Preface

Upon receiving my Masters of English with a concentration in literature in 2009, I sought online teaching positions that would lend me flexibility in both time and location. Although I had no previous teaching experience, my skills and earned degrees earned me an online adjunct faculty position with the University of Phoenix to teach Research Writing and Introduction to Literature. At the time, there were no available Face-to-Face (F2F) teaching positions in the University of Phoenix’s local satellite campus, so I was assigned solely online courses.

I asked each of my new students to provide biographical information and almost all of them shared a story of struggle and personal strife that led them to seek their degrees online. I heard stories of single parents deterring their educational paths for their families, adults who needed financial stability right out of high school and could not attend college, and those that knew college was not the right path for them until now. In addition, many of these students were adults who were returning to their education after twenty or thirty years away from a classroom. These students revered the flexibility of online learning, especially the fact that they did not have to go to a specific location at a particular time for their courses, which allowed them time for careers and families.

This pattern has continued to this day in all of my online courses for multiple institutions; students appreciate the flexibility and convenience of asynchronous online education. With the movement towards online education, more students are having the opportunity to make their dreams of higher education a reality. Because of students’ shared experience with online learning and their struggle to make higher education a possibility for themselves, I advocate for the opportunity to make this student dream a reality. This passion has led to my personal preference for asynchronous online learning because I feel that oftentimes it most respects and understands the students’ position in the education process and their need for flexibility.

It was not until two years later that I had the opportunity to teach the same types of courses F2F for Westmoreland County Community College and found that there were little to no similarities between F2F and online teaching and learning environments in terms of the demographic of students, communicative interactions, and course expectations, among other things. The vast difference between my teaching experiences led to my deep interest in the training programs available for online educators. More specifically, the teacher training that I received in my tra-
ditional literature Masters program prepared me for all facets of the F2F classroom including rubrics, assessment, syllabi, policies, test making, small group and large group discussions, classroom management, creative projects, teamwork, and building and maintaining democratic relationships with my students. However, upon graduation from the program, I worked in an environment in which not many of these characteristics were similar, if they existed at all. In my Doctoral program, I met several colleagues who had experience with both online and F2F classrooms who shared my confusion over the extensive training available for F2F classroom teachers but the limited training available for online teachers. The more that I spoke with colleagues the more I learned of their own struggles to formulate and execute their courses online, which led to the motivating concern of this text.

In some ways, F2F and distance education are not entirely removed from one another. Throughout my undergraduate and graduate student career, I had the opportunity to take a number of my courses online as the institutions were currently developing and testing distance education. Therefore, online education was not completely foreign to me, although the majority of my educational experience had been traditional F2F. There are a number of similarities in online and F2F education, especially when looking at the surface: a syllabus generally contains the required policies, assignments, and information about the class. Generally, students have to read or learn about a concept and then it is evaluated in some way (writing, formal assessment, quiz, presentation, or many other formats). Some of the tools to execute these steps are different online from traditional F2F, but many of the general parameters remain the same.

Distance education is undoubtedly one of the most rapidly growing subsections of education. From small, rural community colleges incorporating one or two classes on an LMS (Learning Management System) to for-profit institutions such as the University of Phoenix and Capella University, the face of education is changing to embrace these technological movements. Likewise, giant strides have been made in what constitutes distance education. The original concept of distance education was paper correspondence-based, an amazingly slow process for idea exchange (by today’s standards), but the technology has improved and is rising every day to the challenges educators present. Also rapidly increasing is the size of online courses with the advent of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), which cater to hundreds or thousands of participants.

However quickly the technology is moving forward, training for instructors, particularly online instructors, is not moving forward as quickly. Or, in some cases, at all. I have enjoyed all of the challenges in online teaching that I have faced thus far and really thrive on the opportunity to make this process more manageable for future instructors. That chronicles the development of interest not only in online education but also specifically in the training available for online instructors.

Many universities offer “online pedagogy training” that demonstrates how to use the online learning platform required by the university—Blackboard, Moodle, D2L, ECollege, etc. Though
labeled as pedagogical trainings, these are solely platform trainings that allow the instructor to see the classroom from the students’ perspective (Savenye, Olina, & Niemczyk, 2001; Wang, Chen, & Levy, 2010). Seeing the classroom from the students’ perspective is undoubtedly a crucial point of training for online instructors, but it is not the only necessary training. As more traditional universities go online and more online universities develop there will be instructors that never have to or intend to teach F2F. Larger universities such as the University of Phoenix and branches of Corinthian Colleges Inc. offer full-time Instructor positions solely for online campuses. These instructors still receive the institutional benefits of a university of organization without having to commute or be anywhere F2F. Some future scholars will undoubtedly make “online college instructor” their career goal. Current degree programs and universities need to update their programs and degree options to match such potential career movements.

The conversation about the state of universities and the necessary paradigm shifts of education is not exclusive to this text, nor is it an entirely new topic for discussion in higher education. As this text will demonstrate, a number of scholars across disciplines have identified major differences in F2F and online teaching that are not being addressed by universities or faculty members. In 2004, Salmon advocated for the utilization of the term “E-Moderator” in reference to an online instructor, citing tremendous differences in online teaching warranting new standards, new training, and new terminology in order to discuss said changes. If the term of “instructor” has to be modified in order to best describe the role of an online educator, then perhaps the required credentials likewise should.

The state of universities is dynamic and changing with the development of technologies; teacher training must develop in a similar manner so that instructors are equipped with the capability to teach for their potential classroom environment. This is a concept that seems fundamental at the primary and secondary levels: Would a special education teacher whose experience and training is with primary students be asked to teach eleventh grade history? The answer is probably not because that is not the classroom environment or demographic of student in which that teacher was trained to work. So why are online college instructors ill prepared to teach in their classroom environment? Because many faculty members have not received any training in online teaching (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012; Gabriel & Kaufield, 2008; Schrum, et al., 2005). Likewise, until very recently, there have been no formal degree programs in place for teacher training in online pedagogy (Kennedy, 2005; Littlejohn, Falconer, & Mcgill, 2008; Savenye, Olina, & Niemczyk, 2001). Granted, many faculty members at the college level are considered subject-matter experts and may have no training in pedagogy, online or F2F. As this text will discuss, that consideration does not mean that higher education move further away from providing sufficient training. Rather, the conversation can be expanded to include all aspects of pedagogical training for instructors.

Assumptions were made early on in higher education about the training needed to be a successful online instructor. One of these assumptions is that the information presented in a F2F
classroom can be easily transferred online. An example of this assumption would be that presenting a traditional lecture is the same as adding the lecture or lecture notes to an LMS or emailing it to students. As more has been learned about the Internet, Web-capabilities, and online learning, we have learned that the techniques of the F2F classroom do not translate exactly to the online classroom. Many of these revelations came at a time when universities became more invested in online learning in terms of finances and resources. Online learning also earned a reputation as being a “cheap and easy” way to manufacture and process students through an institution. More of these problems and concerns will be discussed throughout the text, but they demonstrate the “perfect storm” that is the state of current online education. What may have begun as a misstep in training is now a seemingly irreversible pathway for the future.

Although a significant portion of a teacher’s education is through trial and error in the classroom itself, teacher training must align with the context of the classroom. If we rely solely on a teachers’ trial and error for classroom success, why require any education or disciplinary specific degree to become a teacher? We could potentially just let anyone give it a shot and those that are successful can stay on for another semester. With the rapid pace in which online education has entered higher education, teacher training at the post-secondary level has not been able to keep up with these developments. We are left with students who request or need their courses online, instructors who are ill-equipped to offer online courses, administration telling instructors to make classes happen, and IT or computer science departments perpetuating the platform-only training programs.

As a note: this is not to say that all current online instructors are ill equipped. Many instructors have been teaching online for several years that have found similar challenges to the ones I am identifying. These instructors have discovered the challenges and addressed them and, although that is the case, more instructors are now entering the realm of online teaching, and our current standards perpetuate the confusion. However, it is my suggestion that rather than make instructors struggle through a decade or more experience with trial and error in their online classroom, perhaps we could prepare them more appropriately before they begin.

I have also determined that there are different modes of gaining knowledge that take place in the online environment related to both formal and informal training processes. Training must take into consideration both the technological skills and classroom expectations of both students and instructors. In this text, I propose to consider technology and classroom awareness in separate manners in order to understand them more easily. The terminology most effective for demonstrating the similarities and differences of teacher training is Gee’s (1989) definitions of acquisition and learning. Gee’s definitions stem from Krashen’s (1981) Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, which identifies acquisition as subconscious and learning as a conscious system of increasing knowledge of a language (p. 1). Krashen identifies acquisition as:
very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It equires meaningful interaction in the target language—natural communication—in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding. (p.1)

Language learning, however, Krashen defines as:

thought to be helped a great deal by error correction and the presentation of explicit rules. Error correction it is maintained, helps the learner come to the correct mental representation of the linguistic generalization. Whether such feedback has this effect to a significant degree remains an open question. (p. 2; Krashen and Seliger, 1975; Long, 1977)

In order to discuss literacy, Gee also defines these terms. Gee defines “acquisition” as a “process of acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models and a process of trial and error, without a process of formal teaching,” while he defines learning as a more formal process “that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching.... This teaching involves explanations and analysis” (p. 5). Because this text uses the terms acquisition and learning as a way to explain technological literacy skills, I will use Gee’s definitions of the terms. Using these definitions, I will identify the methods of acquisition and learning that take place in online learning for teachers to demonstrate the need for an online-specific pedagogical training. I believe it to be an important distinction (distinguishing acquisition and learning) in the development of online teacher training and online learning because understanding the role of each in the classroom is crucial to online teaching success. Likewise, as this text will demonstrate, training that is heavy on acquisition or too focused on learning does not create a balanced or ideal training scenario for potential online educators.

Although Gee does not necessarily discuss acquisition or learning in terms of specific content, for the purpose of this text, I will distinguish my utilization of the terms. By way of initial distinction, I believe “acquisition” to be associated with the technological skills acquired throughout the course of an online class through trial and error. “Learning” applies to the metacognitive understanding behind online classroom practices and the conscious noting of the differences I will later identify between F2F and online learning contexts. There is often a heavy reliance on the “acquisition” aspect of online teacher training, as defined above, without the balance of learning or vice versa. In this regard, a “heavy reliance on the ‘acquisition’ aspect of online teacher training” can refer to a platform-only training. Many institutions focus on providing instructors with the “point and click” skills necessary to set up and manage a classroom without the background information to make the training more holistic. And there are a number of reasons for this: platform-only training has become a normal standard for teacher training or, in some cases, those that act as trainers are proficient in the operation and administration of LMS, but are not experts or students of online pedagogy.
Because of the unique environmental constraints of the online classroom, a balance of both of these types of training (acquisition and learning) is necessary for student and instructor success. This text will argue for the necessary balance of acquisition and learning in online teacher training to best prepare instructors for the educative content pertaining to online pedagogy, technology, and environment of Web-based learning.

As a student of a traditional Masters program, technology was rarely discussed at all. We did not really even address it as a tool to compliment or method to provide presentations or information to students. After graduation, when I stumbled upon the opportunity to teach online, I had never actually considered its similarities and differences to my education. Through my initial exposure to online education and with opportunities granted to me in my Doctoral program (Web design, Web editing, spreadsheets, emails, and presentations), technology quickly became the focus of my career. I would name myself as a student of acquisition: I had no formal training in many of the technologies that I currently use on a daily basis.

Even though I do not consider my educational pathway to be a negative, I often wonder if additional degrees and certifications would have provided better training for my technological needs in order to supplement my acquired knowledge. Unfortunately, “English” and “technology” are terms that were rarely acknowledged as a match and would require me to pursue additional degrees in computer programming or instructional technology. Even though this is an option, it does not necessarily provide the combination of content and technology that a program in online pedagogy would offer. It should be noted early on that my experience with online learning is limited to my own student and instructor experience in the fields of education and composition. Therefore, when this text uses the term “classroom,” I am typically referring to my experience in the composition classroom, as that is my area of study. However, I have found that the need for sufficient teacher training for online pedagogy is a cross-disciplinary concern and have therefore left this text and the aforementioned terminology open to broad interpretation for a multitude of disciplines.

Overall, this text will be a theoretical investigation of the teacher training available to online college instructors. Many of the current training programs available for online instructors are platform-only training or professional development opportunities and do not necessarily discuss or engage in online pedagogy. This text will consider the technological skills and expectations of instructors in terms of Gee’s (1989) definitions of acquisition and learning. Using Gee’s definitions, this text will identify the methods of acquisition and learning that need to take place in an online teacher-training program. In particular, this text will provide a working definition of online pedagogy and consider ways in which accreditation standards and online teacher training could be updated and adapted to utilize this method of training.
ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

Online pedagogy is among the most important and timely developments within higher education. Administrators and regional accrediting agencies set forth standards of education many of which predate the advent of online education. Therefore, additional standards have been developed to compensate for the technological innovations utilized in and in lieu of traditional classrooms. The first chapter of this text serves as an overview and introduction into online pedagogy and exploration of its role in the regional accreditation standards. In particular, this chapter will lay the groundwork for the detailed standards and accreditation information to be discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 2 of this text examines the changing connotation and denotation of distance education since it was affiliated solely with correspondence courses. Distance education has taken on a number of different roles throughout history. As technology has changed and grown, so has the definition and possibilities of educating at a distance. This chapter will examine the chronological history of distance education beginning with correspondence courses and moving into a present day examination of learning management systems and the expansive network of online courses and universities. This chapter will also discuss the development of online teacher training (or lack thereof) in the same timeframe.

Chapter 3 examines the standards for education. Standards for education are established by a number of governing agencies including regional accreditation committees, national accreditation committees, committees on educational standards within colleges and universities, and the United States Department of Education. These standards are long established and are updated occasionally to reflect changes in the fields of education. This chapter will discuss the standards, as they exist today, in all of the aforementioned accreditation committees. Specifically, this chapter will focus on the educational standards as they currently exist for distance and online education, such as the standards for teacher training, professional development opportunities, and resources for online faculty.

Chapter 4 evaluates the currently published guidebooks regarding online education. As the field of online pedagogy is newly developed and being distinguished from traditional pedagogies, the supplemental materials and trainings available for instructors are only just being created. There are few, if any, textbooks available solely for the purpose of a class or training in online pedagogy. Rather, what exist currently are guidebooks. These guidebooks are typically step-by-step instructions by current online educators for new online teachers. Since guidebooks are the official documentation and research (sometimes anecdotal) available regarding online pedagogy, they play a significant role in understanding and evaluating acquisition and learning in teacher training. Therefore, this chapter will examine and define a number of guidebooks for online educators in order to see the development of the field and acknowledge the positioning of acquisition and learning in these currently existing educational standards.
Chapter 5 of this text will examine more specifically the definition of and possibilities of online pedagogy as a distinct discipline from traditional pedagogy. Online pedagogy is a new subject area in terms of education compared to traditional pedagogy. Specifically referring to the way a teacher can teach online and the way in which a student can learn online, this area of study may have some overlap with traditional pedagogies but relies on new ways of thinking, teaching, and learning in order to be successful. This chapter will define the term online pedagogy as it relates to traditional notions of the educational process. By understanding the role of the instructor in the online classroom, a reader will be able to understand the distinction between traditional and online pedagogies. Furthermore, by demonstrating the significant differences in teaching and learning, online pedagogy will become uniquely justified as a new area of research, scholarship, and development.

Chapter 6 will focus on identifying differences between online and face-to-face education. Although the discussion in this chapter will provide an introduction to differences, it will be in no way comprehensive, as all educational situations and institutions provide unique distinctions. Specifically, governing agencies and administrators of education have typically been operating under the impression that online teaching is F2F teaching using computers. This belief is a negative stereotype of education that is continually disproven by instructors of both modes, students of both modes, and research into the similarities and differences. Traditional pedagogies have a longstanding role in the F2F classroom, which do not always transfer into the online classroom. Rather, online pedagogy should be considered as a distinct area of study, which addresses the new and evolving pedagogies regarding technology and online learning. Specifically, this chapter will identify what the differences are between online and F2F education in order to demonstrate the unique and necessary distinction of online pedagogy from traditional pedagogies.

Chapter 7 will delve more specifically into understanding who the online learner can be and how that is different than the face-to-face classroom. This chapter extends some of the differences discussed in chapter 6, focusing exclusively on defining and understanding the online learner and understanding how online learners can be different from Face-to-Face (F2F) learners. Although this chapter is intended to touch upon the many demographics of online learners, it will certainly not be a comprehensive list of differences as all individuals have unique lifestyles and reasons for pursuing online education. This chapter will, however, discuss some of the more researched understandings of the demographics of online learners, including returning/non-traditional students, veterans, working adults, and the unique educational considerations of these individuals.

Chapter 8 will thoroughly define the terms acquisition and learning. Acquisition, or the opportunity to practice skills within the classroom to the point of understanding and mastery, is different than formal learning. For the purposes of this text, acquisition will refer to the opportunity to practice skills and technologies appropriate to the online classroom. Learning, in this context, refers to the background material necessary for understanding online education.
and the metacognitive understanding of choosing one technology for an online classroom over another. Learning, although a unique part of online teacher training, works in conjunction with acquisition in order to create a well-rounded and sufficient online educator. This chapter will examine the role that acquisition and learning play in education and the necessary balance of these in order to provide setup for the following chapter incorporating acquisition and learning into an online teacher-training program.

Chapter 9 will extend the information in chapter 8 to consider the effect of combining acquisition and learning and then applying them to a teacher training program. This chapter will define an appropriate balance of acquisition and learning that should be applied to online teacher training in order to give potential instructors the most effective and comprehensive training program to be fully prepared to teach online. Ideally, as this chapter will demonstrate, this training should occur before an instructor has the opportunity to teach online, but can be implemented at any time. This chapter provides the set up and organization for chapter 10, when the program suggestions are given in their entirety.

Chapter 10 will provide examples of courses to be included in an online pedagogy program, appropriate to the balance of acquisition and learning. This text has defined acquisition and learning and identified their role in educational processes. In chapter 11, these terms will be applied specifically to online teacher training. Using the information garnered throughout chapters 1 – 9, this chapter will provide suggestions regarding potential course offerings for a formalized training in online pedagogy. In order to be most comprehensive, this chapter will begin with the concept of a graduate-level degree program in online pedagogy. Any and all aspects of the potential courses can be modified based on institution, discipline, time or budget constraints, or a different level training program such as a certificate program.

After chapter 10 defines possible courses for inclusion in an online pedagogy program, chapter 11 demonstrates the versatility and possibilities of implementing an online pedagogy program in any type or level of institution. The acquisition and learning balanced program that has been described in the previous chapters is intended to be a graduate-level degree program for potential instructors. However, this level of change may be an insurmountable amount of preparation, work, and modification for current institutions. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the potential adaptations available, including, but not limited to, a type of crash course in online pedagogy, a certificate program, a varying elective scale, whichever type of program may be the easiest for an institution to implement. This chapter focuses on not only defining a program but also recognizing the importance of implementing any type of balanced acquisition and learning-based online pedagogy training for new online instructors.

Chapter 12 serves as a conclusion chapter for the entire text. This chapter reiterates the importance of acquisition and learning and, in particular, the importance of balancing acquisition and learning for online teacher training. This chapter will also focus on identifying future trends in online teacher training and potential directions for institutions, accreditation committees, and
higher education in general to pursue. In addition, this chapter further argues for the flexibility of an online teacher-training program utilizing acquisition and learning to present the argument that this concept is within reach for all universities and colleges that should want to further the training of their online instructors.

As this text will demonstrate, the role of the educator has changed with the advent and continuation of online education. Students and their needs have also changed. What have not changed over time are the required credentials, standards, and trainings of instructors. The concepts discussed in this textbook are timely and, as some would argue, overdue for the necessary paradigm shift of education. Developments must be made to the requirements of educators before they begin in the online classroom so that we are providing the best quality education for our students.

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REFERENCES


