Online Instruction Faculty Development Training at a Norwegian University: An Experience Report

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Abstract—**Introduction:** Online learning and work are commonplace in both engineering and professional communication. To be effective online, even experienced face-to-face teachers require new skills. **About the case:** this case reports on the design and delivery of a faculty training on teaching online at a Norwegian university during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two questions are examined: 1) what topics and training designs are suitable for beginning online teachers with little time to implement the results of the training? 2) In this emergency context, how do local conditions impact the design and delivery of such training? The training focused on building interactive online courses, providing formative feedback for students, and choosing between synchronous and asynchronous teaching. **Situating the case**: literature suggests that teachers often undergo a shift in their teaching philosophies and methods when transitioning to online environments. **Methods/Approach:** pre-training meetings and post-training reflection were used as informal data sources to develop the training sessions and to holistically discuss the themes which emerged from the training. **Results/Discussion**: two online and one face-to-face 2-hour training sessions were delivered to three groups of faculty. Three main themes emerged from the training: active learning, synchronous/asynchronous teaching, and providing formative feedback to students. **Conclusions**: challenges included convincing participants to shift from the lecture as the main method of instruction to more interactive and active techniques as well as reconciling the standardized course study plans with individual teachers' instructional needs. Larger studies of training programs and more formal methods of data analysis are suggested.

Introduction

To teach online effectively, even experienced face-to-face teachers require new skills and training [1]. This experience report details an effort to help faculty at a Norwegian university gain beginning competency in teaching online. The training became necessary after the COVID-19 pandemic closed the campus, and instruction was moved online. Because most teachers at this university lack experience with online teaching, the training became essential. To date, this training has consisted of two online and one face-to-face sessions, with more events planned for spring of 2021. The solutions presented here is grounded in current research into designing and delivering high-quality online instruction. The primary purpose of this experience report is to examine the application of well-researched principles of online instruction in a specific institutional and national context where most members are completely new to online teaching. Local knowledge, local approaches, and local methods are crucial for successful development of effective localized solutions [2]. Developing fine-tuned localized solutions which are fundamentally based on global scholarship makes a good fit for local conditions, constraints, needs, and opportunities.

This case is relevant to professional communication and engineering educators and practitioners because online learning, training, and work are commonplace in those disciplines. For example, in professional communication, the number of online courses and programs more than doubled between 2009 and 2015 [2]. ABET's website lists 22 completely online accredited engineering degree programs in the US alone [3]. Globally, this number is likely higher. Despite this growth, debate continues about whether online courses provide students with the same high-quality learning experience as face-to-face ones [4]. And even though working online is different from learning online, and teachers will have a different set of interests and agendas from practicing engineers and professional communicators, it can be argued that students who are exposed to theoretically and pedagogically sound online instruction may be more likely to develop such useful workplace skills as work in distributed teams, online collaboration, and use of multiple communication and collaboration technologies once they join the workforce.

The need for quality online instruction has been made particularly acute by the COVID-19 pandemic. Whole institutions and national higher educational systems have struggled to transition to effective online teaching in a situation where curricular, scheduling, and staffing decisions have had to be made on a very short notice. For instance, the Norwegian government ordered the university discussed in this report to close its campus in the middle of March 2020. As a result, all instruction had to be moved online virtually overnight. No official time off to move online was given to the faculty. Instead, everyone was expected to simply move their courses online starting with the next class session. This created serious challenges for the administration, the teachers, and the students.

This experience report considers two questions: 1) What training topics and designs are useful for beginning online teachers with very little time to implement the results of the training? 2) In this emergency context, how do local institutional traditions impact the design, delivery, and reception of such training?

The first section of the report briefly describes the case and presents the problem at its center. Next, the solution to the problem and the process of developing that solution are described. Then, the case is situated in literature. After that, the methods for studying the case are described, followed by a report and discussion of the main themes which emerged from the training. The final section states the case's conclusions, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

About the Case

This section of the experience report presents a case of faculty training designed to improve the participants' ability to teach online. The section starts with a description of the problem the training intended to address. That description includes local cultural and institutional constraints affecting the problem. Next, I describe the solution designed to address the problem. Lastly, I examine the training design decisions made the trainer during the development of the program.

The Problem The problem in this case is the lack of training in online instruction among this group of university faculty. The problem became particularly severe in the spring of 2020 as instruction had to be moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation has continued into the fall of 2020, and while some courses at this university will be taught face-to-face during the spring 2021 semester, most instruction will take place online. Therefore, the need to enable more faculty to effectively teach online will remain with us for the foreseeable future.

The following major constraints affected the project

- The Norwegian university discussed in the case has a very limited history or culture of online instruction. This follows the nationwide trend in Norway where, due to the relatively small size of the country and relatively easy access to physical campuses, a vast majority of courses and programs have traditionally been offered face-to-face. "Digitalization" of learning is under way at many institutions, but those efforts are often limited to better and wider use of digital tools and texts, including open access educational resources, in the face-to-face classroom.

- The traditional lecture is the preferred method of instruction in many places. Therefore, shifting to online teaching would require a shift towards more interactive designs. To achieve such a shift, these teachers would need to be shown alternatives to the lecture and persuaded to try them. When translated to online instruction the preference for the lecture leads to the assumption that the best (and even only) means of online teaching is the synchronous video session.

- Unlike in North America where course instructors are usually free to require any number and kind of assignments they deem necessary for student learning, in Norway, especially at the bachelor's level, courses typically follow standardized "study plans" which prescribe the amount and kind of obligatory work in a course. This means that a teacher may not be able to assign frequent low-stakes assignments in an online class. That inability can create a problem with student participation and course interactivity. Only the most motivated of students submit the non-obligatory assignments. Alternatives for ensuring student involvement must therefore be found.

- The university has recently created high-quality resources for digital and remote teaching. However, these resources are dispersed among several online platforms which are run by different offices. Many of the faculty seem unfamiliar with those resources and the differences between them. Furthermore, many of such resources tend to focus on technological tools rather than on pedagogy or course design.

A note on my background in online teaching expertise and faculty training design is in order. Trained in rhetoric and composition and professional communication, I have been teaching online and blended courses for about fifteen years in the US and now in Norway. In addition to on-the-job online teaching training, I have taken a graduate-level course on online course design from a previous employer in the US and a "digital professor" professional certificate, also from a US institution. In 2014, I won a university award for the design of an online course.

Parallel with my development as an online course designer and teacher, I have developed significant expertise in the design and teaching of faculty development courses. Much of that expertise was gained during my time as the director of a Writing Across the Curriculum program at a large university in the US. Results of my faculty development work as a faculty trainer have previously appeared in this journal. Additionally, since the training sessions described here, I have been invited to speak about online teaching to one more group of university faculty and a group of professional trainers from industry, organized by a Norwegian government agency.

Brief Description of the Training Solution

To address the lack of basic online teaching skills among the faculty, three two-hour long training sessions were developed and delivered to three different groups of participants. The sessions took place over the period of 3 weeks in June of 2020. The first and third sessions were delivered via Zoom while the second session was delivered face-to-face. Participants did not receive any

financial or other incentives to participate, and neither did I. Table 1 summarizes the resources used to create and deliver the training.

The first session was developed in collaboration with the university's faculty development office. That office requested that the training not be longer than two hours because they were concerned about "Zoom fatigue." That first session was attended by fourteen teachers from four departments, all of whom enrolled in the course voluntarily through the online platform used by the university to enroll participants in professional development programs. The first session was well-received and led to requests for two more training sessions—one for the Department of Mechanical, Electrical, and Chemical Engineering, and the other—for the Department of International Studies and Interpreting.

Facts About the Solution	
Budget	- For developing the course: none - For teaching the course: none - For incentivizing participants to take the course: none
Length of Time Needed to Complete the Project	- For developing the training curriculum: approximately four weeks - For delivery of the three training sessions: three weeks
Skills Used in this Project	- Expertise in online course design - Expertise in professional training design
Software Used	- Zoom - Microsoft PowerPoint - Microsoft Word - The Common Leaning Platform for Government Agencies (www.difi.no). The platform is used by the university to manage enrolment in faculty development courses and is a modification of Moodle.

Table 1. Resources required for the completion of the project

Process for Developing the Solution

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the process of developing the solution to the problem defined earlier. The section starts with the description of Phase 1 of the process, which focuses on the planning and delivery of the first training session. The discussion of the second phase of the solution development, devoted to the preparation and delivery of training sessions 2 and 3, follows. The final stage of the process discusses plans made by me in collaboration with relevant university stakeholders for the continuation of the training in the future.

Phase 1: Planning and Delivery of the First Training Session Before the first training session, I held two Zoom meetings with representatives of the faculty development office to discuss the plans for the training, and one Zoom meeting with representatives of the university office which develops and publishes online LMS training modules and other similar resources. It was decided during

those meetings that the primary focus should be pedagogy but that some tips and techniques for technology use should also be included.

Based on my knowledge of online instruction scholarship and of the local needs and conditions, I selected the following topics for the first session: 1) building interactivity in online courses, 2) providing formative feedback to students and 3) organizing course content activities around learning modules in Canvas. Synchronous vs. asynchronous online teaching was also briefly discussed as part of the coverage of the first two topics. The topic selection was based primarily on my prior conversations with colleagues and my anticipation that transitioning from the lecture as the main mode of instruction to active learning techniques might present the biggest conceptual challenge to the participants. Based on that understanding, I decided to make active learning techniques the center of the training. Research shows that transition to effective online teaching takes place in stages: personal transformation (reimagining one's own role as a teacher), acquisition of specialized knowledge, acquisition of technological knowledge, and gaining familiarity with best teaching practices [5]. Understanding principles of active learning and interactivity would provide the participants with a solid foundation. No required readings or other assignments were given to the participants before, during, or after the session. It was suggested to them, though, that they bring with them course outlines, projects, and other materials from their face-to-face classes, which they could begin re-designing for online delivery. About one half of the first session's participants brought such materials.

To keep the audience engaged and to model interactivity-building and active learning strategies, I alternated brief 10 to 15-minute PowerPoint presentations with small and large group discussions and exercises. The group activities during Session 1 were conducted in Zoom's breakout rooms.

Phase 2: Planning and Delivery of Sessions 2 and 3 After the first training session, I was approached by the chair of the Departments of Mechanical, Electrical, and Chemical Engineering and asked to develop further training for their units. The next training was delivered, face-to-face, to the Department of Mechanical, Electrical, and Chemical Engineering, approximately one week after the first session. Like the first session, it lasted two hours. Before the second session, I held a Zoom meeting with the department's chair to learn more about the group's needs. Based on that conversation, two changes to the contents of the training were made. Firstly, according to the engineering department chair, most of her faculty were proficient with Canvas and would not require instruction in learning module creation. At the same time, the chair noted that the group would need a more detailed discussion of synchronous vs. asynchronous teaching since most of them were used to teaching large lecture-based classes and might assume that teaching online simply involved moving those lectures to a video platform. Therefore, the PowerPoint presentation and exercises on learning module creation from the first session were replaced with a presentation and discussion of synchronous vs. asynchronous teaching. The session was attended by thirty-one faculty members, two of whom had also attended the first session in Zoom. The other content revision for the second session involved not asking the participants to bring any course materials to the session and replacing structured group exercises with a more open-style discussion format.

A day or two after the engineering department session, I was approached by the chair of the Department of International Studies and Interpreting who had also attended the first, University-wide session. She expressed an interest in a separate training session for her department, particularly for the teachers in the department's master's program in International Education and Development in the Global South. An added layer of complexity in this situation was that typically about one half of the students in the master's program are from Africa and South Asia. Normally, those students would come to Norway and take face-to-face courses together with their Norwegian counterparts, but the COVID-19 pandemic had made that impossible. Therefore, the

department was particularly interested in solutions that would enable it to deliver the program online to a global student population. Based on these conversations, no significant changes to the contents of the training were made in the run-up to the third session compared to the second session. Building interactivity, providing on-going formative feedback, and synchronous vs. asynchronous teaching remained the three main topics covered. One special consideration for the third session, however, was how to accommodate the time zone differences for globally dispersed students if the teachers chose to incorporate synchronous instruction into the courses. The format of the third session followed that of the first two: brief PowerPoint presentations interspersed with discussion. Table 2 summarizes the topics covered and the sequence of activities across the three sessions.

Phase 3: Plans for the Future Soon after the first, university-wide session, the Director and Assistant Director of the university's faculty development office informed me that their office was working on a new set of teacher-training courses devoted to "digital teaching" and that they would like online and hybrid teaching to feature prominently in that set. I was asked whether I would be willing to teach those training courses in the fall of 2020. I have accepted the invitation pending the formalization of the agreement between my academic department and the university faculty development office.

Additional training courses which focus on various aspects of online pedagogy are planned for spring of 2021. Of interest would be the coverage of various active learning models, such as the flipped classroom, and their application in online courses. In addition, ways to reconcile the strict course plan requirements with allowed student workloads, which I mentioned earlier, would need to be developed.

Training Topics and Activities by Session

Training Topic or Activity	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Building interactive online courses	X	X	X
Providing formative feedback to students	X	X	X
Question and answer periods after each topic presentation	X	X	X
Synchronous vs. asynchronous teaching		X	X
3 small group course design activities followed by a whole-class discussion	X		
Organizing courses via learning modules in Canvas	X		

Table 2. Training topics and activities by session

The choice and sequencing of the topics for the training were guided primarily by the needs expressed by the university administration and the participants, as well as by my anticipation of what might be needed given based on my knowledge of the local context. The choice of topics for the training, particularly the emphasis on interactivity, matches the priorities outlined in published

literature [6], [7]. The numbers of attendees of each session and their departments are listed in Table 3.

Situating the Case

This section situates this teaching case in the literature of research and practice of training for online instruction. This section first situates the case in select research literature on two concepts central to this case: the necessity of training to teach online and the influence of local conditions on the design and delivery of such training. Next, four other teaching cases which illustrate one or both concepts and provide a foundation for this case are presented. The section ends with an explanation of the criteria used to select the literature discussed here. This case is also situated in a tradition of international scholarship on online learning, some of which dates to the 1990s and foreshadows the challenges with computer-based communication and learning we would face later [8].

Key Concepts

A discussion of the following limited number of published works on online teaching is presented to demonstrate how the training's design was based on what we know about successful online instruction. Though much of this knowledge is taken for granted by experienced online teachers, this is entirely new for the beginning online instructors who were the audience for the training.

The Necessity of Training to Teach Online Even experienced face-to-face teachers need specialized training to be successful online because teaching online is not as simple as "putting" a face-to-face course on the internet [7]. Successful online instruction requires a different design and, often, different teaching methods [7]. Scholars agree that appropriate faculty training has positive effect on the design of syllabi of online courses [2, 6] and can lead to higher levels of student satisfaction with those courses [9]. For instance, including certain language in online course syllabi correlated positively with the students' understanding of the course's expectations, workload, and other important aspects [9]. Furthermore, levels of teacher satisfaction with the courses also increased following appropriate training in course design [9]. When designing training, attention must be paid to disciplinary conventions. While courses in some disciplines sometimes rely more heavily on lectures (e.g. natural and social sciences), others tend to favor discussions and other Socratic methods (e.g. writing and technical communication). Customization of training can be a challenge, however, due to the lack of experienced trainers from different disciplines or the need to scale the training up [2]. Understanding the need for additional training for online teaching was important for this group of trainees and for this experience report because of the wide spread and erroneous assumption among the trainees that online teaching meant simply taking their existing face-to-face courses to the Internet and that their face-to-face teaching skills would serve them equally as well online.

Influence of Local Conditions on Training Inadequate faculty training often happens for large, multi-section service courses, such as lower-level service courses in writing and technical communication [10], or where the status of a department on campus is relatively low, which, again, often happens with technical communication and writing programs [11]. Traditional lecturing defined as "continuous exposition by the teacher" in online courses can promote passive attitudes towards the course material among students [12]. Therefore, teachers who privilege lecturing, as is the situation with this case, may find themselves at a disadvantage when preparing for effective online instruction. This further confirms the importance of local conditions on online course design. In simpler terms, what may be "old news" to instructional designers and faculty at

institutions with robust online programs is brand-new and paradigm-shifting knowledge to trainees such as the ones described here.

How the Literature Was Selected Faculty training for online teaching is covered in literature from many academic fields. Some issues related to the topic transcend disciplinary boundaries while others are more discipline specific. An online search of academic and professional journals was conducted using the databases EBSCOhost and Science Direct. The search phrases "teacher training for online courses," "online course design training," and "Institutional culture AND online courses" were used. Most of the sources selected were published in the last five years and represent research from different countries. It is important to remember that my purpose was to situate the problem of the case in a select number of relevant sources and not to produce a comprehensive literature review on the subject.

Similar Cases

This section discusses four similar teaching cases: one evaluating the nature of transitioning from face-to-face to online teaching, two examining faculty experiences with online instruction and their needs to be successful online teachers, and one detailing the design of a faculty training program. Here again, the purpose of this section is not to provide a comprehensive review of scholarship on faculty training in online instruction, but to demonstrate how the design of the sessions reported here is grounded in what we know about successful online teaching.

Case 1: Transitioning to Online Teaching as "Transformation." The first case reviewed here underscores the need for specialized online instruction training. It demonstrates that significant changes in teaching methods must take place even for experienced face-to-face teacher for them to teach online well. Cochran and Benuto characterize transition from face-to-face to online teaching as a "transformation" which comprises two distinctive adjustments: new knowledge acquisition and experiential learning [5]. According to the study, this transformation is "a fluid continuum" during which even experienced online instructors report never reaching "the end of the journey" [5]. New iterations of the transformation emerge as new online learning theories and technological tools are developed [5].

Case 2: Evolving Teacher Experiences with Online Courses. The next published case is relevant to this report because it suggests a hierarchy of training topics and training priorities thus impacting the choices made by the trainer. Building on the idea that becoming an effective online instructor is an iterative process, Colak argues that faculty's intentions and motivations for various course design decisions change with the change in the level of experience and ambition [13]. Whereas new online teachers begin with a simple desire to organize an online course logically and to avoid student confusion, with experience, they become more interested in such matters as building student-to-student interactions, social presence, etc. [13]. This case highlights the iterative and gradual nature of learning how to teach online. The case applies to the training presented in this report in that the trainees were receiving only the foundational competencies in online instruction and would need a lot more training to become truly proficient.

Case 3: Criteria for Rapid Incorporation of Online Instruction into Traditionally In-Person Programs. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, this case develops a set of five following criteria necessary for a successful design and implementation of an online instructional program: the effort is necessary and educationally beneficial; its technical quality is sufficient; instructor training is provided; online courses undergo periodic review; and institutional policies exist to support online instruction [7]. Though the case's focus is not on addressing the immediate emergency but on long-term development of high-quality online educators, it is relevant for this report for two

reasons: the training discussed in it was created due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is targeted at teachers with little or no experience in online instruction [7].

Case 4: A Multi-National Design for Online Teacher Preparation. Andan et al. describe a faculty training program for participants from different countries [14]. According to the study, teaching online fundamentally changes the teacher's role from information provider to facilitator and coordinator [14]. Active learning is essential for student success in online courses and any faculty training for online teaching must include facilitation of active learning, in addition to or instead of lecturing [14]. Both pedagogical and technological competencies are needed for successful online teaching, but technological competencies must develop in service of pedagogical ones [14]. This case underscores the importance a paradigm shift in teaching methods as well as of giving priority to pedagogical competencies. By including this case in the report, I intended to underscore the importance of paying attention to the local conditions when designing and delivering faculty-training solutions.

The analysis of the select sources presented here, including similar teaching cases, demonstrates several ideas important for the case. Firstly, the analysis confirms the importance of accommodating the local conditions and the influence of those conditions on the design of the training. Secondly, it confirms the frequent need to redesign one's existing teaching methods and techniques for online courses. Thirdly, cases 1 and 4, confirm the crucial role of active learning for the success of online instruction.

Methods/Approach

As stated earlier, this case study addresses two research questions: 1) what topics and training designs are suitable and useful for beginning online teachers with very little time to implement the results of the training; 2) How do local institutional conditions and traditions impact the design and delivery of such training? This section presents information about training participants, approaches to informal data-collecting, and the main themes which emerged from the training sessions.

Participants The sixty-two participants came from six departments at a public university in Oslo, Norway. All had little to no prior experience or training in online teaching, though all were familiar with "digital teaching tools" such as Canvas, Zoom, and others. The participants represented natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities and included both "regular" faculty and administrators. Their academic ranks ranged from "lecturer" with primarily teaching responsibilities to full professor with primarily research responsibilities. Three section heads (a title roughly equivalent to "department chair" in the US) participated in the sessions. Enrollment in the training events took place either through an online course enrollment system maintained by the university or via email and was voluntary. Because no formal data was collected during or after the training, no research ethics review was required or conducted. Table 3 breaks down participant numbers and the departments they represented.

Training Participants and Their Departments (the total of 62 participants)

Session 1 (university-wide)		Session 2 (department-wide)		Session 3 (department-wide)	
Education	5	Mechanical, Electrical, and	31	International Studies and Interpreting	17
Health Sciences	5				
English	1				

Industrial Design	3	Chemical Engineering			

Table 3. Training participants and their departments

Data Collection Informal data was collected from training planning meetings and my post-training reflection. The training program described in this case was designed and delivered, on a short notice, in response to the exigency created by the COVID-19 pandemic. As stated earlier, the university where the training took place needed to give as many of its faculty as possible basic online instruction competencies as quickly as possible. The processes of negotiation and planning which took place between the trainer and the various university stakeholders in preparation for the training are also described. Other faculty trainers and institutions in a similar position will find this description useful for their own work in designing and delivering similar training programs.

Results/Discussion

In this section, I examine the main themes which emerged out of the discussions among the participants and between the participants and the trainer during the sessions. Others in my position can learn a lot from this experience. These conversations and themes are instructive for two reasons. Firstly, they provide a useful glimpse into the concerns and apprehensions that the participants had about the prospect of remote teaching. Understanding these concerns will provide other trainers in similar situations with a better ability to address the needs of their audiences. Secondly, some of these discussions specifically highlight challenges of online teaching in Norwegian higher education and, by extension, the importance of localized and culturally specific instructional design. Readers of this article can use the themes discussed here to identify and resolve such local concerns in their own training and course situations. Below, I identify and discuss three broad themes which emerged from the training sessions. These three themes emerged from all three sessions, with a vast majority of the participants finding them relevant to their work. Quantification of the numbers and frequencies with which these themes were brought up by individual trainees is not possible since collecting or analyzing such discrete data was not the purpose here. Nor is such analysis necessary in the context of this case. The purpose of this experience report was to examine how the collective needs of these three faculty cohorts vis-à-vis preparing for online teaching were met through these training sessions.

Theme 1: Active Learning and Alternatives to Lecturing The traditional lecture, when used as the main method of instruction, can be ineffective in online courses [12]. And yet, due to their own training, experience, both as students and as teachers as well as, to some extent, due to institutional expectations, many of the trainees found it hard to imagine other methods of teaching online. Even those who were familiar with the flipped classroom and other active learning models stated that the traditional lecture was still their default teaching method. Most seemed to understand "teaching online" as simply starting a Zoom meeting and delivering the same lecture they would otherwise deliver to a room-full of students.

Completely changing the participants' minds about a deeply entrenched practice during a two-hour session was, of course, impossible. Nevertheless, I tried to offer alternatives. Those included the flipped classroom, student-initiated and student-led discussions of new class material, writing-to-learn assignments, and some others. Some of my suggestions were met with skepticism. For instance, several people in each training cohort brought up a rather valid concern when discussing low-stakes, writing-to-learn assignments. It went something like this: "The study plan for my courses allows me to grade only these two or three specific submissions from students. If I assign

anything else, I cannot assess it formally, and if I do not assess it, they will not do it." There was no simple solution to this problem, short of rewriting the study plans, but I suggested that teachers take extra time and effort explaining to students how completing low-stakes and ungraded assignments will ultimately help them do better on the graded assignments such as final exam. My own experience with undergraduates here in Norway suggests that this strategy works, at least for most students, if not all. In addition, the viability of this strategy appears to be supported by recent research on formative assessment [6]. Overall, transitioning from traditional lecturing as the only teaching method to a mix of different approaches that work online will be a long and iterative process for these teachers, and research bears that out [5]. Research also confirms the effectiveness of active learning in STEM disciplines [6], [16]. So, changing these teachers' approaches will take time, but the most fundamental goal of these training sessions was to get the trainees to see online course design as more than simply "putting" their face-to-face courses on the internet, but as new designs necessitated by a different learning environment. Considerations of alternatives to lecturing in this context go a long way towards achieving that goal.

Theme 2: Synchronous or Asynchronous Teaching. As mentioned earlier, coming into the training, most participants assumed that online teaching had to be done only synchronously and only in real time. It is important to note that the university does not mandate synchronous-only teaching. For many, it was just a matter of convenience. They wanted to simply move their existing lectures to a video conferencing platform, such as Zoom and continue the course as before. That assumption became even more evident during the first training session, which made me devote a separate section of the second and third sessions to the subject of synchronous vs. asynchronous teaching. One logistical concern regarding asynchronous teaching was that it required a lot of advance planning and writing. Another topic of discussion related to this theme is that, for asynchronous learning to work, the course must be designed around active learning principles and activities. Under such a design, the students would be able to not only listen to their instructor, but to complete various tasks and activities based on lectures and readings. To convince the participants of the value of asynchronous teaching, I asked them to consider the extra time students get to think through and produce thoughtful responses to discussion questions when working asynchronously as opposed to being put on the spot during a synchronous class session. In the case of the training session delivered to the Department of International Studies and Interpreting, combining synchronous and asynchronous methods would likely become unavoidable due to the geographic dispersion of their students mentioned above. The emergence of this theme during the session demonstrates the inevitable connection between particulars of course design and local institutional and academic culture conditions and traditions. The traditional reliance on the lecture as the main method of instruction in face-to-face courses had spilled over into online design, with most instructors assuming that lecturing was their only option for the online course as well. In discussing the trainees' thoughts on synchronous vs. asynchronous teaching, my goal is not to claim that one modality is superior to the other or that the trainees learned to use one or both modalities. My purpose in the training was to expose them to the affordances and limitations of both modalities and to prompt to choose the right approach critically in their own work. Therefore, my discussion on this theme here is not whether the participants' attitudes towards synchronous vs. asynchronous aligned with published literature. Therefore, analyzing their thoughts on this problem in relation to published research on the topic is neither effective nor necessary. The important aspect of these conversations, I hope, has been that the participants have been prompted to critically evaluate and select the modalities and technological tools available to them rather than simply assuming that synchronous face-to-face teaching methods must be uncritically transferred into online courses.

Theme 3: Building Interactivity in the Online Course through Formative Feedback. Frequent and regular feedback is essential for quality online instruction design [15]. Providing such feedback and ensuring that students read it and act upon it helps build interactivity and social presence in the course. It also provides students with important information on their progress in the course, and the instructor on how well the students are learning [16]. However, providing effective ongoing feedback requires an operational knowledge of at least the following key concepts: 1) difference between feedback and assessment; 2) techniques for designing and responding to informal writing-to-learn tasks, such as discussion board posts [17], [18]. The trainees displayed varying degrees of familiarity with these concepts. Many of the doubts they expressed about the very possibility of providing effective frequent feedback to their students were familiar to me from my previous work as a Writing Across the Curriculum director and a professional writing instruction trainer [19]. Those doubts included lack of time to respond to every student's posts, lack of time to correct every mechanical mistake in every post, and the concern that, if student work is not graded formally, it will hold no value. Addressing these concerns is not quick or easy, and it requires a serious reconsideration of one's beliefs and deeply held convictions about the very nature of teaching and learning. For instance, in order to accept that "more teacher comments is not always better," one has to come to terms with the idea that the teacher need not be the sole source of knowledge in the course and that students can learn from one another if taught how to do that. To the teachers in writing and professional communication, these ideas are axioms and form the backbone of our teaching practices. However, to many of our colleagues in disciplines such as engineering, these approaches may be new and will take a long time to accommodate [16]. The local tradition of strictly following standardized course study plans and not assigning anything which cannot be formally assessed is, at least partially, responsible for the doubts these teachers raised about writing-to-learn and writing-to-think tasks.

Conclusions

This section concludes the experience report, describes its limitations, and suggests directions for future research.

Conclusion. The training program reported here was created in response to the institutional need for increasing its faculty's ability to teach online. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a quick creation and delivery of such training. This initial training achieved its purpose of not only providing its participants with basic online course design knowledge but also of raising awareness of the necessity of such training among university administrators. The positive response to the training by the participants probably contributed to the decision by the university's faculty development office to include this subject into their long-term plans. Whether the long-team goal of assisting these novice online teachers in designing effective online courses has been achieved through these sessions will have to be studied in the future.

Limitations. This experience report has four main limitations

- Only informal data was collected and analyzed. The experience report focuses on describing the design of the training and of the main themes that emerged from the training sessions.

- The length of the program and the number of faculty involved in the training make the size of the sample very small and thus not generalizable beyond the current location of the training and the current participant population

- Due to the emergency nature of the training and the speed with which it had to be developed and deployed, no instrument for assessing the quality of the training has yet been developed.

- The author of this experience report was also the creator and teachers of the training sessions.

Suggestions for Future Research. Three possible research directions can be suggested based on this experience report. Firstly, quantitative and qualitative data about the participants' perception of the training's effectiveness can be collected and analyzed. A survey can be administered at the end of future iterations of the training sessions to obtain that data. Secondly, longitudinal research should be conducted into the degree to which the trainees decided to integrate the content of the training into their online course design and delivery. For instance, it is worth finding out how many of the participants made conscious moves to build interactivity into their courses, what decisions were made regarding synchronous or asynchronous instruction, etc. These data can be collected through surveys, analyses of future course documents such as syllabi, and/or qualitative interviews. I plan to conduct a small-scale qualitative study of first-time online undergraduate students' satisfaction with an online course during the fall 2020 semester. Institutional approval for that study has been received. Additionally, a more though investigation of the current state of online education and of the training practices in Norway, based on published literature, can be conducted and correlated with this report. Lastly, since setting up an online education system involves many people and units within an institution, a stakeholder study like the one conducted by Wagner et al., but in the Norwegian context, should be considered [20].

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