Carey (2009) instructional systems design model offers an iterative, 10-step process for instructional designers to follow. Each step can align with the generic ADDIE model, like many other ID models. Another popular ID model is the backward design by Wiggins and McTighe (1998). Backward design starts with determining the

desired results, followed by choosing the acceptable evidence. The last of the 3-step process is planning the learning experiences and instruction. The ADDIE model highlights each backward design step to some extent. Many other ID models exist and are used preferentially by designers or as their institution dictates.

Scholarly literature on the ADDIE model in distance education began to emerge in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Scholar-practitioners have noticed the need to apply ID principles to the emerging worldwide web and the web-based learning potential that came with it (Davidson-Shivers & Rasmussen, 1999; Lee et al., 1999). Over the next several decades, as online learning continued to manifest, faculty and course designers have continued to use the ADDIE model as a basis for developing academic curricula and online learning (Chappel, 2018; Fernandes et al., 2020). For example, in their effort to create a blended learning oncology course, Fernandes et al. (2020) found high learner satisfaction rates after designing and developing an online course using the ADDIE model. More scholars have continued to illustrate ADDIE's implementation for online course development. Although Koç (2020) did not include satisfaction ratings or student outcomes in their findings, they cited that they better understood learning needs through the analysis and evaluation phases when developing an online writing course. ADDIE has proven reliable and flexible enough for many faculty and staff course designers to use and adapt to their needs.

Adult Learning Theory

Online course design is not complete without a thorough evaluation of its learning audience. As instructional course designers plan for learning experiences, they consider learners' needs as successful online learning cannot occur without adult learning theory

as the foundation (Yarbrough, 2018). More specifically, determining and addressing adult learners' needs is viewed as critical to instructionally designing the appropriate learning experience (Diep et al., 2019). Intentional ID for adult learners in an online space is necessary because of the learner-centric nature of ID (Kara et al., 2019). When faculty and other course designers create online courses for their diverse online learning population, ID models such as ADDIE tend to inform their process (Lim et al., 2021). Although there is no agreed-upon process or model to address the needs of adult learners in online learning, several theories and principles build the growing understanding of adult learning, including andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformative learning (Diep et al., 2019; Merriam, 2017).

The andragogical approach uses a model of assumptions about adult learners. These assumptions for adult learning are categorized as self-concept, learner's experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn (Knowles, 1980, 1984). As learners mature, their reason for learning is predominately application-based, be it formal or informal, that is, career-based learning and hobby-based learning (Knowles, 2012). Adult learners are assumed to be self-directed, autonomous, and independent; to learn by drawing on past experiences; to have the readiness to learn for immediate application; to have a problem-centered learning orientation; and to be internally motivated.

As learners mature, their self-concept evolves from dependent to self-directed learners (Knowles, 2012). Rather than instructors leading the experience, the learners prefer to choose their approach to learning and the level of assistance needed from the instructor. Houle (1961) described adult learners as either goal-oriented (problem-

focused), activity-oriented (about the experience itself and social interactions), or learning-oriented (having an enthusiasm for learning). The idea of self-directed learners describes individuals who can take initiative and responsibility for their learning (Rothwell, 2020).

Sîrbu (2020) provided an example of self-directed learning in which a faculty asks learners to explore a topic of their choosing. The learner's knowledge is likely to grow regardless of the learner's approach. Self-directed learning assumes the learner will extract necessary information with little input or direction from the faculty. Self-directed learning puts the learner in charge of their education while still being coached in various aspects of the learning process. Knowles (2011) concluded that as learners evolve into self-directed learners, they become more autonomous and independent. Self-directed learners may have healthy study habits such as "setting goals, managing time, structuring one's environment to maximize studying and seeking out help with tasks" (Ryznar & Dutton, 2020, p. 77). Thus, supporting this self-directed student nature may include a course calendar including assignment due dates and easily accessible materials and activities in various modalities.

The second assumption of andragogy relates to the role a learner's experience has in the learning process. Knowles (1980) believed that designing learning to draw from students' experiences and prior knowledge to aid them in understanding was beneficial for the learning process and learner success. As individuals mature into adulthood, natural life experiences, including family, school, and work, shape who a person becomes. This combination of life experiences influences the learning process. Problem-based learning, experiential learning, and peer learning are notable teaching strategies

that incorporate experience in the learning process (Curran, 2014; Hagen & Park, 2016). Birsanu (2020) suggested using learning activities, such as case studies, role play, and simulations to promote this style of teaching and learning.

The readiness to learn assumption relates to the student's mental preparedness as they approach the learning experience. Students are more likely to be ready for learning if they desire to acquire the information and the content has direct or applicable relevance to their lives (Knowles, 1980). Merriam (2002) noted that readiness to be taught and learning occurs when a learner decides that it is necessary to gain the information to accomplish their goal(s). Additionally, various life events can encourage or alter one's readiness to learn, be it a career change, family matters, health concerns, or others. To adhere to the readiness to learn assumption, course designers can provide easy-to-access digital learning materials and incorporate activities that offer transferable life skills or knowledge (Kowalski, 2013; Sîrbu, 2020).

As adults mature through life, their learning orientation becomes more practical, evolving from subject-focused learning to task or problem-focused learning to successfully meet their life's needs and function within their respective positions (Knowles et al., 2014). Adult learners are primarily interested in learning information that can assist them in solving problems and achieving performance. Regarding the learning orientation, course designers and program administrators can collaborate to provide learners with opportunities to apply new skills and information in authentic settings or practice settings that mimic authentic experiences (Thorton, 2019). These learning strategies might include field experiences, labs, or providing a syllabus with clear goals and objectives to best convey the purpose of learning.

The last assumption of andragogy is the motivation to learn (Knowles et al., 2014). Motivation gives students a purpose for learning the material. This assumption posits that adults are more intrinsically motivated to learn and likely put more effort into learning when they understand why (Knowles, 2011). Reversely, if a learner is required to retain information that has no clear understanding of the purpose, a learner is less motivated to engage with the content. In their study to increase online learner motivation, Ryznar and Dutton (2020) suggested that faculty mold learners' intrinsic motivation through teaching strategies and course design. Some suggestions include creating a sense of community in the online classroom, reiterating the course's values and goals, and aligning tasks with the learning objectives. Ryznar and Dutton administered anonymous student surveys and conducted focus groups with law students. Ryznar and Dutton found that the flexible nature of online learning, opportunities to learn from the same professor of a previous course, engaging learning content using videos, instructor presence, formative assessments, and regular feedback positively impacted all student motivation. Reversely, faculty that do not provide learners with these things can likely negatively affect or hinder student motivation.

Alternatively, Mezirow's (1994) theory of transformative learning in adult education includes three core elements, critical reflection, dialogue, and individual experience, which Schnepfleitner & Ferreira (2021) found to be essential components of adult learning but lacks the contextual aspects for online adult learners. The ability to interact with online content from a universal design perspective is emerging for online course designers and developers to think in-depth about all learners served through the digital medium (Rogers-Shaw et al., 2017). Course designers have developed a growing

interest in evaluating the emotional state of the adult learner population because emotions can positively or negatively impact learning (Kara et al., 2019; Merriam, 2017; Yarbrough, 2018). Couse designers consider holistic views of the online learner, such as socioeconomic status, technological abilities, epistemological diversity, age, and gender, among others (Kara et al., 2019; Merriam, 2017; Rogers-Shaw et al., 2017). Overall, adult learning theory encompasses the theoretical perspectives of andragogy, self-directed learning, transformative learning, and holistic inclusion with the goal of customizing a unique, intentional learning experience for a diverse population of learners.

Due to the asynchronous nature of postsecondary online learning, a student should be intrinsically motivated and self-directed. Online adult learning requires a varied approach considering schedules, time zones, student-teacher communication, and course structure (Galustyan et al., 2019). Through their study on teachers' information and communications technology competence, Galustyan et al. (2019) divided faculty learners into a control and experimental group. They learned that added adult learning strategies implemented for online learning, such as using available and accessible learning materials and the appropriate use of internet software for information sharing and communication, are positively related to learner competence. Yarbrough (2018) suggested that a quality online learning experience cannot occur without adult learning theory as a foundation. Other views are also conducive to engaging online adult learners.

In their review, Yarbrough (2018) described different theories and strategies that promoted Knowles's andragogical principles, which course designers can apply to develop innovative online learning environments. Watson's (1913) behaviorist learning theory, Vygotsky's (1978) social interaction theory, Mezirow's (1991) critical reflection

theory, and Dirkx's (1997) contributions to the emotional and spiritual dimensions of transformational learning can each be employed to create engaging, positive adult learning experiences. Yarbrough (2018) noted that online classroom support for adult learners reflects openness and consistency, creates opportunities for communication led by the instructor, and students can apply knowledge based on their experiences. Yarbrough (2018) suggested several classroom sources that can cultivate such a learning experience as discussion threads or group blogs.

Feeling that online learning strategies for adult learners were insufficient for today's digital adopters, Greene and Larsen (2018) coined virtual andragogy as a new framework for best practices in teaching adults online. Greene and Larsen (2018) used andragogy, constructivism, transformational learning, Bloom's revised taxonomy, and communities of practice as teaching and learning constructs to design online learning experiences better. Merging these into a conceptual framework to guide the ID of online learning experiences for adult learners effectively facilitates today's adult learners' affective, behavioral, and cognitive growth. Meyer and Murrell (2014) posited a lack of consistent theories to design and develop faculty professional development for teaching online. Additionally, they found a lack of consensus on the student learning theories faculty use as a basis for developing online learning. This inconsistency draws concern because faculty cannot effectively design online courses for diverse learners without insight into their learners' demographics and environment.

HBCUs

HBCUs are defined by the Higher Education Act of 1965 as follows:

> Any historically Black college or university that was established before 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., para. 2)

Many Black Americans and other American minorities could not afford college due to the racial disparities and the glass ceiling they faced. Thus, many students afforded their education using the Pell Grant. A little over 70% of the students enrolled at HBCUs are Pell Grant students (Chiles, 2017). In comparison, the National Center for Educational Statistics reported that from a sample of 5,698 schools, 34% of undergraduate students were Pell Grant students from the year 2018-2019. The more Pell Grant students an institution has, the less likely it will have high graduation rates and excessive funding dollars (Clay, 2016; Williams & Davis, 2019). HBCU graduation rates are roughly 35%, whereas the national graduation rate, on average, is closer to 60%. Chiles (2017) reported that HBCUs produce 20% more low-income graduates than PWIs.

These institutions are open to all races, although African American students are the most served population. Nationally, about 20% of HBCUs students are of another race (Thurgood Marshall College Fund, n.d.-b). Overall, the student population at HBCUs is often first-generation and disadvantaged academically (Thurgood Marshall College Fund, n.d.-a). This student profile decreases the likelihood of graduating as some students may have academic, financial, and family stressors that compromise their ability

to stay enrolled. The emotional and mental health of a low-income student requires specific attention and care.

To date, there are 102 HBCUs, according to the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.). However, this number has decreased from its original 121, with roughly eight closings in the last three to five years (Cole Martin, 2017). HBCUs account for under 3% of the total degree-granting institutions. These institutions strive to keep this number from decreasing further because funding issues have been a long-time problem for HBCUs (Schwartz, 2020; St. Amour, 2019; Thurgood Marshall College Fund, n.d.-c; Williams & Davis, 2019). Additionally, researchers have learned that HBCUs have lower million-dollar endowments by the hundred-thousandths than the national average of most institutions (Anderson, 2017; United Negro College Fund, 2016). A recent report depicted HBCUs as more dependent on federal, state, and local monies and tuition revenue than their non-HBCU counterparts (Williams & Davis, 2019). Funding can dictate institutional longevity and growth.

HBCUs receive less money from endowments, private gifts, grants, and auxiliary funds than non-HBCUs (Adams & Tucker, 2022). Because public investments source most HBCU funding, HBCU leadership remains mindful of its relevant governments' partnership (Williams & Davis, 2019). The systematic workings of the HBCU funding can make it difficult for HBCUs to progress financially (Adams & Tucker, 2022). The less government and tuition dollars they have, the less they may attract donors, resulting in a lower quality education experience for students and lower graduation numbers. In 2019, United States Representative of North Carolina Alma Adams worked alongside the HBCU Caucus to pass the FUTURE Act. HBCU funding was set to expire in September

2019 (Long, 2019). Though the FUTURE Act secured permanent funding for HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions, they have continued to search for other opportunities to increase funding.

Although HBCUs have lagged in their adoption of distance learning, some institutions were early adopters, such as Fayetteville State University when began its online learning offerings in 1999, around the same time as many other PWIs (Flowers et al., 2012). Most HBCUs were slower to follow the trend, likely due to the shortage of resources at some institutions and faculty readiness for online learning. In 2010, 18% of HBCUs offered online degree programs (Flowers et al., 2012). Today, over one-third, approximately 30 institutions, have online degree offerings (Anderson, 2017). The forced transition to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic likely increased the number of distance education institutions. To date, no data has emerged about how many HBCUs transitioned to online learning during the pandemic. Nevertheless, many HBCUs have transitioned to online programs or have enhanced the quality of their online program offerings through research, evaluation, and revisions.

Although there has been a slight increase in online courses for HBCUs (Chang, 2020; Straumsheim, 2015), there has yet to be an examination of these institutions' online course development process. The literature lacks insight into how HBCU faculty experience the online course development process at their institutions. Adding to the body of academic literature through learning about how HBCU faculty experience the online course design process could better assist institutional administration and the ID and educational technology fields by learning more about how a subset of faculty produce online education (Stefaniak, 2020). As stated previously, not all institutions have

nor need online learning offices or course development teams, while more prominent universities with higher online course production and revision rates may have a need. Consequently, faculty can be left to undertake the course design and development process unguided, lacking evidence-based online instructional strategies. This study explored how faculty at HBCUs in the southeastern United States engage in online course design, highlighting their steps, influences, and instructional strategies for their learners.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

In this review of literature related to key concepts about the phenomenon, I analyzed literature related to online course design in the higher education sector. Online course design and ID were used interchangeably throughout the literature review based on the terms used in specific literature. I reviewed articles to explore faculty, ID, online learning, adult learning, and the HBCU setting. This literature review aimed to examine and analyze studies related to the fundamental concepts for this qualitative study while exploring the factors that guided my interview questions and data analysis.

Online Learning

Technology has positively impacted higher education over 30 years to provide learners with a flexible, convenient learning modality (Rodrigues et al., 2019). Many students enroll in online learning because of the flexibility and convenience, which may overshadow a student's need for more traditional face-to-face learning pedagogy (Liu, 2019). Osho and Williams (2018) discussed that more women in rural areas pursue online education because the distance to college and university campuses, work, and home commitments can already consume much of their lives. The latest enrollment data by the National Center for Education Statistics (2019) reported that 35% of postsecondary

online education students are either fully enrolled in an online program or taking at least one class online. Online enrollment rates increased every year between 2012 and 2016 for both graduate and undergraduate levels despite enrollment for higher education overall decreasing during this time (Seaman et al., 2018). Due to the convenience, online learning is an option for career advancement.

Online Learning Format

There is some flexibility as to how online learning can occur. Based on the definitions above, traditional courses can incorporate online learning modules or experiences when students are in the physical classroom using internet-enabled technology to promote learning (Singh & Thurman, 2019). In-person classes using web-based technologies describe online learning in a hybrid or blended form where some of the learning occurs online and some in a traditional classroom or with a live instructor (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Online learning can also host entire courses, programs, and learning experiences via the internet, and students and instructors are never in the same physical location at the same time (Bright, 2020).

As one may imagine, each format has its benefits and challenges. In their study examining student outcomes related to blended learning using pre-and post-test surveys, Berga et al. (2021) found no significant differences in self-efficacy scores or knowledge. However, student perceptions were positive regarding the online learning experience. Additionally, each student's learning needs are different, and some online learning formats may be better suited depending on the learner (Al-Mahdi et al., 2020; Araka et al., 2021; Shu et al., 2019). Many students in blended learning environments believe this format is a good balance of learning because of the independent learning time through

online learning and having immediate access to instructors and peers for more collaborative tasks in the physical classroom (Namyssova et al., 2019).

Today's postsecondary online learning incorporates asynchronous, synchronous learning, and hybrid formats. Synchronous online education requires students and the instructor to spend time simultaneously in the same online space (Neuwirth et al., 2021). Asynchronous learning allows the learner and instructor to participate in the learning exchange at different times, where immediacy is not required in the same way (Bright, 2020). Because of the asynchronous nature of online learning, scholar-practitioners emphasize various satisfaction levels of faculty and students due to the transactional distance in online learning. Transactional distance, learner-student interaction, engagement, and the community of inquiry framework attempt to curve the isolating nature of online learning by influencing the design of online courses (Garrison et al., 2000; Weidlich & Bastiaens, 2018).

In their study on the impact of transactional distance on satisfaction in online distance learning, Weidlich and Bastiaens (2018) found that the transactional distance between students and the learning technology is the most critical predictor in students' satisfaction with the learning experience. Students' experiences with technology impact other interactions in the online learning space, such as student-teacher, student-student, and student-content (Weidlich & Bastiaens, 2018). Additionally, of all the online environmental characteristics reviewed in Walters et al. (2017), faculty were the least satisfied with the communication tools in online learning, noting that teaching experience may have an influence. In their case study, Wingo et al. (2017) found that faculty considered the lack of physical presence a challenge, whereas instructional designers did

not. Despite varying perspectives of online engagement, online learning continues to grow.

Online learning is growing in many industries, including education, government, and business, with a recent surge in adoption and use due to the 2020 global coronavirus pandemic (Koksal, 2020). According to the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.), there are 102 HBCUs, with 40 offering masters and doctoral degrees, 23 exclusively offering doctoral degrees, and 33 offering online programs (Cole Martin, 2017; Riggs, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Additionally, Cole Martin (2017) found that the majority of HBCUs with online offerings are medium-sized institutions. It may appear that HBCUs are doing well, with roughly 30% of the institutions offering online programs. However, the same current literature on this topic echoes the encouragement for and incorporation of online learning while questioning and examining the slow growth of online learning over the past few years at these institutions (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Hollowell et al., 2017). Some HBCUs have a sense of inherent newness as they transition to and adopt online learning.

Growth of Online Learning

Scholars have pointed out several reasons for slow growth in online learning at HBCUs based on changes over the last several decades. HBCU student enrollments are smaller than the national average (Anderson, 2017). Factors that continue to lower enrollment include affirmative action laws, the desegregation of schools, more educated minorities, higher household incomes, access to student financial aid, and funding (Anderson; 2017; Crawford, 2017; Glenn Jones & Davenport; 2018). These factors have shifted the population of students who would generally enroll at HBCUs to PWIs or large

for-profit institutions (Crawford, 2017). Also, universities are graduating students in large numbers from fully online programs such as Walden University, Arizona State University, Capella University, Southern New Hampshire University, and many more (Seaman et al., 2018; Tannehill et al., 2018). Traditional, financially equipped brick-and-mortar institutions have also begun to create space for online courses and programs amongst their on-campus offerings, pulling in more enrollments. Many of these schools, even small institutions, are better equipped to manage and offer online and in-person educational opportunities because of their financial stability (Anderson 2017; Crawford, 2017). There continues to be a longstanding debate for funding for any HBCUs to remain in existence.

Funding issues at HBCUs have affected both their enrollment and accreditation. Gaining and retaining accreditation has been difficult for some HBCU institutions in the past due to the costs associated with the requirements to achieve accreditation (Crawford, 2017). Accreditation provides institutions with expanded opportunities to recruit and enroll more students (Crawford, 2017), as learners want to graduate from institutions that have recognized accreditations in their prospective field. Therefore, without proper accreditation, schools risk their enrollment growth.

Though funding can impact a school's ability to obtain accreditation, various accrediting bodies are also viable options. After obtaining accreditation information for 88 HBCU business schools, Doh et al. (2018) found that enrollment growth is not contingent on the most common business school accreditor, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business **(**AACSB). Thus, institutions can consider other, less expensive accreditations. Of the 88 institutions, they compared the two sample groups: 16

AACSB accredited HBCUs and 22 non-AACSB accredited HBCUs. Using a two-tailed T-test, Doh et al. (2018) failed to reject the null hypotheses that there is no significant difference in AACSB and non-AACSB accredited HBCU business programs regarding enrollment growth.

For some HBCU institutions, choosing to obtain an accreditation for current, traditional face-to-face programming can offset the possibility of adopting online learning due to funding. Despite preferences for face-to-face instruction and varying levels of faculty acceptance, scholars have found that institutions mainly believe their programs are more marketable if online offerings are available (Allen et al., 2015; Crawford, 2017; Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). Coincidentally, HBCU scholars have strongly encouraged the adoption of online learning because it serves as a high-ranked survival strategy for their institutions, increasing their ability to compete with larger and more equipped institutions (Hollowell et al., 2017; Riggs, 2019). The successful adoption of online learning into the HBCU climate may be their only hope for survival.

Faculty Perceptions and Perspectives of Online Learning

Recent literature presents a variety of faculty perceptions and perspectives of online learning. Overall, there is a split of online faculty proponents and opponents, and many recognize the pros and cons of this learning modality (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Kelley, 2017). Several scholars have highlighted flexibility as a desirable quality of online learning, referencing its valuable advantage and deeming it necessary to combat the constant “always online” nature of online learning (Hansen & Gray, 2018; Loague et al., 2018; Mansbach & Austin, 2018). Of their interviews with 19 middle and senior-level faculty teaching online, Mansbach and Austin (2018) incorporated flexibility as an aspect

of the broader essential work elements conceptual framework. Their findings indicated that while flexibility provides convenience to the teaching experience, it can also shift faculty priorities. Faculty can underestimate the time needed to successfully engage and facilitate an online course, creating a greater need for time management.

Time management is a theme amongst online faculty attitudes and perceptions because many believe their workload has changed due to teaching online. Although all survey respondents agreed that online learning was convenient, Luongo (2018) also reported that 75% of faculty participants agreed to have a higher workload when teaching online compared to traditional teaching environments. The workload can encompass learning new technology, designing courses with web-based software, or learning and incorporating online pedagogies and online instructional strategies (Cook, 2018; de los Santos & Zanca, 2018; Glass, 2017). As faculty adjust to a new learning modality and pedagogy, an unavoidable learning curve impacts the time faculty devote to their courses (de los Santos & Zanca, 2018). Of their 16 faculty interviews, Glass (2017) found that some faculty members have differentiated workloads that provide freedom to balance course development, teaching, and research responsibilities. Others have increased workloads with added responsibilities.

In addition, Taylor and Wright (2020) contended faculty frustration regarding increased workloads and stagnant pay. To mitigate these frustrations, Hansen and Gray (2018) concluded that faculty could incorporate strategies from the Community of Inquiry framework and andragogy to assist with time management and workload. Such strategies include prioritizing student engagement, creating resource materials that provide guidance, and using time management strategies. Time management strategies

include limiting distractions, having a distinct workspace, developing a routine, and relaying boundaries to close friends and family (Hansen & Gray, 2018).

In addition to balancing their time and various work responsibilities, faculty continue to have varying levels of perspectives about student-instructor interaction and student-student interaction in online courses (Blundell et al., 2020; Glass, 2017; Hamilton, 2018; Luongo, 2018; McGee et al., 2017). Interviews have revealed that faculty as mentors feel isolated from students, consequently leaving faculty feeling undervalued and underutilized (Glass, 2017). Beyond qualitative data, quantitative data also supported this notion. Luongo (2018) reported that 70.5% of faculty agree with missing face-to-face contact with students, and 87% feel that online learning prevents them from getting to know students. Blundell et al. (2020) found related findings that suggest instructor-student interaction is the most prominent finding of overall faculty satisfaction. McGee et al. (2017) further supported faculty engagement practices. They found evidence of expertise in online learning suggested faculty teaching styles that encourage student interaction and elicit instructor presence.

Even programs that were not previously online before the COVID-19 pandemic but consequently adopted also documented a need for intentional interaction built in the classroom, indicating the importance of student-instructor exchange for more rational and critical thinking (Todri et al., 2021). Although McGee et al. (2017) studied the perceptions of experienced faculty, Jackson (2019) reported that years in teaching do not impact an instructor's desire to utilize digital tools. However, faculty naivety of the online learning environment and communication tools can present new faculty with a challenge to online engagement strategies.

There are differences among whether faculty feel online learning is appropriate for students. Some faculty believe online learning is beneficial to students because of its flexibility and convenience (Shreaves et al., 2020; Taylor & Wright, 2020). However, the literature is very clear about the type of learner that is successful in online learning. The faculty agreed that a self-directed student is more likely to succeed in the online learning environment and warned that students who do not possess self-directed qualities are less likely to succeed (Taylor & Wright, 2020). Regardless of the student profile, scholars have believed some subject matter is not appropriate for the online space. Kelley (2017), an online learning opponent, posited that online learning is not the proper method for teaching topics within criminal justice that can incite past trauma for students.

Similarly, Willett et al. (2019) found an agreement among faculty that sports management courses with more complex content are not suitable for the online learning environment. Further, through surveying faculty, Cook (2018) found that faculty learned that what works for one subject matter in the online space, such as social sciences, is different for the learning design and approach to teaching physics or math online. Scholars have recently indicated that some faculty prefer face-to-face teaching over online (Luongo, 2018; Taylor & Wright, 2020). Just as teaching styles vary, so do the perceptions of online learning.

New and experienced online faculty have reported many challenges and opportunities in adopting and using online learning that elicit a spectrum of emotions from faculty. Many online instructors and faculty continuously grapple with the pedagogical reframing of online teaching and operating in virtual learning environments instead of pedagogy used in traditional face-to-face settings (Andrews Graham, 2019).

While some creative and tech-savvy instructors may be more adaptable to teaching online, others are not. Kidd (2017) interviewed five faculty members to determine their emotional response to online learning and found that most emotions such as anxiety, frustration, fear, and anger were harmful. Frustration appeared as a common emotion among several teaching scholars due to a lack of interaction, time spent learning new instructional strategies, technology, intellectual property concerns, and training and support (Cook; 2018; Glass, 2017; Luongo; 2018; Mansbach & Austin, 2018).

Although online learning may not be the preferred teaching modality for some faculty, Cook (2018) articulated that faculty's overall positive emotional reaction was enjoyment, with many faculty desiring to teach online in the future. The researchers provided faculty with extensive training, including individual and group sessions which can contribute to their positive emotions. Alternatively, Glass (2017) found a divide in faculty emotions, with half mainly expressing positive emotions and the other half expressing negative emotions. The online teaching process can prompt faculty to feel positive and negative feelings even if they enjoy or continue teaching online.

Some faculty are adjusting well to adopting online learning at HBCUs and using online learning teaching practices to enhance their face-to-face teaching practices to encourage active learning. In their study on the impacts of HBCU faculty teaching online teaching and returning to face-to-face instruction, Andrews Graham (2019) found that faculty conceptual philosophies on teaching changed. Most faculty philosophies went from traditional lecturer roles to facilitator roles, from knowledge holders to resource providers, and from sage-on-the-stage to guide-on-the-side (Andrews Graham, 2019;

Morrison, 2014). In alignment with andragogical teaching principles, their teaching also became more student-centered rather than teacher-centered.

Additionally, researchers have depicted faculty as becoming innovators in their online classrooms as they grapple with interweaving the digital space with the learning environment. Loague et al. (2018) supported this notion in their research that found HBCU faculty having an overall positive attitude toward using technology for instruction. Also, many of the participants operated at an intermediate use/acceptance level. Using a survey research design, Riggs (2019) examined HBCU faculty members' attitudes and intentions toward technology and examined the relationship between these attitudes and faculty members' level of innovativeness. This latest research shows a subset of HBCU faculty as early majority adopters based on Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovation theory. Although Glenn Jones and Davenport (2018) debated that faculty resistance is a factor in HBCUs slowly moving to online learning, Riggs (2019) found HBCU faculty to have varying comfortability levels with online learning and found them to accept innovations. Proper faculty training can shorten this learning curve and adjustment period, which Andrews-Graham (2019) pointed to as a necessity for faculty to design and facilitate online courses successfully.

Faculty Training and Professional Development

Scholars have pointed to faculty training and professional development as a solution for negative or lesser faculty opinions of online teaching and learning (Bawa, 2016; de los Santos & Zanca, 2018; McGee et al., 2017). Faculty tend to resist change in teaching practices, particularly online teaching, due to faculty having insufficient training, knowledge, and practice, difficulty adjusting to a new time commitment, and

frustration with poor technological infrastructure (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). Additionally, new online instructors must alter their teaching practices to be more compatible with online learning because the instructional strategies used for in-person face-to-face teaching are not the same as those used for distance education. For instance, Pereira & Wahi (2017) suggested a strategic approach to increase the adoption of course management systems (CMS), used interchangeably with learning management systems (LMS). They shared to target faculty whose teaching styles are less compatible with the LMS and provide them training to translate their styles to the online setting.

Faculty want to learn about the online learning environment and appropriate online instructional strategies. For study participants in McGee et al.'s (2017) Delphi study, faculty indicated formal training as one of three supports that best develop their online teaching expertise. Similarly, Blundell et al. (2020) found that faculty desire a model for continued faculty development related to online learning. The need for faculty training and professional development is consistent in much of the faculty and online learning research. Whether faculty are teaching online courses or building and teaching online courses, scholars have encouraged training. Villarruel et al. (2019) found their participants were increasingly positive after training on the course management system. Brinkley-Etzkorn (2020) added a slightly similar perspective in their study. They found that faculty entering online course redesign training felt overall passionate, interested, and eager about revising and teaching an online course. After the participants edited their courses and conducted them online, their attitudes changed, and they were less optimistic and desired more support. The perspectives and outcomes of faculty training are often mixed and can vary across and within institutions.

HBCU scholars have also found a positive impact on faculty members' attitudes and student scores by implementing appropriate and tailored training. Hollowell et al. (2017) described the impact of Quality Matters (QM) training on faculty course design and the effect of QM-based course revision on student outcomes. Quality Matters is an internationally recognized rubric-based program used to assess the quality of online learning environments (Quality Matters, 2021). Researchers have discussed Quality Matters as a highly regarded standard for evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of online courses by higher education institutions. In the study, HBCU faculty completed QM training, followed procedures to update their LMS courses, including the overall course structure and content. After running newly revised sections six times, student exam scores, final grades, and QM course review scores increased (Hollowell et al., 2017).

Another HBCU study demonstrated utilizing QM as a part of their faculty online learning training experience and having a learner-centered course design approach (Alston et al., 2017). The researchers have suggested creating a training approach to improve how faculty members feel about computers, technology, and online education. More specifically, institutions can achieve faculty professional development by implementing continuous training on hard skills such as software and instructional skills that include the use of technology.

Online Learner Demographics

Knowing about the learner is advantageous so that the learning experience is successful. Online student demographic data primarily represents the nontraditional aged student with the typical online age between 31 and 37 years old (Johnson, 2015; Paulsen

& McCormick, 2020; Vinson, 2017). Individuals who did not receive a standard high school diploma are considered nontraditional (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Additionally, students who do not enroll in high school nor attend full time are considered nontraditional. Finally, students who have dependents of their own or work full time are also considered nontraditional (Chatham-Carpenter & Spadaro, 2019). Thus, online learning caters to working adult students to fit their need for flexible learning options (Shreaves et al., 2020). Students may have other conflicts that prevent them from going to campus, such as physical distance or disability (Ilgaz & Gulbahar, 2017).

Adult learning principles outline what typical adult learners need and inform how learning experiences should be designed (Yarbrough, 2018). However, these principles are especially useful in online asynchronous learning, where students navigate the learning environment themselves and learn for a specific reason or application (Ferreia & MacLean, 2018). Online courses require a motivated, self-directed learner due to learning without an instructor physically present and the nuances surrounding computer-based learning (Ryznar & Dutton, 2020). Scholars have suggested that adult online learners need guidance from their instructors but will typically reach out for assistance as needed (Knowles, 1980). However, the expectation is that vital resources and information are available for students. Online courses typically contain a syllabus, course objectives, learning resources, assignments, and assessments (Kowalski, 2013). The difference between having access to these items in a traditional course versus an online course is that the traditional, face-to-face instructor is likely to verbally review course content with students. In an online course, the student is primarily responsible for extracting

information from the course documents and reviewing all the details to learn the course requirements and expectations (Vanslambrouck et al., 2019).

The online course experience can affect a student's grades or enrollment status if a student is underprepared. For instance, if a student does not feel they have all the necessary course documents, or if the student experiences difficulty transitioning to being more independent in their learning. Fain (2019) reported that online programs contribute to the achievement gap. Student traits and environment, course design, and faculty members' online learning experience impact online retention rates (Bawa, 2016; Glazier, 2016). While retention rates for online courses are still problematic, Gering et al. (2018) conducted a three-phase study about student success factors for online learning. The phase three interviews with twelve student participants suggested students can be more successful in online courses if they possess strong time management skills, have a supportive family, and are self-directed learners.

Researchers have noted that online orientations and other institutional preparatory measures can increase student success in the online classroom. Abdous (2019) explored student satisfaction and preparedness for online learning, proving that online learning can cause anxiety primarily in, but not limited to, female students, younger students, and first-year students. Abdous (2019) and Bawa (2016) agreed that online learning orientations help prepare students for the online learning environment versus not having one at all. Some institutions still do not orient new online students, leading to more anxiety as students interact in isolation with the online learning environment. Additionally, Joosten et al. (2019) found that the design and course organization are the

primary instructional characteristics influencing online courses' student outcomes. Instructional online course design is discussed further in a later section.

Further online student success strategies relate to student and instructor interaction (Salvo et al., 2019). In their study of 62 HBCU undergraduate students, Haywood and Murty (2018) found that students prefer to access their instructor more readily. Student access to their instructor includes outside the online classroom, instructor involvement in group discussions, and quicker response time in student email and assignment feedback. Despite students' desire for more interaction, most of the participants in this study were overall satisfied with their online learning experience.

Numerous studies for both HBCU and PWIs have encouraged the need for engagement and communication in the online classroom (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Ornelles et al., 2019; Thomas & Spencer, 2020). Bandura's social learning theory (1977) supports an increase in engagement. His theory posited that learning occurs through observation, modeling, or imitation as environmental and cognitive factors influence learning and behavior. Researchers have suggested that the Community of Inquiry framework also influences engagement with students through teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence (Brown, 2020; Garrison et al., 2000). HBCUs continue to assess how to provide the necessary support to students online (Gilbert, 2020). HBCUs must master designing quality online learning experiences because research pointed to learner-instructor interaction as an indicator of student academic success.

HBCU Faculty Considerations for Teaching Minority Students

Although HBCUs tend to be more traditional and conservative because of their close ties to the church, they have prided themselves on the nurturing social and academic environment they create for their students (Walker, 2018). A consistent find in the literature is the personal and emotional considerations faculty at HBCUs have for their students (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Groccia et al., 2018; Thomas & Spencer, 2020). The institutional environment of HBCUs is known to provide a climate where students are less likely to deal with negative race-based stereotypes and situations that undermine students' achievements (Gasman et al., 2017). Thus, HBCU faculty have recognized the societal impacts on students of color and paid attention to their specific learning needs.

To give a greater insight into the societal impacts on students of color, Lewis and Wu (2021) used a convenience sample of 301 HBCU students to determine whether being stopped by the police and being victimized by community violence were strong predictors of PTSD. The findings demonstrated that Black students are more likely to be at risk for higher levels of trauma due to exposure to community violence and over-policing. Furthermore, cognitive neuroscience described trauma's effect on the brain, which impedes a student's ability to retain and analyze information appropriately (Walker & Goings, 2017).

To further extend this research, scholars have sought to understand the psychological impacts on HBCU and PWI students, focusing on John Henryism, a high effort coping mechanism in response to social and racial discrimination. Bernard et al. (2020) sought to determine the effects of institutional racial composition and John

Henryism on imposter syndrome and psychological well-being by sampling 266 Black HBCU and PWI students. Bernard et al. (2020) used hierarchical moderation regression analyses to discover that imposter syndrome is associated with decreased well-being indicators among students attending both schools. A result from their study showed that imposter syndrome positively predicted social anxiety, but only among students attending PWIs who reported higher levels of John Henryism. This evidence of the mental and emotional factors on some HBCU students requires the administration and faculty to adopt strategic instructional approaches that support healing and care.

HBCUs engage with their student population through a culturally and historically significant concept called “othermothering” (Walker, 2018). This institutional value regards faculty as mentors and guardianship-like roles for students by creating a safe, supportive learning environment. Othermothering plays a role in boosting student self-confidence and esteem in a new, challenging context. Regardless of the many benefits of these informal and formal connections to increase student determination and intrinsic motivation, some scholars have believed othermothering has some drawbacks (Njoku et al., 2017). Njoku et al. (2017) referenced the Dixon v Alabama (1961) case that ended the culture of in *loco parentis* where the institutional community members step into a role as parents or guardians. Despite this ruling, HBCUs have found othermothering essential and continue to incorporate the concept in the social and academic culture. Further, this gives insight into the HBCU's traditional, face-to-face teaching style so that rapport, trust, safety, resiliency, and community building can occur for their students.

As HBCUs continue to adopt and integrate online learning, othermothering and student support remain a high priority. Alston et al. (2017) shared the need for institutions

to train faculty to design, deliver, and facilitate online learning for social work students with considerations for the emotional and academic states. Other HBCU scholars have echoed the inclusion of these considerations. Thomas and Spencer (2020) used the Constructivist, Emotionally-Oriented Model of Web-based Instruction and Kobasa et al.'s (1982) five "high-touch" personal needs to reflect on current online teaching practices. The five high-touch needs include challenge, commitment, control, creativity, and caring, and each need aligns with andragogical principles. Challenge and creativity highlight problem-based learning and a learner-centric environment; commitment and caring relay to the relevancy of content, immediacy of application, and the instructor as a mentor or guide; and control, or autonomy, recounts the self-directed nature of nontraditional students.

Caring is in alignment most with culturally relevant teaching practices and communication (Williams, 2018). Thomas and Spencer (2020) grounded their online course practices in the conceptual framework of producing reflective practitioners who can create educational justice for all students. Reflective practitioners are teaching and learning professionals who critically analyze aspects of the learning environment to determine if they are unbiased and support student knowledge acquisition and overall academic student success. As HBCUs continue to transition to online learning, they will need to continuously refine engagement and support for their online students through online course design.

Online Course Design

Online course design refers to the time-intensive, complex, and multifaceted process in which learning professionals analyze, plan, design, redesign, and develop

online courses (Kumar et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020). Online instruction strategically guides learners through the learning experience creating new schools of thought or experiences that influence changed behavior (Badami & Fatima, 2020). The design in the instruction determines what the learning experience consists of, making the field of ID crucial for the learners (Rajabalee & Santally, 2020). As noted in the faculty perceptions section, designing a mathematics course and humanities course look very different, highlighting course design's contextual nature. Further, design decisions are a constant part of the process. They are relied on to guide the development and connect learning objectives, course structure, and material for a quality learning experience (Nguyen, 2020).

Online course design requires individuals among the design team to have solid communication skills to guide design decisions effectively (Drysdale, 2019). Effective communication is vital to the ID process because of the design's contextual, learner, and instructional considerations (Drysdale, 2019). Faculty have recited communication enablers such as experienced design facilitators and synchronous and asynchronous communication (Croxford et al., 2019). Based on their findings regarding faculty experiences with communication, Croxford et al. (2019) recommended that design teams agree on a mode of communication and determine a communication plan. Similarly, after completing a cross-case analysis on three faculty experiences with online course design, King et al. (2019) found that faculty deem team trust as necessary, as is the ability to have critical, open, and constructive discourse. Because design team members make many decisions, their ability to have clear communication skills is paramount.

In addition to communication among the design team, faculty scholars have highlighted the need for student engagement strategies as a part of the design process. Engagement and student interaction in the online classroom have benefited student outcomes (Hollingshead, 2018; Jaggars & Xu, 2016). After developing a literature-based rubric containing the most prevalent course design features (organization and presentation, learning objectives and assessments, interpersonal communication, and use of technology), Jaggars & Xu (2016) assessed each feature in 23 courses and interviewed instructors and students. They found that interpersonal interaction was the most positively and significantly associated area for predicting student grades. These findings support the basis for which other scholars design and develop courses.

In their study to develop a framework for engaging adult online learners through online course design using a student engagement framework, Knowles's adult learning theory, and the community of inquiry framework, Ornelles et al. (2019) created an instructional design and facilitation framework intending to enhance student engagement. Their framework incorporated personal factors, social interaction, and problem-based learning experiences to elicit student engagement. Jaggars & Xu (2016) determined that digital and educational technologies were also significantly associated with predicting student outcomes. These findings have provided a basis for Karchmer-Klein et al. (2019) to learn how digital tools provide opportunities for interaction and collaboration in a fully online master's program. Faculty participants in this study received no formal training before developing their courses and averaged six years of online teaching experience. As discovered through their analysis, Karchmer-Klein et al. (2019) found that students primarily interact when it is required. Students are more likely to engage when an

instructor extends an invitation (Shriram & Burton, 2021). An instructor's experience with digital tools and programmatic policies such as high enrollments influence ID.

Due to the depth and complexity of course design, faculty have found it necessary to gauge the timing of the process (Croxford et al., 2019; Guilbaud et al., 2021; King et al., 2019; Martin, Budhrani, et al., 2019). King et al. (2019) described their course design process as lasting between six and seven months. Ferriman (2016) suggested that eLearning designers need 160 hours of development time per hour of learning content. Time is also needed to analyze the course needs, determine learning objectives, select instructional approaches to develop student activities, develop content drafts, conduct reviews, and hold a series of meetings (Crosslin, 2018). Designers have added extra time for more complex learning experiences (Drysdale, 2019). Scholars have encouraged designers to implement time management and project management strategies. In their study to identify project management competencies in ID, Allen and Gardner (2021) found that communication, ethical behavior, flexibility, organization, and estimating timelines were the top ID-related project management competencies for higher education. Nevertheless, faculty reported it challenging to manage time and that it is sometimes unrealistic for the course design (Croxford et al., 2019).

Based on literature, effective online course design uses multiple roles and expertise to plan instruction and develop a learning experience that aligns with the learning objectives. From their analysis of focus group discussions and short-answer surveys, Croxford et al. (2019) found that faculty who participated in an online course design project value the knowledge and expertise of online learning designers to ensure sound instruction. Croxford et al. (2019) described the use of faculty, education teams,

library staff, student support, administrative staff, and design and technical teams were involved in course design. The steps and jargon used to describe the design approach vary but typically encompass a degree of similar tasks. King et al. (2019) described the process they followed as planning and initial development, beta-testing, course development, and quality assurance.

Similarly, an instructor in Kumar et al. (2019) described using a systematic process to course design by first determining the course description and objectives. For some faculty, that was a new concept. These tasks would generally be associated with the planning stage. Quality Matters (2021) listed the course overview and introduction as its first rubric standard learning objectives as the second. Based on the rubric standards, their approaches align with that of the broader course design process.

Faculty have described a spectrum of instructional techniques used to guide the design of learning content. Aside from determining learning objectives, an instructional strategy faculty described using in the course design process was scaffolding learning topics (Karchmer-Klein et al., 2019). The goal of scaffolding is that learners can become more independent in their learning process (Castro et al., 2019). Designers can scaffold materials and activities to build on to the next while removing learning supports such as prompts (Kumar & Ritzhaupt, 2017). Scholars have discussed chunking as a type of scaffolding. Chunking refers to breaking down content into more digestible topics to be mindful of learners' cognitive load and workload (Martin, Budhrani, et al., 2019; Martin, Ritzhaupt, et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020). Recognizing that adult learners often have multiple responsibilities, scholars have reported the need to be mindful of student workload to elicit student learning outcomes better. Regarding course organization,

Martin, Ritzhaupt, et al. (2019) found that faculty sought to chunk course content meaningfully during the course design process.

Smidt et al. (2017) sought to determine the meaning of quality in online courses through surveying administrators, faculty, and students. They found that the quality was viewed differently by each group. Students rated clarity, availability, and feedback the highest. Faculty found course interaction and engagement most important. Administrators concluded that quality courses align with the objectives and have comparable rigor. Each group distinctively rated components of quality, but all components are design considerations. Whether a learning component is apparent or lacking in a course, it points back to the design process. However, as noted previously, there is no unified, agreed-upon design standard for online learning in higher education. Instead, best practices are available in the current literature (Kumar et al., 2019). After interviewing award-winning course designers, Kumar et al. (2019) found that quality online courses incorporate relevant material and the use of multimedia, provide students an opportunity to apply and reflect on learning, and provide a clear purpose for learning. Andragogical approaches mirror the student-centered learning experienced as described by Kumar et al. (2019) as adult learners are experienced and learn for a purpose. Adult learners desire content that is relevant and applicable to their goal for learning.

Course designers emphasize course materials and assessments to align with student learning goals. In Martin, Ritzhaupt, et al. (2019), faculty felt they could better meet student needs by making the materials alive to students by using a variety of material formats. Like the award-winning elements of a course, Kumar et al. (2019) found that course materials were relevant to students' personal and professional interests.

Faculty shared that they do not always consider the alignment from learning objectives to the course content and content to assessment (King et al., 2019). Ornelles et al. (2019) suggested that course design concludes with a culminating activity or summative assessment to assess the student's overall performance and understanding of course content (Ornelles et al., 2019). Many ID models have focused attention on assessment as an element of course design. Andragogical teaching practices suggested assessments should be problem-centered and learner-centered (Anderson, 2016).

Researchers have suggested using reflection and ensuring alignment for designers to appropriately and strategically create online courses (King et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2019; Martin, Ritzhaupt, et al., 2019). Kumar et al. (2019) cited the need for faculty to reflect on design decisions and ensure alignment between the learning objectives, course content, and course assessments. Not all faculty consider course alignment, as reported by participants in King et al. (2019). However, other participants felt provoked to reflect on their teaching strategy as they worked alongside the course development team. A participant from Martin, Ritzhaupt, et al. (2019) exclaimed needing to consider what students need to know and how they will demonstrate it. It is necessary to align course materials as faculty consider what and how students will apply new learning (Chonwony et al., 2020). Misalignment of course objectives, content, and assessments can deter students from meeting learning outcomes and transferring new knowledge to real-life settings.

Many institutions have employed course designers, instructional designers, and instructional technologists to build and create sound online learning. These learning professionals have a keen eye for the learning process to meet the learning outcomes

(Kumar & Ritzhaupt, 2017). However, all HBCUs cannot staff these positions (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). The literature does not describe specific ID models HBCUs apply to guide the instructional development of their online offerings. In their qualitative comparison study, Tannehill et al. (2018) concluded that institutions with standards and accountability for their online course design practices typically have higher student satisfaction.

Further, it is inferred from Tannehill et al. (2018) and noted explicitly in Alston et al. (2017) that there are no ID standards for online higher education courses. The lack of standards requires a continuous trial-and-error cycle until online learning best practices can be adopted and implemented (Nworie, 2022). As described earlier, faculty have different expertise and comfortability with developing online courses. Kumar et al. (2019) noted that novice faculty who engage in online course design might not have a high student satisfaction rating compared to veteran online faculty. For this reason, it is essential to consider the *who* in online course design.

A grounded theory study conducted by Baldwin et al. (2018) extended this thinking by understanding how faculty approach online course design. In learning that many of their faculty participants were unaware of ID models, Baldwin et al. (2018) created the informal design theory, closely mirroring the ADDIE model. Faculty participants in this study received neither institutional support from instructional designers nor had access to a centralized online course support center. This experience is common for some faculty, but not all, as the team-based literature depicts. Researchers have indicated the positive effects of online course design in a team approach versus solo faculty members. McCurry and Mullinix (2017) encouraged a concierge model to assist

faculty in online course design, incorporating instructional designers as a core component to working with faculty in developing courses for a personalized and individualized process. Similarly, King et al. (2019) recommended a multidisciplinary team-based approach to course design in higher education, including faculty, instructional designers, and learning management system specialists.

Many tend not to fully understand the role of an instructional designer (Kumar & Ritzhaupt, 2017), although the field of ID is not new in learning and education. Many instructional designers work in the business and industry sector to create training or train employees to succeed in their jobs (Kang & Ritzhaupt, 2015). The second most significant work context for instructional designers is the higher education field. Designers in higher education build traditional, face-to-face courses, hybrid, and fully online courses (Nworie, 2022). Instructional designers in higher education focus on designing and developing courses in which instructors facilitate and teach, and the students learn (Nworie, 2022).

Because of the nature of ID work, institutions can better meet the student population's needs. However, institutions utilize instructional designers varyingly. Ritzhaupt and Kumar (2017) interviewed eight higher education instructional designers to understand better what higher education instructional designers do. Ritzhaupt & Kumar (2017) found that most instructional designers were university staff who worked closely with faculty who served as subject matter experts (SMEs) to create and design learning experiences. Other institutions may require faculty members to operate as instructional designers or assist other faculty members in course creation and development (Baldwin et al., 2018). Koc (2020) articulated the added burden faculty can experience due to

juggling teaching and course design responsibilities. In addition, depending on the institution, a faculty member designing a course solo may or may not have the andragogical or ID insight to develop a sound, quality course because their expertise is in the subject matter.

In a job announcement analysis study, Kang and Ritzhaupt (2015) determined that instructional designers' knowledge, skills, and abilities are multifaceted and multidisciplinary. Beyond having ID knowledge, the job analysis demonstrated that instructional designers must be highly collaborative and possess strong written and oral communication skills. Additionally, ID is a project-based field, and as such, project management skills are essential. Although jobs overlook project management skills, research findings indicate they are necessary (Kang & Ritzhaupt, 2015; Ritzhaupt & Kumar, 2017). Specific knowledge, skills, and abilities are required for course design and development regardless of a singular or team-based approach to course design projects.

Summary

ID is a primary component of the online course design process in higher education. ID is the iterative, strategic planning of learning content and material through the analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation phases. This cycle is widely known as the ADDIE model used to guide a creator's design efforts. Some higher education institutions utilize instructional designers (and other similarly titled educational technologists, instructional technologists, or instructional specialists) through the learning content design, but other institutions do not.

Colleges and universities that do not employ instructional designers or related titles leave the online course design in the hands of faculty. Faculty that are well-versed

in course design and ID tend to create online learning environments that are engaging, structurally aligned, and academically challenging for learners. Other faculty do not have this insight. Despite the expansion of online learning opportunities and positive student outcomes, some faculty do not believe online learning is a valuable learning mode and oppose its utility. Designers determine much of the functions and layout of an online classroom in the design process before any content creation or course shell development. Unfortunately, the design process is not implemented by all. It is unknown what percentage of US institutions provide course design assistance to faculty compared to the portion that does not.

HBCUs provide educational opportunities to African American students who may be academically or financially disadvantaged, impacting their federal, state, and local funding, endowments, and tuition revenue. While some HBCUs are thriving and doing well financially, some HBCUs have shut down due to financial hardships or continue to have financial issues. Institutional finances affect whether departments and staff are available such as instructional designers and other online course support staff. Although only 30% of HBCUs offer online learning, faculty desire to increase online course offerings at HBCUs. However, faculty at HBCUs may complete the course design and development process by themselves. As the literature indicated, a team-based design approach produces quality online learning experiences.

Despite institutional factors, the literature encouraged all institutions to approach online course design with a multidisciplinary team approach, understanding that most faculty have expert knowledge in their field, but likely not in online course design and online learning delivery. Instructional designers and other online course support staff

have expert knowledge in assisting faculty and students in achieving course learning outcomes. Currently, there is little literature regarding the online course design process implemented by faculty at HBCUs or the support available to them within their institutions. Therefore, this qualitative study aims to understand the online course design process at southeastern HBCUs.

The focus of this study was the online course design process at HBCUs. Faculty play a pivotal role in online course design and delivery. However, faculty may or may not be equipped with the instructional strategies and tools to design or deliver an online course successfully. It is also necessary that the institution support faculty in developing online course material and prepare them to teach online. The current literature showed that various online instructional strategies such as student engagement in the online classroom can be determined and incorporated during the design process. This study explored faculty practices of online course design. Chapter 3 reviews the research methods proposed for the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to understand the online course design process experienced by faculty at HBCUs. In the study, I focused specifically on faculty who had designed and developed at least one online course at their current or previous HBCU institution. Based on current literature on this topic, faculty online teaching practices and online course design varies, and scholars have not thoroughly researched these topics at HBCUs (Baldwin et al., 2018; Cole-Martin, 2017; Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). Thus, a gap existed, which prompted an opportunity for further research to learn about faculty experiences in online course design at HBCU institutions. The qualitative nature of the study influenced the sampling, data collection, and data analysis decisions.

The major sections of this chapter include research design and rationale, the researcher's role, methodology, participant selection, instrumentation, data analysis plan, and trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions for this study explored the central phenomenon of online course design:

1. How do HBCU faculty describe their approach to online course design?
2. What is the faculty's understanding of their students' online learning experience?
3. How do HBCU faculty learn how to design online courses?

The conceptual framework and literature review served as a basis for each developed research question. The research questions focused my study to learn how HBCU faculty described their approach to online course design, how they viewed

learners' experiences with online learning, and how they learned to design for online learning environments.

The qualitative approach analyzes the meaning of experiences and collects data from peoples' experiences to interpret those experiences better (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This research goal was in alignment with the purpose of this study. In the case of online course design, online faculty engage with online course content and computer software and experience a process in which they design and develop courses or course material. Additionally, basic qualitative research may incorporate purposeful sampling, such as criterion-based sampling, that is, online faculty who have experienced designing an online course at an HBCU.

Three other qualitative research designs were considered for this study: grounded theory, phenomenological study, and case study (see Egbert & Sanden, 2014; Patton, 2015). However, these approaches did not accurately align with the study as the basic qualitative approach did. Basic qualitative studies focus on understanding the meaning of peoples' experiences, and this method allowed me to explore faculty experiences with online course design generally. A grounded theory approach is applicable if the study devises a theory based on the findings (Patton, 2015). A phenomenological approach would align if the study searches for faculty's more profound, lived experiences regarding online course design. The depth of the phenomenological interview is more than what the present study called for.

The case study approach analyzes a specific event, person, place, organization, or unit of some kind (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). This unit is considered a "case" bound by time, place, or a physical boundary (Mills et al., 2010). Case studies look at what is

within the case and what is external to but affecting the case. Case studies provide a real-life, in-depth analysis of a unit to provide an explanatory and descriptive view (Mills et al., 2010). Because of the focused aspects of the case and its bound requirements, this qualitative design was not applicable for this study.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was to play the role of a neutral, unbiased third party whose mission is to gather objective data for analysis (see Patton, 2015) as an interviewer and data analyst. To prepare for data gathering, I selected the research approach most aligned with the research questions. I recruited study participants, sent all communications to participants, including a biographical questionnaire, and conducted the interviews. I reviewed and corrected transcribed interview data and analyzed all data using selected data analysis methods to gather results and conclusions.

As a previous instructional designer in higher education, I had familiarity with the context in which faculty contribute to online courses. I had awareness of their roles in the course design process and the variances relative to each role. Although researcher bias naturally came into play during the research process, I was responsible for reducing the opportunities for biases. I implemented strategies to reduce researcher bias during the interview process, such as using nonbiased, open-ended questions, along with a neutral tone. The interview questions did not assume any information from the participants to allow them an opportunity to provide impartial responses. To help remove bias, the data collection occurred outside of my professional and personal environments. Finally, prior to beginning the study, I had a general idea about how some higher education institutions approach online course design. Still, I was unaware of any practices or online course

support structures at the participants' institutions. At the time of this study, there were no apparent conflicts of interest or power differentials relevant to the study.

Methodology

The methodology of the study was the "identification, study, and justification of research methods" (see Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 32). This section shares the decisions for participation selection, instrumentation, recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.

Participant Selection Logic

The participants for this study were HBCU higher education faculty members who had participated in at least one design and development project for an online course. The faculty's location was preferred to be those individuals at southeastern HBCUs as the majority of HBCUs are in southeastern states such as Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida, and North Carolina (see Broady et al., 2017). Because roughly 30% of HBCUs have online learning, only specific institutions' faculty could participate. The physical distance between myself and the participants did not impact the interviews for this study, which occurred virtually. Purposeful sampling allowed me to locate and study information-rich cases relevant to the phenomenon (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The sampling strategy was purposeful sampling, also called purposive sampling (Patton, 2015), targeting specific faculty to participate in the study. This sampling strategy produced findings applicable to inform potential changes within the identified field's practices, programming, and policies. This sampling strategy applied to the current research study because of the goal to learn about faculty online course designers' experiences holistically. The study results allow others to either replicate the study or

garner relevant aspects of faculty experiences relative to their faculty and make adjustments based on the findings.

Inclusion criteria for the current study's participants required higher education faculty/instructors currently employed at an HBCU. Faculty participants could either have had full-time or part-time/adjunct status. Finally, the faculty had to have assisted in developing at least one hybrid or fully online course at an HBCU institution. Reversely, the participants could not have had another role/title other than that of a course instructor or synonymous title. The faculty member had to have been employed and taught online at an HBCU.

Further, the faculty could not solely have had experience developing curriculum for traditional, face-to-face courses. Before participating in the study, participants were assessed verbally or in writing about their experience with teaching in higher education and the online course design process. Participants reviewed the terms of the research study to become aware of what the study entailed and provided informed consent.

For the present study, a sample size of four or more individuals may cause the findings to lose the depth and detail achieved during data collection (see Patton, 2015). However, a sample of two or three individuals may forgo the opportunity to glean rich, comparative information (see Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Despite increased sample sizes for qualitative dissertation studies in the past (Mason, 2010), data saturation can be met by ensuring the interview questions' quality and asking interviewees the same interview questions (Fusch & Ness, 2015). McClellan (2016) used 16 staff from three HBCUs for her qualitative study, while Allen (2014) used 11 faculty from one HBCU. Therefore, in this study, I used nine participants (see Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

I first identified participants through relevant, published scholarly literature. Next, I reviewed faculty's biographical information on university websites to learn who taught online. The majority of faculty contact information is in the public domain on university websites. Thus, I contacted individuals directly via email or phone. I sent an initial email to introduce the study and its goal. If there was no response, I sent a follow-up email.

Data saturation, the point at which a researcher finds no new information concerning their topic, was met with nine participants. I did not need to adjust the sampling size for this study's needs. The goal of the current study was to understand faculty experiences with the online course design process at HBCUs. The anticipated sample of the study provided enough data to gather evidence of the online course design process. During a certain point in my data collection process, per Ravitch and Carl (2016), no new information appeared. Reversely, if new and differing data continued to appear amongst the nine or so participants, a larger sample would have lent itself useful for the study. Finally, the interview questions allowed me to narrow and elicit specific responses in the data collection process.

Instrumentation

Participant interviews allowed me to understand the faculty human experience (see Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I developed a semistructured interview protocol for this study that consisted of eight open-ended interview questions based on the conceptual framework and research questions (see Appendix A). The goal of the interview questions was to explore faculty designers' decisions and thought processes about and during the course design and development process, which connected to the ADDIE ID model (see Bond & Dirkin, 2020; Stefaniak, 2020). The online course design process requires

several decision points and how faculty make their decisions aligned within the ADDIE ID model, adult learning theories, and the HBCU as a context.

Question 1 answered Research Question 1 by addressing faculty's approach to the online course design process. Questions 2 through 5 answered Research Question 2 by focusing on how faculty's awareness of what learners need in the online space. Questions 6 and 7 addressed Research Question 3 by focusing on who faculty come to learn about designing for online learning environments. Purposeful sampling for recruitment and selection ensured faculty could speak to this experience. Finally, demographic questions served to describe and distinguish the participants. Presented in Table 1 is the alignment of the interview questions to the research questions.

Table 1

Interview Questions and Research Questions Alignment

Interview Question	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3
1	X		
2		X	
3		X	
4		X	
5		X	
6			X
7			X
8	X	X	X

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Because participant locations varied, I emailed informative flyers to individuals describing the research and participant qualifications. Those individuals were identified through professional networking or research as described previously. As participants expressed their interest in participating, I polled each person via email to determine participant eligibility. If the potential participant was eligible based on the inclusion criteria, I sent an invitation email including an informed consent document. The informed consent provided potential participants with detailed information about study demands, timing, risks, and data, among other items (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Once the individual accepted the invitation to participate, signed, and returned the informed consent form, I negotiated interview times based on availability.

Similarly, the geographic disbursement of participants made it difficult and unsuitable to conduct face-to-face interviews. Therefore, I used the Zoom web

conferencing tool to conduct and record each interview. Zoom transcribed interview files when the video and audio rendering was complete. I aimed to conduct 45-minute interviews with the individual participants, on average. With nine participants, the interview timeline was 2 months, with one to two interviews per week.

As part of the debriefing procedure of the interview process, I

- provided my contact information to the interviewee again,
- confirmed participant contact information was correct,
- informed participants when they would receive the transcribed version of the interview to review and requested that they provide feedback within 5 days of receiving the transcription, and
- thanked the interviewee for their time and for providing valuable information to shed light on faculty experiences with online course design at HBCUs (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016)

Further postinterview tasks included making sure the recording was saved appropriately and writing detailed notes of my experience, including how I, as the primary researcher, felt during the interview and unspoken reactions to the interviewee's comments. Lastly, I returned the interview transcript to the participants after the interview transcription was complete and ready for review.

Data Analysis Plan

Some qualitative researchers have used inductive coding practices such as open coding or thematic analysis to draw codes, categories, and themes from the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Using the first cycle coding for my interview analysis, I identified descriptive and conceptual codes from each participant's

response (see Laureate Education, 2016a). After I coded all the responses appropriately, I moved forward to the second review of the data. I used second cycle coding for my interview analysis, in which I looked for consistencies and differences in responses to each question (see Laureate Education, 2016b). To create categories, I grouped like codes and compared the interview context based on the codes to create themes. To identify and eliminate any researcher bias, I incorporated memos for both rounds of coding to include documented personal thoughts about the data and the data collection experience.

Although data management tools are also available for analysis, I used recordings of interviews, transcriptions, and Microsoft Excel to manage my data (see Laureate Education, 2016c; Meyer & Avery, 2008). This decision was made based on the consideration that a similar amount of effort would go into the data management process regardless of using qualitative data management software such as Nvivo or Atlas.ti. The differentiator of using data management software is initial preparation, management, and formatting before conducting the analysis. Although the tools are user-friendly, there is a learning curve to using both tools, whereas I already had familiarity with Microsoft tools and had prepared templates for data collection.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Researchers naturally have an expectation or judgment about a studied phenomenon (Carcary, 2009). Trustworthiness is used as a quality indicator check to ensure the research findings are representative of the studied phenomenon, the participants, and the data collection methods (Stewart & Hitchcock, 2016). Ensuring quality ensures that the study is valid and free of researcher bias, coincidental

relationships, or limitations. This section describes strategies used to establish a trustworthy study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the study truly measures its intended outcomes (Shenton, 2004). Shenton (2004) suggested having prior knowledge of the participant type. In this case, I became familiar with online faculty in higher education who play a role in online course design and development through my professional online learning experience. Another strategy to ensure credibility was using reflexivity to record my thoughts in a journal after reviewing the transcriptions.

I strengthened credibility by selecting a research method, such as a basic qualitative design, to explore and understand faculty's online course design experiences at HBCUs (see Carcary, 2009). This qualitative research method aligned with the research nature of observation as relayed by Johnson and Christenson (2014). They posited that qualitative research attempts to understand the participants' views, meanings, and perspectives. Iterative questioning was used during the interviews to mitigate responses with little substance by asking probing and follow-up questions (see Shenton, 2004). Lastly, I confirmed the content validity of the interview questions after two experts in the field of online course design in higher education reviewed the interview questions.

Transferability

Transferability describes the extent to which the findings of one study apply in other situations (Merriam, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) added that transferability determines the similarities between the research study's context and one's context as it is intended for consideration by those who read the study (Tracy, 2010). In the instance

another researcher wants to determine applicability to their context relating to this phenomenon, descriptions of the participant criteria, data collection instruments, the data collection setting, and the recruitment method are available. Based on Tracy (2010), transferability is more likely if the participation selection criteria are explicit.

Dependability

Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined dependability, otherwise termed reliability for quantitative research, as the consistency of the data. Dependability ensures similar or consistent findings if the study is repeated (Miles et al., 2014). Consistent and reliable findings justify the research design to ensure a study is replicable (Stewart & Hitchcock, 2016). Thus, dependability was met by adhering to and providing the rationale for the data collection protocol, providing sufficient detail about each aspect of the study, including participant description and the general location, and overall research design and rationale.

Confirmability

The intended goal of qualitative research is for the findings to represent the experiences and truths of the participants, minimizing as much researcher bias and subjectivity as possible (Crawford, 2016). Qualitative experts suggested audit trails track decisions made during the research process (Crawford, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Reflective thinking, or reflexivity, helps to ensure the study's confirmability. Examples of reflexive validity questions provided by Ravitch and Carl (2016) consider whether I have my own agenda, how I may be influencing the findings, and how I can manage those influences. Additional recommendations include reflecting on if another

interviewer would have similar or different conclusions and utilizing my network to check my subjectivity and position.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical considerations for a research study are essential to the participant(s) and researcher(s) safety. Ethical research seeks to determine the risks and benefits to participants within the study to protect all research participants. For this reason, I followed several steps to ensure the safety of participants and protect myself as research commenced. To gain access to participants, I first received approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB; Walden IRB approval number # 12-23-21-0760034) before recruiting participants. Then, I located online faculty at HBCUs and obtained contact information from the public-facing websites. Because faculty information is public information and I did not need university-specific information, I did not contact the IRB offices of each HBCU.

Regarding ethical concerns related to recruitment materials and processes, all communication was conducted via a password-protected web-based email platform accessible only to me and filed away in a specific folder. The online informed consent document provided information to participants for ethical concerns related to data collection activities, such as participants refusing an interview or early withdrawal. Hence, participants were aware of their options. Informed consent described participation as voluntary, the research purpose, procedures to follow, the expected duration of participation, any potential risks or benefits, a description of confidentiality of subjects' information and data, and my contact information.

The consent form was emailed as a downloadable form for participants to provide consent by signing and returning the attached document. I used several strategies to keep participants anonymous: removing direct identifiers and creating keys linking participants' names to unique numbers associated with the data, removing identifiers after data collection, and using alternative identifiers in the study's results or other future presentations. Finally, I kept a password-protected record of any documentation of participant communication.

Collected data was encrypted and saved on a password-protected online storage drive. The key to the participant and institutional codes were encrypted, saved, and separated from the data to keep their identity private and confidential. I organized and disseminated data after the research analysis was complete, as I was the only individual with access to the data. Finally, I encrypted all data before saving it on a cloud-based drive and plan to destroy it from the online drive five years after completing the study. I recognized that purposive sampling could place individuals' privacy at risk if participants are from the same institution. My goal was to recruit participants from multiple HBCUs to create a stronger sense of privacy. There may be a small number of participants who teach and assist in online course design. If participants choose to speak to other colleagues about the study who are involved, their participation would no longer be confidential or private. There were no other ethical issues related to my work environment, conflicts of interest, or power differentials.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the aspects of the research design for the proposed study. I chose a basic qualitative study to understand online course design at HBCUs.

Specifically, I hoped to learn from the faculty's experiences with online course design. The study approach allowed me to gain the unique perspective of online faculty at HBCUs. I determined potential participants using the purposive and snowball sampling method to recruit nine faculty across eight institutions. I accessed their contact information from the institutions' public-facing websites or via research literature if contact information was available. Interviews served as the data collection instrumentation for this study. Once all data was collected, I conducted open coding and thematic analysis after correcting and reviewing the transcribed interviews. I considered credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in all aspects of the research design. Chapter 4 describes the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of HBCU faculty in online course design. In this study, I focused on faculty experiences and their perspectives of students' online learning experiences to inform their online course design. To accomplish this purpose, I included a review of ID considerations and processes in higher education and related literature on HBCUs in online learning as represented in the literature. The research questions for the study were based on the conceptual framework of an ID model, adult learning theory, and HBCUs as context, along with the literature review. The research questions were as follows:

1. How do HBCU faculty describe their approach to online course design?
2. What is the faculty's understanding of their students' online learning experience?
3. How do HBCU faculty learn how to design online courses?

The research design I selected for this study was a basic qualitative study. This chapter covers the study's setting, participant demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and a summary of data.

Setting

I recruited participants from multiple universities across the southeast United States, where HBCUs are prevalent. Interviews were conducted over the Zoom web conferencing tool. Turning on the webcam was not required, although eight participants shared it. All interviews were recorded with the participant's consent. Videos were

transcribed using Zoom transcripts. Transcripts were reviewed for corrections and shared with participants for review. Two participants made minor corrections.

Demographics

I used purposeful sampling and the snowball technique to recruit participants. I researched HBCU websites and authors of relevant literature to determine HBCU faculty who taught in online programs or courses. If emails were available, I recruited participants via email. Six participants responded and agreed to participate in the study via email invitations. Two universities were willing to share the recruitment email broadly to their online faculty, which yielded two additional faculty participants. During initial interviews, faculty were welcomed to refer colleagues who might be interested in participating in the study, which yielded one additional participant, for a total of nine participants.

To protect participant identity, I did not include all participant's demographics. Instead, I described the demographics generally that do not disclose faculty identity. See Table 2 for shared faculty demographics. All participants held an instructor title at their institutions: associate professor (n = 6), instructor (n = 2), or professor (n = 1), while n = 2 held additional programmatic or college-level roles. Participants' average age was 51 and were grouped as follows: 35 to 44 (n = 2), 45 to 54 (n = 4), and 55 to 64 (n = 3). Participants were largely African American or Black (n = 6), while other races appeared less, White (n = 2) and Hispanic (n = 1). Participants largely taught in undergraduate online courses or programs (n = 5), while n = 1 taught at the graduate level, and n = 3 taught both undergraduate and graduate courses.

Participants varied across several academic disciplines, although the mode for the biological sciences disciplines (including chemistry) was $n = 3$. Other fields had one participant representing each: communication, criminal justice, cybersecurity, community development, social work, and finance. Most faculty ($n = 5$) had 5 to 10 years of experience designing and developing online courses, while fewer ($n = 3$) had 11 to 15 years of experience, and one had less than 5 years of experience. The majority of faculty ($n = 8$) taught for 5 to 10 years online at HBCUs. All full-time faculty ($n = 8$) taught on-campus courses in addition to their online courses.

Table 2

Participant Demographics Summary

Participant	Sex	Age	Race	Delivery formats	Years teaching online courses at HBCU	Years creating online courses
1	F	51	Black	Fully online	10	15
2	F	53	Black	Fully online	6	5
3	F	62	Hispanic	Fully online	8	8
4	F	55	Black	Fully online	9	9
5	F	48	Black	Hybrid	2	3
6	M	44	White	Fully online / Hybrid	8	11
7	F	62	White	Fully online	10	10
8	M	49	Black	Fully online	6	6
9	F	39	Black	Fully online	6	8

Data Collection

To understand the online course design experiences of HBCU faculty, I used interviews as my method for data collection in this basic qualitative study. Because participant location varies, I emailed recruitment flyers (see Appendix B) to individuals describing the research and participant qualifications. Those individuals were identified through professional networking or research as described previously. If the potential

participant was eligible based on the inclusion criteria, I sent the informed consent document. The informed consent provided potential participants with detailed information about study demands, timing, risks, and data, among other items (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Once the individual accepted the invitation to participate, signed, and returned the informed consent form, interview times were negotiated based on availability.

A total of nine participants met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate in the study. Interviews were between 40 and 130 minutes each, as indicated in Table 3. The average interview length was 62 minutes due to an outlier of 130 minutes. Therefore, most of the interviews were 53 minutes, on average. Due to the nature of Zoom web conferencing, I could only control my setting, which was a private location within my home. Therefore, all participants appeared in their work or home offices during the interview, as all but one participant shared their video. The participant who was not on video verbally stated they were on campus in their office.

Table 3

Participant Interview Log

Participant	Interview length (h:m:s)
P1	00:38:44
P2	00:56:30
P3	00:54:45
P4	00:54:53
P5	00:58:11
P6	00:50:09
P7	01:35:24
P8	00:58:28
P9	00:54:56

Interviews were conducted from January to March of 2022, with one to two weekly interviews. The interview protocol (see Appendix A) was followed as developed unless the faculty needed prompting for responses. Interview data were recorded using Zoom and stored in a password-protected and encrypted online storage drive. I encountered one unusual circumstance during data collection: Despite signing and returning the signed consent form, the participant did not meet the requirements and participated in an interview. The participant answered all the interview questions because of their experience with online learning in higher education. However, after further analysis of their interview transcript, I concluded that their position was administrative and not a faculty or instructor role. Thus, their data were not included in the study results.

Data Analysis

My data analysis plan did not alter from the original plan. I proposed open coding and thematic analysis to move inductively from coded units to larger categories and themes (see Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Using this combination, I navigated through coding, sorting, and synthesizing codes into categories

to themes. My analysis included multiple data readings incorporating prereading transcripts to gather a general idea of the dialogue and second reading to assign codes to statements and concepts. After open coding the transcripts, I drew connections between codes by grouping them into categories. This axial coding process began by organizing codes by participant and question. Codes were also separated by interview questions to collectively view all codes from the transcripts. Grouping codes by the interview questions provided a broad view of codes and data transparency to categorize similar codes. Finally, categories were analyzed to determine their applicability to the research questions and conceptual framework.

Relevant interview data based on the codes in each category were reviewed to validate the category and its relevance to the research question. Next, codes within categories were further analyzed to develop themes, and considerations were made regarding overlaps, disjunctures, and patterns. Next, I compared the themes to the research questions and conceptual framework. Finally, I reviewed the themes to determine if anything was missing and generated subthemes as necessary. The final categories led to the development of the following four themes as influences on the faculty's online course design experiences:

- macrolevel factors
- collaboration and experience
- time and tools
- student-centered design

The alignment of themes, codes, research questions, and conceptual frameworks are presented in Table 4.

Implementing an in vivo and emic coding process allowed me to stay close to the data and allowed the participants' words to speak for themselves, highlighting their view of reality. In addition, I noted memos for both rounds of coding to include documented personal thoughts about the data. Finally, although data management tools were available for analysis, I used recordings of interviews, transcriptions, and Microsoft Word and Excel to manage my data.

Table 4

Codes to Themes and Research Question Alignment

Codes	Theme	Research question
HBCU culture, shift towards online learning, competition, lack of resources, staffing, technology, budget, workload, pay, academic freedom, policy, accreditation	macrolevel factors	1, 3
Credentialed faculty, solo, collaboration, SME delays, varying faculty experience, staffing, approvals, departmental support, distance education office, previous experience, professional development, social learning, feedback	collaboration and experience	1, 3
Continuous development process, assessment development time, iterative, workload, approvals, Quality Matters, course map, course design tool, LMS, no formal process	time and tools	1
Learner demographics, learner preparation, retention, revisions, feedback, accessibility, interaction, engagement, student instructions, active learning, transferable skills, content selection, culturally relevant content	student-centered design	2

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the study measures its intended outcomes (Shenton, 2004). Shenton (2004) suggested having prior knowledge of the participant type. In this case, I had familiarity with the online course design process in higher education through my professional experience. To further ensure credibility, I used reflexivity questions to record my thoughts during the data collection and analysis stages.

I did not alter my research method, a basic qualitative design, to explore and understand the faculty's online course design experiences at HBCUs. This qualitative research method aligned with the research nature of observation as relayed by Johnson and Christenson (2014). Because qualitative research attempts to understand the participants' views, meanings, and perspectives, this research method was aligned. In addition, member checking was used during and after the interviews to clarify and confirm participants' responses by asking probing and follow-up questions (see Nowell et al., 2017).

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the findings of one study apply in other situations (Merriam, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) added that transferability determines the similarities between the research study's context and one's context as it is intended for consideration by those who read the study. Another researcher may want to determine applicability to their context relating to this phenomenon. Descriptions of the data collection instruments, the data collection setting, the recruitment method, and the data analysis plan were available. I describe explicit aspects of each area of need to inform future studies. In addition, this study could be adapted for other unique subpopulations of higher education institutions that offer online courses.

Dependability

Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined dependability, otherwise termed "reliability" for quantitative research, as the consistency of the data. Dependability ensures similar or consistent findings if the study is repeated (Miles et al., 2014). Dependability was met through Walden University's Institutional Review Board approval of my data collection

protocol, which included the research questions each participant received. Follow-up and probing questions varied based on initial responses. In addition, I provided interview transcripts to participants as an opportunity to provide corrections or clarifications. Finally, I implemented my data collection and analysis methods submitted to the Institutional Review Board.

Confirmability

The intended goal of qualitative research is for the findings to represent the experiences and truths of the participants, minimizing as much researcher bias and subjectivity as possible (see Crawford, 2016). Qualitative experts have suggested using audit trails to track decisions made during the research process (Crawford, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For this reason, I tracked decisions related to the study and retained data collection and analysis documentation for auditing purposes and reflection.

Results

The results below provide themes and illustrative quotes from participants to answer the three research questions that guided this study. In addition, the data presented show the views of HBCU faculty regarding the influences of the ID of online courses.

As faculty shared their experiences, it was clear that there were several influences on how faculty approach online course design, including macrolevel factors, collaboration and experience, time and tools, and student-centered design. Most faculty discussed a top-down approach to course design stemming from a university need. This need led to developing the first theme, macrolevel factors influencing online course design at HBCUs.

Theme 1: Macrolevel Factors

Macrolevel factors affect the university system and the online course design process. Faculty cannot change these factors but are aware that they play a factor in their approach to designing and developing course content. Some macrolevel factors include the institutions' shift to online learning, accreditation standards, and delivery format, and faculty academic freedom and intellectual property.

Shift to Online Learning

Faculty referenced their institutions' overall need to shift to online learning to survive and remain competitive, as indicated by Participant 7 stated,

> Universities have to move into the online space whether they want to or not, if for no other reason than to keep up with the competition. However, the more important reason, in my opinion, especially for, um, HBCUs and other universities who are really committed to serving the underserved or serving people who would not otherwise have access to the education - you have to be able to play online.

Participant 9 described their excitement about online learning, highlighted the opportunity to serve students, and have institutional support, indicating, "I just see the evolution that we are going through as far as embracing online education. It's just really exciting to see where we're going to serve our students."

Faculty described how their institutions might miss out on a different population of learners by not being online, as indicated by Participant 5: "We need to make more space for it [online learning] because students, after COVID, are not feeling like coming

back to campus. That's a market that we're missing out on, especially adults, like nontraditional students."

Similarly, Participant 2 shared their institution's strategic planning to increase enrollment to reach those nontraditional students. As a faculty member who worked in the online space for close to ten years, Participant 9 shared their inclusive view on the term nontraditional student and stated, "A lot of our students are nontraditional, and I don't even know if that's even a term anymore because a lot of students are nontraditional now."

Nontraditional students make up a large portion of online learners, and these learners increase enrollment in universities. Therefore, there is a financial benefit for universities who offer online courses because they reach more learners, as indicated by Participant 3:

> [Online learning] is a boom for the university because their graduate classes are expensive, and basically, they make a lot of money, not criticizing or anything, but it's a reality. There is a market for this type of thing, and they are taking advantage of it.

Participant 3 also stressed that much of the allure of online learning is due to its convenience for this learner population. Participant 3 stated,

> Our students, at least, prefer online classes. I mean, I know [it is] because of the convenience. They don't have to come here. We are rural, and they have to come if they don't live on campus, et cetera, or [if] they have a family issue, you name it.

Participant 3 also described the difference in enrollment for online versus face-to-face courses:

> If we have two sections of the same class, the online version fills up in two days and the other, you know, takes forever. If [the students] have to choose, they will go for the online version, like, in a heartbeat.

Faculty reported historical and financial struggles attributed to HBCUs' slower adoption of online learning. As indicated by Participant 2, “HBCUs, we have our own set of unique pressures: enrollment, retaining, and graduating our students.” Participant 8 extended that thought by sharing their perspective on the consequences and factors of HBCUs not offering online options:

> We're going to lose out, not only on students, because that's the way that education is going, but there are going to be some HBCUs that struggle in this new environment… a lot of our HBCUs are not prepared or not doing [online learning] well [compared to non-HBCUs].

Participant 8 later provided additional context on HBCUs from a financial perspective, giving insight as to why HBCUs are not as technologically advanced as their competitors:

> No matter where they are on the tiers of HBCUs, whether they're considered “lead HBCUs” or just your everyday run-of-the-mill, we operate from a standpoint of scarcity and lack of resources since the founding, and so it's different from a PWI standpoint where, when they decide to do something, for the most part, they can just say, okay, let's go do this.

Faculty believe HBCU institutions have met the moment to increase enrollments and provide quality education to those who may not have an option without online, as indicated by Participant 2:

> I think [for] all HBCUs, it is about what can we do to increase and maintain enrollment and still offer quality degree programs, which I think some individuals are out there looking for. It's like a win-win for both of us.

Accreditation Standards and Delivery Format

Accreditation standards guide course curriculum development and course design, yet faculty may or may not be aware of such institutional requirements, as indicated by Participant 5:

> I'm so glad I'm getting formal training right now because we're talking so much about how they keep accreditation. When accreditation comes around, I found myself being someone in my department, where [the department head told me to] send [my] syllabi, and send [my] major assignments, and I'm like, if I knew what you were looking for, I probably could do better at providing that. So having that connection between accreditation and course design is so important.

Five faculty members mentioned using a hybrid delivery format, based on either accreditation or state requirements, as shared by Participant 9:

> Because of our accreditation, we can only have a certain percentage of courses that are online, so we have to have a separate accreditation for online programming, so we've just agreed that all of our practice courses will be face-to-face and elective courses have the option for online or face-to-face.

Participant 8 described a similar experience with their state's requirements and retaining the designation of an online program:

> [The State] Board, which is over all the universities, defines an online program as that you can get 50% or more of your hours from online instruction, so we are an approved online program, although we still offer about four or five face-to-face courses.

In response to COVID, Participant 6 described their institution's temporary shift to hybrid options for their face-to-face courses:

> After we came back, we were in a hybrid mode where instead of having 30 students in a classroom on Monday and Wednesday, you'd have 15 on Monday and 15 on Wednesday. Then so, the 15 that were in class on Monday are online for Wednesday, so we pivoted to hybrid for face-to-face classes so we could do the distancing.

Similarly, Participant 5 chose a hybrid class offering at their university in response to COVID, allowing up to 50% of the class delivery to be online. Hybrid schedules provide flexibility for students and faculty. However, issues arose from institutional decisions, such as solidifying holiday breaks that affect the hybrid schedule, as indicated by Participant 5:

> The format for the classes changed a lot of times, like trying to put in holidays. and then at the end, we say, okay, well, we're going to have a fall break, or we're not going to have a fall break. That's been a problem sometimes if it's going to be asynchronous or synchronous.

Faculty Academic Freedom and Intellectual Property

Institutional policies that influence the broader online course design include faculty academic freedom and intellectual property. Overall, the faculty described the ability to be creative in their course design due to not following a formalized process and the institution allowing them the freedom to create an online class experience as they see fit. In addition, most faculty described having academic freedom to design their courses, as indicated by Participant 6:

> An instructor can say, “Hey, we're adding this because we believe in academic freedom.” So it's easy to add things, or if [we] see stuff as we teach the first semester, [and] you're like, “Well, it really didn't work the way we thought it would,” we can make adjustments as needed.

The online learning ecosystem, including online instructional support staff, yields faculty’s academic freedom, as indicated by Participant 3:

> Nobody comes to me. I mean, every instructor here, they have academic freedom, and they teach their classes the way they want; the way they feel comfortable. We don't have a centralized office that gives us templates, so it's up to the faculty member.

For another faculty, academic freedom extends to the number of learner attempts and grading schemes for assignments and assessments. When asked who decided on grading standards such as allowing learners multiple attempts, Participant 5 stated, “It's up to us.”

Because faculty can design their courses autonomously, there is a mix of university and faculty perspectives, including those that design for university-wide delivery, as indicated by Participant 9:

> [The university is] working on this; depending on what program you're in and who owns a course. So I mentioned I built some courses for the social work program, and I taught that course one time, and now somebody else teaches it the way that I built those courses. I built them in a way that anybody that is knowledgeable on that topic can go in and then teach that course. There are other programs within the university; if someone builds a course, consider themselves to be the subject matter expert in that course, [and] they've gone through the approval process, that is their course. No one else can teach it. It's not the programs, it's theirs.

Reversely, other institutions did not require faculty to share their course designs and templates, as indicated by Participant 7:

> Once the course is built, colleagues want to use it because it's turnkey, and they can just reuse your content and everything, and that's fine, but what I have seen occur is, and understandably so, faculty start to feel like, you know I've invested a lot of effort into this. I spent a whole semester or more frantically constructing this course [and] you want me to hand it off to a colleague who's gonna be, therefore, sitting on their laurels the next semester? I should be able to be the one to be teaching this course the next time, so I can have some time to "relax."

Although Participant 3 described their willingness to share their courses with other faculty, they also stated, "There is no need to share" unless they are unable to teach

and another faculty needs to take over. Much of the online course design was according to faculty preference or style, as indicated by Participant 3:

> I make materials available to them, but it's up to them - the format and the delivery. I give them only the content. Never have I told my faculty member how to do something because as I said, they are professionals, and they have academic freedom. For example, in my case, I have a lot of tests online, like twenty-five tests and twenty-five chapters. Every little thing that they have to read, we have a test, and some people don't have twenty-five tests, they have four or five, of course, that's a safe number. It's a solo experience. It's up to the faculty members' style.

Participant 9 considered the repercussions of not sharing courses across the university, so others could also teach following a similar structure to align learner experiences and stated, "I think sometimes it's a disadvantage to students because if you may be learning the same content but if you're not learning it in the same way, things may be missing."

Theme 2: Collaboration and Experience

Online course design was influenced by who was involved and their level of experience and knowledge of online learning and ID. Online course design at HBCUs can involve only the faculty member. Most faculty (n = 6) described this process as a "solo" experience, having completed the course design, development, and implementation alone. When asked what roles they played in the project and what that looked like, Participant 1 stated, "I did a little subject matter expert, and then the design process." Participant 3 stated, "I always develop mine." Participant 4 provided a nonverbal, up-and-down head

nod response, signaling yes when asked a follow-up question to confirm the solo nature of their online course design experience. To further confirm, when asked if there was anyone to collaborate with, Participant 4 nodded their head from side to side, signaling no, and added,

> You learn how to do it all, [but] that doesn't mean you do it all well… You learn how to do a little bit of everything when you're at HBCU because we don't always have the budget for [an instructional designer] that we would need to help us in organizing because that's really what you need, someone to help with the organizational piece, and what can we use to enhance the learning or the introduction of the material to the students.

Participant 5 described designing and developing their online courses solo and their thoughts on the process:

> So right now is the first time we're formally doing something that is called course design. All before, it would just be, "You're going to teach this class, it hasn't been taught in however many years, have fun," and so you're doing this whole course design, and you're like, "Okay, so, no experience, no understanding, no…" I just know I gotta teach it, like, for real, find a way to make one, so yeah, and that's our motto.

Participant 7 shared the multi-role responsibility they have in the online course design process:

> [As] the subject matter expert and faculty member, you're kind of the chief, cook, and bottlewasher, you know. We do not have a support staff, for example, that I could do my design on paper and hand it off to somebody and say build this

> course for me. We pretty much have to do the end-to-end process, so pretty much any role you can think of that would be associated with actually building the course would be my responsibility.

Participant 8 summarized their role in online course design projects, and stated, "It's all me," and provided justification as to why relating to their program size:

> We typically have between 35 and 50 students at any given time, and it's only really three of us that teach in the program that are literally a part of the department, and then all three of us are bi-vocational as well so, functionally, we don't have time to collaborate, unless they're like, "Hey, how do you do this real quick?" or "Here's a quick little screenshot, just in case y'all have to do it," you know, that type of stuff, but like sitting down on a planning meeting to say, "We're gonna…," no, that doesn't happen, at least not in our school, that I'm aware of.

Fewer faculty (n = 3) discussed participation in a collaborative, team approach to online course design. Two faculty shared the added responsibility of organizing and managing online course design projects with other faculty or staff, in conjunction with their teaching appointments, as stated by Participant 6: "I actually do course design and course redesign for all the courses [in my discipline] in the university system. I do a course development or course redesign [project] actually almost every semester for the last 5 or 6 years."

Similarly, Participant 9 described their additional role in further detail and considered what other roles they played:

> Because of my experience or because of the projects that I engaged in through the [my] program, I've been asked from other programs within the university to help build their courses. I was recently asked to develop a course within the education program, and so we actually had a discovery meeting or a planning meeting, and I shared with her my process on the design side, like, what I would need because I'm not the subject matter expert. I don't want to call myself an instructional designer because I don't take lightly that that's a whole discipline, but I take on aspects of that because even if I am the SME in a sense, I still consult with others to get content.

When asked about their role in the LMS, including building the weeks, the assignments, activities, and assessments, Participant 9 confirmed, “Yes, all of that. I'm adding it in there, but again just going back, the SME is the one that's giving me the content to put, so I'm not [the SME], you know, I can make recommendations.”

As a result of collaboration and multiple roles in the course design and development process, faculty shared how they collaborate. Participant 2 described their experience with collaborative university partners, indicating,

> We had the support of our department chair, so that is another layer that I think some of my colleagues at other institutions may or may not have. We have a distance education unit, and those instructional designers are often paired with the person in the discipline, and the way it worked at [our institution], we tried to create a learning community in STEM, so we actually got faculty from the different STEM disciplines, and we all worked together. We had those instructional designers, kind of, right at our disposal to help us make sure certain

> criteria were being met. We were the content experts, and they were the layout experts, but we worked together per the university's recommendations.

One faculty participant spoke more formally about the start of a course design project kick-off from a supervisory perspective when selecting the course design or redesign team, as indicated by Participant 6:

> We identify the course that needs the design or redesign, and then you try to find somebody who has that subject matter expert to do that. You want to make sure that the course is being designed by someone who's an expert in that area, and so that's kind of how we start, and then we build off of that. We definitely always want to make sure that the person designing the courses has knowledge in that area. It's actually a team effort. So, every time that we do a course design you have the SME, and you have an instructional designer, and we have a librarian, and so it's a team effort. The instructional designer will set up the course modules, help identify course content, upload everything, and make sure it's organized well. The librarian will help us identify articles relevant to the course, and then the subject matter expert will identify the course content.

When asked about their role in managing the process, Participant 9 stated, “I do both. I'm the subject matter expert, and other times I'm supervising. I'm trying to train some more junior faculty to get them involved so I may supervise the process as well.”

Those who worked cross-functionally with others found it advantageous to the overall process, but not without flaws, as indicated by Participant 2:

> We were at an advantage. We were working together, different disciplines helping each other, looking at each other's work, [and] critiquing each other.

> Independently it's like, I may think this is great, but when it gets to the college-level, they may say let's work on this, and then the whole online piece routes a little differently where the instructional design team, if they are not in it initially, once they see it, they may say, "Oh, this needs to be corrected, this needs to be enhanced," at the end, then that's just additional time.

Collaboration had a positive social learning impact on the overall online course design experience, as stated by Participant 5 when asked to describe what could have made their online course design experience better:

> Definitely collaboration. The group I'm working with now, we're collaborating, and I'm like, oh my goodness. They were just talking about the difference between course objectives and learning outcomes, and I never realized I have those mixed up in my head, so the discussion is nice. And all of these new tools that we can use because that's another way, you never know, like I'm always afraid of getting stuck in the same thing that I used to do, and then new stuff comes around, and then I'm like well I've never heard of that, you know.

Similarly, collaboration created a social learning environment to learn different perspectives from colleagues who served different functions, as described by Participant 2:

> [Instructional designers] have recommended, "Oh, you may want to consider closed captioning or recognizing that you may have some students visually or hearing impaired." So, like the contrast on the slides and how we do the images and things, just making sure that we're ADA compliant, which, you know, honestly, that was something I hadn't even thought about.

The faculty discussed working with others within the university during or beyond the design and development stage. As indicated in Table 5, the collaborators included course reviewers and approvers, department leadership and faculty, the distance education office (or other similar titles), LMS administrators, instructional designers, and a librarian. The faculty described collaborating with each at different points in the online course project.

Table 5

Full List of Collaborators

Collaborator	*n*
Reviewers	5
Department leadership or faculty	4
Approvers	4
Distance education office (or similarly titled)	3
LMS administrator	2
Instructional designers	2
Faculty from other departments	2
Librarian	1

Formal and Informal Learning

Research Question 3 was intended to gain information from faculty on how they learn about online course design and development. Although there were specific interview questions to address this research question, the topic came up naturally for some participants before asking the detailed questions. The faculty spoke about learning about online learning and online course design through formal and informal learning opportunities, as indicated in Table 6. Faculty may be represented multiple times if they had multiple learning opportunities.

Table 6

Formal and Informal Learning Opportunities

Type	*n*
Formal	
University distance ed office	9
Professional organizations/Assoc	7
Previous online teaching experience	5
Published work (article, dissertation, book chapter, conference speaker, etc.) on the topic or related topic	4
Personal experiences as an online student	2
Face-to-face teaching experience	1
Informal	
Social learning	2
Personal exploration, such as Google	2

Five participants explicitly stated they had not received training on online course design before participating in their first project. For faculty whose university provided learning opportunities before working on an online course, topics focused on the learning management system (*n* = 1), Quality Matters (*n* = 1), and an unspecified topic (*n* = 1). Participant 1 responded, “Not specifically design, but like products, so [the LMS] and then they adopted some portions of the quality review.” Similarly, Participant 2 referenced their faculty support office: “Well, not necessarily, I mean, we have the Center for Teaching and Learning, but they're bigger on, like, supplemental aids for in-person instruction, not necessarily online.”

Faculty described several formal learning opportunities about online course design beyond the university, including professional organizations and associations, other online teaching experiences, face-to-face teaching experiences, and personal experiences as online students. Informal learning opportunities were described as social learning and personal exploration or research. Some faculty learned about online learning through

their previous experience, as indicated by Participant 7: “I would say in the beginning, when I first started teaching at [this HBCU], I pretty much only had what I brought with me as a new faculty member. I came with online teaching certifications.”

Similarly, Participant 1 shared the influence being an online student had on their approach to online course design: “My first experience with an online course was from [what] I call ‘the goats’ - University of Pheonix; the best. I took some classes, and that was the best design ever.”

Most faculty (*n* = 8) discussed the need to be credentialed or certified in a particular instructional methodology or learning management system to design or teach online courses. For most faculty (*n* = 7), that methodology was Quality Matters. For example, Participant 2 stated, “There was another initiative at the time of Quality Matters that was trying to encourage individuals to get certified in how they did their online course design and instruction, so we worked together to kind of develop an institute.” Participant 4 shared a similar experience:

> It happened years ago, and so it was myself and two other adjuncts. We were able to take the Quality Matters, and so now that's the standard for online classes here; if you have not had that and you're not certified in it, then they won't release your online classes.

For some faculty, there was a difference between receiving certification to build online courses versus a certification to teach online courses, as indicated by Participant 9:

> So you can be certified to build an online course, and you can be certified to teach a course or both, and so there are a lot of, actually, all the instructors at [my institution] are now certified to teach online. Because of the pandemic, that was

> one of the requirements that everybody had to be certified. But you don't have to be certified to teach online, and so for those individuals that want to do once we have a fully online course but don't want to go through the process of getting certification and building the course, they reach out to people within the university that have that certification.

Although knowledgeable on Quality Matters, all faculty were not required to ensure their online courses adhere to the standards, as indicated by Participant 7:

> Recently, [our institution] has really focused on the Quality Matters standards. Now, we've kind of given a nod to them over the years, and a number of us are QM-certified, but they don't really require you to certify your courses or to even demonstrate you're meeting any of the QM standards whatsoever.

One institution did not require certification for its online instructors before COVID. However, with the number of instructors needing to pivot, veteran online instructors, too, had to be certified although they had years' worth of experience, as indicated by Participant 8:

> Because during COVID, when everybody went online, we were already online, so we didn't have to pivot at all, but what we did have to pivot to [were] the requirements that the university applied over the top of being online because everybody had to pivot, they made everybody go through [Quality Matters] training.

Although not related to Quality Matters, a faculty described the requirement to be LMS-certified, as indicated by Participant 5:

> They made everyone get [LMS] certified, and my department chair again made [my colleague] and I go first, and so we had done it like the year before [COVID], so when everybody was jumping to get on, and then they started signing everyone up. We had already done it, so we were doing crash courses for our colleagues and trying know get ours done.

All full-time faculty (*n* = 8) taught in person on campus in addition to their online courses. Faculty (*n* = 4) reported the imbalance that online course design duties cause for their workload and other university responsibilities.

When asked about their workload, P5 indicated,

> It's heavy. My department head asked me if I was okay last week. She asked me something, and my response was just simply "No," and she was like, "Oh, that's not you, you usually go into detail," [and] it's like because I can't right now.

Similarly, Participant 2, who listed the various other responsibilities that also required attention, stated, "On top of a teaching load, on top of other responsibilities and then again we're kind of juggling, you know, I still have my in-person labs, committee work."

Faculty were aware of the financial constraints their universities have, yet two faculty agreed that their institutions needed to focus more resources in the area of online course design and development, as articulated by Participant 7:

> The subject matter expert needs to be doing the higher order thinking things and not the grunt work. That piece of the process is missing, and that's not under our control at the academic level, that's an administrative piece that, you know, they try to save money.

Faculty desired to be compensated more appropriately for their online course design efforts, as stated by Participant 7:

> What HBCUs do, in my observation, they just keep trying to squeeze more and more out of the faculty, and they're not incentivizing the faculty by paying them more or offering them bonuses or overtime or anything… and many [faculty] are afraid to say no.

When asked if they had been involved in all of the courses that are in their online program, Participant 8 stated, "Yes, and unpaid, by the way, to do it, whereas other universities give you a little stipend or something."

To describe the university and the administration's understanding, Participant 7 indicated,

> I think the university doesn't understand. The administrators certainly do not understand because, as I said, occasionally, they will offer opportunities to fund a faculty member to develop an online course, say, during the summer, and they'll offer a thousand dollars. It's almost offensive.

Although faculty understood their institutions do not have the resources, faculty without collaborative experiences still suggested expanding their staffing, as stated by Participant 7:

> I think that's one of the biggest challenges that we have, and in speaking to peers at other HBCUs, this seems to be a common problem. Some of the more big, powerhouse, and traditionally White institutions, they have like a complete staff that that's all they do - they work with the faculty. They build the core shells for them and stuff so the faculty can really focus on, when it's time to teach the

> course, that's what they're focused on. They're not scurrying every week, saying, "Oh my God, I've got to build the next week's content. I've got to get it opened. I've got to spend the whole weekend building these quizzes [and] quiz questions because, you know, they're not ready to go yet, and if I don't get them open on time, then I have to give extensions to the students."

Faculty considered where they would focus resources if given the opportunity to decide, as indicated by Participant 8:

> If I was the university president or provost, I would be looking for funds to be able to have an instructional design team, [and] somebody in your department that understands your particular degree and that might build it for you. [They] could do everything from either build it for you or assist you in those day-to-day issues. I think it would be helpful, and that's honestly regardless of HBCU or PWI, but that's definitely [at] an HBCU, and so just additional resources, financial and otherwise, around online course design I think would be helpful.

Theme 3: Time and Tools

Course design and development resources include the time allotted and the tools required, which greatly influence faculty online course design experiences. These aspects of online course design should be considered during the analysis phase of the ADDIE model, although they are consistent focuses in many stages of the online course design process and, therefore not included with the broader macrolevel influences. For example, most faculty did not follow a formal instructional design approach to online course design, nor did they have formal tools available. In addition, time can either be assigned to a faculty or determined by the faculty.

Course Design Time

The faculty discussed how online course design and development lengths vary significantly depending on bandwidth, term, university needs, and administrative approvals. Faculty described the process as lasting anywhere from 1 month to 1 year. The average time frame of participants' online course design and development reflects a full academic term, roughly three and a half months, to develop a course, as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7

Online Course Design Project Time Frame

Time frame	*n*
1 month - 1.5 months	4
1/2 semester - semester	3
6 months	1
1 year	1

Two faculty described a rolling, or continuous development process, in which the course was developed while the course section was live with students enrolled. Rather than the course being launched in its entirety, courses were launched based on week-to-week content availability. As indicated by Participant 3, “Some people do everything in advance. I do every week, something different. It may take half a day, I would say 4 hours, maybe more, 1 day, for the week.” Similarly, Participant 7 described a rolling design and development process while learners are enrolled in the course:

> You may not even have the whole course built before it's deployed. You got to start teaching. Like this semester, I'm teaching a course where I'm staying a week or two ahead of the students. I have a complete syllabus, but I'm building the

> quizzes, learning activities, and learning content. I'm building the hands-on activities and stuff just a couple of steps ahead of the students.

The time commitment for course design and development tasks were time-consuming for participants, as indicated by Participant 3:

> Yeah, it's very time-consuming. I remember that for one of the classes took me, it was extreme, like, I worked a full, solid week, full-time, to put the contents online… [writing] the test by hand and this, that, sometimes is very, very tough because it's extremely time-consuming.

Online course design can take hundreds of hours, but faculty described these hours as being squeezed into a shorter time frame along with managing other priorities, as stated by Participant 7:

> It takes hundreds, really, I'm sure several hundred hours to develop a good course shell and good learning content that the students are going to actually learn something, and you're not just throwing crap out there. I would have to say, it takes me two to three hundred hours minimum to build a good course, and that might take place in a very pressurized timeline of a few weeks, or it might be frantically done in between other responsibilities as the course is being delivered.

However, three participants extended this thinking by adding the process never really ends due to updates and iterations of the course based on student and university feedback, as indicated by Participant 5:

> I don't feel comfortable until a semester after it's taught. Through the course of teaching it, I'm making notes on what works and what doesn't work so then the

> next time that class comes up, it's kind of a different class, but I usually like the second iteration better than the first.

Another faculty shared the need for two iterations minimum to work through all the necessary course updates, as stated by Participant 7: “I'm going to deliver [the course] the first time, so I can work out some of the kinks in it, and I have found it usually takes two or three deliveries to really make the adjustments that are needed.”

Course revisions and updates were key factors in the course design and development process length. Participants’ iterative approach was supported by the implementation and evaluation phases of the ADDIE ID model to refine the course. Some faculty did not consider a course done until there have been several iterations, as stated by Participant 4, “Whew, can I say infinity? Because I can have everything uploaded and ready to go on the first day of class, but then during the semester, you realize I might need to tweak something, so that's why I say infinity.”

For faculty (n = 1) who had a more formalized process for course design and development, they noted the need to be flexible with their timing due to the more in-depth tasks, as indicated by Participant 6:

> The content development phase has been where the majority of the work takes place. It's actually creating the assignments, creating the discussions, and research papers, and quizzes, and so even though it allots for 30 days, sometimes it goes longer and so we have to [be] a little flexible. Course revision doesn't take as long, but especially if it's a brand new course from scratch, that can take a little longer to put together those assessments.

Faculty also considered university approvals for the timely implementation of their courses. Faculty described course approvals focused on either the syllabi only or the full online course, as indicated by Participant 7:

> There's a whole hierarchical sequence of committees that, not the course itself, but the syllabus for the course has to go through so my role there would be to go to each of these committees and explain to them the reason for the course. Although honestly, if you get outside your department you [and] get to the next tier, they're looking at kind of very superficial things, like, if you cite a textbook, is it a current year?

Faculty jointly agreed that the approval process caused additional delays and frustration. Some institutions required all online courses to go through an approval process, although the faculty have previously taught and designed online courses. The additional approval was viewed by one faculty as geared more towards newer, rather than veteran, online instructors, as indicated by Participant 8:

> I wish there was some type of like, “Okay, well, Professor X has submitted 12 or 14 classes over time, he probably knows what he's doing. So, he gets the abbreviated checklist,” versus, you know, “Professor Burton had never done this before, ever, you need to go through the whole thing.”

Another faculty found their institutions’ approval process to be misinterpreted by university systems due to being disconnected, miscommunication, and misalignment of university and faculty processes. As a result, rather than providing a direct and clear path for faculty to follow, faculty experienced delays getting their courses approved, as stated by Participant 9:

> I built these online courses over the summer in a month, and they have not been approved yet through [our distance education office] because they're new courses, kind of. They're more of, like, updates to antiquated courses. So, I was initially told to go to the registrar's office to get them approved. [I] did all the all the paperwork, got all the signatures, and then when it got to the provost's office, the response was "We can't sign off on these because [the center for learning] has to approve them because they're online courses." So, I had to go through months of approval for it to be shot down.

Design and Development Tools

Course designers used tools to document the plan for organizing the learning experience. Single or combination use of faculty-designed or institution-provided course rubrics, matrixes, and maps guided instructional course design and development. Most faculty (n = 7) referenced Quality Matters standards to either guide their course design or check their course design after development. Faculty shared the influence Quality Matters standards have on their module-based course structure, as stated by Participant 4: "I followed more so the suggested design, the QM. My course is broken down into modules, and so that's how it's been, that's how I set it up, and I think that sticks with my students." Similarly, Participant 6 shared the alignment of lesson content to course learning objectives: "We're all Quality Matters-certified, so we try to make sure everything is within that. We make sure every lesson is tied back to either a module learning objective or course learning objective."

Another faculty described being familiar with Quality Matters but noted the role of the institution in enforcing the standards, as stated by Participant 7:

> In the past 2 years, [they have] really focused on the Quality Matters standards. Now, we've, kind of, given a nod to them over the years, and a number of us are QM-certified, but they don't really require you to certify your courses or to even demonstrate you're meeting any of the QM standards, whatsoever.

Others discussed using personally developed matrixes or maps to plan course learning content and activities, as indicated by Participant 1:

> I have this excel spreadsheet that I use [for] my matrix, and I go from there. I have five columns. The first one is the unit, then the material being covered, then the first set of resources. I have the chapters, articles, or links. I have links to the videos. Then I do the assignment and then discussions, and my last column is my learning outcomes.

Participant 9 described a similarly structured course design tool to plan and organize the course before placing content in the learning management system:

> Because I'm very visual, I develop a course map, and so literally, before I even go into the learning management system to build the course out, I create a document for each week and what each week will entail starting with the course objectives. Then the learning objectives, the activities, then the course material, and making sure they all align with one another, and then from there, building it out in the learning management system.

Another faculty described standard templates that the university provides but faculty use varyingly, as indicated by Participant 7:

> They offer a standard template for a course shell. When they open up a new course shell for you, it's pre-populated with suggested content, some of which is very helpful, but since it changes every semester, it's not really a standard.

Overall, many faculty used an intuitive or informal course design process. Participant 3 described her intuitive design style as indicated:

> I think I know how to teach, [and] how to make people understand. So, I model my instruction in a way that I know that it will click, [and] students will understand. Of course, everybody learns differently, but honestly, I put myself in the student's shoes.

Participant 7 shared their reflections on a formal versus intuitive course design process due to practical, situational needs:

> I understand, and I appreciate the formalized design processes that are part of things like QM or some of these other standardizing bodies for online learning, but like any other standard, it's idealized. It sounds good on paper, but where the rubber meets the road, you often have to do things a little bit differently. So what I do is informed by the standards that I've been educated in, but then I will weigh more heavily on my own personal knowledge and experience of what I need to do and how I need to build the course for the students to be successful in it.

Theme 4: Student-Centered Design

Faculty online course design decisions were student-centered and considered learner demographics to design and develop a course appropriately. Faculty engaged in student-centered design by examining aspects that influence their learners' experience,

such as equipment, geographic location, socioeconomic status, communication, and active learning strategies.

The faculty discussed the nuances of teaching first-generation and nontraditional students. With that, some learners were not prepared to learn with technology, as stated by Participant 8: “The most difficult part is having both young and aged learners in this form of online delivery. It is not for everybody.” A diverse learner population means various levels of experience with technology and how it affects the faculty’s teaching efforts, as indicated by Participant 6:

> Online course design is making it accessible to everyone and not assuming everyone's coming in with some experience. A lot of times, people assume today's younger generation is technology savvy, and they're really not because I have students who can't figure out how to fill out a PDF. I have to spend time teaching them how to fill out a PDF. So, while they might be really savvy with their phones, they're not 100% technology savvy.

Faculty (n = 4) discussed students’ lack of equipment and their ability to be technologically prepared to learn. Traditionally, on-campus learners have textbooks and other learning tools and equipment available because they are in-person at the school. In online learning, learners are responsible for ensuring they are equipped to learn successfully. Mostly stemming from COVID-19, faculty (n = 3) referenced how the digital divide and educational access disrupts online learning. Participant 6 stated, “Throwing in the HBCU, we know that communities of color access to the internet is less than other places, and we're also in rural [southern] areas that don't have access to the

internet.” Participant 7 added the influence of technology and internet access for HBCU learners, as indicated:

> There's sort of, like, a digital divide. So, some individuals who could really benefit from having access to online learning and use that as a portal to a better life don't have the right equipment. They don't have internet access, high-speed broadband, all of that. So, I think some of the thinking that has to go into this is if we're really going to serve a population who has not been served in the past, and we want to take down the geographic barrier, we have to take down the technological barrier too. You need the technology to reach them.

Participant 8 provided a clearer example of the effects of this technological access barrier on the populations that HBCUs serve, as indicated:

> We assume students have the resources to be online from a technology standpoint, and this is the first semester during COVID where I've had graduate students not have the technology to be consistently online. They're doing it from their phone. They're doing a whole program from their phone, and that's something that I think we need to pay more attention to. We talk about the digital divide. We assume that's only in secondary education, but there is a digital divide for those that want to aspire to master's and Ph.D. programs, and [that’s] something we need to think about.

When asked if an online learning orientation was available to help prepare learners for the online space, Participant 2 discussed students’ misunderstanding of online learning requirements when their institution first adopted online learning in the late 2010s:

> It was very frustrating because [the students] didn't have the right equipment, they didn't have the right technology, they didn't have the right speakers or whatever, and as our office of distance education became more structured, faculty could put in some standard language as far as some basic expectations, like which internet provider and what type of computer was needed.

Understanding the circumstances of being a first-generation student, the faculty described the need to use more time to prepare their learners, as indicated by Participant 6:

> When it comes to HBCUs, more of our students are first-generation students, so they don't know what college is like. They don't have anybody who can prepare them [and tell them] what to expect, so spending more time just getting them prepared.

Despite the technological barriers and learning curve some new and returning online learners face, Knowles's theory of andragogy assumed that adult learners are self-directed, meaning as they matured, they were less dependent on others to learn and, instead, were more independent. First, however, the faculty shared the level of guidance and direction learners often need, as indicated by Participant 6:

> When I first started doing research papers, my instructions were a paragraph long. Now, my instructions for research papers are two to three pages because we're breaking it down into more steps for students, not because they can't do it. They can do it. They just need some more guidance. So, we don't lower the standards, we're just making the steps to get there a little more detailed.

Participant 1 added another perspective on working with learners and the need to direct them in the online classroom for content and information, “I call them that microwave generation. [Students] have to go through the steps to get it done, or they'll be asking these questions, and I'll say, ‘Did you look here?’ ‘Oh, I didn't even see that.’”

Course designers can structure courses in a way that learners do not need to interact with an instructor but rather only with the learning content. In examining how the course were designed for learners to learn and navigate independently, Participant 7 provided context as to their learners' feedback on the term independent learner, as indicated:

> Saying that the students work independently or learn independently, the students really resent that. They often will say, “We're teaching ourselves,” [or], “I hate having to teach myself.” They want the convenience of it being all online, so they don't have to attend synchronous lectures. They don't have to come to the campus. But the flip side of that means you, the student, have to do the heavy lifting. You have to consume the content. You have to do the activities. Nobody's standing over you like I do in the face-to-face class. If they want all online, that puts a lot of expectation on them to be independent learners, and so, they either need to embrace that or maybe it isn't a good fit for them.

Participant 3 shared thoughts about the students as independent learners and their role in online learning, with much of the responsibility on the student:

> It's your duty to educate yourself. You are admitted in this [graduate] program with a bachelor's degree, meaning that we are assuming that you earned that degree and you know stuff. If you have a problem, you have to educate yourself

> to reach the level of the class. It's your duty. You're college students. We spoil them. You are a life-long learner, [and] things are changing continuously. You have to get used to keeping up.

Faculty created, set, and enforced academic standards to motivate learners. Academic standards influenced how a faculty helps learners, as described by Participant 3 above, but also deadlines, as indicated by Participant 5:

> Deadlines become, sort of, a difficult thing. But as an instructor, it helps me understand that I can't hang loose. There's too many [students], and it's too many assignments, and it's just too easy to fall behind. So, being strict helps them.

Similarly, Participant 7 shared their thoughts in response to a student that has received communications from an instructor about a deadline:

> You didn't just forget, you just tried to blow me off. But now you want me to lower the academic standard just for you, and that's not going to happen because it's not fair to the other students in the course who have done their work on time. And that's always the rationale we offer to the students.

Student-Centered Instructional Strategies

Beyond communicating deadlines and preparing learners technologically, the faculty (n = 8) described implementing instructional strategies to increase learners' motivation through active learning, interaction, and engagement. Active learning strategies allowed learners to interact with content in a way that is useful and valuable to the learning experience and that deepened their knowledge about the topic and its applicability, as indicated by Participant 6:

> I teach our report writing class, and the best way to learn to do reports, [you] just have to write them. So, I'll set up a mock crime scene and say, "Okay, here's what we learned this week about details in the report," and then have them do a mock crime scene. They love that, and they're going to write the reports, and they don't really see it as writing. They think they're role-playing as a detective.

Faculty used projects not only to encourage the practice but also to incite a level of critical reflection as supported by adult learning theories, as indicated by Participant 5: "I had them take their first video of speeches and look at it for their last assignment, and partner with someone to critique it and do it again." Similarly, Participant 7 valued student reflection and practical application, as stated: "I really try to make the hands-on assignments so that they reflect what the student would be expected to do in the real world." Participant 8 connected their student projects with practical application for the work environment, as stated:

> I'll take them through a process of writing their own mini-comprehensive plan but also make them research other community-based master plans. That is an employable skill. They have gone through this process of understanding how to research, how to get data, and how to write recommendations.

Overall, faculty described the usefulness of learners gaining experience and skill as well as knowledge, as stated by Participant 9 regarding students conducting interviews: "It's not so much about how they respond to the questions, but their experience interviewing someone in that population, so it's a lot. They do reflections on their interview process."

Faculty implemented interaction and engagement strategies to elicit critical thinking skills for students' online learning experience. Learners engaged and interacted with a combination of course content, instructor, and peers. Participant 4 described their use of videos to increase engagement and motivation: “I do videos on my lessons, so students are able to watch whenever. Also every week, I'll have my office hours, and I'll have an actual class period that I'm sitting on Zoom waiting for questions.” Many faculty used online discussion forums, and in the flipped classroom context, Participant 6 described the advantages of meeting online and in person:

> A lot of times I'll have them do the discussion [online] before we talk about it in class, so then I'll say, “Hey, actually, you had a really great point about this in your online discussion. Let's explore it some more.” So, making sure everyone's engaging with the material, instead of just the same five students.

Faculty described engaging learners as necessary so that they complete assigned tasks correctly, as indicated by Participant 7:

> Because many of them will not ask questions. And no matter how many times you say, “If something isn't clear, ask,” they won't. They will go off in some half direction if something isn't so precise, so I'll write up a notional hands-on activity, and then I have to set it aside for a day or two and come back and read it with fresh eyes when I've kind of blanked everything out of my mind so I'm reading it from the same blank slate as the student would.

Not all faculty cared for interaction and engagement in the online space the way they do for the face-to-face classroom, as indicated by Participant 8:

> The reason I got into teaching is this (pointing person-to-person) - this back and forth because education happens when I say something that's in lecture and then you say, “Well, what about this?” that's very hard to recreate on a discussion board and a little hard to recreate on Zoom because people, kind of, zone out.

To increase engagement and create a sense of relevancy with the content, faculty (n = 2) discussed seeking culturally relevant materials, as stated by Participant 6:

> We have some classes that touch on some can be controversial subjects we have a whole class on race and gender in the criminal justice system, and so we want to make sure our students are getting culturally relevant material.

Similarly, Participant 2 described how culture applies to the students but also their academic field:

> When we are talking about gene expression at the end of the semester in cancer development, environmental factors, lifestyles, and livelihoods, just kind of generically about high blood pressure, obesity - things that affect like our Black and brown communities, there was a medical student who did medical illustrations of a Black or brown embryo, and I'm just like “Wow.” Those types of things at an HBCU, you know, as a personal color, instructor, it is nice to show our students.

Overall, the faculty spoke about the need to include relevant material and learning experiences for learners that increase their motivation to learn, engagement, and knowledge or experience in a subject area. The participants discussed the importance of implementing project- or problem-based learning strategies in their online classes.

Summary

This chapter included a description of the study's setting, participant demographics, data collection methods, data analysis methods, evidence of trustworthiness, and study results. The research design for this study was a basic qualitative design using interviews to explore the faculty experiences designing online courses at HBCUs. After analyzing the data from interview questions, the research questions yielded four themes:

- In this study, I found that multiple macrolevel institutional factors impacted faculty approach to online course design. The theme related to the eight interview questions and Research Question 1.
- In this study, I found that HBCU faculty online course design experiences are influenced by who was involved and their level of experience and knowledge. The theme related to Interview Questions 1, 6, 7, and 8 and Research Questions 1 and 3.
- In this study, I found that course design and development varying timelines and tools such as rubrics, matrixes, maps, and templates guided faculty online course planning. The theme related to Interview Questions 1 to 5 and Research Question 1.
- In this study, I found that faculty online course design decisions were student-centered as faculty described considering the learner demographics and experience and implementing active learning strategies. The theme related to Interview Questions 2 to 5 and Research Question 2.

Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the study's findings as it relates to the literature review, limitations, recommendations for future research, and social and theoretical implications of the results.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore faculty experiences with online course design at HBCUs. Because the literature demonstrated a gap in online course design in various contexts, I used a qualitative approach to understand the faculty's experiences in a framework including the ADDIE ID model, adult learning theories, and the HBCU institution as a context. I explored faculty experiences with online course design using a semistructured interview protocol. Four common themes emerged from the interview relating to faculty experiences with online course design at HBCUs.

The first theme highlighted macrolevel, institutional, and structural factors that impacted the faculty approach to online course design. The second theme highlighted how the diversity or singularity of thought affected online course design projects, bringing to attention the type of collaboration faculty encounter and the amount of knowledge and experience in practice. The third theme was that the faculty had various timelines for course design projects and used university-provided or self-developed design tools for online course design projects. The fourth theme was that faculty online course design decisions were student-centered. These themes support the systemic nature of online course design projects in higher education institutions when consideration is given to the available resources, including institutional policies and structure, course designers and support staff, training, funding, technology, and the target audience.

This chapter addresses the alignment of the themes to the research questions, conceptual framework, and literature review. This chapter also includes limitations,

recommendations for future research, and social and theoretical implications of the results.

Interpretation of the Findings

Theme 1: Macrolevel Factors

Institutional resources impacted HBCU instructors' ability to implement quality online instruction for their diverse learners. Previous studies cited the need for HBCUs to transition to online learning, particularly for institutional survival (Anderson; 2017; Crawford, 2017; Glenn Jones & Davenport; 2018) and that institutional factors influence the online course design process (Nguyen et al., 2020). Proper accordance with accreditation is one factor that provides institutions with expanded opportunities to recruit and enroll more students (Crawford, 2017). Similarly, most faculty had academic freedom to make instructional decisions about their courses, although Tannehill et al. (2018) demonstrated how some faculty do not have the same level of control in online course design. In the current study, faculty discussed their institution's move to online learning to stay competitive and discussed factors such as understanding accreditation and using academic freedom in online course design projects.

Theme 2: Collaboration and Experience

Previous studies described the solo nature of some faculty experiences in online course design and development (Baldwin et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2020; Tannehill et al., 2018). Similarly, studies described the lack of ID-related positions at HBCUs to coordinate online learning. Other studies discussed the advantage of a collaborative approach for online course design with multiple people serving different functions (Halupa, 2019; King et al., 2019; McCurry & Mullinix, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2020). In

addition, studies demonstrated the necessity of faculty training and development so they can learn and apply online course design best practices (Brinkley-Etzhorn, 2019; Northcote et al., 2019). Finally, studies on faculty satisfaction with online learning demonstrated that faculty are more satisfied with added institutional support (Blundell et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2020).

In the current study, I found that faculty desire and appreciate collaboration in the design process. Faculty described relying on formal and informal learning opportunities to increase their knowledge about online learning trends and best practices, although most faculty did not receive any training in online course design models or processes from their institutions prior to the first online course design project. Similar to the findings of Luongo (2018) on faculty satisfaction, faculty in this study discussed the lack of compensation, increased workload, and the need for administrative and technical support.

Theme 3: Time and Tools

Previous studies suggested that faculty either used an informal approach to online course design or were unaware of formalized approaches (Baldwin et al., 2018). Previous studies also suggested that many institutions, including some HBCUs, incorporate quality matters (Alston et al., 2017; Hollowell et al., 2017). Previous studies cited the time-intense nature of online course design due to deep analysis and development of learning goals, objectives, contents, activities, and assessments (Martin, Budhrani, et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020). Some online course design projects took roughly 6 months (Croxford et al., 2019; King et al., 2019; Tannehill et al., 2018). Because of time management issues described in Croxford et al. (2019), the authors recommended

institutions provide resources and staff for projects at least 6 months before the deadline. In the current study, I found that many HBCU faculty did not have a formal online course design process and spent a semester on average creating an online course. Faculty designed and developed online courses by using the Quality Matters standards, although faculty may or may not have been required to enforce them. Despite the quality check, the faculty felt more comfortable with the final course after a few iterations.

Theme 4: Student-Centered Design

Studies supported student-centered online course design (Kumar et al., 2019), addressing the distinct learning needs of first-generation and nontraditional learners (Birsanu, 2020; Walker, 2018). Previous scholars have found that course design, learner support, interactions with the instructor, content, and assessments significantly predicted learning for underrepresented learners, including minorities and first-generation. Thus, course designers should structure courses for student needs and meet student learning outcomes (Joosten et al., 2019). Faculty knew that students were not always prepared for online learning and offered opportunities for students to understand online learning requirements (Abdous, 2019). Both faculty and learners desire a certain level of engagement and interaction in their online courses (Luongo, 2018).

In addition, faculty shared their willingness to provide problem-based projects and additional instructions to students in or out of the classroom, increasing student-instructor interaction. Overall, the faculty briefly described some degree of using award-winning elements of online teaching practices referenced by Kumar et al. (2019), such as authentic and relevant course materials that connect to practice, the use of multimedia

resources, student creation of digital content individually and collaboratively, student reflection on learning, and the instructor's explanation of purpose.

Faculty in the current study described considering learners' demographics and contextual factors that interfered with their experience. Participants discussed empathy and putting themselves in the learners' shoes to influence how they design online courses. The HBCU student population is primarily first-generation Pell Grant students, and HBCUs intentionally cater to students' needs and difficulties as they navigate postsecondary education (Andrews Graham, 2019; Smith & Alston, 2019; Walker, 2018). Thus, HBCU instructors discussed the need to also balance empathy and the academic standard, particularly during the pandemic.

Conceptual Framework

This study was based on a conceptual framework's model, theory, and context, including the ADDIE ID model, adult learning theory, and HBCUs as context. The ADDIE ID model provides sequential steps to develop and design online learning (Matthews, 2022). Studies have demonstrated that faculty often used an informal design process that aligned closely with the ADDIE model (Baldwin et al., 2018). The application of ADDIE can vary depending on the projects' needs (Matthews, 2022). Themes 2, 3, and 4 from the study supported the use of ADDIE as part of the conceptual framework for the study.

Faculty maneuvered through many steps by first considering their learners, the online course topic, and the timing to start the process (Themes 3 and 4; see Chappell, 2018). All faculty designed the instruction, and many developed the content and structured it in the learning management system (Theme 2; see Chappell, 2018). Third,

all faculty implemented their courses except for the faculty who designed and developed online courses for other faculty to implement (Theme 2; see Chappell, 2018). Finally, the faculty described online course evaluations influencing their next iteration of the course (Theme 3; see Chappell, 2018). Although most faculty were not aware of the ADDIE model explicitly, they applied many steps informally.

Several theories and principles built the understanding of adult learning, including andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformative learning (Diep et al., 2019; Merriam, 2017). Andragogy theorists have categorized adult learners as self-directed, applying experience, readiness, desire to learn, and being motivated to learn (Houle, 1961; Knowles, 1980). Mezirow's (1994) theory of transformative learning in adult education included three core elements: critical reflection, dialogue, and individual experience. In addition, course designers considered holistic views of the online learner, such as socioeconomic status, technological abilities, epistemological diversity, age, and gender (Kara et al., 2019; Merriam, 2017; Rogers-Shaw et al., 2017).

Theme 4 supports adult learning theories as faculty described designing their online course. Self-directed learning included a level of student autonomy and responsibility in their learning. Although some faculty described more dependent learners, Knowles (1980) mentioned that learners might be dependent temporarily. All faculty implemented project- and problem-based learning as active learning and critical reflection strategies so that learners could transfer and apply acquired knowledge and skills to an authentic environment. Adult learning theory was applied in faculty design decisions throughout the development of additional instructions and information available to help motivate learners and use digital tools and media to engage learners.

The emotional considerations of learners and the social determinants of learning, as Lindell et al. (2021) and Thomas and Spencer (2020) demonstrated as considerations for online, nontraditional, which also related to HBCUs use of familial, othermothering approaches to student engagement and retention.

HBCUs have historically lacked funding and resources, as cited by many authors who have researched this higher education sector (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018; Thomas & Spencer, 2019; Walker, 2018; Williams & Davis, 2019). However, all themes that emerged from the data support HBCUs as a context for this study.

HBCU enrollments dictated institutional funding and online learning ecosystem requirements as they are primarily tuition-funded, affecting equipment and digital structures to support online learning (Theme 1). The staffing needs at the majority of HBCU institutions require instructional support staff to increase course design collaboration and decrease workload (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). Additionally, studies have suggested that HBCUs address faculty professional development and pedagogical strategies to enhance their online learning offerings (Theme 2; Alston et al., 2017; Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). Previous studies suggested that standardization in online learning can increase students' instructional experiences (Tannehill et al., 2018). Although HBCU faculty used Quality Matters rubric standards as a quality measurement tool, this use was not enforced. At some institutions, faculty may not have to share their courses, resulting in different student learning experiences on the same topic (Theme 3). Student demographics for HBCU faculty consisted of first-generation minority learners. HBCU culture intentionally created a supportive, nurturing environment for their students (Theme 4; Smith & Alston, 2019; Walker, 2018).

Limitations of the Study

In Chapter 1, I acknowledged limitations that could have impacted the study's trustworthiness. There was a need to ensure that individuals selected for the study came from at least one to two different HBCUs to ensure faculty experiences were not explicitly parallel due to collecting data from participants at the same institution. As reported in Chapter 4, the nine participants came from eight different institutions, five states, and one district. The first limitation was obtaining a broad geography of participants to reduce the similarity in responses due to organizational structure or similar onboarding experiences. The second limitation pertained to the number of participants and locating enough participants for data saturation; this was a challenge as I was neither an HBCU faculty member nor worked at an HBCU at the time of this study. I sent over 100 individual invitations after researching academic literature, considering my network, and researching online HBCU faculty on public university websites. The timing of the research project may have limited the number of available faculty as many focused on starting the Spring 2022 semester as I sent interview requests.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future research are based on study-related results, the literature reviewed, and themes revealed from this study. For example, some participants discussed the nature of working at HBCUs regarding the lack of processes and structures, funding, and staffing. More research could be done to conduct a comparative educational equity study in online course design and online learning in higher education, specifically HBCUs, related to policies, technology, funding, resources, and staffing.

A recommendation of this study is based on a limitation of my study. The study was conducted with nine participants across six distinct geographic areas, including Texas, Mississippi, Georgia, North Carolina, the District of Columbia, and Virginia. This study could extend to HBCUs not represented in these states, such as Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee, Florida, Maryland, South Carolina, and Ohio. A study could focus on other HBCU faculty experiences with online course design with consideration given to first-generation, nontraditional learners. Therefore, I recommend using a more extensive, broader sample size in the future.

The faculty in this study participated in online course design projects and demonstrated that all faculty participate in the design and development of online courses. Therefore, I recommend extending this study to explore the opinions and experiences of online instructional support staff at HBCUs, such as curriculum designers, instructional designers, instructional technologists, LMS administrators, librarians, and other roles that may assist in online course design projects.

As most faculty described an informal design process, future research could focus on course design iterations and student impact. Therefore, this study could inform future studies focused on student satisfaction and learning outcomes in online learning. In addition, faculty could conduct a grounded theory study to develop a theory on online course design for first-generation online learners considering holistic adult learning strategies.

Another emerging theme was student-centered design. As faculty made ID choices for students, faculty also received feedback as learners evaluated the course. Some learners may not complete surveys at the end of courses. Therefore, I recommend a

study focused on examining the HBCU online learner experiences and their expectations of the online class experience in terms of technology; equipment, including internet access, support, and guidance; motivation; and viewing the self as independent or dependent learners to change the rhetoric of online learning to accommodate the possibility that many online learners can be dependent.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for positive social change regarding influences on HBCU faculty and instructors' online course design experiences. Understanding what influences faculty trickles down into the learner experiences. The study positions itself to impart growing information about HBCUs and online learning. Notably, the results of this study inform the broader online higher education community of factors faced by HBCU faculty regarding online course design and development. The research may encourage faculty and HBCU administrators to analyze their processes, strategies, staffing, and collaboration for online course design, conduct related studies, and disseminate results in their academic disciplines. This study's final social change impact concentrates on designing for diverse learners, aligning online course design best practices across higher education, examining support for current gaps, and mitigating some opposition to online learning in more traditional sectors.

Conclusion

Organizations and institutions continue to shift to online learning. Online course designers are becoming more aware and sensitive to their customers' diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the online learner is no different. Quality online learning for a diverse learner population requires intentional ID. Faculty shared the macro and microlevel

influences of their experiences creating online learning but also described their considerations for the learners they served. Faculty balance their time, students, technology, research, and administration. Faculty described learners who had varying degrees of independence and who are motivated by explicit guidance, examples, probing, direction, and consistent and regular communication.

Although many design decisions that HBCU faculty make support teaching adult learners, some faculty take additional steps to provide a more supportive online learning environment. The HBCU learner population is unique due to being largely first-generation and low-income. These qualities diversify the learner experience. The HBCU online learner also crosses time zones, geographies, ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, age, gender, and sex, as is the case for many other online learners. Thought leaders in online education have suggested that course designers and developers implement best practices based on inclusion, diversity, and equity from a holistic lens, adding instructions, enforcing academic standards, and meeting students where they are.

HBCUs, which have consistently lacked financially, are uniquely positioned to impact many first-generation online learners while expanding their demographic to an increased number of nonminority students looking to find low-cost higher education. In years to come, it will be interesting to learn how their campus culture or online structures, ecosystems, and pedagogies shift to embrace all that online learning brings.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Participant Number:
Date:
Script:

Hi [insert name]. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. As you know, the purpose of this interview is to learn about your experience as a faculty member during the online course design process. I will ask you a series of questions beginning with some general demographic questions, then we will discuss aspects of your online course design experience. This interview is confidential and will be recorded for transcription purposes. Is that okay?

I will not identify you nor your institution in my research, and no one will be able to identify you with your answers. The interview should last about roughly 45 minutes, and you can choose to stop this interview at any time. After the interview, I will transcribe, and then begin to analyze some of the themes within our dialogue. Do you have any questions? Are you ready to begin? **begin the recording**

Opening Demographic Questions

1. What is your age?
2. What is your race?
3. How do you classify your sex/gender?
4. What is your title at your institution, and are you part-time, full-time, tenured, other?
5. What level(s) do you teach: undergraduate, master's, or doctoral?
6. What is your academic discipline?
7. How many years have you taught in an online teaching format? In an online teaching format at HBCUs?
8. How many years of experience do you have with designing and developing online courses?

Primary Questions

1. To start us off, think about your online course design experiences you have been involved in at your current or previous [HBCU] institution. How do you typically become involved with these projects?
    a. Probe, if needed: What are generally some of the next steps after becoming involved?
    b. Probe, if needed: What role(s) did you play in the project and what did the role(s) entail?
    c. Probe, if needed: Who did you collaborate with throughout this process and for what purpose?
    d. Probe, if needed: About how long did the process last from start to finish (first meeting to launching in the LMS?
    e. Probe, if needed: To your knowledge, what instructional design model(s) or design process was used as a guide for this project?

   f. Probe, if needed: Can you describe any hiccups or issues, especially that caused delays in completing the course?
   g. Probe, if needed: Can you describe aspects of the process that went well?
   h. Probe: Tell me about any steps that you believed were missing from this process.
   i. Probe: Tell me about any steps that you would have omitted from this process.
2. Regarding the course structure, can you describe elements of the course that allowed students to navigate the course and learn independently?
   a. Probe: Can you describe any starting points for students, what/how they experience the course? Or what aspects of the course helped to guide students from task to task.
3. Regarding course instructions, content, assignments, and assessments, can you describe how consideration was given to the learner's experience and prior knowledge?
4. Can you describe how course assignments and assessments were relevant to student's lives or work?
5. Can you think of aspects of the course that allowed learners to apply newly learned skills and knowledge?
6. What available faculty support or professional development regarding online course design or designing for adult learners did you receive prior to participating in this project?
   a. Probe: Tell me about any available university-led or university-funded training accessible to you regarding online course design or designing for adult learners, even if not taken in preparation for the project you completed.
7. Beyond the university, tell me about how you learn about online course design practices?
8. Thank you for your responses. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your online course design experience at this institution or in general relating to online course design at HBCUs?

Closing Questions and Statements

Thank you for sharing your experiences. You have provided some great information and examples regarding your course design strategies. If you think of anything else you would like to add, please contact me.

Appendix B: Invitation Email

Subject: HBCU Online Course Design Study Seeking Participants

Hello,

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a voluntary research study titled Historically Black Colleges and Universities' Faculty Experiences with Online Course Design. The study's findings could help HBCU faculty and administrators understand faculty's course design experiences with your participation. I am conducting this study, Ashley Burton, a Ph.D. candidate at Walden University.

Participation includes:

- a 45 - 60-minute web-based interview
- Reviewing a transcript of your interview to make corrections if needed

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- 18 years old or older
- a current or past HBCU faculty or instructor (or related title, can be part-time or full-time)
- Involved with at least one online course design project at an HBCU institution

If you are interested in participating, complete the attached consent form and return it to the email below.

If you would like additional information about this study, please contact me at XXX@waldenu.edu.

Thank you for your consideration, and once again, please do not hesitate to contact me if you are interested in learning more about this Institutional Review Board approved project.

Ashley Burton
Principal Investigator
Walden University