Dyer, L. (2018). Professional development for online faculty: supporting conceptual change through conceptual conflict activities.(Doctoral Dissertation, Towson University).

Dr. La Tonya Dyer

Graduated December 2018

Abstract

Despite the increasing demand for online courses, skepticism by faculty and administration regarding the legitimacy of online education continues to exist. To address this skepticism, institutions have turned to professional developers and faculty development centers to provide professional development on online instruction for university faculty. Unfortunately, the professional development activities tend to focus on the development of skills, especially technical skills, instead of addressing directly faculty conceptual views and beliefs that impact their skepticism. For faculty to facilitate instruction successfully within an online course, the professional development programs need to support the conceptual change process by providing opportunities for faculty to reflect on their beliefs, declare their areas of concerns, and identify plausible solutions to address the concerns regarding online instruction.

This qualitative multi-case study explored five faculty members' conceptual change progressions through conceptual conflict inspired professional development activities. Data were collected through the activities of concept maps, discussion forums, journals, and semi-structured interviews. Data were coded, categorized, and themes were generated for each individual case as well as across all five cases. The findings suggested that the participants' completion of the conceptual conflict activities resulted in them experiencing the different stages of the conceptual change process. The participants were able to declare their beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes; reveal their areas of concerns; and identify plausible solutions to address those concerns. This

research bridges a gap in the current literature by introducing a professional development module designed to afford participants an opportunity to experience the conceptual change process.