

2011

**THE IMPORTANCE AND PLACE OF THE ESSENTIAL SKILLS
TRAINING IN ADULT EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE
INTEGRATED LEARNING MODEL**

Elena Poposka

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**THE IMPORTANCE AND PLACE OF THE ESSENTIAL SKILLS TRAINING IN ADULT
EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE INTEGRATED LEARNING MODEL**

(Spine title: The Importance and Place of the Essential Skills Training)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

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Graduate Program in Education

2

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education**

**The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada**

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

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entitled:

**The Importance and Place of the Essential Skills Training in Adult Education:
A Case Study of the Integrated Learning Model**

is accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

Date _____

Prof. Paul Tarc

Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

Abstract

The essential skills are the skills needed for work, learning, and life. They provide the foundation for learning other skills and enable people to evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace and career change. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada identifies nine essential skills: reading, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking, computer use, and continuous learning. In my research I investigated the effect that the essential skills training and the integrated learning model (ILM - critical, facilitated and independent learning environment) have on the students' attitude towards learning, motivation and confidence in their abilities to succeed in their new careers. A qualitative approach was used. Eight students from two learning centres participated in the study. Data were collected from interviews with students, centre managers, and students' journals over a six week period. Four categories of students were identified. It was determined that each group benefited in different ways. Two categories benefited the most from the essential skills training, and the ILM. The implications for further research are that age, ESL level, health issues, time provided for retraining, limited vocational options, and stress are factors that affect the extent to which the participants are able to benefit.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Ronald Hansen for his valuable input and guidance throughout the process. I would also like to thank Prof. Majhanovich for her support and thoughtful suggestions. This study was conducted at Grade Expectations learning centres, thanks to Mr. Les Rothschild, the owner, who gave me permission. I would also like to thank my husband, Goran, who gave me support to complete the work.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

What are the necessary skills for work, learning, and life? According to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (2007) these necessary skills are the 'essential' skills that provide the foundation for learning other skills and enable people to evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace and career change. The Conference Board of Canada (2010) identifies them as employability skills, i.e., the critical skills people need in the workplace. They divide them into three categories:

1. Fundamental skills (communicate, manage information, use numbers, think and solve problems)
2. Personal management skills (demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours, responsible and adaptable, learn continuously and work safely)
3. Teamwork skills (work with others, participate in projects and tasks)

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada lists the essential skills as: reading, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking, computer use, and continuous learning. These general skills are used in nearly every occupation and throughout daily life in different ways and at different levels of complexity. According to the Essential Skills Research Project conducted by HRSDC (2007), these skills are teachable, transferable and measurable. HRSDC strongly suggests that people in most occupations need these competencies. In addition, there is an increased awareness that essential skills and employability attitudes should be enhanced continuously in today's economy. In the HRSDC research project the skills people use in the workplace were examined and around 200 essential skill profiles were

developed for various occupations identified by the National Occupational Classification (NOC). The NOC is a nationally accepted reference on occupations in Canada which organizes over 30,000 job titles into 520 occupational group descriptions.

It is understandable that people applying for certain positions already have the essential skills, and the qualifications necessary to perform a job. But, there is a category of workers that at a certain point do not have a choice but to be retrained for a different career and obtain the essential skills for their new occupation. One example is (Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) WSIB clients. These are workers who have been injured at the workplace and are not able to perform their jobs anymore. This is a group of adult learners that, in addition to retraining and academic upgrading, need to obtain essential skills in order to be able to participate and be successfully returned to the workforce.

The essential skills training and the Integrated Learning Model (ILM) are models of teaching and learning that have recently been developed and implemented by Grade Expectations Learning Centres, an adult education provider in Ontario.

The research questions are:

1. What are the effects of the essential skills training and development on these adult students' academic progress, confidence, and attitude towards learning, and their successful retraining for a new career?
2. What effect has the ILM on the students' learning experiences, academic progress, and motivation?

A. Rationale

A significant percentage of Canadian adults are in the process of learning and obtaining new skills and knowledge. According to McMullen (2010), between July 2007 and June 2008, an estimated ten million Canadians aged 18 to 64 had participated in some type of education or training, whether it be for personal interest or for their career or job. Adults participate in adult education programmes for different reasons: to improve their employability skills, improve their language skills, or meet Canadian requirements in their professions. Workers earn high school credits, undergo training, or are retrained for new careers.

“Research has shown that lifelong learning is critical for people to be able to take advantage of economic opportunities and have meaningful participation in society. We need to celebrate and encourage lifelong learning, which helps adults improve their health and well-being, diversify their skills to adapt to a changing economy, and be able to create positive changes within their communities.” (Council of Ministers of Education, 2009).

According to *Ontario Learns: Strengthening Our Adult Education System* (2005), an Ontario Ministry of Education publication, the quality and quantity of adult education programs is a concern. The Ministry recommended that adult education be recognized as a “key component of Ontario’s education system and that it link to different programs to better meet Ontario’s labour market challenges and social goals” (p. 28). There are additional recommendations in the areas of program integration, partnerships, learner pathways, accountability, results, funding, access, support in the form of information and communication technology, innovation, and excellence in teaching and learning.

According to the same publication, excellence in the adult education system means that a range of educational opportunities is available to meet the needs of adult learners. The curriculum in such a system would be cooperatively developed and based on the learner's goals. The learning environment would be respectful of and appropriate for adults with special needs, and learners would receive support to address barriers to participation and learning. The program structure would need to be flexible and offer opportunities for interaction with other learners. There should be a variety of approaches, quality control, and measurement of outcomes. Adult education instructors must actively involve adult participants in the learning process and serve as facilitators. They [adult instructors] need to make connections to students' prior knowledge and life experience, ensure good understanding, retention, transfer of knowledge, and ability to use the learned information in a new setting. In an adult education program there should be innovation and creativity. Learning activities should be designed in accordance with adult education principles (Brundage & Mackeracher, 1980). A culture of excellence in the delivery of adult education through improvements in practice, professional development, and through sharing resources, best practices, and results of research, should guide adult education programming.

The Premier's Council Report, *People and Skills in the New Global Economy* (1990) emphasized the weaknesses and vulnerability in the provincial economy that indicated the need for transition to a higher value-added economy, where the number of highly-skilled jobs is increased. Rapid technological development can diminish the value of life-time accumulated skills; therefore there is a need for labour restructuring that will use education, skills, ingenuity and adaptability of workers. This restructuring is possible by continuous growth in the field of

education and training. The Premier's Council defined skill as "all acquired abilities that enable people to function effectively in their social and economic systems. These abilities include not only the ability to perform tasks but also the responsibility and judgement to perform them well" (p. 4). The skills are divided into three groups: basic skills (motor skills, mathematics, reading and writing, ability to learn, communications), workplace skills (generic/technical, analytical/problem solving, workplace/interpersonal), and firm and job specific skills. These skills should be transferable having the 'basic skills' as a responsibility of schools and adult education providers. By providing basic education in the post-secondary institutions, workers will be provided with the necessary skills, and remove the barriers thereby enabling them to be qualified participants in the educational system. In this basic education, "they will learn also to communicate well, have appropriate attitudes to work and learning, have problem-solving skills rather than a fixed body of knowledge, have a combination of skills rather than a single speciality, have interpersonal skills and ability to work in teams, and have the ability to learn new content and processes" (p. 55).

Noble (1989) calls these skills "sophisticated skills" that have a lot to do with the attitude, and the mindset one has. He described those skills as attitude, professionalism, and acting as a manager for the good of the company and one's own career. The ability to really adjust, show effort, commitment, and motivation, and be willing to take responsibility, is now called a skill. *The most important characteristic of "the new labour" is the ability to learn: "training has become part of the production process" (p. 77).*

B. The Purpose of the Research

The first part of my research will be focused on the effect of the essential skills training on adult students' learning experiences. In elementary and secondary education there is a continuation in the curriculum where, in order to select and complete a course, the student would have to complete certain prerequisites. Adults choose to be, or are placed in different programs where, in order to obtain admission, they need to provide proof of credentials, and pass a standardized test or an entrance exam. Workers that have been injured at the workplace and as a result have physical limitations need to be retrained for new careers. This still does not ensure that these adults have the essential skills necessary for them to be successful in the chosen program, or in the selected career. The essential skills are general in nature, and it is incorrect to think that every adult possesses certain skills, or that some skills come with life experience. An adult who is placed in a retraining program for a legal assistant, who has passed an entry exam or a standardized test in English and math, will not necessarily be successful. There may be an absence of necessary basic computer skills, or basic document-use skills, or the student may not know how to work with others. In the first part of my research I will investigate whether or not essential skills training, positively or negatively affects students' academic progress, confidence, and attitude towards the learning process and new career goals.

The second part of my research looks at the organization of instructional strategies and the learning environment. I will investigate the effects of a new learning model, called the "Integrated Learning Model" as a teaching methodology designed to achieve better outcomes and promote student engagement, accountability and independence. This model was implemented in 53 Grade Expectations adult education learning centres across the GTA.

I discuss some of the theories that provide the basis for this model in chapter 2, subheading D and subheading F. In Grade Expectations promotional material, this model is described as a unique teaching methodology designed to achieve strong outcomes and promote students engagement, learning and independence. In order to reflect that uniqueness they now call it “The InteGrade Learning System”.

This model consists of three focused learning environments: Critical Learning, Facilitated Learning, and Independent Learning. Critical Learning provides individualized attention to address students’ needs. Its focus is on skill acquisition. Knowledge is acquired in manageable chunks so that it can be practiced, applied and mastered later in independent settings in meaningful ways. In Facilitated Learning, the teacher acts as facilitator while students practice applying skills in groups. Recently acquired skills are reinforced in a supportive setting that fosters reflection, interaction and dialogue. Teachers engage students through modelling and inquiry so that students can explore different strategies and think critically about their learning and construct individual meaning. Independent learning as a structured independent environment is close to what students will experience in college and at the workplace, where they have opportunities to work efficiently and demonstrate skill mastery at their functional levels in language, mathematics, or computers. The ILM methodology has been gradually introduced since June 2009 in 53 Grade Expectations adult learning centres. These centres offer different programs, such as: high school credit courses, career college programs, college preparation, academic upgrading, and essential skills training, mainly for WSIB clients. In my project, I examine the effects of this model on students’ academic achievement, as well as their motivation, confidence, and attitude towards the learning process.

One way to examine the effects of the ILM and the essential skills training is to talk with students, and provide them with opportunities to share their stories through journal writing. I explore the experiences of eight adult students that are preparing for new careers. Talking with students and looking at their lived experiences allowed me to confirm or refute the adult learning theories in the literature. I am interested in the significance of informal learning in adult education; adult education theories indicate that adults obtain many necessary skills through informal learning – by learning from life and experience. I examined the theories that provide a rationale for essential skills training, and how issues related to motivation, attitude and barriers, can be resolved.

In the next chapter I discuss pertinent literature that grounds my research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review.

A. Adults and Children are Different as Learners.

According to Knowles (1980) most theories of adult education are based on research into the learning of children, which in turn is founded upon theories of animal learning, theories that are not complex enough to be applied to adults. Andragogy (andr- meaning 'man' and agogos meaning 'leading') was used by Lindeman, who was the first writer in English to use this term. It was used extensively in France, Yugoslavia and Holland to refer to the discipline which studies the adult education process or the science of adult education.

Knowles's comparison of the assumptions of pedagogy and andragogy is focused on:

- The concept of the learner (dependent in pedagogy, self-directed in andragogy)
- Role of learner's experience (experience as a resource is paramount in andragogy)
- Readiness to learn (default in K-12, based on personal need in adult education)
- Orientation to learning (subject-centered in pedagogy, performance or problem-centered in andragogy)
- Motivation (external in pedagogy, internal in andragogy)

When looking at the characteristics of adults as learners, we need to take into account the fact that adults have greater life experience and prior knowledge, are more goal-oriented and are motivated to learn. In addition, an adult's learning needs to be relevant, applicable, and problem-centered. Adults are more self-directed and willing to be involved in planning and program evaluation. They are more aware of their learning styles and limitations. Very often adult

learners want to know the goals and objectives of the course; they must recognize the need for learning the information, as well as the benefit of their learning, in order to be engaged.

According to Jarvis (2010), we need a good understanding of the person as a learner and the concept of lifelong learning to begin to understand adult learning. To understand the person as learner, we have to look at the body, the self, and the mind-body relationship. The body is an essential part of the learning process, because every experience from which we learn comes from our senses. The maturation process affects our bodies, and our learning abilities. Because of this psychological association to learning, adults often underestimate their abilities to learn. Related to this is self concept. Self concept is formed when every new experience is interpreted by our mind, given personal meaning, and then stored with the meanings of our previous experiences. Together, they give us understanding of who we are, and how we behave and learn.

Most of my participants felt they were back in school. They did not seem to have enough time to cover the planned material, and they would like to have had more time to extend their program and course of study. Brundage and Mackeracher (1980) found that children and young adults measure time as "time from birth", while adults older than 40 measure time as "time until death". That is perhaps why the learning of adults needs to emphasize the importance of previous life experience and focus on problems and topics from the present. Still, because adults are under pressure to achieve their learning in a short amount of time, they often miss the richness of the experience, and they learn only the content, or only about themselves as learners.

Seven out of eight participants in my study are women. When it comes to women's learning style, it is widely accepted in the literature that women and men learn in different ways.

According to Hayes (cited in Taber and Gouthro, 2006) women learn “through connection, collaboration, and sharing rather than individualism, competition and debate.” Of course researchers emphasize the diversity that exists. The statement that women learn in different ways can be, in a way, explained by the fact that women are socialized in different ways than men. Feminist pedagogy is about women’s place in society. That is why it is important that educators emphasize an approach to learning that is beneficial to both men and women’s learning styles.

The goal of adult education should be to provide adults with skills and traits necessary for life, according to classic European scholarship. “The primary goal of adult education is not vocational. Its aim is not to teach people how to make a living but rather how to live.” (Lindeman, 1929, p. 3) “Adult education is not a process of acquiring the tools of learning, but rather a way of learning the relation between knowledge and living. Adult education is functional in the sense that its aim is to serve individual and group adjustment, but it’s non-vocational.” (p. 7). Briton (1996) explains that adult educators are “cultural workers as opposed to technicians” and should concern themselves with principles, ends, and the whole picture, instead of skills, means, and details.

B. Informal Learning – Learning from Life and Experience

In order to define lifelong learning, first we have to decide what counts as learning. If we write down the ways in which adults can learn, we will have a long and diverse list. Adults often take up learning opportunities in informal situations (reading magazines, going to museums, dealing with family issues) rather than formal. Priesnitz (2000) challenges the very foundations and assumptions on which formal education is organized. According to her, increasing numbers of

people are challenging the assumption that knowledge belongs to “experts”. In today’s world people know how to access and find information, and they are discovering on their own, mostly by using new technologies like the Internet, that what the “experts” tell us is not necessarily true.”There is little correlation between education levels and job performance; and, there is no reason to judge people’s employability by their degrees” (p. 50). By adopting a lifelong learning lifestyle and having an active and open approach to the learning opportunities in everyday situations, people can become familiar with the principle of learning from daily activities, interaction with others, contact with nature, the Internet, and the popular culture.

According to Merriam and Brockett (1997), adult education is different from adult learning. The process of learning is internal to the learner, and includes not only what the learner does in a teaching-learning transaction, but also the unplanned, incidental learning that is part of everyday life. “Education cannot exist without learning. Learning, however, not only can exist outside the context of education but probably is most frequently found there.” (Thomas, 1991, p. 6). Research (Reed and Loughran, 1984) has shown the importance of task-based learning: “many groups of youth as well as adults learn more effectively in non-formal out-of-school settings” (p. 24), such as vocational training, experience, internships, and apprenticeship as a form of non-formal learning. Merriam and Brockett define adult education as “activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults.” (p. 8).

According to Lindeman (cited in Jarvis, 2010) there are two goals of adult education that are compatible: short-term goals of self-improvement, and long-term goals of changing the social order. Both view adults as changing individuals who adjust to changing social functions.

Lindeman saw life experiences as a significant part of adult learning, not only as a resource for learning, but as learning from experiences, most of which happen outside educational institutions. He discussed situations in the family, work, and recreation that call for adjustment and the process of adjusting concisely is a result of learning that takes place.

Learning, in Lindeman's view (1926) involves the whole person. It happens with intent, but also incidentally and unconsciously, as we are not always aware of the learning that happens in our life. According to Jarvis (2010), much of our learning occurs through conscious experiences. However, learning and consciousness are not synonymous. In addition, people learn through socialization, and in a classroom environment, so that they know what types of behaviour teachers want them to adopt. There are two types of socialization: primary (becoming a member of the society), and secondary (an already socialized person enters new sectors of the society). Secondary socialization is of interest in the education of adults because as people grow and develop, they join different groups. They learn how to be a worker, student, or a club member, for example, and learn specific behaviour associated to that position or role. Secondary socialization is not an imitation of our role models, but is more complex. "...we learn in a number of ways ranging from personal interaction to more formal schooling, to informal relationships – and we are exposed to many processes simultaneously." (Jarvis, p.14). Secondary socialization continues through life and becomes part of lifelong learning.

Jarvis (2010) argues that education in general is a way learners respond and adapt to rapid social change. "We witness rapid technological development and cultural change and it's important that individuals keep on learning so that they don't become alienated. The learning society – as a concept – is therefore the inevitable outcome of societies focusing both on information and

knowledge.” (p. 29). There are two different types of knowledge: the knowledge needed to keep up with the social and cultural changes in the society, which changes slowly; and work-based knowledge which changes very rapidly in a modern society.

According to Jarvis (2010), a person is never complete, and is always developing his or her personality through the learning that happens based on life experiences. Learning is often prescribed, and we don't always learn what we would like to learn. That is why it is important that learners develop a sense of criticality. Jarvis states that learning can occur in six different learning situations:

Type of situation	Intended	Unintended
Formal	A	D
Non-formal	B	E
Informal	C	F

Here for example, box D refers to the incidental learning that occurs in formal education, and box F refers to learning in everyday life, when we find ourselves in new situations, and we learn how to cope, and respond to events. Jarvis states that many adults find this type of learning difficult to recall because it is preconscious and unplanned. This kind of learning is inevitable, because our world is changing and we have to ask questions, and find new knowledge, new explanations, and new ways of doing things. In other words, we learn and adapt.

Specific situations that we find ourselves in provide stimuli that can be primary experiences (we experience them directly) or secondary experiences (we are told or we read about something).

Here Jarvis states that all traditional teaching is a secondary experience. Clearly, we learn from primary and secondary experiences, as long as they are internalized, anywhere, not only in educational institutions, but also at work, at home, in the community. Jarvis argues that there are two conditions necessary for learning in everyday life: social interaction and disjuncture. People are different and during interaction we learn how to respond to the differences, and learn from the experience. Disjuncture is the gap between what we expect to perceive based on previous learning or experience, and what we are actually facing. According to Vygotsky (cited in Jarvis, 2010) the process of learning has a social nature as we learn through observing and imitating others and adopting role models.

Jarvis emphasizes the importance of learning in practical situations. As students enter a practical situation for the first time, they are entering a new learning situation. At that time, the more they have learned from previous experiences, the more knowledge they can use in this present situation. Even the present situation is a basis for further learning. Jarvis explains the process of learning as the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person experiences social situations, which are then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person.

Similarly, Usher et al. (1997) argue that the challenge of adult learning is to recognize learning outside of the formal boundaries. "Education can no longer claim a monopoly over learning simply because it is a formally constituted field, since potentially any activity in any context could claim to involve learning and hence be deemed "educational" (p. 23).

“In adult education, the concept of experience is seen as valuable resource for learning that comes together with the attributes of self-direction, or knowledge of one’s own learning needs. Experience is the basis for new knowledge, and knowledge is created through transformation of experience” (Michelson, cited in Usher et al, p. 101). According to Usher et al (1997), there are four aspects of experiential learning as social practice that involve instances of adult learning:

1. Lifestyle practices (learning based on self-consciousness and self-expression)

Learning can be found anywhere, and the key to postmodernism is a learning attitude towards life as a way of changing and expressing one’s identity. Every choice that we make in life is a way of constructing and expressing our identity. Knowledge is generated from a number of sources, including everyday life. It is based on multiple experiences, and is not hierarchical.

2. Vocational practices (Adaptation to the needs of the socio-economic system, applicable knowledge and skills, being motivated, trained, and effectively positioned in the market)

Changes in production and consumption have reduced the need for manual labour and led to the development of new forms of social labour. The learner needs to adapt to this new socio-economic environment, and the learning to involve problem-solving, project-based, open-ended investigation, and cooperation. In vocational practices, multi-skilling and personal motivation are emphasized, having objectives in the form of attitudes, competences, and flexibility. Postmodernism challenges the assumption that knowledge can only be found in educational institutions through a subject-based curriculum, with pre-defined objectives. It challenges the way experience is instrumentalized and seen to contribute only to pre-defined

knowledge or skills with no room for experimenting, open-endedness, or unforeseen learning experiences. In postmodernism, experience contributes to adapting knowledge, providing personal motivation in order to achieve the learning outcomes in the form of adaptive skills.

3. Confessional practices (gaining knowledge of the inner self to better adapt in one's environment)

The learner discovers the meaning of experience in order to learn the truth about his/her own identity for the purpose of self-expression and adaptation.

4. Critical practices (awareness of the dominance of consumption)

“The relationship between experience, knowledge, and pedagogy is articulated in terms of a self-conscious questioning of the representation of experience.... Experience is not regarded as something that leads to knowledge, but as knowledge.” (p. 116).

The postmodern concept of experiential learning suggests that learning from experience is oversimplistic. Critics (Usher et al, 1997) argue that experience can have a variety of interpretations and assessments. It can help construct personal identity. Learning also becomes experience, valued for itself.

According to Usher et al. (1997), in postmodernism, the socio-economic and cultural environments affect adult education and its purposes and values. Adult learning can happen inside or outside educational institutions, and is not always recognized by educators as worthwhile and appropriate. The socio-economic challenges that reflect changes in products,

services, and working practices can lead to “reconstruction” of the workplace, as a site for learning and the social definition of skills as “competences”. “The cultural change becomes closely linked to economic change, the lifestyle changes, and learning through life and lifelong learning becomes part of one’s personal identity.” (p. 5).

Tedder and Biesta (2007) argue that if lifelong learning is to be more than the acquisition of qualifications through participation in formal education; if, in other words, an important aspect of lifelong learning has to do with the ways in which people learn from their lives and, through this, learn for their lives, then we must ask what opportunities people have to engage in processes of ‘biographical learning’. The opportunities that the participants have had for learning from experiences within their lives are most apparent in two areas: through the periods of formal education and training that they have undertaken and through the relationships they have developed in different workplaces and in social life. The significant transitions in our construction of participants’ life stories were key moments for their learning which depended on the social context in which those transitions took place. What the participants learned from life was a mix of more implicit and explicit learning, where things are learned but only become clear over time, as a result of later experiences or as a result of reflection.

The most significant event, according to Tedder and Biesta, is the ‘discovery’ of the person the participant was intended to be. This discovery is clearly something that was learned from life – through a complex process of experience, reflection, communication and interaction. It is something that has a significant impact on the perception and the way in which we make sense of life and ourselves.

C. Why Essential Skills Training?

The Need of Certain Skills in Learning and at the Workplace

In this part of the review, I looked for examples in the research literature that would illustrate that there are skills and personal traits that are necessary in today's workplace. These skills can be obtained through formal or non formal learning, and these skills are not only beneficial for paid employment, but also for growth of the person as a whole.

Adult education involves planned learning opportunities that enable adults to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to participate fully in the economic and social life of their community and perform their roles in the workplace. Adult education courses and programs may be formal or informal in nature, that is, some are designed for achieving academic credit, others are non-credit or for general interest. Education programming for adults considers the life circumstances and their unique learning styles, and is designed to achieve the learner's goals, whether they are economic, social, or for personal development.

In my review of the literature, I found several explanations of why there is a need for essential skills' assessment and acquisition. Knowles (1980) wrote about providing evidence of present performance, not as quantitative measurements of a range of behaviours, but as directions for human development. Adults can see their level of performance more objectively. Their performance resides in the areas of knowledge, attitudes, interests, and values. It involves understanding and insight (solve problems, size up situations, see patterns, develop categories, figure cause-effect relationships, work with others) and skills (public speaking, giving instructions, discussion leading, conflict handling, decision making, reading, computing).

Knowles was aware that this can be done effectively after setting the learning climate, creating an informal and supportive environment, and developing mutual respect and trust. The assessment of this general performance, he felt, helps adult students and their teachers to diagnose needs, set objectives, plan methods and resources, implement, and evaluate.

Griffin (1988) analyzed the "often-overlooked capabilities" (p. 105) that reflect the complexity of the human mind, and are present in every learning situation. Teachers' awareness of these capabilities is sometimes referred to as simply "care" or "sensitivity" in helping adults learn. These capabilities, according to Griffin, are: emotional (ability to experience, acknowledge, name, and accept emotions), relational (ability to experience growth in meaningful and productive relations with the teacher and other learners), physical (senses, tension, energy, body reactions), metaphoric or intuitive (paired with the rational mind, but different in the way it perceives, processes, retrieves, and expresses information, spiritual (not as religious, but as awareness, wonder, or awe of the present, and the potential of people and nature), and rational (ability to use words and sentences to convey ideas, read and understand a book, analyse a problem, gather information, make a logical decision and evaluate its effect). "As teachers, we can help ourselves and our learners become aware of how much of our everyday experience these capabilities are. There is nothing strange about them; we are just going to use them in our learning." (p. 127). Still, not all adults have developed these capabilities on the same level, and some will need help and guidance to put them to use in the learning process.

Taylor and Blunt (2006) argue that in the research work that is done towards advancing adult literacy in Canada, the word "literacy" does not only mean ability to read and write. "Today literacy is very broadly conceived as the capacities required by persons to function effectively in

the social spheres of work, community, culture, and recreation, including reading, writing, numeracy, and the essential skills required for employment, such as computer use, document use, and working with others.” (p. 326)

Demands of Today's Society

Mojab (2006) and many other social theorists writing about economic globalization, argue that over the last two or three decades, the quality of life has changed, going from stability in a way to instability and unpredictability; from the time when someone was educated for a certain occupation, and could perform it until retirement, to the new economy when lifelong learning and skills upgrading are necessary. What kind of education can address all the challenges of the ever changing market in addition to others, such as environmental awareness, for example? While in the past, skilling was informal, today deskilling and reskilling are imposed by production and the market. The education system should respond and address the needs of the adult learners. According to Mojab, they should have the skills to develop critical perception and take their environmental, social, political, and economic destiny in their own hands.

Usher et al. (1997) argue that adult education should follow the trends in the consumer culture which is marked by individualism and activities and skills that form one's identity (assertiveness, interpersonal skills, creative writing, well being, etc.). There is a need for awareness and growth of the whole personality and upgrading for skills and qualities. “In postmodernism, learning is seen as something to be consumed; a learning approach to life.” (p. 17). According to Burbules (cited in Usher et al. 1997), although education must have purpose and direction, learners and educators should be open to the unexpected non-linear growth. They need to develop high

tolerance for difficulty, uncertainty, and error as an ongoing condition of the educational process, while gaining new insights and understandings.

“Two opposite aims of education are fitting people into social roles and functions, and individuation, enabling them to think for themselves and be self-directing. “ (p. 29). Therefore, the goal of adult learning is self-actualization and the development of an informed and critically aware citizen. For critical vocationalism the “education for national interest” is problematic; the learner should engage critically and productively with their private interests in securing and retaining work and gaining personal meaning and worth from it. To have a more informed and skilled workforce, critical vocationalism focuses on the concepts, knowledges, and intellectual skills necessary to understand how industries and economies work. Productive work covers a wide range of activities, from voluntary work, part time work, self-employment, casual work, community work. Therefore, instead of asking how to adjust people to the hierarchy and divided work, adult educators should ask how to work in a manner that contributes to maintenance and improvement of life rather than profit.

According to Bouchard (2006), in today’s knowledge economy, most employment is created in low-level service jobs. The question is what knowledge is valuable, and what is the relationship between, education, knowledge, and the development of human capital, the knowledge, skills and qualities that a person has. This capital can be acquired and cannot be separated from its owner. Its value depends on the person’s capacity to apply his or her knowledge in an economically viable enterprise.

Opposite to the claim that knowledge is the source of wealth is the fact that companies with identical products or services are increasingly dependent on the quality of the customer service they provide. That's why there is an increasing focus on developing "soft" skills and technological knowledge, and providing additional training for employees.

According to Rubenson and Walker (2006), the concept of "lifelong learning" could reduce educational gaps in the society, and promote a better society and quality of life. It would help people adapt to change, as well as control change. People who possess the necessary skills and technological knowledge can better adapt in the knowledge economy.

Inequality in Adult Education Participation

According to the Rubenson et al (2007), in the 2003 Adult Life Skills and Literacy survey, the overall participation rate in Canada in organized forms of adult learning was 49%. From the Canadians who participated in adult education, approximately 80% had done so for job-related reasons, and 20% for personal reasons. In addition, from those who participated, 65% had a university education, 9% had completed secondary school, and 26% had not completed secondary school. In 2003, those in managerial, knowledge or high skill information occupations were somewhat more likely to receive some form of training that was employer-sponsored. Also, the OECD (2002) reported unequal opportunities of different groups who participate in adult education; the working poor and those with restricted literacy capacity being marginalized. It seems that people who do not possess basic essential skills do not engage in adult education opportunities as much. The question is: If they participated in essential skills training, would that change their participation rate?

According to Hillier (2005), research has shown that in UK, 20% of adults have a low level of basic skills, and they cannot read or perform simple calculations. Therefore, the Adult Basic Skills Unit was formed and introduced the new strategy called Skills for Life (2001). Six key skills were developed in four levels: communication, working with numbers, information technology, problem solving, working in teams, and improving own learning and performance. Despite providing opportunities for participation, and improving the strategies and guidance provided, the results from the National Adult Learning Survey (1997) showed that 25% of adults did not engage in any learning in the past four years. This means that by simply providing learning opportunities, will not encourage certain people to participate.

Diagnostic Assessment

For many programs, learners need to have a certain level of knowledge and skills, not necessarily in the subject area, but in the key skills. Therefore, a diagnostic assessment of students' capabilities is important, which is different from basic skills in reading, writing, and math. For example, if the spelling skills are tested, we don't know about note-taking, reading comprehension, or report-writing. The diagnostic test that will measure students' level in a set of identified key skills is necessary, so that an appropriate guidance and program path can be determined. Here it is also important that students' prior learning should be assessed. Also all potential learners should be given enough information about the program and the career they are going into, and the skills needed to succeed. In addition they should receive educational guidance based on information, as well as advice and guidance where the learner will look at a range of educational opportunities, and make an in-depth analysis of the learning requirements. The prior qualifications, experience, and knowledge assessment is done by a process called Accreditation

of Prior Experiential Learning, where learners are asked to look at their previous experience not necessarily gained in formal settings. For example, people that spent time raising their children have experience in managing people, time, finances, pre-school education. People are not always aware they possess certain skills. The APEL process includes details about the educational and training history, descriptions of tasks and responsibilities at work and in the family, and additional activities. In my opinion, realizing that they have a wealth of experience, skills, and knowledge can be a strong motivator for academic and career excellence.

Hillier (2005) argues that even if students work separately on improving their key skills, these skills are needed in every academic curriculum. For example, if they need to write a report, they would need communication skills in obtaining information, math skills to organize and interpret data, skills for working with others, if it involves team work. These skills need to be identified, as well assessed in adult education. Adult learners will come to the program with a range of abilities, and therefore, the assessment of the level of their knowledge and skills is an important part of the planning process. The students might feel threatened or anxious at the prospect of undertaking the initial assessment, especially if they have had poor educational experiences in their life. The test performance would be affected by their emotions, and they might even decide not to undertake the educational program at all. Therefore, the reasons for the assessment should be explained to the students, as well as the outcomes and implications. In addition their objectives for taking the course should be discussed.

In my opinion, before an adult starts a learning program, it is important that an assessment of the essential skill level is undertaken. Here I would like to clarify that by essential skills I do not mean academic knowledge or practical experience, but skills such as reading, document use,

numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking, computer use, and continuous learning. Educators take for granted that all adults possess these skills on a certain level, which in my opinion is incorrect. This assumption will not increase adults' level of independence, and will not help them increase their self-directedness.

Motivation and Self-awareness

Fenwick (2006), suggests the need for learning can create pressure and stress. Nowadays, it seems that adults rarely achieve a state of expertise and stability. Their time for learning is often limited and they have little control over what is to be learned. There is no doubt about the existence of workplace learning, but the question is how is that learning focused on well-being and development of workers, or on creating competitive and profitable organizations? "The assumption is that learning and knowledge associated with work are practice based, embedded in material and social activity, highly contextual, fluid, and not necessarily connected with intentionality or educational initiatives" (p. 188). By learning at the workplace, workers adapt to the organization's changing needs for skills and labour. Workers learn and need to be flexible, self-reliant, to make choices and take charge of their learning. Therefore, in Canada the policy focus is on upgrading workers' skills, and the HRSDC nine skills that are essential for all occupations.

When discussing adults' past experiences and prior knowledge, Brundage and Mackeracher (1980) found that adults do not necessarily possess all the meanings, values, strategies, and skills required for new learning activities. All adults have unique past experiences, strengths, and weaknesses; therefore, the essential activity that should be an integral part of all learning

experiences is the acquisition of the missing components. Learning for personal growth, or learning to reduce unmet needs are two different types of motivation when it comes to adult students. The first is related to the tendency to function independently in an environment and to control that existence, and the second is to function interdependently with others in pairs or groups. Adults that don't possess the essential skills necessary for their success in a specific program may have a feeling of incompetence, and therefore develop motivation based on dependence. This is in contradiction with the assumption that all adults have gotten over being dependent, and with claims that there is a developmental process from child to adult cognitive styles, and that all adults, at some point, reach the adult style. It is imperative that the adult education teacher be aware of individual learning styles, and the cognitive development level of students. Knowles (1980) looked at the movement from dependence to autonomy as one of the dimensions of maturation. A given experience is educational if it helps us move away from dependence. If it keeps us, or makes us more dependent, it is anti-educational. Brundage and Mackeracher (1980) point out that an instructional strategy in adult education depends, to a certain extent, on students' motivation. Adult students, who are in the learning situation for the purpose of personal growth rather than to reduce unmet needs, do not require much structure or direction from teachers. They need minimal assistance to plan and reinforce their activities, and they learn best when information is presented through a variety of sensory modes and experiences. When it comes to the learning environment, all adults learn best in environments that provide trusting relationships, opportunities for interpersonal interactions with both the teacher, and other learners. Anxiety and stress are factors that affect adults' learning. According to Brundage and Mackeracher, for many adults, learning situations, schools, teachers, grades,

tests, the threat of failure or exposure to inadequacies are primary sources to which anxiety becomes attached. When adults don't possess the necessary essential skills to learn and be in that program, the consequence of learning can lead to disorientation and conflict, which in turn can lead to increased stress and decreased learning.

According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2005), there are strong and important relations between academic self-concept, goal orientation and academic help-seeking in adult learners. Some participants in adult education have not attended formal courses for a number of years and may feel insecure about their academic abilities. They may have a low or unstable academic self-concept which may result in increasing self-defeating ego orientation and the development of inadequate learning strategies. An important task for adult educators is to organize learning activities and develop learning environments in which the participants may feel secure, feel free to ask questions, and generate mastery expectations.

According to Usher et al. (1997), it is problematic that in modernism, educators dictate what the purposes of education are and some things are taken to be more important than others. It seems that although diversity is valued, the tendency is to make everyone alike. In postmodernism, different sources and forms of knowledge are valued as opposed to specialist discipline-based knowledge and that reflects the instability and change in the real world of constant change of knowledge. Knowledge is seen as a plurality of locally grounded partial knowledges, instead of hierarchical discipline-based education. "The role of education is to shape a personality with certain qualities and attitudes, rather than a self with certain kinds of work-oriented vocational skills." (p. 11) In addition, Usher et al. (1997), argue that education is change, not to reach pre-defined objectives, but change outside of a certain framework, and at a personal or social level,

can fulfil a variety of ends, or even simply be its own end. "Significant and valued outcome of learning is effective performance based on competences."(p. 13)

Usher et al. (1997) discuss the conception of self in adult education, and they point out that the desired change as the outcome of the learning process depends on the conceptions of self. Here self signifies in a way a person's autonomy, self-awareness and active personal involvement and self-direction as approach to learning. In the learning process there are barriers, distractions, and restrictions that hold back the self as a learner from attaining goals such as self-realisation and autonomy. The specific subject-matter knowledge is less important than learning about oneself, and attaining a sense of self-knowledge and autonomy. In the traditional approach, the learner receives pre-planned inputs, and produces pre-defined outputs, and the socio-cultural factors and specific differences are not taken into account. Even when learners have control of the learning process, and work at their own pace and according to their own circumstances, the goals in the form of knowledge and skills are still pre-defined. That's why learning should be learner-centered, controlled by the needs of learners and optimal for the development of the whole person.

Freire (cited in Jarvis, 2010) emphasized the humanity of learners, and thought that learners should be free to reflect on their own experiences, and to harmonize their reflections and actions. Individual learners have a close relationship with the socio-cultural environment, and should be able to create their roles rather than become role players performing roles prescribed by others. In addition, Jarvis (2010) argued that not only we identify with the roles that we play, but an important part of our identity is how we play our roles, in our unique way. We form that identity by developing personal traits in relation to the roles that we play. These traits are learned and

reflect our habits, attitudes, beliefs, and skills. Not being able to identify with the vocational goal would not negatively affect students' attitude and motivation for learning.

In my research, I investigate students who are workers that have been injured at the workplace, and who are learning new skills to prepare for new careers. The discussion about constructing one's identity and self-awareness is of importance, because their occupations were the roles that they played and identified with. By changing their occupations and preparing to go into a new career, they were in a process of transition, where significant factor in their learning success was their ability to identify with their new chosen occupation.

D. Motivation, attitude, and barriers

In contrast to the behaviourist assumptions in education that the goal is a change in behaviour to achieve the set of pre-determined objectives, the humanistic assumptions are based on personal growth and developing the learner's potential. "Learning has an impact not just on the behaviour, but also on the attitudes and personality of the learner." (Merriam and Brockett, 1997, p. 41) Humanist psychology of education proposes a learner-centred approach, where the teacher only facilitates, rather than dictates learning. The goal is developing the full potential for the self-actualization of the learner. "Motivation is seen as generated from within, particularly from a strong self-concept, which compels teachers to focus on the self-esteem of learners. Competition is discouraged because it negatively affects a supportive environment for learning. Learning proceeds best when learners state a need and have a readiness to know so that they take responsibility for their learning." (Lange, 2006, p. 100)

Reasons for Participation

Knowles (1980) thought that the goal of adult education is to satisfy the needs of individuals, institutions and the society. Bryson in Merriam and Brockett (1997) wrote about the five purposes of adult education: liberal (knowledge is a value and the goal of liberal adult education is an educated person), vocational (job-preparation and skills development, for example), relational (personal growth, self-actualization, and improving one's self-esteem), remedial (the goal is basic skill-development, such as literacy), and political (developing skills in relation to citizenship in democracy). When it comes to adult students' motivation, one of the assumptions that Knowles (1980) proposed was that adults are self-directed in their learning and their motivation to learn is internal. Merriam and Brockett (1997) challenged that assumption, stating that not all adults are always self-directed. Many adults are externally motivated, and we can find evidence in today's practice; adults undertake training courses because their employer requires them to so, for example.

According to Merriam and Brockett (1997), there is a strong connection between self directed learning and self-concept as well as other personal and social characteristics. These views contributed to gaining insight and looking at the whole personality of the adult learner. Adults develop and undertake learning as a response to a life transition. According to Merriam, in adult development there are three key concepts: sequential patterns of change (adult development as series of stages), life events (marriage, child birth, etc.), and transitions (the turning points). Understanding adult development and the fact that learning is a response to a developmental change or transition will help better understand the learner.

Kim et al (1995) argue that in order to be an adult educator, one needs to have good understanding of what being an adult means, why adults participate in learning programs, and what their barriers to learning are. The most significant aspect is to know how adults learn, and how they respond to the complexity of the learning environment. Their research shows that the majority of the learning activities adults participate in are practical, skill-oriented and personal development rather than academic.

When investigating why adults participate in learning, Houle (1960) determined three types of adult learners: goal-oriented (to meet certain objectives), activity-oriented (the participation has little to do with the content), and learning-oriented (seek knowledge for its own sake). Morstain and Smart (1974) identified six reasons for participation: social relationships, external expectations, social welfare, professional advancement, escape/stimulation, and cognitive interest. Understanding why adults participate in learning, as well as what are the common barriers they have, is significant because that way appropriate programs, activities and teaching strategies can be developed and implemented in the future. Cross (1981) identified three major categories of barriers to adults' participation in learning: situational (individual life's circumstances – job, time, money, home, etc.), institutional (course availability, bureaucracy, etc.) and dispositional (attitudes, self-perception, low confidence, lack of energy, etc.). Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) found that adults' barriers to participation are personal problems, lack of confidence, costs, and lack of interest.

Stress

What is adult students' motivation based on, taking into account the unique stressors they are experiencing such as family, mortgage, and career? According to Knowles, adult students' motivation is internal, and closely related to self-esteem or recognition. Also adults decide to learn in order to update their skills for the job market and facilitate career change and advancement. Adult education programs should be developed in a way to increase retention, because adults will drop out if they are unsuccessful academically, or unable to balance school, career, and family. There is a complex two way relationship between home and school. Their concerns at home affect their academic performance, but poor performance at school can also affect their relationships at home. In general, adults' success and failure depend on multiple factors, but individuals who lack a positive sense of academic self-concept may not continue their education.

According to Boylston and Blair (2008), "Working adult students experience unique stressors due to their multiple roles as students, providers, and employees, and institutions of higher learning have not always been adept at recognizing and responding to these pressures." (abstract, p. 1) Stress is an important psychological factor in the educational process because it may influence both academic performance and student well-being. In addition to the stressors in an adult's life due to the multiple roles, the academic pressure can impact academic performance and student's ability to persist. In the new economy, the changing employment requirements demand new skills and knowledge, and therefore more and more adults participate in education and training courses. Due to the unique stressors adults have in their lives, they should not be treated as a homogenous group, but according to their individual needs. Student satisfaction and

the extent to which the learning experience has helped them achieve their personal and professional goals are important. Students can be surveyed, and the data obtained can be used to make changes to the existing programs, enhance services and address the needs of the adult students.

If adult students are unable to gain access to support and constructive advice, even if they are motivated and see education as a way to better life, they will become frustrated and drop out. In the study done by Boylston and Blair when asked what would cause them to withdraw from a program, most students answered that it would be for family reasons and inability to balance all their roles in life. But on the other hand, in the same study, it was found that adult students value the most the quality academic advising, the collegial relationships, quality faculty, and the quality of instruction, interactions, and feedback. In addition, they value safe learning environment, favour the convenience of an accelerated program. What I find the most interesting, despite the shortened time frame to complete the assignments, students are able to perform well academically, and are motivated to complete the program.

Emotions

Among other things, emotions affect students' motivation and attitude towards learning. Although as people grow and develop they learn how to control their emotions, they still have an important place in learning, and they have an effect on people's abilities to learn.

To the degree that our emotions get in the way of or enhance our ability to think and plan, to pursue training for a distant goal, to solve problems and the like, they define our capacity to use our innate mental abilities, and so determine how we do in life. And to the degree to which we are motivated by feelings of enthusiasm and pleasure in what we do – or even by an optimal degree of anxiety – they propel us to accomplishment. It is in this

sense that emotional intelligence is a master aptitude, a capacity that profoundly affects all other abilities, either facilitating or interfering with them.(Goleman, cited in Jarvis, 2010, p. 123)

According to Hodkinson (2008), the individuals involved in learning are affected by and affect the broad context in which they are operating. Their histories are part of the context and their dispositions (built up through their own history) influence what and how they learn. A person's dispositions are formed throughout their earlier life and go on being formed in ongoing and new situations. Learning involves the whole person, not just their cognitive development, and is affected both by the current situations and by earlier experiences and dispositions.

Hodkinson argued that even formal learning is best understood as embodied and the emotional as an important dimension of that. Emotions are a significant but often neglected part of a person's dispositions, and their dispositions influence and are influenced by learning. On the one hand, emotions influence the ways in which people react to opportunities for formal learning, and the ways they engage with any such provision. On the other hand, the processes of involvement in formal learning can have a significant emotional impact, which may feed into life more generally. This impact can be positive or negative, from the perspective of the learner. Emotions may be the trigger for starting engagement in formal education. They may be the reasons for pulling out. The outcomes of education always have to be measured, but the outcomes measured rarely include a measures of the joy (or despair) generated, or the depression lifted.

Hillier (2005) argues that when working in a group, people experience different emotions, positive and negative. If they have all chosen to be in that learning situation, chances are that they will experience warmth, security and positive regard for their peers. On the other hand, if they are required to be there for different reasons (employment training or compulsory

component of a qualification) then they may experience suspicion, boredom, and anger. People have different ways of showing and hiding their emotions which makes the complexity of an emotional structure in a large group. In addition, people sometimes do not recognize their emotions and project them on another person, and acknowledging them can provoke very strong reactions in the group.

Showing empathy is necessary when we work with other people, especially with the special category of injured workers that are constantly in pain or under medications. According to Hillier (2005), it is identifying with what other people is experiencing, and trying to understand from their perspective. When acknowledging other people's feelings in a group, teachers need to be careful not to offer interpretations and judgements. They need to make sure that all students feel valued and motivated to learn.

ESL

ESL students need to learn the language of instruction in English language schools at the same time as they are working towards meeting the curriculum expectations. There are policy documents with recommendations on how to help all English language learners in the province by engaging them in learning that enables them to develop their talents, meet their goals, and acquire the knowledge and skills they will need to achieve personal success and to participate in and contribute to Ontario society.

Depending on their age and country of origin, they may have had varying educational experiences prior to their arrival in Canada, and consequently will require different levels of support in order to succeed in the classroom.

According to Miller and Endo (2004), the problems come primarily from linguistic and cultural differences. Struggling with language is a common occurrence in schools, where, despite their desire to speak English fluently, students struggle for several years before they understand everything that is said in their classrooms. This creates anxiety which in return results in greater difficulty in performing well academically. Another important challenge that many ESL learners face is understanding the curriculum and pedagogy used in schools. They are often not accustomed to the curriculum and often find it lacking an appreciation for other cultures.

Self-Concept

When it comes to motivation, I think it is in close relation with what Sternberg (in Jarvis, 1997) describes as mental self-government. Sternberg found that there are four forms of mental self-government:

- Monarchic – people who are single-minded and driven
- Hierarchic – people who have a hierarchy of goals and recognize the need to set priorities
- Oligarchic – people who are motivated by several competing goals of perceived importance
- Anarchic – people motivated by a pot-pourri of needs, who have trouble adapting to formal organizations.” (p. 95)

Sternberg also discusses levels, scope, and learnings. Levels are local (prefer concrete problems and working with detail) and global (prefer large, abstract problems). Scopes are internal (introverted, task oriented, and not socially aware) and external (extroverted, outgoing and people-oriented). Learnings are liberal (go beyond the rules, maximize change and seek

ambiguous solutions) and conservative (stick to the rules, minimize change and stick with familiar situations).

Intelligence, Memory, and Learning Styles

Factors that affect the adults' learning ability are intelligence and memory. When it comes to intelligence, the theory that adult intelligence remains stable, and then declines in adult years has been problematized. Gardner (1983) proposed the theory of multiple intelligences (linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, and internal and external personal intelligences) and proposed that a person can be highly intelligent in some areas and not in others. Sternberg (1985) suggested that there are three subtheories of intelligence, and the importance is that "it argues for a practical intelligence that is tied to real life situations, where "street smarts" (contextual intelligence) is at least as important as "book smarts" and test-taking ability (componential intelligence).

The beliefs that the functions of memory decline as part of the aging process have been problematized and research has shown that while little change has been found with aging in short term memory, the changes in long term memory are in the area of acquisition and retrieval of knowledge, and not in storage and retention. Merriam and Brickett (1997) wrote: "Finally, as with intelligence, changing views of memory have the potential to add greatly to the knowledge of how acquiring, storing, and retrieving information is influenced by such factors as the context in which learning takes place and a person's motivation in a particular situation to engage in the processes of memory."

According to Burke and Doolan (2008), learning styles are ways in which individuals concentrate, process, internalize, and remember new information. According to Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Model, their strengths can be affected by the following stimuli:

- Environmental (sound, light, temperature, seating)
- Emotional (motivation, responsibility/conformity, task persistence, structure)
- Sociological (self, pair, peers, team, adult, variety)
- Physiological (perceptual, intake, time of day, mobility)
- Psychological (analytic, global, reflective, impulsive)

Emotions affect learning, and according to this model, motivation is strongly linked students' achievement. When students are interested in the material, and can progress and learn, they feel accomplished. In terms of the sociological environment, according to this model, some students prefer to work alone, with peers, with an authority, and in a variety of ways. It is important that teachers need to implement a variety of techniques, large group, small group, while encouraging teamwork, discussion, and interaction. Physiological factors include not only auditory, visual, tactual, and kinaesthetic, but also time of day, need for intake, or mobility. Some students better concentrate in the afternoon; some are not able to sit for long periods of time, and so on. My participants have all been injured, and they are constantly in pain, and are taking different medications that affect their learning. Burke and Doolan in their study found that students need structure regarding the learning expectations, time management, personal responsibilities, and length of assignments.

Program Barriers

According to Chao et al. (2008), today's adults need higher levels of academic and technical knowledge in order to be employable, and more skills to be able to adapt in the workplace. But on the other hand, adults face certain challenges, and are forced to deal with multiple responsibilities. For this and other reasons, adults have lower level of persistence and completion rates. Adult learners are at risk of not completing their educational programs. In US in 2003, 33% of the population over 25 participated in work related courses, and 40% reported that work has a negative effect on their grades. In addition, six years after beginning their post secondary studies, 62% of these had not completed and were no longer enrolled. Although, according to NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) adult students have a preference for vocational and technical programs that take shorter time to complete, three years after enrolling in a community college, nearly half of the adult students had withdrew without completing the degree requirements.

I believe that adult students face many barriers in learning, and one is that they lack the essential skills needed for learning other skills.

According to Chao et al. (2008), there are three categories of barriers for adult students:

- Program structure and duration (flexibility options for when, where, and how, moving in and out of classes as their schedules change, and shortening the time for learning the sufficient basic skills needed for their occupational or academic programs)
- Pedagogy and supports that don't meet adult students' needs (traditional lectures, "chalk and talk" that assume that students are passive, do not acknowledge the life experience that adult

students bring to the class). For many, these methods replicate the same techniques that didn't work well for them in high school. "Adult students benefit from active engagement in defining the learning program and approach, from methods that tap their experience base as workers and in other aspects of life, and from learning that is structured in ways that align with work settings and in other aspects of life, and from learning that is structured in ways that align with work settings – in teams, group discussions, emphasizing skills practice, use of technology, and use of case method to elicit lessons." (Knowles 1970, p. 294)

- Slow credentialing process and transfer of previously completed courses

Improving the basic reading, writing, and math skills is sometimes necessary for many adults in order for them to be able to take occupational or academic programs. But very often it is a barrier. According to McCabe, 2000 in Chao et al., approximately 40% of all community college students are required to take at least one remedial course, with many going further back on the educational ladder with less than eighth grade reading, writing and math skills. Many immigrants take ESL classes, and some students that are academically ready for college level, but lack experience in the occupational and technical field take courses. Although these courses are designed to be a door into further education, for many students they function as a barrier; unable to complete these for various reasons, students become frustrated and lose motivation.

Some of the ways to deal with these challenges include introducing modularized curricula and certification, and redesign of the precollegiate education. The latter includes integration of the developmental skills instruction into the occupational program rather than before, teaching the basic skills within a workrelated context, offer basic skills instruction through distance and online technology, individualize the instruction so that it targets the weaknesses. In addition the

creation of a career pathway as a clear road map, so that adults can navigate a sequence of precollege and college level courses that prepare them for a certain occupation. During their programs, they should earn credentials not by completing a certain number of credit hours, but by showing mastery of content and skills on self paced exams or performance assessment.

According to Hillier (2005), after the initial assessment, teachers should decide about additional learning support, if needed, in terms of if the learner needs additional learning activities to develop their key skills or language skills. "It is vital that people do not feel that they have failed even before they embark on a learning programme. Yet if they are not aware that they have to develop particular skills and knowledge to enable them to cope with the programme, they will ultimately find difficulty during their studies." (p. 72)

Giving feedback to our adult learners is very important factor. If they see the feedback as evidence for failure, that will not be good for their motivation. If it's not detailed enough, they will not identify the areas where they need to improve. The point is to find out if they are ready for the next stage of their learning, and to focus on the knowledge and skills rather than on criticizing the person. Feedback must be constructive and encouraging.

E. Theoretical Justification for the Integrated Learning Model

Brundage and Mackeracher (1980) in their literature synthesis identified three basic modes of teaching: directing, facilitating, and collaborating. These modes are used in different phases of the learning process: acquisition of new skills and knowledge, discovering personal meanings within that knowledge, and creating shared meanings, values, skills and strategies. Certainly, these modes are used by teachers that respond to individual styles and needs.

Knowles (1980) developed a theory of differentiated educational practices for adult learners. Adult learners need to be aware of the goals and objectives of their learning, as well as know the established organization of learning and instructional strategies. Knowles discussed different formats for learning as ways in which people are organized to conduct an educational activity, and these ways should be predetermined by the ways in which people are naturally organized in the society. He discussed three simple formats for learning: individual learning, group learning, and community education. Knowles thought that the planning of educational activities should be based on the realities of human experience; therefore the facilitation of learning should reflect the constant change in the human environment. The learning environment is important for successful learning. According to Merriam and Brockett (1997), there three dimensions of the learning environment: physical (room size, temperature, lighting, personal space, etc.), psychological (respectful, safe, and welcoming environment), and social (emphasizing the social context of adult learning in terms of sex, race, etc.)

The way adults learn effectively is that they need immediate application of knowledge, they learn best when they build upon the current skills, focusing on a problem to be solved or a need to be addressed. That's why according to Boylston and Blair (2008), case study learning is very effective. Adults bring knowledge to the learning situation, and can be active learners, but mostly they are independent and self-directed when learning and implementing new concepts.

According to Hillier (2005), it is not only important that teachers address students' preferred ways of learning, but is also important that the students themselves understand their learning styles. The process can be challenging if they didn't have any learning experiences in years, and

therefore it is okay not to know everything about a person's learning before the start of their program. The questions that the teachers, according to Hillier, can ask can be (p. 68):

- Do you prefer to work alone or with others?
- Does information make more sense if you hear, see, or speak about it?
- Do you need to do something practically, or do you prefer to watch and listen?
- Can you work with different pieces of information, or do you need to have things presented one at a time?
- Do you prefer to have a structure to your learning activities or would you rather set your own agenda?
- Do you need to have feedback often, or are you happy to decide for yourself how well you are doing?

In addition, Hillier discussed the importance of matching learners' current levels of knowledge and skill with the demands of the learning programme, more specifically, identifying the skills that learners require, and establishing learning inventory that most meets learners' requirements. There are also special considerations that teachers need to be aware of and address, for example, if we have physically disabled, hearing impaired, people who don't see well, or with learning disabilities.

Barlow et al. (1998) defined instructional technique as the means by which teachers and learners achieve objectives, and that it is desirable to use more than one technique in a learning activity.

They identified the following instructional techniques:

- Instructor-centered (lecture, questioning, demonstration)

- Interactive (class discussion, discussion groups, peer teaching, and group projects)
- Individualized (programmed instruction, modularized instruction, independent projects, computerized instruction)

How should the different types of teaching strategies be organized to engage and motivate the adult student? According to Jarvis (2010), when it comes to didactic teaching, what is being learned has to be relevant, and the students need to be encouraged to consider the validity. The learning material needs to be such to provoke their thinking, and motivate them to continue their learning. In facilitated teaching, for example, facilitators set behavioural objectives, but should not dictate the outcome of the learning experience, which is open-ended. Students, in a sense, should be given freedom in different aspects, such as the learning style, the speed, particular topics of interest, and so on. Freedom is an important element in teaching adults, where traditional teaching is not as effective. In student-centred groups, for example, individual life experience is a major resource, where students reflect and recreate knowledge and find personal meanings, and again, teachers do not control the learning outcome. In discussion groups, adult students could not participate if they don't see relevance or their meaningful contribution, so it is important for the teacher to pick topics and form discussion groups carefully. A major part in vocational preparation is work-based learning that happens in work placements. Practical knowledge is legitimate, and students are encouraged to keep records or journals regarding their learning. Overall, adults contribute to the teaching and learning process, and should be given freedom and choice when deciding about both content and method.

F. Summary

In my review of relevant literature, I looked for research that would identify aspects of learning that distinguish adults and children. My participants are adults who, while they did not obtain basic skills in formal education, still learned some essential skills through informal learning and life experiences. The literature that I reviewed emphasized the value and importance of informal learning. In my study I aim to show that there is a need for essential skills training, and in literature, I have found reasons that support my view. Next, I found out that many factors affect adults' motivation to learning. Finally, in the literature I reviewed, I have found several theoretical justifications for the ILM. The literature suggests that research on injured workers and their learning, is needed.

The theoretical framework for my research is the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) for several reasons. The basic premise of ELT is the creative exploration of the links between experience, learning, and development across the social spectrum. Experiential learning engages the learner at a more personal level by addressing the needs and wants of the individual. Experiential learning requires self-initiative and self-evaluation, and to be truly effective, it should involve goal setting, experimenting and observing, reviewing, and finally action planning. Experiential learning is about creating an experience where learning can be facilitated. And while it is the learner's experience that is most important to the learning process, the facilitators experience and the learning environment are also important. This complete process allows one to learn new skills, attitudes or even entirely new ways of thinking. The essential skills training is aimed at addressing the needs and goals of the individual, obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed, adapt, and build competence, self-awareness and confidence.

Kolb's (1984) conception of ELT provides a holistic model of the learning process and emphasizes the central role that experience plays in the learning process. "Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (p. 41). The ELT model portrays two modes of grasping experience: concrete experience and the formation of abstract concepts, and two modes of transforming experience: observation and reflection, and testing in new situations. Concrete experiences are the basis for observations and reflections. These reflections are assimilated and distilled into abstract concepts from which new implications for action can be drawn, then tested in new situations, and serve as guides in creating new experiences. These four elements form the spiral of learning that can begin with any one of the four elements, but typically begins with a concrete experience.

Kolb (1984) developed the Learning Style Inventory (LSI) to assess individual learning styles -- Diverging, Assimilating, Converging, and Accommodating. During the last three decades researchers have examined the characteristics of the learning styles at five particular levels of behaviour, and found relations between the basic learning styles and five levels of behaviour: personality types, early educational specialization, professional career, current job role, and adaptive competencies.

According to Kolb and Boyatzis (1999), a new direction for ELT is the empirical testing of its theoretical propositions with regard to integrated learning. "Integrated learning is conceptualized as an idealized learning cycle where the learner "touches all the bases"--experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting--in a recursive process that is responsive to the learning situation and what is being learned. The theory argues that this development in learning sophistication results from the integration of the dual dialectics of the learning process." (p. 22)

The Learning Skills Profile (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991, 1995) assesses the level of skill development in four skill areas: Interpersonal Skills (Concrete Experience), Information Skills (Reflective Observation), Analytical Skills (Abstract Conceptualization) and Behavioral Skills (Active Experimentation). The LSP has been used in program evaluation and learning needs assessment.

In the emerging, networked world of information-based economies, learning is becoming more important than productivity in determining a person's or an organization's adaptation, survival, and growth (Kelly, in Boyatzis & Kolb, 1999). Increasingly complex and service-oriented jobs demand flexibility as a requirement for success. ELT provides guidance to help people improve their learning and flexibility. "It provides a theory and assessment method for the inclusion of the study of individual differences while addressing learning at many levels in organizations and society." (p. 28). The methods that I use are detailed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology

A. Topic Selection and Researcher's Position

My position as a researcher was initially determined by the desire to improve my practice, to understand better how adults learn, and to eliminate obstacles and barriers to their learning, and at the same time to empower them, by providing them with necessary skills, and an environment conducive to learning. As an adult education instructor, I have had students who were WSIB clients that had new vocational goals, and were placed in programs that prepared them academically for post-secondary programs. For these people passing the GED (General Education Development) exam, the CAAT (Canadian Adult Achievement Test), or entrance tests in English and Mathematics was not so much of an obstacle, as the general essential skills that teachers sometimes take for granted, (e.g. document use, reading, comprehension, vocabulary, computer skills, decision making, following instructions, working with others, or learning strategies). Many adults need to be taught some of these and other skills. My initial idea was to help adult students who were not enrolled in a specific vocational program or training, but who spend the 6 hours a day in school placed in academic upgrading programs. These students, in my opinion, could benefit from a certain structure that would come in the form of the new Integrated Learning Model, which seemed beneficial for students. But its effectiveness was not yet examined.

B. Research Design

Case study is one type of qualitative inquiry. According to Merriam and Simpson (1995) the case study approach is used to describe and/or evaluate the efficacy of a new program, or field of practice not well researched or conceptualized. There is a possibility that by intensive description and analysis of adult students' experiences in connection to the essential skills training and ILM, some understandings can be identified that can be further investigated in other research.

The factors that I investigated in relation to the essential skills learning, (as well as organization of the learning environment and instructional techniques) include motivation, confidence, and attitudes towards the learning process. These factors overlap and do not exist in isolation. According to Wlodkowski (1986) attitudes, needs, stimulations, feelings, competence, and reinforcement are all factors that impact adult students' motivation. Attitudes influence behaviour, are learned, and can be changed by life experiences. Identifying needs and setting goals can have a positive effect on students' motivation. Stimulation keeps learners focused and attentive, and a positive feeling about personal achievements can have an effect on students' personal commitment and active involvement. Finally, according to Wlodkowski, "competence builds confidence." (p. 69).

My assumptions for the first research question, (What are the effects of the essential skills training and development on these adult students' academic progress, confidence, and attitude towards learning, and their successful retraining for a new career?) based on the literature I reviewed, are that adults as learners have special needs and requirements and are different from children as learners. There are needs in the form of essential skills that can be identified and

learned on a certain level. This process, I believe, will increase the effectiveness of the academic program, will increase learners' competence and movement from being dependent to being self-directed, and thereby enhance the learning process. The learning of the essential skills can be formal or informal, and their presence should be assessed. In addition, my assumptions for the second research question (What effect has the ILM on the students' learning experiences, academic progress, and motivation?) are that a majority of adults need a well structured and dynamic learning environment, such as the ILM.

In my research the advantages of the case study method were that it provided me with in-depth information on individuals. I studied the effects of the essential skills training on students' motivation, attitude, and confidence, which are complex. It takes good knowledge of the individual for one to be able to draw conclusions. Some aspects of the cases I studied shed light on problems that should be questioned and studied further. One disadvantage was the risk of misinterpretation of students' answers and journal entries. Their memories might have been selective or inaccurate. In addition, my participants might not have been representative of the category of injured workers retraining for new careers.

C. Data Collection

In my research, I used qualitative data collected from three sources. My participants include eight adult students from two Grade Expectations Centres who are part of the essential skills training program using the integrated learning model. In my research I use pseudonyms to protect their identity.

1. Nancy is a 49 year old native English speaker doing essential skills training, and academic upgrading program. Her vocational program is office assistant

2. Dorothy is a 50 year old native English speaker, doing essential skills training, and academic upgrading to be an office assistant

3. Urma, 59, was born in Fiji. She is doing essential skills training, ESL, academic upgrading. Her goal is to successfully complete the customer service program and find employment as a customer service representative.

4. Luna, 58, was born in Guatemala. She is doing essential skills training, ESL, academic upgrading, and is registered in the customer service program.

5. Sherry, in her forties, is a native English speaker doing essential skills training, academic upgrading. Her goal is to complete the customer service program and work as a customer service representative.

6. Phong, 40, was born in Cambodia. She is doing essential skills training, ESL, and academic upgrading to be an office assistant.

7. Asan, 43, was born in Syria. He is doing essential skills training and ESL, and is without a vocational goal.

8. Anastasia, 52, was born in Poland. She is completing essential skills training and ESL and is without a vocational goal.

I approached the centre managers who explained the study to the case managers, but without informing them if their clients decided to participate, in accordance with the Ethics Board

recommendations. After the case managers gave permission to approach their clients, I used the Letter of Information (See Appendix A) to explain aspects of the study and get their agreement to participate.

The data collection was conducted in two adult education centres and was collected from three sources for each student.

1. Semi-structured interviews were used with each student. They involved multiple choice questions and open-ended narratives about their learning experiences. More specifically, I examined the influences of the essential skills training and the new learning model on their confidence, attitude, motivation, as well as academic progress. In the interviews, the questions provided the basis and a starting point for discussion while additional questions grew out of the responses. The interviews were recorded, and then analyzed and interpreted (see Appendix D).
2. Student journals were kept over a six-week period, where they recorded their daily progress in terms of specific skills learned, the achievement of objectives, and their thoughts on the learning experiences they had. In their journal entries I looked for patterns regarding their attitudes, confidence, and motivation. This helped me determine if the essential skills training would result in change of students' motivation for learning: from motivation to reduce unmet needs, to motivation and learning for personal growth. The instructions for completion of journal that I gave to my participants are in Appendix E.
3. Interviews were conducted with the centre managers regarding each student. The managers had data from students' essential skills initial assessments in reading, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, thinking, computer use, and continuous learning.

The assessments are Tests of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) developed by Bow Valey College. Although, according to Merriam and Simpson (1995) "tests are limited by lack of knowledge of what actually constitutes human intelligence or aptitude; they are narrow in scope and tend to represent a limited aspect of potential for achievement." These tests assess students' essential skills on levels 1 to 4, and by knowing this level, I would be able to determine if students that have a lower level of essential skills, benefit more from the training program, and the ILM. The managers also used students' monthly reports in order to provide information about the effects of the essential skills training and the new model on their academic achievement. Combined with info on teachers' input about students' attitude and behaviour, the centre managers provided valuable answers to my questions. See Appendix B for the Centre Managers' Letter of Information and Appendix F for the interview questions.

D. Data Analysis

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), "The study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world. This general concept is refined into the view that education and educational research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; learners, teachers, and researchers are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories."

(p. 1).

I gave voice to participants to write and tell stories about their lives and their experiences.

Journals made by participants in the practical setting were another source of data.

Part of the difficulty in writing narrative is in finding ways to understand and portray the complexity of the ongoing stories being told and retold in the inquiry. We are, as researchers and teachers, still telling in our practices our ongoing life stories as they are

lived, told, relived and retold. We restory earlier experiences as we reflect on later experiences so the stories and their meaning shift and change over time. As we engage in a reflective research process, our stories are often restoried and changed as we, as teachers and/or researchers, "give back" to each other ways of seeing our stories. (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 9).

To analyze the data I reread the narratives at several levels. "At one level it is the personal narratives and the jointly shared and constructed narratives that are told in the research writing, but narrative researchers are compelled to move beyond the telling of the lived story to tell the research story." (p.10) From the narratives that I got from my eight participants, I could formulate four student categories, according to their personal and academic attributes, as well as the aspects that I identified in my study. Finally, I was able to find patterns. It turned out that my assumptions were accurate for two out of four types of students.

Chapter 4: Findings

In order to find answers to my research questions I questioned my participants on 3 areas of interest: Their learning history; their previous work experience and their experience with the ILM. (See Appendix D for the interview questions). The interviews were conducted with each participant individually. When rereading my transcripts and analyzing students' age, background, English proficiency, and the outcomes from the training they received, I was able to find similarities, and therefore categorized and placed them in four groups.

A. Nancy and Dorothy

Interview Data

Nancy and Dorothy are 49 and 50 year old females, native English speakers who have been injured at the workplace, and are now retrained for a new career. Both of them are high school dropouts, did not do well in high school, and do not have positive memories from high school. They both remember that they struggled, were not interested, and did not get proper help. They both felt that school was not going to help them and they were not going anywhere. They wanted to work, instead of going to school.

Dorothy used to work in a factory, and Nancy in a fast food restaurant, when they were injured at the workplace. The vocational goal in the academic program approved by WSIB for both Nancy and Dorothy is the office assistant program. They did not choose this program, their skills were tested, and the program was chosen by their case managers. Dorothy was interested in careers that would involve helping people, such as pharmacy or social work. Nancy wanted to do her high school equivalency (GED) because she thought she would secure employment more easily,

but that was not approved. Neither one had any background or experience working in an office, and they felt that they didn't have a chance to choose their vocational goals. Both Nancy and Dorothy feel that more education or experience is needed, and that the office assistant certificate and the academic upgrading programs are not enough. They both hope to receive more training on the job, and Nancy will even volunteer to gain experience.

Their learning now is different from the learning they did in their school years. They both stated that unlike in high school, they are more motivated now. For both of them, learning now is much easier, and they both feel that they have improved and progressed a lot. Their children are grown, they have more time, and they get a lot of personal attention. According to Nancy, when you are in elementary and secondary school, you need good teachers to guide you and help you learn the basic skills; then you can build up on those skills in life. I think here she expressed her frustration that she did not get proper help when she was in school, and therefore did not do well. Although there are gaps in their knowledge, they feel they are both able to make more connections. Sometimes, memory is a problem, but the teachers they have now made them aware of the skills they have, and the skills they need. It was very motivating for them to learn that they do have certain skills, and I believe there are issues of confidence and self-esteem. But now, as Nancy says, "I want to learn, I need to learn."

They identified people skills and ability to work in a team, problem-solving skills, and computer skills as the essential skills that they didn't obtain in formal education. They both pointed out that being in school now, they learned how to approach and solve problems, and gained significant computer skills. Nancy and Dorothy thought people skills were the most valuable, along with learning how to work with people, deal with different personalities, and help people.

It is also important to be self-directed and know how to work independently. Back in school, they didn't even learn the basic skills of reading and writing, and what they mostly learned, they learned from life and work experience.

Their answers about the barriers to learning were somewhat different, in terms of confidence. Nancy thought, "I feel I'm not smart enough". They both have pain issues, but they learned how to cope and are aware that they need to get through the program. While Nancy sees her reading and writing skills as barriers to her success, Dorothy was on a sick leave for seven months because of a surgery, and feels that she fell behind and that there is a lot to make up for, and that might be a problem. Both stated that in the current school, at first they had a computer teacher that was not very helpful. Even when they had difficulties, they were left to work independently, which was frustrating. He made them feel the same way they felt back in high school, when they both struggled and dropped out. When asked about other issues or obstacles that might prevent them from being successful in their new career, they both mentioned the need to get more education and spend more time in school to learn and gain skills. They feel they only learned the basics (in computers) and would like to learn more in depth. Nancy felt that she needed more time to gain basic literacy skills. They both agreed that adults need to be taught, they are not to be only given independent work and be self-directed just because they are grown ups, they still need a good teacher.

Neither Dorothy nor Nancy had many of the skills necessary to go into a new career. They both regret that they did not complete high school, and now they both realize the importance of learning fundamentals. Dorothy thought that now would be a very good time in life for her to go back to school, and learn English, math, and computer skills. She is not sure if she started this

program earlier in life that she would have been as successful. She indicated that now in school, besides learning computer skills, she learned how to read carefully and look for information. In addition, she is more comfortable and relaxed around people, and unlike at the workplace, is taking breaks and socializing, and learning not to be stressed the whole time and not to take things so seriously. Nancy has low spelling, grammar and vocabulary skills, and my impression was that she has low self-esteem because of these difficulties. She indicated multiple times during the interview, that as much as she is learning, she is also making a lot of mistakes. She hesitates to write and is constantly worried that she "is going to look stupid." They were both certain that acquiring computer skills would be the most beneficial skill later in their new career. When asked, are you confident in your abilities to learn and meet the requirements of your vocational program, both Dorothy and Nancy said that they were eager to go back to work, and will be even more willing to learn new skills at the workplace and do their best to adapt. They both said that they were progressing well, and the teachers that they have now are very encouraging. They feel better about their abilities. They do believe that the essential skills training will help them in overcoming obstacles. The most important skills they stressed are the computer skills they have now, because they would not freeze in front of a computer and be afraid to press a button, but know ways to solve problems and look for information. Nancy said that for the first time in her life, she felt she was not ignored, but someone would listen to her concerns and provide help.

Both Nancy and Dorothy understand the three components of the ILM (Critical, Facilitated, and Independent). In the school now, they participated only in critical and independent learning activities, but not in facilitated. They both thought they learn the most one-on-one with the

teacher. They are comfortable working independently, but they need a teacher often to ask questions and to clarify. They both like the change of environment, and they wouldn't like to be independent the whole time, or one-on-one the whole time. Neither one learns well in a large group, with the teacher as a facilitator. It would be difficult for the personal needs of a learner to be addressed, to get the teacher's attention; teachers, they claimed, always have their favourite students. They would be either too shy to participate, or would just listen, but not say anything. If there was a facilitated training at the workplace, they would do their best to participate actively and fully.

They are both fine with the centre environment. It is conducive to learning, they stated. Nancy even said that when it comes to motivation, "It's mostly me. It's good to have here people I can talk to." They had suggestions for improvement, such as, ordering books on time, more space in the computer room, but in general were satisfied with how the centre was organized. They both answered that they felt respected and treated as adults by their teachers. Being with other adult students in the classroom sometimes is not good, because people can be distracting and disrespectful. They both indicated that there were no major problems with this issue.

Journal Findings

Nancy wrote journal entries for six weeks (3 weeks in school, and 3 weeks of job placement). During the last three weeks of school, Nancy was completing an Office Procedures, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft Excel programs. In her entries for the first week, she expressed the concern that the office procedures program is difficult and she doesn't understand most of it. She even wrote that she thinks it's a waste of time, and what she does, will not be useful for her at the workplace. She was not sure that she will remember any of it and she even wrote, "I feel

stupid.” After finishing the office program, she wrote that she feels better, she understands better, and “is focused on getting a good office job.” She started to work on Microsoft Excel, and from her writing, I understood that she became stressed, as she felt that she didn’t have enough time because she was given the material and tasks to complete independently. She wrote, “I don’t think I’m ready to work in an office.”

During the first days of her job placement, Nancy was given simple tasks, but she felt it took her too long to complete them. She forgot how to do certain tasks on the computer, and that lowered her self-esteem. She learned certain skills, but she thought that people at work are too busy to show her and teach her things. She is still not confident that she can get an office job, and feels that she lacks basic skills, such as spelling.

Dorothy and another student had an interview for a job placement, and Dorothy expressed her concerns that the other student had more skills and confidence than she did. They both got the job placement, and Dorothy felt “happy, overwhelmed and scared.” In the next couple of weeks, she continued going to school. She described the Workability program she did in school, and that she learned the importance of networking in the process of getting a job. Dorothy was also working on Excel. She was frustrated that she had to learn a different version. She was not able to do simple things she knew before. She thought that she needed a little more practice, and she would be fine. She was happy that she had a good teacher that understood her difficulties, and explained well. Dorothy completed an assignment without difficulty, and got a good mark. She wrote, “The confidence is coming back, more and more I worked on it.” On her last day in school she wished she had time to learn more. She was happy to start her job placement and a new chapter in her life.

At the beginning, Dorothy was able to do all the tasks at her job placement in an office, and she became more confident about her ability to do the job. Further, she wrote, "I learn a lot more, and can do a lot more each day." She was doing spreadsheets in Excel, answering the phone and taking messages, helping customers, typing letters and more. She felt pain because of her injury – she couldn't stand for a long time. She was still positive, and thought about ways to manage. She did her job without asking for help on some days. "I was so proud of myself". Dorothy was called for a job interview, and was excited about it. Later, she felt that she didn't do very well on the interview, and was not prepared for the questions she was asked, but still did her best, and hoped for the best. She had some difficult days at work. She felt that it's not easy to be trained by three different people. There were some unfair things. "Nobody had time for me, and the equipment was not working properly". On the other hand, she got along well with some people at work, and that made things easier. She seemed determined to persist, but in further entries, she wrote that she was not confident that this was the right career for her. In addition, she seemed to like being busy, and was clearly happy with the skills that she was learning on the job. Dorothy got two more job interviews and this time was happy with her answers. She got a job offer, accepted it, and was very excited about her new job. Dorothy was the only one of my participants who, at the time of my research, found a job.

Centre Manager Interview

The vocational goal for both Nancy and Dorothy was office assistant. "They did academic upgrading and computers, will have a job placement, and then the job search program". On the initial assessment it was determined that Nancy had a background in retail, managing, and customer service, while computer skills, typing, and spelling were her weaknesses. On the initial

assessment both were very positive, and now are very motivated and want to go back to work. They were doing the best they could, learning, networking, and looking forward to their new career.

Both were on schedule with their program, and completed the academic upgrading in the time provided. The essential skills that they improved in were reading comprehension and computer skills. Their behaviour in the classroom was very good; they were cooperative with the teacher and the other students. The centre manager stated that, "They are dedicated to completing their work".

Nancy was doing a very good job in her work placement, and her teachers believed that she would do a very good job when she was back to work. Dorothy's work placement didn't start on time, and because of her surgery, she was absent for a number of months. Her confidence declined, especially because she had to review what she learned before, but she had good teachers and got the help she needed. They both did the workability program, and that was very motivating. She excelled at her work placement, was always aware of her skills and limitations and was able to adjust.

Both Nancy and Dorothy participated in critical and independent learning, did well in all three, and were able to adjust. The centre manager thought that being in the centre and learning the essential skills positively affected their attitude and motivation. Although they had always been very positive, both were a little uncertain at the beginning, and anxious to get into a new career. With time they became more confident. Being in the school was beneficial for both Nancy and

Dorothy. In a way both were shy, quiet, and not very confident. The skills that they learned and the learning environment improved their confidence and attitude towards their future career.

B. Urma and Luna

Interview Data

Both Urma and Luna were in their late 50s. They were born outside Canada (Fiji and Guatemala). Back home they didn't finish high school. Urma went up to grade 6, and Luna to grade 9. Urma dropped out because she was sick for a long period of time in grade 6, and Luna because she married and had a child when she was in grade 9. They both moved to Canada in the late 1970s, and did not attend school, but raised their kids and worked in factories. They both regret they did not finish school. The vocational goal in their academic program approved by WSIB is customer service. In order to achieve this vocational goal they both needed to complete an ESL course to a certain level, academic upgrading, and job search. For both of them, customer service was not their choice. While Urma wanted to get her high school equivalency, Luna wanted to go into a profession that would involve helping people, but the social work program was longer. She was not even sure if she would have been good at that. In general, they are both satisfied with the choice.

For both of them, improving their English (reading, writing, spelling, and grammar) was the most valuable learning experience. They both already had basic knowledge of the English language, but here they learned how to read carefully and understand, listen, and think critically about what was said. They both thought they have better understanding of life, and regretted they didn't get proper education earlier in life. They were positive that it's never too late to learn, and

felt that they were improving academically. They both gained basic computer skills, and seemed proud of their achievement. Before, both were afraid that something will go wrong if they touched the computer, but now they both realized that they could work independently on the computer, complete tasks, and use the internet.

Their answers were different when it came to people skills. While Urma seemed more like a people person, who is caring, willing to communicate, help, with a sense of humour, Luna was quieter, and indicated that she was better in a small environment. When she was around people she was distracted and less focused. Urma was more enthusiastic about her new career, stating that she was confident that she could do a good job, was willing to learn more and do her best. She was a little concerned about her physical limitations; she had multiple health problems, but said that with proper diet and exercise, and understanding from her employer, it will work out.

Urma said that learning now as an adult is easier because of her supportive family; she said that she had good teachers that helped her learn, and family members that helped her with homework and house work. My impression is that her family's support had a major positive impact on her motivation to learn and to succeed. Luna, on the other hand, seemed to have had had many worries, and was a little stressed. She said she tried to be focused in school and was very proud of her achievement so far. "It's good to get up in the morning, and to do something for myself. I'm very proud of that. Learning is good. Now, I feel more confident." She hopes to get a good job and be able to pay her bills.

Being injured and in pain was a barrier in learning. Both Urma and Luna see their pain, medications, and physical limitations as obstacles to being successful on the job. They both try to function regardless of these issues, and feel that they will be able to deal with stressful situations

and multitasks at work. They both said that the essential skills training would help them overcome the academic challenges with a good teacher and enough time. They were able to learn and try their best.

Urma thought that vocabulary was a barrier in her learning, because often she couldn't understand words that people were using. Sometimes she felt that the strategies teachers were using were not effective and that she needed more one-on-one instruction. Luna felt that she didn't have enough time, and that she needed more time to learn the necessary skills and cover the outlined program. She felt that she was improving and wanted to learn more. "I feel good about coming here every day."

When asked, about the skills necessary for work and everyday life that they didn't acquire in school, Urma answered that people skills were the most important. Being able to approach people, show respect and be open, communicate and express your thoughts and concerns without being embarrassed, and have a sense of humour is the most important. Luna thought that English skills were the most important, in terms of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. She was not confident that her English skills were good enough to be in customer service. She thought she needed more time. She was not confident in her ability to go back to the workforce. She was anxious and stressed. She said she was not very good in stressful situations and in crowds, but being here in the school helped her with that anxiety. Here she could talk to people and not be rejected, as she has been before. Being in the school now gave her confidence that she was not too old to learn new skills, and that she could speak with people and make friends.

They both indicated that they didn't have the necessary skills and abilities to be successful in their customer service program. Here they learned language, proper reading, writing, spelling,

computers, and more. They both said that they didn't have any experience in customer service, so they had to upgrade their skills first.

They were both confident that they had the ability to learn further, saying that they could do whatever they wanted, if they tried hard. "A person is never too old to learn. If some skills are missing, it's never too late to learn". Both Luna and Urma emphasized the importance of having a good teacher, and thought that adults without basic skills couldn't learn on their own. They need help. Luna was less confident, but very determined. She tried not to avoid problems, but to face them. After her injury, she became depressed, and had her ups and downs. She was aware of that and tried to avoid things that affect her negatively.

They understood the three components of the ILM (Critical, Facilitated, Independent) after they were explained. They both had participated in all three. Luna said that she was satisfied being in a large group; she could talk to people and learn at the same time. They both said that they learned the most in the critical and facilitated environment. Critical, because they could talk, listen, ask, correct their mistakes, and understand the conversation, unlike before. They learned well in facilitated, because they could hear different opinions and perspectives, and communicate.

They both learned the least when they were independent, especially when it was something new, or difficult to understand from a language perspective. Also, it was difficult when in a critical environment; the same ineffective teaching approach was used. It was frustrating. They both liked the structure and change in the environment, but they didn't feel confident enough to be self-directed and independent.

They both indicated that the centre environment was conducive to learning. They were motivated and focused to learn, and they were not affected by distractions. The resources in the centre were good. People come and go, some people are talkative and are arguing, but overall, it is a good environment. In the learning centre, they are both treated and respected as adults. Everyone in the centre is adjusting; they get the proper attention, help, and are treated nicely. The teachers assign work, and students know exactly what is expected. The books and the other resources are good.

Journal Findings

Besides English and computers, Urma was also working on her math skills. "I'm not very good at that, but I'm trying my best". From her description of the English lesson, it seemed that Urma was completing lessons with understanding and reflection; she was doing her best to comprehend and make personal meanings. In her journal entries, Urma expressed her personal opinion on some general topics, such as drinking and driving, the importance of regular exercise, nature, and so on. It seemed to me that she was thrilled to have sufficient literacy skills to read about and write in order to express herself and her thinking. The writing that she took time to do indicated that she was proud of her achievement, and the ability to write. From her writing I could understand that the ability to read and write opened new opportunities and interests. She started going to the library, and became interested in topics she read about. Urma also had bad days when she was in pain because of her injury. On those days she wasn't motivated to learn, and questioned her ability to do well in another career.

From Luna's journal entries, one could clearly see that she was in a lot of pain, everyday. She was trying to keep a positive attitude, and completed all assigned work. Every day, she went to

the English, computers, and math classes. She enjoyed being in school, although she found Excel a little difficult. She prepared her resume to apply for a job placement. She wasn't successful on the interview, and that was not good for her self-esteem. Her computer teacher quit, and she felt a little lost. Her pain was not so much of a barrier, because, "When I'm in pain, I try to create something so it can keep me busy and away from my pain, of course it's not gone 100%, but going for a walk, movies, see friends, coming to school to learn something new and different. Going out makes me feel better". She was in a lot of pain, and sometimes stressed and depressed. "My depression and my pain are holding me back". It seemed that despite these barriers, Luna felt good about learning, and acquiring the essential English, math, and computer skills was good for her motivation and confidence.

Centre Manager Interview

The vocational goal for both Urma and Luna was customer service/cash register. They completed their ESL program on schedule. "Urma is now in her work placement (YMCA) where she works at the information desk. She is happy to be in her work placement and does her job well". Luna was about to start her work placement. Her English skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) improved significantly. "Luna's main weakness at the initial assessment was writing. The overall essential skills were at grade 5 level, but writing was below grade 2. Her strength was the ability to recognize words and comprehension". Being in the school and learning new skills was beneficial for her and positively affected her motivation and attitude.

Both Luna and Urma were very cooperative during the initial assessment, and did everything they were asked to do. During Luna's program, the only problem was the Naturally Speaking

software, which didn't work well for people that are ELL. Although she was frustrated, she managed to complete the training.

They finished their program on schedule, and got to the required level in essential skills. There were no problems with their behaviour in the classroom, only Luna's hours were reduced from 6 to 5 hours a day because of her injury. I have the impression that her essential skills didn't improve significantly except perhaps for her writing, where she was below level 1 when she started. The centre manager thought that now she had the skills to be in basic customer service.

Luna and Urma participated in all three learning components (critical, facilitated, and independents) and adjusted and learned well in all. They both liked the conversation classes. By being here in the Centre, they were able to overcome some of the barriers, are happy with the results, and positive about going back to work. At the time of my research at the centre, both have completed their programs, and were about to start their or have started job placements.

C. Sherry and Phong

Interview Data

Phong and Sherry were both born outside Canada, Sherry was born in Trinidad and Tobago, and Phong was born in Vietnam. They were both in their forties. Phong never went to school. When she moved to Canada, she was taught basic English skills before she started working. Sherry went up to grade 6, and had taken online job related courses. Both started working when they were very young; Sherry for a food company as a packaging operator, and Phong, picking mushrooms, and then as a machine operator. Both were injured at the workplace.

Sherry's vocational goal was customer service. Phong was not sure what her vocational goal would be. It seemed that she was not sure what she wanted. She asked for the office assistant program to be approved, but she was not even sure if she had the skills for a career. She said she could speak and understand, but she could not write in English.

When asked why this program was chosen, Sherry didn't know if she would be a good customer service representative. "I think now I'm not going to be good at anything." Phong's attitude was different. She was also not very confident, but she didn't know if she was capable until she tried. She thought she was realistic, and she knew what her limits were. As a person she says she is "kind, honest, and patient". When she faces a problem, she tries her best. In general she has a positive attitude, although it depends on the situation.

In order to achieve this vocational goal, they both needed to upgrade their English, math and computer skills before going to the customer service/office assistant program. When it came to issues and obstacles that would prevent them from being successful in the future career, Sherry pointed out that her problems are chronic pain, drowsiness from medications, tiredness. She said she had no other issues. "I like to learn". The material is not difficult, but her health issues make learning difficult. For Phong, the obstacles are English and computer skills. She didn't feel she had other obstacles.

When asked what learning experiences had been the most valuable, both thought that people skills were very important, because there were people with different personalities and backgrounds at the workplace. Phong was determined to do her best, asked for help if she needed it, and was willing to learn and put in extra effort. Sherry thought that it was important to learn how to cope with the injury, and do a good job.

For both, learning now was different from the learning they did in the school years. Their learning had changed in opposite directions; Sherry thought that she was more able to learn before her injury. "The emotional and physical thing I'm going through makes it difficult to learn". She said that before she could learn fast, while now she needed to read something multiple times. For Phong, learning English has helped her a lot. She can communicate with people, be independent, and have more opportunities for learning than before.

In terms of barriers, my impressions were that Sherry was in a lot of pain since, as a result of the injury, she developed fibromyalgia. The pain was a major barrier to learning. She has difficulty remembering things. She often needed to go back, relearn, and redo things. She thought she was wasting time and not improving. Phong seemed less in pain, but still pain made learning difficult. She thought that writing skills were a barrier, but as she was improving, she became less hesitant to write, and felt that she was learning every day. She seemed very positive, and now that she learned basic English skills, she takes an active role in her learning, and is looking forward to learning computer skills.

We also discussed the skills necessary for work and everyday life that they did not acquire in school. After the injury, Sherry's overall ability (physical and academic) decreased. She could not do things too quickly; she panicked under pressure and was slower. In communication, with other people she felt very irritated.

Before she started the essential skills training, Phong did not have the necessary skills and abilities. She started from the basics in ESL; reading, writing, communication. Sherry already had reading, writing, and basic computer skills. She thought that skills that she learned in school now would be beneficial for her in the future. Both Sherry and Phong were not confident in their

abilities to meet the requirements of their vocational programs. Sherry saw school now as an opportunity to do something for herself and it helped her realize certain things. She said that after the injury, she had a problem with depression. Phong was aware that she has progressed, but also that she needed to improve her English and learn other skills (computers, office assistant program). She was not sure if she could do it all.

Both Sherry and Phong understood the three components of the ILM (Critical, Facilitated, Independent) after they were explained. They both participated in all components. While Sherry learned the most one-on-one with her teacher, Phong thought learning in a large group was good when learning a new skill, because she liked to communicate and hear different experiences and opinions. When asked in which environment she thinks she learned the least, Sherry answered that it is in facilitated large groups, because there were different people that had different conceptions. "They disagree, and say different things that are confusing". Phong learned the least independently, because of her English. Very often she couldn't understand, and she needed help. They both liked changing the learning environment and the learning styles in the school day.

Sherry and Phong agreed that the Centre environment was conducive for learning and a good environment for them to be in at the moment. Sherry thought that it depended on the students, and that she personally felt good being there. She saw the school as an opportunity to learn, move on with her life and career, and look forward to the future. They both agreed that it was good that there were students with different capabilities, and resources for different needs. Neither felt pressure in the school, and saw it as a safe environment and opportunity for learning. In general, they both thought that in the learning Centre, they were treated and respected as adults, and that their abilities and needs were taken into account.

Journal Findings

From Sherry's journal entries, I learned very little about her attitude and motivation for learning. She wrote in detail about her learning for the day. She went to school every other day. She was working on her English (pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar), and math (number skills and algebra). She wrote that she enjoyed the spelling, and felt that her reading was improving. From the vocabulary lessons she learned new words and their meaning, and got into a habit of thinking about the words she heard and their meanings. She was not good at tests and found them confusing. On some days, she felt she was not retaining her knowledge, but was aware that the skills that she was learning would help her get a good job.

Every other day, Sherry went to the clinic, where she attended classes about different topics, for example, nutrition, mental health, pain management, relaxation, body mechanics, and community resources. From her journal entries, I understood that some days were very difficult for her, because of the pain, stress, and depression. But, she expressed determination to learn, and saw the benefits from learning.

In her journal entries, Phong often expressed dissatisfaction with her academic performance, writing that learning English is difficult, and she was not doing as well as she wanted. She was concerned about and not very confident about her writing skills. She was satisfied with her personal life, and felt that she had a happy and supportive family. Phong was very happy to start her computer program and learn the basics of Word and Excel. As she progressed through the program, she felt that she needed more time during the day to spend learning computers. She thought one hour was not enough. Learning computer skills had a positive effect on her

motivation and confidence. On certain days, she was in pain and taking medications, and she was not able to focus in school. She was a little hard on herself, even angry that she was not able to understand and do well, "I felt a little upset by myself".

Centre Manager Interview

Sherry did academic upgrading to grade 10, and is starting the customer service program in January. On the initial assessment, her essential skills were at level 1 (of 4) and her English and math skills were all at the grade 6 level, with writing as exception at grade 3 level. There were no problems at the initial assessment, except for the fact that she didn't sit down. Even now in class, Sherry is standing because of her pain and medication.

Sherry was on schedule with her program, and her behaviour in class was good, as she got along well with everyone and did her work. She was still struggling with writing, and although she was not ESL, some topics typical for ESL had to be covered with her (phonics, pronunciation). Often, she was not happy with her performance. Before her start at the Centre, she had difficulty to commit to any program or career, and had problematic behaviour. At this school they did not have any problems with her, she was very positive about being here. Being in this school was beneficial for her. She is a person that knows what she wants, and is open and straightforward about everything. Her issue was pain management, but she was happy to be in school, and would do her best when she goes back to work.

The vocational goal for Phong, according to the centre manager was receptionist, and at this school she is doing the ESL and computer studies program. "She is very happy to be in school, and to improve her English skills. Her behaviour in the classroom is good. She is respectful,

doing her work, and even helping other students. Although she has been in the centre for only a couple of months, her vocabulary and speaking have improved significantly. She is working in all three learning components (critical, facilitated and independent) and is adjusting well. Being in the centre is beneficial for her. She is very motivated to learn and be in the school". At the time of my research, both Sherry and Phong had not yet completed their programs at the learning centre.

D. Asan and Anastasia

Interview Data

Both Asan and Anastasia were born outside Canada. Asan was born in Syria, where he reached grade 5 and then started working. Anastasia was born in Poland, where she completed a university program in agriculture and food, and had work experience. In Canada, Anastasia worked in a Polish butcher shop, where she did not communicate in English. Asan worked in a factory, where he performed manual labour. Neither of them improved their English language skills at the workplace.

They were both low level ESL students. Asan hoped that the security guard program would be approved by his case manager. Anastasia didn't know what her vocational goal was. It was not determined yet, nor was it not communicated clearly. She was aware that she had low level skills and she couldn't communicate, remember, and see well. She was not sure what job she would be able to do. Sometimes she thought that she needed to spend more time in school and improve her skills, and that going back to work now would be very stressful for her.

In terms of why this program was chosen, Asan was interested in training for an office clerk, a nurse, or a technician, but he was denied because he didn't have good reading and writing skills, or experience. His case manager didn't think that he would be able to complete a college program. He still didn't know if the security guard program will be approved. Asan would need high school equivalency (GED).

In school, both Asan and Anastasia were learning how to read and write. Asan thought that communication skills were the most important and also solving problems, managing time, and managing life in general. Going to school was good for Anastasia because she started to understand, communicate more in English, and learn new vocabulary. Their learning was different from the learning they did in the school years. Both Asan and Anastasia felt that they progressed and improved their English skills. Anastasia thought that's good for her future.

In terms of barriers, Anastasia had very low English language skills. She didn't know what her vocational goal was, and can't even understand the meaning of the phrase "customer service". The university degree was not very useful for her now, because it was in Polish. She had difficulty moving, using, and even feeling her hands. She was constantly in pain and on medications, but had to deal with side effects (stomach pain, high blood pressure, etc.) She said she could not use her hands well after the injury, but still wanted to go back to work. She lived alone, and was going through a divorce, and there were many difficulties that she faced in everyday life. She was frustrated because she talked to so many people (doctors, case managers, etc.) about her problems "Nobody listens". She wanted someone to help her and ease the process. Her obstacles are the pain, the stress that she was experiencing, and the eyesight. She had been in the Centre for 10 months, and the last 3 months had been difficult, because her eyesight is not

good. WSIB would not pay for an eye exam and glasses because the problem was not related to her injury. She also had financial difficulties, and nobody to help.

Asan said that he had many worries, and difficulties managing his life. He worked for 18 years here in Canada, and in the workplace he didn't learn the English language. He thought that being in the workplace was better, because he felt secure. Since he lost his job, he needed to learn how to read, write and speak in order to obtain skills for a new career. He found that much more difficult. His biggest concern was that whether if he would be able to read and write because he never learned English back home. Asan had many barriers in learning. He was in pain, and that was making learning difficult. He thought he was not progressing well, and was behind everyone, in general. Out of work, with finance problems and big family (5 kids); he felt he could not keep up.

Despite all difficulties, Anastasia liked learning and going to school. "Before starting school, if you were talking to me, I wouldn't understand anything". She had very low level English skills, and that was her main obstacle. She had her books, dictionary, computer, and she felt she was progressing. She said her teachers were always very helpful, and she asked questions when she had difficulties. Anastasia felt that learning would be good for her in the future. "I like studying".

When asked about the skills necessary for work and everyday life that they didn't acquire in school, English skills were important, and being able to communicate. For Asan problem-solving skills were also important, not only at the workplace, but within the family and he felt that he lacked those skills. They were confident that they would be able to do the job responsibly, demonstrate personal management and problem solving skills, and get along with other people.

Before starting their program, both of them did not have the necessary skills as they did not know any English. Learning and acquiring basic English and computer skills so far was making both of them confident that they could go into another career that would be different from manual work. They both seemed concerned, and at moments hopeless, I believe that has a lot to do with their personal situation. In school, they both said that they were focused on learning, from their teachers and by communicating with the people in the Centre. Anastasia said that she didn't have other obstacles or worries (she doesn't have children) so she could focus on school. When it comes to stress and attitude, they both said that they were aware that learning would be beneficial for them, and they hoped to learn how to cope and be positive and flexible. When asked if he was confident in his ability to learn and meet the requirements, Asan was sure that with improved language skills, he would be successful in the security guard program and that he would be able to do his job well after.

They both understood the three components of the ILM (Critical, Facilitated, Independent), after they were explained. Asan used to work one-on-one with his previous teacher, and that helped him a lot. He was mostly doing independent work at the time of the interview; he never participated in facilitated learning in a large group. Anastasia worked in all three components in her school. They both agreed that one-on-one with the teacher was the most effective strategy. They both worked well in the critical environment, in a small group, because they talked and listened, shared opinions with people and with communication their English improved. Asan also liked being in a facilitated large group, Anastasia thought that with many people talking she couldn't understand everyone, and was confused. They both had difficulty learning and completing tasks independently, because they both had poor reading and writing skills. Asan had

concerns that he was not learning enough. He said that he was willing to learn, but he needed more one-on-one instruction and personal attention.

The centre environment was conducive to learning for both. They liked being in the Centre, and felt that it was good for them to be in this environment, around other people, learn and talk about different topics. They said it was good there because it was nothing like the people and the environment at the workplace, where they did manual work, were ignored and communicated very little. Sometimes there were distractions, but they both indicated that the books and resources in the Centre were good. Both Asan and Anastasia thought that everyone was respectful and treated them as adults. They were asked for their opinion, and treated like someone with experience.

Journal findings

Anastasia had difficulty expressing her thoughts in writing, because of her low level ESL skills. She was in a lot of pain every day, and her eyesight was not good. She was completing her work and attending school, but I didn't see a change in her attitude or motivation. I believe it was because she was progressing very slowly and she had physical limitations and barriers.

Asan didn't feel capable to write journal entries, and although he signed the consent form, didn't write in his journal.

Centre Manager Interview

The vocational goal for Anastasia was customer service, and at the Centre she was doing ESL and basic computer studies programs. The goal was to upgrade her English and math to grade 8 level. On the initial assessment, she demonstrated low level skills (level 1 in reading and writing, level 2 in listening and speaking, and below level in math, document use, and computers). At the

initial assessment, she was cooperative, but a little hesitant because she didn't have any English skills. During the first three months, she even needed an interpreter on occasion. She was on schedule with her program. Her behaviour in the classroom was good. At the beginning she was very quiet, but with time she became more comfortable speaking. She communicated more and participated in discussions. According to the centre manager, Anastasia's English skills improved, and she had the skills to go back to the workplace. She took an active role in her learning and demonstrated willingness to learn. She worked in all three environments (critical, facilitated and independent) and adjusted well to all. She felt that being in the school for almost a year was good for her. At the beginning she thought that she wouldn't be able to learn and go into a new career, but her confidence improved. The pain from her injury was not affecting her as much as her poor eyesight and the inability to solve this problem.

Asan was doing ESL and computers. His vocational goal was still uncertain. His behaviour in the classroom was good. He was interested in learning and willing to improve his English skills. He was not on schedule with his program, because he was absent for couple of months, so they had to extend his program. His reading, listening, and speaking have improved, but writing is still a weakness. He is progressing well in the computer program; he didn't have any computer skills, but now seems to enjoy it. He participated well in all learning environments, and was able to adjust when the expectations are clear. Asan had many personal issues, but still attended school and did his work

Chapter 5: Discussion and Analysis

In this study my goal was to provide answers to the following research questions:

What are the effects of the essential skills training and development on these adult students' academic progress, confidence, and attitude towards learning, and their successful retraining for a new career?

What effect has the ILM on the students' learning experiences, academic progress, and motivation?

I found that the answers to these questions depend on certain factors. My participants were all workers who had been injured at the workplace, and were in the process of retraining for a new vocation. The procedure for choosing the vocational goal of each student is important. Students' skills are tested and they are interviewed in order to determine their background, experience, and vocational preferences. The final decision is made by each student's WSIB case manager. My findings indicate that students' without a determined vocational goal, didn't benefit from the essential skills training and the ILM as much. In addition, although all participants were satisfied with their learning programs and liked the ILM centre environment, and coming to school in general, their physical condition, chronic pain, and mental issues (stress and depression) limited the potential effect of the training and ILM. This finding supports the theories from the literature review, particularly with respect to factors such as stress, emotions, memory.

Also, self-concept can be significant barrier in adult learning and can affect motivation. In my literature review I found theories that emphasize the importance of informal learning and learning from life. My findings confirmed that the participants who had greater life experience

and a significant amount of informal learning skills didn't benefit from the essential skills training as much as those that were younger with fewer opportunities for informal learning. In the text that follows, I discuss the characteristics of each group of students in order to distinguish positive effects and outcomes from the Essential skills training and the ILM on experiences, attitudes, and confidence.

A. Discussion of Findings

The Group 1 students were native English speakers and high school dropouts. Their learning now was different from the learning experiences in high school, where they struggled and did not get proper help and attention. Now they are retraining for a new career – office assistant, and are very focused and motivated to learn. Prior to their injuries, the skills they felt were important (such as people and problem solving skills, being self-directed, independent, and critical) were attained in informal learning, from life and work experiences. Their barrier was low confidence, lack of practical experience, and limited time in school. From the interviews and journals, it was clear that these students lacked some basic essential skills (computers, reading, writing, and people skills) and although cooperative at the beginning, experienced significant stress. The reasons for the stress were health problems, but also a significant lack of confidence in their abilities. They were very emotional and felt that they were not smart and that other people have much more to offer than they did. They were not comfortable working in a large facilitated group. Their needs were addressed, and they benefited from critical (one-on-one) instruction and independent work. It was evident that the essential skills training and the school environment provided them with necessary skills and confidence to overcome the barriers and succeed in their new career.

The group 2 students were females in their late fifties, high level ESL students, who had not finished high school. They spent very little time in formal schooling, and thought that the essential life skills that they had obtained through informal learning in life were sufficient. These include communication skills and knowing how to deal with different personalities, awareness of personal physical and social limitations, and the English language skills, since they were in the workplace for a number of years. Learning now is easier because of the family support, and the fact that they were doing something for themselves and for their own good. The English and computer skills have improved slightly, and the school environment had a little impact on their confidence and attitude. They went from being stressed and depressed, with major health issues, to being outgoing and a people person. They participated in critical, facilitated, and independent learning, and liked the structure in the long school day, although the work placement seemed more beneficial than the school. It seemed that the essential skills training and the school environment were positive, but that had little impact on these students' motivation, confidence and attitude, compared to the wealth of life experience, health issues, and previously learned behaviour.

The group 3 students were females in their early forties, with some elementary education. They were in a way different, but both were not confident and motivated at the beginning, with multiple issues. They both benefited from the essential skills training and the school environment in different ways. The first student had almost no education at all, and was a low level ESL student. She was not confident that she was able to learn and start a new career at all. At the beginning, when she became more aware of her abilities, she became even more discouraged. It took only a couple of months for her to become able to communicate in English, complete simple

writing and computer assignments and become motivated to learn and go back to the workplace. The other student in this group had more formal education, but major behaviour problems, major pain, stress and depression. At the beginning and throughout her program, she was not happy with her academic performance. The benefits from the essential skills program, the school and the classes at the clinic were major, in respect to her behaviour, attitude, relationships with other people, and motivation to learn. I had the impression that both benefited from the informal learning that took place in the school environment, in the form of significantly improved behaviour and social skills on one hand, and finding support and opportunities for communication on another. In addition, the Integrated Learning Model was beneficial and had positively affected their attitude towards learning, as this group had their preferred component, and their learning needs were addressed by the instructional strategies. These group 3 students were still not confident and had doubts in their abilities, but were very positive and motivated about learning, life, and career.

The Group 4 students were low level ESL students that were not able to communicate effectively. They didn't have a determined vocational goal. They had many issues, from health issues both related and not related to the workplace injury. There were significant personal and family problems that they felt they were not able to deal with. In addition, I believe that they had difficulty transferring skills obtained in formal and informal learning because of language limitations and personal issues. Although these students were cooperative with their teachers and case manager, and there were no behaviour problems, they did not progress well, and are behind schedule. Some components of The Integrated Learning Model were difficult to integrate: facilitated, because of inability to communicate and confusion, and independent because of the

low English skills. Perhaps they need more time to improve their English skills in order to benefit from the ILM. Mostly they benefited from critical (one-on-one instruction). Although they insisted that the level of difficulty and the resources were appropriate, and that there are no academic issues, the essential skills training, the ESL program, and the school environment in general did not affect in any significant way their attitude, motivation, and confidence towards learning and the new career.

In terms of teaching practice, I am somewhat surprised that most of the participants preferred “more teaching”, and they didn’t like to work independently with directions or tutorials. This was in contrast to the fact that adult learners are (supposedly) self-directed. Riesman (1950) pointed that some adults are “other-directed” and in a learning situation become dependent on a teacher. In these cases, it is difficult for adult educators to achieve any independence in their students.

The attitude that I could feel while interviewing my participants, is that they see the process of education and skills development as empowering. It could enable them to take control of their lives. This is in accordance to Freire’s views that education is a way to liberate and give voice to the oppressed, because they will become conscious about the forces that control their lives, become empowered, and consequently, take action.

Adult learning is often seen as change, growth, or even transformation. Learning new skills is a way to grow, and transformation is achieved by also learning critical thinking, because that way the existing assumptions change structure. According to Scott (2006), there are two types of transformations: transformation of personality and perspective transformation. My participants

had been injured in the workplace, and were in the learning process to upgrade their skills in order to pursue a different career. Scott argues that adults who undergo a substantive trigger event (divorce, immigration, loss of a child) go through a transformative process that is mediated by social forces, and they learn from that experience. The transformation involves new awareness of the aspects of self that are not otherwise known. Learning essential skills that enables the adult to construct new meanings and knowledge is a transformative process, and in the learning environment this process is nurtured and supported.

With respect to the literature review, my findings indicated that informal learning, learning in daily activities and at the workplace, played a significant role. This is because of one or more of the following reasons: very little formal education, extensive life and work experience, learning ESL without attending formal programs. There were barriers in learning that resulted from stress, self-concept, and memory. The pain from their injury was a significant barrier, but in my literature review I have not included relevant resources on this matter. The Integrated Learning Model provided a dynamic and structured learning environment that addresses students' learning needs and limitations.

B. Limitations

In my study I investigated students' learning, and their academic achievement and the effect on motivation, attitude and confidence. In many respects, these aspects depend on the individual characteristics of the students, as well as many factors in their lives. As Stake (1988), points out, "the case is worthy of close watch, it has character, it has totality, it has boundaries. It is not

something we want to represent by a score. It is a complex, dynamic system. We want to understand its complexity.” (p. 256).

The limitation in conducting my study was the inability to look at students’ reports and other documents that illustrate their academic achievement because of confidentiality issues. Instead, I interviewed the Centre managers, who provided me with more general answers about students’ academic progress as well as their opinions regarding the progress, attitudes and behaviour in the classroom. There are multiple factors that can affect students’ academic achievement. Due to the complexity of the learning process and the individual attributes and personal situations, there is a risk of misinterpretation. Therefore, during the interviews I asked the Centre managers to provide their perceptions regarding students’ abilities, levels of comfort with instructional strategies and learning models, as well as prior knowledge and achievement. I was careful to distinguish their personal opinions, looked for concrete examples, and formed my own conclusions.

One of the limitations in my study is the fact that I did not label the four groups. I felt that there was not a strict distinction of the groups’ characteristics and the accomplishments. Since the Experiential Learning Theory has a significant place in my study, from a theoretical perspective, I have examined the Learning Style Inventory (LSI) developed by Kolb (1971) for individual learning styles. The LSI identifies four statistically prevalent learning styles: diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating.

According to Boyatzis & Kolb (1999) people with a diverging learning style have broad cultural interests and like to gather information. They are interested in people, tend to be imaginative and

emotional, and have broad cultural interests. In formal learning situations, people with the diverging style prefer to work in groups, listening with an open mind and receiving personalized feedback.

Individuals with an assimilating style are less focused on people and more interested in ideas and abstract concepts. In formal learning situations, people with this style prefer readings, lectures, exploring analytical models, and having time to think things through.

People with a converging style have the ability to solve problems and make decisions based on finding solutions to questions or problems. Individuals with converging learning styles prefer to deal with technical tasks and problems rather than with social and interpersonal issues.

People with an accommodating learning style learn from primarily “hands-on” experience. They enjoy carrying out plans and involving themselves in new and challenging experiences. This learning style is important for effectiveness in action-oriented careers such as marketing or sales.

Although my participants’ learning preferences did align with the four learning styles, there was a complexity of other factors that affected their motivation, attitude, confidence for learning, as well as their academic success. Therefore, I did not label the four groups using this classification or any other.

Finally, students’ chronic pain and physical and mental health turned out to be a significant factor in their learning. Therefore, relevant research that relates learning and pain should be included to enrich and make further conclusions possible.

C. Suggestions for Further Research

It is evident that the essential skills training and the ILM have a positive effect on some adult students' attitude, motivation, and confidence, but not all students benefit from it. I believe that there is a need for research that will find ways to ease the learning and the transition to a new career for the category of injured workers that did not benefit in a significant way from the essential skills training and the ILM. The effects of the integrated learning model on students' learning could be helpful in finding areas for its improvement and ways that will make this model suitable and appropriate for different programs and profiles of learners, and offer suggestions for ways of implementing this model in practice.

As I mention in the methodology chapter, one advantage of the case study method in this study is that some aspects of the cases I studied shed light on problems that should be questioned and studied further. Here, I'm referring to the fact that students do not always choose their vocational goal. The decision is made by their WSIB case managers, and is based on extensive testing, students' background, and physical limitations. In most cases, students are in agreement with the vocational goal, but in my research this fact is in contradiction with the fact that adults need to be part of the decision-making process in their programs. This topic could possibly be the basis for further research.

D. Conclusions

Adults have special needs and requirements as learners. They are goal-oriented, self-directed, and have greater life experience than youth (Knowles, 1980). Essential skills training has the potential to provide students who have been injured at the workplace the ability to build the

skills necessary to function in an academic environment and pursue vocational-specific programs and new careers. The integrated learning model is an attempt to address adult students' needs and provide a predictable, structured, and dynamic environment where they will receive individualized attention, facilitation and opportunities for interactions with other learners, as well as time for independent work. Using qualitative data from journals and interviews, I examined the effect of the ILM on adult students' academic achievement, motivation, attitude, and confidence. My findings indicate that those who benefited the most from the program, demonstrated the greatest academic progress, and improvement in attitude, confidence and/or motivation were the Group 1 students, that is, the native English speakers and high school dropouts that had attained many of the essential skills through informal learning, and from the Group 3 students, those with major pain and behaviour issues, low level English skills, with little confidence in their abilities. Students from Group 2 (the high level ESL students, with physical and psychological issues and limitations, positive about learning, but with no major progress or change in previously learned skills and adopted behaviour), and Group 4 (the low level ESL students, without determined vocational goal, or not having their vocational preference taken into account, with multiple personal and health issues) benefited the least. One can assume that age, the ESL level, health issues, retraining time provided and stress are factors that affected the extent to which the participant was able to benefit. The essential skills training and the integrated learning model are beneficial for the certain types of students and should be further improved and integrated to address the academic and personal needs of the students. For the types of students that did not benefit, other strategies and approaches should be developed to prepare these students for their college programs and new careers.

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Appendix A: Letter of Information (Students)



The Importance and Place of the Essential Skills Training in Adult Education: A Case Study of the Integrated Learning Model

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Introduction

My name is Elena Poposka and I am graduate student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research about perceived effects of the essential skills training and Integrated Learning Model (ILM) on students' academic achievement, motivation, and attitude towards learning and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Purpose of the study

The aims of this study are to explore deeper the needs of adult students so that they fully benefit from the learning process. The essential skills training provides students with the skills necessary to function in an academic environment and pursue vocational-specific programs and careers of their choice. The integrated learning model is an attempt to address adult students' needs and provide a predictable, structured, and dynamic environment where they will receive individualized attention, facilitation and opportunities for interactions with other learners, as well as time for independent work. The goal of this study is, using qualitative data from journals, interviews, and assessments, to examine the perceived effect of these two factors on adult students' academic achievement, motivation, attitude, and confidence. There is a possibility that the findings will open opportunities for improvement of this model, as well as suggestions for ways of implementing this model in practice.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to keep a daily journal for 6 weeks. This activity will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes a day. In your journal entries, you will be asked to record your thoughts about your learning experiences. The results from the essential skills

assessment that was conducted to determine your abilities, knowledge and skills and to provide basis for the program planning will be used in this research. Also, you will be asked to participate in a 1-hour interview. The interview will be scheduled at a time and place that is convenient for you and the researcher. The interview session will be audio-recorded and notes will be made for further analysis.

Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. Your case worker will be not be informed whether or not you choose to participate in this study. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. All data will be stored in password protected files and destroyed after 5 years.

Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your academic status.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at 519-661-3036 or ethics@uwo.ca. If you have any questions about this study, please contact me, Elena Poposka, or my supervisor, Dr. Ron Hansen.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Appendix B: Letter of Information (Centre managers)



The Importance and Place of the Essential Skills Training in Adult Education: A Case Study of the Integrated Learning Model

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Introduction

My name is Elena Poposka and I am graduate student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research about perceived effects of the essential skills training and Integrated Learning Model (ILM) on students' academic achievement, motivation, and attitude towards learning and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Purpose of the study

The aims of this study are to explore deeper the needs of adult students so that they fully benefit from the learning process. The essential skills training provides students with the skills necessary to function in an academic environment and pursue vocational-specific programs and careers of their choice. The integrated learning model is an attempt to address adult students' needs and provide a predictable, structured, and dynamic environment where they will receive individualized attention, facilitation and opportunities for interactions with other learners, as well as time for independent work. The goal of this study is, using qualitative data from journals, interviews, and assessments, to examine the perceived effect of these two factors on adult students' academic achievement, motivation, attitude, and confidence. There is a possibility that the findings will open opportunities for improvement of this model, as well as suggestions for ways of implementing this model in practice.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate, you will be invited to a 1 hour interview. On the interview, you will be asked about the challenges and benefits to students' learning of the essential skills training and the new learning model. I will be looking for examples of how the three components of the integrated model were structured in a specific topic, and about the challenges of this model. The

interview will be scheduled at a time and place that is convenient for you and the researcher. The interview session will be audio-recorded and notes will be made for further analysis.

Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. All data will be stored in password protected files and destroyed after 5 years.

Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your employment status.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at 519-661-3036 or ethics@uwo.ca. If you have any questions about this study, please contact me, Elena Poposka, or my supervisor, Dr. Ron Hansen.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Appendix C: Consent Form

The Importance and Place of the Essential Skills Training in Adult Education: A Case Study of the Integrated Learning Model

Elena Poposka, Graduate student

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of person obtaining informed consent: _____

Signature of person obtaining informed consent: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Interviews with Students

Personal Profile - Learning:

1. What is your life story in relation to education and learning?
2. What learning experiences have been the most valuable to you?
3. How is your learning now different from the learning you did in your school years?
4. What do you think are your barriers in learning?
5. In your opinion, what are the skills necessary for work and everyday life that you didn't acquire in school? Examples: manage information, use numbers, think and solve problems, communicate effectively, work with others, think critically, use computers, read, write, use documents.
6. Do you think that you had these and other necessary skills and abilities to be successful in this program before you started essential skills training?
7. What skills did you acquire in your essential skills program that will be beneficial for your success in college/workplace?
8. Are you confident in your abilities to learn and meet the requirements of your college/occupational program?

Personal Profile – Work Experience:

9. What is the vocational goal in your academic program approved by WSIB?
10. Explain why this program was chosen.

11. What type of education or training do you need to complete in order to achieve this vocational goal?

12. Are there any other issues or obstacles that will prevent you from being successful in your new career? What are those obstacles?

13. If obstacles exist, do you think that the essential skills training will help you in any way overcome these obstacles? How? Be specific.

ILM

1. Do you understand the three components of the ILM (Critical, Facilitated, Independent)?

2. Have you participated in all three components in your essential skills training?

3. In what component do you think you learn the most?

4. In what component do you think you learn the least?

5. Do you think that the Centre environment is conducive to learning?

6. Do you think that the ways teaching and learning are organized in the Centre are appropriate for your learning style?

Appendix E: Instructions for Completion of Journal

What is a journal and what is its purpose?

Journal writing is close to natural speech and it reveals thought processes and mental habits, and can provide evidence of mental processes. Journals are a safe place to practice writing daily since they are a less formal, less threatening way for adult learners to approach writing and to express themselves. The purpose is to promote critical thinking, awareness, and reflection.

Journal format

Please try to complete the journal daily using full sentences. We prefer that you use 3-10 sentences for each journal entry. You may handwrite or type your journal entries.

What do I write?

What did you learn today? Include the essential skills covered, examples of concepts/skills/methods learned.

How was your learning organized: did you learn in a critical (small group or one –on –one with the instructor), facilitated (large group), or independent environment.

Describe what approach/environment was effective, and what was not effective?

What difficulties did you encounter? How do you plan to deal with these difficulties.

How are you going to benefit from today's learning?

Feel free to write about your thoughts, feelings, and related experiences, and include any information that will provide insight in your learning experiences.

How will it be used?

Your journal entries will be used for research purposes only; they will not be marked for writing style, grammar, or content. The journal entries will not in any way affect your academic marks and progress in the centre.

Appendix F: Interviews with Centre Managers

Questions:

1. What is the vocational goal for this student, and the programs that he/she has at Grade Expectations? Programs at other institutions?
2. Can you tell me more about the initial assessment and its relation to the skills needed for his/her vocational goal or college program? What were his/her strengths and weaknesses on the initial assessment?
3. Can you tell me something more about this student's attitude at the initial assessment, as well as at the beginning of his/her program at Grade Expectations? Positive /enthusiastic / interested / negative / complained /...
4. How is this student progressing? (On/behind schedule) Tell me something more about his/her behaviour in the classroom (motivated, positive, interested, with other students)
5. What essential skills have improved significantly? What are areas of improvement?
6. Describe this student's learning environment (critical/facilitated/independent).
7. Do you think that learning some essential skills and being in the centre have affected student's attitude and motivation towards learning and his/her future career?