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MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM THE FIELD TO THE CLASSROOM:
THE EXPERIENCES OF NOVICE HEALTH CARE INSTRUCTORS
AT PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES

by

Lezlee Haroun

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

University of San Diego

2003

Dissertation Committee

Mary Scherr, Ph.D., Chair

Robert Donmoyer, Ph.D.

Dan Miller, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM THE FIELD TO THE CLASSROOM: THE EXPERIENCES OF NOVICE HEALTH CARE INSTRUCTORS AT PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES

Health care instructors at private career colleges are responsible for training thousands of health services workers who enter the American work force annually. The number of students seeking health care occupational training at career colleges is expected to increase significantly during the next decade because the health service industry is the fastest growing section of the United States economy. At the same time, the public education system does not have the capacity to fully accommodate the future population of students seeking the postsecondary education required for these jobs.

Instructors at private career colleges are typically hired directly from professional positions and receive little or no preparation for their new careers as classroom instructors. In spite of their potential impact on the quality of America's health care work force, little is known about the experiences and needs of these instructors. The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of novice health care instructors at private career colleges. A qualitative research design was used to gather data to provide answers to the following research questions: (1) What do novice health care instructors at private career colleges experience in the transition from the field to the classroom? (2) What are their perceived needs as novice health care instructors? and (3) How do they believe these needs can best be met?

Data was gathered through individual interviews and focus groups with novice health care instructors. Data analysis focused on comparing and contrasting the experiences and needs of the participants. The long-term goal of the researcher is to develop recommendations that colleges can use to help their newly hired health care instructors more easily make the transition to the classroom and to increase their effectiveness as instructors. This, in turn, may contribute to the preparation of a more competent health service work force.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the thousands of health care professionals who have chosen to teach the next generation of health care givers. Their efforts affect both the lives of their students and the quality of future health care.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There may be some who would doubt my sanity for saying this, but the research and writing of this dissertation was, for the most part, an interesting and pleasant learning experience. Much of the credit for this goes to the faculty and administration at USD who, while maintaining high scholarly standards, instill confidence in students and encourage them to achieve their highest potential.

Warmest thanks to Dr. Mary Scherr, my committee chair, for her continual assistance, encouragement, and patience during the various interruptions that occurred while the dissertation was under development as I launched a new career, spent stretches of time living abroad, and went through other significant life changes. Mary helped build my confidence, kept me on track, eliminated many hassles, and suggested ways to complete this dissertation without it becoming a lifelong task. At the same time, she offered many insightful suggestions that improved the quality of the work.

Much appreciation to Dr. Robert Donmoyer, committee member, for sharing his expertise in qualitative research and his many excellent suggestions for organizing and refining this study.

And thank you to Dr. Dan Miller, committee member, for his thought-provoking questions that led to rethinking and including additions that strengthened the applicability of the work.

Dissertations can become massive projects, seemingly taking on lives of their own. In addition to committee members, many other people become involved in their completion. In my case, I was lucky enough to begin the process with the help of Dr. Paula Cordeiro, Dean of the School of Education. In spite of

her overwhelming workload, Paula takes a sincere interest in each individual student, including me. My launch team also included PJ, Sue, Patrick, and Joyce, good friends and colleagues who helped me brainstorm topics and determine what might be most useful in making a real contribution to improving one sector of education. As the launch team converted into a “keep-a-goin’” group of encouragers, it was joined by Sharon and Clara who periodically checked to be sure I hadn’t given up.

I enjoy the good fortune of having a life partner, David, who was both interested and willing to share his ideas in all phases of this project. His example of living a quality life and believing that no obstacle is too difficult to overcome is truly inspiring. I am forever grateful for his presence.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Health care services make up one of the largest industries in the United States with health care spending rising to \$1.3 trillion in 2000 (Reuters, 2002). According to the United States Department of Labor (2002), this industry is the fastest growing sector of the economy and occupations in health care services are expected to increase 33.4% between 2000 and 2010. As a result of this growth, the need for health care workers will continue to increase; it is estimated that 1.1 million new jobs will be created during this same 10-year period (United States Department of Labor, 2002).

Thousands of health care workers who enter the workforce annually are graduates of private career colleges. Their ability to provide high-quality health care depends, to a great degree, on the instructors who provide their training. These instructors bring rich professional experiences to the classroom but, in the majority of cases, have no teacher training and receive little or no orientation for their jobs as teachers. The purpose of this study was to explore the transitional experiences and needs of novice health care instructors at private career colleges as a first step in developing recommendations about how they might be helped to more easily transition to the classroom and maximize their potential as effective instructors.

Background of the Problem

The rapid expansion of the health care industry is attributable to several factors: a) the increasing size of America's aging population, the group that puts the greatest demands on the health care system; b) the continuing development of innovative medical technology that requires workers to have increasingly higher levels of technical training; (c) the growing emphasis on efficiency and cost effectiveness, leading to the creation and/or growth of occupations such as physician's assistant and certified home health aide, positions which supplement the care provided by more costly professionals; and (d) the expanding use of managed care systems which require additional administrative personnel to monitor health care use and process the increased paperwork.

The Department of Labor compiles statistics annually to forecast the growth of specific occupations, including those in health care. Many of the occupations projected to be the fastest growing, both in terms of percentages and absolute numbers, are in allied health and nursing. Allied health occupations support the medical team and include all workers except physicians, nurses, dentists, and podiatrists. Allied health professionals work in areas such clinical laboratory technology, physical and occupational therapy, medical records, radiologic technology, medical assisting, and respiratory therapy. These occupations have gained the largest number of total positions in the health care work force over the last several decades, growing from approximately 2% of the total health care work force in 1920 to over 50% in 1990 (Williams & Torrens, 1999). This percentage is projected to continue growing. Table 1 lists the fastest growing health care occupations for the period 2000 through 2010.

Table 1
Fastest-Growing Occupations and Occupations with the Largest Numerical Increase

Fastest growing as measured by percentage	Largest numerical increase in employment openings
Associate degree	
Health information technicians Physical therapist assistants Occupational therapy assistants Veterinary technologists and technicians	Registered nurses Health information technicians Dental hygienists
Postsecondary vocational training, non-degree	
Fitness trainers Surgical technologists Respiratory therapy technicians	Licensed practical/vocational nurses Fitness trainers
Moderate-term training and experience (6 to 12 months)	
Medical assistants Dental assistants Pharmacy technicians Ambulance drivers and technicians	Medical assistants
Short-term training and experience (1 to 6 months)	
Personal and home care aides Home health aides Physical therapist aides Occupational therapy aides Veterinary assistants	

Source of data: United States of Labor. (2002). *Occupational outlook handbook*. Indianapolis, IN: JIST Publishing.

Jobs in home health services are expected to show the most dramatic increase in terms of absolute numbers. The *Monthly Labor Review* reported in 1999 that the number of positions in home health care would grow from 746,000

in 1998 to 1,179,000 in 2008, a 58% increase in just 10 years. Other occupations involving lower absolute numbers of positions, but large percentage increases, are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Fast-Growing Health Care Occupations for the Period 1998 to 2008

Occupation	1998 number of positions	2008 projected number of positions	Change in numbers	Percent increase
Medical assistants	252,000	398,000	146,000	58%
Physician's assistants	66,000	98,000	32,000	48%
Medical records technicians	92,000	133,000	41,000	45%
Physical therapy assistants	82,000	118,000	36,000	44%

Source of Data: *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1999.

Many positions in the growing allied health sector are at the assistant and aid levels and require training that ranges in length from a few months to 2 years. In many fields, the assistant and aide positions are those with the fastest employment growth, because it is more cost effective for employers to hire staff at these skill levels than to pay the higher salaries of workers who require more education.

In addition to the increasing need for allied health personnel, there is a growing need for registered nurses. In some parts of the United States, including California, the nursing shortage is reaching emergency proportions (Hopkins, 2001). Although registered nurses can be prepared by completing an associate, bachelor, or master degree program, a combination of factors has reduced the number of graduates needed to keep up with employer demands. These factors include an insufficient number of applicants to nursing programs. At the same time, lack of adequate funding at many public institutions prevents them from accommodating the numbers of potential students who do apply (Hopkins, 2001).

In addition to the growth of job openings that must be filled to maintain an adequately staffed health care delivery system, today's health care employers are faced with the challenge of hiring workers who are appropriately and sufficiently prepared. The knowledge and skill requirements for competent health care workers have increased for several reasons. First, additional tasks and responsibilities are being assigned to workers at every level of the health care employment system. For example, nursing assistants, who typically receive less than 200 hours of training, are being given tasks previously reserved for practical/licensed vocational nurses who, in turn, are performing patient care tasks once reserved for registered nurses. Second, some tasks now required of workers fall outside those traditionally assigned to their occupations. For example, some respiratory therapists now perform electrocardiograms and draw blood (United States Department of Labor, 2002). Third, medical and dental procedures are increasingly specialized and need workers who have been trained to perform specific tasks. Fourth, Medicare and many managed care

organizations will reimburse certain services only if the workers providing them have specified levels of training and certification. Finally, the growing emphasis on controlling costs and receiving reimbursement require health care workers at every level to understand the financial aspects of health care delivery and how their work has an impact on the financial health of their organization. This knowledge requires additional training beyond the specific technical duties of their occupations.

Postsecondary educational institutions are being challenged to recruit, train, and educate enough competent workers to meet these growing employment demands. At the same time, the public system of higher education is increasingly unable to keep up with student demand. According to data compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics, enrollment at all types of colleges (2- and 4-year, public and private) is projected to increase by 20% between 1998 and 2010. Enrollment in 2-year institutions, the category in which most private career colleges belong and the focus of this study, is projected to increase by 19% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). A RAND study published in 1996 concluded that by the year 2011, public universities and colleges in California would be unable to accommodate all students seeking higher education (Ristine, 1996). In fact, by 2002, the California postsecondary schools were overcrowded and began raising admission standards and revising the qualifications for entry to limit the numbers of entering students.

The processes currently in place for approving, funding, and developing new public education facilities and/or expanding existing programs cannot always respond quickly enough to meet the anticipated growth in student and employer

demand. Furthermore, there is not always adequate funding for new programs or for creating additional slots for students. For example, the chairwoman of the department of nursing at California State University, Los Angeles, reported she would like to double the number of new enrollees in her department, but cannot secure the necessary funding (Hopkins, 2001).

Private Career Colleges

Private career colleges, whose purpose is to train students for specific occupations, including those within the health care system, are not generally well known or understood for several reasons: a) they have developed outside the traditional education community and are operated as businesses, b) data are not commonly collected and reported on these schools other than by the agencies which accredit them, and c) academic researchers have largely ignored this sector (Lee & Merisotis, 1990).

Private career colleges, however, are significant providers of postsecondary education and have the potential to provide even greater numbers of educational and training opportunities for future health care workers. Most career colleges offer certificate and 2-year degree programs, the levels of education necessary for the fastest growing occupations discussed in the previous section. According to N. Glakas (personal communication, January 8, 2001), president of the Career College Association (CCA), a voluntary membership organization of career colleges and corporate sponsors, there are 4700 career colleges in the United States.

Many private career colleges obtain voluntary accreditation through agencies, equivalent in purpose to regional accrediting bodies such as the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), that hold them accountable to published standards of quality. At least 1500 career colleges are accredited. The two largest accrediting organizations for private career colleges are the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT) and the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS). In 2000, the most recent year for which statistics are available, the combined enrollment at member schools of these two organizations totaled 725,000 students (ACCSCT, ACICS). A third organization, the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES), with 168 member schools, offers accreditation for colleges in which at least 70% of the programs offered are in health care or at least 70% of the students are enrolled in health care programs (personal communication with bureau representative, January 15, 2002). There is also a relatively small number of private career colleges that are regionally accredited.

The Career College Association reports that private career colleges train approximately 50% of the technically trained workers who enter the American work force each year. While statistics about the total number of students enrolled in health care programs at private career colleges could not be located, there is evidence that these numbers are substantial. For example, ACICS reported that in the year 2000, medical assisting programs were offered at 363 of its member schools and comprised a total enrollment of 30,391 students. Medical secretary programs were offered at 278 member schools with 11,123 students enrolled.

The Accreditation Bureau of Health Education Schools reported student enrollment at member schools as of October 2001 to be approximately 37,000 (personal communication with bureau representative, March 11, 2002).

Private career colleges range in size from small, family-owned businesses to enterprises owned by publicly-held corporations that operate dozens of institutions nationwide. Most are operated as for-profit ventures, based on the premise that providing educational services is a legitimate goal for business. They receive no direct public funding but rely on tuition and fee revenues to cover operating expenses and to generate a profit. Many of the students who attend are eligible for publicly funded educational loans and grants, available if the college is recognized by the Department of Education. This required recognition is secured by obtaining accreditation from agencies such as those listed earlier in this section. Because private career colleges are privately financed, their growth and the number and type of programs offered are not limited by the availability of public funding. Therefore, private career colleges are capable of responding quickly to the market demands of both employers and potential students. They are in a position to help alleviate the problem of limited access to postsecondary education and to prepare trained workers for occupations currently suffering a dearth of qualified employees.

Successful private career colleges work closely with employers to ensure that the training provided is up-to-date and aligned with current employer needs. Advisory boards composed of local employers meet regularly with career college staff to help them select new programs to offer, plan curricular content, and choose appropriate and up-to-date training equipment. Advisory boards also offer

feedback about the performance of the college's graduates in the workplace. Private career colleges are often able to respond quickly to employer needs because they do not have the restrictions related to faculty tenure, shared governance, and other requirements that guide the operations of public educational institutions (Lee & Merisotis, 1990).

While the majority of private career colleges strive to provide quality training to their students, there are cases of unscrupulous owners who take advantage of access to student loan funds. As a result, many states closely regulate the operations of these colleges to prevent such abuse. In California, for example, the colleges operate under the auspices of the Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education, which is part of the Department of Consumer Affairs. State regulations administered by the Bureau require that career colleges maintain certain standards, including ensuring that specific percentages of the students who enroll complete their programs, graduate, and find related employment.

In addition to complying with overall school regulations, many educational programs must meet the standards of state health-care agencies, such as boards of nursing, and national professional organizations, such as the American Physical Therapy Association. These organizations have specific minimum requirements in areas such as curricular content, program management, number of hours of required training time, and student-faculty ratios. They monitor the quality of programs by conducting formal school visits and reviewing the professional certification exam pass rates of graduates.

Regulatory oversight of private career colleges and the health care programs they offer is expanding. The use of national certification exams for many allied health occupations is growing and these exams are being restricted to graduates of those schools approved by a hierarchy of specific organizations. According to the representative of a major accrediting body, satisfying the requirements of these various organizations has become the main focus of both accreditors and schools alike (personal communication, January 15, 2002). Focusing on meeting many compliance standards, some of which are mutually contradictory, may actually be detracting from the stated goals of the approval bodies. College administrators' time and energy, as well as financial resources, are frequently diverted from developing quality curricula and providing needed instructor training and professional development. Legislation and oversight, which was originally intended to protect the public from poor quality schools, may actually be inflicting harm on the very public it purports to protect by diverting attention from those factors that truly determine the quality of education offered.

Private Career College Students

The students who attend private career colleges come from a variety of backgrounds: (a) recent high school graduates seeking to enter the work force for the first time, (b) individuals who want to change careers, (c) workers who have been laid off from industries with diminishing employment opportunities or from corporations engaged in downsizing, (d) injured workers who must retrain for a new occupation that accommodates a work-related disability, (e) former

welfare recipients who need job training, and (f) workers whose skills have not kept pace with employer or marketplace demands.

Many students attend private career colleges because they have been academically unsuccessful and/or have had difficulty entering and succeeding in the job force. The needs, as well as vulnerability, of this student population present career colleges with the ethical obligation to do their best to provide high quality educational services. Most students pay for their education by means of student loans that must be repaid with interest. It is therefore essential that the educational programs offered and instruction provided adequately prepare students for successful employment. Unprepared graduates who incur debt and default on student loans become burdens on the nation's taxpayers who ultimately bear the cost of defaulted student loans.

Private Career College Instructors

The instructors at private career colleges are generally hired on the basis of occupational experience and expertise. The majority come directly from non-teaching positions in their occupational areas. Health care instructors represent a variety of health care fields, such as nursing, dental assisting, radiographic technology, and pharmacy.

The three major accrediting bodies, in their respective Standards of Accreditation, emphasize occupational expertise as the principal criterion for hiring instructors. The standards for the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCCT) state, in the section on faculty qualifications, that instructors teaching technical courses in degree programs

“shall have a minimum of three years of practical work experience or equivalent training in the field being taught” (Standards of Accreditation, Section III.C). The Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) requires that instructors who teach general education, academic, or business courses in non-degree programs hold a bachelor's degree. For all other subjects, instructor competency must be demonstrated through work experience and/or non-academic credentials (Standards of Accreditation, Title III, Chapter 2, 3-2-100).

The accreditation standards of the various agencies refer only vaguely or not at all to the teaching ability of and/or teacher education requirements for private career college instructors. Although ACCSCT states that instructors be “trained to teach,” no specific guidelines are offered to suggest what should constitute such training (Standards of Accreditation, Section III.C). The Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools requires that colleges have a “regular program of in-service training,” that “instructors effectively use contemporary teaching strategies and practices” (Standards of Accreditation, Section H, IV.H.2.b), and that “instructors appropriately use appropriate teaching devices and supplemental instructional materials” (Standards of Accreditation, Section H, IV.H.2.c). No information is given, however, about what is meant by “appropriate,” about how instructors might be assessed for this knowledge, or how they should gain knowledge about strategies, practices, and materials. ACICS does not address the issue of teaching ability or training at all in its standards. A representative for ACICS, in a telephone conversation with the researcher, stated that the Council's concern regarding teacher training was that

“instructors be current in their occupational field” (personal communication, January, 2001).

Once hired, private career college instructors have limited teacher training opportunities. A major reason for this lack is the commonly-held view that technical or content knowledge is the major indicator of instructor effectiveness for teachers of adults (Cranton, 1996). According to the education specialist at an accrediting agency, only a few career colleges have developed formal training programs; most have little or nothing to offer the novice instructor (personal communication, September 17, 1999). Additional reasons for the lack of comprehensive and consistent training opportunities for career college instructors include:

1. The widely held belief that if one can do something, one can teach it. This belief is particularly prevalent among career school owners and administrators who typically have experience and expertise in business, rather than education. They lack a clear understanding of the educational process and the complexity of teaching. The idea that instructors teaching vocational subjects should be trained to teach simply does not occur to them.
2. The unwillingness or inability on the part of for-profit school owners to make the financial investments necessary for instructor orientation and training.
3. Problems with scheduling and lack of time. Most career colleges offer classes year-round and instructors do not usually sign long-term contracts nor do they have tenure (Lee & Merisotis, 1990). When

leaving their teaching position, it is not uncommon for them to give no more than 2 weeks notice and as a result, it is not unusual for instructors to begin teaching within a day or two of being hired.

4. The focus of administrative attention on compliance issues. It is not unusual for large amounts of time and money to be devoted to meeting the requirements of various approval agencies.

It is the experience of the researcher that while most instructors begin their teaching careers with enthusiasm, many experience frustration in making the transition from the field to the classroom. Lack of support and/or training exacerbates the difficulties inherent in adjusting to a new career, especially one like teaching which is not easily mastered. As one instructor at a large health care career college remarked, "Sometimes I feel like I'm swimming through mud" (personal communication, July, 1996).

Having enjoyed success in their professional careers, novice instructors who find the transition from the field to the classroom difficult can be disheartened and experience considerable discomfort. When these feelings, combined with a lack of knowledge about instructional practices, result in teaching that is less than effective, students can be negatively affected. The accrediting-agency education specialist referred to earlier also disclosed that many of the written complaints received by the accreditation agencies are from students who are concerned about "teachers who can't teach" (personal communication, September 17, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

Instructor competence is critical to the success of an educational institution and its graduates. As expressed in the ACCSCT standards of accreditation, “The success of a school is directly related to the quality of its faculty.” Sheckley (1999), in his research on teacher professional development, asserts that “excellent teachers and administrators are the hallmark of a high-quality educational system” (p. 1).

Effective teaching is complex and requires specialized knowledge and skills. Career college instructors who teach in health care programs are faced with a variety of challenges: (a) working with a very diverse student population, (b) teaching future health care practitioners whose actions can literally have life and death consequences for their patients, and (c) interacting with a student population that has a high incidence of personal problems and negative academic experiences.

Little is known about the transitional experiences and learning needs of private career college instructors. No studies could be found in the education literature about this specific group. Accreditation agencies and other professional organizations do not appear to have conducted research about the experiences and needs of these instructors, other than gathering statistics about instructor retention.

Newly hired instructors at private career colleges may benefit from assistance in making the transition from the field to the classroom. We cannot determine this, however, nor design ways to help them effectively make the transition, without understanding how they perceive their experiences and needs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn about the experiences and needs of novice health care instructors at private career colleges as they transitioned from health care occupations to the classroom. To accomplish this, the researcher interviewed 11 novice instructors and conducted two focus groups composed of novice instructors in order to hear, in the instructors' own words, how they perceived the experience of becoming instructors.

This study was conducted as the first step in a professional plan developed by the researcher to create ways to ease the transition of novice instructors from the field to the classroom and to increase their instructional effectiveness at private career colleges. The complete plan, including the role of this study within it, appears as Appendix A.

Objectives of the Study

This study had two major objectives:

1. Explore the transitional experiences and needs of novice health care instructors as expressed in their own words.
2. Develop recommendations for career colleges to use for meeting the identified needs of novice health care instructors.

Research Questions

The following three questions guided the study:

1. What do novice health care instructors at private career colleges experience in the transition from the field to the classroom?

2. What are their perceived needs as novice health care instructors?
3. How do they believe these needs can best be met?

Significance of the Study

The quality of the education and training provided to health care workers who attend private career colleges can have a significant impact on the well-being of the American health care system as students graduate and become employees of health care providers. The quality of student education and training, in turn, depends to a great extent on the instructors employed by the colleges. It is the instructors who help students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for the safe practice of their occupations, motivate them to be their best, and instill in them the confidence to properly apply their skills in the workplace.

The study was based on two assumptions:

1. Private career college instructors can articulate their experiences and identify their learning needs.
2. A better understanding of these experiences and needs is necessary to develop effective methods for assisting novice career college instructors.

The results of this study may provide information of value to those who hire and supervise career college instructors. By making use of this information, career college supervisors can help new instructors more easily make the transition to, and achieve maximum effectiveness in, the classroom.

Definition of Terms

Allied Health Workers: health care workers who are not physicians, nurses, dentists, or podiatrists. Examples of allied health occupational areas include the clinical laboratory, physical therapy, occupational therapy, medical records, radiologic technology, medical assisting, and respiratory therapy.

Novice Instructor: for the purposes of this study, an instructor who was hired directly from work as a health care professional, received no formal teacher education, and has taught for 1 year or less.

Private Career College: a nonpublic postsecondary institution that provides occupation-specific education and training. The majority are operated as for-profit businesses.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and needs of novice career college instructors. A review of the literature indicated that this unique population of instructors has not been studied. These instructors do, however, belong to two larger, more general categories of teachers: a) those who teach at the postsecondary level, a group for whom a key characteristic is the lack of formal preservice teacher preparation; and b) beginning teachers at all levels of instruction who are experiencing the challenges of starting a new career and adapting to a new organizational setting. In addition, career college instructors are adult learners who are acquiring, even if on their own, the knowledge and skills necessary to function as classroom teachers. The literature review, in order to provide both a contextual background for the population being studied and a rationale for the methodology, includes an overview of preservice teacher education for postsecondary teachers, the problems of beginning teachers, the stages of teacher development, and teachers as adult learners.

Preservice Teacher Education

Teacher education is the process of acquiring knowledge about subject matter, educational theory, and techniques for teaching a specific subject,

combined with guided practical experience (Barrow & Milburn, 1990). Only teachers of grades K-12 consistently receive formal preservice teacher education. There are few formal training requirements in pedagogy for postsecondary teachers and these are generally limited to individual schools or state systems of higher education.

This absence of formal preparation has been a source of concern among educators and educational researchers for many years. More than half a century ago, a 1949 conference report contained this statement: "The American college teacher is the only high level professional man in the American scene who enters upon a career with neither the prerequisite trial of competence nor experience in the use of the tools of his profession" (Lee, 1967). The lack of teacher education for postsecondary teachers has continued to be noted and questioned over the years. Cohen and Brawer (1972) compared the educational requirements for teachers of elementary and high school teachers with those of college teachers:

Certification requirements for the former group demand immersion in several courses dealing with pedagogical theory and practice. For the latter, there is no credential required other than the possession of a graduate degree in an academic discipline. Yet differences in teaching at the various levels of education cannot be so great that the one calls for a year or more of deliberate training while the other requires none. (p. 154)

The current challenges of working with postsecondary students is seen by some as bringing even more urgency to the situation. Student populations in all types of educational institutions are becoming increasingly diverse, both culturally and academically. Naylor (1997) cites the research of two groups,

Rudolph, Fry, and Barr, and Nolan and Venable, which concludes that postsecondary vocational teachers must be prepared, through both preservice and inservice education, to work with growing numbers of minorities, at-risk students, itinerant populations, and adult students. Weimer (1990), in making her case for the need to educate postsecondary teachers in pedagogy, argues that teaching methods must be adapted to the students as they are, not as faculty might wish them to be:

Faculty members who lack training, who teach pretty much as they always have, tend to be unaware of alternative techniques and strategies better suited to the needs of more diverse populations. With bright, inquisitive students committed to a college education, how the faculty member teaches is less critical. But when students other than the brightest and the best, other than those most highly motivated, end up in college classrooms, their ability to succeed is much more closely tied to how the faculty member conducts the class. With the profession doing little more than complaining about these changing student populations, faculty difficulties in the classroom are deepened. (p. 13)

Private career colleges, perhaps even more than public schools, are characterized by diverse student populations and students with low academic achievement. Calhoun and Finch's (1982) description remains true for today's career colleges:

The postsecondary schools are faced with a student population consisting of recent high school graduates, minority groups seeking new educational opportunities, homemakers seeking new or up-dated skills to enter or

reenter the labor market, and older workers needing retraining for jobs changed by technology. Other enrollees include school drop-outs who are deficient in basic education. (p. 147)

Career colleges, in part because of their focus on vocational training, attract large numbers of students who lack strong educational backgrounds. Many of these students are seeking programs that require a minimum of what are typically offered as “general education” courses because these students consider them not relevant to their occupational goals. They want – and are willing to pay for – condensed training that will get them on the job as quickly as possible. Traditional teaching methods, based on lectures and reading assignments, are not the most effective ways to maximize learning in this student population. Yet these very methods, especially lecture, are those most familiar to instructors and thus tend to be the most frequently used by untrained teachers who assume that lecturing equals teaching. Without information about how students learn and the variety of teaching methods available, many instructors who lack teacher preparation find themselves ill prepared to work effectively with the variety of students they meet in their classrooms.

Weimer (1990) suggests there are three “flawed assumptions” about postsecondary teaching that inhibit efforts to provide teacher education at this level: (a) faculty teach content; (b) if you know it, you can teach it; and (c) good teachers are born. The following discussion of preservice teacher education is based on an organizational framework provided by these assumptions.

Faculty Teach Content

Content, rather than pedagogy, is typically the overriding concern of teachers at the postsecondary level. Grub (1999) conducted a study to explore the extent to which community colleges, which purport to be “teaching colleges,” actually support teaching. His group of researchers interviewed 260 instructors and observed 257 classrooms at 32 colleges in 11 states. Even when good teaching was declared a primary goal of an institution, the study found that “most postsecondary instructors have no formal preparation in teaching methods, and they tend to discount the study of pedagogy” (p. 26). Many of the instructors interviewed believed their principal responsibility was to “cover the material” (p. 30). This emphasis on content was reinforced by staff development programs that supported “trips to disciplinary conferences and further specialized study but not the examination of alternative pedagogies” (p. 27).

In her studies of teachers of adults in a variety of settings, Cranton (1996) defines “colleges” as “institutions in which teaching and service are the primary responsibilities of faculty,” but then observes that “most educators in colleges are not prepared teachers, but rather experts in a content area” (p. 8). In fact, they tend to “identify more with their discipline, subject area, trade, or profession than they do with education” (p. 24). Referring specifically to educators in the health professions, she notes that they “primarily associate themselves with their profession rather than with education” (p. 11). Weimer (1990) suggests that with university faculty members, “the problem is that sometimes their allegiance to the content is much stronger than their loyalty to students” (p.7). This, she suggests, explains why some faculty members end up “teaching *content* but not necessarily

students” (p. 7). McKeachie (1999), in his popular how-to-teach guide for college faculty, suggests that subject matter is not what makes the difference in teacher effectiveness. He advises new teachers that “the key to a good start is not the choice of interesting content (important as that may be) but rather the ability to manage the activities of the class effectively” (p. 3).

The purpose of the preceding discussion is not to suggest that content is less important than pedagogy. In fact, health care instructors, the subjects of this study, must possess accurate, up-to-date content knowledge and skills. It can even be stated without exaggeration that tragic consequences can result if health care instructors possess outdated or incorrect information. Too much emphasis on content as the end-all of teaching, however, can obscure the ultimate goal of instruction, which is the students’ ability to *understand* and *apply* the content.

When “covering content” is the principal concern of the instructor, the meaning of content may be restricted to its most narrow classroom definition: the instructor’s presentation of facts and figures and theories. It limits the students’ role to that of receptacle, reminiscent of Freire’s (1972) “banking theory” of instruction. Focus on content as an entity in itself, to be offered and received, results in its being defined as the acquisition of facts and theories. Content *mastery*, however, requires that students interact with and apply it in ways that are meaningful to them. Effective teaching involves creating opportunities for students to do just that. Teachers, then, “need not only to understand content deeply, but also to know something about how that content is taught and learned” (Kennedy, 1991, p. 17).

Career colleges are vocationally oriented and Lynch (1997) describes the essential purpose of vocational education as being “to facilitate construction of knowledge through experiential, contextual, and social methods in real-world environments” (1997, p. 27). To be effective, then, vocational education must include students as active learners. Kerka (1997) explains that the vocational teacher’s role is “not to set tasks, but to organize experiences that allow learners to develop their own knowledge and understanding” (p. 3).

The nature of the skills deemed important for all students, and especially those enrolled in vocational education, has changed as the focus shifts from the mastery of technical skills to the mental processing skills and attitudes necessary for workplace success. This is a result of widespread concern among employers about the inability of postsecondary graduates to apply in the workplace what they are assumed to have learned in school. Too narrow a focus on one’s discipline – content – is not, as Dinmore (1997) states, “providing the kinds of employees who can demonstrate desired decision-making skills in the face of the complexity of the modern workplace” (p. 458).

In 1990, the United States Secretary of Labor chartered The Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills to identify and define the skills deemed critical for success in the workplace. The commission conducted interviews with employers, trainers, and workers from various industries and in 1991, issued a report outlining what have become known as the *SCANS skills*, broad-based competencies that can be applied to most occupations. Examples of the SCANS skills include the following:

- Participates as a Member of a Team: works cooperatively with others and contributes to group with ideas, suggestions, and effort.
- Understands Systems: knows how social, organizational, and technological systems work and operates effectively within them.
- Makes Decisions: specifies goals and constraints, generates alternatives, considers risks, and evaluates and chooses best alternatives. (SCANS 2000)

A commonality of these skills is that they require students to *do something* with subject knowledge. The need for these competencies is supported by Miller's (1996) argument that vocational teachers must produce "learners who are problem solvers, lifelong learners, makers of meaning, collaborators, change agents . . . " (pp. 69-70).

Related to the SCANS project, standards for health care occupations were developed by the National Consortium on Health Science & Technology Education and the Far West Research Laboratory. Known as the National Health Care Skill Standards (NHCSSP), their purpose is to fill the gap between general employability standards and the specific requirements for health occupational certification or licensure. The following list contains examples of the core standards which serve as a foundation for occupations across the health services:

- Health care workers will understand accepted ethical practices with respect to cultural, social, and ethic differences within the health care environment. They will perform their duties within established ethical guidelines, supporting sensitive and quality health care delivery.

- Therapeutic and diagnostic workers will understand how to explain planned procedures to clients. They will use various strategies to respond to clients' questions and concerns.
- Diagnostic workers will understand the principles of quality assurance. They will continuously evaluate the procedure and its product.

As with the SCANS Skills, the NHCSSP include many behavioral competencies which require instructors to be *directors of learning*, not simply *conveyers of content*.

Health care students who can recite content, but do not develop thinking skills and the ability to appropriately apply what they learn, can be dangerous practitioners. For example, when a student learns to administer an injection, subject matter knowledge includes the nature of medications, sizes of needles and syringes, and location and anatomy of appropriate injection sites. Technical, hands-on skills include loading the syringe, giving the injection, and properly disposing of the needle and syringe. This knowledge and these skills may seem comprehensive, but they are not adequate for safe practice. Additional thinking and application skills, as illustrated by the following questions, are essential:

- Is this the correct medication?
- Have I checked to be sure this is the right patient?
- Are there any indications one injection site would be better than another for this patient?
- Have I communicated clearly to the patient?
- Is the patient fearful?
- Am I demonstrating empathy?

- How is the patient tolerating the injection?
- Is the patient showing any signs of an adverse reaction?

Teaching students to continually observe, assess, think, evaluate, and apply information appropriately are essential behaviors that simply “covering content” does not address. *Uncovering content* and finding ways to make it available for student mastery, may be a better way to describe teaching. Darling-Hammond (2000) expresses it this way :

Teaching for problem solving, invention, and application of knowledge requires teachers with deep and flexible knowledge of subject matter who understand how to represent ideas in powerful ways and can organize a productive learning process for students who start with different levels and kinds of prior knowledge, assess how and what students are learning, and adapt instruction to different learning approaches. (p. 167)

Unfortunately, postsecondary teachers are often unaware of the wide gap between “instructor covering” and “student mastering.” Weimer (1990) cites a survey conducted by Gaff in which 78% of faculty surveyed attached “great importance to the teaching of critical thinking” (p. 8). In a corresponding survey of students, Gaff reported that only 28% thought any class time was spent developing this skill. As Weimer (1990) concludes, “What college teachers seem to assume is that by virtue of being in the presence of a particular brand of academic content, students will learn how to think, problem solve, critically assess, and so on” (p. 8). This is a dangerous assumption in the field of health care in which a graduate, armed with a little knowledge but unable to apply it properly, enters the work force ill prepared to act in ways necessary to provide

safe and effective patient care. While there is movement toward including application skills in the curriculum, Cranton (1996) notes that many health professionals still treat technical knowledge as “all pervasive” and neglect the teaching of “practical or communicative knowledge” (p. 12).

If You Know It, You Can Teach It

A second commonly held belief among teachers and administrators at all levels of postsecondary education is *if you know it, you can teach it*. Boice (2000) observes that “tradition in academe holds, mistakenly, that if you know your material, you can teach it. Said formulaically: *good knowledge = good teaching*” (p. 12). Many of the community college instructors interviewed by Grub (1999) emphasized “mastery of content as the prerequisite for good teaching” (p. 26).

Educational institutions have developed a variety of ways for teachers to prove knowing it. Universities and the academic departments of community colleges require teachers to have graduate degrees in their subject areas. Technical and vocational institutes, career colleges, and the vocational departments of community colleges require work experience as evidence of knowing it.

The accrediting standards for career colleges also seem to base instructor requirements on the premise that knowing a subject or occupation qualifies one to teach it. Instructors of technical courses are required to have work experience, usually a minimum of three years, while general education instructors are required to have a degree in their subject area. The only mention of pedagogical training appears in the standards of one of the three major agencies which states

that instructors “be trained to teach” (ACCSCT Standards of Accreditation). This “training” is not defined or explained in the standards. The practice of basing vocational teacher qualifications solely on work experience is not limited to private career colleges. Many state certification agencies for public educational institutions place “increased emphasis on work experience rather than pedagogical preparation” (Galloy, 1992, p. 3).

Both Boice (2000) and Weimer (1990) make the point that if knowing automatically led to good teaching, we would not hear complaints from college students about renowned, well-published professors who cannot communicate even the basics of their discipline. McKeachie (as cited in Lee, 1967) proposes the interesting idea that a professor’s subject expertise is actually more indicative of his or her ability as a *learner* rather than as a *teacher*. Being capable learners in subjects in which they are very interested may, in fact, lead future teachers to believe the subject is easy for everyone. Such an attitude may be more of a hindrance than an advantage for the untrained teacher. In fact, Darling-Hammond (2000) points out that “people who have never studied teaching or learning often have a very difficult time understanding how to convey material that they themselves learned effortlessly and almost subconsciously” (p. 167). It would seem then, that *teaching* a subject is not the same as *knowing* a subject. This view is corroborated by Camp and Health-Camp (as cited in Eifler & Pottoff, 1998) who found “career-change teachers astounded at the difficulties of transforming technical vocational knowledge into lessons accessible to students” (p. 189).

The belief that “if you know it, you can teach it” has not, in fact, been universally accepted. In the early 1970’s, the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare contracted the Center on Education and Training for Employment at the Ohio State University to identify the essential instructional competencies needed by vocational instructors. Approximately 1100 vocational teachers, supervisors, and teacher educators were surveyed. They identified 384 competencies considered important for effective vocational teaching (Hamilton & Quinn, 1978). These competencies were then organized into ten categories. One significant outcome of this project was the development of 127 short, performance-based learning modules for vocational instructors. The modules include topics such as *Develop a Lesson Plan*, *Present Information with the Chalkboard and Flip Chart*, and *Provide for Student Safety*. The modules proved to be very helpful to instructors who had no other recourse than to learn pedagogical strategies on their own. While the modules continue to be used, a problem with this type of learning, as Kennedy (1991) points out, is that if teachers “learn a series of specific teaching techniques without understanding their rationale and without help in adapting them to particular students and classroom situations, they will be unable to make lasting changes in their practice” (p. 17).

The need for appropriate and adequate teacher education for vocational teachers at both the secondary and postsecondary levels has continued to be a subject of interest and concern. The major education reform initiatives of the 1980s and early 1990s argued that improving teacher education was a key factor in improving teacher quality. Lynch (1997) believes that until 1993, vocational

teacher education reform was limited to individual responses rather than efforts to initiate general reforms. A survey conducted by Parish (1985) identified “supporting teacher education” as one of the top four critical issues in vocational teacher education. Scott (as cited in Galloy, 1992), in a paper presented to the American Vocational Association in 1988, declared that finding instructors who have both technical and teaching skills was a critical issue for vocational education. Investigations by Camp and Health-Camp (as cited in Eifler & Potthoff, 1998) revealed that nontraditional older teachers “floundered as a result of limited pedagogical backgrounds” (p. 189) until they could draw on previous life experiences to cope with new situations (p. 189). Bullough and Knowles (as cited in Eifler & Potthoff, 1998) found that some individuals who were highly competent in one career were “psychologically and emotionally decimated by unassisted leaps into teaching” (p. 189).

A number of states have recognized the need to provide training for vocational teachers and make funding available for training and induction programs. Galloy (1992) studied the results of a comprehensive, statewide program developed by the state of Georgia when the state’s General Assembly became concerned that “individuals who mastered the skills necessary for occupational success frequently lacked the skills necessary to provide an effective learning environment for vocational students” (p. 3). In response, the State Board of Postsecondary Vocational Education (later renamed the Georgia Board of Technical and Adult Education) was established in 1985. The Board, in turn, developed the Instructor Training Institute program which consisted of three 4-day phases of instruction designed to help technical instructors make the

transition from jobs in the field to the classroom (Galloy, 1992). The skills taught at the Institute were based on the Ohio State University's performance-based competencies. Galloy asked instructors and administrators to rank the 67 competencies taught at the Institute in order of importance to new instructors. He found that the "competencies ranked among the 25 most important to new instructors [were]...those that relate to instructional interaction between students and instructors. The items pertain to methods, materials, evaluation, and curricular aspects of vocational instruction"(p. 63). In one of the study's conclusions, Galloy (1992) writes that "both new and experienced instructors, as well as administrators, agree that the most important part of an instructor's job is to perform the instructional tasks that help students achieve success in the classroom" (p. 93).

The need for teacher education is underscored by research that focuses on the role of pedagogical knowledge in teaching. Darling-Hammond (2000) cites several studies indicating that pedagogical knowledge is "more frequently found to influence teaching performance and often exerts even stronger effects than subject-matter knowledge" (p. 167). The National Center for Research on Teacher Learning at Michigan State University conducted a study of 700 teachers to explore how public school teachers learn from different types of preservice, inservice, and alternate route programs (Kennedy, 1991). The results indicated that majoring in an academic subject was no guarantee teachers had the kind of knowledge necessary for teaching it to others. "The most surprising finding from the study and the most counterintuitive," according to Kennedy, was "when we contrast teachers who majored in a subject with others who did not, we

find that the majors are often no more able than other teachers to explain fundamental concepts in their discipline” (p. 14). Writing about the field of adult education, Duke (in Dunkin, 1987) refers to Campbell’s assertion that “capability in the application of adult education methodology is not less important to the adult education teacher than his expertise in his subject field” (p. 804). This methodology includes the ability of teachers to *transform* subject matter and as Shulman (as cited in Cochran, DeRuiter, & King, 1993) suggests, this involves several steps:

[The teacher first] *critically reflects* on and *interprets* the subject matter; finds multiple ways to *represent* the information as analogies, metaphors, examples, problems, demonstrations, and classroom activities; *adapts* the materials to students’ abilities, gender, prior knowledge, and preconceptions . . .; and finally *tailors* the materials to those specific students to whom the information will be taught. (p. 264)

Effective instruction requires that teachers develop a different relationship with content than simply knowing it, even when they know it very well. As Elbow (1986) admonishes, teachers must do more than “show up with the goods.” Effective instruction consists of deliberate actions and although some of these actions are intuitive and based on the personal qualities of the teachers themselves, many are skills that require an understanding of learning styles, what is known about how learning takes place, and how content can be presented to maximize student learning. Miller and Miller (1997), in their handbook for college instructors, note that “the key variable in effective educational programs is the instructional leader – the instructor” (p. 1) because

“student learning is a direct result of the quality of the instructor’s decisions as instruction is planned, delivered, and evaluated” (p.2). McKeachie (1999) describes the instructor as a “mediator between . . . content specialization and . . . [the] student’s understanding of it on multiple, and increasingly high, levels” (p. xvii). Weimer (1990) warns of the consequences of equating content mastery with instructional effectiveness when she suggests this can lead to “a vision of teaching that is narrow and simplistic, a blind spot that makes instructional problems unrelated to content much more difficult to discern” (p. 5). The results are that instructional improvement is inhibited because “it makes teaching an activity without form or substance in its own right” (p. 5).

Good Teachers Are Born

A third assumption used to dismiss the argument in favor of teacher education for postsecondary teachers is that teaching is an art and, as such, *cannot* be taught. “Teachers are born, not made,” they claim. Armstrong (as cited in Lee, 1967), for example, is “disposed . . . to think of teaching as an art, and as such . . . would hesitate to make too-ambitious claims about programs for teaching Ph.D. candidates how to teach” (p. 93). While the statement refers specifically to university-level graduate students, such claims have been made for teachers at all levels. Berliner (2000) includes a variation of this pronouncement in a list he has collected of statements made by critics of formal teacher education: “Teachers are born, not made – it’s a God-given talent” (p. 359).

Weimer (1990) suggests that the existence of a great variety of teaching styles is another reason for the belief that there is no formula that can be passed

on to enable one to teach well. The argument against formulas is valid. However, if we consider the process through which great painters go before achieving their unique styles, we see that learning the fundamentals of composition and color provide the base for generating original ideas. McKeachie (as cited in Lee, 1967), in his studies of postsecondary faculty, concludes that the claim for “the ‘art of teaching’ is all too often based on naive assumptions about students, teaching methods, and the nature of the student-teacher relationship. Art based on sound knowledge and well-honed skill is more effective in promoting student learning” (p. 211). He follows up by suggesting that “teaching is like art in that it involves value judgments, and the means for achieving these values are complex” (as cited in Lee, 1967, p. 211).

There are those who profess that teaching cannot be taught, but can only be learned by doing. Konig (as cited in Veenman, 1984) asserts that “to expect that practice could be deduced from or founded and governed by theory is a mistaken belief. Theory cannot provide the teachers with how-to-act directions for specific situations; theory has primarily a critical and reflective function and is only constructive in a limited way” (p. 167). Actually, becoming critical and reflective is precisely what is needed if one is to develop and improve practice. And critical thinking and reflection can be promoted by good teacher education.

The literature on educators who teach adults in settings other than schools contains similar arguments about the value of preservice preparation. Duke (in Dunkin, 1987), believes it is difficult to train adult educators because the “the importance of values, qualities, and attitudes poses a problem for the training of adult educators It is acknowledged that the somewhat intangible qualities to

mark a good adult educator are difficult or impossible to teach” (p. 803). This may indeed be true, but it certainly does not dismiss the benefits of understanding adult learning theory and exploring the variety of potentially useful teaching strategies. Duke (in Dunkin, 1987), in fact, cites Knox’s suggestions that in addition to possessing certain personal qualities, adult educators should have an “understanding [of] the field of adult education [and an] understanding [of] adults as learners” (p. 803). Duke then proceeds to review a number of studies and concludes that they “lay much stress upon the process of teaching, even sometimes somewhat to the exclusion of the subject matter” (p. 804).

The Problems of Beginning Teachers

Beginning teachers at all levels of instruction, whether they have preservice teacher education or not, share many of the same problems and needs during the first years of their career. All face the challenge of simultaneously entering a new profession and a new working environment. They must adapt to the social and political environment, learn where and how to get what they need to perform their job, and either call on teaching skills they have acquired or quickly develop the skills needed to survive in the classroom. For many new teachers, it is a matter of sinking or swimming. “Sink or swim” is, in fact, an expression that appears throughout the literature to describe the experiences of beginning teachers. Boice (2000) observes:

To an extent, academe has accepted awkward starts at teaching as inevitable. More often, campuses ignore the performances of new faculty unless they cause a rash of student complaints; new teachers are left to

sink or swim presumably because they must learn on their own or

because they cannot be taught to teach. (p. 14)

Veenman (1984) notes that “the beginning teacher is often thrown in at the deep end (the ‘*sink or swim*’ or Robinson Crusoe approach)” (p. 167). This failure to provide adequate induction and assistance for beginning teachers leads to some of the problems they experience, as well as the high attrition rates during the first few years in the profession.

Although the researcher was unable to locate research about the specific transitional experiences and needs of private career college instructors, many studies have been conducted about and recommendations made for other populations of teachers. It is known that the problems experienced by beginning teachers are significant. Even among those who initially choose teaching as their primary career and spend several years acquiring the necessary education and certification, 40 to 50% drop out during the first 7 years (Brock & Grady, 1997; Gordon, 1991). Reports of instructor turnover in career colleges are not available, but from the researcher’s experience it is quite high, averaging at least 50% annually in some schools.

Veenman (1984) conducted a comprehensive review of the literature that included 83 studies of the problems of beginning secondary teachers. He coined the phrase “reality shock” to describe the loss of idealism about the nature of teaching experienced by many beginners when they encounter the everyday problems of the classroom. For many teachers, the transition to the classroom is both “dramatic and traumatic” (p. 143). Brock and Grady (1997) interviewed first-year teachers of grades K through 12 as part of a project to develop

recommendations for teacher induction programs. New teachers frequently reported that life in the classroom was harsher than they expected. This may be due, in part, to the unrealistic optimism of new teachers about the performance of both themselves and their students (Gordon, 1991; Huling-Austin, 1992).

Corcoran (as cited in Gordon, 1991) found that what he called “transition shock” (p. 5) can lead to a state of paralysis and reduce the teacher’s effectiveness and ability to cope. University faculty also show tendencies to begin their careers with unrealistic expectations for themselves (Menges, 1999).

Menges and his associates (1999) conducted a 3-year study, sponsored by the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, to gain “a better understanding of the experiences of new faculty members and provide a basis for easing faculty transitions into new jobs” (p. 20). A 16-page survey was sent to 225 faculty at five institutions of higher learning once a year for 3 years. In addition, 1-hour interviews were conducted each year with a subset of approximately 40% of the participants. The concerns identified as central to the lives of new faculty included handling stress, allocating time, understanding job expectations, and dealing with performance evaluations.

An experience shared by many new postsecondary teachers is the sudden change from the role of expert to novice. Menges (1999) notes:

[This is] perhaps the most vividly frustrating aspect of being a faculty newcomer . . . although a new faculty member is a specialist in a discipline and has been hired for expertise in a specialization, that very same newcomer is also a rank amateur on the new campus. (p. 3)

This transitional experience is similar for the career college instructor who moves from the field to the classroom. A registered nurse, for example, who leaves a supervisory position in a hospital, enters the career college classroom as a novice instructor. In a study of nontraditional teacher education students, Knauth and Madfes (as cited in Eifler & Potthoff, 1998) note that “despite their rich life experiences and successful prior careers, nontraditional teacher education students are novices at teaching” (p. 188). This, as Eifler and Potthoff (1998) point out, “can be difficult when one is at an age at which earnings, status, and self-efficacy may be at their peak” (p. 188).

A number of problems are shared by new teachers at all levels of education. Speculations about why this entry phase presents difficulties range from poor preservice preparation to the inherent difficulties of teaching to the general lack of proper induction into the profession. The following seven specific problems are a compilation of the ones mentioned most frequently in the literature:

1. Feelings of being overwhelmed
2. Difficulties with classroom management
3. Lack of information and feedback from administrations .
4. Feelings of isolation
5. Difficult teaching and working assignments
6. Insufficient materials and supplies

Feelings of Being Overwhelmed

The sense of being overwhelmed, caused by the complexities and responsibilities of teaching, demands on time, and unmet expectations, is commonly experienced by new teachers. As Brock and Grady (1997) ask their readers, “[Do you] remember your first teaching experience? Your feelings probably vacillated between exhilaration and sheer terror” (p. ix).

McKeachie (1999) describes the beginning university teacher’s first days in the classroom in the introduction of his book of teaching tips:

Most of us go into our first classes as teachers with a good deal of fear and trembling. We don’t want to appear to be fools; so we have prepared well, but we dread the embarrassment of not being able to answer students’ questions. We want to be liked and respected by our students; yet we know that we have to achieve liking and respect in a new role which carries expectations, such as evaluation, that make our relationship with students edgy and uneasy. We want to get through the first class with éclat, but we don’t know how much material we can cover in a class period. (p. 2)

Menges (1999) found that new college and university faculty frequently felt stressed by their workloads and the effort required to balance professional and personal lives. Contrary to what might be expected, many participants reported that these stresses increased over the course of the 3-year study. Grub (1999) states that at the community college level, “the most basic fact of instructors’ lives is that, if they are conscientious, they are overloaded” (p. 281). Brock and Grady (1997) report that the beginning K-12 teachers in their study felt

“overwhelmed with the realities, complexities, and workload of teaching” (p. 20).

Many novice teachers said they spent a great deal of their time away from school either preparing for classes or grading papers, causing them to neglect their family and social lives. As one teacher explained, “I have so many papers to correct and forms to complete. I do school work every evening and all weekend. I no longer have a social life” (Brock & Grady, 1997, p. 20).

Difficulties with Classroom Management

The tasks of managing a classroom and dealing with the problems of students present significant difficulties to new teachers, even those who arrive with formal teacher education. In his analysis of the 83 studies investigating the problems of beginning teachers, Veenman (1984) concludes that the three most frequently mentioned problems were classroom discipline, motivating students, and dealing with their individual differences. Vittetoe (as cited in Brock & Grady, 1997) found that discipline was the problem most frequently cited by supervisors as the reason for failure among new teachers. This corresponds with the findings of Brock and Grady (1997) who write: “The clearest message we heard from first-year teachers is that they do not have adequate classroom skills” (p. 74).

Boice (2000) observes that even at the university level, the most traumatic experience reported by new faculty is facing unruly students. He devotes an entire chapter in his book of advice for new faculty members to dealing with what he calls “classroom incivilities.” In fact, the chances of encountering these unruly students are reportedly increasing. The researcher spoke with an experienced professor at a well-known university in the South who confided that in a spring

2002 graduate class, only one third of the 18 students seemed motivated and interested in the subject and that some of the students routinely demonstrated rude and disrespectful behavior. Veenman (1984) confirms that classroom management problems can span the teaching career: "Aspects of teaching that involved student control and motivation were perceived as the greatest problems for teachers across all experience levels" (p. 157). Menges (1999) found that at the university level, female faculty, in particular, find troublesome students to be a significant stressor.

Isolation

Teaching, by its very nature, tends to be more isolating than other professions. Work is carried out independently and the majority of the workday is spent in the classroom with students, rather than with other professionals. This is in particular contrast to health care workplaces which frequently function using a team work approach and provide opportunities for mutual assistance among coworkers. In fact, the ability to work with other professionals is a critical skill in the health care workplace. In the classroom, on the other hand, teachers are expected to conduct their own classes and know how to handle their own daily problems. This isolation, Gordon (1991) points out, is often exacerbated by the novice teacher's fear of being exposed as a failure. Teaching environments tend to offer few opportunities for sharing experiences with or receiving feedback from colleagues and supervisors, so new teachers have no way of knowing if their experiences are typical for novices. Although new teachers may be sharing the same problems, the means to work with others to find solutions to work-related

problems is usually limited or even nonexistent. Brock and Grady (1997) relate the story of a novice teacher who wept during an interview when Brock told her the problems she was describing were common to beginners. This was the first time the teacher had been given this information and, assuming she was a “bad teacher,” she had been planning to leave the profession (p. 15). Boice (2000) believes that, like the other groups, new university faculty members tend to resist asking for help and advice.

To make matters worse, experienced teachers are often not forthcoming with assistance for newcomers; in fact, being excluded from a school’s social structure is a frequent complaint of new teachers. (Brock & Grady, 1997; Gordon, 1991; Menges, 1999). Reasons suggested to explain this seeming lack of support are that experienced teachers believe that beginners should go through the same “rites of passage” they did, fear their offers may be interpreted as being interfering, and think it is the role of administrators to help new staff members. New teachers themselves do not always know how to go about networking and establishing helpful relationships. In describing new university faculty who were experiencing difficulties, Boice (2000) writes that “almost all the failures and miseries of these new hires owed to misunderstandings about effective ways of working and socializing” (p. 91).

Difficult Work Assignments

Unlike other professions, in which responsibilities are increased gradually as one gains expertise and experience, new teachers at all educational levels are often given the most difficult assignments: classes full of students with behavior

problems, the least interesting courses, several different subjects to teach, and/or extracurricular tasks. It is a common practice to reward experienced instructors by allowing them to choose the plum assignments (Brock & Grady, 1997; Gordon, 1991; Huling-Austin, 1992; Veenman, 1984). This practice can add significantly to the stress level of beginning teachers who are usually the least prepared to take on assignments that require expertise in classroom management. As Brock and Grady (1997) point out, beginning teachers are frequently set up for failure before they set foot in the classroom.

Veenman (1984) cites a number of studies that indicate it is not uncommon for new teachers to be assigned subjects in which they have little or no training. Or they may be asked to teach several different subjects, each requiring a separate preparation. Finally, they may be given time-consuming extracurricular assignments or asked to substitute for other teachers. In postsecondary vocational courses, especially in health care, instructors may have the additional responsibilities of locating practicum sites and jobs for graduates (Grub, 1999). Even experienced teachers report finding the workload excessive. As a medical office instructor reported to Grub's research team, "They just expect me to get it done, and fortunately I've been able to do that, but it's very tiring, very tiring" (Grub, 1999, p. 282). These extra duties take time that beginning teachers need for adjusting and properly preparing to teach their classes. Huling-Austin (1992) summarizes the findings of a number of studies when she writes that "beginning teachers should not be given multiple assignments because of the stress such assignments are likely to induce" (p. 174).

Lack of Information and Feedback

It is not uncommon for beginning teachers to receive little or no information about what is expected of them on the job (Brock & Grady, 1997; Gordon, 1991; Menges, 1999). Questions of importance to the new teacher range from the significant -- "What is good teaching and how will I know when I've achieved it?" "How will my performance be evaluated?" -- to the less significant, but necessary for everyday success -- "Where do I get pens and pencils?" "What paperwork must I complete and turn in?" And so on. According to a study by Kurtz (as cited in Gordon, 1991), not knowing what is expected of them is the most common complaint among those who leave the teaching profession early in their careers. Whitt (as cited in Menges, 1999) uses the phrase "hit the ground running" (p. 42) to describe the experiences of new university faculty in a school of education. The newcomers were "concerned about how little assistance they were given in adjusting" as they found themselves confronted with "an unexpected and bewildering number of obstacles" (p. 42).

University and college faculty in the Menges study (1999) were disappointed by the lack of corrective feedback they received about their teaching. While many complained that evaluations and reviews were stressful and sometimes seemed to be performed by people unqualified to make such judgments, they still wished to receive constructive suggestions they could use to improve their practice.

Inadequate Materials and Supplies

The allocation of equipment and supplies is not always equitable throughout an educational institution. Glickman (as cited in Gordon, 1991) notes that in addition to plucking the plum teaching assignments, experienced teachers sometimes confiscate the best furnishings and equipment before new teachers arrive. And new teachers who work in departments that receive the least funding or have the fewest students may find themselves at the bottom of the totem pole when it comes to the allocation of equipment and supplies. Vocational instructors in community colleges report having to “beg, borrow, and steal” to keep their classes going (Grub, 1999, p. 136). Even when resources are available, newcomers sometimes lack information about where and how to obtain them.

Stages of Teacher Development

The phenomena of developmental stages for beginning teachers was researched by Fuller and others (Brock & Grady, 1997; Heck & Williams, 1984; Veenman, 1984). Three stages of concern were identified through which beginners typically pass during the first year of teaching. The first, concern about survival, is marked by the teacher’s focus on self and his or her own adequacy as a teacher. This period is spent “struggling to learn school procedures, policies, record keeping, and classroom management” (Karge et al. as cited in Brock & Grady, 1997, p. 67). The concept of “survival” to describe this initial period appears throughout the literature. Books written for postsecondary teachers reiterate this theme in their titles: *The Adjunct Professor’s Guide to Success:*

Surviving and Thriving in the Classroom by Lyons and *Improving Your Classroom Teaching (Survival Skills for Scholars, Vol I)* by Weimer.

Gordon (1991) cites a number of studies which indicate that “many teachers who *survive* [italics added] the induction period and remain in teaching develop a *survival* [italics added] mentality, a set of restricted teaching methods, and a resistance to curricular and instructor change” (p. 7) Brock and Grady (1997) believe it is not uncommon for new teachers to use whatever works and never reflect on or change these strategies throughout their careers. They cite the work of Howey & Bents, Langana, and Zumwalt, which indicates that “unless beginning teachers are provided assistance during this period, the *survival* [italics added] style of teaching that results leads to teacher stagnation instead of development” (Brock & Grady, 1997, p. 68). In his review of studies of junior faculty, Menges (1999) uses the term when describing the first of five problematic features of junior faculty life, “anxiety about *surviving* [italics added] in the job” (p. 20).

The second stage of concern for beginning teachers centers on instructional activities such as covering the curriculum, selecting methods and materials, and mastering teaching skills and strategies. Even trained teachers find they must work at applying what they learned in teacher education to the actual classroom. At this second stage, the teacher’s focus is primarily on subject matter rather than on students.

The shift to having a significant level of concern about students occurs in the third stage. Teachers at this point have gained some comfort with themselves in the context of their classrooms and focus more of their attention on their

students as individuals: their learning, social and emotional needs, learning styles, and response to motivation. Gordon (as cited in Brock & Grady, 1997) believes it is at this stage that teachers can begin to devise teaching strategies that are innovative and specifically designed to help their students learn.

There is disagreement in the literature about whether the tasks at each stage must be fully completed before moving on to the next. It seems likely there is overlap; even the circumstances of a given day or specific group of students can influence the teacher's response. Cheney, Krajewski, and Combs (as cited in Brock & Grady, 1997), who divide the first year into two stages, survival and consolidation, note that while the order of the stages did not change, teachers took varying lengths of time to reach the more advanced stage.

Teachers as Adult Learners

Instructors transitioning from the field to the classroom play dual roles of teacher and student, in a reversed version of Tennant and Pogson's (1995) observation that "adults who are learners in one context may become teachers in another" (p. 171). Teachers as learners, however, have not been well studied. Brookfield (1995) points out that "attempts to research teachers as adult learners . . . are rare indeed" (p. 221). This section of the literature review, therefore, focuses on adult learners in general.

The researcher leans toward humanism in her orientation to adult education and has chosen to approach the literature review from this perspective. The humanist approach, described by Elias and Merriam (1980) as according respect to the learner as an autonomous individual, is based on the

tenants of Fromm, Maslow, Rogers, and Knowles. Humanists believe that education should be approached from the *learner's* rather than the *teacher's* point of view; and that learning objectives and activities should not be developed *for* learners by teachers who “know best,” but rather *with* the direct involvement of learners who are deemed capable of helping determine what they need to know and how they might best come to know it. As Knowles (1978) asserts in his discussions of the adult learner, “The heart of education is learning, not teaching, and so our focus has started to shift away from what the teacher does to what happens to the learners” (p. 52).

Adult learning theory is grounded in this respect for the learner. Vella (1994) notes that “a relationship of mutual respect between teacher and learner is often cited as the most important motivator of adult learners” (p. 182). While the need for respect applies to all adult learners, it would seem to be of particular importance when determining the learning needs of professionals, such as career college instructors, who have functioned as competent, successful practitioners prior to entering the classroom. The core qualities of the good facilitator (the term for teacher in humanist literature), described by Rogers (as cited in Tennant and Pogson, 1995), reflect this emphasis on mutual respect in the learning environment:

1. genuineness in entering into personal relationships with learners, rather than consistent adherence to the prescribed role of the teacher
2. acceptance and trust in the learner as a person of worth
3. empathy (nonjudgmental understanding, both intellectual and emotional) for the learner's perspective (p. 176)

Growth, as defined by Allport, Maslow, and Rogers, is not achieved by what is done to us, but rather is a process of becoming for the learner. As Rogers (as cited in Knowles, 1978) posits, “The individual seems to be more content to be a *process* rather than a *product*” (p. 42). Knowles (as cited in Tennant & Pogson, 1995), too, stressed the importance of the relationship between facilitator and learner in determining learning outcomes and makes the following points about this relationship:

1. People are more open to learning when they are respected.
2. It is important for participants to be placed in a sharing relationship at the outset.
3. People learn more from those they trust than from those they mistrust, so it is important to establish a climate of mutual trust.
4. People learn better when they feel supported rather than judged or threatened.
5. A climate of openness and authenticity is also essential. (pp. 176-177)

A major factor that distinguishes adult from pre-adult learners is that for the adult, engaging in a learning event is almost always voluntary. Therefore, learning must be seen by the adult as having relevance; or stated another way, the adult must see a *need* to learn. Tough’s (as cited in Cross, 1981) interviews with adult learners revealed that they are “most frequently motivated by the pragmatic desire to *use* or apply the knowledge or skill” (p. 84). Competence theory suggests that human beings are “intrinsically motivated to master the environment” (Wlodkowski, 1985). Whether they stay motivated throughout a learning event depends on whether they perceive their learning needs as being

met. Wlodkowski (1985) developed what he calls a *Time Continuum Model of Motivation* to describe how motivation levels can vary throughout the learning process. He suggests that the process consists of three critical periods and has assigned corresponding factors of motivation to each period. Table 3 is an adaptation of his continuum figure.

Table 3
Components of Wlodkowski's Time Continuum Model of Motivation

Period in learning process	Motivational factors
Beginning	Attitudes of learner Needs of learner
During	Stimulation affecting learner Affective experience of learner
End	Competence value for learner Reinforcement value

What takes place during the learning process can have either a positive or negative effect on learners. It is clear, however, that if learners do not perceive their needs as being met, they will be discouraged from further participation.

Adults, then, are generally purposeful learners. Identifying their needs is a critical first step to ensure successful education. In her descriptions of training sessions that range in location from an American medical school to an impoverished Ethiopian village, Vella (1994) emphasizes the importance of performing a thorough needs assessment before planning any program of instruction for adults. As she puts it, "Listening to the learners' wants and needs helps to shape a program that has immediate usefulness to adults" (Vella, 1994,

p. 4). In fact, she asserts, “Immediacy is the key motivator . . . unless adults see that their efforts are having practical and immediate results, they rarely continue in a retraining program” (Vella, 1994, p. 187). This would seem to be especially important for adults who are attending training on their own time, as is often the case with career college instructors.

Vella (1995) draws inspiration from Freire who describes needs assessment in terms of identifying what he calls “generative themes” (p. 30). These are the ideas, problems, and issues that generate energy and thus the motivation within each individual to learn; they emerge from the learner’s direct experience with the world.

It is this very experience, wide in range and depth, that is a key characteristic of the adult learner. It has long been recognized as a significant influence on how adults acquire and use new information. Brookfield (1995) points out that “of all the ideas that can be identified as quintessentially adult educational [*sic*], the emphasis on honoring, while at the same time critically analyzing, people’s experiences has the strongest intellectual lineage” (p. 222). It was paramount for Lindeman, one of the first to explore the nature of adult learning and education. In a work originally published in 1926, he wrote that “the resource of highest value in adult education is *the learner’s experience*” (1961, p. 6). Brookfield (1995) cites Lindeman’s definition of adult education: “A cooperative venture in non-authoritarian, informal learning the chief purpose of which is to discover the meaning of experience” (p. 222). While Dewey (1939) advocates that all new learning, regardless of the learner’s age, should be based on previous experience, Knowles (1978) considers it to be especially significant

for adult learners because “as an individual matures he accumulates an expanding reservoir of experience that causes him to become an increasingly rich resource of learning, and at the same time provides him with a broadening base to which to relate new learnings” (p. 56). Knowles (1978) carries the significance of experience even a step further when he asserts, “To an adult, his experience is *who he is*” (p. 56) and suggests that ignoring the experiences of the adult is to ignore him or her as a person. This belief in the importance of experience for the adult learner contributed significantly to his theory of andragogy, in which he identifies the characteristics of adult learning as distinguished from the principles of pedagogy which are traditionally used to describe the learning of children. Knowles’ (1978) theory of andragogy comprises four major tenants:

1. Adults are self-directed. They have moved from the total dependency of infancy to increasing self-directedness. As learners, they can be called upon to perform self-diagnosis and self-evaluation.
2. Adults have myriad life experiences that can serve as resources for learning.
3. Adults’ readiness to learn is linked with their developmental stages and needs to perform their life roles.
4. Adults enter education with a problem-centered orientation to learning. They are seeking to fill current needs and want to quickly apply what they learn.

The literature contains many references to learners’ problems as being not only a legitimate, but essential concern of the adult educator. Galbraith (1990)

believes that “the most common bond among adult learners is their problem orientation” (p. 28). Most adults see little benefit in learning activities that do not have immediate or foreseeable application. What is intended to be learning time can be perceived as wasting time if the outcome does not contribute to the learners’ ability to solve their problems. Horton (1990), in describing his work developing participatory education for members of labor unions, states, “we learned we had to take what people perceive their problems to be, not what we perceive their problems to be. We had to learn how to find out about the people, and then take that and put it into a program” (p. 152). Brock and Grady (1997) stress the importance of drawing on the experiences of teachers when working to help them. Beginning teachers, they write, are “filled with ideas and energy, anxious to assume responsibility for their own class, to try their own ideas, and develop a personal style of teaching. The most useful induction programs provide ideas and information that can be applied to real classroom situations” (p. 64).

Freire (as cited in Tenant & Pogson, 1995) advocates a problem-based approach as the underlying foundation of education: The problems of the learner, he emphasizes, not the agenda of the instructor, should drive instruction. Although his work was motivated by efforts to empower the poor in Brazil, and thus had political undertones, his problem-based approach has universal applications. Traditional education, which he calls the “banking approach,” is characterized by the following:

- The teacher determines the goals.
- The teacher is knowledgeable and the students are ignorant.

- The teacher imparts knowledge and skill and the students receive them.
- The teacher talks and the students listen.
- The students store the knowledge and skills for future use.
- The teacher directs the class sessions and the students comply.
- The education process perpetuates the status quo.

In contrast, the problem-based approach focuses on the learners:

- The learners determine the goals.
- The facilitator and learners all have useful knowledge and skills.
- The learners soon apply the knowledge and skills in the pursuit of their goals.
- The facilitator and learners discuss issues.
- The facilitator and learners jointly decide the direction of class sessions.
- The education process helps create new realities. (Tenant & Pogson, 1995, p. 175)

Ironically, the very educators who are responsible for creating learning events for teachers frequently ignore the principles of adult learning theory that they themselves may espouse. Professional workshops, for example, often consist of recitations of “expert knowledge” by a presenter who has no knowledge of the backgrounds and interests of the participants. Duke (in Dunkin, 1987), notes Campbell’s assertion that “training for adult education must itself be consistent with adult education principles. Indeed, it ought to epitomize adult

education at its best” (p. 804). This is echoed by Vella (1995) who emphasizes the importance of modeling and doing “what we are teaching” (p. 13). In popular education, she asserts, “You must use the principles and practices to teach them or else you do not teach them” (p. 172).

Sheckley (1999), in describing his work to develop an effective model for the professional development of educators, begins with a critique of currently offered professional development activities. He cites the report, *Teacher Quality*, published by the National Center for Educational Statistics in 1999, that includes the following reasons for the ineffectiveness of traditional methods, such as one-time workshops, for professional development: (a) They are typically isolated from the participant’s classroom and school contexts; and (b) they take a passive approach to training teachers, allowing little opportunity to learn by doing and reflecting with colleagues. Sheckley (1999) reports that “less than 10% of the learning that individuals acquire in professional development programs is used to improve practice when they return to their worksites” (p. 3). In their proposed model for professional development, he and his associates include the engaging of teachers “in solving genuine problems they encounter in their classrooms” (Sheckley, 1999, p. 1). They offer the following as implications for professional development:

- Identify a “genuine problem” and the “working model” individuals use to assess the problem
- Work to enrich the working model through:
 - practicing deliberately
 - building a rich body of experience

- helping individuals to organize their experience(s)
- encouraging reflection and effective dialogue
- setting up an environment that supports and challenges learning
- addressing specific aspects of the genuine problem

Genuine problems are described as “ill-defined,” meaning that “the true nature of the problem often is not apparent, the boundaries of the problem are not clearly defined, and more than one solution is possible” (Sheckley, 1999, p. 7). These genuine problems must be drawn from the learners’ experiences. Gordon (1991) suggests, for example, that mentors of beginning teachers should use actual classroom experiences as resources for learning.

Discovering the nature of learners’ genuine problems, then, is a critical component of successful professional development. But as Queeney (1995) notes in her studies of continuing education, needs assessment is a “much-promoted and little-practiced activity” (p. xii). Kang (1994), in her review of training programs for university-level associate instructors, concludes that the “designs of the programs reflect the perspectives and concerns of the program designers, rather than the instructors” (p. 5). Pre-planned learning activities, such as professional development workshops, are most often presented without prior consultation with the learners about their needs and expectations. At best, the attendees are asked during the workshop introduction when it is too late to make substantive changes. At worst, the opinions of the learners are not solicited at all.

Cross (1981), on the other hand, sounds a caution against planning instruction for adults solely based on needs assessments which she describes as “alarmingly popular among educators” (p. 219). She is concerned that “educators

responding to ‘demand’ may . . . find themselves selling the ice box that the learner remembered rather than the refrigerator that the learner wants” (p. 219). And Brookfield (1995) makes the point that learning requires a critical analysis of experience and those who most need to engage in critical reflection may be the least prone to do it. How then, do we reconcile the perceived needs and desires of learners with what we might call their *real* needs? Vella (1994) suggests that this is possible if we follow Jung’s advice to “hold the opposites” (p. 6). For example, in recommending that adults be provided with a safe learning environment, she explains this “does not obviate the natural challenge of learning new concepts, skills, or attitude. Safety does not take away any of the really hard work involved in learning” (p. 6). In fact, an accepting climate of the learners’ efforts, along with a trusting relationship between facilitator and learners, may be essential if learners are to engage in this difficult work.

Learning is hard work because it requires examination of the very experiences that are welcomed by the educator and which provide the resources for learning. These experiences may, in fact, act simultaneously as motivation for learning and barriers to learning. For example, adults may hold dogmatic beliefs they are loathe to give up. Furthermore, they are likely to be unaware of their biases. As Mezirow (1991) points out, “we are caught in our own histories . . . approved ways of seeing and understanding, shaped by our language, culture, and personal experience, collaborate to set limits on future learning” (p. 1). Knowles (as cited in Brookfield, 1995) agrees that “as we accumulate experience, we tend to develop mental habits, biases, and presuppositions that

tend to cause us to close our minds to new ideas, fresh perspectives, and alternative ways of thinking” (p. 223).

“Learning,” as defined by Mezirow (1991), is, in fact, “the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (p. 12). This process, known as *transformative learning*, is based on critical reflection as a means of uncovering and examining hidden assumptions that guide behavior. Cranton (1996) notes that

it is generally agreed in the literature . . . that critical reflection is the key to learning from experience. Educators learn about teaching by talking about their experiences, becoming aware of the assumptions and expectations they have, questioning these assumptions, and possibly revising their perspectives. (p. 2)

In what might serve as a summary of the appropriate use of experience in adult learning, Brookfield (1995) reminds us that “while recognizing, honoring, and celebrating experience is important, it is not, in and of itself, enough. What turns this activity into adult education is subjecting experience to critical analysis” (p. 223). If Cranton (1996) is correct that “educators often look for simple guidelines, want to be told, and expect expertise to be transmitted” (p. 182), then educators themselves may have to critically reflect on their assumptions about adult learning.

Summary

The literature review examined four areas that provided a background for this study. First, the question of preservice teacher education for postsecondary teachers was examined to determine the influence that a lack of preparation has on both teachers and their students. Second, the early transitional experiences of beginning teachers at all levels of education were explored to learn about the problems they encounter as they enter the classroom and start working with students. Third, the stages of teacher development were reviewed to see if patterns describing the learning experiences of new teachers have been identified. And fourth, the nature of adult learning was reviewed to form a context for studying career college instructors who are overcoming the lack of preservice preparation and transitional problems to learn, as best they can, the craft of teaching.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the experiences and perceived needs of health care instructors in private career colleges as they make the transition from the field to the classroom. The long-term goal of the researcher is to develop recommendations that career colleges can implement to help their newly hired instructors more easily make this transition. Because instructional effectiveness significantly affects student learning, helping new instructors more effectively transition may result in the preparation of more competent health care workers.

Little is known about the transitional experiences of private career college instructors. The researcher believes that understanding the views and perceived needs of stakeholders is crucial to designing appropriate and effective programs to assist them. She agrees with Denzin (1989) that “the perspectives and experiences of those persons who are served by applied programs must be grasped, interpreted, and understood if solid, effective, applied programs are to be put into place” (p. 105). Referring specifically to education, Merriam (1998) suggests that “research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education” (p. 1).

Goodson (1992) expresses concern that while many recommendations have been developed regarding educational reform in all sectors, there has been little corresponding study of or in collaboration with teachers.

Effective leadership, the researcher believes, is characterized by respect for stakeholders. Soliciting their perspectives and attentively listening to their views are actions that demonstrate respect. In her work as a career college administrator, the researcher developed high regard for the knowledge and efforts of instructors. She found that most instructors have a strong desire to help their students achieve academic and vocational success and that they work very hard to share what they have learned as health care professionals. Career college instructors deserve the respect of being asked about their experiences and needs. As Vella (1994) points out, "Inviting people to tell their stories, to share their hopes and fears, to simply express their expectations for an educational event, is a way to show . . . respect for them as subjects of their own lives as well as subjects of their own learning" (p. 185).

Qualitative methodology, drawing upon phenomenology and ethnography, was chosen for this study because it offered the most effective means to explore the experiences and perceptions of participants. Exploring these perceptions was the purpose of this study, as reflected in the three research questions:

- (1) What do novice health care instructors at private career colleges experience in the transition from the field to the classroom?
- (2) What are their perceived needs as novice health care instructors?
- (3) How do they believe these needs can best be met?

Research Design

The primary task of the qualitative researcher, according to Patton (1990), is to provide frameworks within which people can respond accurately and present their points of view. The frameworks for this study consisted of interview protocols for the 11 individual interviews and guiding questions for the two focus groups. These frameworks were designed to provide opportunities for novice instructors to explore and describe their experiences and perceived needs. Individual interviews were chosen because, as Patton (1990) advises, they provide the researcher a means to “understand the perceptions, feelings, and knowledge of people” (p. 25). The organizing frameworks for the individual interviews consisted of a series of pre-planned, open-ended questions designed to elicit phenomenological data about the participants’ transitional experiences and needs.

Focus groups were used to promote discussion about transitional experiences and to obtain peer reactions to the data gathered in the individual interviews. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) believe that focus groups provide a setting in which perspectives may be generated by the interaction of the group members. Patton (1990) suggests that high-quality data can be obtained when participants have the opportunity to “consider their own views in the context of the views of others” (p. 335). In addition to providing a different interview environment, the two focus groups increased by nearly 50% the number of participants in the study.

A plan outlining the steps involved in initiating, conducting, and completing the study was prepared in advance to serve as a guide. This plan appears as Appendix B.

Site Selection

Participants for the study were selected from private career colleges in Arizona, California, and Oregon. Western states were chosen because they were accessible to the researcher for personal visits to conduct the interviews. The colleges were located in urban areas that ranged in population from 189,000 to 2.8 million. The settings included coastal, desert, and agricultural areas. Criteria for the colleges were developed to ensure that participants were employed in similar types of institutions. The criteria were also intended to identify colleges most likely to be well-managed, credible providers of educational services. In the experience of the researcher, instructors in poorly run colleges that are encumbered by problems, such as insufficient funding, incompetent administrators, and poor records of regulatory compliance, are likely to suffer low morale and experience difficulties which overshadow the typical transitional problems of newly hired instructors. The criteria were designed, therefore, to reduce the possibility of interviewing participants who might focus on atypical issues specific to their institutions. The following five selection criteria were used:

1. Programs are offered at the certificate, diploma, and/or associate degree level.

Rationale: Programs at these levels are usually long enough and have enough academic credits that students who qualify can apply for some

type of government-guaranteed financial aid. Colleges that offer short-term training must rely on private-pay students or grants, less reliable sources of income. As a result, these colleges may be less financially stable, function on a short-term training model, and hire only part-time, temporary instructional staff as needed.

2. At least 50% of the students are enrolled in nursing or allied health care programs such as medical and dental assisting, respiratory therapy, radiographic and surgical technology, and health information technology.

Rationale: The study focused on health care instructors. Colleges are more likely to invest adequate attention and resources in programs in which a significant percentage of the student population is enrolled.

3. Student enrollment was at least 150.

Rationale: Colleges with fewer than 150 students are more likely to have very small classes, inadequate resources, and problems with financial stability.

4. The college is accredited by one of the following agencies: Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools, Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology, or Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools.

Rationale: Current accreditation indicates a college has met certain minimum standards. The three accreditation agencies chosen are well regarded, in terms of rigorous standards and oversight, for private career colleges. These three agencies are approved by the United States

Department of Education to offer accreditation which, in turn, allows qualified students attending the colleges to apply for Title IV financial aid funds. Accreditation is also a sign of a certain degree of business success and stability because a college must be in operation for at least 3 years before applying for accreditation. This process takes at least 1 year; therefore, an accredited college will have been in operation for at least 4 years.

5. The college is in good standing with applicable regulatory agencies in the state(s) in which it operates.

Rationale: While regulations vary from state to state in depth of coverage and degree of detail, being in compliance is another indicator a college has met certain minimum standards.

Potential sites were identified in one of several ways: (a) The researcher knew at least one administrator, (b) they were listed in the online yellow pages, and/or (c) they had high visibility and a positive reputation in the career college community. The initial contacts with college administrators to determine interest in participation were made by telephone. A letter (see Appendix C) was sent to administrators who expressed interest in participation and believed they had at least one instructor who met the criteria for participants (described in the next section). The letter explained the purpose of the study, the criteria and selection process for participants, potential benefits for the college, and assurances of confidentiality for both the college and the instructors.

Most administrators whose colleges met the site selection criteria wanted to participate in the study; most also stated they would like to see the results of

the study and believed the findings would be useful to them. Only one director of education, contacted through cold calling, had no interest. He stated that the instructors were “too busy” to take part in “anything like this.” A nursing program director at a large college said she wanted her instructors to participate in a focus group, but had “too much going on” and was unable to organize a time when the staff could coordinate their schedules. The education department at another college initially expressed an interest in participating, but was going through an administrative change and did not respond to several follow-up telephone calls.

A total of nine career colleges were selected to participate. At six of the colleges, the administrators determined whether potential participants met the selection criteria and then arranged the interview locations and times. All of these interviews took place in a private room at the corresponding college. The administrators at two colleges secured permission from qualified instructors for the researcher to contact them by telephone. In these cases, arrangements for interviews were made directly with the participants. One meeting took place in the lobby of the researcher’s hotel and the other at a veteran’s clinic, the participant’s daytime workplace. The administrators were asked to sign a consent form on behalf of their institutions before the interviews and focus groups took place. (See Appendix D.)

Participant Selection

The original plan of the study was to conduct 10 individual interviews and two five-member focus groups. In fact, 11 individual interviews and two focus groups, one with 2 participants and the other with 3 participants, were conducted.

Patton (1990) suggests there are no set rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry; the method of sampling is more important than the size of the sample. He posits that “purposeful sampling,” meaning the selection of information-rich cases likely to reveal a lot of data about issues of central importance to the researcher, is key to a successful qualitative study. Merriam (1998) makes a similar argument when she asserts that “the crucial factor is not the number of respondents but the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon” (p. 83).

The researcher developed criteria for selecting participants who would be most likely to contribute a lot of data about the experiences of novice instructors. The following selection criteria were used:

1. Participants must teach courses in nursing or allied health occupations.

Rationale: The study was concerned with the experiences of health care instructors because the professional interest of the researcher is the nature and quality of occupational health care instruction.

2. Participants must have been teaching for less than 1 year (at either the current or any other college).

Rationale: One major objective of the study was to explore transitional experiences, and instructors with less than one year of experience were considered most likely to be in the transitional period and able to easily recall their early classroom experiences and needs.

3. Participants must teach at least 15 hours a week.

Rationale: Private career colleges typically offer health care courses in blocks of up to 4 or more hours daily. Fifteen hours a week would be the

minimum part-time schedule in most institutions. Instructors with fewer teaching hours would be less likely to experience the same demands as those with a schedule more representative of the average career college.

4. Participants must teach classes that have at least 10 students.

Rationale: Instructors of classes with fewer than 10 students frequently function more as facilitators or tutors than as classroom teachers. The researcher was interested in the needs of instructors who must plan for group instruction and be responsible for classroom management.

5. Participants cannot have had any type of formal teacher education.

Rationale: The study focused on the transitional experiences of instructors who had moved directly from positions as health care providers to positions as classroom instructors.

6. Participants must demonstrate interest in the research topic, be willing to share their teaching experiences, and be able to articulate their experiences.

Rationale: Interviewing as an effective means of gathering useful data for this study depends on the willingness and ability of participants to verbally express their experiences and needs.

The participants represented seven health care professions: physician, nurse, medical assistant, medical biller, pharmacist, pharmacy technician, and physical therapist assistant. Of the 16 participants, 2 were African American and 2 were Hispanic; 1 was a recent immigrant from Bosnia; and 5 were males. They ranged in age from mid-twenties to mid-sixties, with the majority being younger than age 40.

Data Collection

Two methods of data collection were used: (a) individual interviews and (b) focus groups. The interviews and focus group discussions were audiotaped and transcribed. The researcher also took notes immediately following each interview session to record relevant information, such as nonverbal communication demonstrated by the participant.

Individual interviews. The 11 individual interviews ranged in length from 50 to 90 minutes. The interview guide contained 18 open-ended questions designed to give the participants opportunities to reflect on and articulate their transitional experiences and needs.

In addition to providing a means to gather useful data, the purposes of the question guide included keeping the interviews focused, using the limited time available as efficiently as possible, minimizing interviewer effects by asking the same questions of each participant, and facilitating the comparison of data and identification of common themes in the responses (Patton, 1990). A copy of the interview guide appears as Appendix E. The researcher also developed corresponding follow-up and probing questions for each of the 18 questions to serve as prompts which were used, as needed, to further explore the participants' responses.

The following format was used for each individual interview:

(a) introductions; (b) explanation of the purpose of the study; (c) request for participant to read and sign the consent form (Appendix F); (d) request for participant to fill out the demographic survey (Appendix G) and select a pseudonym; and (e) explanation of the questioning process, including the fact

that the interview was to be audiotaped. None of the participants had questions about the consent form or demographic survey or expressed concerns about the audiotaping. Several did comment before the interview began that they had doubts about the usefulness of their contributions.

Preparation for focus groups. The audiotapes were transcribed by the researcher following the completion of the individual interviews. The data were reviewed to compile a list of ways, in the views of the participants, that career colleges could help newly hired instructors transition more easily to the classroom. The list was created by studying the responses to all the interview questions; however, the following questions were most useful for this task:

1. Suppose I had been your supervisor when you started teaching. How could I have best helped you?
2. If you could design ways to help new instructors make the transition to the classroom, what would they be?
3. If you were writing a handbook for new instructors, what would you be sure to cover?
4. Is there anything else you can tell me about your needs as a new instructor?
5. Is there anything else you can tell me about how you believe these needs can best be met?

A total of 14 recommendations were extracted from the transcripts. These were then listed on a handout to distribute to focus group members.

Focus groups. Two focus groups were conducted with participants who had not been interviewed individually. The original research design was for two

five-member groups, each member coming from a different college. Locating qualified novice instructors at five colleges who could coordinate their schedules in order to meet was not practical. Therefore, two focus groups were organized, one at each of two colleges. Meetings were difficult to organize even when all participants worked at the same college. As a result, focus groups consisting of 4 and 3 participants were scheduled. When the researcher arrived for the meeting with four group members, only 2 participants attended. It was not possible to reschedule, so the focus group proceeded with 2 participants. Neither college at which focus groups were held had been represented by instructors in the individual interviews.

The on-site directors of education set up the two focus groups at their corresponding colleges. This process included identifying and screening potential participants and setting a time and place for the meetings. Both took place at the college facility where the participants were employed. One group meeting lasted approximately 90 minutes; the other approximately 70 minutes. The following format was used for each focus group: (a) introductions; (b) explanation of the purpose of the study; (c) request for participants to read and sign the consent form (Appendix H); (d) request for participants to fill out the demographic survey (Appendix G) and select pseudonyms; (e) distribution of the list of recommendations; (f) oral description of the source of the recommendations; and (g) explanation of the discussion process, including the fact the interview was to be audiotaped. None of the group participants had questions about the consent form or demographic survey or expressed concerns about the audiotaping.

Each focus group was asked to perform the same three tasks:

1. Share their own transitional experiences as novice instructors.
2. Give their opinions of the list of recommendations for ways to help novice instructors more easily make the transition to the classroom.
3. Add their own recommendations for ways to help novice instructors.

In actuality, most of the focus group time was spent exploring the experiences of the participants. The data from the focus groups was coded, categorized, and incorporated into the themes that resulted from the analysis of the individual interview transcripts. This data added value to the study because it enabled the researcher to compare and contrast the experiences of instructors who worked at the same site.

Data Analysis

The transcripts of the 11 individual interviews were reviewed and the data organized and analyzed in three ways. First, a matrix of the responses to the 18 interview questions was created to facilitate the comparison of responses and provide a means of searching for similarities and themes, exploring the nature of the transitional experiences, and identifying recommendations for helping new instructors. To create the matrix, each of the 18 interview questions was listed and then followed by 11 groups of statements, each group containing the responses of 1 participant. Some statements were direct quotes; others were paraphrased versions of responses.

The second method used to analyze the data was open coding, “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). A line-by-line analysis of the

interview transcripts was performed to search for categories relevant to the research questions; that is, categories that provided data that could be used to describe the experiences and perceived needs of novice instructors. For example, the category “Difficulties with Students” was created to label, in the margin of the transcript, the variety of student problems encountered and reported by the participants.

The purpose of the coding and categorizing was to fill in and expand on the responses recorded on the matrix. Whereas the responses in the matrix generally consisted of single concepts, the process of coding included asking questions about the data, applying what Strauss and Corbin (1990) call “theoretical sensitivity, the ability to ‘see’ with analytic depth what is there” (p. 76). For example, several participants reported feeling very nervous during their first days in the classroom. The word “nervous,” therefore, appeared several times as a response to Question # 6, “Thinking about your first two weeks in the classroom, how would you describe your feelings?” During the coding process, topics were explored to develop subcategories and find interrelationships. In the case of the “nervous” example, these included “causes of the nervousness,” “the degree of nervousness,” and “what alleviated the nervousness.”

The coding was accomplished by first underlining key words in the transcripts and listing potential categories on a separate sheet of paper. After completing the underlining of key words in all the transcripts, they were reviewed a second time and the category titles were written as labels in the margins.

The third strategy was the creation of an outline of the categories and subcategories to provide a framework for listing appropriate quotes from the

participants. This provided a useful format for further identifying and organizing data within themes, the means by which the findings were to be reported. It also provided an additional means for comparing and contrasting the experiences and needs of the 16 participants. And it provided a visual means to more easily search for possible relationships among the categories. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out, "Categories have conceptual power because they are able to pull together around them other groups of concepts or subcategories" (p. 65). Finally, creating categories whose contents included the words of the participants facilitated the search for language and key terms common to the participants as they described their transitioning experiences.

Validity and Reliability

The purpose of this study was to gather data that might be useful in developing recommendations for ways to assist new instructors in their transition to the classroom; therefore, conducting a valid study that would allow some degree of extrapolation was important to the researcher. Extrapolations, as defined by Patton (1990), are "modest speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical conditions" (p. 489).

The degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied to other situations is widely debated. If the goal of research in education is to be practical and action-oriented, as Cronbach (as cited in Merriam, 1998) argues it should be, then increasing the reliability of a study is a prime concern. Achieving reliability, in the traditional sense of being able to replicate one's findings in a different context, is, however, "not only fanciful but impossible" (Merriam, 1998,

p. 206) in qualitative research. Guba and Lincoln (1981), among others, believe that validity and reliability in qualitative research should be approached from a different perspective than that traditionally espoused in quantitative research. They suggest that instead of seeking generalizations, the researcher should think in terms of “fittingness,” the degree to which the findings, or “working hypotheses,” from one context fit other contexts to which they might be applied.

Increasing the chances of there being a fit between one study and other contexts is achieved through “careful attention to the study’s conceptualization and the way in which data [are] collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented” (Merriam, 1998, pp. 199-200). The following four strategies were used to enhance the validity and hence the possible fit of the study to other career college contexts:

1. Purposeful Sampling: Selection criteria for sites and participants were designed to obtain as representative a sample of the population of career college instructors as possible. As Guba and Lincoln (1981) point out:

Whether or not certain information is generalizable is a function not only of the degree to which the locale of the study is in fact a “slice of life” but also of whether that particular “slice of life” is representative of other “slices of life.” (p. 116)

The sampling criteria also served to identify participants who were most likely to provide rich, descriptive data. Patton (1990) points out that “the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of cases selected and the

observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size” (p. 185).

2. **Location and Variety of Sites:** Participants were selected from nine colleges in three states to increase the variety of educational settings and contexts. At the same time, as with the selection of “typical” participants, sampling criteria was used for site selection to identify colleges most representative of career colleges in general. These criteria may also serve to inform potential users of the findings and recommendations so they can determine whether their context is similar to those in the study.
3. **Use of Interview Guide.** The same questions were asked of each individual interview participant to reduce researcher bias. Merriam (1998) cites many studies when she concludes that “the use of predetermined questions and specific procedures for coding and analysis enhances the generalizability of findings in the traditional sense” (p. 208).
4. **Member Checks.** The participants in the individual interviews were given the opportunity to review the summaries of their responses and indicate their agreement or disagreement with the researcher’s interpretations; space was also provided for them to make additions and/or deletions. Letters containing instructions for reviewing and responding to the summaries were sent along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope and a request to return them within 3 weeks. (Appendix I contains a copy of the letter.) Four of the 11 participants returned the completed forms.

Ethical Considerations

The USD Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects' guidelines were strictly followed throughout the study. The potential harm to participants was believed to be very minimal, limited to possibly experiencing mild fatigue during the interview or focus group. Participation in the study was voluntary and each participant was fully informed in advance about the duration of the interviews and focus groups and the type of questions that would be asked.

The potential benefits to the participants included opportunities to (a) reflect on their transitional experiences, (b) share their experiences with someone interested in their work, and (c) receive satisfaction from sharing information that might benefit other novice instructors.

All participants signed consent forms prior to the interviews and focus group sessions. These forms contained all the elements required by federal law and outlined by the USD Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects. (See Appendixes E and G for individual and focus group consent forms.) The participants' rights, as outlined on the forms, were also explained orally by the researcher. Time was scheduled for participants to ask questions about the research and any items on the consent form. Participants were advised they could withdraw from the study at any time before, during, or after the interview or focus group session.

Several steps were taken to protect confidentiality. The interviews and focus groups were conducted in private. Participants were given the opportunity to create pseudonyms; if they did not do so, the researcher assigned one.

All data, including tapes and transcripts, were stored in a locked cabinet in the home of the researcher. Participants were asked if they wanted to receive a copy of their interview transcript and what they wanted done with the audiotape once the research was completed. One participant requested the audiotape of the interview. All other tapes were destroyed upon completion of the dissertation.

Delimitations And Limitations

The study was limited to one type of postsecondary instructor. A small number of participants, as compared to the many thousands that constitute the group of private career college health care instructors, were interviewed. In addition, purposeful sampling by means of selection criteria for both sites and participants further limited the study.

Role of the Researcher

The quality of qualitative research is dependent on the skill and biases of the researcher because “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). As Oliver (as cited in Vella, 1995) points out, “The observer is part of what he or she observes” (p. 3). In this case, the researcher is a former administrator and educator of career college instructors. This background may have contributed to the quality of the study by enabling her to ask appropriate questions and understand the language of this particular segment of education.

At the same time, personal biases of the researcher likely influenced certain a priori assumptions that guided the design of the study. One significant assumption was that instructors could readily articulate their own learning needs.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

This study was based on interviews and focus groups with 16 novice health care career college instructors in order to gain a better understanding of their experiences and needs as beginning teachers. Eleven individual interviews were conducted using an interview guide containing 18 questions. The remaining five novice instructors participated in two small focus group discussions.

The transcripts of the interviews and focus groups were analyzed and organized in three ways: (a) by listing responses to the interview questions, (b) by creating categories obtained from coding, and (c) by preparing an outline that identified themes that emerged from the categories.

This chapter begins with a brief description of the participants and their entry into the teaching profession. The remainder of the chapter is organized around responses to the following three research questions which were used to guide the study.

- Research Question # 1: What do novice health care instructors at private career colleges experience in the transition from the field to the classroom?

This research question is answered by means of a discussion of the four major themes that emerged from the data and captured the experiences of

the participants. Most of the data are presented in the words of the participants themselves.

- Research Question # 2: What are their perceived needs as novice health care instructors?

Most participants did not readily identify their needs when asked directly to name them. The researcher, however, was able to ascertain a variety of needs, based on the participants' own words, as they described their experiences as new instructors.

- Research Question # 3: How do they believe these needs can best be met?

Suggestions for ways to help new instructors were taken from the data and organized into a list of 14 items. This section also contains a discussion of the participants' negative view of instructor education and a summary of advice for new instructors as expressed in the words of 11 of the participants.

Descriptions of the Participants

The 16 participants in this study represented a variety of health care occupations, ages, and cultural backgrounds. They included a physician, licensed vocational nurse, medical biller, physical therapist assistant, and pharmacist; three pharmacy technicians; and six medical assistants. The years of work experience for each individual ranged from 3 to 40. Five of the 16 participants had worked for at least 10 years in the field. The type of education required for the various occupations ranged from on-the-job training to university

and medical school degrees. Five participants had attended private career colleges; 2 of the 5 graduated from the colleges in which they now teach. Three participants have plans for moving up the health care career ladder: 2 are taking classes to become physician's assistants and 1 hopes to someday attend medical school.

More than half of the participants are under age forty. Two are African American and 2 are Hispanic. Five of the 16 are male. The physician is an immigrant who escaped from Bosnia with her husband and two young children. In addition to teaching, she is currently studying English and reviewing to take the medical board exam for foreign-educated physicians.

The pseudonyms selected by the participants are listed here to make them easy to identify as such because some are words with everyday meanings that might be confused with the text: CJ, CM, Danielle, Doc, Easy, Ed, Erica, Hank, Janae, JW, Mama Sandy, Nunes, Rob, Sincere, Suzie, and Upbeat.

Entering the Profession

Well, go for it. --- Doc

The participants gave a variety of reasons for becoming health care instructors, ranging from the fulfillment of long-term goals to serendipity. The majority set out with the intention of becoming instructors. As Upbeat says, "I *always* wanted to be a health care instructor." Nunes explains that she, too, always wanted to be a teacher, but did not have the opportunity until recently. She is now teaching at the career college she attended and says she knew when she was a student there that she wanted to be an instructor. Sincere's desire to

teach was motivated by the relationship she developed with her instructor: “I was very close to my medical assisting instructor and became motivated to be a teacher.”

Patient education is a significant part of many health care occupations and several participants say they discovered their interest in teaching while in the field. Upbeat says enthusiastically, “I *loved* patient education when I worked in the field. It was the favorite part of my job.” Easy says he really enjoys the patient education he does as a physical therapist assistant. This prompted him to accept a friend’s invitation to apply for the part-time teaching position at the college where the friend is employed. Erica learned she liked teaching when she was asked by her physician employer to train new coworkers: “I found out in working in a medical office that I like to teach. I really enjoy watching people learn and develop their skills and apply what they’ve learned.”

Doc was an army medic whose current long-term goal is to become a physician’s assistant. While working as a medical assistant after he left the military, he became concerned about what he perceived to be the lack of medical assisting skills of a career college graduate with whom he worked. He decided then that he would like an opportunity to teach and help future medical assistants develop better skills. That opportunity came when he moved 6 months ago from another state: “There was an ad in the paper for an instructor so I said, ‘Well, go for it.’ So that’s why I’m here.”

Two other participants had also moved recently and were scanning the employment ads. Mama Sandy’s husband saw the ad and told her she should think about applying. After consulting with her previous boss, who told her she

would be good at teaching, Mama Sandy “gave it a try” and was hired as a result of her teaching demonstration. Janae attended a career fair to look for a medical assisting job. She stopped by the college’s recruiting booth, thinking it was for a clinic or medical office, and was invited to apply for an instructor’s position. It had never occurred to Janae to apply for a teaching position because, as she explains, “I always thought you would have to have a degree in *teaching* to do something like this. So I was a little surprised that they stressed experience.”

CJ was planning to become a different type of teacher. She explains, “I was starting to head back to college. I was going to teach junior high history. So I thought [teaching at a career college] in a field [in which] I have knowledge would be a good segue for my history teaching.” CJ enjoys teaching medical billing and says she will probably stay in the career college setting rather than pursuing a career teaching junior high school.

Hank also had another purpose when he applied to teach at a career college: “I just saw the ad. But I just did it for the interview, really, just to get experience with interviews. I never really thought about taking my experience and teaching with it.” When asked what changed his mind about accepting the job, Hank responds: “Well, when he [school director] actually wanted to hire me I figured, ‘Alright, that’s cool, let’s go for it.’”

Friends were the impetus for 2 participants. A friend in the Bosnian community suggested teaching as a logical employment choice for the physician while she improved her English and prepared to take the qualifying exam to practice medicine. She explains that although working as an instructor was “not my choice,” her mother and sisters were teachers and she understands “the

environment.” Easy was also recruited by a friend whose department needed an evening instructor. After thinking it over, Easy decided it “would be something that’s fun.”

Ed was another participant who did not set out to be a teacher: “I’m semi-retired and have a lot of time. I saw an ad for the job and thought, ‘Why not?’ I thought it would be a chance to dust off my brain.”

Findings by Research Question

Research Question # 1: What do novice health care instructors at private career colleges experience in the transition from the field to the classroom?

Analysis of the interview and focus group transcripts identified four major themes that capture the transitional experiences described by the participants. These themes serve as a framework for presenting the variety of experiences which are, for the most part, described in the words of the participants themselves. The four themes are:

1. The Experience of the Unknown
2. The Experience of the Unexpected
3. The Experience of Teaching Oneself to Teach
4. The Experience of Satisfaction

The Experience of the Unknown

I was excited and I was scared. "What am I doing here?" -- Suzie

Classroom teaching was a new experience for all the participants. None had received education or training about how to teach and they were also newcomers to both the culture of education and the organizations in which they were to teach. They were, indeed, stepping into the world of the unknown.

Early feelings. When asked to describe their feelings during their first days in the classroom, the most common responses given were scared, excited, nervous, and overwhelmed. The reasons given for these feelings relate to not knowing what they should do. Sincere describes her first few days:

It was very nervewracking. Because it's one thing to tell somebody one-on-one how to do things, but to stand in front of a class of 25 to 30 people [is different]. Teaching was *really* scary, because there was no "this is how you do it."

Sincere jokes that, as a result of her fears, she "was on a lot of medication." CJ uses the same term, "nervewracking," and laughs as she describes her early experiences dealing with the mechanical aspects of teaching:

Not only was I using the dry board, I was using overheads and the different visuals to go along with it. Now that's the first time I ever flipped on an overhead in my life! And I'm gonna fill in the blanks on this thing! So all that kind of stuff made me extremely nervous.

Several participants expressed their initial fears about what they would do if the students asked them a question they could not answer. Sincere expresses a belief that is held by several of the participants and documented in the literature

(McKeachie, 1999) as common among beginning teachers at all levels: “When you’re actually the teacher, they expect you to know *everything*. That was kind of scary.” Janae, too, represents the feelings of the participants when she describes how she felt in the beginning:

I was very afraid. *Very* afraid. Because this was a new experience for me.

It was just very scary, because I thought I had to know everything. I

thought that if I made a mistake, they [the students] were not going to be very forgiving.

JW was also concerned about student questions, saying she worried about not being able to answer them on the spot and feeling “like [I was] backed up against a wall.” The participants were also concerned about how students perceived them and wanted to always appear competent and in control.

Conquering the fears. When asked how their early feelings in the classroom compared with how they feel now, most of the participants who reported feeling nervous or scared are now more comfortable:

- “I feel very confident now.” (Erica)
- “Now I feel 100% confident when I walk into a classroom.” (Nunes)
- I’m a lot more comfortable now and don’t feel intimidated by the students. I feel more prepared and able to answer questions.”
(Sincere)
- “I enjoy myself and enjoy coming to work every day.” (Janae)

The participants explain that their increased confidence and feelings of comfort are the result of experience: time in the classroom, knowing what to

expect, and becoming familiar with what they are supposed to be doing. Hank talks about conquering fears by facing them:

All the nervousness is just out of fear of anticipation of things that could or may happen and as you go along, they don't happen. The bad things that you hoped would never happen don't happen. Things go good, and you get response from your students and you just go with it. You just get over your fears.

Not everyone, however, is completely at ease yet. Suzie says that her "feelings now really depend on the group and how motivated the students are." And Doc says that while it's better than it was in the beginning, he feels "there is still a bit of a barrier between me and some of the students because they don't automatically respect their instructors. You have to build that up."

Career colleges typically have new students entering every 4, 6, or 8 weeks, so instructors frequently face new groups. Some participants mention that this still causes twinges of nerves at the beginning of each module. As Sincere explains, "We have new classes starting every 6 weeks, so it can still be a little nervewracking."

The unknown craft of teaching. Danielle describes a common feeling of these health care professionals as they enter the world of teaching: "It wasn't the curriculum [content] that I had a problem with. It was 'How do you administrate it? How do you get it out there?'" Indeed, how does one "get it out there" to the students, the essence of teaching. This is what many of the new instructors interviewed wanted to know. They had, along with the people who hired them, made the common assumption that if you know it, you can teach it. Their

experiences support the research which demonstrates that knowing and teaching are not the same (Boice, 2000; Huling-Austin, 1992; Kennedy, 1991).

Erica still sounds a little bewildered when she explains her early days: “I had *no* idea what I was supposed to be doing. I’m a new teacher and I need to know how to make lecture notes and I need to know how to put together a lesson plan.” It seemed overwhelming to Sincere, too: “Where do we even *start* to prepare a lecture? I didn’t have any *clue* “ Upbeat explains the challenge of teaching material she knows very well, a problem for experts documented in the literature (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Lee, 1967): “I have to go back and say [to myself], ‘Some people don’t actually know how to take a phone message.’ And that’s been the most difficult for me.” She also notes that although she did extensive patient education in the field, “teaching anatomy and physiology is a lot different from teaching a person how to do blood sugar checks.” Easy found he was making assumptions about what his students understood when he presented material. He says he realized from their questions that they were taking everything he said very literally, sometimes with rather humorous interpretations. As he explains, “You learn these things in depth and it’s easy to walk out and really think they [the students] know this at the same level and you have to remind yourself that they don’t.”

Unfamiliar subject matter. Some participants have been assigned to teach unfamiliar subject areas. A common example comes from the medical assisting field which consists of two kinds of work, administrative/clerical (front office) and clinical, hands-on work with patients (back office). Two participants talk about the difficulties of teaching outside their areas of expertise. As Erica

explains, “The most difficult has been the fact that I’m so strictly clinically based, that my experience has been so clinical out in the field and I need to be able to teach front office also.” She is also having to learn the medical office computer programs she is expected to teach the students: “I haven’t done a lot of computer work [in the field]. So I’m making it my business now to get the programs and actually do the computer program the students are doing.” She laughs as she reports, “When I interviewed for the position, I made sure I told [the college director] ‘I have no idea what this Medical Manager [medical software program] business is about!’” Upbeat has also been assigned classes out of her immediate area of expertise: “I’m still struggling with teaching the front office aspect of being [a medical assistant] because I didn’t do it a lot. I was always back office.”

Unknown curricula. Even when the participants are teaching topics they know, exactly *what* they are to teach is often unknown until the last minute. Sincere, who has described herself as being “too organized,” explains that “I like to have everything ready ahead of time and that’s not always how it is in the classroom. You kind of get thrown into things that you don’t know you’re teaching until you’re right in the classroom.”

Another common problem revealed in the interviews is that the participants do not always have an overall view of the programs they are teaching. Rob, for example, has responsibility for teaching only certain classes in the certified nursing assistant program and says, “I don’t know exactly how the CNA program [works]. I know [the classes I teach], but I have no idea what [other classes my students take].” JW reflects the concerns of other participants who are learning the content of their programs as they teach them:

My biggest fear was if they [students] ask me what's going to happen next week. Well, I don't know because I haven't *gotten* to next week yet. I'm still trying to figure out what's going on *this* week. So getting bits and pieces of the program was hard for me and it still is, because I haven't completed a whole term yet. So I try to get ahead as much as I can so that I'm that much more able to tell them what's going to happen.

Thrown into the classroom. The extent of what was known and unknown on the first day of teaching varies among the participants, depending on how much orientation and assistance they received before stepping into the classroom. Their early experiences ranged from being “thrown in” to having some time to work with an experienced teacher and ease into the classroom. For some, the entry was abrupt, as Erica describes: “Basically we were told, ‘Here’s the books, you need to lecture, and clinically you need to do hands-on, and these are the tests, and there you go!’”

While Erica does not use the phrase “thrown in” to describe her initial experiences, it would be descriptive, and other participants do use it. Rob describes what happened when he was hired to teach a nursing assistant theory class. Three days before he was to start teaching, he received an evening telephone call advising him that the instructor who supervised students doing their practicum at a long-term care facility had quit without notice. He was directed to go to the facility the next day and take over the clinical supervision of the students. Rob explains: “I was really hired to teach theory CNA [certified nursing assistant], but then I got *stuck* into that position [supervising on-site practicum] where they needed a clinical instructor and so I just got *thrown* onto

the floor and I wasn't *prepared* for it." He sounds exasperated as he emphasizes the words that describe his predicament.

Nunes describes an experience similar to Rob's: "I was thrown into a situation where [the college was one teacher short] and the supervisor was teaching the morning and the night class. So when I arrived they threw me into the classroom."

The unknown territory of the hostile classroom was the entry point into teaching for several participants. The concept of "thrown in" is expanded by JW when she describes her experience of being given a group of upset, suspicious students as being "thrown to the wolves." She, like some of the other participants, was perceived by her students as just one more in a series of instructors who had come and gone, leaving the students frustrated and angry about the lack of continuity in their training. In JW's case, she said the first question the students asked her was, "How long are you going to last?" Mama Sandy describes her first experiences with her students as "devastating" because the class had "been through [about] three instructors before they got to me." Her students had the same question as JW's: "Are you staying?"

Another difficult situation for the novice instructor is replacing a popular instructor. This happened to Doc and Danielle. Doc reports his students as being quite "hostile." He thinks they felt "cheated" when he took over the class. He now believes that "it kind of worked out okay, but it's like, put up an iron shield to make sure I don't get stuff thrown at me." While Danielle does not describe her students as hostile, she says they considered her predecessor to be the "perfect

instructor.” So, she explains, “I had to battle, ‘R. does it this way’ and ‘R. did that.’ And that was really hard.”

The Experience of the Unexpected

I don't care how much teaching experience you have, that one-on-one of how you have to deal with adult students is, I think, the hardest transition. --- CJ

As they started their new careers as instructors, the participants had certain expectations about what teaching and the college would be like. In several major areas, they were surprised by what they actually encountered.

Their expectations were most off the mark regarding the students. Nearly every participant mentioned being surprised by the nature of the students. They were simply not what the novice instructors thought they would find in a postsecondary setting. For some, learning to work with the student population they encountered was the most difficult part of their transition to the classroom.

Immature students. Knowing they would be teaching adults, the participants almost universally report having expected the students to exhibit maturity, “adult behavior,” and a high level of interest in their occupational education. But, as Mama Sandy explains, “I assumed I would be doing adult teaching and you think there’s a higher maturity level, but ‘no!’” She draws out the word “no” in a humorous fashion. This surprise at the immaturity of the students reiterated throughout the transcript:

- “I was surprised at how young-acting they were. Even my 50-year-old students were young-acting. And that really surprised me.” (Danielle)

- “I thought there would be a greater depth of maturity. In many regards, a lot of the students are still very much teenagers.” (Easy)

CJ is appalled when she sees her students throwing spit wads in each other's hair: “These are adults, mind you.” In describing her transition to the classroom, she observes: “The most difficult [part is] handling the students on a personal level when an issue arises. They become abusive or disruptive, just outright defiant.” Danielle is “shocked” when her students engage in name-calling and even worse: “We had fist fights and threats and we had rude acts in the parking lot.” She explains that “rude acts” refer to the activities of a couple “making out” in a parked car adjacent to the school building. Danielle says she didn't really know how to handle the situation, but found herself marching out to the car, knocking on the window, and yelling at the students, “Get out! Get in class!” Mama Sandy reports having students “almost come to blows in the classroom, which was something I was definitely not expecting.” And CJ has a class in which there are serious interpersonal problems among the students: “They don't like each other. They *hate* each other. They key [scratch] their [each other's] cars, do all kinds of stuff.”

The expectations of the participants about their students were based on their own educational experiences. They report thinking their students would be similar to their current and/or former classmates. But this has not always been the case. CJ recently studied history at a state university. She uses the term “normal” when speaking about that university, as distinguished from the college in which she now teaches. CJ uses this term in the context of describing the types of students who attend career colleges which are not, by implication,

“normal” colleges. Janae also has recent university experience: “I just finished a program myself from Southern Illinois University. So it [the career college classroom] just wasn’t a typical classroom setting that I was used to.” Like CJ, her use of the term “typical” implies that private career colleges are in a different class of postsecondary institutions, one with which they were unfamiliar until now.

Doc recently attended a 4-year university as a pre-med biology major: “I guess it was more of a surprise, because I was used to [the] university and coming here it was kind of quite opposite.” He contrasts his current students with his former classmates:

When I went to college, you go in a classroom and you give the instructor the respect because they’re your instructor. Here it seems to be, okay, it doesn’t really matter if you’re their instructor, you know, they treat you like anybody else on the street until you’ve shown them that either (a) you know what you’re doing, or (b) you can kind of relate to them.

Ed also finds that students do not automatically respect the role of the instructor: “In *today’s* world, students are not hesitant to respond to teachers very dramatically and pointedly.”

Even the participants who attended career colleges themselves believe that times have changed. They remember their classmates being more motivated than many of the students they work with today. Upbeat expresses astonishment that people would waste their time and money:

When I was a student here everyone was here because that’s what they *chose*. You paid your money to be here. . . . For *me* anyway . . . I didn’t

want to waste *my* money. And that's how a lot of people when I went to school felt. We were paying to come here to learn something.

Nunes, who also attended the college in which she now teaches, has a similar observation:

The students seem to be *quite* different here from when I was here.

Everybody that was here when I was a student was here because they wanted to be and they were paying for their education or getting their grants.

The participants were also surprised by what some students believe they should receive in return for their tuition and about what it means to be a student. CJ reports it is not uncommon for a student to tell her, "I paid this money and you should just tell me the answer!"

The participants encounter negative attitudes that some find difficult to deal with. Nunes, in speaking of students enrolled in Welfare-to-Work programs, observes that "it's like they're mad at the whole world because they have to be here." She says many of them lack interpersonal skills and this makes them particularly difficult to work with: "They want to make sure you respect *them* and yet they're not willing to give *you* that respect back." Sincere, who graduated from the college in which she is now teaching, expresses surprise at the lack of respect for instructors: "I was very respectful of my teachers and it's not always the case with a lot of students, so that was new to me."

Students' personal problems Another source of surprise for the participants is the number and type of personal problems their students have. As Mama Sandy says, "I didn't expect the emotional baggage. I was not prepared

for the emotional part of it. Students who would tell me, 'I have no place to live.'" Nunes lists some of the problems she sees in her classroom: "I've had homeless students. I've had students sometimes that have been beaten by their spouses and are living in a shelter. I've had recovering addicts in the classroom. So you get a wide variety." This wide variety, according to other participants, includes former gang members and students who have received public assistance for many years. The participants report that students with these backgrounds often lack interpersonal skills and have little understanding of what employers will expect from them. The novice instructors find themselves needing to teach basic life skills along with technical health occupation skills.

Janae says she is not only surprised by the extent of the students' problems, but how open they are about discussing them. She spends considerable time listening to students and doing her best to counsel them.

Many career college students are single mothers. Suzie says she really feels sorry for single mothers, some of whom she describes as "very smart, very good," but who have to work and care for their children. Many discover they cannot manage to do it all and thus drop out of school. Suzie says that as a mother, she understands, but she does believe that sometimes "you have to sacrifice" in order to achieve your goals. Several instructors report they try to be understanding and give their adult students a break. Ed, for example, holds back on assigning homework, explaining that "many of them have part-time jobs. They have many, many other things. You can't treat them like grammar school or high school kids that have homework. These people don't have the time."

Academically unprepared students. In addition to having personal challenges, many career college students are academically unprepared to do the work necessary to complete their occupational programs. This is another student characteristic not anticipated by the participants. Easy says that one of the first things he learned in the classroom was that “I have to remind myself not to take previous learning for granted.” Erica describes a specific area with which her students have difficulty:

A lot of them have spelling difficulties and you’re dealing with medical terminology. It’s almost like they already have a strike against them because it’s very difficult when you can barely spell and then try to get these medical words down.

Nunes expresses her concerns even more strongly, her frustration evident in her voice:

You know, *how* am I supposed to take this person with a *learning* disability or with a 7th grade education and teach them medical terminology, teach them how to write and spell these words without making critical errors that can cost somebody their *life* someday? That’s my concern.

Doc reports that “every student I’ve seen has had the most difficulty with the math part. A lot of students have real problems with the math.”

Ed believes that educational programs in health care are suffering a dearth of qualified students because “those who are capable are being gobbled up by the electronics industry that’s offering more money to them, so we’re getting a very bottom-of-the-barrel student, if you will.”

The participants did not anticipate having to teach students who lack basic skills and they talk about their concern about admission and retention policies. Nunes expresses her frustration: "Some of them don't even know how to write and I'm wondering how did they get in here? And that drives me crazy, because *that's not for me to ask*, but it does, it drives me crazy." She says at least 50% of her current students have inadequate basic skills. Janae, who teaches in a college with a reputation for high integrity, has similar concerns:

I have in class some students -- I wonder how they slipped through the system. I've had students that I've tried to teach pharmacology to, students that didn't have a basic understanding of math. And so I've had to spend some time just in the basic math. It's hard to teach pharmacology to someone who doesn't have a basic understanding of math.

Janae does say, however, she is referring to a "very small percentage of the students." But even in small numbers, they are there and they must be taught.

Pressures from the administration Some participants express a concern related to the poor skill levels of their students: their perception of administrative pressure to retain students in their classes, who, in the instructors' opinions, do not belong in the program. Doc explains his view of the situation:

If [the students] aren't making it, then [they] shouldn't be here. But then there's always that corporate mentality, you know, "we need to keep our attrition [*sic*] rate up." Other instructors say, "Yes, it affects your pay raises what your attrition [*sic*] rate is." So you're always kind of thinking about that.

Doc then discusses the resulting dilemma:

You have to put your morals there. What I think of is, "Would I hire this person if they graduate?" And if I can't really say, "yes," and they're not fulfilling the requirements, then you have to say, "You can fire me if you want, but I'm not going to pass people that aren't up to these standards."

He thinks being put in this difficult situation could be more difficult for any instructors who are teaching "because of the money," but then quickly adds, "I don't think anybody is here at *this* school for the money!"

Ed's opinion about his students' prospects is startling: "I would say that two thirds of the present class will be employed in something other than pharmacy. They're just not equipped to handle what they'll be faced with." Ed then explains why he makes this dire prediction:

I think there's enough built into the structure of grading that it's pretty hard to fail. I mean, you really have to be unwilling to come to class. You virtually can't fail and even if you get close to it, they're not going to allow you to do it anyway. They [the administration] want that student out [graduated]. "Let the working environment determine what happens, not you. We need to have that student out. We need to have a good record."

Regarding the administration and what he perceives to be their policies, he says he will be "compliant with their wishes" until he finds it "repugnant."

The Experience of Teaching Oneself to Teach

It wasn't the curriculum that I had a problem with. It was, "How do you get it out there?" (Danielle)

Postsecondary instructors rarely participate in teacher education programs, even abbreviated ones, before they enter the classroom. For them, learning to teach is an individually pursued activity and takes place almost wholly in the classroom in a learning-by-doing fashion. Learning to teach mainly by trial and error was reported as the principal means used by community college instructors, a closely related population (Grub, 1999). In the current study, knowing what to try in the first place appears to come mainly from the participant's personal preferences and previous educational experiences. The external source of help most frequently cited by the participants, and also supported by the literature, is the assistance provided by more experienced instructors. A study by Smylie (as cited by Huling-Austin, 1992), found that "of the 14 possible sources of learning, direct experience in the classroom was the only source that teachers ranked higher than consultation with other teachers" (p. 174).

As an introduction to the subject of learning to teach, the next section examines what the participants believe to be the nature of teaching and what they believe they are supposed to be learning to do.

Defining teaching. Many of the participants describe teaching as if it were a different activity from interacting with students, as revealed by their comments:

- “Teaching: you cover the material. You come to the classroom, you take the marker, you write on the board, you explain, you show the pictures.” (Suzie)
- The teaching part was easy, because it was right up my alley. It was things I knew, that I’d experienced. The part I was not prepared for was the counseling – to help the students.” (Mama Sandy)
- “You have to deal with all these challenges. Not the teaching challenges, but the challenges of dealing with these students.” (Erica)
- “The only thing that I wasn’t prepared for . . . it wasn’t so much the teaching and the books and the materials, but the counseling that I have to do.” (Janae)
- “I make it fun. It’s not just teaching, teaching, teaching. Because the students get bored so [I try to figure out] how to make class more fun so they can really enjoy it.” (Suzie)

It appears that these novice instructors have the concept of teaching as conveying information – covering content. This corresponds to findings in the literature which document that “faculty teach content” is a commonly held notion (Boice, 2000; Grub, 1999; Weimer, 1990). Dealing with students, many believe, is a different, separate activity that is related to, but not the same as teaching.

The lecture. In addition to these specific statements about teaching, the transcripts contain numerous references to “the lecture.” Learning to prepare and deliver lectures emerged as a core concern of these novice instructors and appeared to represent, for some of them, the essence of teaching. Rob explains his daily teaching routine, as he believes is required by the curriculum he was

given by the college: “I have to test every single day whatever I lecture on the day before. And as soon as the test is over, I go into my next lecture and test on it the next day.” When the other member of his focus group describes games she sometimes has her students play to review material, he explains that getting through the lecture is his priority: “I don’t have time to break off and say, ‘Let’s play a game,’ even if that’s part of the learning. I have to get through the lecture first.”

Sincere also plans her teaching around tests: “We would take a lecture and then, depending on whatever’s on the test, that’s how you would make sure you cover all the information that’s on the test.”

Erica advises supplementing what will be on the test, but still in the context of the lecture:

Make sure what you’re lecturing on is complete and that you have the information that is going to be on the test. But you also need to add on there things relative to the field. For it to click – to make sense to them. Not just make it be a bunch of medical words.

Teacher-focused instruction. The participants’ description of their teaching methods reveal them to be mainly teacher-focused. Many emphasize that they plan their teaching based on what works for *them* as instructors. For example, Erica describes her teaching in terms of her own preferences: “I’m the type of person who likes to have a lecture prepared and they [students] can follow along in the book and then I do the lecture on the board. That’s how I like to teach.”

When asked if he would be interested in participating in teacher training, Rob responds: “I don’t think so. I do it *my* way. And they’re [the students] going to have to adjust to my way. Because I’m not going to change how I [teach].” He explains that the previous instructor had a different style to which the students had become accustomed. But he emphasizes, “I’m used to doing certain things in a certain way in a certain order and the students are used to a different way, because there was a different instructor. But *that* instructor is no longer *here*, so I had to set the way I wanted to teach.”

The participants have recommendations about how students can best learn from their lectures, the lectures remaining the pivotal point around which any learning might take place. Danielle advises her students to “come to class and get the lecture,” and then go back and re-read the chapter. Sincere also believes that the lecture, along with the text, are the keys to student learning and has developed a way she thinks will help students understand better: “All my lectures are fill-in so they have to go and write it in. They have to go back and find the information from the lecture in the book, which forces them to read the book again.”

Nunes explains her methods, based on the unstated premise that students can read and comprehend what they read:

I’m a board-writer and I utilize the board constantly because of the educational level of some of the students. When I lecture to them, I find a lot of times they’re not taking down notes. So if I lecture to them and I write the lecture on the board as I’m going and talking with them, I know

that they're getting the lecture that they need and it's spelled correctly and they can read it and understand it.

Student learning activities. Activities in which students participate in more ways than simply listening, or perhaps taking notes or filling in a notetaking guide, are often connected with making the lecture more effective or are simply a rest break from what is "really important." They are not considered legitimate teaching methods in their own right. Rob explains hands-on activities for students:

I found it was easier if I was lecturing on something and I saw that the students were lost, I would just stop and go do a skill with them to get that in their mind a little better. And go back [to the lecture] and if they look lost, go do the skill right away. And then just keep on going over and over and over.

Although Rob is responding to what he perceives as the students' need for some kind of participation, his use of hands-on activities appears to be simply a way to help keep the lecture proceeding without everyone falling asleep.

Suzie also sees student participation as separate from the lecture: "I'm glad when I can do an activity because students like that. They don't much like lecturing." Lecturing is, however, the main mode of instruction in her classes.

Hands-on learning appears to usually be limited to skills labs in which the content to be learned consists of hands-on skills. Otherwise, most of the participants do not view what *students* are doing in the classroom as the center of their concern when they plan their teaching. Hands-on learning is not viewed

as a bona fide means of learning – and therefore teaching -- content. This comes across as Erica explains how she selects instructional methods:

I go by what we are teaching. For instance, if it's clinical, it could be half lecture, half hands-on. It depends on what I'm teaching and what the subject is. Some things need more hands-on teaching and other things need more lecture depending on how complicated they are. So it depends on what the subject is.

Upbeat says she plans her instruction based on the content and time available. As she describes what she has done over the past 2 days in class, she comments that she just completed teaching lessons about blood. As she speaks in the interview, she suddenly realizes it only took 2 days to present the information and she comments that she could have “taken longer and had them do more fill-in.” So the use of a student activity, such as filling in notetaking guides, depends on how much time is available after the lecture is completed. It is incidental, occurring if the opportunity presents itself. As Upbeat puts it, “Time is my main motivator ... [the important thing is] if I can get my lecture done.” Upbeat refers to “covering the material,” a familiar refrain in the interviews, when she describes her understanding of what she is expected to do: “Here they want you to develop your own lecture so that you can teach what you want as long as you cover the material.”

CJ says that when she first started teaching, “I was not sure [of] the style – how I should approach the subject.” She says she now uses “a lot of different instructional methods depending on what the course is. ‘What would best

enhance the course’?” The subject matter, not the students, influences her selection of teaching methods.

Three of the 16 participants do mention students when asked how they choose their instructional methods. Janae refers to the personalities of groups of students, as if they all learn in the same way, but she is considering more than content when she explains how she chooses what methods to use:

That depends on the type of students I have. At times, I may have to do a little more interacting, hands-on type of thing. Some of the students are more academic. So we’re a little more out of the book.

Once again, the “interacting, hands-on” is for the less academic students. It is to help those who are academically weak.

Easy, in discussing his teaching, mentions learning styles and differences among students. When asked how he knows about learning styles, he responds:

Well, actually, I learned this on my own. I’ve been studying, trying to find ways to motivate and that’s one of the things I came to understand. You can’t present material the same way to all people. [To] some you need to describe it so the person can visualize it. Or [so] they can touch it and feel it and see what’s going on. And then also I have found that you have to have them repeat it back. Because if you’re talking to them, just because they’re looking at you doesn’t mean that they actually heard you.

JW articulates the closest description of a student-centered view of teaching:

As a teacher you have to figure out, “How can I get this person motivated versus this person?” It’s not going to work – the same techniques – with

everybody, so I think knowing the make up of your class helps a lot in being a successful teacher.

In contrast, Hank, in the focus group with JW, expresses the opposite view: “In general, most of the students here are sort of similar in most ways. What one style works best for one group should – would – work well for another.”

Participants’ learning preferences. Several participants report developing their teaching methods based on how they themselves learn best or from what they liked about teachers they had in the past. As CW explains, “I was a very visual learner, so a lot of my teaching style is for those who are visual learners.” When asked how she does this, she talks instead about how she has modeled her teaching after a high school instructor who “used to make us laugh and got us motivated by starting off the day with funny little games – so I’m going to do that. So that’s how I got it. And then I just rolled from there.” And later, in what appears to be a contradiction of her emphasis on visual learning, she recommends the heavy use of methods that focus on auditory learners: “I want everything to be retained. If you don’t want them to retain it, you say it only once. If you want them to remember it, you go through it two or three times.”

Rob believes that his insistence on reading the text may “seem kind of mean, but that’s how I want to do it and that’s the best way / learned it when I studied it out of the book.” Mama Sandy also borrows from her own experiences as a student:

I kind of did my teaching style in the ways I was taught. I was always taught in group settings. I had to participate in class. If the teacher asked a

question, you had to answer as a group. So that's how I find myself teaching. If I ask a question, I expect the *group* to answer.

Classroom management. While few of the participants discuss their teaching in terms of students and learning, they are keenly aware of the need to develop effective classroom management techniques. They are expected to work with a diverse group of students who bring a variety of problems to the classroom; yet none report receiving training in communication, interpersonal relations, or student counseling as these relate to the classroom. And no one reports having a counselor or student advisor on staff. Janae explains the situation at her school:

We had a lady in a position here who we could send our students to if they needed a referral or some special counseling or special service. We no longer have that so we've been kind of thrown in that position. We're still kind of feeling our way around. Right now we just kind of wing it based on our experiences."

It appears that instructors in most colleges must "wing it" to some degree and they have devised a number of strategies to do so. Some believe that knowing how to work with students is instinctual. Hank, for example, refers to the other two members of his focus group and says he believes "we all have just a sort of natural way of dealing with problem students. I think it just comes naturally. You just have to deal with it as the teacher." When Danielle was asked how she knew how to deal with the student incident in the parking lot, she attributes it to "a gut reaction. It was just my instinct."

Sources of help. The source of help mentioned by almost every participant for learning to work with students is other instructors or the supervisor. Mama Sandy describes the sensitivity of her fellow instructors in noticing when she needs help:

When students get to [you] where you have a breaking point and you walk down the hall and one of my coworkers would go, "Come here," and I'd go in there and I could vent to them about it. And [they would say], "Oh, yeah, this is how you handle that situation" or "I've had a similar situation." Or I could go down and talk to [the administrators] and know that I wasn't being weird because I had this situation.

Mama Sandy's use of the word "weird" illustrates a common notion among new instructors, documented in the literature (Brock & Grady, 1997), that they might be the only ones who are experiencing certain problems. Many of the participants express their gratitude for coworkers who are willing to share their own experiences, thus letting the novices know that what they are experiencing is normal. Even Hank, who has stated, "It just comes naturally," explains the importance of receiving help from a colleague:

I think one of the keys for me was having a break time with Miss S. [an instructor in a different program], because when I had silly little questions about how things run here or just wanted to talk about whatever, she was there to talk during break. Just having some support there. Just dealing with stress or dealing with issues with students. Those were the kinds of things that were helpful to me.

A few of the participants received help and ideas from their supervisors and coworkers. Janae, in fact, says she was warned in her initial interview for the job that “these things would occur,” referring to problems with students. She was not, however, given any specific suggestions about how she might best deal with “these things.” Janae does appreciate the ongoing support she receives from her supervisor:

The supervisor that I have now is great. She has an open-door policy. I feel like I can talk to her about *anything*. Anything at all. She’s a very human supervisor. Very human. We can vent if we need to vent. She’s supportive. She encourages us.

While several participants said they receive support similar to what Janae describes, the researcher was startled by the advice Hank reports being given by the college administrators who hired him:

When you go in there that first day, just be confident. Go in there and just act like you own the room. Don’t tell them this is your first day. That shows weakness. Don’t show weakness. You bluff it. You just lie. Because it doesn’t matter.

The advice to put up a brave front and take control was mentioned by several participants. CM believes new instructors should not let students know they are inexperienced because, in her words, “They’ll eat you alive.”

Establishing authority. Many of the participants stress the importance of establishing authority in the classroom. Erica expresses it this way: “You have to have complete control of the classroom and yourself because if you don’t have control of that class -- if you give an inch they’ll take a mile.” You do this, she

suggests, by “setting the tone right away,” because if you don’t, “they’ll zone right in on you.”

Three participants refer specifically to “drawing the line” and making a clear distinction between the teacher and the students. As Hank explains, “You set the teacher-student boundary that you’re the teacher, they’re the student. They’re here to learn, you’re here to teach.”

In addition to setting teacher-student boundaries, drawing the line refers to establishing and enforcing class rules and clearly communicating the instructor’s expectations. As CM says, “One of the things I’ve learned is that you have to go in and set the line. And then after that, you can rescind.” Hank, participating in the focus group discussion with CM agrees: “I force myself to draw the line and be very strict for the first day, couple of days, or week.” CM emphasizes her position when she says, “Make *sure* that they know they are the students and you are the teacher. And everything from there is going to be a piece of cake.” JW, in the focus group with Hank and CM, advocates a different approach:

I think, personally, it’s just nice for the students to be able to come to you and have them say, “I don’t understand it.” If they’re afraid to come to you, then something’s not right in the class – the atmosphere. [If] you’re not telling them that I am the teacher and I am here to *teach* you [and] they can’t come to you, that makes a really awkward situation.

Doc thinks it would have been helpful if someone had told him, before he entered the classroom for the first time, that “you really have [to be] in control of things at first and then kind of relax it towards the end.”

Student behavior problems can be quite severe and adversely affect staff morale. Nunes describes the situation in her school:

There's a high turn-around on teachers at this school. To be very frank, I think it has to do with the clientele -- the students. The students here at the school will run the teachers off in a minute. A lot of teachers have had really horrible experiences.

Both Hank and Mama Sandy warn against being too friendly with students. Hank admonishes, "*Don't* socialize with them." Mama Sandy believes it is important for teachers to be fair and to "remain impartial and not choose favorites." She recounts her response to a student who wanted to be friends: "The minute you graduate, I'll be more than happy to be your friend. But I cannot be your friend now. I have no friends as students."

Some of the participants liken their students to children. In Nunes's view, "It's like you're with your own child. You have to teach them with little baby steps, little by little [about] professionalism." CJ describes it this way: "You have to spoon feed them in a sense to build up their confidence. I think part of it [problems] is some of these students have been told 'no' [for] so long, that they set themselves up for failure." Danielle and Rob, members of the two-person focus group, approach their students in contrasting ways. Danielle describes herself as "a counselor, a mother, a teacher, constantly having to interact with them as one would with children, [saying things like], 'Hey, we all have to play along and be nice.'" Rob describes himself being the opposite: "She's the mother figure. *I'm* not like that. I'm *totally* opposite. I mean, they're all adults. They've gone through high school. They're here to learn. They need to act like adults."

Adult students who act like children can be particularly challenging to the novice instructor because while they may *act* like children, they resent being *treated* like them. As Mama Sandy explains, “They don’t want to be treated like a child. [They tell me], ‘I didn’t pay this much money for this.’” Her response is to set rules she believes the students, as adults, can and should follow: “I say to them, ‘Well, okay, fine, we won’t treat you like a child. At 8:10 my door is locked. Don’t come knocking on my door ‘til break. These are my rules and my classroom.’” Other participants also report using rules as a means to keep their classes orderly. Easy, in contrast to the pseudonym he selected, also locks the door:

I explain that class starts at a certain time. The door is locked at that point. If they need to come, they have to knock at the door. We’ll all stare at them when they come in. It works very well. People will rush to get there rather than have to come through a locked door.

All the participants who report having developed strict rules say that once students know the rules – and if they are applied consistently – they follow them. Upbeat outlines her expectations and what she says to her students:

“I will not tolerate talking while I’m lecturing. I will not tolerate you getting up and leaving. If you get up and leave the classroom, you need to sign out. And you’re done for the day.” And they *did* [follow the rules].

Upbeat sounds very pleased and almost surprised that, once announced, the students actually followed her rules. Danielle also discovered that once she asserted herself, the students went along. She explains how she handled the problem of constantly being compared to the perfect instructor whom she

replaced: “I finally just said, ‘R is not your teacher!’ And the students accepted it amazingly well and then we started going on from there.”

Rob had a problem with students talking during his lectures and he developed some strict guidelines to deal with a behavior he finds objectionable. He now tells the students:

If you want to talk, go outside until you get it out of your system. And when you’re ready to come back to learn, then come back into the class and sit down. And when you come and sit down, I expect you to be quiet. The only time you’re talking is when I’m asking you a question, or you’re asking a question. And raise your hand. Don’t blurt out.

Previous work experience. Many participants report applying their health care work experience to the classroom and using it to create behavior guidelines for their students. These guidelines serve as a means to maintain classroom order and at the same time, to teach students the professional behaviors they will need in order to succeed on the job. Mama Sandy explains that “my rules are no different than in the workplace. And I tell them, ‘This is your job 4 hours a day.’” Easy points out to students “that the medical field is conservative and professional and that when [you’re] in class, I expect professional behavior and professional language.” Ed puts it this way:

Well, you know, I still have a boss’s mentality and don’t like certain things. I’m not too tolerant of whispering or little cliquish responses toward students while other students have made an effort to learn. Or continually coming in late or not [being] prepared and then [being] what I feel [is]

unruly. And I think they affect others and I'm not at all hesitant to call them out.

CJ has actually modeled her classroom after the workplace and tells her students: "This is your workplace. You are the employees, I'm the employer. These are your coworkers. I am trying to prepare you to build a strong team. And you're only as strong as your weakest link." She teaches medical billing and evaluates the students' academic work and behavior in terms of workplace standards. For example, assignments that involve filling out insurance claims are graded according to the likelihood they would be accepted by an insurance company. Behavior is evaluated by whether it might lead to a promotion or a raise. The students are organized into quality assurance and grievance committees and there are "dollar" incentive programs for students whose "claims" are accepted by the "insurance companies." CJ has also created what she calls the CLASS ACT Program, in which ACT is an acronym for attitude, courtesy, and teamwork. She explains:

Attitude is everything. So if I'm teaching attitude, I have to have a good attitude, you know. You can be negative all you want. But it's not going to get you anywhere. And if you're negative on the phone, you're [probably] negative to the doctor. I tell the students, "You're negative to each other in the classroom. And you say, 'Oh, it's because I'm in the classroom [but] I know how to behave in the workplace.'" [The fact is] you have a bad habit and your bad habit is going to show through eventually in the workplace. So unless you're able to practice it in the classroom setting [you won't practice it on the job]. I'm preparing you for real life.

In addition to having technical skills and knowledge of the workplace, the experience of working with a wide variety of people is most often mentioned by the participants as helping their transition to the classroom. Doc has a military background and says when he is confronted with students who lack respect, “it [has] me go back to the military and pull on some resources I learned there” about dealing with various personalities. He explains that he applies his prior experiences giving orders to people who were older than he was and of different ethnic and racial backgrounds. Nunes once owned a small catering business and applies what she learned about customer service: “I try to treat this as though this is a business, making the student the customer and I’m providing a service.” For Mama Sandy, it is the tolerance she learned in the Navy. Sincere, in her work as a medical assistant, learned that “things are not always as they look. People may seem one way, at first, but when you get to know them, it’s a totally different story.” Ed, with 40 years working in pharmacy, says that “being involved with many different people and having gained confidence in dealing with people” has helped him adjust to the classroom. And Janae feels it is “being exposed to many different types of people [and] many different problems.”

Defining oneself as a teacher. The participants hold contrasting views of themselves as instructors. For Hank, it is a role he plays in the classroom: “You just go in there and they [the students] will respect you because you don’t put down your mask. You put on this face.” He differentiates between Hank the instructor and Hank the person. Authenticity, on the other hand, was mentioned by several participants as the key to their success in working with students. When Janae is asked if she feels she works effectively with her students and has

their respect, she responds, “Absolutely. Absolutely. Because I’m real. Because they see me as being real.” Danielle thinks students learn better if “you become a real person instead of just this podium figure up there.” And some participants report taking the risk of stepping out of the instructor role and attempting to communicate with students on a person-to-person level, rather than relying on the authority of their position to coerce behavior. CJ explains how she might work with a student who is giving her a hard time in class:

I might pull the student aside and say, “Let’s try this” or “Maybe we got off on the wrong foot” or “I didn’t make myself clear.” And then just put it on like that to take the pressure off. And I take them all as little triumphs.

Erica reports using a similar approach: “If they’re giving me an attitude problem, I need to take them aside and ask them, ‘What’s going on? What can I do to help you?’” Rather than seeing behavioral problems as threats to their authority as instructors, CJ and Erica see them in terms of problems the students are experiencing. They are willing to confront the situation personally and directly and offer to help students resolve their problems, rather than simply insisting that the behavior cease. Rather than wear a mask, they open themselves up to dialogue with the students.

The Experience of Satisfaction

The rewards are wonderful. More than I thought they’d be. --- Nunes

In spite of the difficulties encountered with students, nearly every instructor reports that sharing their professional knowledge and seeing students learn and succeed are extremely satisfying experiences and what they enjoy

most about teaching. Erica expresses it well when she describes what she likes best about teaching: “Seeing that end product, sharing my knowledge, watching somebody take that knowledge, become a professional, gain self-confidence, and go out there and do a good job and graduate.” The terms “end product” and “end results” were used by several instructors to describe a successful student and later, a graduate.

Student success. The participants take pride in their health care professions and are gratified that students have chosen to pursue them. It is especially satisfying when their students become employed. The retired pharmacist is pleased the students have chosen the field in which he spent many years. Mama Sandy, referring to her career as a medical assistant, tells students, “You are coming into a field that I take a lot of pride in and I’m going to teach you the best way possible to be the best at it so you don’t make my field look bad.” Mama Sandy’s first group of students is getting ready to graduate and she compares the experience with seeing her child take its first step: “I see my first students graduate which is just thrilling. And now I get to see my end result and that’s what I love.” Erica, too, stresses the importance of student success:

You don’t teach for the money, because you don’t make money being a vocational teacher. I can make more money out in the field than being an instructor here. I mean, that’s a *fact*. You do it because you *love it*. The end product. Seeing a student taking that knowledge and seeing someone going out with that. It’s been very positive.

Helping career college students succeed often requires more than sharing professional knowledge. Janae is almost glowing as she talks about how much

she loves helping her students. Her goal is to encourage students “every day to let them know that ‘this is the first step toward your future.’” She, like some of the other participants, has endured personal difficulties, such as growing up in poverty and being a single mother. She and the other participants hope that in addition to sharing their professional knowledge and skills, they can serve as examples for their students. Janae sees her own past experiences as opportunities to help others: “I thank God that I went through some of the situations that I went through and am able to share those experiences.” Upbeat teaches at the same college from which she graduated and likes to tell her students, “I was sitting here 10 years ago just like you. And look at where I am now. And look at all the things that can happen to you.”

Mama Sandy, who “came from the streets of Chicago,” has a different approach. She tells her students, “You get no sympathy from me because I did not come from a cushy background.” But she says she is trying “to learn not to be so cold.” For example, she wants to “learn to button up [because] sometimes all [the students want] is to just talk. And I have to learn to listen.” She does believe, however, that students need to realize they can make choices about their lives and pull themselves out of difficult situations: “You make certain choices, you have to live with those consequences. Nobody wants to hear you whine about them.” For example, Mama Sandy was approached by a student who complained about being in an abusive relationship. But when the student said she was not willing to leave the abuser, Mama Sandy told her she couldn’t help her until she was willing to take the first steps necessary to help herself. CM also believes she may be too harsh and talks about her need to soften up: “You have to remember

not to lose your temper with disciplinary problems. Because I'm very, well, standoffish. And I shouldn't be. I should be more caring, [a] 'do-you-need-a-hug?' kind of a person, [but] I'm not."

Most of the participants, however, express empathy for their students, especially the difficulties faced by adults who return to school. JW describes her evening class:

[In the] night classes you have mothers, fathers, people transitioning from one phase of their life into another. People that tried college and for whatever reason didn't like it. Some people are single mothers. People with families. And when they come at night, this is their time that they get everything else in their world out of their head and focus on school. And so they come in and they're just like sponges, they want to know everything. I enjoy my students a lot.

Suzie also describes her evening class as being much more motivated than her morning class and, using the same term as JW, says they "learn like sponges." And like JW, she enjoys these students: "They are great. They're just so good. They motivate me. And I'm glad that I'm coming tonight to teach them [and] work with them."

The light bulb goes on. Several participants use the expression "seeing the light bulb go on" as they describe the satisfaction they experience when students understand and learn, especially ones who are having difficulty in class. Mama Sandy explains: "There are students who don't get it at the beginning and then the light bulb goes on. Those are students who keep you truly coming back." CJ describes it in a similar way:

I like it when the students start off the course with the scrunched up look on their faces. They don't know what you are saying. You're speaking another language. And then somewhere along the line, their face, like a light bulb, goes on. And they smile. And you knew at that moment you connected with them. And they got it.

Seeing students adopt more positive behaviors and become successful is the reason many instructors have chosen to pursue -- and stay with -- a teaching career. Nunes puts it this way:

What's kept me here [are] the end results. Having a person come in and not be respectful and not smile and be just ugly and have then turn around and be a happy person, willing to help and willing to be of service to patients. Students who turn around, are successful, get a job.

The attitudes toward students described by the participants are consistent with the researcher's experience with career college instructors. They are willing to go to great lengths to help their students succeed and receive great satisfaction in doing so. Danielle describes a letter she received from a graduate in which he expresses his appreciation for her willingness to help him:

I received this letter from this one student, a young male [who] had such a hard time going through the program. I mean, you name it, it happened to him. Their house burnt down. He was homeless. He didn't have a job. His parents were somewhere and he had to take care of five younger siblings. He was 21 years old. He came to me and said, "Miss H., I'm quitting the program." And I . . . [said to him] "No, you're not!" "Well," he said, "I have to get a full-time job because I don't have food, I don't have..." And I said,

“You stay in the program and we’ll get you food.” When he graduated, he wrote this letter to me and that just really helped me think, “Yes, this is what I’m supposed to do.” [In the letter] he wrote, “Thank you for turning this ghetto-fabulous [*sic*] punk into a productive medical assistant.” And he’s employed full-time. He works at a local clinic.

Sincere summarizes the satisfaction of helping students that most of the participants report feeling: “Helping someone not only in their career, but personally. Being able to help somebody here as a professional to have confidence in themselves and do the job right is what it’s all about.”

Research Question # 2: What are their perceived needs as novice health care instructors?

The needs expressed by the participants fell into two categories:

a) articulated in response to direct questions about needs, and b) unarticulated but implied in their discussion of other aspects of their transitional experiences. Most fell into the second category.

The researcher was surprised, in fact, by the small number of needs expressed. In her experience as a career college administrator, instructors are generally not hesitant about letting their needs be known. On reflection, however, there may be several explanations for the dearth of stated needs. First, the researcher was not known to the participants. Most participants appeared to be, to some extent, “on their best behavior.” Much of what they talked about had to do with what they say and do in the classroom; some of their descriptions were quite detailed, including snippets of dialogue they had exchanged with students.

The researcher's impression was that they wanted to appear as competent as possible, even while describing the shaky feelings they had in the beginning.

Second, perhaps because the researcher was unknown and furthermore, from out of the area, the participants may have believed that talking fully and candidly about their needs would serve no practical purpose. That is, there was no urgency or particular benefit in expressing their needs. Interestingly, the participants who were most open about expressing their frustrations were from schools in the company in which the researcher had served as the regional director of education. They did not know her personally, but had heard the name. This may have caused them to respond more openly.

Third, analysis of the transcript revealed that participants interpreted some of the interview questions as asking something other than what the researcher intended. For example, the following question was posed as a hypothetical to help participants identify their needs and what they might find helpful: "Suppose I had been your supervisor when you started teaching. How could I have best helped you?" The responses to this question indicate that some participants thought they were being asked about how their own supervisors had been inadequate and how the researcher could have done a better job. Typical responses included assurances about what a good job the supervisor was doing.

Fourth, in spite of reassurances by the researcher of confidentiality, some participants might have believed it to be risky to be too candid in their responses.

Fifth, and the most significant for answering the research question, is that novice instructors may be unaware of both the kinds of help transitioning instructors might receive and further, *they don't know what they don't know.*

Corcoran (as cited in Brock & Grady, 1997) points out that a typical predicament of the beginning teacher is the “condition of not knowing” (p. 57). Grub (1999) describes a community college auto instructor whom the researchers asked what his administration could do for him. His response was, “They could stay out of my way” and perhaps buy a few more tools and car transmissions. Grub explains that the same instructor had earlier expressed frustration about having “students with inadequate reading levels and low levels of motivation” and poor English skills; had stated that he barely knew any other faculty members; and had not reported ever considering any innovative teaching practices. As Grub points out, “When teachers live their lives wholly in their classroom, they can’t always articulate how their colleges could influence teaching practices or think about how things might be different” (p. 281).

The transcripts in this study revealed similar contradictions. For example, here is an exchange with Erica:

Researcher’s question: “If you could design some ways to help instructors make the transition to the classroom, what might they be”?

Erica’ response: “I really can’t think of anything else other than what they’ve [offered us]. They’ve offered us everything here. I just don’t see how they could really improve on that as far as [helping] a new instructor.”

Later in the interview she says, when prompted to think of something that might help a new teacher:

I think it would be great if our department would have meetings, weekly meetings anyway. I think instructors should have weekly meetings. It would be really, really helpful to have someone, whether it be the director

of education or the dean of academics or someone [else], to spend some time one-on-one with you giving you some tips, some advice on how to handle those things before they come up. I think that would be a great idea. Rather than going cold turkey and winging it by yourself.

Erica's college had neither a director of education nor dean of academics at the time of the interview. This might explain why her response to the first question made sense to her. Why talk about needs that the college appears unable to remedy?

While almost every participant expressed surprise and even dismay about the problems presented by their students, not one stated anything about needs in this area: no requests for workshops on communication or motivational strategies, the hiring of a counselor, lists of agencies to which they could refer students, or even information they could read to learn more. "Winging it," a term used by 2 participants, describes what seems to be an accepted way of dealing with student problems, the part of the transition to the classroom identified by the majority as being the most difficult.

CM had a significant need she did not mention when asked directly to discuss her needs as a new instructor. Rather, she brought it up when the focus group was discussing a different topic. Here is her description of her first few months on the job before the other members of the focus group were hired and joined her in what had been a one-person department:

I [created] the lesson plans and then I [wrote] the lectures. And then, as the school grew, there was just myself and I was doing [the teaching in both] the morning and the evening [classes]. I spent 6 months writing, so

now we [the instructors in the focus group] all [teach] the same thing [that I developed].

When asked how she managed to both teach full-time and create the curricular materials, CM explains:

Oh, you really have to juggle. If you give the students an hour to do homework or spend time in the lab [working] on things [on which] they can be independent, then you take that hour and you do what you have to do. Sometimes I would find myself preparing in the morning for what I had to do in the evening. And preparing in the evening for what I had to do in the morning. And [I worked during] my break between classes preparing for the next week. When I first started, I was here from 7:30 in the morning until 10:00 at night.

The researcher asks why CM had not mentioned this situation as a transition difficulty to which CM responds:

I just assumed that it was a given. Because that only lasted about 7 or 8 weeks that I could do that. And then that was it. I went back to one class a day. Three months into being an instructor, never having taught before, [and] I'm writing lectures for two programs. So I only lasted 8 weeks. I was too burned out. I couldn't do anything. I had to take a week and not even think about anything. I wish I could have kept it together. I feel guilty for not being able to keep it together.

CM is not the only participant with a demanding work schedule. In fact, many full-time instructors teach between 6 and 8 hours a day and report that they take work home after that. This is an arduous schedule for any teacher. Yet only

1 participant mentioned “more time for preparation and grading papers” as a need.

Some needs rose to the surface during the focus group discussions. A very interesting exchange took place in the group with 2 participants, Rob and Danielle. They teach in different programs and had very different experiences transitioning into the classroom. Danielle worked closely with the instructor she replaced; he was leaving the classroom to take a supervisory position in the college. She observed his teaching, was indoctrinated into the college and the medical assisting program, and taught in the principal building that housed most of the classrooms, the administration, the break rooms, and the supplies. Rob, on the other hand, was called 3 days before his scheduled start day and asked to supervise students at an off-site location, describing his situation as being “thrown onto the floor.” He is now teaching a theory class in a four-classroom satellite location a few blocks from the main campus building, has never observed nor been observed since he began teaching, and has been buying some of his own supplies because no one has told him where to secure them at the main building. He describes his current situation:

I didn't get a thing. I didn't even know [the location of] the main campus. I wouldn't mind going through an orientation now. I still don't know where half the stuff in this building is. I sit in my class and I don't deal with anybody. When I need help, I have to get on the phone and call somebody. And it's not like they're going to stop what they're doing and come over and help me. I'm *frustrated*, but I'm getting through it. And the

students are all passing [the state exam], so I must be doing the job okay.

It's just one day at a time for me. I don't get any feedback.

Danielle, in addition to receiving some orientation to the classroom, knows who to see for supplies, has an agreement with the nursing department to use some of their equipment (Rob has complained that the nurses refuse to loan him anything he has requested), and reports attending a new instructor orientation. It turns out, however, that the orientation took place 4 months after she was hired and *only* took place then because a related program had hired "a bunch of new instructors" and the medical office program department did a catch-all orientation to which they invited other relatively new instructors.

These stories, especially those told by focus group members who teach in the same colleges and tell of very different experiences, underscore the lack of consistent institutional support for novice instructors. Policies in place to support the transition of novice instructors were evident at only one college which has very low instructor turnover and a long-time culture of advance planning and attention to instruction. Newly hired instructors at this college traditionally spend at least 4 weeks observing and assisting experienced instructors, learning about the college and the students, and preparing their lessons in advance of starting their teaching assignment. This college was the exception.

Research Question # 3 How Do They Believe These Needs Can Be Met?

The lack of extensive, direct articulation of transitional needs, discussed in the last section, resulted in few directly stated recommendations from the participants for how needs might be met. A careful study of the words of the

participants, however, revealed many potential needs and ways they believed these needs could be met.

Many of the means for meeting needs were inferred from responses to questions about early feelings and the reasons for those feelings, what participants found most difficult in making the transition, what helped them most in making the transition, and what advice they would give a new instructor at their college. An example of an inference is the issue of problems with students. While nearly every participant stated that difficulties with students was one of the most challenging parts of their transition, not one mentioned needing or wanting help learning to resolve student problems.

The following list of 10 ways to help meet the needs of novice instructors was largely inferred from the participants' responses to a variety of questions.

1. Provide opportunities for new instructors to observe and assist an experienced instructor(s) in the classroom.
2. Allow time before new instructors begin teaching so they can become familiar with the curriculum and materials and prepare their lessons for the first units they will be teaching.
3. Provide assistance and techniques for working with students who have personal, behavioral, and academic problems.
4. Provide written program information, curriculum, and course objectives. Invite input from newly hired instructors, who have recent field experience, about whether materials meet the current needs of employers. If tests are provided and the college requires they be used, ensure that they match the course objectives.

5. Help new instructors learn to prepare lesson plans and write lectures.
6. Provide access to and detailed information about the locations of supplies, equipment, keys, forms, etc.
7. Create opportunities for networking with other staff. Encourage a culture of sharing.
8. Observe new instructors in the classroom and give them constructive feedback.
9. Schedule classes so instructors have preparation time during the work day.
10. Provide opportunities for instructors to keep up-to-date in their fields.

When asked if they would be interested in teacher education, the unanimous answer was “no.” Some responses were of the “don’t confuse me with the facts” genre. Here is Rob’s answer, which reflects the general misunderstanding of the participants about what constitutes effective teacher education:

I don’t think so. I do it my way. And they’re [the students] going to have to adjust to my way. Because I’m not going to change how I [teach]. I think if you go to a training or a program to become an instructor, I think it’s going to take a lot of the diversity out of it.

In referring to the four instructors in his department, Rob observes:

The method that we deliver is completely different because a lot of that is all personality and I don’t think I could instruct the way the other instructor did because I wouldn’t feel like it was me – like I wasn’t giving them [the students] *me* to give them the information. They [the teacher educators]

would try to mold you in a certain way. They would try to change you. I'm used to doing certain things a certain way in a certain order.

Doc, when asked about the usefulness of a teacher's handbook, says:

It would have been nice to have a little handbook. But over time, you just kind of get into it and pick up your own style anyway, so I guess at the beginning that would be fine. Now I wouldn't want something like that, because it would probably go against everything I've already taught myself how to do now.

Advice from the Participants

This section contains words of advice in the words of the 11 participants who were interviewed individually. This advice reflects the needs of novice instructors and suggests how those needs might be met as they transition into the classroom.

Erica

- Get to know the other instructors and develop a support network.
- Find out where to locate the curriculum, books, and other teaching resources.
- Be sure to ask questions if you have them.

Mama Sandy

- Be open-minded and don't take anything the students say to heart.
- Use your avenues of support, which include other instructors and the supervisors.
- If you have a question, ask.

- If you can't answer a questions for a student, tell them you don't know. But be sure and find the answer and get back to them.
- Don't show fear.

Sincere

- Observe as much as you can and see how different instructors present the same information.
- Definitely stay excited about it.

Upbeat

- Breathe.
- Don't get stressed out and don't try to be a perfectionist.
- Know that it will all come together for you.

Easy

- Plan and organize as much as you can as far in advance as possible.
Students have more confidence in an instructor who is calm and explains in a clear manner.
- Be prepared. This will increase the level of communication with students and the trust they have in you.
- Take care of your health and get enough rest.

Nunes

- I don't have any advice right now. You are welcome to come back in a couple of weeks, after you've been in the classroom, and ask any questions you want. You need to get acclimated first.

Ed

- You need to have some experience first. So go in the classroom and do what your gut inclination is. Learn about your needs and the needs of the students. Then come and ask some specific questions.

Suzie

- You need to be nice to the students. That is, you should like them.
- Make the class easy and understandable so the students can understand what you're talking about.
- Review a lot and encourage student participation.

CJ

- Listen twice as much as you talk.
- Stay true to yourself.
- Be consistent with the students.
- Realize that you'll make mistakes and have fun.
- Ask the other instructors if you need help.

Janae

- Just be yourself and be a real person.
- Admit your mistakes.
- If you don't know something, tell the students you don't know. Then get the answer and get back to them.

Doc

- Be somewhat firm with the students at the beginning. Then let the reins go as you see fit.

- Talk with another instructor who is experienced and good at lecturing.
- Use the Internet to pull additional information that's related to the topic.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn about the experiences and needs of novice health care instructors in private career colleges. Private career colleges, postsecondary schools which are usually operated for profit and always focused on providing specifically targeted occupational education, prepare substantial numbers of health care workers annually. The instructors who are hired to teach these students typically move directly from the field to the classroom and have little or no training or preparation for teaching. Once on the job, professional development opportunities tend to be infrequent or nonexistent.

Little is known about this population of instructors and their experiences transitioning to the classroom. It is the hope of the researcher that the findings of this study will contribute to assisting health care professionals more easily transition to the career college classroom and become effective instructors.

Rationale for the Study

The health care industry is one of the fastest-growing segments of the United States' economy and one that greatly influences the quality of life of nearly everyone who lives in this country. The effectiveness of the health care

system depends, to a great extent, on the abilities of workers in allied health occupations, many of whom are trained in private career colleges. The instructors in these career colleges influence the professional attitudes and skill levels of their students and thereby influence the health and well-being of the patients served by career-school graduates. How well health care instructors teach matters to society.

Summary of the Methodology

The data for the study were gathered through interviews with 16 novice health care instructors at nine private career colleges in three states. Eleven instructors were interviewed individually; the remaining five comprised two small focus groups. Interview protocols were used to explore the instructors' perceptions of their transitional experiences, their needs in making the transition to the classroom, and their ideas about how these needs might be met.

The transcripts from the interviews and focus group discussions were coded and analyzed in three ways: a) the responses to the interview questions were organized on a matrix for comparison among the participants, b) categories were developed by coding the transcripts, and c) the data in the categories were then reconstructed to capture major themes which emerged as the data and categories were compared and contrasted.

Summary of the Findings

Three research questions guided the study:

1. What do novice health care instructors at private career colleges experience in the transition from the field to the classroom?
2. What are their perceived needs as novice health care instructors?
3. How do they believe these needs can best be met?

Research Question # 1: What do novice health care instructors at private career colleges experience in the transition from the field to the classroom?

Data related to this question centered around four themes which served as frameworks for discussing, comparing, and contrasting the transitional experiences of the participants.

Theme # 1: The experience of the unknown. The participants were newcomers to the teaching profession, the culture of education, and, with the exception of 2 participants, the colleges in which they worked at the time of the study. They were, indeed, entering an unknown world and this fact resulted in reports of nervousness and fear, concerns about how they would be perceived by their students, questions about exactly what they were supposed to do in the classroom, and difficulties teaching subjects not within their direct areas of expertise. Several participants used the metaphor “thrown in” to describe their first days in the classroom, indicating that these novices were not prepared for what they would encounter. The amount of orientation and assistance the

participants received when they started varied considerably, even within the same college and the same department.

Theme # 2: The experience of the unexpected. Related to the experience of the unknown, the unexpected consists of aspects of teaching and education about which the participants had originally thought themselves knowledgeable and prepared to handle. But they described receiving some surprises. The surprise mentioned by nearly every participant was the nature of the students. Based on their own educational experiences and preconceptions about adult behavior, the participants had not anticipated, nor were they prepared to deal with, the behaviors and problems their students presented in the classroom. A defining aspect of their lives as novice career college instructors was learning to work effectively with this student population.

Theme # 3: The experience of teaching oneself to teach. The participants, like the vast majority of other postsecondary instructors, were left largely on their own to learn the craft of teaching. They learned from trial and error, some describing rather creative approaches to teaching that they had developed on their own. Other participants seemed to still be in the survival mode, closely following the lesson guides the college provided them and hoping for the best.

Most of the participants reported receiving some help from other instructors. The participants who worked with colleagues reported this to be the most helpful kind of assistance they received as new instructors. In many cases, this help was informal and unstructured; in some, it only occurred because the new instructor happened to share the same break time with an experienced

instructor who was willing to be helpful. There were no reports of formalized mentoring programs in place at any of the nine colleges.

Many of the participants in the study equated teaching with lecturing and covering content, consistent with the findings of other studies of postsecondary faculty (Boice, 2000; Cranton, 1996; Grub, 1999; Weimer, 1990). The participants reported spending a great deal of time learning to prepare lectures and present lessons to “get everything covered in the time allotted.” Some talked about getting content across to students as the key task of a teacher. They frequently spoke of students in terms of their own actions as instructors presenting material, not in terms of whether students were interacting, taking any part in the process, or showing signs of learning.

Finding methods to manage the classroom, with emphasis on control of student behavior, was a major concern of the participants. They described rules and techniques they had developed to keep classrooms orderly and students under control so they would not “eat you alive,” as one participant cautioned.

Theme # 4: The experience of satisfaction. Almost every participant responded quickly and with enthusiasm, “the *students*,” when asked what he or she liked best about teaching. Working with students, and especially a population with a multitude of needs, brought this group great satisfaction. Several talked about how they love “seeing the light bulb go on.” Some talked specifically about the rewards of watching a student with difficulties develop a positive attitude and turn his or her life around. The greatest joy they experienced was when students moved on to do well in their next classes and, the crowning moments, graduated and became successfully employed.

Research Question # 2 What are their perceived needs as novice health care instructors?

The participants articulated only a small number of needs when asked directly to name them. An examination of the transcripts, however, revealed a significant number of needs that were implied by what the participants said had been – and in some cases continued to be – the most difficult aspects of their transition to the classroom. A number of contradictions were noted in the transcript in which a participant would report having “everything I need,” in one response and then later mention, incidentally, something that could *definitely* be considered a need. For example, one participant who stated that “everything” she needed as a new instructor had been provided commented later about a lack of communication between the administrators and the faculty. She then, in an offhand way, reported not being informed of a full-staff meeting the morning of her interview with the researcher. She learned about the meeting by chance when she heard others talking about it in the hallway. This lack of communication was not, however, identified by her as a need. It was, however, so identified by the researcher.

Research Question # 3 How do they believe these needs can best be met?

Responses to questions about how the needs of the participants might be met were few and many were limited to practical items such as “fix the copy machine.” Therefore, suggestions for meeting needs were inferred from what the participants reported had helped them most as novice instructors and what advice they would give new instructors. These suggestions were extrapolated

from the transcript and presented in two formats: a) a list of 10 actions that might be taken by colleges, and b) advice for new instructors in the words of the participants.

Discussion of the Findings

The major finding of the study was that formal policies to assist newly-hired instructors were not in place at any of the nine colleges, a finding supported by the literature for instructors at all levels of postsecondary education (Grub, 1999; Menges, 1999). Postsecondary educational institutions, in general, pay astonishingly little attention to teaching and learning, according to Grub (1999), who also notes that even institutions that purport to be teaching institutions, such as community colleges, do little, if anything, to support the learning and development of teaching among their instructors.

The participants in the study, instructors at private career colleges, reported a wide variety of experiences in transitioning to the classroom, especially in terms of the amount and kind of help they received in making the transition. Their experiences prior to entering the classroom ranged from the new instructor observing and assisting an experienced instructor for 2 months before teaching a class to being asked to begin teaching, with no preparation, 3 days before the anticipated start-date for work. Institutionalized lack of consistency was evident when comparing the vastly different experiences of instructors who taught at the same college, some even in the same program. The three-member focus group, for example, consisted of instructors who teach in the same program. CM, a young woman who had no teaching experience when she was

hired, was the first instructor to teach the new program. She had also been charged with creating the curriculum and lesson materials. She performed this work simultaneously with teaching the first group of students enrolled in the program. This workload resulted in 15-hour workdays and burnout within 2 months. The two instructors who were subsequently hired for the growing program had very different experiences. Having survived the experience, CM was able to help newly hired JW, who reported: "I trained with CM the first 4 days or [so]. She was an excellent person to learn from because I really got to see the ropes." Hank, the third member of the department explains, "[I was] put with Mr. G. because I was taking over his spot in the afternoon. I didn't have a lot of time with him. I had maybe a day to go over what my course was all about. [So] I just relied on my background in biology as my support." These instructors had three very different experiences at the same college, in the same program, and during the same 18-month period.

There was also a contrast between the experiences of the two instructors in the smallest focus group. Rob was called 3 days before he was to begin classroom teaching and told to report to a long-term care facility the following day to take over the on-site supervision of students during the practicum phase of their nursing-assistant training. He expressed frustration during the interview about how he still, after 8 months, had not received an orientation, lacked information about the location of supplies, did not have access to equipment for teaching his courses, and did not have opportunities to give input about the appropriateness of the curriculum he was required to teach. Danielle, hired by the same college only 1 month before Rob, had easy access to her supervisor,

knew how to secure supplies, and shared equipment with the nursing department, something Rob had requested and been denied. Danielle had also attended an orientation, albeit several months after she was hired.

A variety of factors determined the extent of assistance offered to new instructors at the nine colleges. Many of these factors were based on the circumstances of the moment: the amount of notice given by the previous instructor, the availability of administrators to give them help, the personality and helpfulness of the supervisor, and the willingness of experienced instructors to help new arrivals. In some cases, personalities rather than policies determined how novices were received. One participant cited what he believed to be “political reasons” for the dearth of help offered him when he started, stating that “many teachers, because of the political ramifications, feel they don’t want to share knowledge.” He explained that the administration was “supposed to [provide an orientation] but it never manifested itself. It’s been a very piecemeal issue.”

In some colleges, there was little evidence of structured means, such as faculty meetings, by which instructors could communicate among themselves or with administrators. Erica, for example, recommended that “the needs of the instructors could be met on a better level with more communication.” She explained that there are no faculty meetings “that I know of.” She believes it would be helpful “if instructors could get together for half an hour, talk about issues that are happening in the classroom, have better communication amongst each other.” She then added, “I think there are lots of very good instructors here that are frustrated right now.” Frustration was also expressed by Rob when he explained that his only access to administrators is by cell-phone:

When I need help I have to get on the phone and call somebody. And it's not like they're going to just stop what they're doing and come over and help me. I think I just got a bad hand dealt to me and I got *thrown* into a situation that I wasn't prepared for.

Access to assistance sometimes depended on scheduling. Easy, for example, teaches in the evening. When his supervisor is available, she answers his questions. But, as he explains, "Sometimes the difficulty is that she starts her day early, I end my day late.[So] if I do have questions, it's usually after she's gone home." Hank had better luck, reporting, "One of the keys for me [was] having a break time with Miss S," an experienced instructor in another program who gave him general advice about teaching and the college.

Implications of the Findings

Educators and researchers profess the importance of teacher quality in educating students to become competent members of the workforce. Actions to assure this quality, however, are not consistently taken. Phrases such as "sink or swim" and "thrown in" appear in the literature on beginning teachers at all levels (Boice, 2000; Veenman, 1984). The expression "thrown in" was also used by several of the participants in this study to describe their entry into the classroom. Throwing new teachers into the classroom, unprepared to undertake the complexities of teaching and guiding students, serves no one: neither the teachers, their students, their schools, or society as a whole.

In the researcher's experience, many private career colleges suffer a disconnect between their stated mission of providing high-quality educational

services and the actions taken to fulfill this mission. They frequently display a dichotomy between what might be labeled the *business-side* versus the *teaching side* of their operations. The business side – admissions (sales), budgets, financial targets – take a disproportionate share of the time and resources of management. It is not unusual for career colleges, which have no orientation programs or training for new instructors, to provide expensive sales training for admissions personnel, along with performance incentives, such as trips and gifts. Instructors, like those in this study, generally receive no training nor are there rewards for performance. Although recognition may be given by an immediate supervisor, institutional respect and rewards are not often seen.

The quality of the *product*, defined as student retention and successful job placement of graduates, is important in determining the bottom line of a private career college. And this product quality depends, to a great extent, on the ability of instructors to motivate, teach, and prepare their students. Unsuccessful students negatively affect the bottom line because they fail to continue providing tuition revenue and may harm the college's reputation and ability to attract future students. Investing in the product, therefore, is likely to increase the bottom line. The business-side and the education-side are, in fact, not *sides* to be pitted against each other, but groups of players on the same team who should be working together to support each other and achieve team goals. Attending to the quality of each can positively influence the ongoing success of the business and consequently, the growth of profits.

Career colleges, like other businesses, sometimes mistakenly focus more attention on sales than on the product they are selling. The bottom line mantra

has brought many commercial enterprises, some of them financial giants, to their knees in recent years. And like these companies, which have ethical obligations to their investors and others who placed their trust in them, career colleges have ethical obligations to the people they serve. These people include both internal customers -- instructors and staff -- and external customers -- students, future employers of these students, and members of society at large.

In fact, the researcher believes that career colleges have a particular obligation to provide their students with high-quality training. These colleges tend to serve the academically and socially disadvantaged. As the novice instructors in this study repeatedly pointed out, their students bring myriad personal problems to school. Most of these students are seeking the chance to learn an occupation and become productive. The vast majority have borrowed money, principally government-guaranteed student loans. Students who incur student loan debt and receive little or nothing in return are doubly harmed. First, they remain underskilled and unable to advance personally or financially and, consequently, cannot meet their potential as contributing members of society. Second, the loan debt has worsened their financial condition. Society, in turn, is harmed because of less productive, possibly financially dependent members who, in addition, may have defaulted loans that must be repaid by taxpayers (Haroun, 1996).

Raising the levels of the teaching ability and well-being of instructors is necessary for career colleges that wish to improve the quality of their educational services. Recommendations for educational reform, including teacher education and instructional improvement, however, are commonly made to educational

institutions at all levels without input from the stakeholders most affected – in this case, the instructors (Kang, 1994; Queeney, 1995; Vella, 1994). Getting to know the participants in this study and hearing about their experiences and needs provided information to initiate this improvement process.

Recommendations: A Call for Leadership

The findings of this study showed a general lack of support for novice instructors at the career colleges represented. This conclusion corresponds with the researcher's experience as a career college administrator and with the literature on postsecondary instruction. The participants expressed, albeit indirectly, many needs which suggest colleges should take a hard look at how instructors are hired, oriented, and supported once they begin teaching. Even the most basic needs expressed, such as making sure the copy machine works, are not likely to be met if the concerns of instructors are not taken seriously and given priority.

Although it is not the purpose of qualitative research to make empirical generalizations that can be applied to every similar situation, the researcher hopes this study will contribute to improvements in educational practice. As Cronbach (as cited in Merriam, 1998) puts it, qualitative researchers can "develop explanatory concepts, concepts that will help people use their heads" (p. 199). Useful research need not serve to *predict* future actions, but rather to *guide* them.

Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest substituting the concept of *fittingness* for generalizability, fittingness meaning the degree to which the findings from one

context fit that of another. Cronbach (as cited in Merriam, 1998) proposes the term *working hypotheses* to describe conclusions applied to new situations. A related concept suggested to determine the applicability of qualitative data is *user generalizability*, meaning that the user of the data, rather than the researcher, determines the applicability of the findings. The researcher's major responsibility is to clearly present enough detail for readers to determine if the findings ring true and apply to the situations of potential users. Firestone (as cited in Merriam, 1998) suggests, "It is the reader who has to ask, what is there in this study that I can apply to my own situation, and what clearly does not apply?" (p. 211).

The recommendations that follow, while derived from specific contexts, are suggested as starting points for those who wish to review their own situations and judge the degree of fittingness for their own circumstances.

Providing support for instruction calls for school *leadership* that establishes the goal of the career college as earning a profit by providing high-quality educational service and preparing successful graduates. The administrators who we would assume to have leadership roles within their institutions are usually more preoccupied with other concerns – *management* concerns. In the private career college sector, administrators tend to focus on increasing enrollments and revenue, controlling expenses, and staying in compliance with state and accreditation requirements. Making teaching and learning top priorities to which time, expertise, and funding are devoted can lead to increased profits and decreased compliance problems. Good practices in education and good practices in business are synergistic, not antagonistic.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) have created a set of guiding principles for leaders who wish to “keep getting extraordinary things done in organizations.” These principles form the organizing framework for the recommendations that resulted from this study of novice career college instructors.

Principle # 1: Challenge the Process

In order for positive change to occur, the status quo must be challenged. Assumptions about secondary education, such as “if you know it, you can teach it,” which were identified in the literature review and supported by the findings in this study, must be examined. Practices such as “throwing” unprepared teachers into classrooms must be challenged. Such practices can no longer be accepted as doing business as usual. Other assumptions and practices that maintain the status quo, such as the business-education dichotomy, must also be identified and questioned as a first step toward effective change.

Systemic changes. If teaching and learning are to be given true priority status, they must be *institutional* goals. As Grub (1999) points out, as long as “educational institutions do little to foster good teaching – or if they make ineffective efforts – then indeed the quality of teaching is idiosyncratic and random, as individuals develop teaching abilities on their own” (p. 280). The results of any efforts, made by individual administrators and/or instructors, tend to be piecemeal and hit-or-miss, as noted in the widely differing experiences reported by participants at the same college, hired at about the same time. Grub (1999) further remarks that “unless educational institutions make teaching a priority, instructors follow a wide variety of practices and good teachers are

viewed as ‘born, not made’ – because there are no systematic influences to help them” (p. 57).

Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1992) emphasize the need to question our institutions and the assumptions on which they are based, writing that “institutions are patterns of social activity that give shape to collective and individual experience” (p. 40). Burns (1978) proposes that real change requires a “transformation to a marked degree in the attitudes, norms, institutions, and behaviors that structure our daily lives” (p. 414). This is because the patterns, mentioned by Bellah et al., become entrenched and unquestioned. An essential quality of the leader is to question what has been taken for granted and ask, “Is our institution based on sound principles? Do our actions make sense? Is there another way to organize ourselves and our thinking?” (Haroun, 1997). A key question for career colleges may be how to unite all stakeholders in a common effort to ensure system-wide success.

Critical reflection. Identifying and questioning assumptions, necessary when challenging the process, are at the heart of critical reflection and transformative learning. Cranton (1996) defines critical reflection as “an articulation of assumptions about practice and a questioning of those practices” (p. 5). Transformative learning, as defined by Mezirow (1991), results “whenever assumptions or premises are found to be distorting, inauthentic, or otherwise invalid” and there are “new or transformed meaning schemes” (p. 6). Critical reflection is necessary if development and improvements are to occur. Cranton (1996) suggests four steps to help facilitate critical thinking:

1. Articulate assumptions that underlie our actions.

2. Determine the sources and consequences of these assumptions.
3. Critically question the assumptions.
4. Imagine alternatives.

Based on his 3-year study of university and college newcomers, Menges (1999) developed a number of useful questions to serve as starting points for those who are in a position to help the newcomer transition to teaching. These provide a means to question the status quo about how new instructors are treated:

1. How can we ease the newcomer's transition into our setting?
2. What details of life here might we take for granted and forget to mention?
3. How can we make explicit our expectations for the newcomer's success?
4. How can we ensure that the newcomer is supported collegially?
5. Can we protect our newcomer from unnecessary, time-wasting effort?
6. What influences can we expect this newcomer to bring to us, and how can we prepare ourselves to be receptive? (pp.13-14)

Cultures of teaching and learning. School *leaders* create cultures that foster learning and teaching. Sheckley (1999) posits that "schools should cultivate building-wide environments that challenge and support the development of proficiency among teachers and administrators" (p. 8). Paulsen and Feldman (1995) draw from a 1986 address by K. Patricia Cross to create a list of the characteristics of cultures that support teaching:

- Unambiguous commitment to and support of teaching and its improvement from senior administrators
- Widespread involvement of faculty in planning and implementing activities and programs to improve teaching
- Frequent interaction and collaboration among faculty
- A sense of community among faculty regarding teaching-related issues
- A faculty development program or campus learning center (p. 1)

The following “elements in work settings,” suggested by Brock & Grady (1997) as necessary for enhancing the self-esteem of novice teachers as adult learners, are attitudinal and cultural in nature and based on the underlying philosophies of the institution:

- Mutual respect between novice and instructor
- Collaboration among peers
- Mutual trust within the staff
- Supportiveness of peers and administrator
- Openness and authenticity of expression
- Pleasurable learning experiences
- Comfortable and accepting atmosphere (pp. 65-66)

Grub (1999) emphasizes the importance of leadership and culture-building when he describes the ineffectiveness of piecemeal efforts to effect change:

[A] great failing of staff development days is that they are typically one-shot activities with outsiders that do nothing to generate a *culture* [italics added] within an institution supporting teaching. . . . When the inspired leadership is gone, you fall back into routines. (p. 298)

Principle # 2: Inspire a Shared Vision

School *leaders* promote the creation and sharing of an institutional vision that includes teaching and learning as top priorities. They also invite the input of instructors because, as Senge (1990) points out, shared visions that foster commitment from group members emerge from personal values.

A basic assumption for this study was that stakeholders should be consulted. Sharing a vision requires the communication of values and information. New instructors, for example, cannot be expected to share and contribute to visions – if indeed they even exist – if they do not know what they are. Nor can they help carry out the vision if they are not informed of even the simplest matters needed to carry on their work. Instructors like the participants who were not informed of the location of classroom supplies or how to prepare a lesson plan will be hard-pressed to “share the vision” when they must spend their time struggling to accomplish their daily tasks.

Induction. Induction programs, designed to assist beginning instructors, are a means to welcome newcomers and share the institution’s vision of teaching and learning. More than simply an introduction to the college, effective induction programs are the entry point to continual support for the novice instructor (Gordon, 1991). Runyan (as cited in Brock & Grady, 1997) describes developmental induction as “a sequenced set of professional growth opportunities delivered in accordance with the needs of the recipients. Activities are situationally driven and designed to support the personal and professional growth of beginning teachers” (p. 42).

Contrary to the beliefs of several participants in the study, good induction programs are individualized to meet the needs of the novices and, according to Runyan, (as cited in Brock & Grady, 1997) “focus [on the development of] personal strengths of the beginning teacher without stifling idealism and legislating dependency on accepted methods and materials” (p. 50). Rob, the nursing assistant instructor, was afraid “they would try to mold you in a certain way.” On the contrary, good developmental induction programs “encourage teachers to attempt creative teaching ideas and develop a personalized style of teaching” (Brock & Grady, 1997, p. 43). Teaching is, in fact, far too complex to reduce to formulas. The implied beliefs of the participants about the nature of teaching and learning to teach *reinforce* the fact that they need to know more about what good teaching *is* – and is *not*. Darling-Hammond (2000) writes that effective teacher education “aims to empower teachers with greater understanding of complex situations rather than to control them with simplistic formulas or cookie-cutter routines for teaching” (p. 170).

Collaboration and community. The best source of external help for the participants in the study was the assistance they received from other instructors. However, this was not usually a result of purposeful planning by the school. This is unfortunate because the encouragement of collegiality and sharing is vital. As Bergquist (1993) points out, “Conversations are the essence of the organization” (p. 135). It is through conversation that information flows and forms the “basis for creation of community” (Bergquist, 1993, p. 136). Ricoeur (1992) posits that it is *only* through our relationships with others that we develop and achieve our potential.

Isolation is a characteristic of the teaching profession in general. Spending most of their long teaching days in a classroom or lab, career college instructors are especially isolated. According to Brock & Grady (1997), "First-year teachers cannot be left in isolation and expected to be successful" (p. 24). Grub's (1999) studies of community college instructors revealed a clear relationship between community and quality of teaching: "The effective instructors were almost universally linked with other faculty, often in learning communities, while really bad teachers were generally alienated from their peers" (p. 55).

Not only did most of the career colleges in the study not formalize the means for new instructors to collaborate with experienced instructors, some had a culture that *discouraged* sharing. One participant reported that instructors at her college were unwilling to share their materials with new instructors because of their attitude that "no one helped me when I was new." Their lack of collaboration seemed entrenched in the school's culture, clearly a process to be challenged. This unwillingness to share is in direct contrast to the research on induction which suggests that "beginning teachers need frequent opportunities to share and solve problems with other . . . teachers" (Huling-Austin, 1992, p. 175). In fact, the 3 participants who exhibited the most dissatisfaction with their work were the ones who reported being the most isolated from their colleagues. Becoming an instructor involves learning and as Vella (1994) suggests, "Adult learning is best achieved in dialogue" (p. 3).

The novice instructors in the study had little time outside the classroom to collaborate with other instructors. Many taught as many as 7 hours a day. A reorganization of scheduling would not only allow time for collaboration, but more

time for reflection, class preparation, and grading student work. There is expense involved in such a change, but career colleges should consider making this financial investment if they are serious about instructional improvement.

Principle # 3 Enable Others to Act

School *leaders* provide the resources, both in time and materials, for instructors to learn and function optimally in the classroom. Administrators must share information and access to that which instructors need in order to learn and effectively perform their jobs. This not only enables instructors to work efficiently, but accords them respect. One participant relates how he was neither informed nor respected when another department was given his desk:

They don't communicate with us at all. I went into my class last Monday and opened the door into my classroom. My *desk* was gone!! And I see this flimsy table there with my picture of my wife and my calendar. And everything else is missing [books, tests, teaching supplies, key to filing cabinet]. It would have been nice if someone had called me over the weekend and told me. But they didn't do that. And I'm like, "Grrrr! Kill somebody!"

Enabling instructors to act also requires that consideration be given to the kinds of students who are enrolled in career colleges. As reported by the participants, instructors are frequently confronted with students who are unprepared academically and personally to pursue health care studies. Colleges must be willing to effectively screen applicants and admit only those who can reasonably be expected to succeed. Serving disadvantaged students is a worthy

goal for career colleges, but taking in these students and putting them together with untrained teachers is not a recipe for success for either party. Enabling instructors to act means making reasonable demands and preparing instructors to work with challenging student populations.

A related student problem that can cripple the new instructor's ability to act is the hostile class, often the result of teacher turnover. Analyzing and addressing the causes of teacher turnover in order to prevent the hostility, such as that which Doc described when he joked about needing a shield to protect himself in class, is necessary if this is more than a once-in-awhile emergency situation.

Enabling instructors to act may require that administrators spend time with and listen carefully to what instructors are saying. As shown in this study, new instructors, when asked directly to state their needs, cannot always do so. Needs *were* revealed, rather, in conversations during which they described their experiences. Time and attention appear to be the necessary prerequisites in determining unmet needs that may be interfering with instructors' ability to perform most effectively – in short, to act.

Critical reflection. Instructors can be encouraged to engage in critical reflection as a means of achieving growth and improvement. Gordon (1991) suggests that beginning teachers be given opportunities to “reflect on experiences, problems, successes, and future alternatives” (p. 60). They can be encouraged to engage in reflection in several ways that relate directly to their experiences in the classroom: a) journal writing, b) portfolios containing items that record their professional growth, c) student case studies in which they

concentrate on seeking ways to work with specific student problems, and d) reviews of critical incidents.

Teaching is complex, even for teachers who receive preservice teacher education. Sheckley (1997) suggests that teachers can be helped with “instructional approaches that involve the solving of genuine problems, reflection on experience, and experimentation” (p. 2). Critical reflection can help new instructors, such as those participants who reported that they had learned how to teach and did not want to learn about instruction “because it would probably go against everything I’ve taught myself to do now.” Becoming aware of what we don’t know is often the first step to learning and change.

Grub (1999) discusses the need for teachers to have opportunities to make real changes in their practice in his critique of traditional approaches to teacher development:

While some approaches to teaching can be presented in a short period of time, their successful use generally depends on instructors changing their ideas of who they are, how they ought to relate to their students, and what the purposes are of conventional subject matter. These *transformations* [italics added] cannot be accomplished within an afternoon. In effect, conventional workshops are didactic, skill-oriented presentations of complex practices, while learning new ways of teaching requires more constructivist approaches in which instructors reinterpret the entire teaching enterprise.

Professional development activities. Grub’s point is well taken regarding the need for transformation. Runyan (as cited in Brock & Grady, 1997)

admonishes that assistance should be “individualized according to a perceived need, rather than determined solely by an evaluator or a predetermined notion of what beginning teachers need to learn” (p. 43). This emphasis on individualization may seem contradicted by the findings in which the participants did not articulate areas in which they desired further learning. However, the participants did express needs; it simply required extended conversation about their experiences to uncover these needs. For example, Easy mentioned studying learning styles in his own quest to discover ways to better assist and motivate his students. He did not, however, mention a desire for this type of information when he responded to questions about his needs as a beginning teacher.

Although individualization is important, there are workshops and other traditional professional development activities that might be useful for presenting ideas, sharing tips and tools, offering strategies that instructors can use to advance their own learning, and teaching how to engage in critical reflection. Based on the words of the participants in this study, the following are examples of workshops that might be useful for both new and experienced instructors:

- Adult learning theory
- Motivational techniques for adult learners
- Incorporating the teaching of basic skills, such as math, into the health care curriculum
- Problem-based learning strategies
- Modeling and teaching professional behaviors
- Conducting an interactive lecture

The specific content and context for these examples should, however, be drawn from the actual classroom experiences of the instructors.

The literature abounds with suggestions about why professional development workshops are *ineffective*. From these, we may infer what we *should* be doing. Sheckley (1999), for example, cites a report on *Teacher Quality* published by the National Center for Educational Statistics:

Traditional approaches to professional development (e.g., workshops and conferences) [are] ineffective because they are usually short term; they lack continuity through adequate follow-up and ongoing feedback from experts; they are typically isolated from the participant's classroom and school contexts; and they take a passive approach to training teachers, allowing little opportunity to learn by doing and reflecting with colleagues. (p. 2)

The need to base professional development on *authentic* problems faced by instructors in the classroom is emphasized in the literature. This makes sense in terms of what we know about how adults learn best. As Brock & Grady (1997) point out, "Adults commit to learning when they see something as important and relevant to their personal and professional needs. Beginning teachers want information they can apply to their immediate work setting" (p. 43). This would seem particularly important for instructors who, like the participants, expressed reluctance about trying anything new. It is possible they have so recently achieved a comfort level in the classroom that they are not interested in trying anything that might cause them to once again feel out of control.

Principle # 4: Model the Way

School *leaders* model the way by consistently making teaching a priority, applying adult learning theory to their work with beginning instructors, collaborating with staff throughout the college, and demonstrating critical thinking and transformative learning as they tackle the problems of the institution. In summary, by modeling the behaviors they hope to encourage in faculty. Additionally, they can provide models of teaching for novice instructors through the development of mentoring programs.

Mentoring. The desire for a mentor is expressed by new teachers at all levels of education (Brock & Grady, 1997; Menges, 1999). Lyons, Kysilka, and Pawlas (1999) suggest to college adjunct faculty that a mentoring relationship is “probably your single most valuable developmental resource” (p. 27). While none of the colleges in the study had formalized mentoring programs, many participants reported that working with and observing an experienced instructor was very helpful in making the transition to the classroom. Here is one participant’s response when asked what had helped her most: “I’d have to say my coworkers. They have been great. They’ve offered me material they have to support the lecture. They’ve encouraged me. They’ve prepared me for situations that have come up. They’ve been great.”

Finding a good mentor should not be left to chance. Without formalized programs, an instructor like Rob is left to fend for himself – “I sit in my class and don’t deal with anybody” – while his colleague at the same college has a rather wide network of collegial support and the assistance of her supervisor.

Serendipity should not determine who gets what. Policies and systems, created

collaboratively and endorsed by school *leaders*, should ensure that all instructors are supported.

Some career college educational programs are small and have only one instructor. Mentors can still be provided from other health care programs. There is extensive literature on establishing mentoring programs. A common word of advice is that mentors be *prepared* to work with new instructors (Brock & Grady, 1997; Gordon, 1991; Huling-Austin, 1992). Simply setting up a buddy system is not particularly effective. If mentors are to observe and critique classroom performance, something beginning teachers report wanting (Menges, 1999), the mentors must be able to observe carefully and communicate effectively. And, if we agree with Gordon's (1991) opinion that "moral support is one of the most vital forms of assistance the induction team can provide for the beginning teacher" (p. 52), then mentors must be endowed with empathy, be willing to share their experiences, and be open and authentic in their communication with new colleagues.

Principle # 5: Encourage the Heart

School *leaders* honor teaching by acknowledging and rewarding instructors. The participants who expressed the most satisfaction with their work were generally those who had encouraging, supportive supervisors. Teaching can be difficult on the best days and having someone to help along the way can make the difference between a successful instructor and one who struggles along ineffectively and eventually leaves teaching, contributing to the problem of instructor turnover.

It is instructors who constitute the heart of any school. They spend their days with students, teaching them and helping them become employable graduates. Their efforts should be recognized, encouraged, and rewarded.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study prompted further questions about private career college instructors, their teaching environments, and the students whose lives they touch. Further studies might contribute to finding effective ways to ease the transition of instructors to the classroom and maximize their potential as teachers.

The following questions suggest research that would further explore and expand the findings of this study:

- Can novice instructors more directly identify their needs if they are offered different means for expressing them, such as written surveys, daily logs to complete, or queries from their supervisors?
- Do the opinions of instructors about the effectiveness of their teaching methods correspond to the opinions of their students?
- Do instructor opinions about their effectiveness correlate with the success rate, measured by retention and employability, of their students?
- Are formalized mentoring programs helpful for easing instructor transition to the classroom?
- What types of induction programs are most effective for helping career college instructors?

- Are there factors common to career colleges that have high rates of instructor turnover?
- What are the perceptions of career college owners and administrators regarding the effectiveness of their instructors?
- How do the perceptions of career college owners and administrators regarding institutional emphasis on instructional quality correspond with the perceptions of the instructors? Of the students?

Conclusion

This study is the first step in the researcher's plan to assist health care career college instructors realize their potential as self-actualizing professionals who love their work and are successful in preparing their students to be safe, competent health care workers. Future steps include conducting studies of career college administrators and students and developing methods for assisting instructors more easily make the transition to the classroom. Getting to know the 16 participants and learning about a variety of college settings added significantly to what the researcher knew from her experiences in career college administration. Hearing about the participants' experiences, frustrations, and satisfactions has rekindled her enthusiasm to provide leadership that focuses on making teaching and learning top priorities in career colleges. Imagine the possibilities . . .

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APPENDIX A

Professional Plan

Provide colleges and instructors with
recommendations for assisting novice
instructors

Develop recommendations and
create delivery system
for assisting instructors

Investigate perceived needs of:
* Instructors
Students
Academic administrators
Employers of graduates

* Subject of dissertation

APPENDIX B

Plan for Conducting the Study

1. Identify eligible colleges
2. Contact college administration
3. Secure names of potential participants
4. In necessary, contact participants to verify criteria and ascertain interest
5. Conduct individual interviews
6. Transcribe tapes
7. Prepare summaries of answers to questions
8. Send out summaries for member checking
9. Make any necessary changes or deletions to summaries
10. Prepare recommendations from summaries
11. Conduct focus groups
12. Summarize comments and recommendations
13. Code all transcripts, identify categories and themes
14. Write up findings

APPENDIX C

Letter to Colleges

June xx, 2001
5241 Lewison Court
San Diego, CA 92120

Contact Person
Name of Career College
Address of Career College

Dear (Director of Education, College Director, etc.):

Thank you for considering participation in my doctoral research. As described in the attached proposal abstract, the purpose of the research is to learn more about the experiences and needs of newly hired health care instructors. Instructors will be invited to participate in either an individual interview or focus group to discuss their experiences and comment on recommendations for helping instructors more easily and effectively make the transition to the classroom.

I am asking the Director of Education or other appropriate administrator to identify instructors who meet the following criteria:

1. Teach at least 15 hours a week in nursing or allied health programs
2. Have taught for less than 1 year (at either the current or any other college)
3. Teach classes that have at least ten students
4. Have not had formal teacher education
5. Are interested in participating in the study

Confidentiality will be protected for the college, its administrators, and the instructor participants. Interviews will be conducted in private at the college unless the administration or the participant prefers another location. Focus groups will be conducted at a location agreed upon by the participants. Both interviews and focus groups will be scheduled so instructors do not miss class or other work assignments.

I will be happy to share a summary of my findings with the college. It is my hope it will prove useful in developing strategies to ease the transition of new instructors and help them be more effective in the classroom.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (619) 229-8865 or lcharoun@aol.com.

Sincerely,

Lee Haroun

APPENDIX D

Consent Form for Institution

Lee Haroun, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Diego, is conducting a study about the experiences and needs of novice health care instructors in private career colleges. The purpose of the study is to develop ways to assist novice instructors to more easily make the transition from their work in health care occupations to the classroom. The results will be published in a dissertation and has potential use for future journal articles and books.

The administration of

(Name of institution)

agrees to recommend instructors who meet the necessary criteria for possible participation in the study.

(Administrator – printed)

(Date)

(Administrator – signature)

APPENDIX E

Interview Guide

Interviews with Individuals

Opening statement: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I understand how valuable time is and very much appreciate your willingness to spend some of yours with me. My goal is to better understand the experiences of new instructors so I can develop recommendations to help make more easily make the transition from the field to the classroom. I hope you enjoy the interview and find it useful to think about and describe your experiences.

1. How did you decide to become a health care instructor?
2. How would you describe your experience making the transition from working in the field to being an instructor?
 - Could you explain what you mean by _____?
 - Could you give me an example of _____?
 - Could you tell me more about _____?
 - Could you tell me a story that describes _____?
 - Many probing and follow-up questions possible, depending on content of answer.
3. What, if anything, from your work as a _____ (occupation) has helped you as an instructor?
 - How has that been helpful?
 - Could you give me an example of how that was helpful?
 - Could you describe how you applied _____ (skill, experience, etc.)?
 - What, if anything, from your general life experience has been helpful?
4. What has been most difficult in making the transition from practitioner to instructor?
 - Could you give me an example?
 - Could you tell me more about _____?
 - Could you describe something that happened to help me understand what you mean/how that experience was for you?
 - How do you think that difficulty might have been prevented?
5. What do you believe helped you most in making the transition to the classroom?
 - Could you give me an example that illustrates how this helped you?
 - Were there any people who helped you?
 - How did you locate this help?

6. Thinking about your first two weeks in the classroom, how would you describe your feelings?

- Could you give me an example of what happened that caused you to feel that way?
- Could you tell me more about that/those feeling(s)?
- How did you deal with that feeling?
- Do you still feel that way? When?

7. Compare those early feelings with the way you feel now in the classroom.

- Could you give me an example/tell me a story that illustrates the change?
- Tell me more about how they are different.
- What do think caused the change?

8. Compare a day in your classroom last week with a typical day during your first month.

- Do you consider the changes (if any) to be positive?
- How do you believe that/those change(s) took place?
- What occurred that made the difference?

9. Tell me about how your expectations about what teaching would be like compare with your actual experience in the classroom.

- What was the source of your expectations?
- Could you give me an example to illustrate the difference?

10. What do you like best about teaching?

11. Suppose that I had just been hired as a new instructor at your school and asked you for advice about how to succeed. What would you tell me?

- Could you tell me more about what you mean by _____?
- What else should I know?
- How can I _____?
- What is the most important thing I should know/do to successfully make the transition to the classroom?

12. How do you decide what content to cover in your classes? How do you decide what instructional methods to use?

- a. How do you decide which methods to use? (For example, whether to lecture, have students work in groups, etc.)
 - b. What has been the helpful to you in determining which methods to use?
 - c. Which methods have to found to be most successful in terms of students mastering the knowledge and skills?
- Ask for more information about any resources mentioned.
 - Did someone at the school provide?

- Have you been given the opportunity to learn different teaching techniques? When? Where?

13. Suppose that I had been your supervisor when you started teaching. How could I have best helped you?

- Could you tell me more about what you mean by ____?

14. If you could design ways to help new instructors make the transition to the classroom, what would they be?

- Ask for details about content, method of delivery, time instructors would be willing to devote.

15. If you were writing a handbook for new instructors, what would you be sure to cover?

- What would be the most important points?

16. Is there anything else you can tell me that would help me understand your experiences as a new instructor?

- Questions based on response.

17. Is there anything else you can tell me about your needs as a new instructor?

- Questions based on response.

18. Is there anything else you can tell me about how you believe these needs can best be met?

- Questions based on response.

APPENDIX F

Consent Form for Individual Interviews

Lee Haroun, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Diego, is conducting a study about the experiences and needs of novice health care instructors in private career colleges. The purpose of the study is to develop ways to assist novice instructors more easily make the transition from their work in health care occupations to the classroom. The results will be published in a dissertation.

1. I understand I will participate in an individual, audiotaped interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. I will be asked a number of open-ended questions about my experiences and needs as a novice instructor.
2. About 1 month after the interview, I will be asked to review and comment on a written summary of my responses to the interview questions. This task may take up to 60 minutes to complete. I will also have an opportunity to review the transcript of my interview, if I wish. The researcher agrees to change or delete any portion(s) I designate in either the summary or the transcript.
3. I understand my participation in this study is completely voluntary. I may withdraw at any time before, during, or after the interview takes place without prejudice.
4. I understand my identity will be considered strictly confidential. The dissertation may contain direct quotes of what I say; therefore, I may create a pseudonym to protect my identity or the researcher will assign one to me. The tapes, transcripts, and any written notes will be kept at the home of the researcher in a locked file cabinet. The tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the dissertation.
5. Potential risk to me is expected to be very minimal or nonexistent, limited to possibly experiencing mild fatigue during the interview.
6. Potential benefits for me include the opportunity to reflect on my transitional experiences and contribute to the development of ways to help other novice instructors.
7. Lee Haroun has explained the study and answered my questions. If I have any other questions, I can contact her at (619) 229-8865 or lcharoun@aol.com.

There is no other agreement, either written or verbal, beyond that expressed in this consent form.

I, the undersigned, understand the above explanations and on this basis, I give consent to my voluntary participation in this research.

Signature of Subject	Date	Location
Signature of Researcher	Date	Signature of Witness Date

APPENDIX G
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

☐ Individual Interview

☐ Focus Group

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail address _____

College where currently employed _____

of months teaching _____

Occupational specialty _____

of years in that occupation _____

Type of education or training required for your occupation _____

Subjects you are teaching now _____

Pseudonym _____

APPENDIX H

Consent Form for Focus Groups

Lee Haroun, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Diego, is conducting a study about the experiences and needs of novice health care instructors in private career colleges. The purpose of the study is to develop ways to assist novice instructors more easily make the transition from their work in health care occupations to the classroom. The results will be published in a dissertation.

1. I understand I will participate in an audiotaped focus group lasting approximately 90 minutes. I will be asked to discuss a list of written recommendations for assisting novice instructors transition to the classroom.
2. About 1 month after the focus group, I will be asked to read and comment on a written summary of the suggestions made by the group. This task may take up to 60 minutes to complete. I will also have an opportunity to review the transcript of the group discussion, if I wish. The researcher agrees to change or delete any portion(s) I designate that contain my contributions to the discussion.
3. I understand my participation in this study is completely voluntary. I may withdraw at any time before, during, or after the focus group takes place without prejudice.
4. I understand my identity will be considered strictly confidential outside the group. The dissertation may contain direct quotes of what I say; therefore, I may create a pseudonym to protect my identity or the researcher will assign one to me. The tapes, transcripts, and any written notes will be kept at the home of the researcher in a locked file cabinet. The tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the dissertation.
5. Potential risk to me is expected to be very minimal or nonexistent, limited to possibly experiencing mild fatigue during the focus group.
6. Potential benefits for me include the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other instructors and contribute to the development of ways to help other novice instructors.
7. Lee Haroun has explained the study and answered my questions. If I have any other questions, I can contact her at (619) 229-8865 or lcharoun@aol.com.

There is no other agreement, either written or verbal, beyond that expressed in this consent form.

I, the undersigned, understand the above explanations and on this basis, I give consent to my voluntary participation in this research.

Signature of Subject	Date	Location
Signature of Researcher	Date	Signature of Witness Date

APPENDIX I

Letter to Participants

Lee Haroun
5241 Lewison Court
San Diego, 92120
(619) 229- 8865 lcharoun@aol.com

November 26, 2001

Dear _____,

I want to thank you once again for taking the time to be interviewed. I learned a lot about the experiences and needs of health care instructors from your interview. Now I am offering you the opportunity to participate in the next phase of the study.

I have enclosed a form that includes a summary of your answers to the 18 interview questions. Each question is followed by boxes in which you can check whether you agree or disagree that this is what you intended to say in your response. You also have an opportunity, *if* you wish and have the time, to add any ideas you may have thought of since the interview.

I have also included a stamped, self-addressed envelope for you to return the completed form to me by December 17, 2001.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Phone number: (619) 229-8865

E-mail address: lcharoun@aol.com.

My best wishes to you for a happy holiday season.

Lee Haroun