The Impact of Industry Expert Adjuncts on Students’ Course Experiences

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ABSTRACT

As a reality of modern higher education, the use of adjunct instructors to teach courses is a common practice, often viewed through institutional constraints. This paper uses a different lens to examine the experiences of students in courses taught by adjunct instructors who are primarily employed in industry. It explores the affordances these instructors bring into the classroom including timely knowledge and skills from outside the academic institution. This work is a methodological pilot in a longer design-based project studying industry expert adjuncts as college teachers by analyzing their impact through students’ perceptions of their experiences.

KEYWORDS

Adjunct Instructors, Industry Experts, Learning Environments

INTRODUCTION

The issues related to the use of adjunct instructors in higher education, as evinced in discussions of the financial, logistical, or organizational impacts, are often defined by the necessity of their use and the constraints of their positions as itinerant labor (Casto, 2017; Evans, 2018; Pankin & Weiss, 2011; Swartzlander, Garcia, Sweeney, Dayton, Hunter, Stoll, Meija, Bob, Hahn & Hoffman, 2006). Discussions of the effects on student success of having adjunct instructors have thus far provided conflicting messages. Existing studies on the impact of adjuncts on student success have produced findings ranging from positive to negative results, and even finding no significant differences across instructors (Figlio, 2013; Flaherty, 2013a, 2013b; Harris, 2017; Keller, 2015; Ran & Xu, 2017, Smith 2010). These findings provide an unclear portrait for those at the institution tasked to support, collaborate with, and manage adjunct instructors.

Although important, the administrative decisions regarding the use of adjunct instructors are not the focus of this study. This work begins with the existence of the phenomenon as the baseline. The institutional context for this research is one where adjunct instructors are already in use, with no plans to limit or end the practice. Given that reality, this work contributes to better understanding how to improve adjuncts’ effectiveness in the classroom by exploring their impact when teaching courses related to their professional work. This paper shares student perspectives on their experiences in these types of courses with industry professionals as adjunct instructors.

This study is the first in an ongoing, design-based research and curriculum development project focused on how to support the needs of industry expert adjuncts. Industry expert adjuncts are adjunct instructors with full time employment in a non-academic position who enter academia with the intent to instruct and mentor students within their particular industries. Understanding students’ beliefs about how and what they learned during their course taught by an industry expert adjunct provides

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useful feedback for revising aspects of instructional design like classroom culture and experiential learning, as well as out-of-class issues such as outreach and marketing to prospective students. How students feel about the technical skills that they gained is an essential piece of the overall portrait of their experience; however, those skills should be something students gain with any instructor, hence the focus on those aspects specific to courses with industry expert adjuncts. Where the difference lies, is in the application of knowledge by different instructors. Through this process, students learn when and where the instructor applies their professional expertise in the context of typical industry workflows. This gives students the opportunity to refine their knowledge toward authentic situations they may encounter in their future work.

Admittedly, industry-related skills can be developed and maintained by full-time faculty members at the institution who teach similar courses to the industry expert adjuncts. However, full-time faculty instructors do not benefit from the timely and situated nature that those working full-time in the industry experience. Industry expert adjuncts are constantly reinforcing and updating their knowledge in the professional context. While full-time faculty members who are employed by the institution and work as instructors may have recent industry experience, the focus of their work at the institution has shifted and potentially lessens the quality of the knowledge that they bring to the course with respect to current industry expectations. This example of how knowledge can become less useful over time occurs when the underlying understanding is no longer timely in its appropriateness and applicability. The belief here is that the industry expert adjunct can provide a timely perspective on professional work environments, which students replied was a valued aspect of their participation in these courses. The research team sees value in students having classroom experiences with both types of instructors, full-time academics and industry expert adjuncts, as they bring complementary skill sets and expand the growth and preparation of students as they work toward their degrees.

This paper uses a qualitative approach to develop methods for understanding the experiences of students in courses taught by part-time adjunct instructors by analyzing data collected through students’ feedback on surveys and in semi-structured video interviews. The primary question for this study is: what are undergraduate students’ experiences in courses taught by industry expert adjuncts? The intent of this paper is to better understand how students feel about their interactions with these instructors and courses. This formative study contributes to understanding how to address the needs of industry professionals and their students with the intention of creating more effective classroom practices. An underlying belief here is that leveraging the benefits of using industry expert adjuncts can be better accomplished through understanding their impact both inside and outside of the classroom. This work explores the impact of taking a course with these adjuncts on students’ beliefs about their experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

If institutions offering traditional undergraduate coursework will use adjunct faculty, there must be a concomitantly effort to supervise their work. Adjuncts need to know what the curricular, performance, and mentoring standards are. Students should expect adjuncts to deliver content that is overseen by full-time faculty, teach the material in an interesting and professional manner, and be available for discussion outside of class. To accomplish these goals, the university must direct resources in support of adjunct faculty.

Stenerson, Blanchard, Fassiotto, Hernandez & Muth, 2010

Understanding that institutions may provide little academic support and professional development for adjunct instructors, one can put into that context the relatively small percentage of adjuncts from industry. Industry expert adjuncts can bring knowledge from their concurrent jobs into the classroom and are especially effective in courses tied to specific professions (Bettinger & Long, 2010), but there
remains the necessity of giving them the knowledge and skills they need to effectively translate their understanding to students while also addressing instructional and assessment requirements in the process. Instructors from outside the university also need preparation and guidance to become course instructors in the post-secondary classroom (House Committee on Education and the Workforce Democratic Staff, 2014).

Research has shown that adjuncts, who on average are less likely to hold advanced degrees, may be less capable of helping students build the skills required for success with more advanced content (e.g., deeper understanding of the current content and critical thinking) (Xu, 2019). While this pilot does not explore this particular phenomenon, it is a primary goal to test this finding in the context of the industry expert adjunct. Gasper and Lipinski (2016) examined the role of industry experience in the use of working professionals as adjunct instructors and summarized that benefits are typically related to connecting students with internships and service-learning opportunities external to the university. Although their work brought the phenomenon of industry experience to the greater discussion on adjunct instructors, it does not explore how that same experience is understood from the student perspective.

In general, the varied impacts of adjuncts on student learning have been explored through a range of themes. Hoffman and Oreopoulos found that “differences in commonly observed instructor traits, such as rank, faculty status, and salary, have virtually no effect on student outcomes” (2006, p. 23) leading them to conclude little adverse impact to student achievement. Green contends that collaborative development of student learning outcomes between full-time and adjunct faculty to ensure identification and assessment, concluding the methods as “a new path for institutions pursuing the continuing quest for quality among adjunct faculty” (2007, p. 38). Halcrow and Olson are more critical in their findings of administrative neglect for supporting the needs of adjuncts, which negatively impacted aspects such as mentoring and evaluation, recognition, professional development, social and professional inclusion, committee work, and appreciation of adjunct faculty (2011). Caruth and Caruth (2013) take a view similar to this paper in their acknowledgement of the increasing use of adjuncts, leading to their contention that additional investigation of adjuncts will lead to improved professional development and hiring practices for adjuncts.

This study is not focused on evaluating the instructors through traditional student-provided feedback at academic institutions. Given questions about the use of student evaluation to assess instructors (Hornstein, 2017; Wachtel, 1998; Zabaleta, 2007), the goal here is not to pass judgment on instructional quality from any perspective other than how student participants perceive their experiences in the courses. When it comes to evaluating instructors, the difficulty lies in separating “the causal effects of instruction quality from the aptitudes and attitudes of their students” (Xu, 2019). Methodological choices that focus data collection and analysis on students’ contributions and reflections are useful for maintaining individual voices in the analysis of data, however, they are not intended to evaluate instructional quality in a manner similar to traditional institutional evaluations. While these aspects are important to examine a complete portrait of student experiences with adjunct instructors, they are most useful in this work for informing how student participants may perceive their experiences when enrolled in a course taught by this specific type of adjunct instructor. The following section describes the methodological choices used in this study.

**METHODS**

This paper presents a pilot study focused on the use of industry experts as adjunct instructors in higher education coursework. Research data and collection methods support an overall design-based implementation for development that uses iterations of formative reflection to improve the design of the implementation while maintaining fidelity to research through ines that remain consistent across all aspects of the overarching project. In this instance, implementation refers primarily to the course-related aspects of employing industry experts as adjunct instructors and was enacted over data
collection and analysis through interview and survey. This formative instance is also an essential pilot for improving methods for future iterations of investigation in the ongoing project.

The industry foci for the courses included in this study are in the area of digital media, creative production, and communication, with a particular focus on design for digital campaigns, video production, and user experience design. The industry expert adjuncts are all creatives who collectively represent a range of related industries, skills, and experience. The courses were focused on digital production and were upper-level, project-based courses that were open to all majors and had sixteen to twenty students enrolled in each section. These courses introduced production skills using industry-standard software applications and the industry expert adjuncts provided additional context from their daily work. Students were invited to provide feedback on their beliefs about their prior learning experiences and the current course through either an interview or survey process depending on which semester they were enrolled in a course taught by an industry expert adjunct.

The first four semesters of implementation used the interview process to collect data from the initial offering of courses. 123 students enrolled in at least one of the three industry expert adjunct-led courses between Spring 2017 and Spring 2018. Of those student, 79% or 97 students participated in the semi-structured interviews. 60% of the interviewees identified as female and 40% identified as male and 85% of the students were upper classmen. 24% were from outside of the department that hosted the courses. All students enrolled in the courses were invited to be interviewed and there was no compensation for participation. The interviews were conducted during the last class meeting and during finals week. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility based on interviewee response, but some questions were covered in every interview. These included: what was the most impactful part of this course for you; after taking this course, what types of skills do you feel more confident with; and what did you think about a nontraditional professor teaching this course? Analysis from the interview data informed the construction of the survey tool for the second round of data collection in Fall 2018.

In the Fall of 2018, four additional courses taught by industry expert adjuncts were invited to participate in the study. These courses included those taught by a broader range of industry expert adjuncts with specialties in areas of brand strategy, analytics, and digital communication. Students were invited to participate in both pre and post online surveys of their expectations and experience, and while initial participation in the survey was promising, the completion rate for those who took both the pre and post surveys was 40% or 52 students completing all sections. While researchers informally attributed this to lack of control over how the surveys were implemented by each individual instructor, this realization reinforces the need to better define and support implementation in future iterations. The surveys used a combination of five-point Likert scale questions to identify changes in students’ perspectives over time and open-ended questions about their expectations of and experiences with the industry expert adjuncts. The thematic analysis presented in this paper uses the interview transcripts and open-ended survey question responses to create emergent themes and identify patterns in student experiences and beliefs.

While response rates and participant population sizes were varied in this pilot and do not support the use of statistical prediction methods to understand participants’ input, the interview and survey responses do allow for the aggregation and organization of data for thematic analysis that views important trends in participants’ experiences. Many of the quotes in the findings were from the interviews, which were video recorded and transcribed, providing important data as well as evocative examples to support and illuminate conclusions. As qualitative data, the goal was not to dismiss outliers from patterns that emerge, but rather to view them for the rich insight they provide into diverse perspectives that push back on traditional narratives about adjunct instructors.
FINDINGS

Data were analyzed for emergent themes and presented two useful groups for organizing responses: how and what students learned. How students learned includes the impact of industry expert adjuncts on students’ beliefs about and expectations for their assessment, classroom culture, and their relationships with the instructor. It also includes students’ feedback on instructor availability and timeliness, as well as the influence of instructor expertise on course content. What students learned includes the content, viewed as professional skills important to their future success in industry roles. This category provides feedback from students about what they felt was important knowledge and skills gained from their course experience.

Analysis of how students learned resulted in findings related to authentic assessments, classroom culture, students’ relationship with the industry expert adjunct, and feedback related to the adjunct’s work experience. Authentic assessments connect students with real-world expectations and evaluations of their work:

The most impactful part of this course for me was, actually I think getting to see the real applications of our work. Getting to work on projects that were being used, we got immediate feedback from the stakeholders who are actually using [what we created], and [we] got to have [an] impact on actual projects and events.

Students could view their situated learning in connection with authentic projects “[We were] learning more about how to communicate a brand and gaining real world experience and we did a project for a client and had assignments that connected [sic] with the real world every week” and they were aware of importance of creating authentic products: “I know that the stuff that I make in these classes is really going to be huge, and it’s gonna be something that I can put in my portfolio, and it’s things that I’m gonna show people.” Classroom culture provides a context for learning activities that resembles an authentic work environment with respect to the types of interactions students felt were useful.

It was actually one of the most participatory, participative classes that I’ve ever been in. All the students really cared about creating things that they were proud of and that they wanted to show people and wanted to put on their Instagram feeds. So, if anything, I would say having a professor who wasn’t an actual professor increased class participation and the value of the class to the students.

The classroom environment was engaging because students could be, “surrounded by people who are all passionate about the same design principles and the same values as we are” and this feeling impacted how they felt about their interactions in the space.

I felt more comfortable in the class setting, just because it all felt like we were friends talking to each other, and it wasn’t a super teacher lecture kind of thing. … It made it easier in the long run in the class to just talk to people and make sure that my opinion was also being heard.

With regard to their relationship with their instructor, students commented on the impact of an approachable, supportive demeanor: “it’s really nice to have someone that’s relatable in something like that, that can push you towards your goal without you being scared of asking a question.” This is typically identified in contrast to more traditional instructors, reinforcing the fact that their instructor is not a typical professor:
having a non-professor teach the course like [him] it really makes the class feel a little bit more informal but I think that’s a good thing because it allows the students to kinda relate to our professor more and it makes that relationship be ... It feels a little bit stronger since he’s not an actual professor.

In comparison to traditional classroom environments, working in a space with an industry expert adjunct brought a level of comfort to the students: “it felt more relaxed and it felt more personal, less than just, kind of, just sitting up in a lecture hall or something and have a professor speak to you for 50 minutes,” including how classroom environment impacted that level of comfort with their instructors:

they’re more relatable I think sometimes and it’s like a more relaxed environment. So I feel like you can just like chill and have fun and things like that, but you still learn a lot. And it’s a lot of fun to come into class.

This environment engenders an apprentice-type relationship: “he’s very personal with us and he’s very involved in what we’re doing and it feels more ... kind of like, a friend almost, in just the way that ... but in a mentor-type way” providing a fertile context for instructional methods based on mentor-apprentice relationships.

Not everything about industry-related aspects of instructors’ work lives was ideal, especially when work demands impacted availability:

we miss certain things because he’s so busy. Like, he went to New York to film, and that’s awesome. I don’t know. Maybe if there was another person that could step in when he’s away, that would be useful, because this is so new to me and to other students as well, that we don’t want to miss anything. We don’t want to miss any time that we could be working.

Students felt, however, that the timeliness of day-to-day work experience was an essential aspect of their learning related to course content, which outweighed perceived negatives: “it’s what going on right now, and his class very much caters to that. We talked about March Madness when it was going on. We talked about different trends as they were going on right then and there.” This timeliness improved the level of trust in the instructor’s professional experience and understanding:

You know what they’re doing is immediately coming from the field, they have experience in what’s presently being done, and the knowledge and expertise in that field, so you have a lot of trust in what they’re doing and what they’re teaching you.

This daily, in-the-trenches reality was something that students connected to the professional behaviors of their instructor:

the most important part about the class to me, was having somebody that does this every day and I know that’s true of other classes that we have, but [he] has a full-time job and so he gets the scoop on what’s going on, you know, what the latest trends are, what other people in the industry are doing, and he can show us as it happens. He can show these changes as they come.

The instructors provided timely, real-world evidence that supports students’ increased confidence in their instruction with regard to the appropriateness and applicability of concepts and practices presented in class: “I also think that having someone that’s like working and this is literally just them leaving work to come here is super cool because they’re experiencing what’s working in the industry right now.” The instructors could also share what their industry colleagues in related fields find useful:
“Getting to see what’s new and what’s out there and what people in the industry are actually using is probably the most impactful thing.”

Coming into the course with an industry expert adjunct brought expectations for some, related to what they believed to be a benefit of their particular instructor: “My tangible goals were to learn more about the advertising industry from [the instructor]. I think this was successful. He was very knowledgeable about the industry and had great stories about it.” This awareness of their chosen career pursuits contributed to how students reached their goals: “this class along with one particular accounting chapter made me realize that it is possible to pursue a career in this industry and is up to my personal goals.” The industry expert adjuncts could also provide insight on a range of other workplace topics:

One day he went over salaries and things like that, that I would’ve never ... It was kind of a tangent, but he was like, “If you’re doing creative work, you should definitely be asking for this much. This is the standard right now.” I had no idea what those numbers were or anything like that. He kind of is able to give us insightful information like that every day.

The theme of how students learned involves their beliefs about a range of issue related to instructor, content, and course. It also includes their feedback on how the particular instructor brought important experience and expertise to the classroom.

Analysis of what students learned began with a connection to the content that timely work experience provided. Themes also emerged around the development of professional skills, seen through the lenses of hard and soft skills. Hard skills are evidenced through the ability to apply knowledge of tools and procedures, such as shooting video, using software applications, and storytelling. Soft skills are those abilities less easily defined and evaluated, related to learning and innovation, such as communication, creativity, and teamwork.

Students highlighted hard skills such as storytelling, working with cameras, using industry-standard software applications, and producing video: “this course really kind of emphasized storytelling and how to tell a story in a short amount of time,” including working with cameras: “we developed technology skills with the camera, so that we understood what the aperture means, how shutter speed affects when we’re filming, and our ISO and all that.” For some students, learning progressed to the point where they could transfer their newly developed knowledge in the context of new tools: “if you get your hands on a camera, even if it’s not a Sony, you understand how to set it up,” as well as industry-standard software applications and production timelines:

it’s one thing to learn about how to make videos, but the process of going through it yourself is what really builds those skills in order for you to learn Premiere and how to use a camera. So the act of actually producing it yourself is what’s most important. Not just the theory behind it.

Students focused on particular software applications from the Adobe Creative Cloud suite of tools:

I wanted to become more proficient in programs such as After Effects, Premiere, Lightroom, and Photoshop and after I definitely have made progress through the projects and lectures in class. [...] The class gave me the opportunity to do these things through projects like the passion/portfolio project and the class lectures.

Some students commented on how they hoped to apply this knowledge in the context of the tools and products they could create:
I hoped to take my editing in Premiere and After Effects to the next level and have more hands on experience with cameras. The biggest thing that I wanted out of this class was videos to put into my portfolio to help with internships / employment.

in addition to how their learning experiences improved their confidence with the tools: “Becoming more adapt [sic] to adobe creative suite and working on them throughout the semester has helped me become more comfortable with the programs.”

The soft skills students mentioned related to a range of topics, with substantial commentary on communication: “So all of those roles required different levels of communication and different hats, so to speak. So working together and communicating were definitely important,” shared especially in the context of specific professional skills and vocabulary:

how to put it into formal communication and terms that anyone else can understand, everyone can understand. Because I know I use terminology that’s different than someone else who might not have, who might not have ever picked up a camera knows.

Students shared their impressions about how their experiences improved their creative expression: “it’s pushed me as a creative, to think differently, and to think outside the box, and to really delve into what I’m interested in, but also realize what’s going on around me,” and their skills and abilities working in groups that leverage individual expertise:

working in a group to help plan out different aspects of the video. Like someone shooting, someone being like director and then someone else being like the actor or whatever and then editing together as group and stuff like that. Using different people’s inputs.

Students had the opportunity to improve their personal teamwork skills while supporting their teammates: “To like rely on their strengths but then also like fill in where they had weaknesses was helpful to like gage [sic] working with different personalities,” including creating groups where individual skills are valued for their contributions to the group. “Every week doing our challenges, you’re put into groups, and being able to kind of designate where people need to go, or sitting back and letting someone else take the leadership role, was a really good thing to learn,” and individual expertise is valued for its contribution to collaboration:

something I could carry forward is organization with planning out and dividing up jobs and things like that and knowing who’s good at what, but also, being adaptable and being able to say, “Hey, I can jump into this position if you need me.”

The theme of what students learned describes the content and activities that students encountered in the course and identifies their beliefs related to perceived importance.

Reflecting on methodological decisions for this study, the research team also analyzed the manner in which participants provided their feedback. This process provided essential information on how to refine collection and analysis for future iterations, including the need to streamline survey data collection and to clarify the scope of semi-structured questions. The pre/post survey structure was effective for data collection and analysis, as well as being well-timed using the traditional semester to encapsulate the experience. This also provided consistent interactions over a fifteen-week period, saturating students with experiences on which they could then reflect and respond. These findings provide useful information to consider for timely reflection and revision of the instructional design aspects of the implementation, as well as for the design of the next iteration of the overarching institutional project.
DISCUSSION

The how and what students expect and experience in courses taught by industry expert adjuncts provide useful categories for general discussions of these instructors; however, it is through delving into the nuances of these aspects that a more complete portrait of the classroom truly emerges. Especially with respect to the skills and knowledge being gained, it is essential to better understand the impact of authentic, timely industry expertise on how skills are improved while situated in activities designed to support professionally-contextualized transfer of knowledge from classroom to workplace. Analysis of students’ feelings about their experiences will contribute to designing instructional activities and learning environments that support the strengths that industry expert adjuncts bring to teaching in higher education.

The hard skills that students mentioned were the types of skills that one would expect to encounter in a traditional course experience. The foundational belief here is that any qualified instructor should be able to teach these types of skills in the context of project-based learning, however, the industry expert adjunct gives context and situated understanding from current industry practice about how these discrete skills are integrated into a design and production timeline. The benefit to students is this situational application of their knowledge in a potential future work environment. It provides anchoring and importance to connect and encourage students in their learning.

Students mentioned a range of soft skills that they felt were impacted by their experience with an industry expert adjunct. Broadly, the skills mentioned were client relations, communications, confidence in their abilities, creativity, organization, personal branding, time management, and transfer of knowledge. Similar to the hard skills that students had shared, their experiences learning these skills were impacted by the current work experience of the instructor outside of the institution. This recognition supports the belief that instructional design should be overt in presenting and leveraging timely industry experience in the creation of learning activities, as these are the areas where students find value and connection to their educational experiences.

In addition to giving feedback about skills, student participants also shared their beliefs about their experiences with industry expert adjuncts through other lenses, including how their peers were envious of their instructors being from industry and how they felt about interacting with their fellow students in a more creative environment than typical courses provide. Although these aspects and ones similar did not play out to be important themes for most participants, they are interesting data points to consider for creating a more nuanced understanding of phenomena being studied in this particular context.

For the student, expectations about the class begin to form at the moment they choose to take a course with an adjunct instructor, whether that choice is purposeful or not. Students’ beliefs about “the relative effectiveness of full-time versus adjunct instructors could impact their course selection,” (Bettinger & Long, 2005; Bettinger & Long, 2010) and make the selection process an important precursor to expectations. In the study presented in this paper, however, student participants who chose to take these specific courses did not have options for alternate instructors. They did, however, have the chance to take more than one of the courses, and many students looked for an opportunity to take all of them, or as many as they could fit in their schedules even when they only counted as elective credit within their degree path. While this decision-making process is essential to students’ expected outcomes for the course, it was not an aspect that could be assessed through this study.

Specific trends emerged in the findings related to trust in knowledge and experience of the industry expert adjuncts, the applicability of class activities toward learning and professional goals, and the affordances and constraints of having an instructor whose primary employment is outside the university. These themes are useful for understanding previous data, as well as providing a frame for future study. Although student responses did not include specific recommendations for ways to support industry expert adjuncts in the higher education classroom, understanding the emergent themes provides a guide for future programming to support the professional development of adjunct
instructors, especially those who are mainly employed as industry experts. For example, helping adjuncts better understand the expectations of their students around what aspects of their professional experience the students find most useful can help adjuncts recognize the necessity of integrating their expertise rather than attempting to avoid sharing contextually-rich situated examples of course theories and practices.

The process of interview and survey used in this study provided useful feedback for revising data collection and analysis procedures. While interview was vital to capturing the depth of some participants’ experiences, providing useful data for our analysis, the work requires transcription and thematic analysis every semester, which can slow what is intended to be a streamlined process for capturing and making sense of feedback in a timely and effective manner. Although there was some inconsistent application of data collection procedures during the surveys, the researchers are pleased with the results of this study as they inform the improvement of implementation, data collection tools (i.e., future surveys), and the necessity of procedural revisions that streamline collection and analysis of large amounts of survey response data. To lessen the demand on participants by using survey questions that provide essential data while remaining unobtrusive in their user design, the next steps will require creating survey questions that better integrate with the reflective processes used in the courses for self-assessment, which will provide timely access to authentic feedback from students.

What became important to identify in the design of future data collection and analysis procedures are the ways that particular question types may be negatively impacted by a design that is too open-ended for succinct student feedback. This was evident in how participants chose to respond in widely differing ways for the same question and what they chose to say, or in some cases, what they did not say pertaining to their experiences. Detailed awareness of where data were lacking for obtaining information in a usable format is currently informing the design of the next iteration of study. Each semester is another piece of the summative narrative this type of design-based project provides, with the opportunity to study each semester’s implementation for how it informs and is informed by the overall study. Consistent, efficient data collection and analysis procedures are the throughlines that retain project fidelity and ensure useful results from the ongoing work.

LIMITATIONS

One purpose of this study was to function as a pilot, reflecting on process and uncovering potential issues. Although an iterative, design-based process is useful for making essential revisions to an implementation, it does not provide space for testing different procedures for requesting student responses. Control for this aspect of data collection and analysis should be firmly set for future iterations, allowing additional chances to view other methods for gathering student input.

In this particular situation, the modes of course delivery were a combination of methods, leveraging face-to-face interactions with the use of digital tools for communication and collaboration. Considerations of how the physical classroom and virtual environments influenced students’ experiences were not explored as facets of this study; future iterations, however, will include questions to participants about the physical and digital contexts for learning. The focus will be on how aspects of studio culture can be useful for instructional design in courses taught by industry expert adjuncts.

ONGOING WORK

This paper shares the initial iteration in a longer design-based research and development implementation, and as such, served as testbed for initial data collection and analysis procedures. It provides useful feedback from student participants about their experiences with an industry expert adjunct, also adding to the procedural knowledge gained relative to integrating project assessment and evaluation effectively into an ongoing implementation. Each new iteration of this project will be
informed, overtly and consistently, by previous findings in this line of research, but also by the need to refine future development using data-driven evidence to influence course design.

Results in this study focused on participant perceptions as a way to better understand the context for how industry expert adjuncts impact students’ experiences. Two other themes currently in analysis will contribute to researchers’ understanding of this context for learning. One is looking at the experiences of the faculty and adjunct instructors involved in this project, while the other is examining the institutional, logistical aspects necessary for implementation in this and other contexts. The goal of this work is to provide transferable knowledge about how to leverage the experience and expertise of industry expert adjuncts for the creation of engaging opportunities for learning.
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