

EXAMINING DISSATISFACTION WITH AN
ONLINE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

An Applied Research Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Doctor of Ministry
Dallas Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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May 2006

Accepted by the Faculty of the Dallas Theological Seminary in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Ministry

Examining Committee

ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to develop a substantive grounded theory concerning the cause of learner unhappiness that arose during the second semester of the online Doctorado en Educación Teológica (DET) program at Seminario Teológico Centroamericano (SETECA). The learners at the end of the first semester voiced no significant complaints. However, in the midst of the second semester, a vocal outcry exposed several surface complaints. The question this dissertation seeks to answer is What was the root problem or problems, and how might they be related?

Interviews with the professors and a focus group with some of the learners and faculty during the second semester expanded the issues instead of narrowing them. The administration implemented some immediate corrections and research continued. Now, at the end of the fourth semester, a clearer picture of the issues is available. The research findings obtained after this fourth semester is the focus of this dissertation.

A grounded theory qualitative study was attempted. The goal was to develop a substantive theory that would explain the learner dissatisfaction in this case, possibly explain why it first arose during the second semester instead of the first, and provide

guidance to help correct the current situation and prevent this sort of problem in the future.

The results show that the root of the learner problems that surfaced during the second semester were, and to some extent continue to be, the ability of the faculty to embrace the new environment, its pedagogy, and especially its time management disciplines. The problems center in the faculty and not the learners, the environment, the pedagogy or the educational content. Similar issues are to some extent discussed in the extant literature.

Future research on the DET program at SETECA should focus on the effectiveness of faculty training as the program prepares for a second cohort of learners expected to start the program in January 2007.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter states the purpose of this study and provides the background necessary to understand the research environment, especially the doctoral program studied.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a grounded theory regarding the root cause or causes of the learner dissatisfaction expressed during the second semester of the initial offering of the Doctorado en Educación Teológica (DET) program at Seminario Teológico Centroamericano (SETECA) in Guatemala City, Guatemala Central America.

Description of the Doctoral Program

The DET program is unique in many ways. It has a unique history, philosophy, and a unique implementation. A discussion of each of these follows.

History

During the last decade of the twentieth century, there was born the idea of creating a doctoral program in Latin America for Latin America. A meeting was held in August of 1998 in Costa Rica with representatives of four seminaries present. There began to develop the basic concepts of what came to be known as the Cooperative Program for Doctoral Studies, or “ProCED.” In October of the same year, another meeting was held in Brazil (during a continental AETAL meeting- Evangelical Association for Theological Education in Latin America) where the concept was presented to all interested in participating in or using the program to improve their own institutions. The elaboration of the project began with the involvement of seven seminaries, but as time passed, only three were left to bring it into being. This number was reduced to two in the early months of

2001 and to one a year later, leaving the project exclusively in the hands of SETECA.¹

One of these institutions decided not to participate in the program, according to several informal sources involved in the discussions, over disagreement about the amount of technical theological content in the curriculum. Another did not have adequate personnel.² The statements concerning the philosophy of the program, given below, reveal the effects of this practical orientation fostered by SETECA.

Philosophy

The philosophy of the program has not significantly changed since the first group of learners arrived on campus in January 2004 for their orientation. The English version of the DET web site advertises the philosophy of the program. The excerpts below summarize it.

“The purpose of the program is to develop educational leaders. . . . It responds to the needs of persons already involved in leadership positions in theological institutions, without having received preparation in administration or education. It is not a doctorate in ‘Christian Education,’ nor does it seek exclusively to prepare professors to be better teachers.”³

The DET philosophy clearly embraces the so-called “new paradigm” philosophy of education as seen in the following statements concerning learning in community and focusing on the learner.

“The impact of community is a very important factor in the learning process. Research in adult education has identified two elements that favor learning: (a)

¹ “Historic Background,” online: <http://phd.seteca.edu/English/Descriptions/Background.htm> accessed 14 February 2006.

² Informal conversations in Guatemala with the DET administrators, October 2002.

³ “Purpose of the Program,” online: <http://phd.seteca.edu/English/Descriptions/Purpose.htm>, accessed 14 February 2006.

constant contact with one's own context, and (b) at the same time a close relationship with persons that have the same interests. DET draws on both and in this sense community comes to be both a vehicle for and a result of the learning process.

DET intends to serve a group of individuals who are presently leaders in the field of theological education. They will learn from: each other; their experience of the contexts in which they currently live and minister, their interaction with the teaching faculty, materials provided them in written and electronic form, and their own investigation.”⁴

“Qualified professors and relevant materials play an important role in this as in any doctorate. Nevertheless, our program is centered on the student and his (or her) role in taking responsibility for his own learning. The professors assist him in this process by means of the Internet and the residential seminars. In addition to interacting with professors, the student will develop a close relationship with his advisor, who has the responsibility to guide the student in the process of preparing the thesis.”⁵

All of this is justified and emphasized in a final section about learning on the job.

“Typical students in the program will have at least a decade of experience as church and/or seminary leaders. Most of them will also have university degrees in a secular field in addition to their qualifications in Bible and theology. Thus, our students will be well qualified to assume responsibility for their own learning, as suggested in the previous section.

But on-the-job learning relates to more than the competence of the student. It relates to the fact that such students are able to relate new theories to past and present experiences. New ideas can be tested immediately in the vortex of real life needs and challenges. This results in personal rather than surrogate learning. It sticks.”⁶

Implementation

Learners start the DET program by attending an orientation workshop at SETECA in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Here they meet some of the faculty and

⁴ “Learning in Community,” online,
<http://phd.seteca.edu/English/Descriptions/Community.htm>, accessed 14 February 2006.

⁵ “Focus on the Learner,” online,
<http://phd.seteca.edu/English/Descriptions/The%20Learner.htm>, accessed 14 February 2006.

⁶ Ibid.

administration, get course materials for their first two courses and are assisted in accessing and using the online classroom.

The DET program calendar year divides evenly into two semesters. Two courses comprise each semester. A learner takes both of them at the same time since there is a designed synergy between them. At the end of the semester, about six months later, the learners come back to SETECA to present their final papers for each course to the cohort in person. (The learners present all of their other course papers to the others, and discuss them in the online classroom.) This on campus session, called a “module,” lasts two weeks. During it, they also receive the course materials for the next semester. At the end of the module, the learners participate in an integrative seminar with an important person in the disciplines of education or theology.

This pattern repeats for the first four semesters. At the end of the fifth semester, the learners meet with representatives of the faculty at a major research library instead of meeting at SETECA. Here the learners do much of the library research needed for their dissertations.

Relationship of this Researcher to the Program

This researcher conducted an experimental online portion of a doctoral course at Dallas Theological Seminary in Summer 2002. The administrators, who were formulating the DET program, were learners in that course. They were impressed with the online portion of the course and saw it as the tool they were looking for to meet the needs of the DET program. This began a consulting relationship between SETECA and this researcher.

Both of the professors for the first semester courses spent considerable time with this researcher preparing their courses. During the following semesters, the researcher took a greatly decreased role, simply keeping in touch with the program

administration. When the research problem manifested itself, this researcher went on site in Guatemala and worked with the administration concerning the problem. This problem-solving role continued.

The Problem as First Perceived

Near the end of the second semester, the learners started complaining to the administration about their workload, the quality of the assignment prompts, feeling left out in the class discussion and about a general unresponsiveness from the faculty. The faculty also had their complaints. They attacked the philosophy of the program as being non-Latin American and too confining. Some immediate steps addressed these surface issues.

Preview of the Remaining Chapters

The next chapter reviews the extant literature in order to give the reader a background in not only the online learning pedagogy and environment used in the DET program, but also the current, painful, attempt by higher education to return its pedagogy to its roots from before the industrial revolution. This struggle will underline the findings of this study. This chapter also covers several key works in the field of grounded theory research that informed the research method used for this study.

Chapter 3 explains the selection of grounded theory as the type of research for this study. It briefly covers the research activity up to collection of the data for this project. Next, it covers the design of the questionnaires, the data collection process, and preparation of the data for analysis. Finally, it explains the typical steps used to analyze the data and build the grounded theory.

The fourth chapter presents the results of applying the methods in chapter 3 to the data collected in January 2006. A theory arises from these results. Quotes from the data then show the grounding of this theory in the data. Notes and quotes from before this

final study began help validate the findings of the study. A final section shows the corroboration of the extant literature with the results of the analysis and the theory developed from the data.

A fifth and final chapter contains recommendations for the DET program and for continued research on the learners' experience with that program. It also contains recommendations for inexperienced researchers doing qualitative research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature related to online learning as implemented in the DET program at SETECA, specifically in relationship to its philosophy and pedagogy. Creswell says, “In qualitative research the literature should be used in a manner consistent with the methodological assumptions; namely, it should be used inductively so that it does not direct the questions asked by the researcher.”¹ Since this is a qualitative research project this literature review serves to demonstrate the background from which this researcher proceeded. Qualitative research does not test a hypothesis derived from the literature. It seeks an independent understanding of the subject. It then, at the end of the study, compares its results to the literature. “This approach is used in all types of qualitative designs, but it is most popular with grounded theory, wherein one contrasts and compares his or her theory with other theories found in the literature.”² This chapter also looks at several key works concerning qualitative research.

The pedagogy used at SETECA for the DET program is both as ancient as Old Testament and as recent as the past few years. The explosion of computer assisted personal communications in education is forcing education to re-examine the very roots of how people learn and develop. Current thinking is challenging the hegemony that

¹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 20.

² Ibid., 23.

current methods, especially what Paulo Freire calls the “banking method,”³ of education have held since the invention of the steamship and railroad.⁴ This conflict is probably sharper in post-secondary, and especially graduate level education, than it is anywhere else. This short review of the literature, relevant to the current project, starts with recent works about online learning community based education. It then looks at the changing face of post-secondary education today and the philosophy underlying it. This sequence allows the reader to go to any level of background desired.

Online Learning Community Education

Online education is a new field yet it is already developing a literature. However, this literature is still in its early stages. Much of current thinking is in online discussion forums and email list-servers. Since accessibility to this is both difficult and limited, this review focuses on the most significant items in the more traditional media. Again since this is a new field much of what is being written is either anecdotal and/or deals with a limited topic area. This is less true of the first group of books presented, yet even these show their author’s development in this emerging field.

Palloff and Pratt Series

Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt provide us with four excellent books on the subject of learning community based online education. These books were the model presented to SETECA for the development of the DET program. Palloff and Pratt developed the masters program in online teaching and learning at the California State

³ Paulo Freire, *The Paulo Freire Reader*, ed. Ana Maria Araújo Freire (New York: Continuum, 2001), 67-79.

⁴ For an extended discussion of this point see Peter Senge’s article “The Industrial Age System of Education” in Peter Senge, Nelda Cambron-McCabe, Timothy Lucas, Bryan Smith, Janis Dutton and Art Kleiner, *Schools that Learn: A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators, Parents, and Everyone Who Cares About Education* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 27-58.

University at Hayward, and the Ph. D. programs in online education at Capella University in Minnesota, an all-online university.

Their first book, *Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace*,⁵ covers the pedagogical aspects of online learning. Its orientation is practical yet references the appropriate theoretical foundations. It is required reading for anyone considering any form of distance or online education. They clearly set the stage for online learning and its contrast to the current hegemony by stating that, “Key to the learning process are the interactions among students themselves, the interactions between faculty and students, and the collaboration in learning that results from these interactions.”⁶ The bibliography in this book is an excellent starting place for reading in online education. Material from Keith Pratt’s 1996 doctoral dissertation on “The Electronic Personality”⁷ at the Fielding Institute is evident in this book.

Their second book, *Lessons from the Cyberspace Classroom*,⁸ discusses what they have discovered about the practical aspects of teaching online. They summarize these lessons under seven headings. The first is “Course Development Needs to Focus on Interactivity, Not Content.” They hold that “Content can be creatively delivered through facilitation of effective discussions, collaborative assignments that promote teamwork and interaction. . . . It is pedagogy and not technology that is critical to the success of an online course.”⁹

⁵ Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace: Effective Strategies for the Online Classroom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999).

⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁷ Keith Pratt, "The Electronic Personality." (PhD diss., Fielding Institute, 1996).

⁸ Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Lessons from the Cyberspace Classroom: The Realities of Online Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001).

⁹ Ibid., 152-3.

The second heading is “Faculty and Student Roles Need to Change.” “. . . Faculty need to be willing to give up a degree of control and allow the learners to take the lead in learning activities. . . . What is most important is to encourage faculty to move away from the lecture mode of teaching and toward the use of more active learning approaches. . . . Once again, learner-centered pedagogy is everything when it comes to teaching online or face-to-face.”¹⁰

The other headings focus on training and support for both students and faculty, and the need for early planning and infrastructure development. The book has some mention of software that is useful for delivering online education.

The third book in the series by Palloff and Pratt focuses on the virtual student. They summarize their main point and the content of this significant book by saying:

What we are promoting as we focus more on the learner and a learner-centered educational process is neither pedagogy nor andragogy; but instead heutagogy, or self-directed learning (Hase and Kenyon, 2000). In fact, no matter what terminology is used to describe what should be occurring in the online classroom, the reality is that good online learning involves all three theoretical constructs. The instructor provides the container, pedagogically speaking, through which students can explore the territory of the course and, it is hoped, apply their learning to their lives. In this book, we focus on how to make all that happen by looking at the virtual student, who that person is and what that person needs to succeed in an online course, what the virtual student should expect, and what the instructor should expect from the virtual student. We also provide a range of tips and tricks for fostering the success of the student online.¹¹

They also note that,

“The focus of the book is primarily “cohort-based” learning, that is, students who begin and end a course together during a quarter, semester, or a seminar scheduled at the convenience of the instructor and students. We have found that the community building tips we use and discuss are difficult to implement in non-

¹⁰ Ibid., 153.

¹¹ Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *The Virtual Student: A Profile and Guide to Working with Online Learners* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), xv.

cohort situations, such as continuing education courses where students start and end at varying times.”¹²

Note that the cohort forms for just an individual course, not necessarily an entire academic program. Attempts to hold a cohort together over several courses or an entire program are usually frustrated by learners becoming ill, moving, or for some other reason needing to drop out of the cohort and join back in the program later.

The fourth book in the series deals almost exclusively with collaborating online. It is the smallest and most narrowly focused book of the set. They note, “Collaboration forms the foundation of learning community online – it brings students together to support the learning of each member of the group while promoting creativity and critical thinking.”¹³ The first part of this book covers the typical problems faced when attempting to get learners to work together in any environment, especially online. The second part gives detailed instructions for thirteen different types of collaborative online projects.

These four books provide excellent guidance for designing and delivering online courses. The bibliographies included with each book give a broad scope of other available resources. With these resources in hand, one is well prepared to understand the model used for the online program at SETECA.

Building Courses and Learning Units

Quality resources on writing online courses are hard to find. The books by Palloff and Pratt are some of the few good ones that exist. Their books, like most of the resources on course and lesson development, focus on some technique or type of activity. An example of the other books is Conrad and Donaldson’s *Engaging the Online*

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Collaborating Online: Learning Together in Community* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), xi.

Learner.¹⁴ Their focus is on planning online activities, primarily asynchronous, that will enhance learner engagement with the course content. One of their techniques is the asynchronous dyadic debate. It encourages learner peer dialog on critical issues. They also include “ice breaker” activities to help the learners in this cohort quickly form an active, engaged, learning community.

Another resource also focused on learning activities in the online classroom is Gilly Salmon’s *E-tivities*.¹⁵ This book addresses the needs of course planners who, stripped of the lecture method, must learn new and effective ways of getting the learner actively involved in the content, and how to engage them in the adventure of learning in community.

To meet the needs of the faculty at SETECA, this researcher wrote an extensive document on how to build an online assignment prompt. It covered each of the elements that a student needs or might need to know to write a project for posting to the class. In discussing these elements, it reveals the underlying educational philosophy and its resultant pedagogy.

The Facilitator’s Role

A critical element in online learning community education is the role played by the facilitator, that is, the professor. A good facilitator can make up for weak course materials; poor course and unit design, and even, to some extent, compensate for technical difficulties. The Palloff and Pratt series indirectly addresses facilitation skills.

Probably the greatest challenge a traditional classroom professor will face in the move to teaching in an online learning community is the shift of his role from being

¹⁴ Rita-Marie Conrad and J. Ana Donaldson, *Engaging the Online Learner: Activities and Resources for Creative Instruction* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

¹⁵ Gilly Salmon, *E-tivities: The key to active learning online* (London: Routledge-Falmer, 2004).

an all-knowing lecturer to becoming a facilitator of learning. The two items mentioned below document this role.

Collison, et al. in *Facilitating Online Learning: Effective Strategies for Moderators*¹⁶ addresses facilitating online classes or moderating almost any online community. They note that

While we're a long way from developing a profile of characteristics or attributes possessed by skilled online moderators, humility, the capacity to listen (read!) carefully, and the ability to respond without interjecting personal or professional opinions or values seem to be characteristics shared by the most successful practitioners. Needless to say, this is not the usual list of top criteria for successful group leadership in face-to-face settings! In fact, this new, digital venue calls for a reconsideration of many of the standard discussion-leading techniques.¹⁷

They also note that the facilitation skills they develop in this book are not new, but need to be refined for use in online learning communities.

The idea of designing instruction and dialogue to facilitate the personal building of knowledge is certainly not new. Some argue that this method was employed by practitioners from fourth century B.C. Athens, by Renaissance educators like Vico, and, in our time, by followers of John Dewey and case study and management experts in law and business. The challenge we address in this book centers on how technology can successfully mediate and enhance this powerful technique, in text-based, asynchronous environments.¹⁸

This comment clearly shows that this critical tool in the online learning community education is vintage yet nouvelle.

Another book by Gilly Solomon¹⁹ is now in its second edition, a rarity in the literature concerning online learning. This book is a treasure-trove on the art of

¹⁶ George Collison, Bonnie Elbaum, Sarah Haavind, and Robert Tinker, *Facilitating Online Learning: Effective Strategies for Moderators* (Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing, 2000).

¹⁷ Ibid., xvi.

¹⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹⁹ Gilly Salmon, *E-Moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online*, 2d ed. (London: Routledge-Falmer, 2004).

moderating, and hence, facilitating online learning. The sample discussion entries from, the diaries of facilitators, complete with explanations, are especially helpful. Table 3.1,²⁰ entitled “E-moderator Competencies,” is an excellent standard for judging the effectiveness of a course facilitator, and can serve as a valuable self-assessment tool. Even a quick reading of “Part 2: Resources for Practitioners”²¹ gives the reader an excellent background for understanding the dynamics of learning in an online learning community.

From just these two resources, a person unfamiliar with active, cooperative, guided inquiry and learning community education can gain a good feel for what life is like in the online classroom, for both the facilitator of learning and the learners.

The Learners' Experience

While the above resources speak of the facilitators' part, other resources speak of the learners' experience in the online learning community. Daniel Eastmond's *Alone but Together: Adult Distance Study through Computer Conferencing*²² is a very early book in the field of online learning community education. He first explores why many learners prefer asynchronous online education. He then discusses the experience of being in a computer mediated (online) course. He notes that any technology hype is short lived, and yet that learners soon become fully engrossed in the dialog, some almost to the point of addiction.²³ Chapter 5 on “The Dynamics of Online Relations”²⁴ talks about the nature

²⁰ Ibid., 54.

²¹ Ibid., 150-229.

²² Daniel V. Eastmond, *Alone but Together: Adult Distance Study through Computer Conferencing* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc., 1995).

²³ Ibid., 68-90.

²⁴ Ibid., 127-148.

of interpersonal relationships that develop in the online classroom. A key point in this chapter is that the online classroom provides a more “level playing field” than is typical in many other learning venues.

While the online classroom does help “level the playing field,” there are still other factors, such as culture, that play a part. Ruth Geer, a lecturer at the University of South Australia, in an article entitled “The Necessity of Considering Cultural Influences in Online Collaborative Learning,”²⁵ lists major areas of cultural difference needing consideration. One of the key areas is the difference in attitudes towards conflict. Since the online classroom is collaborative, and hence the learners provide constructive feedback to each other, people from certain cultural backgrounds may become uncomfortable with even this level of confrontation. When the facilitator invites critique of the course resources, especially the facilitators own positions, this level of discomfort accelerates for people from cultures that do not allow the questioning of an authority.

The Use of Technology

Daniel Eastman’s book, referenced above, dealt primarily with the sociological aspects of the technology used to deliver online learning community education. Richard Ascough argues that the pedagogy of online learning must take precedence over the technology used to deliver it.²⁶ He decries simply uploading lecture notes and requiring assignments based on them. He also notes the problems with the use of synchronous communications such as chat rooms. A number of benefits of online

²⁵ Ruth Geer. “The Necessity of Considering Cultural Influences in Online Collaborative Learning.” In *ED-MEDIA 2001 World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia & Telecommunications: Proceedings of the Conference in Tampere, Finland June 25-30, 2001*. Online: ERIC ED 466161, accessed 15 February 2006.

²⁶ Richard S. Ascough. “Designing for Online Distance Education: Putting Pedagogy before Technology.” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 5 no. 1:17-29.

delivery, such as the ability to have the learners interact with each other over individual projects, enhance this article.

An interesting side note in Ascough's article is the very positive response of the learners concerning their spiritual formation in his online class. He says, "Of thirteen returned evaluations in my online class on Luke-Acts all thirteen indicated that the course design facilitated a community of learners. In response to the question about spiritual needs six students indicated that this course met their own spiritual needs more than a face-to-face course in New Testament, five indicated that it was the same, and two indicated that it was less."²⁷ This is a very encouraging result. This researcher would not be surprised to find significantly greater spiritual formation in online learning community classes, as opposed to most face-to-face classes.

Education in General

Education in general is going through a metamorphosis. Understanding where the changes are happening in education allows one to understand the choice of the online learning community paradigm and what its expected benefits are. The purpose of this section of the literature review is to show some of the current trends in postsecondary education in general, unrelated to online education. This is to illustrate that the pedagogy used in online learning community education is not unique to online learning, but rather a transfer of quality pedagogies to the online arena. While some minor adjustments may be required, by in large the methods used online are usable in many face-to-face learning environments.

The Robin Williams' film entitled *The Dead Poets Society*²⁸ is an easy introduction to this new paradigm. In this film, Williams as Professor Keating takes a

²⁷ Ibid., 27.

²⁸ *The Dead Poets Society*, Walt Disney Video, 1998, DVD.

position in a very traditional boys boarding school and introduces new pedagogies such as active learning, cooperative learning, and learning in community, that are similar to those used in online learning communities. These methods prove to be very effective and for the most part very well received by the learners. The movie has an unpleasant ending, but even to the end, the effectiveness of Professor Keating's teaching methods is clear.

Pascarella and Terenzini's synthesis of the research on the effectiveness of college education highlights the need for change in postsecondary pedagogy. Their findings are very pessimistic. In their first volume, covering twenty years of research, they lament, "Modern colleges and especially universities seem far better structured to process large numbers of students efficiently than to maximize learning."²⁹ Their second volume,³⁰ covering the decade of the 1990s, reconfirms their earlier conclusions.

Lion Gardiner urges education to address these issues in his call to action:

Recognition is now widespread that higher education must change, and, as in other sectors of society, repeated and insistent calls have been made for a significant, even radical, reinvention, redefinition, and restructuring of our industry (see, e.g., Guskin 1994a, 1994b; Heydinger 1994; "It's Time" 1993; Osborne and Gaebler 1992; "Twice Imagined" 1995). If we use our new research based knowledge to construct curricula and courses that engage our students' imaginations and activate their energies in achieving important outcomes that purposefully and consistently involve them in active, social, cooperative modes of learning and if we effectively use new developmental styles of advising, our students will surely rise to heretofore unknown levels of accomplishment.³¹

Mary Ellen Weiner concludes one of her lists of teaching difficulties by saying, "Finally, the equating of content mastery with instructional effectiveness inhibits instructional improvement because it makes teaching an activity without form or

²⁹ Ernest T. Pascarella, and Patrick T. Terenzini *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights from Twenty Years of Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc. 1999), 646.

³⁰ Ernest T. Pascarella, and Patrick T. Terenzini *How College Affects Students: A Third Decade of Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc. 1999).

³¹ Lion F. Gardner, *Redesigning Higher Education: Producing Dramatic Gains in Student Learning* (Washington, DC: The George Washington University, 1996), 145.

substance in its own right. This simple, reductionist view of teaching is not only unfortunate, it is naive.”³²

The next items show some of the ways that postsecondary educators are trying to meet the challenge. All of them are written for a face-to-face environment, yet all of them have been adapted for online learning communities, which is why they are included here.

The widely referenced book *Active Learning* by Johnson, Johnson, and Smith has a very approachable chapter summarizing their view of the problem with postsecondary education and then goes on to give many practical ways to improve teaching in the college classroom.

American higher education has moved through three distinct, yet overlapping, phases (Boyer, 1990). . . . First came teaching, then service, and finally the challenge of basic research. In more recent years, faculty have paid lip service to blending the three, but when it comes to making judgments about professional performance, the three are rarely assigned equal merit. Research and publication dominate. . . . The deemphasis on teaching is based partially on the misperception that teaching is a routine function that anyone can do. If a faculty member has a PhD it is assumed that he or she is qualified to teach. The view that those who know can teach is part of a paradigm of teaching that is labeled as the “old” paradigm. . . . The old paradigm is to transfer the faculty’s knowledge to a passive student so that faculty can classify and sort students in a norm-referenced, competitive way. The assumption was that if you have content expertise, you can teach. Many faculty members consider the old paradigm the only alternative. They have no vision of what could be done instead. Lecturing while requiring students to be passive, silent, isolated, and in competition with each other seems the only way to teach.

Not wanting to appear unfit or stupid, faculty members conform to the current consensus about instruction and are afraid to challenge the collective judgment of how best to teach. The tradition of the old paradigm is carried forward by sheer momentum, while almost everyone persists in the hollow pretense that all is well. . . . All is not well. Students often do not learn what faculty think they are teaching. . . . Furthermore, students often ask boring questions, such as “What do

³² Maryellen Weimer, *Improving College Teaching*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 3-20

I have to do to get an A?” or “Will it be on the final exam?” Students ask the latter question to determine if the material is important.³³

The authors then explain a new paradigm of teaching and learning and go on to give practical ways to implement cooperation in the college classroom. Probably the most famous of these is their “Jigsaw Procedure.”³⁴ They also have a very helpful chapter on staging academic conflict and working through it by cooperative means.³⁵

Inspiring Active Learning by Merrill Harmin sets forth some forty-seven strategies for gaining active, cooperative, learning in the face-to-face classroom. Most of these transform easily into a unit learning-project for online learning community learners. A good example of that is strategy 13:1 where the learners answer the question “What might explain . . . ?”³⁶ That question would make an excellent prompt for a highly interactive online learning community discussion. Mel Silberman’s book³⁷ has even more good ideas for prompting active learning.

No listing of sources of quality learning experiences transferable to online learning communities is complete without mentioning the work of Jane Vella, especially her work on using dialog in education. Most of her writing is on the theory of learning through dialog, and training people to use dialog as a teaching tool. However, even in the midst of this, there are practical ideas for projects in online learning communities. For example, she gives the following project in a chapter entitled “Immediacy: Teaching What Is Really Useful to Learners.” “Take any educational event you have designed.

³³ David W. Johnson, Roger T. Johnson, and Karl A. Smith, *Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom* (Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company, 1991), 1:3-6.

³⁴ Ibid., 4:17.

³⁵ Ibid., 7:1-26.

³⁶ Merrill Harmin, *Inspiring Active Learning: A Handbook for Teachers* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1994), 166.

³⁷ Melvin L Silberman, *Active Learning: 101 Strategies to Teach Any Subject* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1996).

Consider what the content is: the skills, knowledge, or attitudes you are teaching. How could you have presented that content as an open system, inviting questions, arguments, and editing?”³⁸

Grounded Theory Qualitative Research

If grounded theory research is new to the reader then the following works may be helpful. Strauss and Corbin’s introductory book³⁹ is the source of the method using in this project. Strauss’s earlier⁴⁰ book contains more details concerning the method and has some examples of his methods.

Creswell,⁴¹ in one book, highlights the differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods. In another,⁴² he reviews five different types or styles of qualitative research and provides guidance for choosing between them.

Daniel Eastmond’s book, referenced above, is an excellent example of qualitative research that is a mixture of several different subtypes. He says this of his approach

Developing overarching concepts and relationships that can theoretically and parsimoniously describe relations and meanings is often seen as the ideal aim of academic research inquiry (Moore, 1992), this has been a primary aim of my research as well. Rather than seek to develop formal, grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), this research endeavor, in an applied field, is more concerned with establishing substantive theory, “which deals with a particular limited domain of

³⁸ Jane Kathryn Vella, *Learning to Listen Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults*, Revised Edition (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 177.

³⁹ Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2d ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998).

⁴⁰ Anselm L. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴¹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994).

⁴² idem, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998).

inquiry” (p. 67). However, there are other purposes and approaches to investigating the human experience that I sought to employ. First, the ethnographic approach, arising out of anthropology, seeks to provide “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) that meaningfully captures the essence of what transpires in a setting and the interactions among groups. Often that expression cannot be reduced to summary statements and concepts without losing important meanings and relationships (Spradley, 1980; Wolcott, 1988). My approach also shares common elements with Eisner’s (1991) conception of educational criticism and connoisseurship—a stance that other disciplines’ contributions, particularly those of art, music, and literature from the humanities, have as much to offer in elucidating our knowledge of educational realities. I agree that a nonscientific, yet disciplined inquiry has much to offer.⁴³

Summary

This chapter reviewed some sources concerning online learning community education and traced its roots. They have shown that the philosophy of education it seeks to implement is solid. It is time tested and effective. This chapter also briefly reviewed some of the key literature on qualitative research. With this background the reader should be able to understand the environment this study attempts to evaluate, see the problems uncovered as matching the extant literature, and to some extent understand the method used to investigate the DET program at SETECA and provide guidance to the administration for improvement.

⁴³ Daniel V. Eastmond, *Alone But Together: Adult Distance Study Through Computer Conferencing* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc., 1997), 207.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter explains the research design that is the basis of this project. The research period spans more than eighteen months. Early investigations helped the DET administration alleviate some of the learners' problems. This project, which comes near the end of the program, is the culmination of this. It is the first formally analyzed study concerning learner satisfaction with the DET program. The current research data illustrates the research design determined before the research began.

Research Method Selection

Grounded theory qualitative research became the method of choice for several reasons. First, qualitative methods fit the research situation better than quantitative methods. There were a number of reasons for this. One was that the population is extremely small. At any one time, there were never more than eight learners. There were only two administrators for the program, and only two faculty members involved in each semester. Another issue is that there was no control group with which to compare the findings. It was also impractical to discern all the variables and hold certain of them under control. In addition, one cannot reasonably replicate the experience of these learners. In summary, the situation under study is not repeatable and hence cannot be subject to the rules of quantitative research. It can however, be subject to the rigors of qualitative research. That is to say, hermeneutical analysis of the verbal data can yield well-grounded, accurate, results derived from field research.

According to Creswell, there are a number of different types of qualitative research.¹ Grounded theory is appropriate for this study because the goal was to determine the root cause or causes of the learner dissatisfaction issues with the current offering of the program. If the research goal had been to trace the experience of any one person through the DET program, this would indicate a biographical qualitative study. If the goal were to understand what it is like, in general, to be a learner in the DET program, this would call for a phenomenological or ethnographic qualitative study. If the goal of this study were simply to report what happened, a historical or case study would be adequate. However, the goal of this study is to develop a theory concerning the root cause or causes of a social phenomenon. This then suggests a grounded theory qualitative study.

Preliminary Research

A brief history of the previous research and corrective actions will show the rationale behind the two data collection methods used in this final study. The program began in January 2004. The first semester, during which there were no significant problems reported, ended in July and the second semester began. By October, the administration began receiving significant complaints from the faculty and the learners. In November this researcher, who was also the consultant for the program, went on site and met with the administration, faculty and two of the learners who were present at SETECA. These meetings revealed that learners were upset with the faculty over late grading of assignments and problems with the assignment prompts. The faculty was frustrated because they did not understand the pedagogy, which they often termed “philosophy,” of the program. To some extent, they felt that it was just a North American

¹ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998).

idea pushed upon them. The administration assured the faculty that the new pedagogy was not just a North American idea, and that they fully supported it. The faculty received a document of some thirty pages on how to write online assignment prompts. It also explained the philosophy as it related to each element in a prompt.

A January 2005 focus group with the learners at SETECA reviewed the issues. They heard of actions taken to overcome their problems. The next semester did go better but there were still complaints from the learners. The fourth semester of the program began in July and was relatively quiet. More faculty training was available for this semester. There were fewer verbal complaints from the faculty and learners. The question however, remained as to why these problems did not appear in the first semester, and whether the corrective actions taken resolved the root issues, or just masked them.

Data Collection

This section details the data collection process after the fourth semester, which is the data from which the theory emerges. It explains the construction of the questionnaires and the preparation of the resulting data for analysis.

Data Collection Method

The research question concerns the root cause or causes of the learner satisfaction issues. Moreover, the question asks, at least from the learners' point of view, if these issues are resolved.

Directly asking these questions seemed unlikely to yield meaningful answers. This was due to the tendency of the learners to be critical of the program, and yet try to protect the people who make up the program. This tendency started early in the research. During a December 2004 online chat session with one of the learners, several frustrations surfaced, yet the learner offered excuses for those who were creating the problems. For this reason, personal interviews were not likely to be productive. The learners would

likely not wish to speak ill of others in either a one-on-one or focus group meetings.

The SETECA DET administrators always had the learners complete an open-ended questionnaire at the end of each semester. The questions it asked called for both positive and negative expressions concerning various parts of the program that semester. This questionnaire was not threatening to the learners and the learners never had it used against them. Hence, the learners felt free to share their real feelings, as evidenced by the learners' openness on previous surveys. The results of this survey after the fourth semester provided much of the research data.

To corroborate the findings of the DET standard questionnaire, this researcher prepared a second open-ended questionnaire. He used a similar questionnaire with these learners at the end of the third semester. Since the first one remained confidential and was not used as a corrective against the learners, the second one was expected to elicit open responses.

This second questionnaire asked the learners to reflect on the pedagogy of the DET program. At this point, the learners had completed four courses in education, at least two of which had significant components concerning post-secondary pedagogy. Therefore, the concept of pedagogy was familiar to the learners. In fact, they had the background necessary to evaluate pedagogy. If the root cause of the learner satisfaction issues related to the pedagogy, this questionnaire would certainly elicit that response. If, however, the learners found little or no fault with the pedagogy, they might use this as an opportunity to air deeper concerns about the program, at least concerns not settled to their satisfaction. In any case, the results should point to the underlying or root causes of the learner dissatisfaction that arose during the second semester.

The questionnaires had advantages over other methods. In previous focus groups with these learners, language became a significant barrier. With the questionnaire, the questions were in simple English that all could read and understand. The responses

could be either in Spanish or in English as the learner desired. A few speakers often dominated the previous focus groups. The opinions of the others went unexpressed or they joined in the “group think.” Interviews with the individuals have similar difficulties, especially at it related to language. Interviews and focus group recordings need transcription and sometimes translation before analysis.

These two questionnaires then provided the forum for the learners to express themselves about the program. These should give enough information to reveal a root cause or causes of the learner perceived issues with the program.

Construction of the Questionnaires

This researcher had no input to the construction of the SETECA DET questionnaire. This is helpful because it prevented any bias on the part of the researcher from creeping into the questions. Since the questionnaire was very open-ended and covered all aspects of the current semester, the learners had adequate freedom to express themselves about any issue with the program. The questionnaire directly invited both positive and negative responses. This feature was helpful.

The other questionnaire was totally the work of this researcher. As discussed above, this questionnaire asked about the learners’ experience in reference to the pedagogy. The first question asked for any changes the learner saw in the pedagogy over the past two years. If there had been a notable shift in the pedagogy, it might explain why there was less pronounced dissatisfaction now. A second part of that question asked them to evaluate those changes.

The next two questions asked the learners to evaluate the positive and negative aspects of the pedagogy as they saw it. It also asked them to explain themselves on these points. These questions, while mentioning pedagogy, allowed the learner to reflect on the various other educational aspects of the program. If indeed the pedagogy or

some element of it was a root problem, then these questions should elicit that. At the same time if the pedagogy itself was not a problem, but the implementation of it was, then the offending implementation should surface.

The fourth and final question asked the learners to suggest changes to the program and give their reasons for these changes. If the learners had residual issues with the program not aired in the previous questions because they specifically mentioned pedagogy, then this space was available for that discussion.

Data Collection Process

This researcher flew to Guatemala on 17 January 2006 engaged in small talk with the learners and had them fill out the questionnaire. There were no other meetings with the learners, faculty, and the administration during this visit. This was deliberate so that the learners knew they had only this chance to express their feelings. There was no opportunity for having a private discussion. Normally these private, often undocumented, discussions are very useful in qualitative research. However, anticipating this formal report of the research, the researcher avoided informal discussions. This way the readers of this project could see that the findings were rooted in the field data collected.

Administration of the SETECA DET survey occurred later during the on-campus module. SETECA collated the responses and electronically forwarded them to this researcher on 8 February 2006 in electronic format. The reason for the delay was that one of the learners had not turned in a completed questionnaire and the administration was waiting for it. SETECA forwarded the results without it since they had waited long enough.

Data Preparation

The SETECA DET survey required translation since the results were completely in Spanish. A former translator and editor for a publishing company was

engaged to do the translation. An .rtf file of the translation became part of the ATLAS.ti² database.

The learners, with the exception of one, responded to this researcher's survey in English. A native Spanish speaker translated that one response into English. This researcher then created an .rtf format file for inclusion in the ATLAS.ti database.

Data Analysis Methodology

This study used a qualitative method for developing a substantive grounded theory. That is, it seeks to build a theory about what caused the satisfaction issues with the current offering of the SETECA DET program. If the study were to build a so-called grand theory, then it would need to build a theory that could explain what happens in similar situations, or make some other generalized statement.

Data Analysis Tool

This researcher used ATLAS.ti to store the results of the questionnaires and to record the qualitative coding and print reports. This tool greatly simplified the tedious work often associated with qualitative studies. The tool provided fresh queries and reports of the coded quotations with minimal effort.

Anselm Strauss' early involvement with the design of ATLAS.ti³ made it the ideal tool for the type of research attempted in this study. Its design was for grounded theory research of the type Strauss promoted.

The sections below describe each of the steps in grounded theory qualitative analysis.

² *ATLAS.ti: The Knowledge Workbench*, Version 5.0.67, ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin Germany, 2003-2006.

³ Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2d ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 276.

Microanalysis

The analysis process begins with an extremely analytical reading of the learners' responses to both questionnaires. There are several goals for this reading. The first is to become very familiar with the details contained in the learners' responses. A second goal is to start looking for subtle distinctions in the learner's meaning based on a learner's choice of a particular word or phrase. For example when a learner commented "More materials, like books, from the Latin American reality," what is the complete message? Is this simply a call for more Latin American books? Alternatively, is this a statement concerning a perceived lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of the faculty or administration? Are there other nuances in this statement that can help one gain a full understanding of what the respondent is trying to communicate?

Since this study involved people from Latin America, but the analysis was in English, care was required to keep from reading too much into the exact wording. Some of the responders would have been thinking in Spanish and responding in English. Since much of the research data required translation from Spanish to English by a third party, many nuances may be lost. It is also possible that unintended nuances crept into the data. Therefore, microanalysis would stop short of analysis at the word level, and limit itself to nuances visible in entire statements.

Another goal of microanalysis is to look for conceptual categories of responses that might relate to the purpose of this particular study. For example, the statement "More materials, like books, from Latin American reality" suggests two possible categories to this researcher. One was a possible content issue with the program. That is, there was a lack of material from a Latin American perspective, or "reality" to use the respondent's term. Therefore, "Issue – Content" becomes a code in the notes. Another category surfaces in this statement. The learner might feel that there was some cultural insensitivity with the content of the course and/or its facilitation. "Issue –

Cultural” became a code and it joins “Issue –Content” in the notes.

This process continues until it appears that most of the conceptual categories, related to the research goal are in the notes. The categories used to develop theory are primarily conceptual categories, not demographic categories. These conceptual categories go into ATLAS.ti as codes along with comments defining them. The research data is now ready for open coding.

Open Coding

Open coding is the process of going back through the research data and assigning to significant statements in the data the codes determined during microanalysis. To code a statement in ATLAS.ti, one highlights that statement and then drags a code from a list to the highlighted statement. Creating hyperlinks between statements denotes a special relationship between them. Epistemic primitives assigned to each link signify the nature of their relationship. Some of the epistemic primitives predefined in ATLAS.ti are: discusses, evaluates, explains, expands, and supports. The researcher is free to define more hyperlink epistemic primitives. Statements deemed irrelevant to the research goal received no codes. Some of the statements required multiple codes.

New codes can arise during open coding. This is expected. These codes became part of the code list in ATLAS.ti and are used in the coding process.

Open coding continues until all apparently relevant statements have one or more codes. To simplify building queries and producing reports, codes addressing similar concepts join together to form a family of codes. Almost from the outset of open coding, a second level of coding, known as axial coding commences.

Axial Coding

Axial coding finds subcategories within the existing categories or codes. This happens when the original categories were broad, and a current single code now appears

as comprising multiple categories that might be separate elements of the emerging theory. These separate categories receive their own codes. Statements in the data evidencing these new codes receive them. It is also possible the some of original codes are already at the detail level. During axial coding, these codes cluster together in what ATLAS.ti calls “super-codes.” In this case, no additional coding is necessary, since no greater granularity is required.

Axial coding is a synthesis of the open coding, because the codes gain relationships to each other. Doing this is accomplished either by adding new codes that cluster elements found in earlier codes or by clustering codes into super-codes. Epistemic primitives denote the relationships between codes. Some of the epistemic primitives predefined in ATLAS.ti are: contradicts, is cause of, is part of, and, is associated with. The researcher is free to define more code-to-code epistemic primitives. During both open and axial coding, the next level of coding, selective coding, begins.

Selective Coding

Selective coding moves the coding process from description to conceptualization. The theory underlying the data is now emerging. A single, central, conceptual category becomes the foundation for theory building. Quotes that support elements of the evolving theory receive new codes. Lists of the quotes under each code provide the evidence to support the new theory. At this point the story line, or explanation of the theory takes shape.

Coding for Process

Coding for process looks for the time factors that sequence the events described in the emerging theory. First, it looks for processes through which the subjects regularly pass. One codes the steps wherever they appear and as often as they appear. Sequencing of the steps happens by linking the codes in ATLAS.ti using appropriate

epistemic primitives. Not all studies will have time factors or they may be irrelevant to the study.

For a linear theory, one would code the stages through which a person or group passes. For a cyclical or systemic theory, one would code the steps that are in the cycle, which underlies the system. The complete process may be a combination of these.

Cause/Effect Matrix

For complex theories, it might be useful to build a cause and effect matrix. This matrix does not appear in a published report of the results. It is a working tool for the researcher. When an effect appears in the data, it goes on the effect side of the matrix. The empty space on the cause side of the matrix is a prompt for the researcher to look for that cause. This is a powerful tool for building theory. The unseen causes yield the theory in a grounded theory study. If the causes are obvious, then research is unnecessary. Descriptive studies report the effects but seldom seek to elicit the causes since they are not directly observable and are hard to verify quantitatively with precision.

Comparison to the Literature

The final task in a grounded theory qualitative study is to compare the results obtained, that is, the theory derived from the data, with the results and theories reported in similar studies. If the current study generally matches previous studies, then the findings confirm each other. If they are significantly different, then the researcher seeks out and explains plausible reasons for the disparity. However since the researcher's findings were grounded in the research data, those findings are valid even if at variance with the literature. The only question is why they are different. This chapter sought to explain the research theory, tools, and methods used in this grounded theory study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter walks through the development of a grounded theory that seeks to explain the dissatisfaction with the DET program that appeared during the second semester. This theory arises from the data collected in January 2006 and is then validated by reference to earlier research data on the program. Since a substantive theory was the goal of this project, there is no attempt to project a broader application. The final part of this chapter looks at this theory vis-à-vis the extant literature.

Grounded theory results from finding a central conceptual category around which the other conceptual categories cluster, and to which the quotes from the informants point. Insights that lead to the discovery of grounded theory come from looking at the properties of the conceptual categories abstracted from the data. It is often the seemingly odd comment by a single informant that is the key to recognizing the abstract concept underlying the comments of the subjects. As is typical in qualitative research, especially grounded theory research, descriptive statistics are not used. They easily distract the researcher from thinking and comparing data at the conceptual level and are hence of little value in discovering grounded theory.

This chapter contains a number of quotes from the research data. In keeping with the ethics and traditions of qualitative research, there is no editing of these for grammar, spelling, and the like. There are no footnotes for these quotes. Nor are they marked “[sic],” since that would disrupt the thought contained in the quote. It is also not polite to point out a foreign speaker’s grammatical errors. Sometimes the informants’ errors give clues to their underlying meaning. These clues are useful primarily during microanalysis. Protecting the identity of an informant sometimes requires modifying a

quote. Shortening quotes by summarizing rambling sections and replacing pronouns with their antecedents is permissible. Square brackets denote any modifications.

The literature on grounded theory qualitative research calls the report of the results the “analytic story line.”¹ There are two typical ways to present this story line. One is to step through the analysis process showing how the theory grew out of the data. The other is to relate the history of the situation showing how it fits the theory. This chapter presents both. First, it traces the steps of the analysis showing how the categories surfaced, how the one central category emerged, and how the theory took shape. It then seeks to substantiate that theory by briefly following the learners through the DET program using earlier observations. The second “story” is organized by problem areas and then chronologically within.

Development of the Theory

For this project, the theory developed quickly. This was due to several factors. One, there were only five responders to the standard DET survey, and only seven to this researcher’s short questionnaire. The entire raw data comprises only thirteen pages. The appendices contain all of it.

Another factor was the use of questionnaires instead of transcribed interviews and focus groups. The respondents limited their responses to the space available on the forms. This caused them to compress their thoughts, and mention the most pressing ones. While this may have filtered the data to some extent, it also prevented rambling and groupthink.

¹ Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2d ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 148, 249.

The third contributing factor was that the learners had often discussed these issues over a two-year period. They did not need to think long before presenting their feelings. They had been over it many times.

Microanalysis, Open and Axial Coding

Microanalysis helps the researcher, the true instrument of qualitative research,² see the conceptual aspects of the data, and move away from general description and demographics. In this study, microanalysis did not last long. Because of the Spanish/English language issues involved in the data, microanalysis had to operate above the typical word level. In response to the pedagogy questions, the learners moved between the pedagogy in theory and the implementation of that pedagogy. Therefore, some references to the pedagogy were actually references to the facilitation of the pedagogy or the content and structure of certain course assignments. This insight engendered a conceptual distinction between various references to “pedagogy.” It soon became evident that many of the references concerned the implementation of the pedagogy and not the philosophy of the pedagogy. With this constant comparison of the data,³ the researcher now had a conceptual level difference between some responses, and hence open coding could begin.

Coding this distinction in ATLAS.ti involved first inventing a code for pedagogy, meaning the philosophy of the pedagogy, and then another for the faculty/facilitation, meaning how they used or facilitated the pedagogy. Next, statements in the research data evidencing either of these concepts received the appropriate code.

² Nicholas Mays and Catherine Pope, “Qualitative Research: Observational Methods in Health Care Settings,” *BMJ* 311 (July 1995): 182-184.

³ Glaser and Strauss explain their insistence that “constant comparisons” are the basis of qualitative research in chapter five of Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1999), 101-15.

One way to do this, mentioned earlier, is to highlight the statement in the data, then drag and drop the appropriate code from a list to the highlighted statement.

As soon as this began, other distinct categories presented themselves. For instance, there were statements about the course content that were often independent of the pedagogical distinction. This called for a new code and the marking of the relevant statements in the data. This iterative process of microanalysis and open coding continued for essentially the duration of the project.

The major broad categories found in the data included administration, content, faculty/facilitation, cultural, interaction, and pedagogy. A simple count of the occurrences of each code is irrelevant since the count does not show any logical or theoretical connection between codes. Counts do not necessarily imply theory building significance. Unique statements often point out theory building insights.

After coding only a few statements in the data, another type of conceptual category became evident. Some of the comments expressed issues, or negative statements, concerning a category, while others expressed some accolade. These new categories received codes. Since these categories cut across the original categories, they are axial categories or codes.

This axial concept appeared almost immediately. Therefore, new codes were formed that took into account both axes. This produced a two dimensional matrix. The few statements already coded received the new codes. The original categories or codes became “supercodes”⁴ that collected the elements along each axis. For the most part, open and axial coding occurred at the same time. A few other categories appeared and received coding. However the two axes discussed above, remained dominant. Coding continued

⁴ Thomas Muhr and Susanne Frieze, *User's Manual for ATLAS.ti 5.0*, 2d ed. (Berlin: Scientific Software Development, 2004), 32, 176-179.

until the data from the two questionnaires produced no new codes at the open or axial levels. The qualitative research term for this phenomenon is saturation.

Some statements in the data fit more than one conceptual category. These statements received multiple codes. The quote cited in chapter three under microanalysis is an example of this. “More materials, like books, from Latin American reality.” This statement received codes for both “content” and “culture” on one axis and for “issue” on the other axis. Another learner had a positive statement: “In the modular part of the program I have seen different kinds of presentations, simulation, and role playing.” This statement received codes for “faculty/facilitation” and “interaction” on the one axis and “accolade” on the other. Since this quote applied to the “module” between the online sessions, it also received the code for “module” on a third (venue) axis. This descriptive axis allowed the separation of the other categories by venue. Since this study focuses on the online portions of the program, this separation of the data allowed the researcher to maintain that focus.

This researcher kept looking for a category related to the use of technology to emerge. It simply did not. In the January 2006 data, nothing related to the use of the internet, word processing software, or the like, surfaced even once.

Selective Coding

To this point, the results have been descriptive of the conceptual categories found in the data. Reporting these categories, regardless of the level of detail, does not constitute a theory. A theory must explain, or predict something;⁵ a description only describes something. All of the previous coding helps the researcher get “above” the

⁵ Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1999), 31, footnote 22.

details in the data, and look for the single central category around which the theory builds.

Multiple readings and a constant pondering of the data, especially listings of the quotes sorted by their codes, begins the process of selective coding. That is the process of finding the single central category.

Strauss and Corbin give the following criteria for choosing a central category. The criteria also explains the process.

1. It must be central; that is, all other major categories can be related to it.
2. It must appear frequently in the data. This means that within all or almost all cases, there are indicators pointing to that concept.
3. The explanation that evolves by relating the categories is logical and consistent. There is no forcing of the data.
4. The name or phrase used to describe the central category should be sufficiently abstract that it can be used to do research in other substantive areas, leading to the development of a more general theory.
5. As the concept is refined analytically through integration with other concepts, the theory grows in depth and explanatory power.
6. The concept is able to explain variation as well as the main point made by the data; that is, when conditions vary, the explanation still holds, although the way in which a phenomenon is expressed might look somewhat different. One also should be able to explain contradictory or alternative cases in terms of that central idea.⁶

The central category that emerged from this study was “faculty performance.” It explicitly does not say “faculty competence.” That term would imply that the faculty did not know the content they attempted to teach. There were no significant indications in the data that the faculty did not know their content. The issues were simply issues with faculty performance in the online environment. An alternative central category, “faculty

⁶ Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2d ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 147.

sensitivity to the learners,” could cover most of the issues. However, preference was given to the slightly broader expression.

There were some issues with the non-online portions of the program. These issues related primarily to the duration and time usage during the non-online elements. One learner expressed strong feelings that the duration of the on campus sessions was too long by saying, “Drop the conference at the end of the modules - Limit the modules to 2 weeks.” Some alternative suggestions included, “Perhaps the integration conference could be done in the evenings of the second week,” and, “To begin on Friday and end on Sunday.” Another felt the format of the day lacked cultural sensitivity. “Not to have sessions at 2:00 P.M. It is very tiring and not contextualized.”

Since the learners did not build satisfaction related connections between the online and non-online portions of the program, and since this study concerned the online experience, the non-online issues received little treatment. Nevertheless, the one central category subsumes even these issues. Before stating the theory and showing its groundedness in the data, two other research steps require comment.

Other Research Steps

After determining or selecting the central category in selective coding, the next step in this highly iterative research method requires coding for processes. Since this study considered only the reaction of the learners at a point in time, the data shows little in the way of process. Only two steps are visible. Step one is what the faculty did or did not do, and now step two is that the learner is not satisfied. Had this study included additional research with the faculty, then at least a three-step process might show. The difficulty with such research is faculty defensiveness. They would surely feel attacked.

Shifting the blame to other persons or processes would naturally follow.⁷ An interesting degenerative loop might be detected by such a study. Poor performance by the faculty that causes satisfaction issues with the learners may cause additional poor performance by the faculty.

A final research step with the collected data involves building a cause/effect matrix. Again, since this is a point in time study, such a matrix is simplistic. The data gathered is only sufficient to ground the direct cause of the learner dissatisfaction. An extensive chain of causes and effects, in all likelihood exists. Some possible second level causes suggest themselves and are given mention in these findings. The literature also suggests some of these second level causes. However, the data gathered for this study is insufficient to ground these second level causes.

Statement and Grounding of the Theory

Theory: Learner dissatisfaction with the DET program was the result of weak faculty performance, especially in the areas of timely response to the learners' work, inconsistent application of the pedagogy, and insensitivity to the learners' life situation.

The following three sections deal with each area of weakness. A final section, administrative issues, then seeks to explain other comments by the learners in terms of the central category.

Timely Response to the Learners' Work

The most egregious of these areas was the slow response the learners experienced from the faculty. This is a very sore point with the learners. One learner makes a very direct suggestion. "It would be good to hire professors who have time to

⁷ Indeed, during a discussion during the problematic second semester, one faculty member launched a major attack on the philosophy and pedagogy of the program. Yet the learners, a year later, point to prompts in that course as being weak. A lack of faculty training or mentoring could cause this.

evaluate assignments quicker.” Another goes into more detail concerning the problem. “Once again there is a subject that I only received until now the evaluation for three units. I am missing the rest. In the second evaluation it was called to my attention because I didn’t work taking account of the professor suggestions, for unit one, when I received it while I was working on unit five.” At least one professor seems to have taken an entire semester to return work based on the following comment. “Teachers grades and responses need to be quicker. Some have taken an entire semester to return assignments. By that time the topic is cold and we’ve moved on to other things.” Another learner states it this way: “The change that happens is the discipline with which the professors evaluate the assignments. Some of them do it in the same week. This helped and was encouraging. Others evaluate the assignment once I’ve started the following semester (which does not help the student to progress).”

This shows that there has been at least some improvement. Another learner commented, in reference to the current semester, “The same course gave us back almost every unit in two or three weeks.” It is interesting that only one out of seven made this sort of positive comment. This might indicate that the learners expected prompt responses from the professor, therefore when it occurred it was not noteworthy. Since, even in this improved semester, there were many negative comments concerning timely professor response, it was still an ongoing issue for the learners and a very strong one at that.

This negativity concerning the professors’ response to the learners is in sharp contrast to the learners’ experience of the online learning community. Their praise of the online community was almost unbounded. When asked about the online experience, their first comments are about their love for the interaction with their peers. Their comments include, “Interaction with my colleagues,” and “to have opportunity to discuss with people with different background, and different tradition.”

Learning in the online classroom went beyond the readings and the papers

presented; the learners learned from active interaction with each other. This interaction itself was educationally purposeful. Some comments include “Interaction with the other colleagues helps one to find oneself in the subject and communicate better,” “Learning from other's experience,” and “reading about what others were doing was very stimulating.”

The learning was interactive. One learner liked “to find and debate other points of view.” This interchange was, for the most part friendly: “There isn’t competition. This means that one student try to help the other. The critics is not to destroy the other, but to help.” However, one learner remarked, “Not all interactions w/other students have been gracious or helpful. Would be worthwhile to consider spending time on team building, peace making. Agreements on how to resolve conflicts biblically at the beginning of the program.” There is room for progress in this area.

Both questionnaires drew comments on these subjects as the research design hoped it would. The learners were indeed upset over this issue and rightly so. If the faculty had been timely in returning graded work, it might have offset some of the other issues.

It seems as if the learners learned from the materials and peer interaction, while the faculty was often aloof. This is easy to understand since the learners were a cohort that moved through the program together. They formed and fostered a micro culture in the online classroom. Starting with the second semester, the faculty members were almost interlopers in this culture. Much of what teachers do to gain presence and respect in an online learning community is respond rapidly to learner projects by email. Other faculty functions in the learning community include preparing clear and informative prompts, steering the online discussion, and summarizing or calling for summaries of the learning in each unit. A discussion of some faculty weaknesses in these areas follows.

Inconsistent Application of the Pedagogy

One learner, responding in English, summarized the professors' use of the pedagogy by saying, "One notable feature is that a number of the teachers have not assimilated the basic pedagogical (and androgogical) ideas taught in the first course. This fact has tended to annul the benefits of seeing newer educational methods. Our guides do not practice them, and we have treated them as a theoretical exercise that is now in the past." It is interesting that this person switches terms from "teachers" to "guides." When learning in community the content expert is not outside the community, a "sage on a stage" who brandishes knowledge and then departs, but rather is a personal guide who facilitates learning the expert's content. This learner had clearly learned and embraced learning in community, and is piqued at content experts who did not join the ethos of the community. Learning in community can be addictive once one experiences it; it is hard to return to other ways. The next sections cover several violations of community, noted by the learners.

Overly Directive Assignments

One of these was overly directive assignments. One learner put it this way. "The designing of the courses should include more flexibility and diversity in the ways the students do the assignments. Adult education is based mainly on the students' choices, according to their own circumstances." Another connects this directly to adult learning. "Very directed. I'd prefer a program with less direction. In some ways it is like a masters level course. Fewer units required w/options to choose would be good, more like androgogy."

There are many ways to cover necessary content. One learner suggested a solution. "To seek literature for every subject and let the student choose a subject of his own interest." Another way is to hold a discussion with the learners and from it determine a project or projects that will both cover the content and fit each learner's situation. The

point is, the way content is covered has to fit each individual learner's context, or be generic enough to be applicable to that context rather directly.

One learner noted improvement in this area, at least in the module at the end of the course. "There has been significant improvements in the module - with both students and teachers using andragogical methods. More case studies, more discussion, more power points etc." Since there is no mention of improvement in the online portion of the courses, one has to assume that there is little progress to report.

Lack of Clarity in the Prompts

A second problem was a lack of clarity in the assignment prompts. During the second semester, this problem was acute. Action taken since that time has reduced the level of complaints, especially concerning the writing assignments. However, this is still a sore point for the learners. One of them, a year later, still points back to that semester. "Prompts more clearly- especially the prompt from some subjects like [those in the second semester]. For me both were very confuse." This is a clear reference to a second semester issue, which created a learner satisfaction issue.

It is no wonder this learner found them confusing. Assignment prompts generally are at least three pages long and can easily reach five or six single spaced pages. Concerning one of the courses the learner mentioned, an assignment prompt was only about two-thirds of a page in length, and a number of the typical elements in an assignment prompt were missing. In a face-to-face environment, this may have been adequate, since there is a campus culture to inform the learner about many details concerning an assignment. Especially in the first offering of the DET program, there was no campus culture other than that formed by the learners during the first semester. In an online environment, faculty can never assume, consciously or unconsciously, that there is an institution specific subculture to inform the learner concerning what an assignment

requires or how to proceed with it. This was reflected by a learner who commented, “Sometimes the instructions are not clear, but the teacher expect us to do exactly what they think they asked for.”

Assigned Interaction

Early in the program, some learners complained that their projects were not getting as much attention from their peers as others received. To make sure that everyone’s project received peer review, the administration started assigning who critiqued whom in sort of a round robin fashion. This simple solution was at the expense of other important elements.

At least one learner did not like it. “With whom you interact is directed. Started out free choice, which I liked better.” There are possibly better solutions, which would help build community. If the faculty members are actively involved in the classroom on nearly a daily basis, as they should be, then there are alternative ways to handle this situation. One is to ask a natural leader in the class to comment on the orphaned project. This is a complement to the natural leader and provides at least some peer feedback to the learner. The natural leader’s comment may then encourage others to join in the discussion. Another possibility would be to explain privately to the learner of the orphaned project why others might not respond. This can be an opportunity for personal growth and spiritual formation.

A detrimental effect of these rules was forcing the learners into a routine that did not encourage growth. “The rules set up for group discussion have survived two years of interaction. After a couple of courses we settled into routines and do not attempt any longer to change the way of thinking of other members of the group, agreeing to differ.” Agreeing to disagree is fine, but it should only come after lively, lucid discussion in the community on each specific issue. One learner described the goal of the discussions this

way, “There isn’t competition. This means that one student try to help the other. The critics is not to destroy the other, but to help.” Fostering this spirit is mandatory, especially at the doctoral level.

Some did feel free to speak even in opposition to a faculty member’s point of view. “What I like most is the freedom to speak, to give my opinions, my views even my objections. Teachers are not afraid of our ideas. We can deliver ideas contrary to the teacher’s.” This freedom to speak and challenge ideas is central to any academic community, especially an online learning community.

Lack of Classroom Contributions

Another area, closely related to the lack of timely grading, is the level of contributions by the faculty in the classroom. One learner simply stated it as “More interaction w/professors along the way.” If the learner received the grading within a week of the project due date then this call might not have existed or been limited to a call for the professor to close each unit with a summary. The learners suggested this approach by saying, “to have a generic answer from the professor to close the unit,” and to have “more contribution (summaries for every unit from the professor).”

If the professor has built a quality assignment prompt, provided adequate resources for it, possibly including his own published materials, and is making quality private comments to each learner during grading, then a closing summary should be all that is necessary. A content expert, or teacher, speaking in the online classroom often reduces learner peer-to-peer interaction since “the authority” has spoken. There has been improvement in this area as mentioned by one learner. “For example, in the online part the teachers have done more comments on the papers and more interaction with the students.”

This section covered the main issues the learners had regarding the faculty

members use of the pedagogy. Timely grading of learner projects was a part of this, but displayed separately because it was central to the entire situation. There were also a few learner concerns about faculty appreciation of the learners' culture and life situations.

Insensitivity to the Learners' Life Situation

A final area of faculty performance related to a few minor issues regarding the learners' life situation. Had the learners felt that the faculty members were constantly present in the learning environment, then these issues would likely not exist.

Learner Workload Planning

The learners in the DET program were also active leaders in their own academic institutions. The institutions supposedly reduced the learner's workload to allow twenty hours a week for study. Even if, on average, twenty hours a week were available, the normal workflow in an academic institution meant that not every week had the full twenty hours. This meant that the learners had to plan their work in order to meet the due dates.

This was impossible to do, if the assignment prompts showed up too close to the due dates. One learner stated the problem as, "When the teach don't put the prompt in advance and we have no enough time to do what we should do." Another learner explained the time issue and made a suggestion. "Prompts need to be posted 15 days earlier. It is often hard to juggle last minute academic requirements with ministry responsibility."

In the fourth semester, at least one course had all the prompts posted at the beginning. One learner expressed pleasure saying, "Units are posted ahead of time for the semester - VERY GOOD. Helps plan your time." This praise also indicated that this was not the normal experience. Little courtesies like this can go a long way toward learner satisfaction.

The due dates helped another learner manage time and learn again the old adage that “there are no completed projects, only abandoned ones.” Still another learner noted, “One of the positive aspects is the discipline of the program. At a given date, the monograph needs to be turned in. There is a set time for discussing with fellow students. The set dates aids in the fulfillment of the assignments.”

Posting all the assignment prompts at the beginning of the semester, as some learners suggested, requires a completely detailed course design before the semester starts. Course planning and instructional design at this level, especially for a learner-centered environment such as an online learning community; requires a skill some faculty members have not developed. It may be that the prompts for some courses simply did not exist at the start of the semester.

Latin American Context

Many of the learners in the DET program were indigenous to the Latin American culture and hence had a natural desire for its prominence in their studies. However, Latin American resources, in post-secondary education and evangelical theology, are limited. In addition, some of the professors were North American. One learner expressed the desire this way, “More materials, like books, from Latin American reality.” This feeling of a North American cultural bias had at least some impact on learner satisfaction.

Learners in the DET program represented at least four different first languages. All were at least bilingual. At points, this made communication difficult. One learner commented, “Sometimes the teacher is not very clear in the prompt and for student the Spanish or English is not their first language, is difficult to do the work.” Satisfaction, at least for this learner would increase if the grammar and vocabulary in the prompts were simple. The faculty probably were unaware that some learners experienced

this difficulty.

Attention to cultural and language diversity in an online learning community is especially important since there are few non-linguistic clues the learner can use to clarify meaning. Learner satisfaction in DET was, to some extent, lower by cultural issues.

Philosophical and Theological Context

Another problem area was a perception of some lack of sensitivity to the learners' philosophical and theological context. One learner wanted "more reading material outside of the academic liberalism and North American evangelicalism." Another said there was a need "to pay more attention to other contemporary movements, not just those in USA or the academic ones." Again, this may have been due to a lack of resources. If this were the case, then stating that and asking the learners to help locate resources would show sensitivity to this aspect of the learners' context.

There was also a feeling that theological coverage did not match the learners' environment. One learner wanted the program "not to waste so much time focusing/discussing the dispensational position." This issue may reflect the theological background of the faculty.

Learners in a seminary may be very sensitive to and have strong feeling about differences in philosophical or theological positions. While this issue appears in the data, its mention is minor compared to other issues.

Faculty performance issues in the DET program were the major source of learner dissatisfaction. Those related to returning graded projects, and clearly communicating with the learners, were central. By comparison, the others were minor.

Administrative Issues

A few administrative concerns appear in the data. These could fall under the

faculty performance rubric. However, they relate elements beyond the control of a single faculty member.

Program Integration

The learners expressed belief that the faculty members were unaware of what the others had done or would be doing in the program. One learner suggested having “More communication between the professors about content, for them to know what we do and write in other subjects.” There are two aspects of this. One of these, noted above, is for the faculty to practice the pedagogy taught in the first semester. A learner stated it as “More could be done on integrating subjects and building on basic education and administrative principles taught.” The other aspect was redundancy. Asked about the weakest unit in a course, a learner said, “The review of Modern Theology because it was repetitive.”

One learner suggested a corrective was “For the professors to have some integration sessions prior to the writing of the courses.” Apparently, the learners felt that integration needed to occur before the integrative seminar at the end of each semester and that it should apply across the entire program.

Course Design

The learners felt that the units in any given course did not have equal impact. One of them suggested, “Reduce the number of assignments and make them more profound. We often got a glimpse of important ideas, but moved on too quickly to something else. Many of the assignments and reading were on the level of more information.” Another learner worded it this way; “Sometimes some topics require more discussion (and there is not enough time). Other times there is little to discuss.”

Maybe the issue with the unit, where there was little to discuss, was a matter of prompt design. A learner stated that one way to improve the program was “For the

professors to . . . design better discussions.”

While each professor typically does his own course design, the administration needs to provide guidance for the professors in this task. Seminary faculty members are content experts in their respective disciplines. Many of them are not trained in pedagogy and classroom conduct. Unconsciously they teach as they were taught, be that good, bad, or indifferent. The learners now understood new and better ways to teach so were unhappy with the return to old ways.

The professors for the first semester courses received considerable help from this researcher, who acted as a consultant in online learning. The administration did not request this help for others, so it is not surprising that the learners saw a shift in the course design.

Module and Seminar Issues

Learner dislike for the time involved in the modules and integrative seminar shows in this comment: “Drop the conference at the end of the modules - Limit the modules to 2 weeks.” This dislike is understandable since the learners are required to be away from their families and institutions for a month and a half each year. The learner must also have felt that the integrative seminar was of little value since there was the suggestion to eliminate it. Another learner suggests a way of keeping both. “Perhaps the integration conference could be done in the evenings of the second week.” This comment also suggests that the conference was of little value since it could be relegated to evenings.

Some learners felt there was significant improvement in the modules. One of them commented: “There has been significant improvements in the module - with both students and teachers using andragogical methods. More case studies, more discussion, more power points etc.” This notice of improvement implies that past modules were

weak.

Summary

This section grounded, in the data, the theory that the satisfaction issues with the DET program stemmed largely from faculty performance. It appeared primarily in the lack of timely response to learner projects. Another area of issues concerned faculty implementation of the pedagogy. At least at times, the faculty did not prepare clear and comprehensive prompts. They often did not allow the learners to participate in tailoring the assignments to fit their local context. They were often aloof from the classroom. There were also issues concerning faculty insensitivity to the learners in terms of workload planning, and the theological and Latin context of the learners. Cross-course issues were primarily a lack of integration between the courses.

Note that there was no comment about the technology used to deliver the program. There was also not a single comment about the program being of little value to the learners. Indeed, there were many comments to the contrary. It is safe to say that the learners love the program and profit from it. The fact that no learner has dropped the program for any of the issues mentioned above indicates that the learners perceive the benefits gained to outweigh any issues they may have.

Validation of the Theory

The findings, presented above, came solely from the two questionnaires administered in January 2006. The analysis process did not consider the earlier data collected from the DET learners and faculty even though it was available. After generating the theory and grounding it in the 2006 research data, the earlier data served to validate the theory generated. If the theory derived from the January 2006 questionnaires matches the earlier data, then the theory gains credibility. If this is true, then the qualitative data analysis process used for this study is validated.

This discussion of the earlier data follows the same outline used to present the grounding of the theory. It notes both similarities and differences between the earlier data and the 2006 data.

Timely Response to the Learners' work

As anticipated by the theory, the earlier data shows that the professors' responses to the learners work were not timely during the second semester, which in turn created a learner satisfaction issue. During the module, after the course was complete, one learner commented, "Perhaps this is unique to me, but to tell the truth in one course I only received one grade before the final project and in another not even one. . . . Really, I'd like to change this reality a bit."

There was delay in the first semester as well, but only in one of the two courses. This same learner commented, "In the first semester I only received one grade from [the professor]. And now, the same thing happened. [Another professor's in the first semester] were the only ones I received when I took the course with [him], I received all my grades, very much on time." Apparently getting feedback in one course helped to offset the lack of it in another. Also during the first semester, the learners did not know what to expect, so they might have considered the delay to be part of the new system.

The third semester also had slow feedback from the professors. On the SETECA evaluation at the end of the semester, one learner felt unworthy to fill out the evaluation due to having only received one graded assignment back. Another, when asked for suggestions said, "Only that the professor evaluates sooner." While in each semester there was at least some problem with late grading, the problem reached its nadir in the second semester.

The stark contrast between the slow response of the professors and the joy of learning in community showed in every semester. When asked about the best of the

internet portion of the course, one learner commented, “Interaction with my colleagues, students, especially when we went deep in some of the topics and new ideas emerged.” The praise for peer interaction was almost unbounded after the first semester.

During a focus group after the second semester, one learner reported being tempted to “skip the [online classroom] interaction. [But] that is not what I want! I want interaction.” This interaction covered more than just the subject matter. When praising the internet portion, another learner said, “Like in the first semester, the interaction with the colleagues, the students. In addition, the shared personal subjects.” This praise for the interaction continued into the third semester. The most beneficial element to one learner was, “The discussions in the site and to be able to read what other colleagues produced.”

Thus, in the area of timely response to learners’ work, the data gathered during the first three semesters corroborates the theory generated from the data gathered after the fourth semester. Significantly, during the second semester learners noted that the timeliness of professor responses deteriorated compared to the first semester. This is probably the greatest cause of the learner dissatisfaction during the second semester.

Inconsistent Application of the Pedagogy

A DET first semester course presented Malcolm Knowles’ concept of andragogy,⁸ and learning in community, as the ideal pedagogy for post-secondary learners. The learners in DET agreed. When asked about the best part of that course one learner said, “Andragogy: 2 units touched on this. I was already interested, informed, and convinced.” Some felt the course exemplified these by making statements like, “Andragological support was great.” Not all agreed. When asked for suggestions to improve the program one learner commented, “Andragogy - Let us participate in the

⁸ Malcolm Shepherd Knowles, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, 4th ed. (Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company, 1990).

course design and evaluation. Be a co-learner with us. . . . Great flexibility in [one course], little in [the other], but less overall than you thought. Still pretty much directed from the top.” The contrast between andragogical and traditional pedagogy started in the first semester and continued for the next three semesters.

Once the learners had a taste for learner centered, andragogical methods, they loathed courses that were less learner-friendly. The detail below shows that this contrast remained throughout the four semesters and that the second semester accentuated it, as suggested by the theory.

Overly Directive Assignments

One course in the first semester seemed overly confining to at least one learner, who suggested “That the teacher be less directive. His instructions were sometimes very restricting as was his evaluation. I didn’t like the way instructions were given for unit 9.” The other course did not receive this critique. Again, there was a split between the first semester courses.

During the second semester this issue applied to both courses. In a focus group one learner put it this way, “sometimes when I was reading the homework indications then, I would say ‘ah’ I should have done this step beforehand. Sometimes I asked myself how much freedom do I have to develop my idea? Or when should I stick to the teacher’s idea.” The learners indicated strong agreement with this statement. Another learner put it this way. “For me it was too directive, the semester. Speaking of the freedom issue, I feel that it was too directive . . .too. . .too closed. Step one, step two, step three; this, this, this in other subjects [it] was not so much like that. But I felt it very directed.”

One learner solved this problem in the second semester by taking action. “I made another personal decision and told myself: ‘I’m going to write something about the

seminary where I work in the maximum number of homework I do.' I did this with almost half of the homework in one course and with three out of the seven in the other course, and I managed to satisfy myself in this way." The learner did not know if he work was acceptable because the graded projects were not back a month after the end of the semester.

During the second semester in an informal chat, a DET learner reported an assignment had them call a faculty meeting and start a curriculum review process. That learner's institution was already in the middle of a review process. Here the faculty was not only unaware of the learner situation, but also tried to direct activity in the learner's institution. In this case, the learner wrote up what happened at an earlier time. Since this was not the assignment as given, the learner feared getting a bad grade.

There was no mention of this problem on the SETECA evaluation at the end of the third semester. This may not be significant since the evaluation did not call for it. In any case, clearly it existed in the second semester. Hence, the theory developed from the January 2006 questionnaires holds for this sub issue of overly directive assignments.

Lack of Clarity in the Prompts

The contrast between the clarity of the prompts during first and second semester was stark. In a focus group near the end of that semester, one learner stated,

"Since I have already seen four subjects, I was able to see the difference between the prompts that we had in [a first semester course] and these. Which were [a particular professor's] courses and these. [That professor's] prompts were more complete of course: the ones that have been more helpful. . . . Well, I did notice a difference. In fact, it would seem that in this regard [Another first semester professor] has adjusted to the difference.

Sure, it was obvious that there was a difference between the first and the second semester in regard to the prompts. I felt that there was something missing, more information, more details. For example, the [mini-]lectures, in some instances we had no [mini-]lectures, what we had were extra sources, additional information, perhaps a link to go somewhere else, which is OK, it didn't really bothered or affected me. I just noticed that the information source was different."

Another learner in that focus group immediately corroborated this.

“I’m with [the previous speaker] one hundred per cent. I sent a note, at the beginning of this semester and later, [to the second semester professors]. In the notes I mentioned that receiving the [mini-]lectures had been very advantageous for us and I think that in the development of the project, or the individual units, not only the project we have no other contact with the teacher to communicate to us the focus of the unit outside of the mini-lecture, outside of the mini-conference. We don’t have the teacher’s perspectives, and the content of the note I posted at the very beginning [were] of great value. I believe that this is a teacher-student contact.

Now I have been incredibly surprised with the work of my colleagues, which I’ve had to evaluate, how they struggled with the project. I myself struggled terribly with the first one, I mean really struggled, I had no safe footing to work on. It was all very hard for me. From the start, I realized, as I read their papers, that I didn’t understand the homework. That was my first [course in that subject]; I have seen this not only with [that course], but also with the other course where I saw that my colleagues as well as I had not caught on to it. Perhaps it was just me that didn’t catch it because we really are doing two totally different jobs here, and I feel this is where the mini-conference shows its great value, because it contains both; instruction and the description of the focus that the teacher is giving the unit, his emphasis, his purposes. And even though there is a brief description of what [they] are trying to accomplish in the student, many times what [they] want to accomplish in the student does not line up with what [they] ask of them in the homework and so I feel that there was a slip in this regard.”

Another focus group at the end of the second semester also voiced this issue.

One learner commented, “One of the problems I had in both semesters on many occasions was that the prompts were not clear as to what the assignments were or what was expected on the assignments. . . . On several other occasions the information presented in the prompt did not necessarily correspond with what was expected in the instruction for the homework, so that I wasn’t sure what direction to take off on.”

The SETECA questionnaire at the end of the second semester had these two comments: “We needed prompt to be more detailed,” and “To clarify [the] prompt, it is the key for the work of the student.” The questionnaire data from the third semester had little to say concerning the prompts. The learners expressed concern about other unrelated issues.

It is evident that the prompts in the second semester were not as clear as the first and the learners did not like it. The force of the learners' expression on this problem area shows that it is a principle cause of the dissatisfaction during the second semester and thus validates the theory. Even through the questionnaires after the third and fourth semester did not boldly highlight this issue, the primary research for this study found it.

Assigned Interaction

The issue as to which learners were to critique the projects of which other learners came up in the focus group after the second semester, but not again until this researcher's questionnaire at the end of the fourth semester. During that focus group one learner commented,

Now that we are talking about directed interaction, I'd be very grateful if we could maintain the freedom we had share before. Because if one can cry for help, and I for one, every time I cried for help there was always someone there to answer. I feel that this is something that grants us the freedom for closeness. I never felt forsaken by my colleagues. But we are able to notice who is lacking or sometimes a double answer makes one realize 'ah, I was there once'.

This learner then went on to give an example from that semester where a learner had not received comments from others for a while, but then someone picked up on it and soon others joined in. Another learner also saw the assigned interaction as a negative influence. "It seems to me that we gain depth in regard to our investigation and in regard to the projects, but in regard to the critique, we've gone down a level, I think."

Again, the primary research for this project detected this problem, even through the issue lay dormant for two semesters. The learners in general did not like the assigned interactions; however, they did not talk much about it since they had greater concerns.

Lack of Classroom Contributions

The evaluations from all four semesters called for more contributions from the

faculty. The questionnaire after the first semester drew a few mild comments such as “More active participation from the teacher.” Some of this may be the result of the learners’ adjustment to the learner-centered pedagogy from a professor-centered pedagogy.

During and after the second semester the cries for participation by the faculty were stronger. About half way through the second semester, during an online chat, one learner mentioned this problem. “I felt I learned a good deal, but it wasn’t quite as much or as positive as 1st semester. There was not as much interaction with the profs for several reasons.” The reasons given were illness and a lack of computer skills. What is significant is that a learner noted a decline in the level of interaction between the first and second semesters.

The learner focus group meeting at the end of the second semester spent considerable time on this issue. “Now what I saw as the major problem is that the interaction with professors was sketchy and extemporaneous. In one of the subjects, there was practically no interaction with the professor. In the other [subject], it was extemporaneous, high quality but totally out of step. The impact of it was no longer of any consequence. By then I could have cared less about it.” This statement ties the lack of classroom contributions, back to the delayed response in grading issue.

Another learner in that focus group commented:

“Along these lines I was able to observe that in the subjects where the professor was not as involved from the beginning; the structure and the communication suffer greatly as was the case [in one of the courses]. We suffer a lot with these two subjects because of their structure and because the [teaching assistants] did not have the authority to communicate and there was a lot of confusion, these were my observations. This resulted in us practically having to work by ourselves in these two subjects.”

The lack of communication with the professor made this learner feel isolated, certainly a contributing factor to learner dissatisfaction.

On the questionnaire at the end of the semester, many learners commented on the lack of contributions from the professors. One learner summarized it as “I always wait for more interaction with the professors.” The third semester saw improvement in this area. On the questionnaire, concerning one course, a learner happily commented, “Here yes there was excellent participation of the professor. The best we have had in the 3 semesters.”

Lack of faculty contributions to the classroom were clearly a source of learner dissatisfaction in the second semester. The slow response to learner projects, and the lack of clarity in the prompts, exacerbated this situation.

Especially in the second semester, the failure of the faculty to execute the online learning community pedagogy caused significant learner dissatisfaction. The theory generated after the fourth semester predicted this and receives validation by the review of learner comments from the first three semesters.

Insensitivity to the Learners' Life Situation

The element of the theory related to the faculty members' lack of sensitivity to the learners also appeared in the earlier semesters.

Learner Workload Planning

An item covered under the rubric of Administration: Module and Seminar Issues, also deserves mention here. After the first semester one learner commented, “Rethink the Seminario de Integracion completely. It is an unrelated ‘hoop’ and we want to go home now.” Three weeks is a long time to expect the learners to be away from their families and schools, especially in January, when there are often heavy administrative loads preparing for the new school year.

When asked to comment on the amount of reading after the first semester, one learner said that they were “‘too long’ to be in English.” There may have been some lack

of sensitivity to the difficulty of reading large amounts of academic material in a foreign language. Also after the first semester, the learners asked for the prompts at the beginning of the course. One of them put it this way: “Give ALL prompts from the outset, select most important readings and shorten them.”

The problem of late prompts evidenced itself in the second semester. A learner commented on the questionnaire, “when some of the prompts arrived I would really find myself in a pickle trying to finish at the indicated time.” Another wanted “Advanced notice on all time-consuming tasks.” This was most likely in reference to an interview that the learner needed to conduct with a person holding a different religious worldview.

Reading volume was also a problem in the second semester. One learner took action on this issue.

In the second semester, I had to make a decision in regards to the material presented to us. I did not have the time to read it all, so I had to pick and choose, but [the professor] helped me with this when he said at the beginning that we would have to do this. This helped me a lot. It authorized me, so to speak, to handle this my way and then I had no more problems. I read what I could within the time given . . . This was a difficulty I had, that I solved by deciding to do something drastic about it.

There were no significant comments related to learner workload planning during the third semester. Workload planning was a significant issue in the second term, but not as strong as some of the pedagogy and response issues. The primary research correctly picked up this issue even though it was less problematic.

Latin American Context

The Latin American sources used in the first semester drew praise. The learners enjoyed reading Paulo Freire, and found it stimulating, but wanted even more Latin American sources. One of them requested “More reading about education in Latin American settings. Too much of the reading is USA. What about Africa & Asia? Latin

American case studies, please!”

There was no mention of this issue in the data gathered during the second semester. Either the learners found the Latin sources adequate or had greater concerns. There was also only tangential comment concerning this during the third semester.

The primary research noticed this issue after the fourth semester. It was present during the first semester, but apparently was not a significant factor in the dissatisfaction during the second. It remained an issue, but did not significantly contribute to the dissatisfaction during the second semester.

Philosophical and Theological Context

There were no significant clues in the data from the first three semesters that there was any issue with learner theological or philosophical context. It seems that one course in the fourth semester brought about these issues. Minimizing these issues is possible if the faculty members are sensitive to the learners’ context. A skilled faculty member can normally defuse conflict situations. Therefore, while these issues did not arise in the second semester, the fact that they did arise is a faculty performance issue. It simply was not a part of learner dissatisfaction during the second semester.

The issues reviewed to this point were failures of the faculty as individuals. The theory presented earlier receives significant validation from the earlier data. The next section turns to the administration and thus the faculty as a team.

Administrative Issues

The learners raised administrative issues during the first three semesters as well as after the fourth semester.

Program Integration

Even after the first semester, the learners felt a lack of integration between the

courses. One learner wished “That the teachers talk before hand about the possibility of integrating some units together.” Another suggested “More communication among the teachers so they all know what the other is asking for.”

This issue arose again in the focus group and evaluation after the second semester. A learner said one unit was weak because “The content of the unit was in a certain measure a repetition of a unit of the last semester.” Another said, “It was not clear to me the relation between homework [assignments] and even less the relation between the courses.” No comments on this issue appeared in the evaluation after the third semester.

It did exist during the problematic second semester. The intensity of the comments was weak, so it is likely not a major factor in the learners’ dissatisfaction. However, the research after the fourth semester did uncover it even though it was a minor factor.

Course Design

The first semesters saw some comments concerning course design. At the end of the first semester, one learner summarized the feelings of the cohort by saying, “Make the writing assignments simpler – less emphasis on form, publishing, etc. Teach that elsewhere. Make it andragological; it was still ‘banking’^[9] more than you realize.”

Another learner commented on the reading load during the second semester. “There was a LOT of reading, especially in the first units, so that it was not easy to keep the pace. Fortunately, [an administrator] got the profs to back off. We all were feeling very pressured toward the end.” After the third semester, there were essentially no comments on this issue.

⁹ This is a reference of Paulo Freire’s term describing non learner-centered methods of teaching.

Course design was not a major issue with the learners at any point in the program. The validation data mirrored the presence, yet weakness, of this element in the theory.

Module and Seminar Issues

The module and seminar at the end of each semester drew heavy critique after each of the first three semesters. Concerning the module after the first semester one learner said it needed “better class presentation on the part of the professors. It seemed they were improvising. Poor class structure. Unclear aims. Unclear wrap-up.” Another asked for “Less extra reading. If you say it’s going to be a rest, mean it.” Yet another felt that the speaker for the integrative seminar was weak.

There were a large number of comments concerning the module after the second semester. Many of these comments targeted the professors for the courses. This may be due to the poor treatment the learners felt they received from these professors. One learner requested, “That the teachers prepare themselves seriously.” There was also considerable mention concerning the schedule and time usage. When asked how to improve the module a learner said, “If it can be trimmed by two days it would be excellent. Please make the effort to do it, shorten it this much.”

After the third semester, the learners were a little more complimentary. One noted, “The readings were excellent! They dealt with very useful subjects for my situation.” However, there were still the typical complaints. “That it begins Monday and finishes Saturday, in two weeks,” was a typical complaint about the duration. Yet there was also a request for more time. “We always remained without time in order to go deep in discussions.” Faculty preparation was still an issue. A learner requested, “That the professors put themselves in agreement before to come prepared with the subjects and questions.”

The grounding of the theory derived from the questionnaires after the fourth semester indicated that there were significant problems with these administrative aspects of the program, yet that it had improved. The learner comments made in the earlier semesters validate this theory derived from the fourth semester data.

Summary

Data collected during the first three semesters validates the substantive grounded theory developed from the data collected after the fourth semester. There were some differences in the details at the lower levels. Nevertheless, the theory as stated holds. Indeed, “Learner dissatisfaction with the DET program was the result of weak faculty performance, especially in the areas of timely response to the learners’ work, inconsistent application of the pedagogy, and insensitivity to the learners’ life situation.” This begs the question, “Why was the faculty performance weak?” The literature begins to answer that question.

The fact that the earlier data validates the theory also implies that the grounded theory qualitative research method used to isolate that theory worked. At a minimum, it worked in this study.

Congruence with the Literature

Qualitative research in general, and grounded theory research in particular, use the literature to corroborate the theory discovered in the data. Quantitative research uses the literature to suggest a hypothesis, or theory, which is then tested. Qualitative research uses abductive inference to surface, from the data, the most likely theory that explains the data.¹⁰

¹⁰ Chong Ho Yu, “Abduction? Deduction? Induction? Is there a Logic of Exploratory Data Analysis?” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association, New

The literature specific to the situation seen in DET is not extensive. There is some material on how to prepare for and to assist a faculty with change. This generally means a change in the curriculum, teaching a new class or adding a new technology to the face-to-face classroom. However, there is little on getting the faculty members to learn and adapt to an entirely new pedagogy. There is a lot of prescriptive material on what the faculty should do in an online learning community classroom. However, nothing surfaced that documents learner satisfaction issues resulting from a faculty that had not assimilated a new, required, pedagogy.

Since the most pressing issue raised by the learners in the DET program concerned timely feedback, this section starts with a comment from a professor at Bainbridge on the importance of timely feedback to the learners and some suggestions on how to do it..

Yes, timely and meaningful feedback is always important, regardless of the delivery mode. It's especially important for the online course students because they feel so isolated and simple encouragement can definitely work wonders; it doesn't have to be long – just a few comments on the student's assignment. In addition, I send e-cards (such as www.123greetings.com) from time to time just to cheer my students up and let them know that I care.”¹¹

The literature clearly suggests that the teacher maintain timely feedback to the learners. When not done in the DET program, learner satisfaction issues arose.

Another related satisfaction issue was the desire for the professors to be engaged in the online classroom with the learners. Palloff and Pratt give this suggestion. “Stay present! Let your students know you are there by commenting on their posts and asking additional questions for them to consider. But also avoid being intrusive or

Orleans, Louisiana, April, 1994), online:
http://seamonkey.ed.asu.edu/~alex/pub/Peirce/Logic_of_EDA.html, accessed 8 March 2006.

¹¹ Tatyana Pashnyak, “Re: Student Responsibility, Academic Dishonesty & Online learning,” 25 February 2006, online: <http://it.coe.uga.edu/itforum/index.html>, accessed 25 February 2006.

overbearing. Balance is the key to successful participation.”¹² Collison et al. comment on the “voice” of the teacher in the classroom:

A medium that supports learners’ ownership of dialogue and their active engagement with content is certainly a good thing. But the question of what form the voice of an instructor or moderator should take on assumes added importance. To make room for individual and collective grappling with ideas, the moderator of the discussion must take a stance that keeps him or her outside the center of the conversation. As the “Guide on the Side,” a moderator facilitates the forward movement of the dialogue and helps participants, both individually and collectively; see their own ideas in new combinations and at new levels of significance. This process has been described in the literature as facilitating a community of learners who are engaged in inquiry. Again, learning through inquiry is not a new idea; yet its importance reveals itself through the centrality of inquiry in recent United States public education reform efforts.¹³

The call for faculty interaction in the DET online classroom is supported by the literature. There is a balance and “voice” that faculty need to follow so as not to turn the discussion into a lecture. However, faculty must be “visible” to the learner. When this did not happen in the DET program, it exacerbated the learner satisfaction issues.

Concerning the issue of learner directed content, Palloff and Pratt, when discussing the qualifications for online faculty, say,

Another important consideration is the instructor’s willingness to give up some control in the teaching and learning process in order to empower the learners and build a learning community. An instructor who is open to giving up control of the learning process, using collaborative learning techniques and ideas, allowing for personal interaction, and bringing in real-life experiences and examples, and who builds reflective practice into teaching, is a good candidate for teaching online.¹⁴

¹² Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Lessons from the Cyberspace Classroom: The Realities of Online Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 36.

¹³ George Collison, Bonnie Elbaum, Sarah Haavind, and Robert Tinker, *Facilitating Online Learning: Effective Strategies for Moderators* (Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing, 2000), 10.

¹⁴ Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Lessons from the Cyberspace Classroom: The Realities of Online Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 22.

Learner directed content is not unique to online learning; almost any book on adult education will emphasize this point. The literature is congruent with the findings of this research on this point.

The literature supports the finding that insensitivity to the learners, especially their cultural context, causes learner satisfaction issues. Jane Vella notes,

In order to be sound, this relationship must transcend personal likes and dislikes and obvious differences in wealth and power. In such instances, a teacher knows she must be even more careful about showing respect, affirming, and listening carefully. When the teacher fails to show respect or fails to affirm a learner in a group or allows the fatal “plop,” the whole group begins to doubt the learning relationship and often manifests anger, fear, and disappointment.¹⁵

Roger Goodson, Ed. D., a consultant in higher education, in a working paper on his Spring 2005 research, suggests that faculty may be skeptical of and resist online teaching for any of the following reasons. He says,

I have determined that at least four factors influence faculty skepticism and resistance to E-learning: 1.) a distrust in technology and/or lack of interest in technology in general; 2.) a fear of losing control over their classroom and students; 3.) fear of a loss of intrinsic rewards received from their face-to-face performance in the classroom; 4.) fear of loss of face; a generalized fear regarding depth and accuracy of knowledge of the subject taught and of being found as lacking by students who are *ICT Literate* (Information, Communications, Technology Literate.) Finally, identity may play a critical role in resistance to technology.¹⁶

There is no evidence of overt faculty resistance in the research data collected about the DET program. In fact, the faculty seemed to want to do well in the online environment, but was frustrated in doing so. This research project did not directly address the cause of their frustration. However, the faculty present during the two focus groups complained about lacking three things: time, resources and training. Therefore, while this article does

¹⁵ Jane Kathryn Vella, *Learning to Listen Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults*, Revised Edition (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 11.

¹⁶ Roger Goodman, “Faculty Resistance: E-Learning (A Working Paper),” online: <http://cndbusinessprogram.com/facultyresistanceelearning.htm>, accessed 3 March 2006.

not confirm the current findings, it does point to possible future issues, especially when trying to recruit new online faculty. The primary recommendations for the DET programs suggested in the following chapter address faculty training.

The few citations given above are both descriptive and prescriptive of what a faculty member should do to maintain learner satisfaction. They are clearly supportive of the theory developed in this research. The citations given in the following chapter on recommendations also show the congruence between the literature and the research findings.

Conclusions

The learner satisfaction issues with the SETECA DET program centered in the faculty. There were several key points, namely, timely response to learners' work, inconsistent application of the pedagogy, insensitivity to the learners' life situation, and to a lesser extent some administrative issues.

The faculty members had the difficulties that led to learner dissatisfaction. The learners had no significant difficulty adjusting to the new paradigm. Indeed, they embraced it, as seen in their comments praising peer collaborative learning and desiring the faculty to share in it. By the end of the first several units, the learners were moving along smoothly. There were no technical difficulties of note.¹⁷ The orientation session for the learners before the first semester had done its job. The learners were ready.

However, the faculty members had not experienced online learning, either as learners or as teachers. Therefore, they were without any frame of reference on how to teach in an online learning community. During a focus group, a frustrated professor put it

¹⁷ There was a system outage during the second semester when SETECA changed domain names. This incident did not appear in the comments at the end of the fourth semester. Since the learners dismissed this second semester issue while clearly remembering other issues, such as assigned interaction, this outage did not have a significant impact on learner satisfaction.

succinctly by saying, “I have taught that subject at a Masters level, I’ve taken it at the Doctorate level but not via this process.” The faculty had difficulty not because they were resistant, but most likely because they were not trained. The proof of this point will have to wait for further research.

As instruction of the faculty increased, the learner issues began to fade. This instruction was in the form of personal conversations with the faculty, outlines for building learner assignment prompts, and a thirty-page manual on preparing assignment prompts. Nevertheless, the learners’ old hurts remained. The attitude adopted by the administration at the beginning was, since the faculty members were educators, if they saw a glimpse of the philosophy and pedagogy they would be able to adapt to it. This in fact was not the case.

No theory is ever complete. Glaser and Strauss note,

“We have chosen the discussional form for several reasons. Our strategy of comparative analysis for generating theory puts a high emphasis on theory as process; that is, theory as an ever-developing entity, not as a perfected product. . . . To be sure, theory as process can be presented in publications as a momentary product, but it is written with the assumption that it is still developing. Theory as process, we believe, renders quite well the reality of social interaction and its structural context.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1999), 32.

This research narrative is far from complete. The data from the January 2006 questionnaires is nearly exhausted, however it points to new areas of research. The untapped data from the earlier focus groups and questionnaires could play a role in that research. These new areas of research are one of the topics in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations grow out of the findings of this research, the literature, and on this researcher's experience with online learning and with qualitative research.

For the Current Cohort

The current cohort of DET learners are now taking their final semester. After this, all that remains is work on their dissertation. However, even now changes for these learners may enhance their satisfaction with the program as a whole. Learner satisfaction concerns do not stop at the end of the formal courses. Maintaining satisfaction during the dissertation process, and when the learners become the alumni is beneficial for the learners, the faculty and the institution.

During This Final Semester

This semester will create a final impression of what learning in an online learning community is like for the learner. It will probably be a lasting impression. It needs to be a very positive experience. To that end, the administration should monitor the classrooms and keep in touch with both the faculty and learners to insure the quick evaluation of learner projects. It is probably too late to ensure that the workload is reasonable, but that too should be monitored. How well this semester ends, and their experience in the dissertation process that follows, will likely determine the learners' willingness to recommend the program to others.

During the Dissertation Process

The dissertation process may be the most trying aspect of the program for the DET learners. They have never done a project of this scope before. They will be doing it without the advantages of being near a large academic institution and its library. Nor will they have the collegial support of others on a physical campus that can help answer the multitude of little questions that are likely to arise. To make it through the dissertation process, the learners will need significant levels of support, not only from an advisor, but also from their peers. Without easy and frequent communication with others, they may not complete the dissertation. Other issues in life will quickly take priority.

Communication with the advisor will most likely take the form of private email and low cost internet telephone services such as Skype and Vonage. Peer communication, using the threaded discussion tool used for online classroom, will most likely become ineffective since it is a “pull” type of communications protocol. That is the learner must deliberately access the internet, log on to the system and scan the discussion areas for new messages. Since the volume of messages, in all likelihood, will dramatically decrease, there will be little motivation for the learners to log on to the system and help each other.

An effective means of communication between the learners might be a list server mediated email system. In this system, the learner will communicate with peers by simply sending one email to a special email address. The list server will then forward that email to the rest of the class members. Class members will be able to update their own email addresses so the list will remain current. A professor or administrator should also be on the mailing list to address student issues.

After Graduation

After graduation the learners could remain on the list server list used during the dissertation process or be moved to an alumni list server. Fostering communication

not just to alumni but also between alumni will help promote the program as the graduates enjoy the continued stimulation of conversation with their peers. It should encourage them to bring others into that circle. By monitoring this list, the administration might find potential faculty members.

For Preventing Future Issues with New Cohorts

The lessons learned with this first cohort of DET learners must not be forgotten and needs to be the catalyst for insuring that the same issues do not resurface with future cohorts.

Selecting and Training Faculty

Since the preponderance of the root issues lie with the faculty, the greatest gains exist in this area. A major concern of the learners throughout the research process was the delay in returning graded projects. A suggestion by a fourth semester learner quoted earlier reinforces the gravity of this issue: “It would be good to hire professors who have time to evaluate assignments quicker.” However, the amount of grading required caught at least one professor off guard. That was “because we thought of the distribution of academic homework in SETECA, every semester [has] one academic homework. It was thought that [the online course] was going to be less to do, but it turned out to be more than what we were told and we already had classes to teach. And this was on top of all this.” Comments like this point to a need for the professors to be trained in the pedagogy of online learning community education, if for no other reason than to appropriately set their levels of expectation.

This issue needs aggressive attention even during this last semester. Faculty new to online learning communities need to hear the time requirements for participating in the program. This will vary greatly with the content of the course, and the skill of the faculty member. Palloff and Pratt say that it takes eighteen to nineteen hours per week to

teach an online course verses six and a half to seven and half hours for a face-to-face class.¹ However, Lazarus in a presentation at the Seventh Annual Sloan-C International Conference on ALN (asynchronous learning networks), examined the amount of time needed to teach three asynchronous online courses at The University of Michigan-Dearborn from Winter 1999 through Winter 2000. He found that it was about the same as a face-to-face course, that is, three and a half to seven hours per week.² It is important that online faculty realize that it takes as much if not more time to teach online than to teach a face-to-face class. They must consistently allocate the necessary time to the online class. Consistent failure to return learner projects on time should be considered a breach of contract and dealt with accordingly.

The learners also complained that the assignments were too structured or rigid. By this, they meant that they did not have adequate control over their learning experience. They wanted to tailor the assignment to their local context. This is clearly in line with adult learning principles.³ Faculty training in how to make assignments flexible to accommodate each learner's local context could be a part of a mentoring process. The mentor reviews the faculty member's assignments, and makes appropriate suggestions. This is more of an art than a science and each faculty member needs individualized assistance.

¹ Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace: Effective Strategies for the Online Classroom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 50.

² Belinda Davis Lazarus, "Teaching Courses Online: How Much Time Does It Take?" *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* 7, no 3:47-54.

³ Malcolm Shepherd Knowles, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, Fourth edition (Huston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company, 1990), 57-63.

The 12th annual Sloan-C International Conference on Asynchronous Learning Networks,⁴ November 2006, will have an entire track on faculty development. This indicates that there is a felt need among online educators to enhance faculty training. There are certification programs for online teaching and learning from various institutions. None of the administration or faculty in the DET program held any such certification in the new pedagogy.

Most of the faculty training should take place in an online learning community classroom. This will give the faculty training in the pedagogy and the valuable practical experience of having been an online learner. After the faculty members have been through this training, they need mentoring by an experienced online teacher as they prepare and teach their first online courses. If there are not enough faculty members needing training to form a cohort, and using one of the existing certification programs is not practical, then new faculty members need one-on-one mentoring through at least the entire first course. The mentor should be a faculty member who holds such a certification.

Palloff and Pratt comment on the need for faculty training, by saying that

It is assumed by academic institutions that if online courses and programs are offered, teachers will know how to teach in that environment, and more importantly; students will know how to learn or engage with the material. Our experience both in teaching online courses and in consulting with faculty, faculty developers, and administrators across the United States is that the opposite is true. Faculty need training and assistance in making the transition to the online environment, but students also need to be taught how to learn online. Learning through the use of technology takes more than mastery of a software program or comfort with the hardware being used. It takes an awareness of the impact that this form of learning has on the learning process itself as more institutions and their instructors enter the cyberspace classroom and encounter both successes and difficulties in the process, they are coming face-to-face with the realities of online teaching and asking more, not fewer, questions about how to make this transition successfully.

⁴ For information on Sloan-C's support of Asynchronous Learning Networks, see their extensive website at <http://www.aln.ucf.edu>. This site contains many of the proceeding from previous conferences.

The learners in the DET program received adequate training during the seminar before the first semester but faculty training was almost non-existent. This is the single most important recommendation coming from this study.

Setting Learner Expectations

The learners in the DET program were not the source of the problems, but simply the reporters of the problems, with maybe one minor exception. This exception was a possible lack of balance in interacting evenly with all their peers in the online classroom. A simple addition to the learner orientation will most likely correct this problem. During the orientation the learners should receive some guidelines on how to relate to others in the online classroom. This would include seeking out those who appear to be isolated from the rest and responding to their projects. It would also be helpful to add a session on how to discuss areas of disagreement without becoming contentious.

There should also be a review of how to mention areas of weakness in a peer's project without sounding harsh or judgmental. Learners in a doctoral program should already possess these normal social skills. However, a review of these things is usually welcome, and in this case necessary, since the DET program is cross-cultural. Covering these things will help establish the culture of the online learning community classroom. Doing these things should eliminate the tendency of some professors to stifle community by assigning responding pairs. Learning to deal with variances in the amount of attention they get from their peers may be for some a necessary learning experience.

It might also be advisable to give the learners a set of expectations in reference to their contact with the faculty. An example of this is how long after the due date they can expect to receive a graded project. Another expectation to set is what kinds of comments the professor will make in the online classroom versus via private email. In this same vein, an expectation regarding how long learners should wait before receiving a

response from an email message to the professor should be set.

Improving the Module

The module and integrative seminar between the semesters received considerable negative feedback from the learners, especially concerning its length. There were also complaints from both the learners and the faculty about not knowing each other. This frustrated the faculty because they did not know how to tailor the assignments to each learner's situation.

A possible action that would address all of these areas is to rethink totally the module and integrative seminar. Currently the learners present their final papers for each course in the module and the faculty members make some closing comments. If instead the faculty members for the upcoming semesters conducted a three-day workshop on their subject, then the learners and faculty would get to know each other. The faculty members could use the time to discuss the realities in the learners' situations. They could also present a few lectures covering material unique to them that is not currently available in other media. The learner could get an overview of the material they will study that semester and learn something about the integration of the two subjects.

Some of the learners did not see much value in the integrative seminar. Eliminating it or conducting it for two days before the module that introduces the new courses for the upcoming semester might work.

If the course introductions were limited to three days each and the integrative seminar was two days, then the entire on-campus session would take eight working days. If Saturday became a working day, then the learner would only be away from home for one weekend, and from their institutions for two workweeks. If the integrative seminar is retained, then doing it first would let it serve as a capstone for the previous semester without returning to those subjects after the introduction of the new courses. Before the

first semester the orientation to online learning for the learners would take the place of the integrative seminar.

These are but a few of the possible suggestions concerning the DET program. Ultimately, the administration will need to make the decisions concerning how to best utilize these research findings.

For Future Research

Future research on the DET program might focus on the cross-cultural aspects of the learners' experience. The complaints about the lack of course materials in Spanish, and written from a Latin American perspective, are valid. The question in this researcher's mind is "To what extent does this feeling cause the learner to uncritically reject the content from these non-Latin American sources and what are the underlying reasons?" The results of this study might enable the faculty to help the learner gain more from materials that are not the product of the Latin Americans. This would probably be a grounded theory qualitative study.

The learners made frequent positive mention of the benefit of learning from each other's "situations." A possible research topic could be what is meant by "situations," what kinds of things do the learners gain from each other when discussing their "situations," and what do they feel they gain from these discussions. This would probably be a grounded theory study. The results of this study might show ways to include this type of learning directly in the course work.

An interesting phenomenological qualitative study might be to describe the experience of being a first semester learner in the DET program. Another phenomenological study could look at what it is like to be a faculty member new to online learning community education. The results of these studies might improve faculty training, and the learner handbook.

For New Qualitative Researchers

Others need not repeat the frustrations this researcher faced with an initial qualitative research project.

When one attempts a first time qualitative project one should simultaneously enroll in one or more graduate level courses covering the specific type of qualitative research attempted. One should also participate in a workshop covering any computer application used to hold the raw research data and assist in coding, tracking memos, charting and reporting. One would also be wise to seek out an experienced qualitative researcher for consultation during the actual data collection, coding, and reporting. That mentor should know how to use any computer tool needed to assist with the research.

An inexperienced qualitative researcher will certainly need help with the coding. Strauss notes, "Coding is the most difficult operation for inexperienced researchers to understand and to master, as noted earlier. Even when understood theoretically, the actual procedures are still baffling for some people, despite watching an instructor or some other experienced researcher do the coding. What is needed, apparently, are examples of coding steps, and visualizations of actual codes. Finally, considerable practice at coding is requisite."⁵ The first time qualitative researcher should try to locate someone to assist with each successive stage of coding, and review the results of each level of the coding.

If one is using a computer program to organize the research, get it at the very outset of the project. This way the researcher can learn to use it efficiently and effectively during any preliminary studies that lead up to the formal study. The way the computer tool operates may help the researcher make better choices about how to collect field data.

⁵ Anselm L. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 55.

There are mechanical problems one should avoid. One of these is relying on recordings for interviews or focus groups. Technical issues can arise such as the tape not actually recording, or sounds in the environment making the tape unintelligible. A problem with using a tape for a focus group is that the transcriber often has difficulty distinguishing the voices of the different speakers. The person conducting the focus group often must do extensive editing.

Interview and focus group tapes require immediate copying, and the copy stored in a safe place. In all cases, the researcher must take excellent field notes, copy them first, and then get them into machine-readable form as quickly as possible. This preserves at least some of the information gathered.

One should even be careful to make copies of any questionnaires or other paper documents that contain field notes or other research information. This is especially true if there is any travel involved between the data collection site and the researcher's office. Car accidents and lost luggage do happen. Field notes can easily be lost or destroyed. If possible, leave a copy of any paperwork at the remote site. However, insure the maintenance of confidentiality.

Summary

There is always a seemingly endless list of recommendations coming from any research on social issues. Those mentioned may help the first cohort of learners have a good final experience with the DET program, and help prevent similar issues with future cohorts. The greatest recommendation concerns faculty training and mentoring. This first cohort of learners has been very tolerant; the next cohort may not be so gracious.

Despite the problems uncovered by this research, this researcher is extremely pleased with the success of the SETECA DET program. The learners had significant praise for the program. What they learned caused them to make positive changes in their

institutions. Technology was a non-issue. The content was appreciated. To the extent the professors joined the online learning community, the learners were pleased. There is ample positive material to write a paper on the DET program entitled “Learner Satisfaction with an Online Doctoral Program.”

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE ON PEDIGOGICAL CHANGE

January 2006 Questionnaire

Responder 1

1. What changes, if any, have you seen in the pedagogy used to teach this program? How do you feel about each of them?

I don't think that we had changes in the pedagogy process. What happen is that now we are more confident with this kind of pedagogy.

2. What are the most positive aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

The most positive aspects of the pedagogy are:

1. to have opportunity to discuss with people with different background, and different tradition.

2. There isn't competition. This means that one student try to help the other. The critics is not to destroy the other, but to help.

3. The fact that we have to do a monograph every week. This helps us to be encouraged and focused.

3. What are the most negative aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

1. When the teach don't put the prompt in advance and we have no enough time to do what we should do.

2. The language. Sometimes the teacher is not very clear in the prompt and for student the Spanish or English is not their first language, is difficult to do the work.

4. If you could make any changes you wanted to this program, what would they be? Why would you make them?

1. More materials, like books, from Latin American reality.

2. Prompts more clearly- specially the prompt from some subjects like DET 102 and DET 202. For me both were very confuse.

Responder 2

1. What changes, if any, have you seen in the pedagogy used to teach this program? How do you feel about each of them?

There has been significant improvements in the module - with both students and teachers using andragogical methods. More case studies, more discussion, more power points etc.

2. What are the most positive aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

Broad perspectives in the reading. Ample discussion of the criterion and papers. It has broadened my own thinking.

3. What are the most negative aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

Keeping up the pace while trying to balance life and ministry. Sometimes some topics require more discussion (and there is not enough time). Other times there is little to discuss.

4. If you could make any changes you wanted to this program, what would they be? Why would you make them?

Prompts need to be posted 15 days earlier. It is often hard to juggle last minute academic requirements with ministry responsibility.

Teachers grades and responses need to be quicker. Some have taken an entire semester to return assignments. By that time the topic is cold and we've moved on to other things.

Responder 3

1. What changes, if any, have you seen in the pedagogy used to teach this program? How do you feel about each of them?

Not sure I've taken enough courses to evaluate.

- With whom you interact is directed. Started out free choice, which I liked better.

- Fewer words required in assignments – good

**-Units are posted ahead of time for the semester - VERY GOOD
Helps plan your time.**

2. What are the most positive aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

Interaction with other students.

- Directors/Designers have done very well keeping the objective in view. Gracious and flexible.

- Not all interactions w/other students have been gracious or helpful.

- Would be worthwhile to consider spending time on team building, peace making. Agreements on how to resolve conflicts biblically at the beginning of the program.

3. What are the most negative aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

Very directed. I'd prefer a program with less direction. In some ways it is like a masters level course. Fewer units required w/options to choose would be good, more like androgogy.

The theology courses have not contributed as much as the education courses. BUT, they did contribute.

4. If you could make any changes you wanted to this program, what would they be? Why would you make them?

Fewer units per semester. More interaction w/professors along the way. Drop the conference at the end of the modules - Limit the modules to 2 weeks.

Responder 4

1. What changes, if any, have you seen in the pedagogy used to teach this program? How do you feel about each of them?

I have not seen any major change, but some minor changes and adjustments. For example, in the online part the teachers have done more comments on the papers and more interaction with the students.

In the modular part of the program I have seen different kinds of presentations, simulation, and role playing.

2. What are the most positive aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

What I like most is the freedom to speak, to give my opinions, my views even my objections. Teachers are not afraid of our ideas. We can deliver ideas contrary to the teacher's.

3. What are the most negative aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

I think the program is still too directive in the way the prompts are delivered and in the things the teachers ask the projects to the students. Sometimes the instructions are not clear, but the teacher expect us to do exactly what they think they asked for.

4. If you could make any changes you wanted to this program, what would they be? Why would you make them?

The designing of the courses should include more flexibility and diversity in the ways the students do the assignments. Adult education is based mainly in the students choices, according to their own circumstances.

Responder 5

1. What changes, if any, have you seen in the pedagogy used to teach this program? How do you feel about each of them?

1. At this semester we had one course that was totally online in the first month. Prompts were on time always. The same course gave us back almost every unit in two or three weeks.

2. That was really a great help and let us think about the subject freely. Let you work before time is over.

2. What are the most positive aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

- 1. In the same subject we had very specific prompts.**
- 2. We also had a general view for all the semester at the very beginning, and we really worked on the details then, so when we got to have done those items, I felt as I known what I had to do.**
3. What are the most negative aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?
 - 1. Once again there is a subject that I only received until now the evaluation for three units. I am missing the rest. In the second evaluation it was called to my attention because I didn't worked taking account of the professor suggestions, for unit one, when I received it while I was working on unit five.**
4. If you could make any changes you wanted to this program, what would they be? Why would you make them?
 - 1. To have more communication with the teacher, and to receive more re-feeding on time. You have to win the subject, so grades are important and you need to know how to improve them.**

Responder 6

1. What changes, if any, have you seen in the pedagogy used to teach this program? How do you feel about each of them?

No real visible changes. Different teachers have different approaches and are not all coming from the same direction. Each has developed his course and it seems to be up to the students to integrate the materials. There are some explicitly integrating tasks and sessions, built into the programme.
2. What are the most positive aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

The rules set up for group discussion have survived two years of interaction. After a couple of courses we settled into routines and do not attempt any longer to change the way of thinking of other member of the group, agreeing to differ.
3. What are the most negative aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

One notable feature is that a number of the teachers have not assimilated the basic pedagogical (and androgogical) ideas taught in the first course. This fact has tended to annul the benefits of seeing newer educational methods. Our guides do not practice them, and we have treated them as a theoretical exercise that is now in the past.

4. If you could make any changes you wanted to this program, what would they be? Why would you make them?

Reduce the number of assignments and make them more profound. We often got a glimpse of important ideas, but moved on too quickly to something else. Many of the assignments and reading were on the level of more information. More could be done on integrating subjects and building on basic education and administrative principles taught.

Responder 7 (Translated from Spanish)

1. What changes, if any, have you seen in the pedagogy used to teach this program? How do you feel about each of them?

The pedagogy and methodology has been the same (it is excellent). The change that happens is the discipline with which the professors evaluate the assignments. Some of them do it in the same week. This helped and was encouraging. Others evaluate the assignment once I've started the following semester (which does not help the student to progress).

2. What are the most positive aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

One of the positive aspects is the discipline of the program. At a given date the monograph needs to be turned in. There is a set time for discussing with fellow students. The set dates aids in the fulfillment of the assignments.

3. What are the most negative aspects of the pedagogy used for this program? Why do you say that?

Because of the set dates one does not finish the monograph with a great sense of satisfaction feeling that enough research was done.

4. If you could make any changes you wanted to this program, what would they be? Why would you make them?

It would be good to shorten the modules. For those that come from overseas the weekends are hard to take. We could work more in the evenings and shorten the modules. It would be good to hire professors who have time to evaluate assignments quicker.

APPENDIX B
SETECA STANDARD QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS
JANUARY 2006

Evaluación del Segundo Semestre DET, 2005
(Por favor responda en Inglés o Español)

Curso 104 La Administración de la Educación Teológica:

1. ¿Qué unidad le resulto el más útil en su aprendizaje? ¿Por qué? **Which unit was the most useful in your training? Why?**

La tercera unidad, porque me retó a buscar alternativas para la búsqueda de fondos para financiar la educación teológica. **The third unit, because it challenged me to find the means to finance theological education.**

Unidad dos: Ayudó en pensar fuera de los parámetros estrechos de nuestro equipo. **Unit No. 2. It helped me to think outside of the narrow parameters of our team.**

Unidad dos: Sobre el planteamiento estratégico, porque trata de prever el futuro, unido a la institución con su entorno. **Unit NO. 2. About strategically planning, because [it is good] to be ahead of what's to come while united with the institution and what it [the institution] is all about.**

El de la promoción, porque era un tema que no había estudiado a fondo. **The unit about promotion, because it was a subject I had not studied in depth.**

Planificación estratégica. Aclaró muchas cosas, especialmente la distinción con planes operacionales. **Strategic Planning. It clarified many things, specially the different operational plans.**

2. ¿Cuál unidad le fue menos útil (utilidad) ¿Por qué? **Which was the least useful? Why?**

La unidad B. talvez por tratarse de un asunto que ya había estudiado antes. **Unit B. Perhaps because it was a subject I had studied before.**

Unidad 8: Aprendí poco, lo poco que pude recoger en mi tema no amplio mucho mis conocimientos. **Unit 8. I learned little, the little I got on this subject did not broaden my knowledge.**

Unidad 8: Porque la legislación en [country] es un caso y la práctica otra. Además los temas se tratan diferente de un país a otro. **Unit 8. Because in [country], legislation and practice are two different things. Besides these subjects are**

handled different from one country to another.

El de la misión y visión porque me pareció repetitivo, ya que la habíamos visto antes.

[The unit on] Mission and Vision, it seemed repetitive to me, we had already visited it.

Todos temas de utilidad. **All subjects were useful.**

3. La duración de lecturas asignadas eran: The duration of the readings were...

Muy corto: 2 estudiantes **Very short. 2 students**

Buenas: 3 estudiantes **Good. 3 students**

Muy largas: 2 estudiantes **Very long. 2 students**

Demasiado largas: **Extremely long**

4. ¿Cuál fue el aspecto que mas le benefició de la materia en el periodo del Internet?

Which aspect of the subject benefited you the most during the internet sessions?

La interacción con los colegas. **Interaction with my colleagues.**

Aprender de las experiencias de los otros. **Learning from other's experience.**

Tocar los diferentes aspectos de la administración teológica y relacionada a la propia institución. **To touch all the different aspects of theology administration as it relates to the institution itself.**

Lo inmediato de poner en práctica lo aprendido, leer acerca de lo que los demás hacían fue estimulante. **The immediacy of putting to practice what one had learned, reading about what others were doing was very stimulating.**

La interacción con los colegas ayuda a ubicarse con la materia y comunicarse mejor.

Interaction with the other colleagues helps one to find oneself in the subject and communicate better.

5. ¿Qué cambios sugiere a la materia para tener una experiencia mas efectiva de aprendizaje? What changes do you suggest on the subject to achieve a more effective learning experience.

Que se busque más libros que aborden mas eficazmente la administración de la educación teológica. **To increase the number of books that more efficiently cover the administration of theological education.**

Ampliar lecturas en español. **To expand Spanish reading.**

Cambiar la unidad 8: Buscar literatura para cada tema y que el estudiante investigue un tema de su interés. **To change Unit 8. To seek literature for every subject and let the student choose a subject of his own interest.**

Enfatizar menos lo de misión y visión y más la administración de personal y académica. **To stress less about vision and mission and stress more personnel administration and academics.**

Más simulaciones al estilo del módulo. Mas estudio de situaciones reales de organización de la Educación Teológica **More simulations in the style of "modules". More studies on real life situations of the organization of Theological education.**

6. ¿Cuál fue el aspecto que mas le benefició del moduló, relacionado con la materia?
Which aspect of the module benefited you the most, as it related to the subject?

Las clases de interacción, donde pudimos ver como las dos materias se conectaran.

The interactive sessions, where we could see how the two subjects connected.

Clarificar el trabajo del consejo (borrad) **To clarify the role of the council (board).**

Las sesiones de integración de ambas materias. **The interactive sessions of both subjects.**

El estudio de caso y las presentaciones de los estudiantes. **The case matter and the students presentations.**

La simulación del caso Nube. Fue realista y permitió comparaciones con la situación real del león. **The simulation of "Nube case." It was realistic and allowed comparisons with the real situation with the lion.**

7. ¿Qué cambios sugiere para módulo, relacionado con esta materia? What changes do you suggest in the module as it relates to the subject?

Que sea ofrecido más estudios de caso. **That it would offer more case studies.**

Clarificar expectativas-consignas. **Clarified expectatives-consignment.**

Clarificar con anticipación que se quiera hacer en el módulo. **To clarify up front what is expected to be done with the module.**

Algunos temas presentados por los estudiantes eran repetitivos. **Some of the topics presented by the students were repetitive.**

Más participación en simulaciones. Prohíbe el uso de lap-top excepto para presentaciones. Más firme dirección de los debates. **More participation in simulations. To prohibit the use of lap-tops, except for presentations. A stronger direction in the debates**

8. Evaluación Global de la materia: Global evaluation of the subject.

5 (excelente) = 2 estudiantes **5 (excellent) = 2 students**

4 = 3 estudiantes **4=3 students**

3 = **3**

2 = **2**

1 (pobre) = **1 (poor)**

Curso 204 Corrientes Teológicas Contemporáneas:

Course 204 Contemporary Theological Trends:

9. ¿Qué unidad le resultó el más útil en su aprendizaje? ¿Por qué? Which unit was most usefull in your training? Why?

A. La primera unidad, por motivo de poder estudiar un panorama general de la teología contemporánea. **The first unit, due to the fact that it allowed me to do a panoramic study of Contemporary Theology.**

B. 3 y 4 las lecturas eran excelentes!! Clarificaron mucho. **3 & 4, the reading**

material was excellent!! they clarified a lot.

- C. Unidad 4, porque se debió buscar la relación entre el postmodernismo y la teología. **Unit 4, because it forced me to find the relation between postmodernism and theology.**
- D. El de la Teología conciliar en América Latina, porque no la había estudiado tan profundamente antes. **The Theological Councils in Latin America, because I had not done such in depth study before.**
- E. La lectura sobre la mega teología de Buenos Aires. No conocía esa realidad y el libro es excelente. **The reading material on Buenos Aires mega theology. I had no knowledge of such reality and the book is excellent.**
10. ¿Cuál unidad le fue menos útil (utilidad)? ¿Por qué? Which unit was the least useful to you? Why?
- La unidad 6. porque la dificultad en encontrar material específico, en ese sentido no es que la unidad fue menos útil, pero fue más difícil. **Unit 6. It was the hardest to find specific materials on. In a sense, it was not the least useful, but the most difficult one.**
- Unidad 1-Las lecturas (MacQuarrie) no facilitaron el aprendizaje. Habría sido mejor poner McQuarrie más tarde. **Unit 1. The reading material ([Author]) did not facilitate learning. It would have been better to have [This author] later.**
- Nada. **Nothing**
- El repaso de la teología moderna porque fue repetitivo. **The review of Modern Theology because it was repetitive.**
- Lectura de MacQuarrie. Muy aburrido, tendencioso y poco profundo. Solamente describe teología dialéctica. **Reading [Author]. Very boring, tedious and shallow. It only describes theology jargon.**

11. ¿La duración de lecturas asignadas eran: The extent of the assigned reading was:

Muy cortas = **Very short**

Buenas = **Good**

Muy largas = **Very long**

Demasiado largas = **extremely long**

12. ¿Cuál fue el aspecto que mas le benefició de la materia en el periodo de Internet? Which aspect of the subject was most beneficial to you during the Internet sessions?

La interacción con los colegas. **Interaction with my colleagues.**

Encontrar y debatir otros puntos de vista. **To find and debate other points of view.**

La discusión con los compañeros. **The discussion with my classmates**

Las interacciones con los compañeros, especialmente cuando discutíamos sobre la teología del siglo XX. **Interaction with my classmates, specially when we discussed the Twentieth Century Theology.**

Igual que 4. **Same as #4.**

13. ¿Qué cambios sugiere a la materia para que tenga una experiencia mas efectiva de aprendizaje? What changes do you suggest on the subject so it would have a more effective learning experience?

Mas libros en español. **More Spanish books.**

Más aporte (resumen de cada unidad del profesor). **More contribution (summaries for every unit from the professor).**

No tengo sugerencias. **I have no suggestions.**

Mejorar el nivel de las lecturas. **To improve the reading level.**

Más lectura de material fuera del liberalismo académico y el evangelicalismo norteamericano **More reading material outside of the academic liberalism and Northamerican evangelicalism.**

14. ¿Cuál fue el aspecto que mas le benefició del módulo, relacionado con la materia? Which aspect of the module benefited you most as it relates to the subject?

Las clases de interacción de las dos materias. **The interactive sessions between the two subjects.**

Ver como la modernidad ha influenciado a la iglesia evangélica. **Seeing how modernism has influenced the evangelical church.**

Las presentaciones del profesor sobre evangelicalismo y neopentecostalismo. **The professor's presentations on the evangelical movement and neopentecostalism.**

Las discusiones alrededor de los temas presentados. **The discussions on the subjects presented.**

Las sesiones de integración dirigida por el profesor fueron buenas. **The integrative sessions derected by the professor were good.**

15. ¿Qué cambios sugiere para el módulo, relacionado con esta materia? What changes would you suggest for this module as it relates to the subject?

Que no se gaste tanto tiempo enfocando/discutiendo la posición dispensacionalista.

Not to waste so much time focussing/discussing the dispensational position.

Fue excelente-excelente integración. **It was excellent. Excellent interaction.**

Que se aplique reglas. **To apply rules.**

Poner mas atención a otros movimientos contemporáneos, no solo los de USA o los académicos. **To pay more attention to other contemporary movements, not just those in USA or the academic ones.**

Igual que el 7. **Same as #7.**

16. Evaluación dglobal de la materia: Global evaluation of the subject.

(a) 5 (excelente) = 3 estudiantes **5 (excellent)=3 students**

(b) 4 = 2 estudiantes **4=2 students**

(c) 3 = **3=**

(d) 2 = **2=**

(e) 1 (pobre) = **1 (poor)**

GENERAL

17. ¿Qué elementos le han ayudado para una integración mayor de los cursos del tercer semestre? Which elements have been helpful towards a greater integration in the third semester courses?

Las discusiones extra clases con los colegas. **The outside of class discussions with our colleagues.**

Estudio de caso, discusión dirigida por don [faculty member]. **Case studies, discussions directed by [faculty member].**

Las sesiones de integración y los artículos facilitados por el Dr. Campos. **The integration studies and the articles facilitated by Dr. Campos.**

La integración en este semestre fue mucho mejor por los temas y por la comunicación entre los profesores. **The integration this semester was much better due to the choice of topics and communication between the professors.**

Las sesiones de integración cuando los cursos lograron su propósito. **The integration sessions in which the subjects achieved their purpose.**

18. ¿Qué sugerencias tiene para mejorar la integración de las materias? What suggestions do you have to improve the integration of the subjects.

Que haga mas clases de interacción durante el módulo. **For there to be more interaction sessions during the module.**

Más comunicación entre profesores sobre contenidos, que sepan lo que hacemos y escribimos en otras materias. **More communication between the professors about content, for them to know what we do and write in other subjects.**

Que los profesores se reúnan antes para buscar un punto de integración. **For the professors to meet in advance to look for a point of integration.**

Que los maestros hablen más sobre los temas y diseñen las discusiones. **For the professors to speak more about the topics and design [better] discussions.**

Que los profesores tengan algunas sesiones de integración antes de escribir sus cursos. **For the professors to have some integration sessions prior to the writing of the courses.**

19. ¿Qué le gustó más en cuanto al seminario de integración? What did you like best about the integration conference?

1-el tema, 2-la claridad y la profundidad con que el conferencista trató el asunto. **1. The topic. 2. The clarity and depth with which the professor dealt with the subject.**

Conocer e interactuar con el [guest speaker]. **To meet and interact with [guest speaker].**

Las ponencias de [guest speaker]. Será de gran ayuda para el ministerio de educación, teología y predicación. **[Guest speaker's] offerings. They'll be a great help for the ministry of education, theology and preaching.**

Todo el conferencista es un experto, aunque sus conferencias pueden ser más completas en su forma escrita. **The speaker is an expert, even though his presentations may be more complete in written form.**

Nada. **Nothing.**

20. ¿Qué cambios desearía ver en el seminario de integración? What changes would you like to see in the integration conference?

Que comience en viernes por la noche y terminen en el domingo. **To begin on Friday and end on Sunday.**

Preguntas específicas para discutir en grupo. **Specific questions for group discussion.**

Nada. **Nothing**

Orientar mejor al conferencista para dirigir las conferencias exactamente a lo que se busca. **To better prep the speaker to lead the conference exactly to the point sought after.**

Nada. **Nothing**

21. ¿Tiene alguna sugerencia de cómo mejorar el manejo de la parte de Internet? Do you have any suggestions to improve the running of the internet sessions.

Que los prompts sean puestos en el inicio del semestre (los prompts de todas las unidades). **To have the prompts stated at the beginning of the semester. (the prompts for all the units.)**

Una evaluación o interacción del profesor después de cada unidad. **An evaluation of [or from] the professor after each unit.**

Nada. **Nothing.**

Ya no. **Not anymore.**

Tener una respuesta genérica del profesor para cerrar cada unidad y calificaciones a tiempo. **To have a generic answer from the professor to close the unit and grades on time.**

22. ¿Tiene alguna sugerencia de cómo mejorar el manejo en las dos semanas de experiencia del módulo? Do you have any suggestions to improve the running of the two weeks of the module experience?

Que se desarrolle la buena experiencia que se comience en ese semestre de estudios de caso de equipo. **To develop a good experience in the way we began this semester with group case studies.**

Agregar alguna actividad cultural. **To add some cultural activity.**

Nada. **Nothing.**

No tener sesiones a las 14:00 horas. Es muy cansado y no contextualizado. **Not to have sessions at 2:00p.m. It is very tiring and not contextualized.**

Tal vez el seminario de integración se podría hacer durante las noches de la segunda semana. **Perhaps the integration conference could be done in the evenings of the second week.**

23. Observaciones: Observations:

B= Este módulo ha sido muy bueno, especialmente por el uso de visuales y actividades grupales, muy creativas. Hay que estimular la creatividad, no sólo dictar o leer las ponencias. **This module has been very good, especially for the use of visual aids, and very creative group activities. Creativity must be stimulated, not just dictations or lectures.**

E= Muchas gracias por todo. **Thank you very much for everything.**

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