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Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Instructor Perceptions of Instructional Delivery in a
Virtual Environment

A dissertation
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by
John Derek Faulconer
May 2022

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Dr. William Flora
Dr. Virginia Foley
Dr. Richard Griffin

Keywords: virtual, instruction, method

ABSTRACT

Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Instructor Perceptions of Instructional Delivery in a Virtual Environment

by

John Derek Faulconer

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) instructors at the secondary level as they adapted to teaching in a virtual environment during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Although the literature indicated that the delivery method for the content and curriculum aligned to Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps was best suited for face-to-face instruction, no evidence existed to indicate cadet overall success based on the implementation by virtual delivery, using one or multiple online platforms. The objective of each JROTC Program is to ensure that cadets successfully complete the program with advanced skill sets in leadership. Leadership skills are most often taught in a traditional environment wherein instructors and cadets learn in real-world and face-to-face environments.

This study was a phenomenological qualitative study selected to examine the experiences of JROTC instructors who taught portions of their curriculum utilizing a virtual platform during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Data collection strategies included semi-structured, one-on-one interviews conducted via a virtual platform with JROTC instructors who taught the JROTC curriculum utilizing a virtual delivery instruction model. The results revealed that JROTC instructors perceived that virtual instruction of their curriculum did not produce an impact on leadership development of cadets as it would have had cadets been instructed in a face-to-face

environment. The results reveal how cadets missed out on the development of valuable leadership skills by participating in virtual instruction and instructors perceived themselves to be less effective to ineffective as virtual instructors of their curriculum. The results yielded five themes: (a) virtual delivery model of instruction does not permit instructors to teach certain concepts of the JROTC curriculum adequately; (b) the importance of a face-to-face delivery model of instruction connects to the growth of a JROTC cadet in leadership development; (c) an overall lack of instructor preparation for using virtual instruction, but military training prepared them to be adaptive; (d) instructor perception of being ineffective in delivering instruction in a virtual environment; and (e) a new-found comfort in delivering overall instruction in both a virtual and face-to-face environment.

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DEDICATION

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead (Philippians 3: 12-13)

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the individuals who gave their time, patience, understanding, guidance, and trust in me in ensuring successful completion of this process. Thank you to my wife, Cassidy Taylor-Faulconer, for understanding the importance of completing the dissertation and coursework hours and doing so during “our family time”. The fact that this endeavor means as much to you as it does to me speaks volumes for your passion for education. This passion does not go unnoticed. I love you and appreciate all that you do for our family.

I want to thank all my children, Cody, Mollee, Allyson and Landon Reece, for their patience and understanding when I needed to do homework and write instead of going “out and about” and hanging out with the family. I know each of you value hard work and perseverance and I am confident that, because of this, you will all be successful in your future endeavors.

To my parents, my sister, my brother-in-law and nephews. You have helped develop me into an educator and scholar and, for that, I am forever grateful. From becoming a teacher to moving into administration, you have always been there for me and stood behind every decision I have made. Thank you for always being there for me and cheering me on, especially during those times I wanted to throw in the towel.

I would like to thank all my former teachers, principals, and coaches for always telling me that I can be anything I wanted to be as long as I put in the hard work. You believed in me

when it was hard to believe in myself. You watched me grow and gave me the wisdom that I will take with me for a lifetime. I am eternally grateful for all that you gave and expected little in return. This is for you!

I want to personally thank Major Matthew Bailey, Commander of the Tennessee Air National Guard 134th Security Forces Squadron, for advocating in such a way that it allowed me access to environments and individuals that I may have never had the opportunity to meet. You opened doors for me and you are a true educator at heart. I appreciate our friendship in ways that cannot be explained. Colonel Brad Bolin and Lieutenant Colonel Steven Turner and all the men and women of the Tennessee Army National Guard 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment for having an open-door policy that allowed me the opportunity of a lifetime. Thank you for always being there to answer my questions, engaging with me in some incredible dialogue, and making me feel as though I am part of the team with the 278th.

Although not a direct participant within the study, the impact that the Tennessee National Guard Recruiters have on high school students goes beyond saying. Keep up the great work that you do in our schools and know that you are appreciated and valued for your efforts. Thank you, Commander Nathan Thornton, United States Army at Fort Leavenworth Kansas. Your leadership, friendship, and candor is refreshing and eye opening. Thank you for taking the time and allowing me an opportunity that not many civilians have.

I would also like to thank the Army ROTC Cadre at the University of Tennessee and Senior Army ROTC leadership. I appreciate the fact that you were always a mere phone call away and always made time to answer all questions that I had regarding your programs and ROTC programs in general. You are an inspiration to the cadets that you serve and a great role model for all.

Thank you to all the men and women who have given their time and their lives to serve our country. You are true heroes, and your sacrifice is what has allowed a civilian like myself to continue my education.

Lastly, I want to thank Dr. Pam Scott for allowing me the opportunity to take this dissertation in a new and different direction. The autonomy that you bestowed on me is greatly appreciated and I hope that more future students will choose to bypass what is considered normal and seek those opportunities to better themselves.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) are deeply rooted in the American education system. The National Defense Act of 1920 established the first Army JROTC program at the secondary level in hopes of having many high school graduates further their education in one branch of the military upon graduation. This endeavor would, therefore, require proper training. The formulation of the National Defense Act of 1916, best known as the Father of ROTC, implemented one of the first Army Reserve Officer Training programs at Harvard University (Gross, 2021). Between 1915-1920, legislation drove the birth of these two Army training programs. United States legislators wanted to ensure United States citizens adopted the concepts set forth by the founding fathers, including that each citizen was both a citizen and a soldier. This concept brought about the Reserve Officer Training Corps with the intent that Army reservists would be ready, willing, and fully prepared to lead an army of citizens and soldiers (Gross, 2021).

However, the United States Army was not the only military branch developing a Reserve Officer Training Corps during this period. In 1920 and again in 1923, the United States Air Force established the inaugural Air Force ROTC (AFROTC) units at the University of California in Berkeley, the Georgia Institute of Technology, the University of Illinois, the University of Washington, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College (United States Air Force, 2015). While the aim of the Army was to ensure citizens were also trained soldiers, the foundational belief for the AFROTC was to recruit, educate, and commission officer candidates in an academic field of study with field training and professional development training programs using the Air Force framework and curriculum. After World War II, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, along with the Chief of Staff of the War

Department, signed into law General Order No. 124, establishing AFROTC units at seventy-eight colleges and universities within the United States to recruit, educate, and train candidates to become Air Force officers (United States Air Force, 2015).

The United States Navy became the third branch of the military to offer a Reserve Officer Training Corps. Established in 1926 to develop a base of citizens knowledgeable in the arts and sciences of Naval Warfare, the United States Navy developed six NROTC units, located individually at the University of California at Berkeley, Georgia Institute of Technology, Northwestern University, University of Washington, Harvard University, and Yale University. By summer 1930, one hundred twenty-six midshipmen not only graduated from college, but did so with officer commissions in the United States Navy (Oregon State University, 2020).

The final branch of the military to initiate a Reserve Officer Training Corps was the United States Marine Corps (USMC). The USMC, obedient to their motto of fidelity in *Semper Fidelis* (United States Marine Corps, 2021), began offering qualified Navy ROTC graduates commissions within the United States Marine Corps in 1932. In 1968, Prairie View A&M became the first Historically Black College and University (HBCU) to host a MCROTC program in conjunction with the United States Navy (Naval Education and Training Command, 2021a). At the time of this study, the United States Coast Guard did not offer a ROTC Program but did offer direct commissioning programs for graduates of maritime academies (United States Coast Guard ROTC, 2021).

Although the United States Army had provided for JROTC units in secondary schools since the National Defense Act in 1916, other military branches established ROTC units solely within post-secondary systems. In 1964, however, this would change with the signing of a piece of controversial legislation. In September 1964, as the country braced for an upcoming war in

Vietnam, President Lyndon Johnson signed HR-9124 Reserve Officers Training Corps Vitalization Act of 1964 into law. The Vitalization Act mandated 10 US Code-2031, which ordered all military leaders to establish and maintain Junior ROTC Programs at all public and private high schools under certain establishing conditions.

The Secretary of each military department shall establish and maintain a Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, organized into units, at public and private secondary educational institutions which apply for a unit and meet the standards and criteria prescribed pursuant to this section. The President shall promulgate regulations prescribing the standards and criteria to be followed by the military departments in selecting the institutions at which units are to be established and maintained and shall provide for the fair and equitable distribution of such units throughout the Nation, except that more than one such unit may be established and maintained at any military institute. (United States Congress, 1964)

President Johnson, however, had some reservations. On October 14, 1964, the President issued a statement regarding the signing of the bill. The controversy surrounding the JROTC programs in regarding its lack of fulfillment of military requirements, the use of active military personnel as direct instructors, and expansion into secondary schools created concern of a cost-need ratio.

Johnson stated:

The bill, however, contains one feature which concerns me. This involves provisions which specify that junior ROTC units in secondary institutions must be established within prescribed numerical limits if the institutions meet certain standards and criteria. The bill further provides that the President shall promulgate, by January 1, 1966, the regulations prescribing such standards and

criteria. I am aware of the fact that the junior ROTC program has been the subject of some controversy over the years. Even though the program fulfills no direct military requirement, it continues to occupy the full time of several hundred members of our active military personnel. (American Presidency Project, 1964).

With that statement, President Johnson clarified the future of JROTC and ROTC, yet the purpose of each program differed in multiple respects. Pannoni and Moody (2021) noted that leadership, character, and community service represented the core tenets of high school Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps programs and were at the center of JROTC cadet instruction that emphasized working to better the cadet's family, school, country, and citizenship skills. The authors emphasized that, although the JROTC programs were not bound by the same obligations as their military counterpart, each JROTC program included a military component. Although students who participated in JROTC were not required to join the military after high school nor was the program a way to prepare youth for military life, the coursework included military history and branch aligned customs. In addition, students wore a uniform like those worn by military personnel in specific branches (Pannoni et al., 2021).

The statement by Pannoni and Moody (2021) regarding Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp echoed across all branches in the United States military. According to staff writers at Accredited Schools Online, the framework of JROTC was not only in leadership development, but also in motivating groups of students to be better citizens, build character, and enrich their communities. Accredited Schools (2021) outlines the program to include courses in civics, geography, health and wellness, and United States history while framing the overall mission of the JROTC as a way to motivate students to become better citizens by providing leadership and character development. This Congress-mandated program also fosters partnerships with

communities and educational institutions. With leadership as a focus, coupled with core values, abilities and self-discipline, cadets are able to function in civilian careers, even if they make a decision not to enlist in military service. (Accredited Schools, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Although literature indicates that the delivery method for the content and curriculum aligned to Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) is best suited for face-to-face instruction, no evidence exists to indicate cadet overall success based on the instruction implementation by virtual delivery, using one or multiple online platforms. The aim of each JROTC/ROTC Program is to ensure that cadets successfully complete JROTC and ROTC programs with advanced skill sets in leadership. Leadership skills are most often taught in a traditional environment wherein instructors and cadets learn in real-world and face-to-face environments. Thus, the essential research guiding the current study included an examination of the perceptions of JROTC instructors that delivered instruction in a virtual environment.

Significance of the Study

Because the face-to-face curriculum includes leadership skills in multiple ways, it is expected that JROTC cadets will possess strong leadership skills upon completion of the program. During the COVID-19 global pandemic, secondary JROTC units had to restructure not only their curriculum, but the delivery method of that curriculum to meet the pandemic guidelines set forth by the state college or university and respective military branches. This was true for most academic core teachers as well. School closures caused educators to alter not only how they did their jobs, but also to face tremendous challenges in supporting students and providing learning opportunities in new and innovative ways (Patrick & Newsome, 2020).

The results of the current study may reveal how ROTC instructors adapted to teaching in this new environment and examine ways in which this environment provided for instructor innovation. Furthermore, the study will add to the literature on those adaptations and methods for delivering ROTC content online.

Research Questions

The primary research question guiding the current study was: What were the perceptions of JROTC instructors as they adapted to the change from face-to-face delivery of instruction to delivery of instruction in a virtual environment?

The supporting sub questions for the study were.

RQ1. What factors supported changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instruction delivery method?

RQ2. What factors inhibited changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instructional delivery method?

RQ3. What perceptions existed regarding virtual instruction prior to the change from face-to-face instruction to delivery of instruction virtually?

RQ4. What processes and procedures were developed due to the change from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction?

RQ5. What adaptations to current instructional practices occurred by changing from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction?

Definition of Terms

The definition of the following terms as applied to this study connected the literature to the research.

- Delivery Mode. The formats in which the course is delivered. (University at Buffalo, 2022).
- JROTC. Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. (United States Army, 2021a).
- Method. An orderly presentation of material based on the approach. (Hoffler, 1983).
- ROTC. Reserve Officer Training Corps. (Moody, 2020).
- Virtual. A digitally replicated version of something real. (Rahul, n.d.).

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations of the study included a focus on JROTC instructors who provided curriculum delivery methods utilizing virtual platforms. The study did not include all instructors of JROTC within the educational settings at each location. Other limitations could be that the researcher is a curriculum specialist for the JROTC instructors within one of the districts utilized.

The study was delimited to JROTC instructors within one state. Delimitations exist when examining the perceptions of only groups from one educational population. Results of the study are credible to the population examined and may not apply to JROTC in other settings.

Chapter Summary

This study is organized and presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the perceptions of JROTC instructors that delivered instruction in a virtual environment. along with the statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, definition of the terms, and delimitations and limitations. Chapter 2 contains an overview of relevant research related to the perceptions of JROTC instructors that delivered instruction in a virtual environment. Chapter 2 also contains an overview of the purpose of Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC), an overview of the JROTC and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) curriculums, the qualifications needed to become a JROTC/ROTC instructor, teaching

pedagogies associated with JROTC and ROTC, asynchronous and synchronous learning styles, and literature to define virtual instruction and face-to-face instruction. Chapter 3 describes the methodology, including the research questions and research design, site selection, population and sample, data collections strategies, data analysis strategies, and assessment of quality and rigor. Chapter 3 also specifies the theoretical change framework associated with the research. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study in relation to the research questions. Chapter 5 provides further context and implications for practice and future studies.

Chapter 2. Review of the Literature

Chapter 2 contains an overview of relevant research related to the perceptions of JROTC instructors that delivered instruction in a virtual environment. Chapter 2 also contains an overview of the purpose of Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC), an overview of the JROTC and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) curricula, the qualifications needed to become a JROTC/ROTC instructor, teaching pedagogies associated with JROTC and ROTC, asynchronous and synchronous learning styles, and literature to define virtual instruction and face-to-face instruction. Chapter 2 also outlines the theoretical frameworks of the Fullan Change Theory, the Lewin Theory of Change, and the Adaptive Leadership Model.

JROTC: Program Purpose

The United States Army advocates an overall awareness of the JROTC program. According to their official website (United States Army, 2021), the Army JROTC was one of the largest character-building programs in the world and offered opportunities for all students to become better citizens. The belief is that they will ensure students in United States secondary educational institutions learn and model the values of citizenship, as well as, service to the United States. Cadets must learn personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment. JROTC's mission is to motivate young people to be better citizens and is the mainstay for the program's success (United States Army, 2021).

JROTC programs reflect each branch of the military and tout their sole purpose as building United States citizens with a foundational knowledge of civics, leadership, self-discipline, and character development. They insist that it is not their purpose to indoctrinate students to serve in the military. Despite this assertion, some individuals disagree with incorporating JROTC programs in secondary public schools.

McGauley (2014), a teacher at Reynolds High School in Oregon, was afraid that embedding JROTC into the high school under the pretense of *character development* was indoctrinating students into a military life and promoting a culture of firearms. She stated, “The Reynolds LET 1 course description apprises students that they will learn leadership, follower, and citizenship skills. “ ROTC is military training. Instead of teaching toward a just and peaceful world, military training emphasizes dominance and nationalism” (para 17). McGauley continued, “JROTC’s introduction of weapons training, its partnership with the NRA to sponsor marksmanship matches, and its modeling of authoritarian militaristic solutions to problems contradict the school’s stated opposition to violence” (para. 10).

McGauley was not the only person to oppose the JROTC programs in secondary schools in the United States. The National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth (NNOMY) (2020) also voiced concern regarding JROTC and its proposed negative impact on students of color. According to the NNOMY’s membership goals, the network would “develop and articulate strategies for demilitarizing schools; monitoring legislation and seeking to roll back laws that give the military special influence and power over civilian schools” (para 4). Regarding JROTC programs within public schools, NNOMY noted “most JROTC programs are located in predominantly poor, rural areas with a higher density of youth of color, this is part of a trend displayed by the military’s recruitment strategy in which military benefits are posited as the only way out of poverty. This is reflected in the disproportionate amount of African American people enlisted in the military compared to their presence in the US population.” (para 3).

While the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps operated within the boundaries of the secondary school system with the goal of creating better United States citizens, the Reserve Officer Training Corps existed for a much different reason. The officer pipeline, according to

Moody (2020) reported that the United States military was in short supply of officer candidates. Consequently, post-secondary colleges and universities offered potential cadets and others financial scholarships in hopes of growing the pool of candidates available to become military officers. “The Reserve Officers’ Training Corps, commonly referred to as ROTC, offers students a chance to study and serve after they complete their degree, or to participate for a short time in the program without a post-college commitment. Considering the current need for officers, the ROTC serves as an important pipeline for bolstering the ranks of the military” (para 1). The United States Navy boasted that the NJROTC programs across collegiate campuses produced the largest source of Navy Officers to date. According to the Navy, “As the single largest source of Navy officers, the Navy ROTC program plays an important role in preparing young adults for leadership and management positions in the increasingly technical Navy” (Today’s Military, 2021, para. 4).

Colleges and universities across the United States that embedded ROTC programs often aligned their mission with the values and leadership skills of their JROTC counterparts in leadership and character development and used their program to commission cadets to become officers. One such university that incorporated both Air Force and Army ROTC was the University of Tennessee. Led by Lieutenant Colonel William Estep of the U.S. Air Force and Lieutenant Colonel Justin Howe of the U.S. Army, the website for the University of Tennessee stated: “The Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) at the University of Tennessee is an exciting and challenging leadership development and Air Force or Space Force commissioning program that exists within and complements the overall academic experience [and] the Army program ensures that men and women educated in a liberal and broad spectrum

of American institutions of higher learning are commissioned annually into the officer corps” (University of Tennessee, 2022, para.1).

Azusa Pacific University, a Comprehensive Christian University located outside of Los Angeles was another school in the university system that not only promoted the benefits of their own ROTC program but also the program benefits from other schools the students might attend. According to Azusa Pacific (2021), “The Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program has been present on college campuses for more than a century and is currently offered at more than 1,700 colleges and universities. While some programs are larger or better known than others, each institution offers its own opportunities, in addition to the common advantages of being part of the program” (Azusa, 2021, para. 1). Azusa Pacific asserted the benefits did not stop with becoming a commissioned officer in the military and gaining financial assistance for college. The university posited that the ROTC program was an exceptional way to create leadership qualities and skills and construct lasting friendships and camaraderie linked to faith-based learning. “Many students report that they cherish the structure and camaraderie that ROTC provides; it is a surefire path to creating lifelong bonds with your peers and officers alike. APU’s ROTC program also blends the military strengths of discipline and leadership with the university’s faith-based learning community, which can deepen and enhance the college experience” (Azusa, 2021, para. 6).

JROTC/ROTC: Curriculum

The grounding ideology of JROTC and ROTC programs incorporated leadership development, citizenship refinement, teamwork establishment, and character construction. Thus, the design and structure of the curriculum for each individual program ensured cadet success both during and on completion of the respective program. Both JROTC and ROTC programs

alike included facets of leadership, structural organization, health and wellness, and civility, as well as including specific topics such as military customs and processes, military traditions, and military staff functions and operations.

The outline of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps curriculum reflected the individual military branch represented within the secondary school; however, similarities and differences existed among branches when determining curricular topics. Instructors received the Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp curriculum via a textbook utilized to ensure that students who completed the curriculum do so over a two-to-three-year span depending on how long cadets elected to stay in the program. According to the Introduction to the Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps textbook, “this curriculum emphasizes two different areas each year and is customized by your school to meet your needs and the needs of your classmates. In general, the program is meant to provide a balance of classroom studies, military activities, physical fitness, and orientation trips” (Pearson, 2017, p.10). The official Navy JROTC website established the NJROTC curriculum as not only accredited, but one that emphasized the importance of naval topics and operations. “The NJROTC accredited curriculum emphasizes citizenship and leadership development, as well as our maritime heritage, the significance of sea power, and naval topics such as the fundamentals of naval operations, seamanship, navigation and meteorology” (Naval Education and Training Command, 2021a, para.1).

The NJROTC curriculum, broken down into chapter lessons, included such topics as naval history, naval traditions, seamanship, overall leadership, nautical astronomy, and health and wellness. Each year, the program required a cadet to complete one Navy science course that encompassed specific areas within the curriculum; therefore, four separate navy science courses existed for each year a student was in secondary school. Each specific course built and

scaffolded on the previous course to ensure cadets could begin thinking critically as they progressed through the curriculum. The curriculum organization incorporated “40-minute sessions of instruction for 36 weeks, with 180 teaching days. This equates to 7200 minutes of contact instruction (72 hours of classroom instruction and 48 hours of activities including military drill and athletics). Adjustments for class length other than 40-minute periods, as well as staggered, rotating or modular schedules, are made at the local school level” (Naval Education and Training Command, 2021a, para.2).

Like the NJROTC curriculum, the Air Force JROTC curriculum and Army JROTC curriculum were both accredited and component-based. Air University (A.U.), the Intellectual and Leadership Development Center of Air and Space Forces located at Maxwell Airforce Base in Alabama, noted the success of each junior cadet solely driven by the foundations of curriculum design into three separate components and affirmed junior cadets who completed all components of the AFJROTC curriculum were better positioned for work within technical fields either as civilians or members of the military. Air University (2021b) describes a key factor in the success of the Air Force Junior ROTC program as being the academic foundation. With the curriculum divided into three components of Aerospace Science, Leadership Education, and Health and Wellness, each unit balances all three areas to meet cadet needs. Whether employed as a civilian or working in a military environment, AFJROTC cadets are equally prepared to enter and maintain employment. (Air University, 2021b, para. 1)

The United States Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training (MCJROTC) designed their leadership courses concurrent with the grade level of the cadet. Each year, cadets completed Leadership Education courses known as LE courses. Freshman finished a curriculum in LE-I, while seniors completed the LE-IV curriculum. The MCJROTC curriculum constructed a

framework around the role of developing successful future leaders based on the basic Marine Corps tenets.

Leadership Education is the name of the MCJROTC curriculum because we use the tenets of Marine Corps leadership to teach and develop a sense of responsibility, loyalty, discipline and character in cadets. Throughout the four years of the program, the Leadership Education curriculum is presented by way of five different categories of instruction. Those categories are: (1.) Leadership, (2.) Citizenship, (3.) Personal Growth and Responsibility, (4.) Public Service and Career Exploration, and 5.) General Military Subjects. Cadets of the MCJROTC Program will participate in a Leadership Education level as dictated by the number of years in the program the cadet has completed. Naturally, LE-1 is for those students entering the program for the first time, while LE-4 is for the cadets who have successfully completed LE-I through LE-3. (United States Marine Corps, 2021a, p.8)

The framework of the Reserve Officer Training Corps curriculum at the post-secondary level differed from the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps at the secondary level; however, there were some similarities in content and leadership skills. At the collegiate level, Army ROTC course work coincided with typical university studies with each ROTC course aligned to a particular year a cadet was enrolled. A cadet could take ROTC courses for two years without making a commitment to serve in the Army. However, if cadets decided to continue with ROTC courses at the end of two years, they had to make a commitment to serve before enrolling in the advanced ROTC courses during their junior and senior year. At Boston University, for example, the basic courses served as electives during the cadet's first two years in college, including one

elective class and one lab per semester. There, cadets studied basic military skills and the fundamentals of leadership, then began working toward becoming a leader in the U.S. Army. Cadets could choose to take the Army ROTC Basic Course without a military commitment. After completing the first two years in the Boston University Army ROTC, cadets could enroll in advanced courses as electives. Cadets normally selected a leadership course wherein they could learn advanced military tactics while gaining skills in team organization, planning, and decision-making. Prior to enrolling in the advanced courses, however, cadets must make a commitment to serve as an officer in the U.S. Army after graduation (Boston University, 2021).

ROTC curriculum and courses had similar designs with cadets taking courses during all four years of college with the final expectation of being commissioned as an officer in a particular branch. There were, however, differences among branches in terms of military commitment requirements post-graduation. The United States Air Force ROTC programs, like the United States Army programs, determined commitment status based on the way in which students funded their college tuition. The University of Florida Air Force ROTC, for example, would permit cadets without scholarships from the university, also known as college-programmed, to participate in the program, commitment free, for up to two years. Students who wished to secure ROTC scholarships had to make a commitment to serve post-graduation before receiving financial assistance. Freshman and sophomore cadets who are not on scholarship have opportunities to participate in the AFROTC program commitment free for up to two years and cadets who accept an AFJROTC scholarship are committing to serving in the United States Air Force by commissioning as an officer after completing the AFROTC program and earning Bachelor's degree. (University of Florida, 2021, para.1-6)

The Navy branch and the Marine branch distinguished a division in the United States Navy ROTC programs. As Navy ROTC cadets at a post-secondary university, students had the option after their second year of choosing which branch they would pursue. Once cadets made their choice, their courses were specifically aligned to training in the selected branch. Like the Army and the Air Force, the Navy ROTC allowed cadets a commitment-free experience; however, as with other programs, this permission usually depended on the way in which students obtained funds, whether scholarship or college programmed. If students were on scholarship, they should be prepared to make a decision about branch after the first year in the program, while college-programmed cadets had two years to determine if they would continue. According to the Naval ROTC program located at Oregon State University, a cadet on scholarship had one academic school year before making a decision to remain in the program, while college-program students had two academic school years prior to deciding to remain in the program and incur military obligations or to leave the program with no military obligations (Oregon State University, 2020).

JROTC/ROTC: Instructor Qualifications

Men and women joined the military for multiple reasons. Some were raised in a military family and instilled with a sense to join from an early age. Some individuals joined the military out of a sense of patriotic service to the country, while others enlisted for financial reasons and the benefits the military could provide. “Everyone has different reasons to join the military. Some people do it for a change of scenery. Others come from a long line of family members who served. Others simply want a life of adventure and personal fulfillment” (Page, 2020, para.2). Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Instructors and Reserve Officer Training Corps Instructors, like many other members of the military, had personal reasons for initially joining

the military. Becoming a JROTC instructor after retirement from the military was a much different endeavor. In the United States Air Force, for example, men and women who completed 20 years of military service, hold a bachelors degree for enlisted members and possessed official retirement orders for honorable retirement had the option of applying to become an JROTC instructor (Air University, 2021a). Instructor branch specific certification processes and processes for gaining a state teaching license differed slightly among branches.

Branches of the military, including the United States Navy, the United States Army, the United States Marine Corps, and the United States Air Force, required that anyone applying to become an JROTC instructor must first have a Bachelor's degree or Associate's degree, depending on specific rank and branch. Most military officers completed the Bachelor's requirement in conjunction with becoming an officer. In the Air Force, for example, instructors would have a Bachelor's degree in a field related to the subject they wished to teach, had a minimum of 20 years of active duty, had already applied for retirement within the last six months or retired for less than five years (Air University, 2021). The United States Army, on the other hand, had alternative requirements. In the United States Army, retired officers, warrant officers, or noncommissioned officers taught JROTC cadets. Cadet Command determined whether potential instructors met the requirements of Army Regulation 145-2 and any other requirements set forth by Cadet Command. These included but were not limited to being an official citizen of the United States, obtaining a Bachelor's degree or higher for warrant officers, or having a high school diploma, high school GED equivalency, plus a score of 100 on the GT test for any non-commissioned officer (United States Army, 2005).

When officers retire from the military and express interest in becoming a JROTC instructor, they must apply for certification as an instructor. The application process, depending

on the branch, required the applicant to provide documentation regarding military service, provide answers to a brief set of essay questions, provide a current photograph in the official branch uniform, provide data from an annual fitness assessment, and officially schedule an interview with the branch review board (United States Department of the Navy, 2011). The United States Air Force had applicants complete a similar application process to become an AFJROTC instructor: however, the branch clarified that filling out the required application and entering the interview process would not always mean acceptance. The United States Air Force website states “the initial application process screens candidates for general suitability, including time since retirement, service history, college degrees, weight and body fat standards, and desire to teach in the high school environment. Not all applicants are approved.” (Air University, 2021a, para.1)

The certification process for becoming a JROTC did not end with achieving the branch approved application. Once retired service men and women gain approval to become JROTC instructors, some had to conform to a mandate to complete aligned instructor coursework before applying and being accepted in local school districts to teach. The United States Navy, for example, required all instructors who met the application standards to enroll in not only a set of online instructional modules but also to attend a new instructor training each summer. The training and the modules help not only to enhance an instructor’s ability to deliver content but also to align advanced certifications standards.

New Instructor Orientation Training (NIOT) seminar course of instruction to indoctrinate new SNSIs and NSIs is held annually, normally at the end of July. Once hired, all instructors are required to attend this orientation training during the first year of their employment to complete the certification process. The

NJROTC New Instructor Orientation Training prerequisite online course via DoD Learn website is completed prior to the NIOT seminar. Additional courses will be provided to enhance professional skills and development online and at Area In Service Training throughout the year as prescribed by NSTC or for advanced certification. (Navy Education and Training Command, 2021, para.22)

Potential Army instructor candidates who met the initial application standards must also complete an initial qualification course, attend a resident certification course, and complete a resident recertification course every 5th year of the initial instructor hiring date. The United States Army redeveloped the Army JROTC instructor curriculum so that instructors are taught to mentor, lead, and teach high school cadets. Courses provide instructors with knowledge and tools for classroom instruction and program administration. Instructor training consists of a four-step process: Step I - Initial Qualification Course, Step II - JROTC Distance Learning Course, Step III - Resident Certification Course, Step IV - Resident Recertification Course. (United States Army, 2021, para.1)

When a retired United States Marine Corpsman completed the instructor application for a JROTC instructor position, he or she must have a signed letter of approval from the Command General, Training and Education Command (CG TECOM), which permitted the applicant to begin the initial job search in local high schools. “Interested applicants must be approved by the CG, TECOM before being considered for employment as an SMI or MI in the MCJROTC program and applicants pending MCJROTC instructor approval cannot contact, interview, or otherwise, be a part of any employment process with a School District without a CG, TECOM SIGNED approval letter” (United States Marine Corps, 2021c, para.1).

The initial step in moving from an applicant certified in JROTC to an actual JROTC instructor at a high school meant finding a place of employment in a local school system. Most local school systems placed employment opportunities online, including certified and classified staff. Many of those school districts included open JROTC positions by branch. A predominant number of JROTC instructors sought employment utilizing an online system operated and updated for a specific branch. All branches of the military operate an employment clearinghouse for JROTC instructors. Each instructor could create a personalized login that directed them to schools and school districts nationwide with vacant JROTC teaching positions. When a candidate located a place of employment, it became an individualized process of applying and securing an interview within the school or school district. When an instructor is certified in the NJROTC program, they are furnished with a letter of certification NJROTC by Area Managers; however, it is the responsibility of the instructor to establish contact with the schools to arrange for employment interviews. (Naval Education and Training Command, 2017b, para.19)

Certification to teach JROTC and obtaining a teacher position within a secondary school did not indicate that an instructor had a teaching license approved by the state however. Once approved for certification in a JROTC program, an instructor must seek approval from a state education board and receive a valid state teaching license. Procedures for obtaining a teaching license for a JROTC instructor differed from state to state. In Tennessee, this process included: (a) filling out an application and uploading information into the state teacher licensure management system, known as TN Compass; (b) uploading any and all JROTC certification requirements and certifications including valid expiration dates; (c) uploading all official documentation of advanced degrees or transcripts from institutions of higher learning; and (d) verification for intention of employment in a Tennessee secondary school (Tennessee

Department of Education, 2021). In Montana, for example, a JROTC instructor must qualify for the proper endorsement, must provide evidence of certification by the appropriate branch of the US military and successfully complete a criminal background check. A license with a ROTC endorsement may be renewed every five years by resubmission or recertification (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2021, para.1).

The qualifications of becoming an ROTC instructor at the collegiate level differed from that for JROTC instructors at the secondary level and often centered around academic achievement and military rank. ROTC instructors, also known on most collegiate campuses as Senior Military Science Instructors (SMSI) or Professors of Military Science (PMS), must not only be active duty, but also should hold the rank position of an officer and meet the qualifications of an overall academic instructor set forth by the educational institution.

Lieutenant Colonel Howe, Professor of Military Science at the University of Tennessee, has an extensive background in military training and instruction. During a phone interview, he expressed the qualifications expected of a PMS at the University of Tennessee, which included a Master's degree and multiple hours of training. Howe stated:

Becoming an ROTC instructor is somewhat different than becoming a JROTC instructor. Whereas JROTC instructors are retired military, ROTC instructors are officers who are still enlisted and on special assignment. Assignments usually require a three-year commitment. ROTC instructors must first apply to open positions within the university system for PMS instructor or SMSI positions, complete an interview process for the university, and complete an extensive application process with both the military and university. The University of Tennessee also requires each ROTC PMS to have a minimum of a Master's degree. The United States Army will then train instructors

through a training program at Fort Knox on the fundamentals of teaching, teaching pedagogy, building relationship skills with cadets and the importance of instructional methods. Lastly all PMS instructors will then be required to complete at least 80 hours of direct cadet instruction before being fully certified to instruct. (J. Howe, J., personal communication, July 8th, 2021).

Teaching Pedagogy

The term pedagogy often created confusion because it could be defined in multiple ways. Empowered Teachers (2021), not only defined pedagogy as a specific method of instruction, but also described the ways in which pedagogy was multifaceted, including moving parts such as teaching styles, assessment strategies, and means of providing feedback. “According to Merriam-Webster, pedagogy is the art, science, or profession of teaching; especially: education. This definition covers many aspects of teaching, but pedagogy really comes down to studying teaching methods. There are many moving parts to pedagogy that include teaching styles, feedback, and assessment” (para.1). Persaud (2021) not only defined pedagogy as the key component for all teaching and learning, but also described pedagogy as a content delivery system using theory and practice. Persaud posited that “Pedagogy is the relationship between learning techniques and culture. It is determined based on an educator’s beliefs about how learning takes place. Pedagogy requires meaningful classroom interactions between educators and learners. For educators, the aim is to present the curriculum in a way that is relevant to student needs.” (para.4)

Pedagogy included the way in which content was delivered and the instructional methods through which that delivery took place. Pedagogical methods were best when an instructor understood the way in which students learned, adapted to different learning styles, and an ever

changing educational landscape. Devi (2021) introduced students to teaching pedagogies that were not only ever-changing but also in a way wherein specific instructional delivery methods and learning styles connected to meaningful outcomes. “Designing pedagogies that produce meaningful learning through educational concepts, competencies, content, evaluation, learning and teaching practices is paramount” (p192.)

Cucena (2010) examined the term pedagogy based on its Latin roots. Although Cucena affirmed pedagogy had become interchangeable with methods of instruction and techniques of teaching, the original Latin meaning, derived from the word pedagogue, was quite different. The definition of pedagogue was an individual who accompanied and cared for young students to and from places of education. Exploring pedagogy through the lens of the pedagogue could aid in clarification of the term. If pedagogy reflected the actions of the pedagogue, the term would denote relationships between student and pedagogue or as one caring for another. Therefore, the pedagogic action would relate to the direct intent of the pedagogue with an embedded sense of caring and nurturing. Cucena examined pedagogy as related to teaching whereas the teacher became the pedagogue and delivered instruction with deliberate intent. “Given that students of teaching often learn as much from the experience of being taught as from the instructional strategies and theories they are prepared with, the practice of teacher education is a complex interaction between the *how, what, and why* of teaching teachers” (Cucena, 2010, p.2).

Teaching pedagogy in relation to student knowledge, has impacts on student outcomes and achievement, as well. Husbands and Pearce (2012) examined the relationship between teaching pedagogy, what defined sound pedagogical instruction and the implications for student achievement and success. Husbands and Pearce perceived a direct relationship between teacher knowledge, an understanding of teaching pedagogy, and student success and achievement.

“There is a strong consensus that high performance in education systems is dependent on the quality of teaching” (Husbands and Pearce, 2012, p.2). Husbands and Pearce noted effective pedagogical methods and methods that produced the highest student outcomes depended on goal setting. The development of long-term student outcomes combined with short-term goal setting that coincided with effective lesson plans were crucial for student success. Husbands and Pearce, (2012) describe effective pedagogies as a means for considering the views of learning and revisiting critical ideas as needed and reinforcing others. This is accomplished by securing and connecting new knowledge and understanding to appropriate skills sets.

Whelan (2009) reported school districts that utilized relevant curricula, instilled differentiated instruction for all learning styles, and provided a safe learning environment for students was essential for success, The researcher added that having instructors with a clear knowledge of content and understanding of various pedagogical methods was a major factor impacting school and student achievement. In order to positively impact academic performance, school districts' goal is to ensure that curriculum is relevant and flexible enough to differentiate student learning styles, and differentiate between social and economic needs, while making sure that schools are in good physical condition. None of these, however, is nearly as important as the quality of teaching best practices (para 4.).

Face-to-Face Instruction

One pedagogical instructional delivery method is face-to-face instruction or lecture style instruction. In face-to-face instruction, the instructor is in a classroom delivering content in front of students either in lecture format, group settings, or in a one-to-one instructional environment. Thus, students receive the direct instruction if they are present, but miss the instruction if they are absent from the class. This type of instruction, according to Brown (2019), resembled a stage

performance by the teacher for the students. This environment included a script (lesson plan), a dress rehearsal (practice and preparation for lecture), and a performance (the class session). Brown added that, if students were not there to witness the lesson, they missed an open opportunity for learning.

The value of face-to-face instruction is essential for some students and their unique learning styles. Face-to-face instruction, when successfully implemented, involve student-to-student interaction, teacher-to-student interaction, and teacher-to-group interaction. These interactions could define student and instructor relationships and led to overall successful outcomes. Bejerano (2008) emphasized the importance of face-to-face instruction, as such:

Teachers also enjoy interacting with students inside and outside of the classroom. Students who take traditional classes find it easier to meet with their professors and to get to know them because they can see their professors before and after class. Also, students are already on campus and can talk and visit with the professor while they are at school. The relationship building, interaction, and nonverbal modes of communication may seem minor, but they have large effects on teachers. They combat teacher burnout by creating job satisfaction. (para.8)

According to Dommett et al. (2019), college students preferred a face-to-face lecture style instructional delivery model over that of other models as long as the lecture provided students with student-teacher engagement and interaction opportunities, unveiled the way in which experts addressed certain functional tasks, helped the student build, obtain, and retain knowledge, and aided students in independent thinking and problem solving skills. The study examined the way in which student perceptions of face-to-face lectures can impact overall success and achievement. “It is possible that the perception and use of lecture capture, and

therefore potentially its impact on performance may be determined in part by student views and experiences of lectures in general” (Dommett, et al., 2019, para.5).

Relationship building and student-teacher interaction was only one benefit of face-to-face instruction. Face-to-face instruction also allowed the instructor to monitor the students’ understanding of the content, make immediate adjustments to instruction, and ensure that mastery of the content takes place. Face-to-face instruction could also result in higher academic achievement. According to research, direct instruction is one of the most effective teaching strategies. “Although often misunderstood, students who are taught using the direct instruction method perform better in reading, math, and spelling than those who weren’t” (Renard, 2019, para.1). Face-to-face instruction also frequently employed the Socratic method of teaching because face-to-face allowed teachers to question students on their knowledge of content, then pose higher order questions based on students’ responses. The Socratic Method not only promoted critical thinking skills in students but did so by focusing on the importance of the questions over the importance of the answers and by being driven on student inquiry and research. Whiter (2021) used The Socratic Method to promote critical thinking by focusing on providing more questions than answers to students and fostering inquiry into subjects. “Ideally, the answers to questions are not a stopping point for thought but are instead a beginning to further analysis and research” (Whiter, 2021, para.1)

When used only as lecture style instruction, face-to-face faced criticism. Many considered lecturing an out-of-date delivery method that failed to allow for student-teacher discussion and answer, to allow for immediate assessment of mastery, and to allow the instructor to provide for the differing learning styles of students. Kelly (2019) discussed the ways in which lecture style learning methodologies limited the teacher and would “simply offer a way for

teachers to carefully execute their teaching according to a precise plan. They do not assess learning, offer varied perspectives, differentiate instruction, or allow students to self-direct” (para.4). According to Kelly, drawbacks to this delivery method were lectures tended to be long, drawn out, teacher-centered, and not engaging for students. “They do not bring students into the conversation to ask questions, debate ideas, or share valuable personal experiences. Lectures are built on a teacher’s agenda only with almost no student inquiry or contribution. In addition, a teacher has no way of telling whether students are learning” (Kelly, 2019, para.14).

Flaherty (2019) noted that students who were actively engaged in the lesson not only retained more information, which should convert to learning more content, but conversely, they were under the impression that they learned less in active learning than they did from the passive learning of face-to-face lectures. The study revealed that students perceived they acquired more knowledge from passive learning than active learning. Flaherty found that, although students asserted they learned more through lectures, they performed better on exams after active learning replications of the lecture. “Students feel more comfortable in a lecture environment and believe that they are learning more because of the expectations they have for a college learning environment, but in fact, they’re actually learning more in the environments where they are actively engaged in building knowledge about key concepts.” (Flaherty, 2019, para.16).

Lecture might not be a beneficial instructional delivery method for students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), middle school students, or high school students. Students with ADHD often struggled to focus on the instruction, slow to process verbal information, and unable to take proper notes during lecture style instructional delivery models. Often, students with ADHD will miss important points, topics and dates, and have non-specific notes for studying or for exams (Rooney, 2017).

Although middle school and high school teachers utilized lecturing to deliver instruction to students, this style may not be as effective as believed. Anderson (2017) explains how middle and high school teachers utilize different methods for direct instruction, one of which is lecturing. This method allows teachers to deliver information directly to students, however lack of student engagement can be an issue for those with short attention spans or who are easily distracted being that lecturing is not as interactive as other forms of instruction, (Anderson, 2017, para.1)

While some teachers use lecturing as a primary delivery instructional model, some have given up the method altogether. Cooper (2017) was fond of using lecture style learning in her classroom because she felt as though she was performing for her students and they were benefiting from her discussion by mastery of the content. However, she abandoned the practice when she realized that her students were not retaining information taught from lectures in order to perform on standardized tests. “When test time rolled around, only about a third of the first third had a working idea of what the heck I’d been yammering about.” (Cooper, 2017, para.3)

Deneen and Cowling (2021) attributed teachers leaving the lecture style instructional delivery model to having a lack of understanding of quality teaching pedagogy and ways to improve the pedagogy of lectures. Combining proper educational training and a better understanding of pedagogical strategies with a reflective mindset wherein teachers could reflect on their lesson and presentation styles, teachers could utilize the lecture model to improve the quality of instruction and increase student achievement. In addition, teachers’ experience played a role in their impact on student learning. “Lecturing at this level requires more than just experience. We must reflect on our teaching practice, evaluate the quality of our lectures in relation to our intentions, and then commit to developing both our lectures and ourselves”

(Deneen & Cowling, 2021, para.9). The researchers also discussed the incorporation of new technological advancements and the push toward virtual instruction as grounds for teachers abandoning such delivery models as face-to-face lecturing. On the other hand, they were not convinced that moving toward virtual instruction or incorporating technology instead of face-to-face lecturing was more beneficial or increased the pedagogy of quality instruction. “Technology can even open new possibilities and paradigms for teaching. But there are no guarantees”

(Deneen & Cowling, 2021, para.14). The authors stated that mere technology use might enhance learning but did not ensure any inherent pedagogical value. Technology use might never be a substitute for teachers reflecting on the pedagogical value of instructional practices. “And while technology can assist a major transformation, it should never be a requirement for improving how we teach” (Deneen & Cowling, 2021, para.9).

Virtual Instruction

Instructional models utilized by teachers include direct face-to-face, or lecture instruction and a mix of both. Virtual instruction, however, provided another instructional delivery model that could stand alone or blend with face-to-face instruction to yield equally high results in student performance. The definition of virtual instruction, according to Brauner (2011), was a “course which is taught solely online or when components of face-to-face instruction are taught online such as with Blackboard and other course management systems. Virtual instruction includes digitally transmitting class materials to students” (Brauner, 2011, para.2). Virtual instruction, also described as distance education or online learning, implied there was physical distance between the instructor and student with a degree of technology used to deliver instructional content. “Distance education is defined as a method of teaching where the student

and teacher are physically separated. It can utilize a combination of technologies, including correspondence, audio, video, computer, and the Internet” (Roffe, 2004).

Virtual instruction increased in usage with advances and ease of access in educational technology, however societal lockdowns associated with the COVID-19 global pandemic caused schools and school districts to redesign instructional modalities that limit face-to-face student and teacher interaction which increased virtual instruction. “The lockdown has resulted in most people taking to the internet and internet-based services to communicate, interact, and continue with their job responsibilities from home. Internet services have seen rises in usage from 40 % to 100 %, compared to pre-lockdown levels” (De et al., 2020. para.2). In March of 2020, during the initial surge of the COVID-19 global pandemic, in order to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 and keep schools open, districts were faced with either moving instruction from a face-to-face environment to a virtual environment or closing schools altogether. While districts in some states developed online instructional modalities, others states like Ohio, Illinois, and Maryland decided to close entirely. “Though health experts disagree to what extent school closures will help, entire states, including Ohio, Illinois and Maryland, and some of the nation’s largest cities, including Los Angeles and Houston, announced closings in recent days” (Goldstein, 2020, para.1).

Although the overall use of virtual instruction and online learning increased, in part due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the phenomenon was more than twenty years old. In 1994, CalCampus, a private online distance learning center operating out of New Hampshire developed, implemented, and offered the first totally online-based school, including administration, real-time classroom instruction, and online materials using the Internet (Thompson, 2021). Virtual instruction continued to grow. “Online education is no longer a trend. Rather, it is mainstream. In the fall of 2012, 69% of chief academic leaders indicated online

learning was critical to their long-term strategy and of the 20.6 million students enrolled in higher education, 6.7 million were enrolled in an online course” (Allen & Seaman, 2013. p.21).

As early as 2010, Means et al. (2010) with the US Department of Education, reported a growing use of virtual instruction and online platforms designed for student learning.

Online learning—for students and for teachers—is one of the fastest growing trends in educational uses of technology. The National Center for Education Statistics (2008) estimated that the number of K-12 public school students enrolling in a technology-based distance education course grew by 65 percent in the two years from 2002-03 to 2004-05. On the basis of a more recent district survey, Picciano and Seaman (2009) estimated that more than a million K–12 students took online courses in the school year 2007-08. (Means et al., 2010, pXI).

The report by Means et al. with the United States Department of Education contributed growth and popularity of online learning to the fact that the potential existed to provide more access to content and instruction outside of normal school hours, increased the availability for learners who might not be able to choose traditional face-to-face instructional delivery models to access content, and allowed teachers the opportunity to impact more students, while maintaining the validity and reliability of high quality face-to-face instruction. Online and virtual instructional concepts became a way not only to enhance the quality of the student learning experience and increase student outcomes, but also to supplement face-to-face instructional methods of delivery (Means et al., 2010).

Ensuring that a model of instructional delivery made a positive impact on student achievement was a constant theme for educators. Although virtual instruction has increased in

usage for decades, research on the influence on instruction was just beginning at the time of this study. The positive impact that occurred with virtual instruction was one embedded in the building of student-teacher relationships. In a typical teacher-led class, especially at the collegiate level, instructors often lectured to large student populations in auditorium-type settings. This scenario did not lend itself to students who thrived on teacher-student interactions. In larger classes, teachers not only had a difficult task in learning students' names but also in focusing on one student over the entire group collectively. Instructor bias could also play a role in large group lecture style instruction. Student height, weight, race, ethnicity, introversion and extroversion, and physical and mental disability could impact instructor bias. The ability to access virtual learning environments enabled students to bring their full selves to the virtual classroom and eliminated differences that could hinder in-person learning. In in-person classrooms, race, physical appearances, personality conflicts, learning differences, and overall cognitive abilities were more noticeable (Srinivasan, 2020). Srinivasan also remarked that virtual instruction could positively impact students with time-distance issues. Face-to-face classes were usually scheduled to meet at a certain time and within a certain geographic location. As long as students had Internet access, virtual instruction allowed flexible opportunities for employment as well as advantages to care for family and children. Meyer (2021) also examined the positive impact from virtual instruction. Virtual learning not only could personalize individual student experiences, but also provide online tutoring availability, encourage group work and student collaboration, promote and enhance new ways of learning, and differentiate between learning styles.

Online and virtual instruction might positively impact teacher quality as well. Robyler et al. (2009) surveyed sixty-five teachers who attended a state-sponsored technology conference

wherein conference sessions centered around efficiency expansion in virtual programs, technologies, and procedures. The survey queried attendees regarding their perceptions of virtual instruction and its impact on teaching practices. Focus groups consisting of attendees met with researchers following the conference, allowing for group discussions regarding survey questions. Their responses introduced multiple influences that virtual instruction had on the improvement of teacher quality. These included increased use of technology and integration into regular lesson plan development, better communication with students and the initiation of empathy, and the creation of effective teaching strategies for in-person class instruction. “Findings such as those from the current study offer good directions for further research on virtual teaching benefits, as well as a vantage point for viewing the emerging future of both technologies in education and, most intriguing, of education itself” (p.124).

Like most instructional delivery methods, virtual learning was also met with criticism. Bettinger and Loed (2019) reported that virtual learning courses did not utilize technological advances to ensure quality teacher instruction and student-teacher interaction, instead the majority of these courses, at best, mirrored face-to-face lecture courses wherein the instructor replicated a lecture method using an online or virtual platform. These types of courses produced challenges and did not fare well for students who were ill prepared. Students unprepared for the expected rigor did not perform proficiently in online courses. A consequence of low performance, for these students, was often dropping out of college.

Opponents of virtual instruction in an online format claim that low socioeconomic student status was the nemesis of virtual instruction. A critic of virtual instruction, Leone (2020), examined the impact that virtual instruction had on the grading systems of students who come from poverty. Leone claimed that virtual instruction punished students who already struggled

with school support structures and that virtual instruction only rewarded students who came from more privileged backgrounds. She proffered that virtual instruction did not allow students ample time to improve grades on projects, homework, or other assignments. According to Leone, students from a low socio-economic environment, unlike their more affluent peers, were most likely also caring for ailing parents, employed to assist in family financial responsibilities, and often had limited access to the Internet. “When my students don’t complete work because they are themselves working, caring for sick family members or feeling the weight of this collective traumatic experience, it’s not because they’re unmotivated or careless. The grading policy rewards those with privilege that shields them from these hardships and will disproportionately affect students without access” (para.17).

Synchronous Learning in a Virtual Environment

The popularity of virtual instruction yielded new ways for students to attend courses and new course designs to fit the individual needs of learners. Synchronous learning was a form of virtual learning via an online platform wherein a student attended classes virtually during scheduled class times with classmates. Synchronous learning could be teacher-led and include a live video presentation by the instructor; however, it could also include group and individual activities that were virtual in nature. Like face-to-face courses, synchronous online classes occurred in real time (Scheider, 2021). In addition, Kokoulina (2020) examined the definition of synchronous learning through the lens of computer software and devices with which students could attend classes. “With synchronous online learning, instructors and students are in different locations and meet in the virtual environment with the help of computers, mobile devices, and specific software tools. Online sessions can be hosted as a webinar, a web-based class, or a live stream” (para. 6).

Cottle (2020) detailed the benefits of synchronous learning utilized with an online platform as a way that teachers and students could not only engage more effectively, but also could ensure that collaboration efforts among students as well as teachers offered efficient implementation. Cottle noted that “teachers know that students who are self-motivated and work well collaboratively with their peers, enable themselves to achieve their very best. Synchronous collaboration allows students and teachers to combine their intellectual effort at the same time, often in the classroom, but also via video conferencing platforms” (para.7-8).

The benefits of synchronous learning reached beyond engagement and interaction. Although Bennett (2021) defined synchronous learning as “learning in real-time with a teacher, tutor, or facilitator at the helm of the room, leading the discussion, encouraging active participation in the learning material” (p. 2), she also detailed the benefits of synchronous learning as one that improved outcomes for students. “Synchronous e-learning provides a space for instructors to interact with students to improve the class’s success rate” (para. 16). A study from the University of Central Florida revealed that students enrolled in synchronous online courses not only were more engaged in their active learning environment, but also had better student outcomes (Wilson et al., 2008). On the other hand, Anthony and Thomas (2020) focused on the size of the online class as an important factor for student success within synchronous learning in virtual instruction. Smaller groups created environments that ensured student success by offering a knowledge base centered around the higher order thinking skills of creation, evaluation, and utilization. Understanding these skills usually resulted in higher student understanding and equated to higher test scores (Anthony & Thomas, 2020).

Asynchronous Learning in a Virtual Environment

Asynchronous learning in virtual instruction differed from synchronous learning. While synchronous learning required the student to attend the class virtually and during a specific time, asynchronous learning centered around the needs and development of the learner. This approach allowed the learners to facilitate their own learning outside the classroom at a time that met their individual needs. In this method, the students had the autonomy to engage with the instructor, content, and assignments when and how they chose, allowing them to manage their own time without depending on the instructor and a specific class time (Bhamidi, 2021). Whereas synchronous students were in class at the same time as their instructors, asynchronous students were not, but could communicate with the instructor through email, phone calls, and on discussion forums and or discussion boards (Hrastinski, 2008).

The delivery method for asynchronous learning consisted of processing assignments that allowed for self-exploration and self-guided learning. Algonquin College of Applied Arts and Technology's Learning and Teaching Services suggested multiple methods for the delivery of content to asynchronous students. Students received assignments via a small group discussion board wherein they had the opportunity to respond to discussions and interact with peers, view pre-recorded teacher lectures and complete assignments accordingly, work through teacher developed self-guided student modules for interacting with content, or have the option of online journaling or blogging based on the content and curricular assignments, all of which could be at the leisure of the students (Algonquin College, 2021). Algonquin College Learning and Teaching Services also reinforced the idea that, for asynchronous learning students, keys for success included communication with the professor and classmates, well planned and proper times to

engage with the content and materials, time for feedback and proper technical support, and a sense of community (Algonquin College, 2021).

Asynchronous learning in a virtual environment was beneficial for a select set of students and could provide students the opportunity to guide their own pace, discover the content and curriculum with fewer time constraints, and provide opportunities that allow for more open schedules in their day and personal lives. However, not everyone feels that asynchronous learning is the best option when it comes to learning in a virtual environment.

At best, a course might utilize a discussion board, but when students are submitting at their own pace, engagement stays low. Without the oversight and consistent encouragement of an instructor, students have to hold themselves accountable for their progress. When things get tough, it can be hard for students to persevere and convince themselves that their continued effort will pay off in the long run. (Weitzel, 2021 para.15).

Weitzel was not the only opponent of asynchronous learning. Jeong (2021) addressed the issue of equity when discussing asynchronous learning. Jeong examined this learning type as one wherein students had the ability to progress at their own rate and with their own guidance; however, students had the possibility of falling behind just as easily. “However, this also creates potential for students to fall behind and go about the course at different rates—resulting in potential concerns about the experience being inequitable” (para.9). Zhou (2020) also addressed issues surrounding asynchronous learning in a virtual environment. Zhou argued that asynchronous learning equated to the lack of possibilities for live instruction and minimal live office hours for teacher-student interaction and feedback, while faced with the possibility of technological connectivity issues and loss of or unequal access to high-speed Internet. “Just

because it works for a select group of students doesn't mean it works for everyone. The students who suffer the most from asynchronous classes are often the very ones who need the most help" (para. 5).

Theoretical Framework: The Fullan Change Theory

The basis for the theoretical framework in the research was Fullan's Theory of Change. Fogarty's (2006) Theory of Change Model focused on human participants taking part in a change process that encapsulated four stages, including the initiation of the change, the implementation of the change, the continuation of the change, and the outcomes surrounding the change. Change theory was ideologically based on the premise that educational change and the strategies that surrounded changes were effective tools that resulted in desired outcomes, if the participants had a concentrated understanding of the way in which all the components worked tangentially to obtain results. Fullan stated, "change theory or change knowledge can be very powerful in informing education reform strategies and, in turn, getting results—but only in the hands (and minds, and hearts) of people who have a deep knowledge of the dynamics of how the factors in question operate to get particular results" (Fullan, 2006b, p. 3)

The first stage of the Fullan model included the initiation of change, which established goals, objectives, results, and a timeline for each. The initiation of change introduced all stakeholders to the process, allowed for questions, addressed change concerns, introduced the innovation of the change and set the stage for the remainder of the change to unfold. Fullan stated that planning was the most important factor to consider in the initiation stage of the theory for, without proper planning, awareness could not be established. "First, to initiate innovation requires planning an introductory awareness that establishes the context, goals, process, and timeline for all who are involved" (Fogarty & Pete, 2006, p. 9).

After initiating the change, the plan must be put into action, the second state of the change theory known as implementation. Putting the plan into action required individuals to learn new skills, adopt new behaviors and challenge themselves in different ways. Fullan described the turbulence encompassed in individuals learning new skills and adapting to implementation change as the implementation dip. Fullan writes that the implementation dip is the dip in performance and confidence as a student encounters an innovation that requires new skills and new understandings. These innovations influence people to question and change their behavior (Learning Forward, 2012, para.3).

The continuation of change marked the next phase in the Fullan Change Theory. Continuation, described by the Teaching and Learning Consulting Network (2007), was also known as institutionalization, which occurred when the whole organization embodied the change and incorporated it into the fabric of the organization. The change would then guide policy, procedures, and the day-to-day work of the organization. However, this new order could not occur until there was full implementation and stakeholder buy-in. According to The Teaching and Learning Consulting Network, “institutionalization occurs when innovation becomes routine practice in its frequency, consistency, accuracy, and results” (p. 20).

The final step in the Fullan Change Theory related to the outcomes that surrounded the change process. Outcomes and results were byproducts of the success of implementation of the change theory. Outcomes, both positive and negative, could result from focusing on perspectives that supported achievement. These perspectives included active initiation and participation, continuous interaction of all stakeholders, changes in skills, changes in behaviors, developing dedicated and committed actions, and understanding and overriding issues with ownership of the change (Pennsylvania State University, 2021).

Theoretical Framework: Lewin Theory of Change

Compared to the Fullan Change Theory, some researchers preferred the Lewin 3 Stage Model of Change. Whereas Fullan broke down the change theory into four modalities, Lewin posited a three-fold model as unfreezing, changing, then refreezing change. Some described this *ice cube theory* as simplistic, while others regarded Lewin with high regards and praise.

In recent years, some have disparaged Lewin for advancing an overly simplistic model. For example, Kanter et al. (1992, p.10) claim that ‘Lewin’s . . . quaintly linear and static conception—the organization as an ice cube—is so wildly inappropriate that it is difficult to see why it has not only survived but prospered.’ Many praise Lewin, the man of science, the ‘great experimentalist’ (Marrow, 1969, p. ix), for providing the solid basis on which change management has developed. Management textbooks begin their discussions on how the field of managing change developed with Lewin’s ‘classic model’ and use it as an organizing schema. (Cummings et al., 2015, para.6)

The first stage in the model, described as unfreezing, instituted the overall preparation of the change that was about to occur. This phase, known as *melting the ice*, demonstrated the need and necessity for change, which involved dissecting the status quo before new change could occur. A strong institutional change message offered the key to explaining why the current way of operating could not continue for the organization to prosper (Mind Tools, n.d.).

The second state of the Lewin model like Fullan’s second stage involved the actual change or the ability to put the plan into action. Lewin understood that change could not happen immediately and moving from the unfreezing component to the change component took time. The stakeholders involved in the change must note personal changes going and understand how

the change would benefit them personally. Not every stakeholder would develop a shared vision of change merely due to the fact that change was necessary (Mind Tools, n.d.). Refreezing is the final state of the Lewin model. Hartzell (2021) described refreezing whereas changes made to organizational processes, goals, structure, offerings or people are accepted and refrozen as the new norm or status quo. This step is critically important in ensuring that people do not revert back to old ways of thinking prior to the implementation of the change. (para.4).

Theoretical Framework: Adaptive Leadership Model

A change model theory could not operate without proper leadership and the ability of the leader to lead through change. Adaptive leadership included the ability of leaders to promote and encourage stakeholders to adapt to problems, face challenges, and make changes so that the organization could improve and be successful. Northouse (2016) noted that adaptive leadership is how leaders encourage people to adapt, deal with problems, face challenges, and changes. “Adaptive leadership focuses on the adaptations required of people in response to changing environments” (p. 257).

Adaptive leadership worked when the leader was not the center of the change, but when that person was more centered around the change and the needs of the stakeholders. This style focused primarily on the development of others and the needs of the team for the outcomes to be successful. The team frequently might face challenges, and it was up to the leader to help the team navigate such waters (Northouse, 2016).

Adaptive leadership is a way in which the leader serves the group, suggesting a similarity to servant leaders. Servant leadership focused on the followers with leaders putting followers first, leaders empowering followers, and leaders helping followers to grow and fulfill their fullest working potentials. Greenleaf (1977) posed two questions. Can servant and leader roles be fused

into one real person in all levels of status or calling and, if so, can that leader live and be productive in the real world of the present? Greenleaf argued that the answers to these questions are both *yes* and noted that servant leaders were first servants who brought forth a conscious effort to aspire to lead.

Adaptive leadership and leading through change, like Lewin's second stage of change, could not occur immediately. Changes in organization might feel rushed; however, it required organizational consistency and time to establish new processes and procedures for the organization. "Although organizational and political adaptations seem lightning fast by comparison, they also take time to consolidate into new sets of norms and processes. Adaptive leadership thus requires persistence. Those who practice this form of leadership need to stay in the game, even while taking the heat along the way" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p.5).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 contains an overview of relevant research related to the purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the experiences of JROTC instructors in teaching portions of their curriculum through a virtual platform during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Chapter 2 also contains an overview of the purpose of Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC), an overview of the JROTC and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) curriculums, the qualifications needed to become a JROTC/ROTC instructor, teaching pedagogies associated with JROTC and ROTC, asynchronous and synchronous learning styles, literature to define virtual instruction and face-to-face instruction, The Fullan Change Theory, The Lewin Theory of Change, and the Adaptive Leadership Model. Specifically outlined is the literature surrounding the way in which JROTC instructors receive teaching credentials, a synopsis of teaching delivery methods for face-to-face instruction and virtual instruction,

synchronous and asynchronous instruction, and included key benefits of each, areas where each delivery model was strong, and areas of weakness. Chapter 3 describes the methodology.

Chapter 3. Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the experiences of JROTC instructors in teaching portions of their curriculum through a virtual platform during the COVID-19 global pandemic. An overview of phenomenological qualitative research, a primary research question along with guiding interview questions and the role of the researchers, participant demographics, population samples, participant interviews, data collection strategies and data analysis strategies and assessment and quality of rigor are outlined in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 also outlines the The Fullan Change Theory, The Lewin Theory of Change, and the Adaptive Leadership Model theoretical frameworks.

Phenomenological Qualitative Research

“Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” (Creswell, 1998, p.15). Creswell identified phenomenology as having specific procedures outlined in a blend of psychology and sociology. Phenomenological analysis required separation of the researcher’s human experiences from the overall data. The examination of how individuals make sense of their everyday lives by analyzing their speech assisted in the development of social phenomenology. The matrix of how a person makes sense of human experiences or phenoms defines phenomenology (Creswell, 1998). The data derived from qualitative research comes from researchers embedded in the field with participants, studying situations and observing and interviewing individuals. Three sources of data collection methods, including in-depth and open-ended interviews, direct human observations, and document analysis produced qualitative findings (Patton, 2002). McLeod (2019) emphasized that qualitative research, unlike quantitative research, was the study of non-numerical data analyzed and interpreted through themes, which

defined an individual's understanding and meaning of a certain reality. McLeod noted, "Qualitative research is the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting non-numerical data, such as language. Qualitative research can be used to understand how an individual subjectively perceives and gives meaning to their social reality" (para.1).

Defining and describing meaning from certain human experiences by dissecting personal interviews and examining themes was the overall goal of a phenomenological qualitative study; however, the approach to phenomenology might differ depending on the goals of the study., Although an approach that described the meaning of a phenomenon and researched it from the perspective of the individuals or groups that experienced it, phenomenology had roots in various forms of philosophy and sociology (Neubauer et al., 2019). The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the experiences of JROTC instructors in teaching portions of their curriculum through a virtual platform during the COVID-19 global pandemic. The phenomena of virtual instruction and the experiences of these instructors aligned with the idea of their perception of the phenomena rather the way in which it appeared to the researcher. This study lent itself to phenomenological inquiry because the JROTC participants had experiences with the phenomena.

Theoretical Frameworks

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the experiences of JROTC instructors in teaching portions of their curriculum through a virtual platform during the COVID-19 global pandemic. The Theoretical Frameworks that were used in the research methodology and guided the understanding of the data analysis is the Fullan Change Theory, The Lewin Theory of Change, and the Adaptive Leadership Model. The Fullan Model focused on human participants taking part in a change process that encapsulated four stages, including the

initiation of the change, the implementation of the change, the continuation of the change, and the outcomes surrounding the change (Fogarty, 2006). The Lewin Theory of Change describes change as a three-fold model as unfreezing, changing, then refreezing change (Hartzell, 2021), while the Adaptive Leadership Model included the ability of leaders to promote and encourage stakeholders to adapt to problems, face challenges, and make changes so that the organization could improve and be successful. (Northouse, 2016).

Research Questions

The primary research question guiding the current study was: What were the perceptions of JROTC instructors as they adapted to the change from face-to-face delivery of instruction to delivery of instruction in a virtual environment? To examine the perceptions of JROTC instructors as they adapted to the change from face-to-face delivery of instruction to delivery of instruction in a virtual environment, the following research sub questions were used.

RQ1. What factors supported changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instruction delivery method?

RQ2. What factors inhibited changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instructional delivery method?

RQ3. What perceptions existed regarding virtual instruction prior to the change from face-to-face instruction to delivery of instruction virtually?

RQ4. What processes and procedures were developed due to the change from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction?

RQ5. What adaptations to current instructional practices occurred by changing from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction?

Researcher's Role

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the experiences of JROTC instructors teaching portions of their curriculum via a virtual platform during the COVID-19 global pandemic. The phenomena of virtual instruction and the experiences of these instructors aligned with the instructors' perception of the phenomena rather than that of the researcher. The study lent itself to phenomenological inquiry because the JROTC participants had experiences with the phenomena.

The researcher conducted interviews with seven Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps at the secondary level who taught a portion of their content using a virtual platform in the 2020-2021 academic school term. The researcher collected and analyzed the data to discover themes regarding educators' perceptions of virtual instruction delivery modalities. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of JROTC instructors at the secondary level as they adapted to teaching in a virtual environment.

Sources of Data

Data for this qualitative study derived from interviews with seven JROTC instructors. The interviews examined the perceptions of JROTC instructors at the secondary level as they adapted to teaching in a virtual environment. The researcher conducted semi-structured one-on-one interviews with the participants via a virtual platform. Researcher and participant relationships were important to ensure experiencing and perceiving data regarding the phenomena. It was also important to conduct each interview in the same manner. Qualitative interviews provide opportunities for researchers to explore the experiences of the interviewees by allowing them to see how different phenomena of interest are experienced and perceived. (McGrath et al., 2018, para. 2).

Participants

Due to the nature of the study it was determined that 7 instructors would be sufficient. The following table is a breakdown of demographic data. The table contains the participant identification letter representation, the branch of the military served, the years of military service, the years of teaching experience, and gender.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Data

Participant	Branch	Years of Military Service	Years of Teaching	Gender
A	Navy	26	over 10	Male
B	Navy	23	over 10	Male
C	Navy	20	over 10	Male
D	Navy	25	under 10	Male
E	Army	24	under 10	Male
F	Army	28	under 10	Male
G	Army	24	over 10	Male

Participants agreed to take part in the study with the understanding that other demographic information would remain anonymous not only due to the information revealed in the research, but also because each participant was a JROTC instructor working in programs of study in the same local school district. Anonymity ensures a level of protection for the identity of the participants. The total number of interviews conducted for this study was seven instructors certified by the Tennessee Department of Education. All seven instructors were former officers in differing branches of the United States military. Five of the instructors had five years or more

teaching experience within the public school system, while two had less than five years. Each instructor had at least twenty years of prior military service and officially retired from military service. The longest serving participant had twenty-eight years of military service. Three participants were members of the United States Army, while the remaining participants were former members of the United States Navy. All seven instructors were male. All instructors agreed to an interview lasting between thirty minutes to one hour. The researcher conducted each interview using the Microsoft TEAMS virtual platform off contracted hours. The interview consisted of ten questions regarding the delivery of instructional content using a virtual platform.

Sample

Seven JROTC instructors who shifted from a face-to-face instructional delivery model to a virtual instruction delivery model for any or all parts of their curriculum could participate in this study. Because sampling is usually part of a qualitative study, the researcher incorporated a simple random sample for the instructors. Instructors were lettered A-G to form a non-probability convenience sample method. The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to review the experiences of JROTC teaching portions of their curriculum using a virtual platform during the COVID-19 global pandemic. The phenomena of virtual instruction and the experiences of these instructors aligned with instructors perceiving the phenomena rather than how it appeared to the researcher.

Data Collection Strategies

Data for this qualitative study derived from interviews with seven JROTC instructors. The interviews examined the perceptions of JROTC instructors at the secondary level who taught a portion of their content utilizing a virtual platform in the 2020-2021 academic school term. Advantages of interviews is the amount of detailed information is available, than what is

available through differing data collection strategies. Interviews provide a more relaxed environment when the researcher is collecting information and people may feel more comfortable having a conversation about programs as opposed to filling out a survey (Boyce & Neal, 2006, p.3).

Interviews used a virtual meeting platform, Zoom or Teams, to ensure that each participant was at ease and in a comfortable environment. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences of JROTC instructors teaching portions of their curriculum using a virtual platform during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Names were kept confidential and instructors were only identified by lettering, A-G.

Data Analysis Strategies

The researcher reviewed transcripts and interview notes. All transcripts were initially read and member checked. To gain an overall understanding and an initial sense of what may be specific themes, a first coding produced significant chunks of words, phrases, and sentences that pertained to the perceptions of JROTC instructors as they adapted to the change from face-to-face delivery of instruction to delivery of instruction in a virtual environment. These findings guided the emergence of meanings and themes during a second and third coding, which were then clustered into thematic labels common to all the participants' transcripts. The researcher reduced the code upon a second review. Upon examining the themes, an in-depth narrative was created for a final description of the phenomenon. Specific participant quotes were used to add to the thick, rich description.

Assessment of Quality and Rigor

Trustworthiness

Within the interviews, participants were free to vocalize their feelings regarding experiences they had in teaching portions of their curriculum used a virtual platform during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Since instructors' identity was only a letter from A-G, they should be able to speak freely about their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions regarding the experiences of delivering content virtually. The researcher electronically recorded each interview and coded the responses to discover themes associated with the perceptions of each instructor.

Credibility

To ensure credibility, the researcher used member checking. After conducting interviews, the researcher sent a summary of individual interviews to each participant and allowed them to review what was asked, how it was answered, and to edit their responses. "Member checking is primarily used in qualitative inquiry methodology and is defined as a quality control process by which a researcher seeks to improve the accuracy, credibility and validity of what has been recorded during a research interview" (Harper & Cole, 2012, para.1). Accurately portraying the responses and experiences of the participants regarding are important for credibility and trustworthiness in a qualitative study. Member checking is key to assure participants' voices are not only heard but also to ensure statements are true, clear, and concise. Candela (2019) stated in her report on member checking "Member checking provides a way for the researcher to ensure the accurate portrayal of participant voices by allowing participants the opportunity to confirm or deny the accuracy and interpretations of data, thus adding credibility to the qualitative study" (para.1). Member checking also assures that researcher bias does not play a role in data outcomes and establishes trustworthiness. This method relinquishes authority to the participants and their

perspectives and therefore manages the threat of researcher bias (Padgett, 1998). In addition to member checking, Dr. Joseph Cross, Chief Education and Curriculum Division, US Army ROTC, served as a peer debriefer, examining the research transcripts and the final report methodology to provide feedback ensuring validity.

Transferability

Transferability is the way in which research findings in a study can transfer from the scenario under study into a differing scenario to examine whether findings can apply to other settings. Transferability, however, is not merely a discussion of whether those findings are transferable. Individuals who read and examine the report and not the researcher determine transferability. “Whether findings can be transferred or not is an empirical question, which cannot be answered by the inquirer alone. Persons reading the qualitative inquiry reports have to make this decision” (Williams, 2018, para.1).

This research employed purposeful sampling. The researcher selected JROTC instructors based on their overall knowledge and work with the phenomena of virtual instruction during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Dependability

Dependability of a study refers to the consistency of data over time and over a period of studied conditions (Toban & Begley, 2004). The researcher does not determine high or low dependability, rather the accuracy of repetition of the study over time and scenarios indicate dependability. If another researcher can easily follow the decision trail used by the initial researcher, then it is assumed that the dependability of the study is high. (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). For the purposes of this study, the researcher completed interviews with confidentiality and fidelity and ensured the privacy of the documentation. The researcher coded and recoded

each interview to discover where answers aligned with the specific interview questions, transcribed and member checked the information, and identified emergent themes.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a sense of trustworthiness that a researcher must ensure to be confident in the findings of the research. This must be shaped by the actions and interviews of the participants regarding their experiences with virtual instruction and not by the bias of the researcher. The researcher was mindful of the practice of reflexivity. “Reflexivity offers a way for us to check ourselves and our research process(es). [Reflexivity] requires critical self-reflection on the ways in which researchers’ social background, assumptions, positioning, and behavior impact on the research process” (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p.IX). Ensuring that, the researcher maintained a personal journal regarding selection of topics and participants, phrasing of interview questions, and coding data to ensure the research process was not the result of bias by the researcher.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers must adhere to ethical considerations to balance the risks and rewards of the research. Ethical considerations include maintaining the anonymity of all participants. The researcher needs to consider confidentiality between JROTC/ROTC instructors and their places of employment. As an JROTC Curriculum Specialist within one of the school districts where participants will be chosen, the researcher for this study needed to ensure no impact on the answers from the participants and that the participants did not affect researcher bias. Other considerations revolve around ensuring permission for instructors’ participation, including interview questions published with anonymity, and consideration for military customs and practices.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contained information pertaining to the type of research included in a phenomenological qualitative study, including methodology, data sources, research questions, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability information, and any ethical considerations that play a role in the researcher responsibility to conduct the research and examine the results. Chapter 3 also outlines the The Fullan Change Theory, The Lewin Theory of Change, and the Adaptive Leadership Model theoretical frameworks. Chapter 4 includes the findings of the research.

Chapter 4. Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the experiences of JROTC instructors in teaching portions of their curriculum using a virtual platform during the COVID-19 global pandemic. The research focused on seven JROTC instructors who shifted from a face-to-face instructional delivery model to a virtual instruction delivery model for any or all parts of their curriculum during the COVID-19 global pandemic from March 2020 through May 2021. The researcher analyzed instructor perceptions of delivering instruction via a virtual teaching model. Data derived from interviews with seven JROTC instructors and identified perceptions and adaptations of moving from a face-to-face instructional delivery model to a virtual delivery model of instruction. The study was guided by the primary research question and the five following research questions.

Primary Research Question

The primary research question guiding the current study was: What were the perceptions of JROTC instructors as they adapted to the change from face-to-face delivery of instruction to delivery of instruction in a virtual environment?

RQ1. What factors supported changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instruction delivery method?

RQ2. What factors inhibited changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instructional delivery method?

RQ3. What perceptions existed regarding virtual instruction prior to the change from face-to-face instruction to delivery of instruction virtually?

RQ4. What processes and procedures were developed due to the change from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction?

RQ5. What adaptations to current instructional practices occurred by changing from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction?

Participants

Participants agreed to take part in the study with the understanding that other demographic information would remain anonymous not only due to the information revealed in the research, but also because each participant was a JROTC instructor working in programs of study in the same local school district. Anonymity ensures a level of protection for the identity of the participants. The total number of participants for this study was seven instructors certified by the State Department of Education. All seven instructors were former officers in differing branches of the United States military. Five of the instructors had five years or more teaching experience within the public school system, while two had less than five years. Each instructor had at least twenty years of prior military service and officially retired from military service. The longest serving participant had twenty-eight years of military service. Three participants were members of the United States Army, while the remaining participants were former members of the United States Navy. All seven instructors were male. All instructors agreed to an interview lasting between thirty minutes to one hour. The researcher conducted each interview using the Microsoft TEAMS virtual platform off contracted hours. The interview consisted of ten questions regarding the delivery of instructional content using a virtual platform.

Results

Analysis of the data revealed identified JROTC instructor perceptions and discovered themes that existed among the group of instructors. The results of the coding yielded the following themes:

- A virtual delivery model of instruction does not permit instructors to teach certain concepts of the JROTC curriculum adequately.
- The importance of a face-to-face delivery model of instruction connects to growth of a JROTC cadet in leadership development.
- An overall lack of instructor preparation for using virtual instruction, but military training prepared them to be adaptive.
- Instructor perception of being ineffective in delivering instruction in a virtual environment.
 - A new-found comfort in delivering overall instruction in both a virtual and face-to-face environment.

Themes

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the experiences of JROTC instructors in teaching portions of their curriculum through a virtual platform during the COVID-19 global pandemic. This study lent itself to phenomenological inquiry because the JROTC participants had experiences with the phenomena. As a rule, JROTC cadets undergo a program wherein the expectation is to possess strong leadership skills upon completion.

Theme #1

The first theme that emerged from the analysis of data was that a virtual delivery model of instruction does not permit instructors to teach certain concepts of the JROTC curriculum adequately.

The factors that supported changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instruction delivery method produced some common themes that came to light within the interviews. The instructors perceived that moving from a face-to-face instructional delivery

model to a virtual model of instruction impeded their ability to teach certain components of their curriculum effectively. According to Participant A, “Long story short, you have to break down your entire curriculum and pull out those areas that can easily be transformed into virtual. I think it’s the combination of the difficulty of changing some of the curriculum over to a virtual class along with the frustration of verifying ‘how do I know the student did that?’”

Educators expressed that the virtual model of instruction did not allow them opportunities to teach the hands-on components; therefore, cadets lost interest and became disengaged with the remaining curriculum. Participant D surmised, “It’s hard. It’s hard to teach physical fitness. How do you follow up? You know, how do you ensure kids are doing it properly?” Participant F added, “It was very difficult. I had to try and find things that they could do on the virtual side. What could they do that actually kept them engaged?”

Instructors also felt that uniform inspection, components of physical fitness, and marching were all aspects that could not be monitored by the instructor during instruction utilizing a virtual platform. Participant C stated, “A lot of what we do is practical. It’s hands on if you will. We teach by direct instruction and without all of those things we really don’t have much to teach. Our example is wearing a uniform. It’s very difficult to do that. I found it very difficult to do that in an online session.” Participant B agreed, “You can’t inspect a student virtually. It’s virtually impossible to see their uniform and how it looks. You can’t teach them how to march on a computer. You have to have him there because you’ve got to be able to correct them and show them exactly how to do it.”

The overall theme that emerged from the data analysis was that a virtual delivery model of instruction did not permit instructors to teach certain concepts of the JROTC curriculum adequately.

Theme #2

A second theme that emerged from the analysis of data was the importance of the face-to-face delivery model of instruction connected to the growth of a JROTC cadet in leadership development.

Factors that inhibited changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instructional delivery method centered around common themes discovered during the interview process. All instructors noted that cadet leadership and the growth of cadet leadership was negatively impeded due to moving from a face-to-face instructional delivery model to a virtual delivery model of instruction. Instructors reported that leadership was best taught in a face-to-face environment wherein cadets could interact with one another in larger group settings in physical training exercises, personal drill exercises, and in class exercises. Participant B stated, "It's vitally important that we're face-to-face. I know part of the requirement for being a leader is they have to be able to instruct. They have to be able to teach manuals of arms. They have to be able to march. They've got to be able to teach parts of lessons with the instructors. Staring at a screen is not the same as having a full platoon in front of you and being able to do it hands on. So it's critical." Participant C inserted, "It certainly negatively impacted us. Those senior cadets take the leadership roles and teach how to march and wear uniforms. That critical piece didn't exist. They've got to be able to lead a class, whether they're teaching them how to march or how to do manual swords. You know they've got to be right there in front."

Instructors noted that interacting with cadets via screen time was not as beneficial for learning leadership skills than was actually interacting face-to-face. Participant D remarked, "You know they are the leaders. They're the ones who are typically instructing PT, drill, personnel inspections, and even in a class setting. The standard for academics. How do you do

that virtually, you know? It's extremely difficult." Participant F added, "It was very difficult. That was the big challenge because they need to be here to get the basics. They had to get the basic training, which was what ROTC is about and how to be a leader down the road. It's hard to be a leader when you're sitting there looking at him on a screen." According to Participant G, "Yeah, well, one big way is with leadership. You have to be there. I mean, it's a hands-on thing. You just don't get the same reaction and you don't get the quality time of showing leadership and mentoring."

The theme that emerged from the data analysis was that a virtual delivery model of instruction inhibited growth of a JROTC cadet in leadership development.

Theme #3

The third theme that emerged from the analysis of data was the overall lack of instructor preparation for using virtual instruction when military training prepared instructors to be adaptive to a changing environment.

Interviewed instructors revealed common themes regarding the perceptions that existed regarding virtual instruction prior to the change from face-to-face instruction to virtual delivery. Overall, instructors perceived they were non-effective or less effective in their ability to teach their curriculum in a virtual setting. Participant B stated, "I did a lot of teaching. I mean, a lot of teaching. Virtual wise? We never did any virtual back then, you know back then it was you are there and you know you're there."

Instructors noted a lack of adequate training to deliver instruction in a virtual setting, either from the school district or from their individual branch of the military. Participant C reported, "Most teachers were thrown in headfirst into online instruction. I think it would have been great if we'd had a little bit of background on platforms that we were using, but as far as

being prepared, I was not prepared at all. Specifically, the ability to be able to adapt. They teach me to be prepared. They teach me to use resources. They teach me to work hard and to expect a great deal.”

Instructors lamented that delivery of their individual curriculum could not be taught virtually, while others anxiously spoke about their lack of knowledge of technology as detrimental to instruction. Participant G replied, “One thing they did teach us was to adapt and overcome something that came along. You just had to figure it out no matter what, and get it done. It’s a mission set before you, so you know you are taught to go out, pick out what you need to accomplish your mission sometimes with little or no instruction.”

All instructors, however, expressed that, although they had not been trained to deliver instruction in a virtual setting, their individual military branch did prepare them to be flexible and adaptable to an ever-changing environment. According to Participant A, “And in the military, you’re taught to be flexible yet rigid, but you’re flexible enough that you can apply them. So you’ve got to be flexible enough to change as far as virtual training. In the military, we weren’t really a virtual world at that time when I served, but again, it still goes back to being able to be flexible.” Participant D added, “You know you’re thrown things that you could never plan for and you just kind of learn to roll with the punches and do the best you can through any kind of situation that you’re exposed to. I think you know, maybe this is a good example of that.” Participant E expressed, “That’s when this whole COVID thing hit. You know it was bothering a lot of people, you know, and honestly, it didn’t really bother me that much because we were kind of built that way. I remember telling somebody that military guys were kind of built for this because we’re used to it,” while Participant F replied, “So in the military it is always that

improvise, adapt, overcome type things. In virtual teaching it is still that thing. That's what I ended up having to do a lot of."

Instructors were not prepared to utilize a virtual instruction delivery platform, however based on their military training, were prepared to be adaptive.

The theme that emerged from the data analysis was the 'perception of lack of instructor preparation for using virtual instruction, but military training prepared them to be adaptive.

Theme #4

The fourth theme that emerged from the analysis of data was the overall instructor perception of being ineffective in delivering instruction in a virtual environment.

According to Participant A, "So, I would have said my effectiveness and teaching virtually would have been minimal, extremely minimal at best, and if I had to give it a number, I'd say 10% effectiveness. At that point I thought we were all nuts trying to go to a virtual."

Participant B remarked, "I would have been very, very ineffective. I think because I've never had to teach in front of a camera and talk to a screen and talk to a camera person. You know, without kids being right in front of me. It really threw me for a loop when I first started so I had to do a lot of practice runs."

Participant C added, "Well, it would have been very, very limited"; Participant D agreed, "I would not think that my level of effectiveness would have been very high. I would rate my chances of being effective as extremely low."

Participant F stated, "I'd almost tell him [principal] that that's the end of the program because it's just not something that you can do."

Participant G commented, "Not very well because I would not have been prepared. My experience, my own experience in education and some of the classes that I took through

Blackboard using Blackboard and those things. Taking some college courses that helped me. But you know, like I said, I don't think I can do that right now. I've got to put some time into this and get myself up to speed on it before I start teaching it."

Participant E had a different view regarding his level of effectiveness, however. Participant E explained, "I think even before COVID environment, if my battalion commander said 'Hey Participant E, you're giving a virtual class to these privates,' I could have thrown something together and given them an effective class. But I don't know. I mean, maybe it increased my effectiveness by 50% because I was forced to do it and forced to do the background work and put the slides together. But I think any competent military officer NCO could pitch a virtual class if they were told to in a short time frame."

The theme that emerged from the data analysis was instructor perception of being ineffective in delivering instruction in a virtual environment.

Theme #5

The final theme that emerged from the analysis of data was instructors having a new-found comfort in delivering overall instruction in both a virtual and face-to-face environment.

Themes regarding adaptations to current instructional practices occurred by changing from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction. Participant A stated, "Well, I'm more comfortable. I'm certainly more comfortable. And so, it's changed as much as I am more comfortable in giving delivery in virtual. I think the kids know my expectations because all of them have also been through the pandemic period. It's just the flipping of the switch."

Participant D added, "Well, I tell you, I certainly have come to value face-to-face and having kids present in person because they are so much more lively, energetic, enthusiastic and I would attribute a lot of that to their ability. Being able to interact with their friends means kids coming

in and talking loud and cutting up. They're in high school and there is a place for that. They don't get that virtually. Human interaction is really critical and, you know, without that, I really think that zapped a lot of their enthusiasm for learning. Face-to-face I think I would be much more forceful in my communication with the kids by emphasizing how important it is that they be on time. They are present on a daily basis, I think I would emphasize that a great deal more.

Instructors noted that teaching in a virtual environment increased their overall preparation and planning time, increased their overall ability to work with existing technology, and provided them with a sense of comfort, whether teaching virtually or in a face-to-face environment.

Participant B reported, "I actually think it helps you know when you get over the virtual hurdle of having to talk with people on a screen. It makes talking to students face-to-face a lot easier, you know, especially when you want them to ask your question or you need to approach them. It's easier because we struggled, especially when I had part of the class in the classroom and the other classes on the screen. You learn how to balance that, and then I think I took from that and it made it a lot easier in the classroom. I don't do a lot of virtual, but what I still do is I still take all the tests, curriculum, and lessons that I downloaded onto canvas. Now, when students are quarantined or whatever, all we have to do is say, here's the lessons you need to do. Go on there, view the PowerPoint, read the presentation, take the quiz. A while back we didn't have all that. We weren't loaded up like that."

Participant E declared, "I mean, I think you're just more prepared, honestly. You're more prepared. You have to be planning ahead. Whereas, "what if we go virtual?" How am I gonna give this block of instruction? So basically, you're ready if you can't present it physically to the kids, but you've got to have that alternate virtual plan ready on the TEAMS platform. Basically, you just have to put in the extra work to make sure you're ready. Forward that lesson to be it

physical or virtual. Yeah, there's extra readiness and extra preparation." Participant F expressed the same sentiment. "Well, one of the things I believe is having the curriculum manager. I've actually gotten to where I can use that a little better. The first year I was here and I was still trying to learn how to use that properly. Cadet command gave it to us so we could use it and they can actually see on there how many times it's been used. I was trying to figure all that stuff out but all the things that I was teaching I already knew, so now I'm drawing it on the board and everything. Now I can actually use the curriculum manager a little bit more than I did before. It's because it went well. I didn't realize that I was not clear enough. I know better how to use the curriculum manager, so at that point I could bring a lot more of the classes up there for them to see on the screen versus sitting here and giving them instructions as I'm talking. I believe I could use a bit more than I did before."

Participant G agreed, "So I've learned to be prepared for that. You know, in the past, there wasn't even really anything I thought about other than having canvas classes there in case we needed it for one or two students. If they were out for a long period of time for any type of sickness, that was good to have that there so they can keep up and don't get behind. Now I have that there and I am ready. I make sure I stay up on TEAMS and do professional development anytime that something is out there. I try to get on that and do that to keep up to date so I don't get so far behind."

One instructor noted a new appreciation for face-to-face learning and that they incorporated more rigor and relevance into existing lessons and lesson plans. Participant C commented, "Well, this is an admission of guilt, but the first thing is that the quality of my instruction would be so much better. Here are many teachers who were sort of digging through

the files trying to find what you've got to teach, but how the heck are you going to teach it? So those are things that I would have more rigor within my instruction.”

The theme that emerged from the data analysis was a new-found comfort in delivering overall instruction in both a virtual and face-to-face environment.

Cadets' Opinions as Seen by Participants

At the conclusion of each interview, each participant commented on a follow up question not integrated into the interview. The question related to receiving positive or negative feedback from high school JROTC cadets who had taken courses during the pandemic in both a face-to-face environment and a virtual environment and, if so, what could the instructor infer about cadets' reaction.

Instructors' responses regarding the follow up question are listed below and describe their own personal opinion regarding how high school cadets viewed virtual instruction in a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps environment in comparison to receiving face-to-face instruction within a Junior Officer Training Corps environment. Seven out of 7 instructors indicated that their instructional experiences within the environment yielded cadets that did not like receiving instruction within a virtual environment and that cadets morale was better in a face-to-face environment other than a virtual environment. Although this did not emerge as a theme, it did emerge as important information pertaining to the study results.

Participant A stated, “I won't tell you what I heard 'cause it's not nice. But I will tell you the import of what they said and that is that they don't appreciate a virtual ROTC because just as much as I like to be able to see that young cadet, they like to be able to see me. They read the instructor. They look at you for your level of honesty. You know what information you're putting out there looking at you to get a glimpse of a smile. You know, just being funny or

something. Or maybe somebody is telling a joke and everybody is looking at Chief. OK, we're not gonna laugh, yet chief laughs. It's that interaction, and that's something that I think is key not only to education, but certainly key to us as a society because we were not designed to be disconnected. I know we live in a world where we have these computers that are before us and do great things. I got massive tools, weapons of mass destruction with great big cell phones that do more than I could do in a room full of computers and we say that we live in a connected society."

Participant B remarked, "They hated it. And it's been proven that this last year, the year prior to the pandemic a lot of kids were failing. They were failing because they said it was hard to contact the teachers or the teachers had problems contacting them. They weren't focused enough because they're sitting at home instead of sitting in a classroom setting where someone is watching them. I have students from other ROTC's that came this year that said they were virtual and really didn't get anything out of it, but this year is their best year ever in ROTC because they're getting everything that they know they get to put their hands on it. They get to wear their uniforms like they're supposed to, and they're learning lessons without struggling."

Participant C reported, "They didn't like it and I had everything from brand new students who had not had the class and older cadets. They knew what the class was supposed to be, but it wasn't that and so I mean, I had probably 9 or 10 ninth grade students who were brand new to the curriculum. The fun things that we do, the things that engage them just really didn't exist in a virtual instruction. My other cadets had some experience. You know we could do things like uniforms. We could do a fitness day if we wanted to, but the cadets didn't like it. They, you know, the part of the beauty of what we do is the interaction between students. This is where they find their home. Curricular and extracurricular activities to me are critical to any child's

education. You gotta find your place, and I think that so many of our kids that take one class and then eight classes have found their place.”

Participant D remarked, “Well, they probably grouped these cadets in two separate groups. They’re the ones who are very inhibited. They’re not outgoing kids. They don’t like a lot of interaction. And you know, I had a handful of those kids and they preferred virtual ‘cause I think that you maybe they had some sort of anxiety about getting out, interacted with her peers, I don’t know, but I definitely had those kids. My most successful kids, the CEO of my unit. Currently the X of the unit. The leaders of the unit did not like virtual because they enjoyed the face-to-face interaction. That’s what motivated him.”

According to Participant E, “Yeah, they I would say 99% of them are all happy to be back face-to-face and my kids that were virtual last year. They’re also happy to be back and happy because we’re doing everything.” Participant F agreed, “They were so excited. There’s a bunch of them that, well, it’s a bunch I think. I had 14 in my first virtual class and out of that only two have not come back and they’re seniors and they’re finishing up other stuff that they had to get done. But the rest of them said, I’m so glad to be back. You know, can we go outside and do the drill today? They are so excited to be back and as opposed to being on virtual.”

Participant G commented, “Well, they definitely don’t like it as well. They like the in person more than the virtual because it is more responsibility on them. You know they have to keep up with their day to make sure they’re on time where at school they just followed the schedule, which you would think you could do that at home, but they have too many distractions at home like little brothers and sisters. Other stuff they have to do. You know there’s no one supervising him there to make sure they’re showing up for the classes and things so they like it a lot better now because last year not having the competitions in the field trips and everything we

do is a big draw for our program. That's the big draw for it. As well, we lost some students and the students we had got behind. They're learning in this way in their development as leaders. We're seeing that now. The impact of this group. We got some kids that were hard chargers and they stayed on top of things and they're in charge now. They're leading the platoon, but the ones that weren't so up on things and weren't as motivated, you know, and that's what they get. When they're here with us, they're getting constant motivation to take initiative to do their best. I don't know how else to do that, other than you know, you try to do the same thing here, but you can't. As human beings, we need what we need. We were aggressive when we didn't have that.”

Conclusion

Based on the interviews, JROTC instructors perceived that virtual instruction of their curriculum did not produce an impact on leadership development of cadets as it would have been had cadets been instructed in a face-to-face environment. Each participant noted that their military background provided them with the ability to be flexible and adapt to change; however, each remarked that cadet performance was impeded by lack of overall preparation prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Instructors felt that virtual instruction negatively impacted hands-on and practical skills embedded in their curriculum. They also reported that cadets missed out on the development of valuable leadership skills by participating in virtual instruction.

Instructors perceived themselves to be less effective to ineffective as virtual instructors of their curriculum. On the other hand, they expressed that participating in virtual instruction caused them to become better face-to-face instructors, especially in planning and delivery of instruction.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contained information pertaining to research findings, the primary research questions and sub-questions, the participants, study results, five themes, cadets' opinions as seen

by participants, and overall conclusions. Chapter 5 will outline research discussions, summary, recommendations, and conclusions.

Chapter 5. Discussion, Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the experiences of secondary level JROTC instructors in teaching portions of their curriculum with a virtual platform during the COVID-19 global pandemic and to examine their perceptions as they adapted to teaching in a virtual environment. The phenomena of virtual instruction and the experiences of these instructors aligned with the perception of the instructors rather than how it appeared to the researcher. Although the literature indicated that the delivery method for the content and curriculum aligned to Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) worked best with face-to-face instruction, no evidence existed to imply cadets' overall success or lack thereof based on the implementation by virtual delivery using one or multiple online platforms. The objective of each JROTC Program was to ensure that cadets successfully completed the curriculum with advanced skill sets in leadership, which were most often taught in a traditional environment with instructors and cadets learning in real-world and face-to-face environments. Chapter 5 discusses the connections that are made to the Change Theory and adaptive leadership model, a summary of the research findings, a listing of the research questions and themes, recommendations for future practice and future research, overall conclusions and a personal statement.

Connections to Change Theory and Adaptive Leadership

Based on the interviews with the participants, answers directly connected to the Fullan Change Theory, and Adaptive Leadership Model. These models were used as the Theoretical Framework for the research. Participants in the study reported the need to move from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction was done quickly and without proper planning. Due to the immediate nature of the change, the leadership, either at the school level or the district level,

could not implement Fullan's first stage, that of the initiation of change. The initiation of change established goals, objectives, results, and a timeline for each. That stage in the change theory introduced all stakeholders to the process, allowed for questions, addressed change concerns, introduced the innovation of the change and set the stage for the remainder of the change to unfold (Fullan, 2006). Participants noted little time to prepare adequately; therefore, when the change from face-to-face to virtual instruction occurred, participants were apprehensive and unsure of the adequacy of their ability.

After initiating change, the plan must be put into action in the second stage of the Fullan Theory known as implementation. Putting the plan into action requires individuals to learn new skills, adopt new behaviors and challenge themselves in different ways (Fogarty and Pete, 2007). Because proper planning did not occur in the first stage, however, participants were not able to learn the skills needed to execute the plan successfully. Fullan described the turbulence encompassed in individuals learning new skills and adapting to implementation change as the implementation dip. (Learning Forward, 2012). In the current study, participants experienced an implementation dip during the move from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction because they were not prepared and did not have time to adopt new technology skills to teach in a virtual environment.

Since the idea of moving from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction was not an idea embodied in and accepted by participants, the third and fourth stages of the Fullan Change Theory could not occur successfully. Institutionalization occurred when the organization, as whole, embodied the change and incorporated the change into the fabric of the organization (Fogarty & Pete, 2007). The change guided policy, procedures, and the day-to-day work of the organization. However, this could not happen until full implementation and stakeholder buy-in

occurred. Virtual instruction, incorporated into the daily fabric of the organization, was due to the COVID-19 global pandemic; however, full implementation was more difficult because stakeholder buy-in was low. Participant B expressed the impact this had on successful outcomes . The cadets “hated it. And it’s been proven that this last year, the year prior to the pandemic a lot of kids were failing. They were failing because they said it was hard to contact the teachers or the teachers had problems contacting them. They weren’t focused enough because they’re sitting at home instead of sitting in a classroom setting where someone is watching them. I have students from other ROTCs that came this year that said they were virtual and really didn’t get anything out of it, but this year is their best year ever in ROTC because they’re getting everything that they know they get to put their hands on it. They get to wear their uniforms like they’re supposed to, and they’re learning lessons without struggling.”

Participants, although negatively impacted according to the Fullan Change Theory by the move from face-to-face to virtual instruction, showed an ability to adapt to change and make progress during this time. They were not only followers within the organization but also became leaders through the change within their own classrooms. This was a direct connection to the Adaptive Leadership Model of both Northouse and Heifetz. Northouse (2016) stated, “Adaptive leadership is about how leaders encourage people to adapt—to face and deal with problems, challenges, and changes. Adaptive leadership focuses on the adaptations required of people in response to changing environments. Simply stated, adaptive leaders prepare and encourage people to deal with change” (p. 257).

Participants were successful in adapting to problems and challenges to make changes. They were also prepared to deal with change as stated by Participant E and Participant G.

According to Participant E, “I mean, I think you’re just more prepared, honestly. You’re more prepared. You have to be planning ahead. Whereas, ‘what if we go virtual?’ How am I gonna give this block of instruction? So basically, you’re ready if you can’t present it physically to the kids, but you’ve got to have that alternate virtual plan ready on the TEAMS platform. Basically, you just have to put in the extra work to make sure you’re ready. Forward that lesson to be it physical or virtual. Yeah, there’s extra readiness and extra preparation.” Participant G agreed, “So I’ve learned to be prepared for that. You know, in the past, there wasn’t even really anything I thought about other than having canvas classes there in case we needed it for one or two students. If they were out for a long period of time for any type of sickness, that was good to have that there so they can keep up and don’t get behind. Now I have that there and I am ready. I make sure I stay up on TEAMS and do professional development anytime that something is out there. I try to get on that and do that to keep up to date so I don’t get so far behind.”

Summary of the Findings

Throughout the interviews, JROTC instructors reported that virtual instruction of their curriculum was not as effective for the leadership development of cadets as face-to-face training. Each participant noted their military background provided them with the ability to be flexible and adapt to change; however, they added their lack of preparation prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic impeded cadet performance. Instructors remarked that hands-on skills along with the practical skills embedded in their curriculum were negatively affected by virtual instruction and that cadets missed out on the development of valuable leadership skills by participating in virtual instruction. Instructors considered themselves less effective or ineffective as virtual instructors of their curriculum. On the other hand, they expressed that participating in virtual instruction

encouraged them to become better face-to-face instructors, especially in the planning and delivery of instruction.

Research Question 1

What factors supported changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instruction delivery method? The factors that supported changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instruction delivery method had some common themes that arose in the interviews. The instructors perceived that moving from a face-to-face instructional delivery model to a virtual model of instruction impeded their ability to teach certain components of their curriculum effectively. Educators remarked that the virtual model of instruction did not allow them opportunities to teach the hands-on components, therefore cadets were disengaged with the remaining curriculum. Instructors also noted that uniform inspection, components of physical fitness, and marching could not be monitored by the instructor during instruction utilizing a virtual platform.

Research Question 2

What factors inhibited changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instructional delivery method? Factors that inhibited changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instructional delivery method centered around common themes discovered during the interview process. All instructors noted that cadet leadership and the growth of cadet leadership was negatively affected due to moving from a face-to-face instructional delivery model to a virtual delivery model of instruction. Instructors stated that leadership was best taught in a face-to-face environment wherein cadets could interact with one another in larger group settings for physical training exercises, personal drill exercises, and in-

class exercises. Instructors noted that interacting with cadets via screen time was not as beneficial for learning leadership skills than interacting face-to-face was.

Research Question 3

What perceptions existed regarding virtual instruction prior to the change from face-to-face instruction to delivery of instruction virtually? Common themes arose based on the interviews with instructors regarding their previous perceptions regarding virtual instruction prior to the change from face-to-face instruction to delivery of instruction virtually. Overall, instructors perceived themselves to be non-effective or less effective in their ability to teach their curriculum in a virtual setting. Instructors felt that they were not trained adequately, either by the school district or by their individual branch of the military, to deliver instruction in a virtual setting. Instructors were anxious that delivery of instruction with their individual curriculum could not be taught virtually, while others acknowledged their little knowledge of technology would be detrimental to delivery of instruction. All instructors, however, felt that, although they were untrained to deliver instruction in a virtual setting, their individual military service prepared them to be flexible and adapt to an ever-changing environment.

Research Question 4

What processes and procedures were developed due to the change from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction? Upon completion of the data analysis, the researcher discovered that no significant themes emerged regarding processes and procedures that were being developed or changed due to the change from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction.

Research Question 5

What adaptations to current instructional practices occurred by changing from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction? The researcher discovered themes regarding adaptations to

current instructional practices occurred by changing from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction also. Instructors noted that teaching in a virtual environment increased their overall preparation and planning, increased their overall ability to work with existing technology, and provided them with a sense of comfort, whether teaching virtually or in a face-to-face environment. Some instructors noted that they had a new appreciation for face-to-face learning and that they were beginning to incorporate more rigor and relevance into existing lessons and lesson plans.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Based on the summary of the findings, the following are recommendations for implementation for future practice:

- Develop professional development activities for JROTC instructors that strengthen the instructor approach to best instructional practice for teaching in a virtual environment.
- Crosswalk the current JROTC leadership standards with JROTC best teaching practices in a virtual setting to develop engaging leadership activities for all cadets.
- Use the current JROTC curriculum to plan ways in which to incorporate and assess uniform inspections, marching, and physical training into a virtual setting.
- Develop collaboration and co-planning activities among JROTC instructors across branches to ensure that instructors have a heightened sense of comfort in teaching within a virtual setting.
- Develop a protocol and cadet criteria to ensure that cadets who take virtual JROTC options are academically capable and comfortable in completing the course and mastering the set standards.

- Develop Career and Technical JROTC community advisory council groups that assess current programming and include stakeholder feedback, curricular development, and virtual best practice advisement.
- Develop an online cadet leadership portfolio to demonstrate mastery of curriculum standards in a virtual environment.
- Development of a hybrid program wherein cadets can take JROTC courses both synchronously and asynchronously.
- Develop professional development activities within military branches that prepare instructors for virtual instruction on being hired as a JROTC instructor.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the summary of the findings, the following are recommendations for implementation for future research:

- Research should be expanded to analyze perceptions of instructors of academic core areas in a secondary setting who experienced virtual and online instruction.
- Conduct this research using ROTC instructors at the post-secondary level who taught their curriculum virtually to examine perceptions among cadets and instructors to determine whether similar data results exist.
- Replication of the study to include JROTC instructors from the United States Marine Corps and the United States Air Force.
- Replication of the study to include JROTC units from differing geographical areas of the United States and JROTC on United States Military Bases located abroad.

Conclusions and Personal Statement

Prior to conducting this study, I always had a desire to learn more about military leaders, their backgrounds in education, their reasoning for their career choices, and their leadership views in an effort to make connections between military leadership and educational leadership. Coming from a very patriotic military family and growing up in Central Kentucky where my father is a proud Army Veteran who served in Germany during Vietnam in the 501st Ordnance Company, I always wanted to know why his proudest moment was when he entered bootcamp on July 4th, 1968 at Fort Benning Georgia. My grandfather, a proud Navy Boatswain Mate, served aboard the *U.S.S. Hector* during World War II. My brother-in-law, who passed away in 2018, was a proud Navy sailor who served aboard the *U.S.S. Nassau*. Although my career path would lead me in a different direction outside the military, not joining the military after high school was a decision I came to regret. However, I know that my twenty-year career in public education placed me into a world where I could make an impact on students.

Conducting this research allowed me not only the opportunity to get a glimpse into the JROTC instructors as both military leaders and public educators, it gave me an opportunity to submerge myself in a new environment that was somewhat foreign to me in hopes of making connections between the military and public education. This accumulation of research was to answer an essential question about the perceptions of JROTC instructors that delivered instruction in a virtual environment. Using the data taken from the research, I inferred participants, although not fully prepared or militarily trained to instruct cadets in a virtual environment, were able to do so with some success based on their ability to be flexible, adapt, and overcome challenges and stressful environments—all traits born from military training. Although participants frequently felt that their curriculum was not well suited for virtual

instruction and that cadets would learn the hands-on skills more successfully in a face-to-face environment, they were able to find successes within virtual instruction that could carry over and be used in their face-to-face delivery.

In my interviews, I noticed that the participants, unlike teachers that I had spoken to previously about virtual instruction and the expedited way they were thrust into virtual instruction, were not bitter, angry, or disheartened by moving from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction. Although not fully prepared and somewhat anxious and confused, all understood their mission and felt they could adapt to the challenges that would occur, make changes as needed, and continue to have a positive impact on cadets. They truly showed class and challenged me to become a better educator along the way by being more flexible, adapting and overcoming challenges and changing environments, and being less bitter and disheartened in my own professional career field.

This research is more than just an accumulation of literature reviews, data, interviews, and results. I learned more about myself by fully engulfing myself, not only in the process and procedure, but in the lifestyle of the military. I learned that the impact these individuals have had on soldiers in their military careers and the impact that they have on cadets is equally as impressive and important. I can clearly see the connection between military leadership and educational leadership and how they encompass one another in ensuring an impact is made on individuals.

As a former elementary school principal and former high school principal, I always considered myself a servant leader and wanted to impact the lives of the youth in our society. I have a newly discovered belief that impacting the youth of society has a broader umbrella and can be done via multiple modalities and not merely through public education. It is with that

vision that I have begun to embark on a new journey. Although I will always be a public educator, it is now time, at 44 years old, to bridge the gap between leadership in public education and military leadership. In the future, I do have a desire to become a school superintendent, however to fulfill one dream, another must be accomplished. In doing so, I decided to submit my application to the Tennessee Army National Guard and have begun the process of joining the military and becoming an officer. I look forward to bringing a set of new ideas and experiences into this journey, while continuing to bridge the two fields in order to impact the lives of young people. I appreciate everyone's love and support as I look to the future and want to thank all of those who have served, both in public education and in the military, before me.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Good morning/afternoon Sir/Madam:

My name is J.D. Faulconer. I am a doctoral student in the College of Education at East Tennessee State University and am currently recruiting Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps participants for interviews regarding teaching online instruction. A summary of my research proposal is below. If you are interested in participating in this study, please email a response and I will set up a time for us to talk in more detail. Thank you for your assistance and I look forward to speaking soon.

Title of Research Study: Delivery Methods of JROTC Instructors in a Virtual Environment

Principal Investigator: John Derek Faulconer: Curriculum Specialist Knox County Schools
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SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of JROTC instructors at the secondary level as they adapt to teaching in a virtual environment. Although the literature indicates that the delivery method for the content and curriculum aligned to Reserve Officer Training Corps, also known as ROTC, is best suited for face-to-face instruction, no evidence exists to indicate cadets' overall success based on implementation by virtual delivery, using one or multiple online platforms. The aim of each JROTC/ROTC Program is to ensure that cadets successfully complete JROTC and ROTC programs with advanced skill sets in the area of leadership. Therefore, leadership skills are most often taught in a traditional environment wherein instructors and cadets learn in real-world and face-to-face environments.

Data collection strategies will include semi-structured, one-on-one interviews conducted via a virtual platform with JROTC instructors who have taught the JROTC curriculum utilizing a virtual delivery instructional model. The research will be a phenomenological qualitative study with the researcher reviewing the experiences of JROTC instructors teaching portions of their curriculum utilizing a virtual platform during a global pandemic. The phenomena of virtual instruction and the experiences of these instructors align with the perceptions of the instructors rather than how it may appear to the researcher. This type of study is relevant because the JROTC participants have had unexpected experiences with these phenomena. The researcher will code the interviews, examine each to align answers to the specific interview questions, transcribe and identify emergent themes, and have persons interviewed member check the answers for accuracy.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol and Research Questions

RQ1. What factors supported changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instruction delivery method?

1. In JROTC/ROTC, how important is the face-to-face delivery method of cadet instruction?
2. As a JROTC/ROTC instructor, what factors did you have to consider before moving from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction?

RQ2. What factors inhibited changing from a face-to-face instructional delivery method to a virtual instructional delivery method?

1. Based on the JROTC/ROTC curriculum, why would some instructors choose to refrain from teaching key concepts virtually?
2. Leadership is a key component of the JROTC/ROTC curriculum. How was the concept of leadership instruction impacted by moving from a face-to-face delivery method to a virtual delivery method?

RQ3. What perceptions existed regarding virtual instruction prior to the change from face-to-face instruction to delivery of instruction virtually?

1. How did your time in the military prepare you to deliver instruction utilizing a virtual teaching platform?
2. Prior to the global pandemic, describe your level of effectiveness in being able to deliver instruction virtually?

RQ4. What processes and procedures were developed due to the change from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction?

1. How has military training adapted to delivery of instruction utilizing a virtual platform?
2. What procedures are currently being developed to ensure that instructors and cadets master the curriculum in a virtual environment?

RQ5. What adaptations to current instructional practices occurred by changing from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction?

1. What changes have you made in your approach to your face-to-face delivery of instruction based on the global pandemic?
2. In what ways have you adapted your virtual delivery of instruction to meet the needs of cadets?

VITA
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