

**Learners' Perceptions of Adjunct Teaching Effectiveness in Grenada:  
A Qualitative Case Study**

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### **Abstract**

There is a growing trend of hiring adjunct faculty around the world. Research supports some adjunct professors portray less effective teaching practices than full-time counterparts. Learners' perspectives are important for evaluating the effectiveness of adjunct faculty teaching. The problem is learners' perspectives are rarely used as an impetus for developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors. A qualitative explanatory case study methodology was chosen to explore learners' perceptions of the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice in a small urban community college in Grenada. The literature revealed a gap in learners' perceptions of the factors and characteristics contributing to the effective teaching of adjunct faculty. Qualitative research was appropriate for exploring participants' in-depth perspectives of the research topic. Academic leaders may use the results from the study to inform adjunct professional development initiatives. Knowles's theory of andragogy and Burns's transformational leadership theory guided the study. Individual interviews, a qualitative questionnaire, and a focus group discussion were utilized as the data collection instruments. A sample of 15 participants was drawn from graduates and students of part-time 2-year degree programs. Data were analyzed using the constant comparison analysis coding method. The results of the study revealed teaching effectiveness for adjunct professors of practice means exerting inspirational influence; understanding the adult learner; creating a conducive learning environment; and demonstrating the qualities of care, enthusiasm, and professionalism.

*Keywords:* adjunct faculty, professors of practice, teaching effectiveness, student evaluation of teaching, active learning, collaborative learning, authentic learning, experiential learning

### **Dedication**

The race has ended however, I would be remiss if I did not thank those who have supported me along the journey. To my husband, John, thank you for not complaining on the days I spent countless hours in our home office. Thank you for encouraging me to keep up the pace during the times I experienced mental fatigue.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

During the 2018–2019 academic year, adjunct professors represented 46% of the higher education teaching workforce in the United States (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2020). According to Thirolf and Woods (2017), the adjunct teaching population was estimated at 70% of the total 2013 teaching appointments in U.S. community colleges. The high influx of adjunct faculty in postsecondary institutions may have negative effects on student outcomes (Alshehri, 2020; Coughlan, 2015; Holcombe & Kezar, 2018; Xu, 2019). Holcombe and Kezar (2018) reported institutions with a high concentration of adjunct faculty encountered decreases in students' grade point averages (GPAs) and graduation rates. Alshehri (2020) found students attending 2-year community college courses taught by adjunct professors were less likely to transfer to 4-year institutions.

To improve student outcomes, academic leaders are advised to focus on supporting the instructional development of adjunct faculty (Anthony et al., 2020; Thirolf & Woods, 2017). Eliciting student feedback is necessary for improving faculty teaching methods and course delivery (Serin, 2019; Siddique et al., 2019). Researching learners' perceptions of adjunct faculty teaching in 2-year community colleges may fill the research gap on the factors and faculty characteristics leading to the effective teaching of adjunct professors in tertiary institutions. Results from the study may provide pertinent data for assessing and developing the instructional capacity of adjunct faculty employed in 2-year programs in community colleges.

Introduced in the chapter are the background of the research problem, purpose of the study, research goals and objectives, and study's significance relating to policy changes and professional practice. The research questions, theoretical framework underlying the research, and

definitions of terms and concepts associated with the study are provided. Following the definitions are the assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations of the study. A summary of all major sections concludes the chapter.

### **Background of the Problem**

The growth of adjunct faculty in higher education institutions is largely attributed to decreases in funding support, increases in student enrollment, and competition from nontraditional schools (Frye, 2017). An increase in demand for higher education has led to a corresponding increase in the hiring of adjunct faculty (García et al., 2017). Professors of practice, a subset of adjunct faculty, support student learning by bridging the gap between industry and academia (Ramsay & Brua, 2017).

Many adjunct professors enter the profession to satisfy financial needs and fulfill a desire to teach (Pons et al., 2017). For some adjuncts, negative consequences result from part-time employment. Bakley and Brodersen (2018) claimed adjuncts endure poor working conditions and lack technical and financial support from employers. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (2017) reported part-time adjunct faculty earned 75% less per course in 2015 than full-time tenure-track faculty.

Most adjunct professors have limited opportunities for advancement and promotion (Alshehri, 2020). Access to mentoring programs, feedback sessions, and evaluation exercises is limited (Kezar, 2018). Many academic institutions do not provide opportunities for adjuncts to participate in instructional development programs (Alshehri, 2020). Limited exposure to faculty development programs can negatively affect the teaching effectiveness of adjuncts (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018). Coughlan (2015) noted some adjunct professors demonstrated deficiencies in utilizing the evidence-based teaching practices necessary for student development of learning

outcomes.

In the adult learning context, students desire to participate in conversations about the teaching and learning process (Borch et al., 2020). Student evaluations of teaching (SETs) are widely used to explore student interpretations of faculty effectiveness (Nazir et al., 2020). Raza and Irfan (2018) posited students can provide rich insights on teaching and course effectiveness. Dialogue-based SETs are beneficial for facilitating open discussions about faculty teaching effectiveness (Borch et al., 2020).

Multiple studies have been conducted on teaching effectiveness in higher education (Baliyan & Moorad, 2018; Chiu et al., 2019; De Courcy, 2015; Üstünlüoğlu, 2016), yet there is a gap in the literature on adult learners' perceptions of the factors and faculty characteristics contributing to the effective teaching of adjunct faculty (Komos, 2013; Pham & Osland Paton, 2017). Particularly, no known studies have explored the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice (Oyewo, 2016). Learners' perspectives of the teaching practices of adjunct professors of practice may provide higher education leaders with data for assessing and developing the teaching effectiveness of this instructional group.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem is learners' perspectives are rarely used as an impetus for developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors in tertiary institutions (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2016; Raza & Irfan, 2018). Specifically, adult learners' perceptions are rarely used as an impetus for developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice in 2-year degree programs at a Grenadian community college. Student perspectives on adjunct faculty teaching are primarily used for summative decision making relating to contract renewal and promotion (AAUP, 2016; Ubong & Okpor, 2019). Few

institutions use student perspectives as formative feedback for enhancing teaching effectiveness (Serin, 2019; Ubong & Okpor, 2019). Student evaluations of teaching should be used predominantly for the formative purpose of informing faculty development initiatives (AAUP, 2016).

Academic leaders have a responsibility to develop faculty up to the fullest level of students' expectations and improve the perceived quality of teaching in higher education up to 100% (Raza & Irfan, 2018). Adjunct professors require student feedback for gaining rich insights on teaching and course effectiveness (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Raza & Irfan, 2018). Student input is equally important for adjuncts' attainment of institutional support and instructional development (Banasik & Dean, 2016).

Researching the perspectives of adult learners attending 2-year degree programs in a Grenadian community college may shed light on the effectiveness of adjunct teaching practices in similar settings. Student evaluations of teaching in the adult learning context are relevant as some instructional faculty possess deficiencies in applying adult learning principles in teaching (Sogunro, 2015). Exploring students' perspectives of the teaching practices of adjunct professors is vital as limited research has been conducted on the changing role of faculty for 21st-century teaching and learning (De Courcy, 2015). The increased hiring of adjunct professors warrants an exploration of instructional practices to determine effectiveness (Alshehri, 2020). An inquiry of the problem may fill the literature gap by outlining the faculty characteristics and factors leading to the effective teaching of adjunct professors of practice.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the qualitative explanatory case study was to explore learners' perceptions of the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice in a small urban



community college in Grenada. Adult learners' perspectives were used to explore the teaching practices of adjunct professors of practice. Deficiencies in teaching practices may prompt academic leaders to use learners' perspectives as an impetus for developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice.

A qualitative explanatory study was used to explore a contemporary phenomenon within the real-world context (Yin, 2018). A relatively small sample of 15 participants in a specific geographic region was selected. Small sample sizes are appropriate for exploring the in-depth perspectives of participants (Yin, 2018). Perspectives were gained from graduates and students of part-time associate-degree programs taught by adjunct professors of practice. Data were collected using individual interviews, a focus group discussion, and a qualitative questionnaire.

The instructional practices of adjunct professors can lead to decreases in student outcomes (Alshehri, 2020; Coughlan, 2015; Holcombe & Kezar, 2018; Xu, 2019). Accordingly, knowledge of students' perspectives relating to adjunct teaching may prompt academic leaders to provide more institutional support for improving the instructional practices of adjunct faculty and increasing student outcomes. With the steady influx of adjunct professors in higher education, findings from the qualitative explanatory case study may be applied to several higher education settings. Results will be shared with academic leaders, instructional designers, and adjunct professors to explore adult learners' perceptions of the common factors and faculty characteristics leading to teaching effectiveness.

### **Significance of the Study**

Case studies classified as significant are of importance and general interest to the public (Yin, 2018). Scholarly studies are considered significant when the underlying issues involved in the research are used for policymaking, practical application, or theory construction (Yin, 2018).

The study was developed on the premise that some academic leaders fail to adequately support the instructional development of adjunct professors (Alshehri, 2020; Anthony et al., 2020). Low student outcomes can be a consequence of adjunct professors' display of ineffective teaching practices (Alshehri, 2020; Holcombe & Kezar, 2018; Xu, 2019). As a result, adult learners' perspectives should be considered as an impetus for developing the instructional capabilities of adjuncts (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Lyde et al., 2016).

Results from the study may prompt academic leaders to use learners' perspectives not only for summative decision making relating to promotions, contract renewals, salaries, and benefits (Boring, 2017; Siddique et al., 2019) but also for assessing the teaching quality of adjunct faculty. Student feedback may disclose the areas requiring institutional support for enhancing teaching effectiveness. Instructional designers may find the results of the study useful for designing instructional development activities directed to adjunct faculty. Adjunct professors seeking to improve practice or qualify for permanent teaching positions in higher education may benefit from the study's findings. Results from the study may advance knowledge in the field by addressing the literature gap of the factors and faculty characteristics contributing to the effective teaching of adjunct faculty.

The research is considered timely and relevant. Following the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, universities and colleges implemented hiring freezes for full-time faculty (AAUP, 2019). Adjunct professors provide a flexible and less expensive alternative for accommodating the needs of 21st-century learners (Frye, 2017). Global trends and competitive demands have prompted educational institutions to raise teaching standards as a strategy to attract more students (Üstünlüoğlu, 2016). Governmental agencies and other external stakeholders expect tangible evidence of quality in higher education (De Courcy, 2015). Findings from the study may

point out the leadership styles, information sources, and strategies necessary for developing the teaching competencies of adjunct faculty and by extension improve the educational outcomes of students taught by adjunct professors.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of the qualitative explanatory case study was to explore learners' perceptions of the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice in a small urban community college in Grenada. Three questions were designed for exploring the topic during the stipulated data collection time frame. Research Questions 1 and 2 were designed to garner adult learners' perspectives on the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. Research Question 3 was drafted to evaluate the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice, using participants' perspectives. The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What are adult learners' perceptions of the factors that contribute to the effective teaching of adjunct professors of practice in a small urban community college in Grenada?

Research Question 2: What do adult learners in a small urban community college in Grenada perceive to be effective teaching characteristics of adjunct professors of practice?

Research Question 3: How effective are the teaching practices of adjunct professors of practice, as perceived by adult learners in a small urban community college in Grenada?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theories that supported the study were Knowles's (1970) theory of andragogy and Burns's (1978) transformational leadership theory. Andragogy highlights the theoretical principles associated with adult learners' involvement in the teaching and learning process (Rismiyanto & Mujiyanto, 2018). Transformational leadership is based on a leader's capability

to guide, encourage, and empower staff in accomplishing the institutional vision (Arokiasamy, 2017).

Andragogy outlines adult learners' characteristics and informs the educational practices supporting adult learning (Giannoukos et al., 2016). Adult learning needs can be used for determining effective and ineffective adjunct teaching practices. As such, the andragogy learning theory supported the study's purpose by exploring adult learners' perspectives about the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice (Giannoukos et al., 2016).

Transformational leaders can influence educators to create conducive learning conditions for adult learners (Adams et al., 2017). Bird et al. (2009) postulated transformational leaders promote ideal teacher characteristics, job satisfaction, and job engagement. Academic leaders ascribing to the transformational leadership theory work to address the instructional gaps faculty possess and the personal and institutional barriers hindering high-quality teaching (Kumar, 2018).

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following terms are defined to provide a deeper understanding of the study. Each definition is supported by a scholarly reference to ensure reliability and validity. Definitions are related to the activity of teaching in higher education.

***Active Learning.*** Active learning encompasses student interaction and student engagement (Wiggins et al., 2017).

***Adjunct Faculty.*** Adjunct faculty are part-time faculty employed to teach a specific course or courses and are usually contracted on a term-by-term or semester-by-semester basis (Pham & Osland Paton, 2017).

***Adjunct Professors of Practice.*** Adjunct professors of practice are field experts fulfilling a secondary role as educators (Ramsay & Brua, 2017).

***Andragogy.*** Andragogy is the theoretical principles associated with adult learners' involvement in the teaching and learning process (Rismiyanto & Mujiyanto, 2018).

***Authentic Learning.*** Authentic learning involves relating real-world perspectives in learning (Luo et al., 2017).

***Collaborative Learning.*** Collaborative learning is mutual interactions among students to promote learning (Nielsen et al., 2018).

***Dialogue-Based Evaluation.*** Dialogue-based evaluation is a form of faculty evaluation whereby students engage in open discussions regarding expectations in the teaching and learning process (Borch et al., 2020).

***Experiential Learning.*** Experiential learning is the exchange of educational, social, and cultural experiences to aid learning (Alshehri, 2020).

***Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET).*** Student evaluation of teaching is the evaluative process of exploring student views on faculty effectiveness (Nazir et al., 2020).

***Student Outcomes.*** Student outcomes are factors contributing to the achievement of educational or academic outcomes such as persistence, certificate or associate-degree completion, and rates of transfer to 4-year institutions (Carales, 2020).

***Teaching Effectiveness.*** Teaching effectiveness is executing the task of teaching with the effective use of instructional methods, classroom management, organizational strategies, assessment, and feedback practices (Baliyan & Moorad, 2018).

***Transformational Leadership.*** Transformational leadership is a leader's ability to motivate followers to achieve the organization's mission. Application in the education context refers to a leader's capacity to guide, encourage, and empower staff to accomplish the institutional vision (Arokiasamy, 2017).

### **Assumptions**

*Assumptions* are the factors beyond the researcher's control but are necessary to ensure the study remains relevant (Simon & Goes, 2013). As the purpose of the study was to explore adult learners' perceptions of the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice, teaching quality was assumed to be important to participants. Participants were assumed to be willing to respond truthfully during the data collection period. This assumption was premised on the planned issuance of consent forms to each participant explaining potential risks and procedures for withdrawal. The sample population chosen was presumed to be a true representation of the population for which inferences could be made (Simon & Goes, 2013).

### **Scope and Delimitations**

*Delimitations* are the factors defining the boundaries of the study and can contribute to the achievement of stated aims and objectives (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). *Scope* in the research refers to the parameters or controls for the study (Simon & Goes, 2013). The explicit intention of the study's coverage was outlined in the purpose statement. The community college proposed as the research site was more accessible than any other higher education institution for conducting research. Participants for the study were selected from learners and graduates of part-time 2-year degree programs taught by adjunct professors of practice. Pursuing a study beyond the defined scope was not suitable for fulfilling the purpose of the study nor feasible considering

time and resource limitations. The theoretical perspectives adopted for the study were deemed more appropriate for the study than other formal theories.

### **Limitations**

*Limitations* are the factors beyond the control of the investigator (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). As the study was based on the phenomenon of teaching effectiveness in a community college in Grenada, results may not be generalizable to other institutions or other geographical locations. Since a relatively small population was used for gaining deep insights on the phenomenon of interest, findings may not be applicable to larger populations (Simon & Goes, 2013).

The investigator is considered the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Efficient fulfillment of such duties requires training. Because training was not readily available, slight difficulties were encountered in conducting research tasks such as interviewing and preparing the final report (Merriam, 1998). Researcher bias may have occurred as the college chosen for conducting research is the work location of the investigator. Consequently, procedures for minimizing bias were drafted into the methodological plan.

Individual interviews, a qualitative questionnaire, and a focus group discussion were aimed at collecting in-depth perspectives from participants. The data collection instruments chosen provided some narrow results (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Because of fear of faculty reprisal, participants were expected to provide a minimal amount of data. Data were collected via the online medium Zoom. While using Zoom, technological, security, or Internet issues were envisioned. Such disturbances may have led to shortfalls in collecting accurate and steady information. A global pandemic prevented face-to-face data collection.

### **Chapter Summary**

Adjunct faculty growth trends and the corresponding effects on teaching effectiveness and student outcomes were introduced in the chapter. Also presented was the problem of learners' perspectives rarely being used as an impetus for developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors in tertiary institutions. The purpose of the study was to explore learners' perspectives of the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice in a Grenadian community college. Following the purpose statement was the study's significance, research questions, and theoretical framework. Key terms applicable to the study were defined to improve understanding. Assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study were addressed to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the study. The following chapter describes the literature findings associated with adjunct faculty trends, teaching effectiveness, and learners' input in developing teaching competencies.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The trend of hiring adjunct faculty is increasing around the world (Stromquist, 2018). Despite the increasing trend, adjuncts lack the institutional support necessary for developing teaching effectiveness (Alshehri, 2020). Field experts, alternatively known as professors of practice, are a subset of the adjunct teaching population (Mandernach et al., 2015). Professors of practice possess a wealth of industrial experiences yet may lack knowledge of academic culture and appropriate instructional practices (Coughlan, 2015).

Academic institutions should explore students' perceptions of instructional teaching quality to ensure expectations are adequately fulfilled (Baliyan & Moorad, 2018). The problem is learners' perceptions are rarely used as an impetus for developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors in tertiary institutions (AAUP, 2016; Raza & Irfan, 2018). The purpose of the qualitative case study was to explore learners' perceptions of the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice in a small urban community college in Grenada.

The increased hiring of adjunct professors may have negative effects on student outcomes (Alshehri, 2020; Holcombe & Kezar, 2018). Hanson et al. (2018) claimed education quality can be compromised since many adjuncts do not have formal degrees in education. Students are in the best position to determine the teaching effectiveness of instructional faculty and as such are a valuable source of course information (Borch et al., 2020). As prime beneficiaries in the teaching and learning process, adult learners are in a good position to voice what works and what does not work to support learning (Vann, 2017). A gap exists in the literature on learners' perceptions of the factors and faculty characteristics contributing to the effective teaching of adjunct faculty (Komos, 2013; Pham & Osland Paton, 2017).

Knowles's (1970) theory of andragogy and Burns's (1978) transformational leadership theory are discussed in the literature review. An explanation of how both frameworks is used to support the study is provided. The major themes presented in the chapter include adjunct faculty trends, the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty, and adult learners' perspectives on teaching. Teaching effectiveness is defined by scholarly findings.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The literature search strategy commenced with a search for library databases that include prior studies on the topic of interest (Price, 2017). Numerous databases were selected, including ProQuest, ERIC, JSTOR, Google Scholar, SAGE, and EBSCOhost. The American College of Education's library was utilized as the primary source of secondary data collection. Scholarly journals were selected to increase data relevance and validity (Price, 2017). A purposeful search was conducted for peer-reviewed articles. The goal was to have 50% or more articles peer reviewed and 76% or more articles published within the past 5 years. Additional resources were sought through a search of references found in the original selection of scholarly articles (Price, 2017).

Many key terms and combinations formed the basis of the search. The search terms included *part-time faculty*, *contingent faculty*, *sessional faculty*, *auxiliary faculty*, *adjunct faculty*, *adjunct professors*, *professors of practice*, *teaching effectiveness*, *adjunct faculty teaching effectiveness*, *student voice*, *teaching excellence*, *teaching quality*, *student perceptions of teaching*, *student perspectives of teaching*, *student input of teaching*, *student evaluation of teaching*, *adult learning theory*, *andragogy*, *Knowles' theory of adult learning*, *Burns' theory of transformational leadership*, *transformational leadership in higher education*, and

*transformational leadership in schools.*

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frameworks that supported the study were Knowles's (1970) theory of andragogy and Burns's (1978) transformational leadership theory. Popularized as an adult learning concept, andragogy highlights the theoretical principles associated with adult learners' involvement in the teaching and learning process (Rismiyanto & Mujiyanto, 2018). Andragogic theoretical perspectives inform educational practices in adult education by considering the characteristics of adult learners (Giannoukos et al., 2016). The andragogy theory can be used to deepen scholar-practitioners' understanding of how to ameliorate instructional practices (Gouthro, 2019). Application of the dimensions of the andragogy theory supported the purpose of the study by underscoring adult learning principles related to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty.

The transformational leadership theory promotes visionary and influential leadership to accomplish organizational change (Martin & Epitropaki, 2001). Application of the dimensions of the transformational leadership theory supported the purpose of the study to develop the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty. The andragogy theory and transformational leadership theory combined can be utilized for leading the development of adjunct faculty to teach according to adult learning principles.

### **Andragogy**

Andragogy originates from the Greek root words *agogus*, "to lead," and *andra*, "adult." Both terms together mean teaching or leading adults (Knowles, 1980). Documented by Loeng (2018), andragogy was first conceptualized in 1833 by a German teacher, Alexander Kapp. Other

notable influencers to the theory include Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Eduard Lindeman.

Malcolm Knowles, an American educator, is known as the most significant contributor to the theory (Loeng, 2018). Knowles's perspective was based on six assumptions about adult learners. Merriam (2001) summarized the assumptions as (a) *self-concept*: adult learners are self-directed and require some degree of independence in the learning environment; (b) *role of experience*: adults possess a repository of experiences, which aids learning; (c) *readiness to learn*: adults' readiness to learn is based on the development of tasks for social roles and real-life application; (d) *orientation to learning*: adults prefer problem-centered and task-oriented learning and are interested in immediate application; (e) *motivation to learn*: adults tend to be more intrinsically motivated than externally motivated; and (f) *need to know*: adults need to know the relevance of learning before undertaking an effort to learn.

### **Andragogy in Education**

The theory of andragogy promotes learner participation in the teaching and learning process. Knowles et al. (2005) addressed eight elements involved in the andragogic process: Adult educators should (a) prepare learners for learning, (b) create a physical and psychological climate conducive to learning, (c) involve learners in the planning process, (d) involve learners in the diagnosis of learning needs, (e) involve learners in setting objectives, (f) include learners in lesson planning, (g) assist learners to achieve lesson objectives, and (h) include learners in the evaluation of learning outcomes. Andragogy has gained popularity among scholars in several disciplines. Chan (2010) researched the application of andragogy in the fields of medicine, criminal justice, education, and management. The findings suggest there is merit in applying andragogy in educational and professional settings. Chan found applying andragogic principles in police training aided police officers to develop problem-solving skills and an independent

work attitude. In education settings, andragogy assisted instructors to gain a better understanding of learners' behavior (Chan, 2010).

### **Transformational Leadership Theory**

Developed by James MacGregor Burns (1978), transformational leadership is defined as a leader's ability to motivate followers to achieve the organization's mission. Application in the education context refers to a leader's capacity to guide, encourage, and empower staff to accomplish the institutional vision (Arokiasamy, 2017). The work of Burns influenced many other researchers, including Bernard Bass. Bass and Avolio (1994) advanced the work of Burns by formulating a more systematic model to explain transformational leadership. The dimensions of the model are known as the four I's: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Erdel and Takkaç (2020) defined the four I's as follows: (a) idealized influence is the positive characteristics and actions influencing followers to fulfill the specified mission; (b) intellectual stimulation denotes how transformational leaders stimulate creative thinking and problem-solving skills in followers; (c) inspirational motivation refers to the strategies used to motivate and inspire workers to achieve stated goals; and (d) individual consideration is the extent to which leaders consider the individual needs, strengths, and weaknesses of followers.

### **Transformational Leadership in Education**

Transformational leadership can positively affect job performance (Sun & Henderson, 2017) and increase collective teacher efficacy (Cansoy, 2020). School leaders ascribing to the transformational leadership theory influence educators to activate motivation in students (Adams et al., 2017). Erdel and Takkaç (2020) claimed instructors with transformational leadership characteristics tend to be more effective classroom leaders, leading to increased student

satisfaction. Bird et al. (2009) concluded transformational leadership is important for promoting ideal teacher characteristics, job satisfaction, job engagement, and academic focus.

### **Combining Andragogy and Transformational Leadership Theories**

The theoretical framework combined the andragogy learning theory and transformational leadership theory. Both theories combined are aimed at improving the teaching effectiveness of adult teaching faculty using learners' perspectives. There is a need to concentrate more on structures influencing the role of educators and the context in which teaching and learning occur (Kumar, 2018). Kumar (2018) reasoned academic institutions should address gaps in the skills of individual faculty by addressing the personal and institutional barriers hindering faculty members from engaging in high-quality teaching.

Influential leaders have the power to build commitment in followers and achieve organizational goals (Allen et al., 2015). When a leader exhibits a high level of idealized attributes, faculty members are better able to identify with the leader (Allen et al., 2015). Once administrators provide adequate recognition to faculty, faculty tend to be reciprocally motivated and more inclined to improve instructional performance (Sogunro, 2015).

Transformational leaders contribute to the continual improvement of employees (Yuan-Duen & Chen-Tsung, 2019). Intellectual stimulation is a viable approach for improving the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty. By engaging in high-quality professional development initiatives, adjuncts can learn evidence-based teaching practices necessary for improving practice (Parker et al., 2019). Faculty members have a similar responsibility to address learning barriers adults may face and promote experiential learning (Knowles, 1970). Instructors can appeal to a wide range of learning styles and motivational factors by offering students choices in knowledge and skill development (Zorn-Arnold & Conaway, 2016).

Evaluation and feedback are important for all stakeholders in the teaching and learning process. Allen et al. (2015) recommended leaders should (a) evaluate leadership characteristics, (b) measure evaluation procedures of instructors and the instructional strategies used in the classroom, and (c) examine interactions with students and faculty to uncover more opportunities for impacting student achievement. Student feedback is an important component of reflective teaching and can promote refinement in practice as well as professional development (Baliyan & Moorad, 2018). Wibbecke et al. (2015) concurred communication between faculty and students about teaching and learning needs is an important prerequisite for successful teaching and learning. Blair and Valdez Noel (2014) posited student evaluation of faculty can be a driver for improving higher education practices. Feedback is documented as a medium for assessing leadership competencies and generating institutional improvement (Allen et al., 2015).

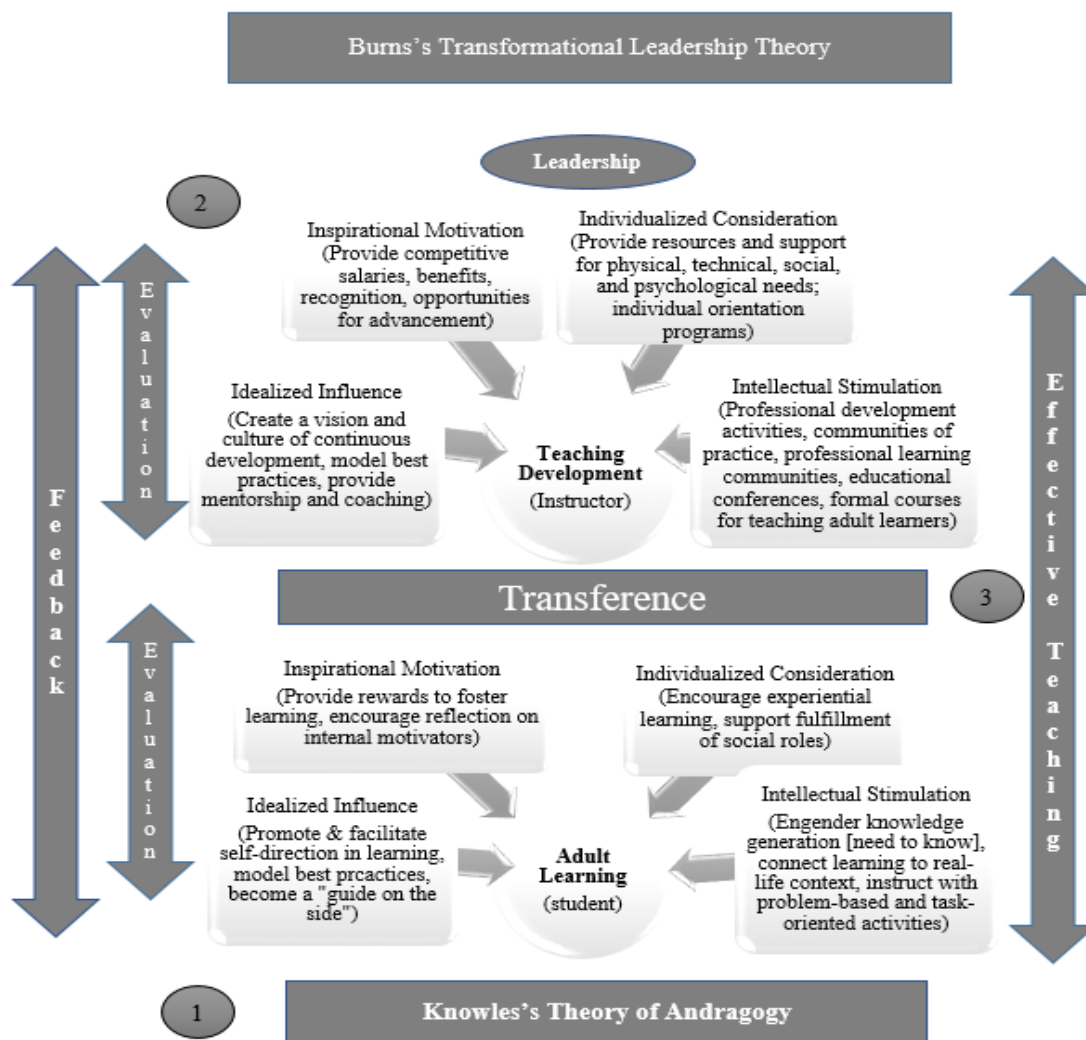
Illustrated in Figure 1 is the combined theoretical framework for developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice and other categories of adjunct faculty. The process begins with academic leaders seeking student perspectives as an impetus for assessing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. By exerting a positive or idealized influence, considering individual faculty needs, providing inspirational motivation, and promoting intellectual advancement, school leaders can transfer transformational leadership skills to adjunct professors of practice. The anticipated result is adjunct professors of practice will use transformational leadership traits to improve teaching effectiveness and successfully meet the andragogic needs of adult learners.

### **Research Literature Review**

Part-time teaching faculty, commonly known as adjunct, contingent, and sessional faculty, are increasing around the world (Stromquist, 2018). Higher education institutions in the United States employed more than 760,000 adjunct professors in the 2018–2019 academic year (USDE, 2020). On a national scale, adjunct instructors represented 46% of the teaching workforce in degree-granting institutions in the 2018–2019 academic year (USDE, 2020).

**Figure 1**

*Combined Theory of Knowles's Andragogy Theory and Burns's Transformational Leadership Theory*





*Note.* The transformational leadership theory guides decision making for developing instructional practices of adjunct professors of practice in adult learning settings.

Between 1999 and 2018, adjunct faculty exponentially increased 72% (USDE, 2020). During the same period, full-time faculty increased only 40% (USDE, 2020). Community colleges rely heavily on part-time faculty for teaching services, as adjuncts represented nearly 70% of teaching appointments in 2013 (Thirolf & Woods, 2017). In 4-year institutions, adjuncts represented 35% of teaching appointments in 2013 (Thirolf & Woods, 2017).

### **Adjunct Professor Trends**

The growth of adjunct faculty in colleges and universities is attributed to several factors. Financial difficulties have influenced changes in revenue sources and spending patterns (Frye, 2017). Public institutions experienced operational challenges due to cuts in government support (Holcombe & Kezar, 2018; Stromquist, 2018). Another financial concern is the amount spent on full-time faculty (Frye, 2017). Retaining tenure-track faculty is coined the *cost disease* as the price of remuneration seems to be inflating at a faster rate than the price of consumer goods (Frye, 2017). A shift toward hiring more adjuncts is a feasible alternative to reduce overhead costs.

The increase in demand for higher education has led to the correlational increase in part-time faculty hiring (García et al., 2017). Growth in student enrollment necessitates a corresponding growth of a flexible academic workforce (Frye, 2017). Between 1983 and 2013, the total undergraduate enrollment in U.S. tertiary institutions increased by 61% (Shulman, 2019). The growth of full-time faculty increased almost consistently with the student enrollment rate of 68%, whereas the growth of part-time faculty more than tripled student enrollment figures

at a rate of 199% (Shulman, 2019).

The statistics show dependence on full-time faculty is not ideal for satisfying large increases in student enrollment. Overreliance on full-time faculty can cause a decline in education quality and overburdened professors (Stromquist, 2018). Predominantly in community colleges, enrollment fluctuations occur regularly. Low enrollment figures can cause abrupt course cancellations, and high enrollment figures can contribute to immediate course additions. By hiring part-time faculty, colleges can expeditiously add or cancel relevant course sections (Thirolf & Woods, 2017). Adjunct professors permit academic institutions to fill all course sections (Anthony et al., 2020).

Competition from nontraditional schools is another factor contributing to the immense increase in adjunct faculty hiring (Frye, 2017). The influx of online and open-access institutions provides affordable and flexible avenues for students to acquire new knowledge and skills. Survival for traditional schools means seeking more affordable staffing options to achieve instructional goals (Packer, 2019). Changes in policy and the legal environment can equally be credited for the increase in adjunct faculty hiring (Frye, 2017). Some higher education institutions implemented hiring freezes for full-time faculty as a response to the global pandemic (AAUP, 2019). Hiring freezes for full-time professors may lead to further increases in the hiring of adjunct faculty.

### **Adjunct Professor Composition**

Part-time instructors are not part of a monolithic group (Thirolf & Woods, 2017). The composition of adjunct faculty in many postsecondary institutions includes freelancers, career enders, field experts, and aspiring professors (Mandernach et al., 2015). A study of adjunct faculty composition revealed emeritus professors represented 11% of the adjunct professors

surveyed, field experts represented 23%, and 66% were classified as other categories (Yakoboski, 2018). Some part-time faculty work as administrative staff and others are enrolled as graduate students in the same institutions where courses are taught (Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2014). A few adjuncts are hired to cover long-term absences such as maternity and sick leave for tenure-track faculty (Coughlan, 2015).

Field experts, as a subgroup of adjunct faculty, possess practical knowledge and industry expertise that can be valuable to students (Packer, 2019; Yakoboski, 2016). Alternatively called professors of practice, field experts act as liminal figures by bridging the gap between industry and academia (Ramsay & Brua, 2017). Professors of practice support learning by connecting students with industry leaders and orienting students and peers to new practices in the industry (Ramsay & Brua, 2017). By actively engaging in industry, professors of practice can convey unique viewpoints to learners that differ from instructors who are not field experts (Nica, 2018). In instances of new classes in emerging fields, professors of practice are preferred to lead instruction (CCCSE, 2014).

Professors of practice are a valuable professional resource for higher education institutions (Packer, 2019). The problem is this instructional group may lack knowledge of academic culture, institutional practices, and effective instructional techniques (Coughlan, 2015). Professors of practice possess varying prior experiences and orientations toward teaching (Coughlan, 2015). A solution is researching how industry experiences impact adjunct professors' ability to be effective instructors (Alshehri, 2020).

### **Adjunct Professor Negative Outcomes**

Despite the increasing growth trends, adjunct professors endure poor working conditions and lack technical and financial support from employers (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018). Salary

inequalities exist between tenure-track faculty and adjunct faculty (Goldstene, 2015). According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2017), part-time and full-time contingent faculty teaching in North Dakota and Ohio public institutions were paid about 75% and 40% less per course, respectively, than full-time tenure-track faculty.

The 2020 annual report on the national Faculty Compensation Survey disclosed part-time faculty members teaching a 3-credit course earned an average pay ranging between \$2,263 and \$4,620 per course (AAUP, 2020). Salaries for full-time faculty members ranged between \$49,000 and \$203,000 per academic year (AAUP, 2020). During the 2018–2019 academic year, the average salary for full-time instructional faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions was \$88,700 (USDE, 2020). A survey of 502 adjunct professors from all sectors of higher education in the United States reported the average compensation per course was \$3,000, with 60% of participants receiving less (Yakoboski, 2018).

Revealed in the same survey, 52% of all participants taught one or two courses at a single institution, and 22% taught three or more courses at two or more institutions (Yakoboski, 2018). Assuming the average adjunct professor teaches eight courses per academic year at a rate of \$3,000 per course, total salaries can be estimated at \$24,000. Compared to the minimum pay for a full-time faculty member of \$49,000 per year, the conclusion is a significant salary disparity between both instructional groups.

Working on a part-time basis means adjuncts have limited access to benefits such as health insurance, life insurance, and pension plans (Stromquist, 2018). The study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2017) disclosed 95.3% of full-time tenure-track faculty in Ohio and North Dakota public universities had access to health insurance, life insurance, and retirement benefits. Approximately 11% of the part-time faculty interviewed enjoyed such

benefits. From a national standpoint, only 22.6% of adjuncts are offered health coverage from colleges (Nica, 2018).

As contractual workers, adjunct professors have no protection, leaving academic institutions with the choice to continue or discontinue contracts (Anthony et al., 2020). Opportunities for advancement and promotion are rare even for experienced adjuncts (Alshehri, 2020). The findings from one study indicated 42.6% of adjunct professors were seeking full-time teaching positions in the institutions (Mandernach et al., 2015). In another study of 1,245 adjunct faculties teaching in 10 community colleges, 67% expressed some interest in becoming full-time faculty. Ott and Dippold (2018) further reported 47% of the participants expressed a strong and immediate interest in full-time employment.

A cross-sectional study revealed nearly 80% of adjuncts expressed dissatisfaction with employment conditions and preferred to have permanent employment (Yakoboski, 2018). A more recent study disclosed approximately 75.5% of adjunct instructors may not access tenure (Anthony et al., 2020). As disclosed by scholarly research, a significant amount of adjunct professors desire full-time employment, however there are few opportunities for doing so.

Adjunct professors in many universities and colleges do not receive access to resources such as computers, copiers, printers, mailboxes, and office space (Alshehri, 2020). Although most adjunct professors teach outside of traditional working hours, instructional resources are important for efficient task fulfillment. Besides not having office spaces, many adjuncts are not compensated for office hours conducted (Kezar, 2018).

The norm for many colleges and universities is to hire adjunct professors within a short time frame before classes commence. Alshehri (2020) found the time frame for hiring adjunct faculty was 3 weeks or less before the start of the academic semester. Last-minute hiring

translates into adjunct professors not having adequate time for preparation and familiarization with institutional guidelines (Nica, 2018).

Adjunct professors are rarely afforded opportunities to participate in orientation programs about departmental culture and objectives (Alshehri, 2020). Several adjunct faculty members are exempted from professional development activities and have no access to funding for attending educational conferences (Alshehri, 2020). A study of adjuncts' views of institutional support showed 23% of the participants expressed satisfaction with the professional development received from institutions of employment (Yakoboski, 2016). Moreover, adjunct professors have limited access to mentoring programs, feedback sessions, and evaluation exercises (Kezar, 2018). On the occasions adjunct professors were invited to participate in professional development, no compensation was offered, and programs were often scheduled at inconvenient times (Xu, 2019).

In a study of adjunct faculty experiences at a private liberal arts college, participants articulated feelings of uneasiness when attending professional development activities (Vincente, 2018). Negative feelings abounded when full-time professors displayed an unwelcoming attitude and when other adjuncts were barred from attending professional development sessions (Vincente, 2018). There have been instances when meeting dates and times were communicated unclearly (Rich, 2017).

Compared to full-time faculty, adjunct professors are perceived as less connected to departments of affiliation (Snook et al., 2019). Goldstene (2015) noted adjuncts seldom receive opportunities to participate in intellectual exchanges with other faculty members. Intellectual interactions are important to adjuncts wishing to learn best practices from full-time counterparts (Vincente, 2018).

Having part-time status means many adjuncts are excluded from institutional decision making. Matters relating to curriculum development, learning goals, course assignments, textbook selection, and other departmental priorities are rarely discussed with adjunct professors (Goldstene, 2015; Kezar, 2018). Adjuncts participating in curriculum and student development meetings received little or no compensation for such services rendered (Guthrie et al., 2019).

Adjunct professors are usually assigned classes filled with students requiring the most help, including those enrolled in introductory courses, freshman writing modules, and remedial programs (Nica, 2018). Some adjuncts do not receive the required institutional support for providing quality instruction to such students (Kezar, 2018). As part-time instructors, adjuncts tend to have larger class sizes and heavier teaching loads (Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017). The lack of institutional support coupled with heavy workloads can lead to stress for some adjunct professors (Reevyi & Deason, 2014). Evident from the actions of higher education institutions, adjunct professors are presumed less important than full-time faculty (Manternach, 2020).

A plethora of research documents adjuncts' feelings about employment conditions (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018; Moorehead et al., 2015; Thirolf & Woods, 2017). Adjunct professors experience feelings of exclusion and disengagement due to limited association with full-time counterparts (Thirolf & Woods, 2017). Moorehead et al. (2015) labeled part-time time faculty as isolated, self-governing, and separated from institutional activities. Even within private institutions, adjuncts can feel disenfranchised (Vincente, 2018). Inequalities in advancement opportunities and compensation may cause some adjuncts to feel marginalized and exploited (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018). To some degree, part-time instructors are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy in many academic institutions (Alshehri, 2020).

**Adjunct Professor Positive Outcomes**

Despite occupying insecure positions, some adjuncts experience positive outcomes and reap intrinsic rewards in the profession. Several adjunct professors enjoy working flexible hours and the autonomy of not having to communicate with supervisors and colleagues frequently (Vincente, 2018). A 2010 study by the Higher Education Research Institute revealed 50.9% of adjuncts at undergraduate institutions expressed satisfaction with the compensation received (Brennan & Magness, 2018).

Besides monetary gains, some adjuncts accept part-time employment for the love of teaching (Binford, 2017). To illustrate, in a phenomenological inquiry of five adjunct professors, participants expressed feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction when teaching (Smith, 2019). In a similar study with 66 community college adjunct professors, 54% expressed feelings of personal satisfaction in the profession (Pons et al., 2017).

Being able to work in the field of expertise is rewarding for several adjunct professors. Approximately 78% of the adjunct professors participating in a study by Pons et al. (2017) experienced enjoyment from teaching. Research conducted by the American Federation of Teachers (2010) revealed 62% of the adjuncts interviewed expressed feelings of satisfaction from part-time employment. Job fulfillment translates to transformation, growth, and identity change for many adjuncts (Smith, 2019).

Student interaction is important to some adjunct professors (Smith, 2019). Professors of practice experience gratification when sharing professional competencies and lived experiences with students (Packer, 2019; Rich, 2017). Pons et al. (2017) disclosed 68% of the adjunct faculty interviewed experienced enjoyment from working with students. Many adjunct professors enjoy



meaningful conversations with students about personal struggles and career aspirations (Smith, 2019). Student conversations are considered equally important for promoting professionalism (Rich, 2017).

### **Adjunct Professor Teaching Effectiveness**

Institutional benefits arising from hiring adjuncts can compromise the quality of education offered to learners (Alshehri, 2020). Some adjunct professors lack the financial, collegial, technical, and social support necessary for developing instructional expertise (Bakley & Brodersen, 2018). Xu (2019) supported the lack of teaching resources can influence the teaching effectiveness of some adjunct professors.

Several adjunct professors possess limited experiences in teaching (Meyer, 2017). The CCCSE (2014) reported 37% of part-time faculty employed by community colleges possess less than 5 years of teaching experience, compared to 13% of full-time faculty. On the other side of the spectrum, 39% of part-time faculty possess 10 or more years of teaching experience, compared to 65% of full-time faculty (CCCSE, 2014).

The possession of professional teaching qualifications may influence teaching practices. In a study of adjunct professors' perceptions of teaching effectiveness, participants perceived having a professional teaching degree led to the implementation of effective teaching practices to a greater extent than not having a professional teaching degree (Hanson et al., 2018). Some adjuncts admitted the absence of a professional teaching degree or formal instructional training does not negate the responsibility to understand curriculum and students' individual learning needs when teaching (Brookfield, 2013).

Snook et al. (2019) found over 71% of adjunct professors desired pedagogical knowledge before beginning to teach. In an examination of adjuncts' perceptions relating to the factors

contributing to success, participants associated success with professional development, teaching experience, and recognition (Parker et al., 2019). A study of adjunct professors in 12 Ontario universities revealed participants requested more opportunities to advance instructional and technical skills (Field & Jones, 2016).

Several adjuncts serving as industry practitioners focus more on developing content knowledge (Hanson et al., 2018). Due to the lack of formal training and professional development in education, many adjunct professors fail to integrate technology in instructional practices and rarely use evidence-based teaching practices for informing student development of learning outcomes (Coughlan, 2015). Kimmel and Fairchild (2017) examined the perspectives of part-time faculty members at a public regional institution and found none of the participants used advanced instructional technologies beyond the required learning management system, PowerPoint, audio, and videos. Kaaki (2020) observed technology is one of the least practiced areas of professional development in which adjunct professors participate. Cooper et al. (2019) noted adjuncts lacking technological literacy often experience difficulties in integrating technology in learning.

Compared to full-time instructors, adjunct professors possess fewer teaching experiences; use less innovative and collaborative practices; interact less with students, colleagues, and superiors; and communicate students' need for support services less often (Schuetz, 2002). In a subsequent study of teaching staff across 130 U.S. institutions, Umbach (2007) discovered adjunct professors placed less emphasis on active learning, holistic student development, class preparation, and sharing diversity experiences. Despite having content expertise, many adjuncts lack familiarity with effective teaching principles (Kezar & Maxey, 2012).

Another observation regarding teaching practices is adjuncts spend less time interacting with students inside and outside of the classroom when compared to full-time counterparts (Hutto, 2017). Some adjuncts promote little or no collaboration among students (Alshehri, 2020). Peer interaction can enrich learning through the interchange of educational, social, and cultural experiences (Alshehri, 2020). Meyer (2017) concluded some adjunct professors are not fully equipped to be effective educators.

Scholarly researchers argue the upsurge of adjunct faculty can negatively impact student outcomes (Coughlan, 2015; Xu, 2019). Students attending courses taught by adjunct professors appear to have a smaller probability of transferring to 4-year institutions (Alshehri, 2020). Holcombe and Kezar (2018) found students' GPAs and graduation rates tended to decrease when there was a correlational increase in part-time faculty. The trends noted can be reversed. Instead of blaming adjunct faculty for low student outcomes, academic leaders should focus more on supporting instructional development (Anthony et al., 2020; Thirolf & Woods, 2017).

Adjuncts' reliance on traditional teaching principles can negatively impact assessment practices. Many adjunct professors have demonstrated deficiencies in designing assessments and failed to provide student feedback at the end of an evaluation (Morthland, 2010). A study of the use of learner-centered assessment practices in U.S. colleges and universities reported adjunct professors in associate-degree-granting institutions are less likely to utilize learner-centered assessment practices and more likely to focus on students' understanding of theoretical knowledge than are full-time counterparts (Webber, 2012). As adjunct professors have fewer opportunities to participate in professional development activities and discussions about innovative teaching practices, there is a pronounced need to conduct faculty evaluations for

guiding the use of learner-centered assessment practices (Webber, 2012).

The inefficiencies of adjunct professors have prompted some department chairs to express concerns about the quality of the teaching environment adjuncts provide to students (Moorehead et al., 2015). A study of department chairs' perceptions of part-time faculty status in 4-year public and private higher education institutions in Maryland revealed 87.9% of respondents in public institutions and 77.1% of respondents in private institutions strongly agreed adjunct faculty are expected to use effective teaching practices (Moorehead et al., 2015). The chairs from the private institutions were more likely to agree adjuncts were evaluated based on evidence of teaching effectiveness (Moorehead et al., 2015).

The results from Moorehead et al.'s (2015) study provided some indication of the need for public institutions to focus more on evaluating the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors. Many institutions do not possess the resources to properly assess and support the rising population of adjunct professors (García et al., 2017). García et al. (2017) concluded academic leaders should concentrate on research to assess the teaching performance of adjunct faculty.

### **The Future of Adjunct Professors**

Academic institutions have a fundamental role in promoting good instructional practices (Banasik & Dean, 2016). Adjuncts can become better equipped to fulfill teaching responsibilities and maintain institutional reputations (Packer, 2019). When administrators satisfy the instructional needs of faculty and provide ample recognition, faculty may be encouraged to improve instructional practices (Sogunro, 2015). Professors of practice require increased attention from instructional developers and leaders to increase student learning outcomes

(Ramsay & Brua, 2017).

Community colleges rely heavily on adjunct faculty to fulfill instructional duties (Thirolf & Woods, 2017). As a result, the instructional practices of adjunct professors should be explored to determine effectiveness (Alshehri, 2020). Alshehri (2020) recommended examining how adjuncts teach and exploring the instructive techniques used to accommodate students' learning styles and needs. Alshehri further asserted students should purposefully reflect on experiences in courses taught by adjuncts. Michel et al. (2018) suggested evaluating the kinds of faculty experiences that contribute to student learning.

### **Using Students' Perspectives for Evaluating Teaching Effectiveness**

Formal evaluations of teaching have the twofold purpose of determining teaching strengths and deficiencies (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Ubong & Okpor, 2019). Student evaluations of teaching are extensively used to explore student views on faculty effectiveness globally (Nazir et al., 2020). Student evaluations of teaching are considered a propelling force for improving practice, assuring student learning, and informing decision making (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Lyde et al., 2016). Some academic institutions use SETs for the formative purpose of developing faculty capacity (Schmid et al., 2016). Many institutions use SETs as a summative tool to inform decision making on issues such as hiring, promotion, and salaries (Boring, 2017; Siddique et al., 2019). The basis for conducting SETs includes the following: (a) students should be active participants in the teaching and learning process rather than passive recipients (Ubong & Okpor, 2019); (b) students are in the best position to ascertain faculty strengths and weaknesses and as such can provide rich insights on teaching and course effectiveness (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Raza & Irfan, 2018); (c) instructors need student feedback to improve teaching methods and course delivery (Serin, 2019; Siddique et al., 2019);

and (d) students' perspectives can be used to improve student achievement and assure quality in higher education (Serin, 2019).

Research conducted by Borch et al. (2020) on students' perceptions of teaching evaluations revealed students considered themselves experts in learning processes and therefore expected to partake in dialogues about the effectiveness of learning activities. In another study of students' perceptions of SETs, participants linked SETs to improving faculty teaching in future course delivery (Siddique et al., 2019). Participants believed SET is the principal source of collecting feedback on teaching performance (Siddique et al., 2019).

### **Counterargument Against Using Students' Perspectives for Evaluating Teaching**

Student evaluations of teaching do not always produce the intended results of improving practice (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014). Baglione and Tucci (2019) uncovered evidence to support a positive correlation between student evaluations and grades. Macfadyen et al. (2016) determined students' responses to faculty evaluations may be influenced by final course grades. The data suggested students are less willing to offer favorable feedback for instructors who are likely to return a low grade. Because SETs are used to inform decision making on matters such as promotions, contract renewals, salaries, and benefits, adjuncts may tend to inflate student grades (Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Nazir et al., 2020). Some adjunct professors believe grade enhancement can reduce students' complaints and protect jobs (Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017).

A culture can be easily developed whereby adjuncts may consciously or unconsciously lower teaching standards to gain favor from students. Vincente (2018) posited some adjuncts may limit the use of rigorous instructional practices on the premise there is a strong relationship between student satisfaction and job retention. Nazir et al. (2020) concurred students' ratings on teaching effectiveness can impair teaching quality.

An exploration of adjunct experiences in a private college revealed students do not possess the required knowledge and maturity to evaluate teaching quality (Vincente, 2018). In the case of professors of practice, students are considered incapable of judging field expertise (Siddique et al., 2019). Student evaluations of teaching are considered valuable when students recognize the purpose of providing feedback (Nyirenda Chikazinga, 2018). McClain et al. (2018) concluded students' willingness to offer honest evaluations is dependent on the belief results will effectively measure course quality, improve teaching, and benefit students.

Due to a lack of understanding or care, students may browse through faculty evaluations without providing rich data. Consequently, the search for honest, in-depth student input may be futile (McClain et al., 2018). Personal grudges, biases, and fear of identity exposure can equally contribute to students' disruptions of faculty evaluations (Siddique et al., 2019). Educators should gain awareness of students' voices on effective teaching, as what may seem effective from a personal standpoint may be ineffective through students' lens (Bouras, 2019). Likewise, academic leaders have a responsibility to ascertain students' perceptions of the quality of teaching received to fulfill expectations effectively (Baliyan & Moorad, 2018), explore the relationship between faculty teaching characteristics and student learning (Pham & Osland Paton, 2017), and develop faculty up to the requirements of students (Raza & Irfan, 2018).

The design of most SETs includes quantitative surveys. In a comprehensive review of faculty evaluation surveys, Baliyan and Moorad (2018) summarized the advantages as cost effectiveness, easy implementation, and time efficiency. Surveys are preferred when anonymous feedback is required (Baliyan & Moorad, 2018). One disadvantage of using faculty evaluation surveys is results do not provide a sound basis for improving teaching effectiveness (Wibbecke

et al., 2015). Stupans et al. (2016) noted surveys are limited to predefined ideas. Some surveys do not allow for students' perspectives on how instructors facilitated learning (Borch et al., 2020). As a result, academia is slowly moving away from using survey responses for improving teaching (Borch et al., 2020).

Dialogue-based evaluations are recommended as an alternative to traditional faculty evaluations. A dialogue-based evaluative system is beneficial for facilitating open discussions about what matters to students in teaching and learning (Borch et al., 2020). Wibbecke et al. (2015) advised higher education institutions should recruit students as teaching consultants. Adult learners require opportunities to be more actively involved in the teaching and learning process (Chan, 2010).

Student consultation on teaching is an avenue for engendering greater student involvement in educational contexts. Learners' input in the adult education context may still have some merit as most instructors struggle to apply andragogic principles in teaching (Sogunro, 2015). Consultations were used in the present study for exploring rich perspectives from adult learners about the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice.

Caribbean colleges and universities may benefit immensely from an exploration of adult learners' perceptions of adjunct faculty teaching practices. The literature disclosed Caribbean systems operate as a centralized hierarchy (Brown & Conrad, 2007; Jules, 2008, as cited in Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014). Within a centralized hierarchy, decisions are typically made at the leadership level. Student voices ought to be heard before improvement in teaching practice can occur (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014). While students are not teaching experts, learning experiences are worthy of consideration in conversations about teaching effectiveness (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014).



**Defining Teaching Effectiveness**

Teaching effectiveness can have varying meanings based on the context of analysis. Alternatively known as quality instruction, teaching quality, or teaching excellence, teaching effectiveness can be broadly defined as executing the task of teaching with the effective use of instructional methods, classroom management, organizational strategies, assessment, and feedback practices (Baliyan & Moorad, 2018). Quality instruction is defined in a growing body of research, yet not much research has been conducted on the changing role of faculty for 21st-century teaching and learning (De Courcy, 2015). One change in 21st-century teaching and learning is the trend of hiring adjunct professors (Stromquist, 2018). As 21st-century learners comprise adult learners, exploring adult learners' perceptions of adjunct faculty teaching effectiveness is not only relevant but also timely.

Teaching effectiveness can be defined from the perspectives of faculty and students. Baglione and Tucci (2019) analyzed studies on faculty and student perceptions of teaching effectiveness published between 1987 and 2018. Baglione and Tucci found instructional methods, subject knowledge, course organization, student interaction, and assessment practices are some important factors contributing to teaching effectiveness. Faculty characteristics perceived as strong contributors to teaching effectiveness include enthusiasm, approachableness, professionalism, and commitment (Baglione & Tucci, 2019).

In a related study, Miller-Young et al. (2020) found some identical factors contributing to teaching effectiveness, such as student interaction, professional commitment, and subject knowledge. Similarities were noted in the perceived faculty characteristics contributing to teaching excellence, such as assertiveness, enthusiasm, approachableness, and competence

(Miller-Young et al., 2020). Anderson et al. (2020) described good teaching as demonstrating care for the discipline being taught, care for the profession of teaching, and care for students.

In a study of college students' perceptions of effective teaching, Chuyun Hu (2020) concluded faculty–student relationship, engagement, and real-world experience are the most desired characteristics of instructors. As outlined by Kirby et al. (2018), the teaching behavior checklist includes 28 characteristics of effective teachers. These qualities include accessibility, approachableness, confidence, creativity, technological savvy, enthusiasm, and flexibility. Humility, communication skills, professionalism, sensitivity, and punctuality were some of the other qualities included in the checklist.

### **Defining Teaching Effectiveness in the Adult Learning Context**

Higher education standards are constantly changing. Global trends and competitive demands have caused academic leaders to raise teaching standards as a strategy to attract more students (Üstünlüoğlu, 2016). Governmental agencies and other external stakeholders require evidence of value and quality in higher education (De Courcy, 2015). Quality teaching in educational institutions is required as many countries strive to upgrade job-related skills of the populace (Baliyan & Moorad, 2018).

Teaching competencies can be developed by drawing from students' perceptions (Wahlgren, 2016). Adult educators are required to develop various teaching competencies to be qualified as effective. According to Wahlgren (2016), qualified adult educators should (a) use effective instructional methods to communicate subject matter and promote understanding through inspirational influence; (b) relate to the learners' preconditions, in a holistic sense; (c) create a constructive learning environment characterized by commitment, confidence and tolerance, and positive relationships among students and between students and faculty; (d)

purposefully reflect on experiences to continuously improve performance and learning; (e) support students' learning processes with conducive learning conditions; (f) assist learners to acquire and use competencies; and (g) train students how to transfer knowledge in the real-life context.

### **Gap in the Literature**

A significant trend in higher education is the hiring of adjunct faculty. Alshehri (2020) purported hiring part-time faculty may be less beneficial to students than the institution as the quality of education is at stake. As a result, students should be provided with opportunities to purposefully reflect on experiences in courses taught by adjuncts (Alshehri, 2020). Student experiences can inform the factors and faculty characteristics contributing to effective teaching.

A gap exists in the literature on adult learners' perceptions of the factors and faculty characteristics contributing to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty (Komos, 2013; Pham & Osland Paton, 2017). The importance of exploring this gap is to determine faculty development needs for improving organizational performance (Kumar, 2018). Other community colleges can utilize the results of the study to ascertain the effectiveness of adjunct faculty teaching practices and guide faculty development initiatives.

### **Chapter Summary**

A significant trend in higher education around the world is the hiring of adjunct faculty. The literature largely credits this trend to increases in student enrollment, competition from nontraditional schools, and cuts in public funding. Community colleges attract adjuncts to a greater degree than 4-year institutions to accommodate the needs of adult learners and low-income or underrepresented students. Adjunct faculty are favored for having flexible schedules. Professors of practice, as a subset of adjunct faculty, are specially recruited for industry expertise

and experience.

Despite the increased demand by academic institutions, adjuncts serve in insecure positions and receive little institutional support. Scholarly research supports adjuncts use less effective instructional practices than do full-time counterparts. Ineffective instructional practices by adjuncts can negatively affect student outcomes. Students' input is vital for determining the instructional effectiveness of educators. A gap exists in the literature on learners' perceptions of the factors and faculty characteristics contributing to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty.

Included in the chapter was a comprehensive review of adjunct faculty trends, scholarly definitions of teaching effectiveness, and student input as a source of determining teaching effectiveness. The andragogy learning theory supported the purpose of the study to explore adult learning needs and perspectives in determining the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice (Giannoukos et al., 2016). As the problem of the study was learners' input rarely being used as an impetus for developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty, dimensions of the transformational leadership theory were proposed for remedying the problem.

Addressed in Chapter 3 is the research methodology chosen for the study. A description of the case study research design and rationale for selection is provided. The role of the researcher is discussed. Research processes are examined, referencing the instrumentation, population design, and data collection methods. Also included are the procedures for data analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical procedures.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The practice of hiring adjunct faculty is a growing trend around the world (Stromquist, 2018). Despite this growing trend, academic leaders offer minimal support in developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty (Kezar, 2018; Nica, 2018). Teaching effectiveness can be improved when there is a purposeful evaluation of faculty strengths and weaknesses (Fajčíková & Fejfarová, 2019). Academic administrators should concentrate on understanding learners' perspectives of teaching effectiveness to ascertain faculty teaching strengths and weaknesses (Raza & Irfan, 2018). A gap exists in the literature on students' perceptions of the factors and faculty characteristics contributing to the effective teaching of adjunct faculty (Komos, 2013; Pham & Osland Paton, 2017).

Learners' perceptions are rarely considered as an impetus for developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty in tertiary institutions (AAUP, 2016; Raza & Irfan, 2018). A qualitative case study design was chosen to explore learners' perceptions of the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice in a small urban community college in Grenada. An exploration of learners' perceptions can determine faculty teaching quality and may guide teaching development initiatives (Wibbecke et al., 2015). The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What are adult learners' perceptions of the factors that contribute to the effective teaching of adjunct professors of practice in a small urban community college in Grenada?

Research Question 2: What do adult learners in a small urban community college in Grenada perceive to be effective teaching characteristics of adjunct professors of practice?

Research Question 3: How effective are the teaching practices of adjunct professors of practice, as perceived by adult learners in a small urban community college in Grenada?

The methodology chapter is separated into five sections. An explanation of the research design and rationale for selection is provided in the first section. The second section is a discussion of the role of the researcher. Research procedures are addressed in the third section. Validity and reliability measures are presented in the fourth section. Ethical procedures conclude the chapter.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

Qualitative research is valuable for conducting an inquiry of participants' experiences and describing relevant meanings attributed to the experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Most qualitative inquiries address social problems by extracting the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to the problems (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative design was utilized in the study for exploring participants' experiences and perceptions about the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. An alternative to qualitative research is quantitative research. Quantitative inquiries are often used to describe trends, opinions, or attitudes of a population using numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As the study was designed to explore in-depth perspectives using text analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), a quantitative design was not an appropriate research methodology.

The case study method was used for answering the research questions. Case studies are in-depth inquiries of a contemporary phenomenon within the real-world context (Yin, 2018). In scholarly research, a case is defined as a program, process, event, activity, or individual (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A case study was selected to explore the meaning participants

ascribed to the activity of teaching. As a defining characteristic, case studies operate within the construct of a bounded system or unit of analysis (Merriam, 1998). Data were collected from participants with affiliations to a single academic institution. The phenomenon explored was the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice.

The explanatory case study approach was selected for exploring the research phenomenon. Explanatory case studies are recommended for analyzing causal factors leading to particular events (Pearson et al., 2015). Learners' perceptions were analyzed to determine the factors leading to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice.

Qualitative case studies are frequently used in the field of education (Merriam, 1998). An educational phenomenon provided the context for research. Scholarly research on the subject of teaching can provide evidence for improving practice (Hanson et al., 2018). Results from the study may influence improvements in the teaching quality of adjunct professors of practice. The case study may guide theory by expanding relationships and constructs within a distinct setting (Ridder, 2017).

Case study inquiries are not lengthy by nature (Yin, 2018). The data collection time frame for the study spanned 6 weeks. Qualitative case studies are flexible enough to accommodate emerging changes during the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The research site's legal structure is categorized as a statutory body. Statutory bodies implement policies and activities to support governmental objectives (Bilu et al., 2016). A quest to support governmental objectives could have contributed to changes occurring during the research inquiry. Such changes may have impacted the processes for conducting a study with a larger population sample. As a result, the qualitative case study methodology was deemed appropriate for the study.

The qualitative case study research design possesses several advantages. One advantage is triangulation can be achieved through multiple sources and multiple methods of data collection (Yin, 2018). Triangulation is the use of two or more data and methodological sources to validate emerging findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Virtual interviews, a virtual focus group discussion, and a qualitative questionnaire were used for achieving triangulation in the study. Data sources included 1st-year students, 2nd-year students, 3rd-year students, and program alumni.

Another feature of qualitative case studies is data are collected at a site where participants experience a phenomenon. This approach allows for the observation of behaviors exhibited in a natural setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To gather in-depth perspectives of adult learners, the study was based in a small urban community college in Grenada.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Particularly in qualitative inquiries, researchers are considered human instruments of data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The role of the human data collection instrument encompassed observation, data collection, and data analysis. Efficient task fulfillment involved active listening of verbal communication, observation of nonverbal communication, information processing, and data clarification (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Active listening entailed the assimilation of information without bias and inferring participants' intended meaning (Yin, 2018).

The investigator's roles in the research site included instructional skills facilitator, full-time lecturer, and former adjunct faculty. Professional affiliations were limited to full-time faculty and full-time students only. There were no authoritative or interactive relations with part-



time faculty and part-time learners. As a result, no dual roles existed. Ethical procedures were implemented before and during the study to increase the reliability of data and the validity of interpretations and conclusions. The procedures included identifying personal values and protecting participants' confidentiality and anonymity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Research Procedures**

Presented in the research procedures section are the processes for performing the research. The topics of discussion include population size, sample selection methods, and instrumentation. Data collection processes and data analysis systems defined the path for conducting the research.

### **Population and Sample Selection**

Participants were selected from a target population of 108 enrollees and former enrollees of a small urban community college in Grenada. The intended target population of 50 participants proved to be insufficient for achieving the minimum sample size of 15 participants. A sample of 15 participants was utilized for the study. Purposeful sampling was chosen for identifying information-rich cases. In purposeful sampling, participants are selected based on defined inclusion and exclusion criteria (Etikan et al., 2016).

The maximum variation strategy was implemented to ensure as much variation in the sample selection as possible (Merriam, 1998). All participants met the inclusion requirement of being 21 or older and the enrollment requirement of being a student or graduate of a part-time 2-year degree program in a small urban community college in Grenada. Adjunct faculty served as the primary instructional faculty for part-time associate-degree programs in the research site.

Research commenced after receiving permission from the principal of the research site to conduct the study (see Appendix A). An email was sent to the program coordinator for part-time

associate-degree programs to access alumni and students' contact records. Initial communication with the target participants was an invitation email consisting of a recruitment letter (see Appendix B) and the consent form (see Appendix C). Participants were provided the option to withdraw from the study at any point in time by signing a withdrawal form (see Appendix D). Nonresponding recruits were contacted by telephone to ensure the email was received. Candidates were asked to submit a written response to the participation request indicating agreement or disagreement to partake in the study.

The maximum variation sampling strategy involves identifying participants with a wide range of characteristics (Merriam, 1998). A short survey requesting demographic information (see Appendix E) was circulated to interested candidates. This process was implemented as a one-phase screening approach (Yin, 2018). The demographic survey was distributed to participants via email. Google Survey was not utilized as originally planned. As the survey was relatively short, participants expressed comfort with replying by email. Survey results informed the selection of the final sample. An ideal sample included participant variations based on age, gender, program enrollment, and year of enrollment. Selected participants received a notification email and instructions for returning a signed copy of the consent form.

The goal of the study was to explore learners' perceptions of the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. A listing of the adjunct professors of practice was prepared for respondents to differentiate adjunct professors of practice from the other categories of adjunct faculty. The listing of adjunct professors of practice was distributed to participants preceding data collection and redistributed during data collection.

### **Instrumentation**

Three data collection instruments were used in the study to achieve data triangulation. Individual interviews (see Appendix F) were used for collecting historical and unobservable data from interviewees (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview questions were semiformal. Semistructured questions were used for exploring emerging issues raised by interviewees (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). All members of the population sample were invited to participate in the individual interviews. Audio recordings provided the means for data retrieval.

Participants' perspectives not attained from the interviews were generated from the questionnaire. Qualitative questionnaires provide deep insights into participants' experiences (Charlotte & Hagström, 2017). The design of the questionnaire was open ended (see Appendix G). Open-ended questions yielded descriptive data about participants' stories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). All the participants were asked to complete the questionnaire.

A focus group discussion served as the third data collection method (see Appendix H). Focus groups are beneficial for obtaining socially constructed data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This data collection method was chosen to generate rich data on participants' unobservable feelings and perceptions (Merriam, 1998). All the participants were invited to participate in the focus group discussion.

Original instruments were developed for conducting interviews, the focus group discussion, and the questionnaire. Field tests were carried out with five subject matter experts (SMEs) in the fields of educational leadership, educational development, and educational research. SME consultations (see Appendix I) assisted in enhancing the question design, improving wording structure, and increasing the content validity of the instrument (Zamanzadeh et al., 2015).

**Data Collection**

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), an email notification was sent to the selected sample population. The notification included instructions for submission of the signed consent form. After submitting the signed consent form, participants received instructions for completing the demographic survey. Regular email checks revealed the participants' response rates. Reminder emails were disseminated to nonresponsive participants.

Virtual interviews were utilized as the first method of data collection. COVID-19 protocols restricted the use of face-to-face interviews. Interviews are the most direct and straightforward method for gathering rich information (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Participants received the interview questions via email preceding the interview. Early dissemination of interview questions provided participants a preview of the discussion topics. All the interviews were conducted via the Zoom online platform.

Online meetings were hosted in private chat rooms. Security codes were disseminated to participants for gaining access to the Zoom meetings. A code entry system lessened the occurrence of security violations. Initial interviews lasted 45–60 minutes. In some instances, telephone calls followed the virtual interview to eliminate information gaps and clarify misunderstandings.

Before conducting the interviews, participants were reminded of privacy rights and background information about the study. Interviewees were asked only about the issues relevant to the study to ensure the research was conducted ethically (Yin, 2018). The use of an interview protocol ensured interviews remained within planned guidelines (Yin, 2018). Participants received reminders about privacy rights and the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

The general interview atmosphere was friendly and fostered good rapport. This atmosphere encouraged the disclosure of rich information. Field notes and audio recordings were used to gather participants' perspectives. Permission was sought from participants before recording (Yin, 2018).

The qualitative questionnaire was used as the second data collection method. Participants received questionnaire via email following the interview. Reminders were provided thereafter. Participants were asked to respond via email.

The focus group discussion was used as the third data collection medium. All the protocols used for conducting individual interviews were applied for the focus group discussion. An email regarding the discussion time and date was sent to participants. Participants responded via email. As such, the Doodle scheduling software was no longer required. A briefing session outlined the study's purpose, privacy and confidentiality issues, and discussion etiquette. Semistructured questions were used to explore participants' experiences and perceptions; the discussion lasted approximately 30 minutes. Data were chronicled using field notes and audio recordings. A debriefing session occurred to remind participants about the confidentiality protocol and address questions or concerns. The schedule for member checking and submission of the final report was distributed at the end of the debriefing session. Participants also received a formal thank-you note and a dessert box.

All hard copies of the study were kept in a locked filing cabinet. Soft copies were archived on an external drive and placed in the locked filing cabinet where the hard copies were stored. The filing cabinet is accessible only to the author of the study. All data will be stored for 3 years following completion of the study.

The preparation of data incorporated simultaneous procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Reflective comments were written during each interview and organized thereafter. Tentative themes and rudimentary ideas about the study were developed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additional preparatory actions included transcribing interviews and typing field notes. Relevant data were separated from irrelevant data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Audio recordings were transcribed using Temi online speech-to-text software. Field notes were typed using Microsoft Word. All transcribed reports were printed for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis commenced with a compilation of responses from the qualitative questionnaires, interview transcripts, field notes, reflective memos, and audio recordings. All field information was organized and sorted into files for easy retrieval. Organized files formed the case record for the study. Data were analyzed manually as technical difficulties arose in using the Dedoose software. The constant comparison analysis was used as the evidence-based data analysis model for the study. Originated by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 and adapted by Lincoln and Guba in 1985 and Maykut and Morehouse in 1994, the constant comparison analysis model combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning obtained (Memon et al., 2017).

The first stage of analysis was inductive categorization. Inductive categorization involved reading through the interviews for themes and merging overlapping themes to assign temporary codes (Memon et al., 2017). Temporary codes were generated for grouping themes. Open coding allowed for identifying distinct themes and concepts for categorization (Williams & Moser, 2019). Constant code checking was done to modify the working list (Memon et al., 2017).

The second stage of the data analysis was category refinement. During this stage, the criteria were developed for determining which themes to include and exclude from a code (Memon et al., 2017). Axial coding was applied to identify, refine, and categorize emerging themes (Williams & Moser, 2019). Constant comparisons were completed to ensure codes were placed in appropriate categories.

The third stage of data analysis was exploration of relationships across categories (Memon et al., 2017). During this process, categories were refined into broad groupings. Data integration for synthesis and theory building followed as the fourth stage of data analysis (Memon et al., 2017). Narratives were produced for reporting the data. Thick descriptions were used to communicate detailed information about the case studied. Box displays highlighted unique and important quotes. Tables displayed emerging themes and topics. Pie charts depicted participants' demographic information.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity strategies aid in improving the quality of research. In qualitative designs, reliability measures the consistency of the instrument used and validity refers to the appropriateness of processes and tools (Leung, 2015). This section presents the strategies for establishing credibility, dependability, transferability, and trustworthiness.

#### **Credibility**

Credibility, or internal validity, is obtained when there is congruence between research findings and reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Credibility measures are important for adding control and rigor to research (Merriam, 1998). The methods used for achieving credibility in the study included triangulation, member checking, and adequate engagement. Triangulation

examines varying viewpoints using multiple data collection methods, theories, data sources, and investigators (Santos et al., 2020).

Three methods of data collection were employed in the study, including a virtual focus group discussion, a qualitative written questionnaire, and virtual interviews. The data sources comprised program enrollees and alumni. Data triangulation was achieved by collecting data through multiple documents, including field notes, taped interviews, and an investigator's diary (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Member checking was used in the study to elicit participants' feedback on data. In addition, member checking provided the means for clarifying misunderstandings, filling information gaps, and gaining new insights into the phenomenon studied (Kornbluh, 2015). Adequate engagement is an in-depth inquiry of the research problem. This in-depth inquiry involved the purposeful search for new findings and variations in understanding of the phenomenon researched (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### **Dependability**

Dependability measures how consistent results are with data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Triangulation, reflexivity, and audit trails served to increase the dependability of conclusions. Reflexivity fosters engagement in activities geared to create self-awareness and clarify biases (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Karagiozis, 2018). A reflexivity statement was prepared before data collection to highlight subjective experiences and relationships that have the potential to influence interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interpretive comments relating personal feelings, thoughts, and potential biases can increase the dependability of research (Karagiozis, 2018). All research documents used were traced through audit trails (Amankwaa, 2016). Audit trails involved compiling notes on the steps taken in all aspects of the



research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

### **Transferability**

Transferability, or external validity, is the extent to which research findings can be generalized to other situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The transferability of the study was increased by selecting a real-world representative sample. The maximum variation strategy of the purposeful sampling technique was utilized to gather rich data from participants with a wide range of characteristics (Merriam, 1998). Thick, or detailed, descriptions allowed for making inferences, generating conclusions, filling gaps, and extrapolating data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In qualitative research, thick data are used by readers to determine the extent to which personal situations align with the research situation (Merriam, 1998).

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness defines the rigor of research processes (Amankwaa, 2016). To guard the trustworthiness of the study, relationships proving to have power over participants and planned incentives were disclosed. No dual roles existed, and no monetary incentives were offered to participants. Multiple validity procedures were implemented, to include triangulation, member checking, use of thick data, and reflexivity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additional procedures were utilized in the study to increase trustworthiness. Adequate engagement in the field, active listening of participants' contributions, bracketing, and cross-checking transcripts for accuracy were some of the additional procedures used (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Ethical Procedures**

Research involving human participants carries potential benefits and risks (Merriam, 1998). *The Belmont Report* presented three principles for protecting human subjects as respect, beneficence, and justice (Adashi et al., 2018). Respect in research means acknowledging

humans' right to autonomy, the principle of justice supports equity and fairness in research, and beneficence advocates securing the well-being of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Nonmaleficence is founded on the moral principle of avoiding harm (Adashi et al., 2018). The study adhered to the four ethical principles throughout the data collection process.

Preceding data collection, permission was sought from site officials to conduct the study. To ensure compliance with the principle of respect, a consent form was prepared disclosing the purpose of the study, potential risks and benefits, assurance of voluntary withdrawal, and arrangements for protecting confidentiality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A key component of the consent process is voluntary participation. Provision was made in the sampling design to recruit participants above the age of 20. The initial communication with participants comprised an electronic recruitment letter and the consent form. Early dissemination of the consent form allowed participants to have sufficient time to peruse the content and request additional information if needed.

During the data collection phase of the study, multiple procedures were implemented to ensure minimal disruption of site functions. Interviews were held virtually at a time and date convenient to participants. Various strategies were implemented to issue fair and equal treatment to participants. The role of the IRB was discussed with participants to lessen the occurrence of nonresponse. Transparency of the involvement of an independent vetting authority (IRB's role) contributed to building participants' confidence to be treated fairly (Lynch, 2018). Continuous checks were carried out to ensure participants were free from harm. Interpretive commentaries revealed the thoughts, feelings, and experiences that may have contributed to the unfair treatment of respondents (Karagiozis, 2018). A thank-you card and dessert box were offered to respondents as a token of appreciation after the study was concluded.

Focus group discussions pose an ethical challenge as researchers have little control over information discussed outside of the group. Several strategies were used for mitigating information leaks. A briefing was conducted before the focus group discussion to outline the ground rules and emphasize the need for confidentiality and anonymity (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). The functions of a moderator extend beyond collecting data. Procedures undertaken to protect participants' privacy included staying alert to nonverbal cues and verbal claims of discomfort. Redirecting the focus of the conversation was necessary on the occasions when over disclosure of information occurred (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). A debriefing session was held after the discussion to provide participants with privacy reminders.

During the data analysis phase, due care and attention were applied to report multiple viewpoints and conflicting findings in an unbiased language (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Pseudonyms and composite stories were used to protect participants' identities. A password-protected computer was used for storing soft-copy information. Hard copies were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the investigator's private residence. All soft-copy data were transferred to a portable external drive. The external drive and hard copies were transferred to a locked cabinet. All data will be destroyed 3 years after the study.

### **Chapter Summary**

The methodology provided a background of the research and outlined the research problem and purpose. The qualitative case study research design chosen for the study was described in conjunction with the rationale for selection. Included were the research procedures, which encompassed the sampling design, recruitment strategies, instrumentation, data collection, and data preparation procedures. The role of the researcher was defined. Also presented in the

chapter were the data analysis model, validity and reliability measures, and ethical practices. The results of the study are discussed in Chapter 4.

#### **Chapter 4: Research Findings and Data Analysis Results**

A noteworthy trend in higher education is the upsurge of hiring adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty are a flexible and economical option for accommodating the needs of 21st-century learners (Frye, 2017). Professors of practice, a subset of the adjunct faculty population, are desired for having practical knowledge and industry expertise (Packer, 2019; Yakoboski, 2016). Research indicates some adjunct professors are less equipped than full-time counterparts to be effective educators (Meyer, 2017).

Academic leaders should ascertain students' perceptions of adjunct faculty teaching effectiveness (Baliyan & Moorad, 2018). The problem is learners' perspectives are rarely used as an impetus for developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors in tertiary institutions. A qualitative explanatory case study design was selected to explore learners' perceptions of the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice in a small urban community college in Grenada. The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What are adult learners' perceptions of the factors that contribute to the effective teaching of adjunct professors of practice in a small urban community college in Grenada?

Research Question 2: What do adult learners in a small urban community college in Grenada perceive to be effective teaching characteristics of adjunct professors of practice?

Research Question 3: How effective are the teaching practices of adjunct professors of practice, as perceived by adult learners in a small urban community college in Grenada?

Presented in the fourth chapter is a description of data collection procedures. The data analysis methods and results sections provide succinct answers to the research questions.

Following the data analysis methods are the strategies used for increasing reliability and validity in the study. Concluding the chapter are the ethical procedures followed during the research.

### **Data Collection**

A small urban community college in Grenada was selected for the qualitative explanatory case study. The principal of the college provided written consent (see Appendix A) to conduct research approximately 2 months before data collection commenced. As described in the recruitment plan, the coordinator of part-time associate-degree programs at the research site was contacted via email for a listing of candidates to participate in the research. Within 3 weeks, the coordinator provided a listing of enrolled students and graduates from the previous 2 years.

A total of 108 candidates were invited via email to participate in the research (see Appendix B). Candidates demonstrating interest to participate were subsequently contacted via a second email to sign the mandatory consent form (see Appendix C) and complete a demographic survey (see Appendix E). Signed informed consent forms and completed demographic surveys were collected via email prior to interviews. After the consent forms and demographic surveys were collected, participants were asked to provide a contact number for follow-up. Interviews were scheduled based on participant convenience.

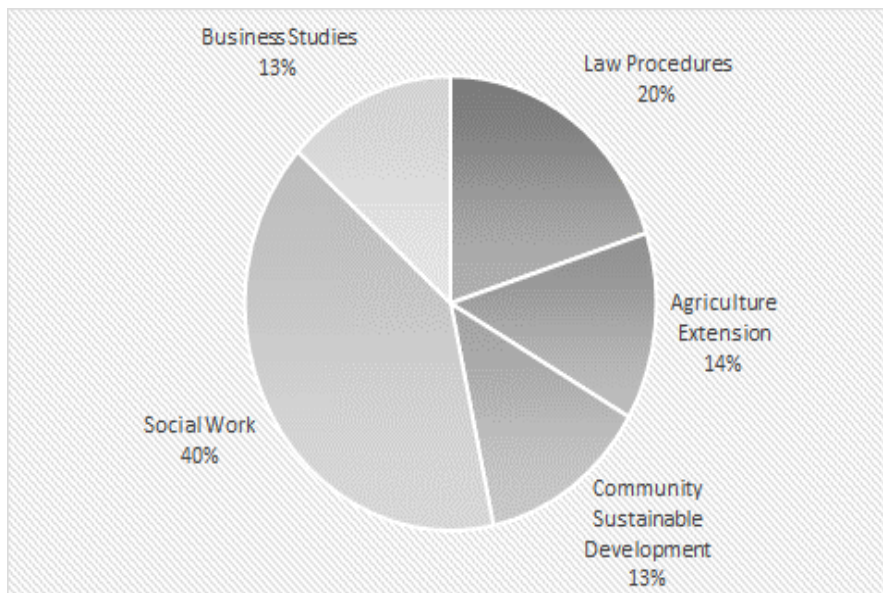
### **Demographics**

Using the purposeful sampling method, the study utilized 15 participants. All the candidates met the defined inclusion and exclusion criteria for participating in the study (Etikan et al., 2016). The maximum variation strategy was utilized to ensure ample variation in the sample (Merriam, 1998). Participants represented five of the six programs of study offered at the research site, including law procedures, business studies, agriculture extension, social work, and community sustainable development. None of the invited students and graduates of the media

studies program consented to participate in the study. The relatively small student population of the media studies program may have contributed to the nonresponse. Figure 2 illustrates the program distribution of participants.

**Figure 2**

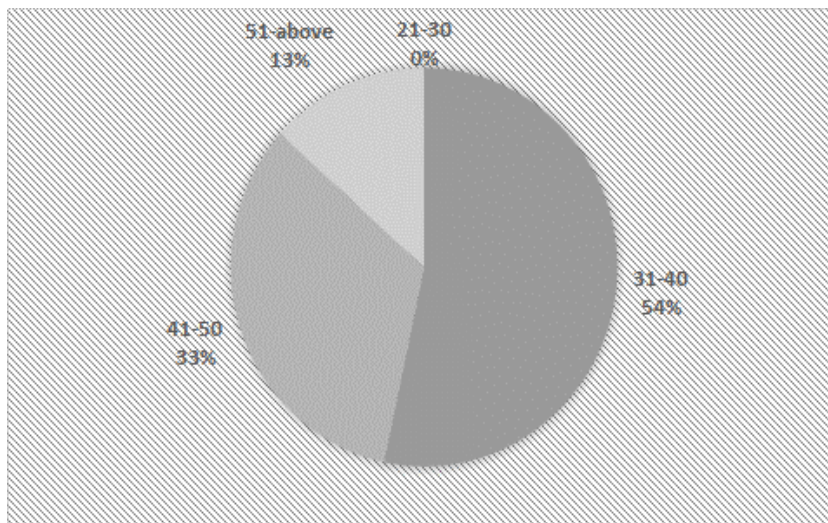
*Program Distribution of Participants*



Participants' age ranges are displayed in Figure 3. The data indicated 33% of participants were between the ages of 41 and 50 and 13% were 51 and above. More than 50% of participants fell within the 31–40 age range. None of the participants was under the age of 31.

**Figure 3**

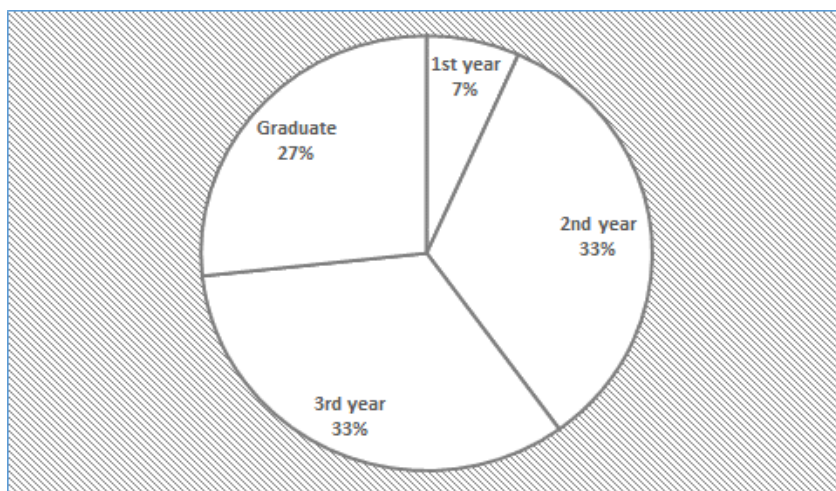
*Age Distribution of Participants*



The enrollment status of participants is presented in Figure 4. The data indicated 7% of participants were 1st-year students. Second-year and 3rd-year students accounted for 66% of the participants combined. Graduate students represented 27% of the total sample.

**Figure 4**

*Enrollment Status Distribution of Participants*



The gender distribution of participants was 13% male and 87% female (see Figure 5).

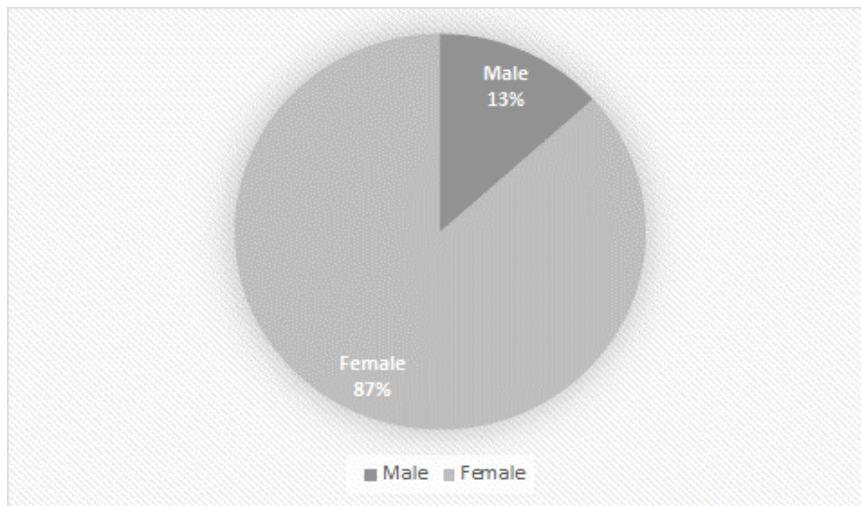
Female participants represented all programs of study (shown in Figure 1). One male participant



was classified as a graduate student. The second male participant was categorized as a 3rd-year student.

**Figure 5**

*Gender Distribution of Participants*



### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection commenced on December 29, 2020 and concluded on February 5, 2021. Virtual individual interviews served as the first method of data collection. Semistructured questions were utilized for collecting participants' responses. All 15 respondents participated in one interview, achieving a response rate of 100%. Interviews were conducted using Zoom technology. Interviews were recorded with participants' approval. Interviews lasted 20–60 minutes and averaged 42 minutes.

A qualitative questionnaire served as the second data collection instrument. The questionnaire was distributed to all participants via email. Three out of the 15 participants responded to the questionnaire, achieving a response rate of 20%. A virtual focus group

discussion was conducted via Zoom as the third method of data collection. Six interviewees agreed to participate in the discussion. One participant withdrew from the discussion due to technical difficulties, resulting in a response rate of 33%. The discussion lasted 30 minutes. Following the discussion, the participant experiencing technical difficulties submitted written responses to the focus group questions via email.

An interview protocol was used to direct each interview (see Appendix G) and the focus group discussion (see Appendix H). Audio recordings were created using the Zoom record feature. Handwritten field notes served as a secondary source of documentation. Temi computer software was utilized for transcribing the interviews and focus group discussion. Transcribed notes were compared with the audio recordings to ensure accuracy. Manual edits were made to correct inaudible and misinterpreted terms. After completing the transcripts, individual copies were emailed to respective participants for member checking. Themes produced from field notes were emailed to participants as a supplementary interview record. Participants stated the themes produced from field notes and transcripts were accurate.

### **Deviations from Data Collection Plan**

Several deviations from the data collection plan occurred. Due to the COVID-19 protocols, the plan to conduct some interviews face-to-face was abandoned. As a result, all interviews were conducted virtually. The IRB approved the use of both virtual and face-to-face interviews.

A listing of the adjunct professors of practice was prepared for participants to distinguish between adjunct professors of practice and other adjunct faculty members. This listing was important as many full-time lecturers serve in the dual capacity as adjunct faculty. Many of the participants demonstrated awareness of this distinction, so the listing was not disseminated to all

participants.

Google Survey was not used to distribute the demographic survey as originally planned. As the survey was relatively short, participants expressed comfort with responding via email. Doodle was not utilized for scheduling interviews as all the participants relayed meeting times via email. A larger target population was necessary to ensure the minimum number of 15 participants was achieved. More than double the intended target population received invitations to participate in the research. Technical difficulties were encountered in using the Dedoose coding software. As such, the data were analyzed manually.

### **Data Analysis**

The constant comparison model guided the data analysis for the study. Stage 1 of the model was inductive categorizing (Memon et al., 2017). During this process, transcripts from individual interviews and the focus group discussion were read carefully to identify initial themes (Memon et al., 2017). Typed field notes were compared to transcripts to determine similarities in findings. Results from the qualitative questionnaire were printed to establish codes and themes.

Overlapping themes from the three data sources were identified, combined, and assigned provisional codes (Memon et al., 2017). Emergent quotes from all data sources were identified and assigned to appropriate codes. Data were organized using a spreadsheet and flip chart. Applying the second stage in the model to refine categories, similar codes were grouped and assigned a category (Memon et al., 2017). Thereafter, refined categories were combined into broad categories. Reports were generated using the broad categories. With the use of an example, Table 1 illustrates how the manual coding process was carried out.

**Table 1***Development of Codes and Themes*

Code	Theme	Initial category	Broad category
Enjoyed storytelling	Experiential learning	Evidence-based teaching practices	Teaching skills/learning environment
Desired fieldwork experience	Authentic learning	Teaching & learning environment	
Practical application of content is important for learning		Teaching skills	

**Results**

Analysis of the three data sources resulted in emergent themes. As displayed in Table 2, participants ascribed inspirational influence and the learning environment as important factors contributing to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. Understanding the adult learner was considered another significant factor.

**Table 2***Factors Leading to the Teaching Effectiveness of Adjunct Professors of Practice*

Inspirational influence	Learning environment	Understanding the adult learner
Encourage personal and professional development	Learner-centered instructional practices, to include active learning, collaborative learning, authentic learning, experiential learning, technology integration	Understand and accommodate adult learners' circumstances, needs, and experiences
Promote lifelong & holistic development		
Offer mentorship and coaching	Classroom management	
Develop a collegial relationship	Learner-centered assessment practices	

Table 3 displays prominent quotes depicting the factors contributing to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. Three quotes are provided to demonstrate the importance of inspirational influence by the adjunct professors of practice. Four quotes establish the significance of teaching skills, the learning environment, and understanding the adult learner.

### Research Question 1

Participants' responses revealed the ability of an adjunct professor of practice to project inspirational influence was an important factor leading to teaching effectiveness. Inspirational influence combines two tenets of the transformational leadership theory: idealized influence and inspirational motivation. Idealized influence refers to the positive traits and actions leaders use to influence the achievement of a specified mission in an organization, while inspirational motivation encompasses the strategies used for motivating and inspiring followers to realize set

goals (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020).

**Table 3**

*Sample Quotes of Factors Leading to the Teaching Effectiveness of Adjunct Professors of Practice*

Inspirational influence	Learning environment	Understanding the adult learner
"Give us more information beyond the syllabus."	"Knowing and teaching are two different things."	"Don't talk over our heads."
"Promote holistic and continued learning."	"Use different strategies."	"Define jargons."
"It's more than learning, it's an experience . . . life changing."	"Break down the process step by step."	"Adults do not know it all."
	"I want to be involved."	"Be mindful that adult learners have to work and attend classes."

Providing content knowledge was insufficient for learners. Participant 3 desired "more information beyond the syllabus." As professors of practice are known to possess a wealth of industry knowledge and experiences (Ramsay & Brua, 2017), participants expected recommendations and resources for fulfilling professional goals. Likewise, participants valued the advice and experiences of adjunct professors of practice for personal development, "lifelong learning and holistic development." Participant 11 described the influence of adjunct professors of practice as "more than learning . . . as an experience and life-changing opportunity." Participant 6 remarked adjunct professors of practice should seek to develop a "collegial relationship rather than a hierarchal relationship" with learners.

Some participants appreciated when professors assumed the role of coach and mentor. A review of the literature conducted by Ali et al. (2018) revealed coaching is a professional

partnership whereby the coach supports the learning and development of the recipient.

Mentoring, on the other hand, is an ongoing relationship whereby the mentor utilizes their influence to enhance the career and professional development of the mentee (Ali et al., 2018).

A second theme that emerged as a factor leading to the teaching effectiveness adjunct professors of practice is the learning environment. Subthemes include active learning, collaborative learning, experiential learning, authentic learning, technology integration, and learner-centered assessment practices. The subthemes are described according to learners' perspectives. Reference is made to the literature where appropriate.

### ***Active Learning***

All the participants required an active learning environment characterized by student interaction and engagement. Participant 14 pleaded for "varied strategies to assist learners to reach the required standard." Participant 12 remarked, "I want to be involved." Instructional activities such as songs, games, and role playing aided in "making concepts come alive" and making "learning easy" for several participants.

### ***Collaborative Learning***

To construct knowledge, most of the participants desired a simplified explanation of content and repetition. One participant exclaimed professors should "break down the process step by step." Collaborative exercises such as heterogeneous and homogeneous group activities and peer learning were cited as important for constructing knowledge. Peer learning occurs when students engage in mutual interactions for learning (Nielsen et al., 2018). Creating a supportive learning environment in which learners feel comfortable to collaborate, ask questions, and voice opinions contributed to the teaching effectiveness of the adjunct professors of practice.

### ***Authentic and Experiential Learning***

Authentic learning is defined as connecting the real-world context in learning (Luo et al., 2017). Experiential learning is the exchange of experiences from various contexts, including educational and social experiences (Alshehri, 2020). All participants anticipated adjunct professors of practice to connect the real-world context in learning, reflective of industry affiliations. Teaching effectiveness was described by participants as incorporating "theory in practical settings," "providing hands-on knowledge," and "combining experiences with book knowledge."

### ***Technology Integration and Classroom Management***

To be considered effective instructors, learners require adjunct professors of practice to effectively deliver instruction via the Moodle online learning platform. Through the perspectives of learners, technology integration encompasses the use of "multimedia and interactive software." Presentation design, course organization, and balancing asynchronous with synchronous engagement were equally important for effective technology integration.

Classroom management was identified as another factor contributing to teaching effectiveness. Participant 12 defined classroom management as "behavior management," or the ability to control the communication flow during discussions. Some participants pointed out the effective use of class time was an important facet of classroom management.

### ***Learner-Centered Assessment Practices***

Most of the participants agreed regular formative assessments are needed to gauge student learning and inform teaching effectiveness. Some participants disliked traditional assessments such as tests and exams. Case studies and oral evaluations are some of the learner-centered assessments learners preferred. Students required guidance for completing assessments



and comprehensive but quick feedback following submission. Noteworthy, assessments should align with instruction and learning objectives. Diagnostic assessments and individual consultations were viewed as necessary procedures for assessing learners' prior knowledge, experiences, needs, and learning styles. Participant 11 noted, "Diagnostic assessment is important [as] some students are more advanced than others."

Understanding the adult learner emerged as a third factor leading to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. Some participants declared several adjunct professors of practice do not possess the knowledge and skills required for teaching adult learners. Participants described the approach of some of the professors as suitable for "children." Adjunct professors of practice were admonished to "learn how to teach and facilitate adult learners."

Through the lens of participants, understanding the needs of adult learners means recognizing adults have multiple roles, such as parenting, taking care of the home, and earning an income. Students complained of feeling overburdened and stressed due to a heavy workload and unreasonable time limits for submitting assignments. Participant 3 asked for adjunct professors of practice to "be mindful that adult learners have to work and attend classes." A few participants desired professors to demonstrate an understanding of personal circumstances such as illness. Recognizing adult learners may have additional commitments in other academic courses was important to participants.

Several participants experienced difficulty in grasping the content taught by professors of practice. Many professors of practice used terms and jargon unfamiliar to the students. Failure to explain such terms diminished students' understanding of the content taught. The notion exists adults "should know it all." Participant 3 summed up the solution as, "Don't talk over our

heads.”

### Research Question 2

The second research question explored the learners' perspectives of the characteristics leading to teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. As shown in Table 4, the emergent themes were care, enthusiasm, and professionalism. Twelve subthemes are presented to define the characteristics outlined by participants.

**Table 4**

*Characteristics Leading to the Teaching Effectiveness of Adjunct Professors of Practice*

Care	Enthusiasm	Professionalism
Patience	Passion	Punctuality
Empathy	Humor	Respectful communication
Commitment	Approachability	Fairness
Humility		Organized
Flexibility		

Significant comments specifying the characteristics leading to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice are presented in Table 5. Three quotations are presented under the themes of care and enthusiasm. Five quotes are presented under the theme of enthusiasm.

### *Care*

A recurring subtheme under the theme of care is patience. According to some participants, patience is defined as creating a learning environment that “allows for mistakes” and does not “ignore” or dismiss students' concerns. In the words of Participant 2, teaching

effectiveness means caring about student achievement and "being there for when questions are asked," not stating, "I already told you this."

**Table 5**

*Sample Quotes of Characteristics Leading to the Teaching Effectiveness of Adjunct Professors of Practice*

Care	Enthusiasm	Professionalism
"Be present not just physically."	"Be vibrant."	"Switch to instructional mode."
"Tell me I am capable."	"Encourage, don't ignore students."	"Be punctual."
"Be willing to learn from the learner."	"Show that you want to teach, you want students to grasp what you have learned."	"Time is precious." "Have a proper work plan." "Respect students' perspectives."

Several participants agreed, care means demonstrating patience with slower learners and offering individual support during and outside of class time. Participant 12 commented care means "asking how I am doing and how is my day going." When asked, How can care be displayed by adjunct professors of practice? the responses can be summarized as demonstrating "empathy," "compassion," and "sensitivity" to learners' feelings and needs. Most participants voiced displeasure in professors who made learners feel embarrassed or unworthy. What was appreciated were encouraging and inspirational professors of practice. Some participants articulated recognition and praise were important for motivating learning. One participant expressed, "Tell me I am capable." Some participants related caring professors of practice are committed to the profession of teaching.

***Enthusiasm***

Another characteristic many participants ascribed to teaching effectiveness is enthusiasm. Participants used the words “energetic,” “passionate,” “warm,” “welcoming,” “friendly,” “approachable,” “humorous,” and “witty” to describe enthusiastic professors. Enthusiastic professors can encourage students to become enthusiastic about learning. Participant 15 desired to see and feel professors’ “love” for teaching. As adjunct professors of practice tend to spend more time in industry careers, students perceived this instructional group may not be as committed to the profession of teaching as other faculty groupings.

***Professionalism***

Participants placed a high value on punctuality and regularity. Every participant regarded punctuality as a top characteristic leading to teaching effectiveness. Punctuality means “starting and ending class on time.” One participant lamented, “Time is precious” for working adults. Another quality linked to professionalism is communication skills. Good communication was described as promptly informing students when being late or absent. Respectful communication means not “rolling eyes” or “quarreling,” demonstrating the importance of nonverbal and verbal cues when relating to adult learners.

Humility was noted as an important characteristic leading to teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. Participants described humility as “respecting learners’ perspectives,” “being willing to learn from learners,” and “knowing the lecturer’s approach is not always effective.” Learners believe some adjunct professors of practice are “self-absorbed” and think the possession of a content degree and industry knowledge is sufficient to be an effective teacher. A humble adjunct professor of practice can adapt to students’ needs and “change or

transition" when necessary.

Fairness in grading was noted as important. Participants noted all students should be treated equitably and impartially. The final subtheme relating to professionalism is planning and organization skills. Participant 10 and others stated adjunct professors of practice should be "prepared" and have a "proper work plan."

### Research Question 3

Research Question 3 was designed to determine the effectiveness of the teaching practices of adjunct professors of practice, as perceived by adult learners in a small urban community college in Grenada. Table 6 illustrates the teaching strengths and weaknesses of adjunct professors of practice as perceived by learners. Teaching strengths and weaknesses indicate the effectiveness of the teaching practices of adjunct professors of practice.

**Table 6**

*Strengths and Weaknesses of Teaching Practices of Adjunct Professors of Practice*

Strengths	Weaknesses
Real-world knowledge and experiences	Teaching skills for adult learners
Promoting experiential and authentic learning	Technology integration/virtual teaching
Provided mentorship	Professionalism—punctuality, regularity, communication skills, dedication to teaching

Most participants were pleased with the industry knowledge and experiences adjunct professors of practice transferred to the classroom. This industry knowledge was important for learners to fill, and in some instances improve, professional roles. Real-world application of

knowledge, storytelling, and experiential learning were identified as important strategies for learning.

The problem is some adjunct professors of practice display an inability to adapt to the teaching and learning environment. Participant 6 affirmed adjunct professors of practice should know when to “switch hats.” Some students were treated as industry clients. A few participants could tell when adjunct professors of practice experienced a bad day at work; the resulting behaviors were described as “unprepared for class,” “frustrated,” “tired,” “full of rage,” “upset,” and “late.”

Many adjunct professors of practice used jargon unfamiliar to students and offered little or no explanations to support learning. To illustrate, many of the adjunct professors of practice in the law procedures program referred to legal terms before introducing the terms to students. Students' questions were met with embarrassing responses in some cases. Participants called on adjunct professors of practice to stop assuming “adults should know it all.” The qualities of professionalism, care, and enthusiasm are needed to understand learners. Most participants agreed adjunct professors of practice need to develop skills for integrating technology in learning and, on the general front, skills for teaching the adult learner.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Multiple strategies were implemented for increasing the credibility, dependability, transferability, and trustworthiness of the study. Credibility measures were important for attaining congruence between research findings and reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Dependability strategies were used to ensure consistency of results and transferability measures were utilized for generalizing findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Actions used for increasing trustworthiness demonstrated the rigor of the study (Amankwaa, 2016).

**Credibility**

The credibility strategies used during the data collection process were triangulation, member checking, and adequate engagement. Triangulation was used to examine varying viewpoints from participants and was achieved using multiple data sources and data collection methods (Santos et al., 2020). Data sources included graduates and students enrolled in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year of study. Individual interviews, a qualitative questionnaire, and a focus group discussion were used as the data collection methods. Findings were documented using field notes, audio recordings, and transcripts. Member checking was conducted by eliciting participants' feedback on transcripts and tentative themes developed from field notes. During each interview, participants' comments were summarized to ensure accuracy in note taking.

Adequate engagement occurs when there is an in-depth inquiry of the research problem (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Repetition was used frequently to ensure questions were understood by participants. Probing questions were utilized for collecting in-depth data. Follow-up calls and emails were used for clarifying data and filling information gaps. The average length of interviews was 42 minutes.

To reduce the possibility of bias and increase the credibility of the study, participants were asked to avoid referring to adjunct lecturers by names. When this situation occurred, the moderator provided reminders. There were occasions when participants attempted to wander from the research topic. On such occurrences, the conversation was quickly redirected back to the research topic.

**Dependability and Transferability**

Triangulation, reflexivity notes, and audit trails were used for improving the dependability of the study. Triangulation was achieved using three data collection methods and three data sources. Reflexivity notes and interpretive comments were produced to outline any biases in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Karagiozis, 2018). Audit trails encompassed gathering notes on the procedures implemented throughout the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The audit trails outlined the procedures undertaken during the data collection. Interpretive comments documented how findings influenced bias and reflexivity notes documented initial biases about the study. By using the maximum variation sampling technique, rich data were gathered from a population with a wide variation of characteristics and representative of the real-world context (Merriam, 1998). Thick, detailed descriptions were used for analyzing research data.

### **Trustworthiness**

No monetary incentives were offered to the participants. Dessert boxes and thank-you cards were offered to participants as an expression of appreciation. None of the participants was under the authority of the principal investigator. As such, no dual roles existed. Some other procedures implemented for increasing the trustworthiness of the study were active listening of participants' views, cross-checking transcripts with audio recordings, and bracketing (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The measures used for increasing the study's credibility, dependability, and transferability were dually used for increasing trustworthiness.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Several procedures were implemented for enforcing participants' confidentiality and rights. At the start of the interviews, briefings were held to discuss the clauses contained in the



consent form. Participants were required to sign the consent form before being interviewed.

Permission was sought from participants before recording (Yin, 2018). The focus group discussion followed the same protocol as interviews. Briefing and debriefing sessions served to remind participants about maintaining confidentiality. As another means for protecting privacy, participants were asked to conduct the focus group discussion with videos turned off. Numerical identifiers were used in the transcripts.

### **Chapter Summary**

The results of the study presented six major themes. In answering Research Question 1, inspirational influence, the learning environment, and understanding the adult learner evolved as factors leading to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. Results from Research Question 2 established enthusiasm, professionalism, and care were important characteristics leading to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. Findings revealed adjunct professors of practice in the case study possess the strength of industry knowledge and experiences. Teaching skills and the characteristic of professionalism were cited as key areas requiring improvement. The findings are discussed further in the next chapter, along with future recommendations and implications for leadership.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

Adjunct faculty hiring has steadily increased in colleges and universities throughout the United States. As part-time employees, adjuncts are an economical option for cash-strapped institutions. The influx of nontraditional learners has prompted academic leaders to seek a flexible teaching staff. Adjunct professors of practice, a subset of the adjunct population, are desired for industry experiences and practical knowledge.

Adjunct faculty growth may be correlated with decreases in student learning outcomes. Academic leaders have a responsibility to explore students' perspectives of adjunct teaching effectiveness to ensure expectations are fulfilled. A qualitative explanatory case study was used to explore the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice in a small urban community college in Grenada. The study was necessary as learners' perspectives are rarely used as an impetus for developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors in tertiary institutions. Results of the study may prompt academic leaders to utilize learners' perspectives for assessing and improving the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What are adult learners' perceptions of the factors that contribute to the effective teaching of adjunct professors of practice in a small urban community college in Grenada?

Research Question 2: What do adult learners in a small urban community college in Grenada perceive to be effective teaching characteristics of adjunct professors of practice?

Research Question 3: How effective are the teaching practices of adjunct professors of practice, as perceived by adult learners in a small urban community college in Grenada?

Semistructured interviews, a focus group discussion, and a qualitative questionnaire were used for collecting data. A total of 15 participants contributed to the study. Six major themes emerged from the study. Participants described the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice as exerting inspirational influence, understanding the adult learner, and creating a conducive learning environment. Professionalism, enthusiasm, and caring for adult learning needs were noted as significant characteristics leading to teaching effectiveness.

Presented in Chapter 5 is a discussion of the results, interpretations, and conclusions. The results of the study are discussed in relation to the literature and theoretical framework. Limitations are described outlining the threats to the reliability and validity of the study. Recommendations for future research and application in practice are provided. Also included are the implications for leadership.

### **Findings, Interpretations, Conclusions**

The results revealed six major themes. In answering Research Question 1, the themes that emerged are understanding the adult learner, the learning environment, and inspirational influence. Subthemes include learner-centered instructional and assessment practices, accommodating adult learners' needs, and promoting professional development. Three major themes that emerged for answering the second research question were professionalism, enthusiasm, and caring for adult learning needs. Professionalism and the learning environment emerged as major themes for answering Research Question 3.

#### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 was designed to explore learners' perspectives of the factors leading to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. Results from the study revealed

inspirational influence was an important factor leading to teaching effectiveness. Inspirational influence combines the principles of inspirational motivation and idealized influence outlined in the transformational leadership theory. Inspirational motivation refers to the leadership strategies used for motivating followers to achieve set goals (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020). Idealized influence denotes the positive behaviors and characteristics leaders demonstrate to influence the achievement of a specified mission in an organization (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020).

The findings from the study revealed adjunct professors can model transformational leadership by exerting inspirational influence. As further reflected in the study, when adjunct professors of practice share industry experiences and expertise in academia, students can become influenced and inspired to realize professional goals. Adjunct professors of practice should assume the roles of instructor, facilitator, coach, and mentor. Adult learners in the study expressed appreciation for adjunct professors of practice who provided recommendations for fulfilling career aspirations. Likewise, learners desired to be a part of the professional networks with which most adjunct professors of practice are affiliated.

The results of the study support the literature findings. Packer (2019) and Yakoboski (2016) posited student development can occur when adjunct professors of practice share industry knowledge and expertise. Adjunct professors of practice utilize industry connections for creating networking opportunities between students and industry leaders (Ramsay & Brua, 2017). Professors of practice equally support professional development by orienting students to new practices in the industry (Ramsay & Brua, 2017).

Some adjunct professors of practice influence the professional development of students through rich conversations (Rich, 2017). Student conversations encompass discussions on lived experiences, professional competencies, and career advisement (Packer, 2019; Rich, 2017;

Smith, 2019). Qualified adult educators share industry expertise to assist learners to prepare for the real-life setting (Wahlgren, 2016). Assuming the roles of coach and mentor, adjunct professors of practice support learning and influence professional development through ongoing relationships with students (Ali et al., 2018).

### ***Active Learning and Collaborative Learning***

The learning environment emerged as the second theme for answering Research Question 1. Participants described teaching effectiveness as an active learning environment characterized by collaborative activities, student involvement, interaction, and engagement. Several participants stated adjunct professors placed more emphasis on traditional teaching and less emphasis on active learning (Umbach, 2007). Most participants indicated collaborative exercises such as group discussions and assignments enhanced learning, yet some adjunct professors of practice promote little or no collaboration among students (Alshehri, 2020). Participants appreciated when adjunct professors of practice created avenues for regular interaction. Student interaction was viewed as important for clarifying assignment instruction and filling knowledge gaps.

The findings from the study corroborated the findings from the literature. Chuyun Hu (2020) postulated effective teachers promote student engagement and participation by creating opportunities for meaningful conversations with students and among students. Chuyun Hu further pointed out effective teaching includes assigning student groups to apply problem-solving skills in various contexts. Connecting the findings from the study to the theoretical framework, the theory of andragogy states adult learners' orientation to learning is problem centered and task oriented (Merriam, 2001).

### ***Experiential Learning***

Learners benefited from the interchange of experiences in courses taught by adjunct professors of practice. Experiential learning fosters the exchange of educational, social, and cultural experiences (Alshehri, 2020). Knowles's theory of andragogy indicates adult learners possess a repertoire of experiences and desire to share such experiences in academic settings (Merriam, 2001).

Participants' learning was enhanced when adjunct professors of practice facilitated experiential learning through instructional activities such as classroom discussions and debates. Learners valued recommendations and personal stories adjunct professors shared for fulfilling academic and professional pursuits. The literature findings support the use of experiential learning in the adult learning context. Effective adult educators purposefully reflect on experiences to continuously improve student performance and learning (Wahlgren, 2016) and use personal examples to foster learning (Kirby et al., 2018).

### ***Authentic Learning***

Authentic learning occurs when educators connect learning to the real-life context (Luo et al., 2017). Participants regarded the industry affiliations of adjunct professors of practice as vital for learning. Some professors of practice facilitated authentic learning by orienting students to new practices in the industry, creating networking opportunities, and conveying perspectives to learners that differed from those of instructors who are not field experts (Nica, 2018; Ramsay & Brua, 2017).

Most of the participants in the study welcomed the use of authentic instructional activities such as case studies, field trips, and role playing. Wahlgren (2016) postulated effective adult educators assist learners to acquire and transfer knowledge in the real-life context. Chuyun Hu

(2020) concluded effective teachers provide relevant content for students to apply in real-life situations.

Knowles's theory of andragogy outlines adult learners' readiness to learn is based on the development of tasks associated with fulfilling social roles (Merriam, 2001). The transformational leadership theory promotes intellectual stimulation in followers. Application to the adult learning context involves the use of creative thinking and problem-solving activities to stimulate learning (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020).

### ***Technology Integration***

Results from the study revealed technology is a significant part of 21st-century learning. As a consequence of the global pandemic, the research site transitioned from face-to-face learning to blended learning; some courses involved 100% online learning. Adjustments were required for students and faculty to acclimatize to the new mode of learning. Participants described teaching effectiveness for adjunct professors of practice as the effective use of the prescribed virtual learning platform and skilled use of technology in learning.

Several of the adjunct professors of practice described in the study lacked the skills for effectively integrating technology in instruction. Coughlan (2015) acknowledged many adjunct professors fail to integrate technology into instructional practices. Technology integration for some adjuncts includes the use of PowerPoint, audio, and video rather than advanced instructional technologies (Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017).

Results from the study validate the findings of Field and Jones (2016) that specified adjuncts require more opportunities to develop skills for integrating technology in instruction. One of the least practiced areas of professional development in which adjunct professors participated was technological activities (Kaaki, 2020). Several adjuncts who were not computer

savvy or technology literate experienced difficulty in integrating technology, manipulating software, and utilizing digital applications in instruction (Cooper et al., 2019). According to Kirby et al. (2018), teaching effectiveness means effectively utilizing technology to support and enhance learning.

### ***Learner-Centered Assessments***

Students expressed a desire for more application-based assessments, continuous assessments, and timely feedback following exams and quizzes. The responses from participants in the study indicate adjunct professors of practice should diagnose adult learners' circumstances, learning styles, experiences, needs, and prior knowledge before designing assessments. Assessment design should be tailored to the needs of learners.

Literature findings confirm some adjunct professors demonstrate deficiencies in designing assessments and fail to provide student feedback at the end of an evaluation (Morthland, 2010). Several adjunct professors in associate-degree-granting institutions are focused more on evaluating students' understanding of theoretical knowledge through traditional assessments and less on the practical application of knowledge through learner-centered assessments (Webber, 2012). Participants required continuous assessments to determine knowledge gaps and timely feedback following assessments. Baliyan and Moorad (2018) associated teaching effectiveness with the effective use of feedback practices.

Effective instructors promote intellectual stimulation using thoughtful questioning, diverse assessments, and constructive feedback (Kirby et al., 2018). Kirby et al. (2018) pointed out the importance of fair testing and grading as a prerequisite of teaching effectiveness. Another qualification for effective teaching is communication between faculty and students about teaching and learning needs (Wibbecke et al., 2015). Knowles's theory of andragogy addresses



the need for adult educators to involve learners in the diagnosis of learning needs (Knowles et al., 2005).

Understanding the adult learner emerged as the third theme for answering Research Question 1. Understanding the adult learner requires adjunct professors of practice to increase knowledge about adult learning characteristics and accommodate adult learning needs and circumstances. Teaching effectiveness in the adult learning context means designing effective instructional strategies relating to learners' preconditions (Wahlgren, 2016). Effective instructors adapt to the various backgrounds of students, consider the different learning styles, and incorporate student backgrounds and learning styles into the instructional design (Chuyun Hu, 2020).

Participants expressed disappointment when adjunct professors of practice demonstrated a lack of understanding of adult learners' circumstances. Some adjunct professors failed to recognize that adult learners fulfill multiple roles such as parenting and homemaking. Kirby et al. (2018) found teaching effectiveness means understanding adult learners' circumstances and accepting legitimate excuses for missing assignments or classes.

The transformational leadership theory supports the need for educators to display individual consideration for adult learners. Individual consideration is the extent to which leaders consider the individual needs, strengths, and weaknesses of followers (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020). Considering the unique needs of adult learners may prompt adjunct professors of practice to tailor an instructional design for accommodating such needs. The theory of andragogy addresses eight elements for promoting adult learning success, including the role educators play in creating a physically and psychologically conducive learning climate (Knowles et al., 2005). Some participants pointed out a learning environment that overburdens students can increase

frustration and stress levels.

### **Research Question 2**

The results of the study revealed professionalism, enthusiasm, and caring for adult learning needs were the leading characteristics contributing to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. Several subthemes emerged: the characteristics of empathy, patience, approachableness, respect, punctuality, flexibility, fairness, and communication skills.

#### ***Care***

Adjunct faculty teaching effectiveness was described by participants as adjunct professors of practice demonstrating care. Some participants described care as demonstrating personal interest in learners' individual needs and encouraging open communication with learners. Caring was also described as displaying empathy and patience when learners encounter personal, academic, or professional difficulties, and adapting the instructional design to accommodate the needs of learners.

Literature findings substantiated the results from the study. A content analysis by Baglione and Tucci (2019) identified the characteristic of care as a significant dimension of teaching effectiveness. In another study of student perspectives of teaching effectiveness, Anderson et al. (2020) found care is a key indicator of effective teaching. According to Anderson et al., good teachers care about creating student interest in the subject matter taught, developing the skill of teaching, and accommodating students' needs. Results from a study by Todd (2018) revealed teacher care is essential for students' personal and academic development. Care is manifested when faculty exhibit flexibility, treat students with respect, and demonstrate a willingness to assist students to achieve academic and personal goals (Todd, 2018).

#### ***Enthusiasm***

Participants identified enthusiasm as another important characteristic leading to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. The subthemes of passion, humor, fun, and wit emerged as contributing factors to enthusiasm. Literature findings supported the characteristic of enthusiasm as a significant dimension of teaching effectiveness (Baglione & Tucci, 2019; Miller-Young et al., 2020). Kirby et al. (2018) highlighted effective teachers are enthusiastic about teaching and demonstrate this quality by smiling, gesturing, and expressing emotion.

The transformational leadership theory supports the findings. A governing principle of the transformational leadership theory is inspirational motivation, which refers to the strategies used for motivating followers to achieve set goals (Merriam, 2001). Enthusiasm can be used as an inspirational motivator for adult learners. According to the theory of andragogy, adult learners' motivation to learn is intrinsic (Merriam, 2001).

### ***Professionalism***

The results from the study revealed professionalism is a prominent characteristic leading to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. Most of the participants described professionalism in the context of punctuality, commitment, and communication skills. Other subthemes include humility and respect.

Literature findings support professionalism and commitment as key dimensions of teaching effectiveness (Baglione & Tucci, 2019). Miller-Young et al. (2020) listed professional commitment as a necessary characteristic for effective teaching. Kirby et al. (2018) found effective instructors are punctual and demonstrate this trait by arriving and dismissing class on time and scheduling time for student questions. Kirby et al. (2018) further pointed out effective

teachers portray respectful communication skills by not embarrassing, humiliating, or talking down to students.

The transformational leadership theory is based on the idealized influence leaders exert on followers (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020). Idealized influence includes the positive characteristics and actions leaders demonstrate to influence behavior in followers (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020). When adjuncts display a caring attitude, professionalism, and enthusiasm in academic settings, students can be influenced to display the same behaviors.

### **Research Question 3**

The themes presented in Research Questions 1 and 2 also emerged in determining the effectiveness of teaching practices of adjunct professors of practice, as perceived by learners in the case study. The findings from the study revealed the teaching strengths and weaknesses of adjunct professors of practice. Adjunct professors of practice were deemed effective for promoting experiential learning, connecting content to the real-life context, and providing mentorship (Ramsay & Brua, 2017). Professors of practice require improvement in the areas of professionalism, technology integration skills, and teaching competencies for adult learners. Students placed a strong emphasis on the subthemes of punctuality, communication skills, and overall commitment to the profession. The literature findings noted communication and professional commitment are significant dimensions of teaching effectiveness (Baglione & Tucci, 2019; Miller-Young et al., 2020).

The transformational leadership theory informed the context of the study. Four principles form the basis of the theory. As educators, adjunct professors of practice exhibited the transformational leadership principles outlined by Erdel and Takkaç (2020) as idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration.

Presented in the study, adjuncts professors of practice provided idealized influence and individual consideration through mentorship, intellectual stimulation through active and authentic learning activities, and inspirational motivation through experiential learning.

### **Epiphanies**

The theme of professionalism emerging from the study was a surprise. A review of the literature by Baglione and Tucci (2019) revealed professionalism is an important characteristic leading to teaching effectiveness. As adjunct professors of practice are considered industry professionals, issues relating to the subthemes of communication and punctuality were unforeseen. Professionalism denotes accepted behavior in the workplace and includes punctuality, communication skills, and commitment (Amarwani et al., 2018). Professionalism is necessary for workers desiring a long and productive profession (Amarwani et al., 2018). As students' lives can be impacted by the behavior of educators, strict standards of professionalism are required in academia (Amarwani et al., 2018).

Within the context of the case study, many of the adjunct professors of practice paid little heed to the work standards of professionalism and commitment. Some adjunct professors of practice were habitually late for class. Several adjunct professors of practice communicated with students in a condescending tone and displayed little commitment to the job of teaching. A lack of commitment was displayed when adjunct professors of practice demonstrated little evidence of course organization, lesson planning, and classroom management.

Literature findings disclosed classroom management and organizational strategies are important facets of teaching effectiveness (Baliyan & Moorad, 2018). Baglione and Tucci (2019) identified course organization as an important factor contributing to teaching effectiveness.

Professional commitment was highlighted as a significant factor contributing to teaching effectiveness (Baglione & Tucci, 2019; Miller-Young et al., 2020). Wahlgren (2016) defined teaching effectiveness for adult educators as creating a constructive learning environment characterized by commitment.

### **Limitations**

Limitations in research are the factors beyond the investigator's control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The research site selected for conducting the study was a small urban community college in Grenada. Findings may not be generalizable to larger institutions and other geographical locations (Simon & Goes, 2013). A population of 15 participants served as the sample size for the study. The response rates for the focus group discussion and questionnaire were less than 35%. Students between the ages of 21 and 30 and students attending the media studies program at the research site were not represented in the study. Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) posited some data collection instruments can provide narrow results. Studying a larger population with greater inclusion in all data collection methods and greater participant diversity may have yielded richer results.

The transcription software used for the study produced less-than-expected results, requiring a substantial amount of manual editing. Time constraints may have led to spelling, punctuation, or omission errors in the editing process. Due to time and money limitations, no formal training was undertaken to navigate the planned coding software.

Technical difficulties encountered directed the use of a manual coding system. Human error may have influenced the final analysis of data. As the interviews were conducted virtually, Internet glitches contributed to communication delays. Active listening was implemented for assimilating information without bias and minimizing error (Yin, 2018).

### **Recommendations**

Expanding the geographical location and population may provide richer results. Exploring the perspectives of learners from several institutions, to include vocational schools, private institutions, large universities, and larger community colleges, may provide greater generalizability.

The population chosen for the study included part-time students attending associate-degree programs in a community college. Adjunct professors of practice are hired by many academic institutions to instruct full-time students. A recommendation is to explore the perspectives of full-time learners taught by adjunct professors of practice. Adjunct professors of practice perspectives of teaching effectiveness can be explored to determine if there are similarities with learners' perspectives.

Another recommendation is to compare learners' perspectives of the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice to the teaching effectiveness of full-time faculty. Additionally, the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice can be compared to the teaching effectiveness of other categories of adjunct professors. As no known studies have explored this topic, such considerations may broaden academic leaders' knowledge of the teaching gaps and developmental needs of adjunct professors of practice.

Another recommendation is to research the impact of teaching practices of adjunct professors of practice on student learning outcomes. Students' graduation rates and GPAs are two learning outcomes researchers should analyze. Exploring students' satisfaction levels and achievement rates through case studies is another source for assessing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice.

Student evaluations of teaching are widely used for summative decision making, such as contract renewals (Boring, 2017; Siddique et al., 2019). Some academic institutions use SETs for developing faculty capacity (Schmid et al., 2016). The results from the present study demonstrate SETs are a valid method for assessing teaching effectiveness and, by extension, informing the training and development needs of adjunct professors of practice. Students should purposefully reflect on experiences in courses taught by adjuncts (Alshehri, 2020). More emphasis should be placed on developing adjunct faculty up to students' requirements (Raza & Irfan, 2018).

Another recommendation is to redesign evaluations of teaching to include student dialogues. Surveys are preferred to elicit anonymous feedback from a wide sample (Baliyan & Moorad, 2018). However, surveys do not allow for students' perceptions of how instructors facilitate learning (Borch et al., 2020). Dialogue-based evaluations such as interviews and focus group discussions are beneficial for facilitating open discussions about what matters to students in teaching and learning (Borch et al., 2020).

Professional development and training programs are recommended for developing adjunct professors of practice up to the requirements of students. High-quality professional development initiatives provide opportunities for adjunct professors to learn the evidence-based teaching practices necessary for improving practice (Parker et al., 2019). Utilizing the findings from the study, instructional designers could design professional development and training programs to include developing professionalism for the adult learning context; understanding the adult learner, adult learning theories, and principles; integrating technology in learning; and applying evidence-based teaching practices in adult learning.

### **Implications for Leadership**



The literature disclosed several adjunct professors possess limited experiences in teaching (Meyer, 2017). Not having a teaching degree can affect the instructional performance of adjuncts (Hanson et al., 2018). Results from the study support some adjunct professors of practice lack the knowledge and skills necessary for teaching adult learners effectively. Academic leaders ought to view adjunct professors of practice not as a cheap and flexible teaching force but as a group of industry practitioners possessing valuable knowledge and experiences to share with students.

Considering learners' feedback could improve academic leaders' understanding of adjunct teaching practices. Student feedback is an important component of reflective teaching and can promote refinement in practice and professional development (Baliyan & Moorad, 2018). Dialogue-based evaluative systems of teaching are beneficial for discussing what matters to students in teaching and learning (Borch et al., 2020). This collaborative approach may improve the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice and in turn increase student outcomes. Adjunct faculty seeking to qualify for permanent teaching positions in higher education may benefit from students' evaluation of teaching. Institutional reputation could improve following instructional development.

The time frame for hiring adjunct faculty is usually less than 3 weeks before the start of the academic semester (Alshehri, 2020). Last-minute hiring can result in adjunct professors not having sufficient time for preparation (Nica, 2018). Academic leaders should begin recruiting adjunct staff earlier than the norm. Advance hiring may provide adjunct professors of practice adequate time for rearranging personal and professional schedules. When last-minute hiring is unavoidable, department heads should consult adjunct professors to decide on matters concerning course schedules. A consultative hiring approach may decrease occurrences of

tardiness and absenteeism.

### **Conclusion**

The findings from the study revealed six themes to describe learners' perspectives of the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice. The overarching themes of characteristics leading to teaching effectiveness are (a) enthusiasm, (b) care, and (c) professionalism; (d) understanding the adult learner, (e) inspirational influence, and (f) the learning environment emerged as significant factors leading to the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice.

The study was limited to one geographical location and utilized a relatively small sample. Recommendations may not be generalizable for improving practice. Future research can add to the existing body of knowledge by exploring adjunct professors of practice perspectives of teaching effectiveness. The teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice can be compared to the teaching effectiveness of other adjunct categories.

Leadership implications abounded from the study. The findings support a need for academic leaders to utilize learners' input as an impetus for developing adjunct teaching effectiveness. Educators should gain awareness of students' perspectives on effective teaching, as what may seem effective from an administrative standpoint may be ineffective from students' standpoint (Bouras, 2019). One recommendation is to utilize student dialogues for evaluating instructional quality (Borch et al., 2020). Professional development and training were identified as mediums for improving the instructional skills of adjunct professors of practice (Parker et al., 2019). Change in policies and practice are anticipated for improving the teaching effectiveness of adjunct professors of practice and, by extension, students' learning outcomes.

Two epiphanies emerged from the study. The findings from the study revealed many adjunct professors of practice displayed a lack of professionalism relating to communication and punctuality. Higher education standards should be enforced directing expectations for punctuality and a protocol for communicating with students. Monitoring systems are necessary for ensuring standards are met. Job appraisals should align with the set expectations.

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**Appendix A****Site Permission Request and Approval Letter**

Lisa Francis-Charles  
Faculty member

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Currently, I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education (ACE). I am requesting permission to interview students enrolled in the part-time associate degree programs offered by the School of Continuing Education. This information will be used for my dissertation research related to examining the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty. I have chosen a qualitative case study research design to explore learners' perspectives of adjunct faculty teaching effectiveness. The sample population will be a minimum of fifteen (15) participants.

If you desire additional information, please contact me or my chair.

Principal Investigator: Lisa Francis-Charles

Email: [lisaf@tamcc.edu.gd](mailto:lisaf@tamcc.edu.gd)

Phone: 415-2347

Dissertation Chair: Sarah Everts, Ph.D.

E-mail: [sarah.everts@ace.edu](mailto:sarah.everts@ace.edu)

Phone: 315-246-8399

Thank you for your attention to this issue and prompt response. I appreciate your time and consideration of my request.

Regards,



Lisa Francis-Charles





October 30, 2020

Mrs. Lisa Francis-Charles  
Faculty Member

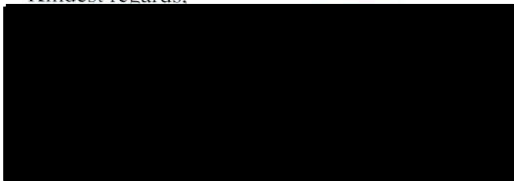


Dear Mrs. Francis-Charles,

I am pleased to inform you that approval is granted for the carrying out of interviews with students enrolled in the part-time Associate Degree programs offered by the [REDACTED] Education for your dissertation research.

Let me take this opportunity to express best wishes to you as you pursue your Doctorate at the American College of Education (ACE).

Kindest regards,



**Appendix B****Participant Recruitment Letter**

Lisa Francis-Charles  
Doctoral Candidate  
American College of Education

Participant Name  
Participant address

Date

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a dissertation research study about adult learners' perceptions of adjunct faculty teaching effectiveness in the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I am a doctoral student at American College of Education. The study purposes to explore learners' perceptions about adjuncts teaching effectiveness to inform teaching development initiatives. You have been chosen to participate in the study because of your experiences as a current student or former student attending adjunct faculty courses.

I am a fulltime lecturer in the college. I have no authority nor interactions with adjunct faculty and enrollees in the program. Should a conflict arise occur during the study, you may choose to voluntarily withdraw from the study by signing the participant withdrawal form.

As I have mentioned, you have been identified as a possible participant for this study. Agreement to be contacted for more information does not obligate you to participate in this study. Your participation in the study is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, you may withdraw at any time.

I may publish the results of this study; however, I will not use your name or share any information you provided. Your information will remain confidential. If you would like additional information about the study, please call (473-415-2347).

Thank you again for considering to be part of this dissertation research.

-----  
Principal Investigator

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research

**Prospective Research Participant:** Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

### Project Information

**Project Title:** Exploring Learners' Perceptions of Adjunct Faculty Teaching Effectiveness: A Qualitative Case Study in a Grenadian Community College

**Researcher:** Lisa Francis-Charles

**Organization:** American College of Education

**Email:** lisafrancis.tamcc@gmail.com

**Telephone:** 473-415-2347

**Researcher's Faculty Member:** Sarah Everts PhD

**Organization and Position:** American College of Education, Doctoral Instructional Faculty

**Email:** sarah.everts@ace.edu

### Introduction

I am Lisa Francis-Charles, and I am a doctoral candidate at American College of Education. I am conducting research under the guidance and supervision of my Chair, Dr. Sarah Everts. I will provide you some information about the project and invite you to be part of this research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research. This consent form may contain words you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information, and I will explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them then.

### Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study which will assist with understanding adult learners' perceptions of adjunct faculty teaching effectiveness. This qualitative study will explore how instructional practices and competencies impact teaching effectiveness. The results of the study may support instructional development initiatives in 2-year programs offered by community colleges.

### Research Design and Procedures

The study will use a qualitative methodology and explanatory case study research design. Demographic surveys will be disseminated to specific individuals associated with the [REDACTED] to establish suitability. The study will comprise of a minimum of 15 participants, purposefully selected from those eligible, who will participate in

virtual or face-to-face interviews (focused group or individual) or online questionnaires. The study will be conducted at a site most convenient for participants. After interviews are conducted, a debrief session will occur.

### **Participant selection**

You are being invited to take part in this research because of your experiences as an adult learner or alumnus. The criteria for selecting participants are: 1) learners will be 21 years and over 2) be formerly or currently enrolled in a part-time, 2-year degree program in the [REDACTED].

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate. If you choose not to participate, there will be no punitive repercussions and you do not have to participate. If you select to participate in this study, you may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

### **Procedures**

We are inviting you to participate in this research study. If you agree, you will be asked to participate in a virtual or face-to-face interview (focused group or individual) or online questionnaire. The type of questions asked will be direct inquiries about the topic of adjunct teaching effectiveness. Individual and focus group interviews will be recorded. Affixing your signature on the Informed consent form indicates your approval to be recorded.

### **Duration**

The data collection portion of the research study will require approximately 40-60 minutes to complete. If you are selected to participate in the individual or focused group interviews, the time expected will be a maximum of 60 minutes at a location and time convenient for the participant(s). A follow-up debriefing session will take place for 7 minutes. If you are chosen to participate in the qualitative online questionnaire, the time allotted for completion will be approximately 15 minutes.

### **Risks**

The researcher will ask you to share information that you may feel uncomfortable talking about. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion if you have reservations about doing so. You do not have to give any reason for not responding to any question.

### **Benefits**

While there will be no direct financial benefit to you, your participation is likely to help us find out more about the teaching competencies of adjunct faculty. The potential benefits of this study

will aid academic leaders in developing the teaching effectiveness of adjunct faculty.

**Confidentiality**

I will not share information about you or anything you say to anyone outside of the researcher. During the defense of the doctoral dissertation, data collected will be presented to the dissertation committee. The data collected will be kept in a locked file cabinet and encrypted computer file. Any information about you will be coded and will not have a direct correlation, which directly identifies you as the participant. Only I will know what your number is, and I will secure your information.

**Sharing the Results**

At the end of the data collection period, you will be invited to review transcripts to ensure accuracy. At the end of the research study, the results will be available for each participant. It is anticipated to publish the results so other interested people may learn from the research.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

Participation is voluntary. At any time, you wish to end your participation in the research study, you may do so without repercussions.

**Questions About the Study**

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact me, Lisa Francis-Charles @473-415-2347 or lisfrancis.tamcc@gmail.com. This research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of American College of Education. This is a committee whose role is to make sure research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to ask questions of this group, email IRB@ace.edu.

**Certificate of Consent**

I have read the information about this study, or it has been read to me. I acknowledge why I have been asked to be a participant in the research study. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I certify I am at least 21 years of age. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print or Type Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print or type name of lead researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of lead researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

I have accurately read or witnessed the accurate reading of the assent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm the individual has freely given assent.

Print or type name of lead researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of lead researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of faculty member: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE KEEP THIS INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR YOUR RECORDS.**

**Appendix D****Participant Withdrawal Form****Name of Principal Investigator:** \_\_\_\_\_**Title of Study:** \_\_\_\_\_**IRB ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ wish to discontinue my participation in this study.

*Name of Participant*

I understand that ending my participation means:

- I will no longer be contacted about this research study unless I need to be informed of a safety concern.
- Information about me, and my experiences as a student or former students of the research site will no longer be collected.

I understand that any data collected as part of my participation in the study will remain as part of the study records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name of Participant*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Participant*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of principal Investigator*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

**Appendix E****Demographic Survey**

**Instructions: Please circle the response which applies to you. This information will inform the final participant selection for the study.**

1. State your gender (male, female)
2. Which age range do you belong? (21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-above)
3. State the program you are (were) enrolled in (Media studies, Social Work, Business studies, Law Procedures, Agricultural Extension, Community Sustainable Development, Other)
4. State your student status (1<sup>st</sup> yr., 2<sup>nd</sup>., 3<sup>rd</sup> yr., graduate, other)



## Appendix F

### Individual Interview Questions

- 1 . Think back to your favorite teacher. Describe his or her actions that made it an effective learning experience
- 2 . In your own words, how would you describe effective teaching?
- 3 . What are the teaching characteristics that are important to you as a learner? e.g. personality traits. Can you share your experiences or reasons to support your view?
- 4 . Think about your experiences as a current (past) student of the [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]. What are some things your instructors did that made it an effective learning experience for you?
- 5 . What kind of things you wished your instructors did to improve your learning experience?
- 6 . What are the teaching practices where your instructors demonstrate effectiveness?  
Can you share your experiences or reasons to support your view?
- 7 . What are some things your instructors did that has had an impact on your life after [REDACTED] (alumni)
- 8 . What are some other factors which contribute to effective teaching?

**Appendix G****Qualitative Written Questionnaire**

- 1 . How would you describe effective teaching?
- 2 . What are the teaching characteristics that are important to you as an adult learner?  
e.g. personality traits
3. What are some other factors which contribute to effective teaching?
4. What are the teaching practices that are important to you as an adult learner?
5. What are the teaching practices where you perceive your instructors demonstrate proficiency? Share reasons for your answers.
6. What are some activities your instructors do (did) to demonstrate proficiency?

## **Appendix H**

### **Focus Group Discussion Questions**

- 1 . How would you describe effective teaching?
- 2 . Think about your experiences as a current/past student in [REDACTED] what are some characteristics your instructors possess(d) that made it an effective learning experience for you?
- 3 . Think about your experiences as a current/past student in [REDACTED] what are some activities your instructors did that made it an effective learning experience for you?
- 4 . What kind of things you wished your instructors did to improve your learning experience?
- 5 . What are some things your instructors did that has had an impact on your life after [REDACTED] (alumni) Can you share your experiences or reasons to support your view?
- 6 . What are some other factors which contribute to effective teaching?

## **Appendix I**

### **Subject Matter Expert Request and Feedback**

#### **Subject Matter Expert Request # 1**

Recipient

Date

**Dear Recipient Name**

I am happy to connect with you at this time. I hope you are safe and well. Currently, I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education (ACE). At this moment, I am writing the methodology section of my dissertation. To successfully complete this chapter, I am required to engage subject matter experts on the data collection instrument. My research topic relates to exploring adult learners' perspectives of adjunct faculty teaching effectiveness.

I value your contributions to the field and would love your input. If you are able to assist, kindly insert your feedback in the attached document. Further information on the study and draft interview questions are included.

--

Kind regards,

Lisa Francis-Charles

Doctoral Candidate, American College of Education

#### **Subject Matter Expert Request # 2**

Recipient

Date

**Dear Recipient Name**

As you may know, I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education. I am in the process of preparing my data collection design and I am required to solicit feedback from experts in the field. In this regard, I will appreciate it if you can review same and provide feedback.

Here are a few questions to guide your thinking:

Do you think the questions are appropriate?

Do you think the data collection methods are appropriate for answering the question?

Are there questions I could include? Are there questions I should omit?

--

Kind regards,

Lisa Francis-Charles

**SME #1**

Hello Lisa,

The questionnaire is very thorough. You did an excellent job! Here are my comments:

Overall question:

What is the measurement for competency and satisfaction? The parameters are clearly outlined for competency. These parameters will be used to assess students' perception of competency.

Does it align with a particular theoretical framework?

Would the type of course matter, for example, TVET versus professional courses?

Is course length considered, for example, 45-hour credit versus 60-hour credit courses?

Also, will the nature of participants be a factor, such as part-time versus full-time?

These are not questions for the questionnaire, just general questions linked to research design and background information.

RQ1

I love how the questions are comprehensive. Great job! Will the questions for this section start up as open ended questions to leave room for other options or ideas from students so that they will not be restricted in their responses? Think about the rationale for using predetermined categories so that this can be justified. This may also connect to the general question I asked about measurement of competency and theoretical orientation.

RQ2

Again, the questions were well constructed. Maybe, you can add questions that deal with alignment of content, objectives and testing (but not too technical)- in a simple way so that the interviewees will grasp what the question is asking.

As a learner, I used to note the disconnection between what teachers know and how they bring it across. In other words, there was a gap between how they taught and their subject knowledge. "They know the subject but cannot bring it out". A question can be framed along those lines.

A question linked to meeting diverse learners, differentiating instruction can be included.

I did not see questions based on assessment (I will double check). I am not sure if assessment can be included or if it will detract from the RQs.

RQ3 seems fine to me.

Overall, ensure that the interview questions align with the RQs. I think they do. What is your overall ontological and epistemological position? Ensure that every decision made, from methodology to method align well with your research philosophy and paradigms. RQ 1 appeared to be quantitative to a certain extent. How will you present the data? Maybe, when I delve into more literature on interview design, I will be more familiar with that technique.

I hope you find this useful. Once I think of more questions (after I sit with them for a second time), I will send them through.

Good going colleague!

Regards,

--

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature and name of the sender.

**SME # 2**

Hi Lisa,

Congrats on the doctoral studies!

I think the questions are appropriate and comprehensive. Would you consider including a question on blended learning? At this very moment, it seems like that is the way forward. The question on the virtual learning space deals with the learners' tech and media literacy skills, but not necessarily on the competency of the instructor to deliver effectively in a blending learning environment that includes digital technology.

I was also thinking that you could ask the respondents for a specific number of reasons (maybe one) for their checklist answers.

I had some difficulties figuring out the following questions. I inserted a word in brackets as a suggestion to make it clearer. This is for Section 1, and a similar question 5 in Section 2.

*5. Using the checklist below, select the teaching competencies [where?] you perceive your instructors demonstrate proficiency*

I was trying to come up with a different word for "things" as used in the questions in Section 2. A substitute word is not forth-coming. But I think the questions are clear nonetheless.

I think using the questionnaire, focus group and interview as data collection methods will work well.

I hope these points were helpful.

All the best.

--

[REDACTED]

**SME # 3**

Okay all looks good; best wishes and success...  
Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**SME # 4**

Hi Lisa,

So great to hear from you! Thanks for thinking of me to provide some feedback on your research questions and data collection instruments.

I have attached some thoughts, and would be very happy to chat more about your project and methods if you think it would be helpful (and it would be great to catch up with you too!).

I hope you are well, and taking good care of yourself during these crazy times.

-----  
[REDACTED]

1. Is this a written response on paper (or electronically)? Or interview?
2. Can you give some indication of how much of a response you are expecting/hoping for (e.g., 50-100 words per sub question)?
3. One concern I see with this section is that there is a lot of educational jargon in here that may not make sense to your participants. (e.g., will they know the difference between the different types of faculty positions? – adjunct vs. full-time permanent. And more importantly, do they know which of their instructors are adjuncts vs. not? Otherwise, how will they compare?) Other jargon I see: learning style, aligned instructional activities,
4. How much description are you looking for? Is this an online survey? Are the participants answering these sub-questions one-by-one (which I would recommend)? These look like they are going to be great interviews, Lisa! I would recommend looking at each interview question, and determining which of your 3 research questions you think the participant responses will help you answer. This will make sure you are asking interview questions that will lead to data that will answer your research questions. (I have taken a try at doing this for each question, but you may disagree with my alignment! ☺ )
5. I think I would change this one from a more abstract response to focus on the participants more concrete experiences. For example, "Think back to your best learning experience at [REDACTED]. What kinds of things did the instructor do that made it such an effective learning experience for you?
6. I think you might have to breakdown what you mean by "instructional practices" for the participants. (This is language that we are very used to, but probably not [REDACTED] students.)
7. Questions 3, 4, 5 and 6 are so similar, and I think answers to some questions could blend with others. Could you turn this into one question?



8. Would it be better to call this 'teaching development' in the interviews? I think it would cue the participants to think more about teaching rather than professional skills development.
9. I wonder if a follow up question could be: do you think your adjunct instructors are participating in professional development? What makes you think they are/aren't? Do you think more or less teaching development is needed for adjunct instructors, and why?
10. Maybe instead of asking if the participants would want to contribute to instructors' professional development (because I doubt that many [REDACTED] students would want to teach their teachers how to teach!) – I might change this question to something like: What types of professional development opportunities would you recommend for adjunct instructors from [REDACTED] to participate in, and why?
11. I'm not convinced that individual interviews AND focus groups are necessary. What is your rationale for this? This seems like a bit of a dry way to run a focus group, and again, there is a lot of jargon in here. What about creating some case studies or short stories to describe each of these qualities (even from two angles, like 'effective communication' and 'ineffective communication'). I think that would generate deeper thought and evoke more of a response than just presenting these titles

#### SME # 5

Dear Lisa,

As always, it was fun to read your work! I hope that my suggestions help and please just disregard what doesn't work for you. Great work on adapting your instruments!

Keep me posted & keep well

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[REDACTED]

1. I find your first question a bit confusing. Are you trying to say which teaching competencies of adult education instructors contribute to learner's ...? Or which competencies do learners find most contribute to their learning?
2. I think this is also your R question above. Just note the discrepancy in how the two are written. This one makes more sense to me.
3. Suggested rephrasing: "please also list reasons why each competency is important to your learning" Or something like that. (saying "can" makes it sound optional which is not what you would want here...although of course all questions are optional but you don't have make it easy for them to avoid answering ☺)
4. Remove learner and add "you or "your" as I have above. This just helps to personalize the questionnaire to their experience and also follow the format of the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 statements in these lists.

5. See, to me this is a more comprehensive research question that you could use for Question 1. Whichever you choose, just be sure to keep the question consistent throughout.
6. Really like how you've adapted these!
7. Are you going to ask them to comment on all of these? It seems like a lot to get through for the interview participant. Or will you be using the info you gather from the questionnaire and perhaps only talking about the ones they chose to elaborate on (i.e. gave reasons for) when they took the questionnaire?
8. This is a crazy idea I have for a question to start this off (so please take it or leave it ☺) What do you know about how teachers learn to become teachers? Or something like that this general and starts to hint at the participant's ideas about the kinds of education & professional development (or lack thereof) that adjuncts get.
9. I'm not sure what kind of information this question will give you. If they don't know (which they may not) then they might be making a lot of assumptions. Is that ok? Are you looking for the implicit or explicit "signs" of incompetence or competence?
10. How do you think teaching development opportunities (such as [you may want to give some examples]) could help your instructors become more effective teachers at  
