THE APPLICATION OF ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES

TO THE

REDESIGN OF A POST-DIPLOMA PROGRAM

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ADULT EDUCATION

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March, 2001

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ABSTRACT

Educational institutions such as community colleges have responded to the continuing education needs of professionals by offering post-diploma specialized programs. This thesis describes one such program that a community college developed in response to the needs of professionals in the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE). These professionals needed additional certification beyond their entry-level requirements, in order to qualify as resource teachers/consultants in their field. The first program that my College planned for ECE professionals failed, in large part due to its inflexibility and failure to meet the needs of the students. The focus of this thesis is on the revised program, specifically its redesign and implementation phases. The thesis describes how models of program planning and principles of adult education were utilized during the revision. The study concludes that program delivery, which is not suited to adult students, is one cause of program failure; that evaluation is a key component of the program planning process; that the students' orientation to program expectations is vital; and that motivation of students is a key factor in a program's success. The study recommends that as many stakeholders as possible be involved during the redesign and implementation phases of any program. It also recommends that guidelines should be written on how to redesign existing programs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to those whose assistance and support made it possible for me to achieve my learning goal, a Master of Adult Education degree. First, I would like to thank the staff at Loyalist College, Belleville, who invited St. Francis Xavier University to come and offer the degree program on-site. I would also like to thank the staff at the Instructional Development Center, Queen's University for their support in assisting me with my literature review. I would like to express my sincere thanks for the support, assistance, and encouragement that I received from the staff at St. Lawrence College, Kingston as well as from my colleagues in the ECE field.

Second, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Marie Gillen, my advisor at St. Francis Xavier University, who offered guidance, reassurance, and motivation. Without her support and understanding, I might not have reached my goal.

Third, I would like to express my gratitude to my mother for her continuing support of my academic pursuits. I would like to thank my children, Peter, David, and Kendra, without whose understanding when "mum was studying," this thesis would never have materialized. To my partner, John, my sincere thanks for his patience, understanding, and help in holding "the fort" together during this process.

Finally, I would like to recognize the support that I have received from my friend who has accompanied me on this learning journey, Jane Barken. Together we will walk across the stage, degrees in hand!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As more professionals recognize the value of additional education beyond the entry level requirements of their jobs, they actively seek specialized learning opportunities. Educational institutions such as community colleges have responded to this increased demand by offering post-degree and post-diploma specialized programs. Some of these programs have been run successfully, while others have petered out after a short time. Reasons for failure vary from program to program, but a common factor tends to be learners' dissatisfaction with the delivery process. Many of the people, who had been enrolled in these programs, complained that the delivery of the program did not take into account their preferred learning styles, nor was their practical experience valued. Another common complaint was that the perceived needs of adult learners were not being acknowledged, and consequently not met. Whenever adult learners start voicing these concerns and nothing changes, they will disengage from a program. A good example is the post-diploma program in Early Childhood Education (ECE) that was offered at the college where I teach. It was established in the 1980s, was offered for a few years, then ceased to attract students.

In the field of Early Childhood Education, it has long been recognized that additional education beyond the entry level, 2-year college diploma is essential in order to keep abreast of new legislation, issues, and research in the field. One such issue in ECE is how to work effectively with children who have special needs, and their families. This study describes how adult learning principles have been used to redesign the post-

diploma program in Early Childhood Education at the college where I teach because it had failed to meet the various educational needs of the students. Henceforth in this thesis, the college where I teach will be specifically referred to as "the College".

Background of the Study

Childcare in Canada is not a new phenomena. As early as 1850, Roman Catholic religious women in Quebec established child-care centers. In Ontario, the first day care center, called a creche, opened in the 1880s. In fact, it is still in existence today and is known as Victoria Day Care Services. The cities of Edmonton and Winnipeg started childcare services in 1908 and 1909 respectively. The Vancouver Children's Hospital established an infant and preschool center in 1910. However, it was not until World War II, with the passing of the War Measures Act, that the federal government of Canada provided funds for childcare. The Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement provided for shared funding between the federal government of Canada and any province that was interested in developing child-care centers. When the War Measures Act ended, the funding for childcare from the federal government of Canada ceased. The prevailing view at the time was that the women, who had been employed in the factories, would leave their employment and become full-time homemakers once again. Many women, however, continued to work outside the home and the issue of childcare remained. This fact gave rise to a problem because any cost-sharing would now be limited to agreements between local municipalities and provincial governments. As a result of pressure from working women, provincial legislation such as the 1946 Day

Nurseries Act of Ontario was enacted. However, it would be more than 20 years before

the federal government of Canada would address again the need for childcare funding.

The federal government of Canada in 1966 passed the Canada Assistance Plan

Act (CAPA) that offered to share with any province the cost of up to half of the financial

assistance required for children in childcare, whose families were deemed to qualify

through a needs or income test. This CAPA arrangement appeared to be plausible, but it

did not provide any special funding for children with special needs. In fact, it was not

until the Charter of Rights and Freedoms became part of the Canadian Constitution in

1982 that Section 15 guaranteed equal rights for all citizens, including those with special

needs. One of these rights is the right to an education. Even though education is a

provincial matter, parents of children with disabilities, who feel that they are being

denied access to education, have the right of legislative appeal under the Charter of

Rights. Unfortunately, this right applies only to children over the age of 6 years, the time

when education is mandatory. Early childhood education (infants through children age 6

years in preschool settings, children ages 6-12 years attending child-care settings before

and after school) is viewed as optional and can not be considered a right under the

Charter of Rights. Fortunately, most provinces and territories have developed their own

child-care legislation that has included provisions for children with special needs. The

main intention of the legislation in most jurisdictions is normalization and integration.

The underlying philosophy of the legislation is that children and adults with special

needs should not be institutionalized, but rather remain in their own community,

preferably in their own homes. Similarly, children with special needs should not be

separated from other children either in preschool or other school settings. They should be integrated into early childhood education programs as far as possible, so they can learn to interact with their nondisabled peers (Allen, Paasche, Cornell, & Engel, 1994).

As a result of Ontario legislative changes, which included children with special needs attending mainstream early childhood programs, the need for qualified resource teachers became evident. These teachers are specially trained to plan and implement programs at child-care centers for children with special needs. A resource teacher also is qualified to act as a liaison between the family and the child-care center, and the family and other professionals. Unfortunately, a 2-year diploma in Early Childhood Education provides ECE graduates only with very basic knowledge about how to deal with children with special needs. Further advanced training is required for these graduates so they can qualify as certified resource teachers.

At the College, initial talks concerning the need for post-diploma resource teacher training are noted in the September 29, 1982 minutes of the Advisory Committee of the ECE department. This need had surfaced because many of the ECE graduates, who had found employment in the school system, were not qualified to work with children with special needs on a one-to-one basis. At this meeting a subcommittee was established. Their mandate was to do some preliminary investigation relating to the availability of resource teacher training by contacting the other colleges in the province. At the November 3, 1982 Advisory Committee meeting, the chair of the subcommittee reported that four metro Toronto colleges planned to offer a post-diploma resource teacher program in the upcoming academic year, although none had received approval as yet

from the Council of Regents. The outcome of the news was that the College, on the advice of the ECE Advisory Committee, decided to offer a similar program in its catchment area, and that the ECE department would design and implement this post-diploma program. The proposed start date was targeted for the fall of 1983. Throughout the intervening months, a subcommittee of the ECE Advisory Committee undertook the work of planning and preparing a proposal submission for the Council of Regents. At the June 8, 1983 Advisory Committee meeting, the subcommittee circulated the proposal before it was submitted. As the minutes report, the Advisory Committee acknowledged "the need for such a program for those already working in the ECE field and hoped for Ministry approval." A letter, dated June 30, 1983, from the past-president of the local branch of the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario, confirmed the need for such a post-diploma program in the catchment area where the College is located.

As with many proposals sent to the government for approval, there was a time delay. The program could not start until final approval was received. It finally came late in 1984. By then there were six colleges planning to offer, or who were already offering similar programs. The College offered its first course in the fall of 1985 with an enrollment of 27 students. Between the winter of 1987 and the winter of 1989, only 14 more students entered the program, bringing the total of entries to 41 students. Of this group only a small number (approximately 6) actually graduated; the others dropped out. The program ceased to be offered in 1990.

The Problem

As early as the fall of 1986, the College had identified problems with the program. On Wednesday, December 3, 1986 a meeting was held at the College during which students enrolled in the program were invited to share their concerns. After this meeting the Dean of Human Studies summarized these concerns. One concern related to in-class course work; some of the students felt that the courses were not meeting their needs. Another concern related to the design of the field placement component; some of the students found that they were unable to complete their field placement requirements because they could not leave their places of employment without losing pay. Still another concern was the College's inflexibility in granting the students credit for their work experience. This fact aside, the students felt that their experiences should be recognized, at least partially, so that they might be able to lessen the field placement time thus enabling them to meet the program requirements without putting themselves under undue financial strain.

In June 1988, two instructors of the program wrote a report in which they identified the problem of low enrollment in the post-diploma Resource Teacher Certificate program. As a remedy to the problem, these instructors proposed a compressed program as a way to attract students. Their proposal included a realignment of the hours for the courses and a different delivery mode. They suggested that instead of the traditional one class a week for 15 weeks, that the College adopt a series of weekend workshops. The College, unfortunately, did not act on these suggestions.

Courses continued to be offered without any changes being made, and

consequently the problem of low enrollment continued to plague the program. In 1990,

even though no courses were being offered that year, a survey was sent to students

currently enrolled in the program, and to those who had dropped out of the program, to

find out why they were not continuing. The survey included some questions on the design

of the program. Unfortunately, there is no record of the findings of this survey.

In what would appear to be a last ditch effort to revive the program, an ad hoc

committee meeting took place on August 4, 1993. At this meeting, the main part of the

discussion centered around developing and distributing another survey in which various

delivery options for the program would be presented to the students enrolled in the

program. The objective was to ascertain which option would be most feasible for the

majority of students and which would entice them to continue with the program. Some of

the options included: evenings, weekend sessions, 4 months of intensive study, and

distance education. Seemingly, not enough interest was generated from the survey to

revive the program.

The Resource Teacher Certificate program sat in suspension until the ECE

Advisory Committee meeting of November 1998. One of the committee members, a

representative from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the provincial

department that licenses child-care programs in the county, introduced the possibility of

renewing the program because of the increased number of children with special needs in

the child-care centers. The ECE faculty on the committee also reported that recently they

had received several telephone inquiries regarding the status of the Resource Teacher

Certificate program. Some committee members, who were familiar with the original program, immediately identified the problem of low enrolment, which they seemed to feel stemmed in large part from the way the program was delivered. After a lengthy discussion, the Advisory Committee decided that the feasibility of offering the program once again should be investigated. They acknowledged that the major challenge would be to offer the program in such a way as to retain the students for its duration. At this point, as an ECE faculty member who had been invited to attend the Advisory Committee meeting, I volunteered to take on this task and to report regularly to the Committee.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to redesign and implement, based on program planning models and on adult learning principles, a post-diploma program for ECE graduates who wanted to be certified as resource teachers. The intent of the study was that the students' needs would be met and that enrollment in the program, which required 2 years of part-time study, could be sustained.

After I reviewed the work of notable adult educators (Brookfield, 1986; Brundage & MacKeracher, 1980; Knowles, 1989; Merriam & Brockett, 1997; & Vella, 1994), I selected key principles of adult education to use as guidelines during the redesign process. By keeping these principles at the forefront of the redesign process, the subcommittee members and I were able to establish a sound philosophical basis for the study, which included the redesign, implementation, and evaluation of the program.

Scope and Limitations

This study had three parts. First, I evaluated the program as it had existed. This was done by means of personal interviews and telephone contacts with the people who had been associated with the original program, such as former students, graduates, and instructors.

Second, I took part in a series of subcommittee meetings during which the planning of what the subcommittee referred to as "the revised program" took place. Following these meetings, I developed a survey that was distributed as widely as possible. The purpose of the survey was to generate interest in the revised program and to determine the respondents' reactions to its redesign. The redesign process terminated when the subcommittee presented its final report to the ECE Advisory Committee.

Third, I evaluated the program after it had been offered for a year. I gathered data mainly through anecdotal observations and comments from students who had taken part in the program.

The study has three limitations. The first was the constraints that the Ministry of Education and Training imposed, and that the College upheld with regard to redesigning existing programs. One constraint was the restriction regarding changes to any program that already exists. In effect, I was not allowed to change more than 10% of the original program either in terms of its delivery or learning outcomes. Another constraint, imposed by the College, required that the learning outcomes be in place before the students began a course. This constraint inhibited instructors from consulting with students regarding their personal learning goals for the course.

The second limitation was the slow, tedious process of changing the name of the Resource Teacher Certificate program to another name that would be more congruent with current jargon and changing job descriptions in the field of early childhood education. To change the name of a program, although it was important for recruiting students, was not a simple task. It required work at both the College and ministry levels. At the time of the writing of this thesis, the name the College uses for the program is <u>Studies in Childhood Exceptionalities</u>. This name has been approved in principle by the College, but it has not been approved by the Ministry of Education and Training because a provincial subcommittee working on a name change for all of the Resource Teacher programs in the province has not yet decided on a common name. It is estimated that another year will pass before a name is determined. In the meantime, the College continues using Studies in Childhood Exceptionalities.

The third limitation was the fact that the teacher selected to deliver the first course had very little teaching experience. She, however, was part of the planning committee, a graduate of the original program, and a well-respected practitioner in the field. As a way to deal with this limitation, I volunteered to be her mentor throughout the first course. We agreed that the mentoring process was a rewarding experience for both of us.

Assumptions

This study is based on two assumptions: (a) the people who agreed to be part of the subcommittee would contribute not only their expertise regarding the content of the

program, but also their experiences and suggestions relating to adult education practice, and (b) a renewed interest in the redesigned program would be realized and would result in a sustained enrollment of students.

Definition of Terms

Early childhood educators are persons who have completed a 2-year post-secondary diploma or a 3 or 4-year degree from a recognized post-secondary educational institution. This diploma or degree certifies them to care for children from infancy to adolescence in licensed child-care settings. In Ontario, a diploma is the basic qualifier recognized by the Day Nurseries Act for employment in the field.

An exceptionality can be described as the "extreme end of what society considers normal development" (Allen, et al., 1994, p. 12). This includes, by virtue of the definition, children who are both gifted as well as those with special needs, a term preferred by early childhood educators and other service providers. These special needs are categorized under three broad headings. First, there are impairments which refer to incapacities or injuries, especially those which have to do with the sensory or neural systems; for example, speech or visual impairments. Second, there are atypical special needs which are broad in nature. When determining these impairments, the following questions are asked: How far behind is a child's development compared to a normal child? Does this gap make the child's development atypical? If the answer is "yes," then the child is considered to have special needs. Finally, there are developmental disabilities that usually refer to a variety of conditions that interfere with the child's physical,

sensory, or cognitive development. These developmental disabilities always surface between conception and 18 years of age (Allen, et al., 1994).

A resource teacher, a term used in the Day Nurseries Act, is a person who assists children with special needs and their families by providing assessments; individual program plans; and advocacy on behalf of the family and children within the community, and with other professional organizations. A new term for resource teacher, which is being promoted in the field of early childhood education, is resource consultant. As dollars shrink for childcare, centers can no longer afford the luxury of a resource teacher on staff. Instead, the centers use resource consultants who work out of service agencies and carry a caseload of clients from different child-care settings. These consultants typically take care of the whole family, not just the child. In this thesis, the term resource teacher is used throughout the text to avoid confusion. Names appear to come and go with the changing focus of the field and the government's response regarding funding dollars available for children with special needs.

Jarvis (1983) offers the following simple definition of program planning: "The total number of courses that are actually organized and taught within the educational institution" (p. 215). Similarly, Boone (1985) views program planning as a master plan for behavioural change in the learners as a result of stated needs and objectives designed to meet those needs. In contrast, Cervero and Wilson (1994) define program planning as a social activity involving the learner and the organization. Brundage and MacKeracher (1980) refer to program planning as an extremely complex activity that defies an exact definition. For the purposes of this study, program planning is defined as the organization

of learning outcomes into meaningful learning experiences that reflect adult learning principles and practices based on the needs of students and the demands of their employers.

Plan of Presentation

This thesis is presented in four chapters. Following this first chapter, I review the literature in three main areas: adult learning theories and principles, program planning, and program evaluation. In the adult learning theories and principles section, I look specifically at how these ideas are applied to practice.

In chapter 3 I describe the redesign and implementation process of the study. The process consisted of three steps: (a) an evaluation of the original program, (b) the redesign process itself, and (c) the evaluation of the redesigned program to ascertain its success in retaining students after one year of operation. In the final chapter, I discuss how each of the adult learning principles that I applied in the study is reflected in the literature. The conclusions summarize the major findings of the study. I also offer several recommendations relating to the redesign of a post-diploma program that might be of interest to adult educators working in a community college setting.

CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter I review the literature relating to the topics discussed in this thesis. Firstly, I review selected literature pertaining to key theories and principles of adult learning. Secondly, I present an overview of the program planning literature that provided a framework for my study. Finally, I focus in detail on evaluation, which is one aspect of the program planning process. This review provides a backdrop and rationale for the study described in the next chapter.

Adult Learning Theories and Principles

In this first section, I concentrate on the literature related to several key theories and principles of adult learning. I begin with a general discussion of theory building. I next move to a more specific discussion of selected adult learning theories and principles, focusing on how these are applied specifically to practice. In the final section, I examine the literature pertaining to program evaluation. I begin with a general discussion, and then examine various models of program evaluation.

Theory Building

Over 20 years ago, Dubin and Okun (1973) noted that "if a comprehensive theory of learning existed which was applicable to adults, it would be of great utility for both researchers and instructors" (p. 3). After lamenting the fact that there was no single theory, they turned their attention to delineating and comparing the learning approaches

prevalent at that time. A decade later, Cross (1981) acknowledged the fact that theory building is difficult in adult education. In her view, it would be highly unlikely that there would ever be a single theory of adult education due to its complex nature.

Merriam and Caffarella (1991), writing a decade later, concur with Cross's (1981) opinion. As they see it, there can never be a single theory of adult learning, because the field is much too complex to be condensed into one theory, which explains it adequately. Writing on this topic at the same time, Brookfield (1992) notes that "the discovery, or generation . . . of a comprehensive theory of adult education continues to exercise a fascination for scholars and researchers alike" (p. 80). He believes that all adult educators develop some sort of informal theory based on their own context in order to understand how they function as adult educators in their particular area of practice. As Brookfield points out, these theories remain only as ideas if they are not critically reviewed and tested in various areas and aspects of adult education. Brookfield, therefore, encourages the development of a formal theory in the field of adult education. He claims that this step would be beneficial to the field of adult education for three reasons: formal theories hold more weight in academic circles, personal hunches and intuitions can be framed into theories of practice that can be useful to others, and a common criteria of theory building would enable researchers and theorists to talk to each other in terms that are understood by all.

Adult Learning Theories and Principles

Merriam and Caffarella (1991), after examining current theories of adult learning, have concluded that rather than formal theories, the field of adult education is influenced by several models of learning. They place these models into three categories: those based on adult characteristics, those based on adult situations, and those based on changes in consciousness.

Models Based on Adult Characteristics

The best known model in this category is that of Knowles (1980), who based his ideas about adult education on the concept of andragogy. At the beginning, he viewed andragogy (the teaching of adults) and pedagogy (the teaching of children) as opposites, but later modified his stance because this contrast accentuated differences and ignored commonalities between children and adults' learning. Consequently, he later presented andragogy and pedagogy on a continuum, the former applying primarily to adults and the latter applying to children. He based his theory of andragogy on six assumptions about adult learners. He began with four assumptions and later added a fifth and sixth assumption. In his autobiography, Knowles (1989) provides a summary of all six assumptions.

The first assumption is that adult learners move from dependent to self-directed learning. In other words, in terms of their overall development, adults have a greater need to be self-directed. The second assumption is the critical role that experience plays in adult learning. As adults grow and develop, they "accumulate an increasing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning--for themselves and

others" (Knowles, 1980, p. 44). The third assumption is the concept of readiness.

Knowles believes that people become "ready to learn something when they experience a

need to learn in order to cope more satisfyingly with real-life tasks or problems"

(Knowles, 1980, p. 44). The fourth assumption, addresses orientation to learning.

Knowles (1989) believes adults want to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned

to situations of immediate or future concern. Facilitators, therefore, need to be more

concerned with competency-development rather than subject-development. The fifth

assumption focuses on orientation to learning. Adults are life centered (or task centered

or problem centered) in their orientation to learning. Accordingly, learning experiences

in adult education are increasingly organized around life tasks or problems. Finally,

Knowles, in his sixth assumption, claims that although some adults are responsive to

extrinsic motivators (better jobs, promotions, salary increases, and the like) the more

potent motivators are intrinsic motivators (the desire for increased self-esteem, quality of

life, responsibility, job satisfaction, and the like).

Brookfield (1986) refers to the characteristics of adult learners in his theory of

self-directed learning. He summarizes his findings concerning adult learning as follows:

> Adults learn throughout their lives, with the negotiations of the transitional stages
> in the life-span being the immediate causes and motives for much of this learning.
> They exhibit diverse learning styles--strategies for coding information, cognitive
> procedures, mental sets--and learn in different ways, at different times, for
> different purposes. As a rule, however, they like their learning activities to be
> problem centered and to be meaningful to their life situation, and they want the
> learning outcomes to have some immediacy of application. The past experiences
> of adults affect their current learning, sometimes serving as an enhancement,
> sometimes as a hindrance. Effective learning is also linked to the adult's
> subscription to a self-concept of himself or herself as a learner. Finally, adults
> exhibit a tendency toward self-directedness in their learning. (p. 31)

Many of the same concepts found in Knowles's (1980) work are echoed in the above quote. For example, Knowles cites as a critical assumption that adults are no longer interested in postponed applications of learning, rather they require an immediacy of application. This assumption is consistent with Brookfield's statement that adult learners want "the learning outcomes to have some immediacy of application" (p. 31). Another example, which shows that Knowles and Brookfield have parallel thoughts is their views about the concept of learning; both men believe that adult learning should be performance-centered or problem-centered rather than subject-centered. Both Knowles and Brookfield also agree that self-directed learning is "the most distinguishing characteristic of adult learning" (p. 25).

Cross (1981) offers what she refers to as a "tentative framework" for adult learning. Her "Characteristics of Adults as Learners" (CAL) is a conceptual framework that attempts to "elucidate differences between adults and children as learners and ultimately to suggest how teaching adults should differ from teaching children" (p. 234). She acknowledges that this framework is basically the position of andragogy. In her framework, she considers physiological, sociocultural, and psychological characteristics. Physiological characteristics refer to such things as the aging process; sociocultural characteristics relate to life phases; and psychological characteristics refer to adult development stages.

Models Based on Adult Life Situations

In this category of adult learning models, Knox (1977) and Jarvis (1983) are two authors, among many, who are representative of adult life situation models. Both writers

are concerned with situations that adult learners often find themselves in, such as new

employment, rather than with their personal characteristics. According to both authors,

adults are motivated to search for new learning situations in order to build on their

current experiences and to add new experiences, which will eventually enable them to

feel more comfortable in their new life situations. As Jarvis (1999) explains, "People

carry all their learning from their previous experiences (their biography) into every

situation and these are employed in coping with their current situation and in creating

new individual experiences from which they learn" (p. 46).

> Knox (1977) believes that:

> in most instances in which adults purposefully engage in systematic and sustained
> learning activities, their interest is to modify performance. Their reasons for
> engaging in the learning activity and their anticipated uses of the new learnings
> typically relate to a coherent area of activity or performance. (p. 406)

He contends that the situations in which adults often find themselves affect their

learning; therefore, factors such as health or age can determine whether adults will or

will not engage in some sort of learning. Also, in various life situations, such as

embarking on new employment, adults look to learning as a way to build on current

competencies as well as to give meaning to new situations. Knox's idea is defined as a

proficiency theory because it stresses the discrepancy between the current and the desired

level of proficiency of the learner.

Jarvis (1983) further expands on the concept of the adult life situation by placing

the learner within his or her socio-cultural framework. He believes that not only does the

individual learner need to be considered, but the broader contexts of society and culture

also need to be taken into account. Briefly, his model consists of four interrelated

components. The first is culture that he defines as "the sum total of knowledge, beliefs,

ideas, values, practices prevalent in a particular society" (p. 69). Culture, however, is not

static, so this component of the theory is ever changing due to various influences such as

technology, political forces, and economic realities. The second component deals with

the agencies of cultural transmission. Essentially, the way individuals respond to

interpretations of culture affects how and when they learn. As an example, Jarvis points

out the difference between children and adults with regard to learning. Learning for

children, on the one hand, is primarily unidirectional from teacher to child. Learning for

adults, on the other hand, can be in both directions, equally or unequally, depending on

the situation. The third component of this model is the self. This concept has many

interpretations, but in terms of learning, as Jarvis explains, it comes into play when

adults assume the role of teacher, but at other times are learners themselves. He

concludes that however difficult the concept might be, the self is "quite crucial to both

the theory and the practice of teaching adults" (p. 72). The final component of his theory

refers to the learning cycle. Jarvis explains this component as follows:

> In a cyclical fashion, the cycle starts with 'culture—a rapidly changing
> phenomena'. It moves along to 'agencies of transmission—a selection of culture
> transmitted by a variety of means'. The third step is the 'individual receives the
> cultural transmission, depending upon physical ability and processes it in accord
> with previous experience'. Next the 'individual decides consciously or
> unconsciously to accept or reject the results of process.' Finally, the last
> component of the cycle is that the 'individual integrates decision into the body of
> knowledge, etc. in the self and may externalize these new cultural perceptions in
> action or in interaction with others.' The cycle then returns to culture. (p. 73)

Merriam and Caffarella (1991) have extrapolated three important points from Jarvis' complex model. Firstly, all learning begins with experience; secondly, learning is an interactive process; and finally, this model is unique to adult learners.

Models Based on Changes in Consciousness

Two representative theorists in this category are Freire (1970) and Mezirow (1991). Both these writers in their work deal "with mental construction of experience and inner meaning" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 259).

The work of Freire (1970) is a classic, although many find him difficult to understand. His ideas are grounded in his cultural context, the oppression of the masses in Brazil by an elite who were from a different cultural background and who tried to force their dominant values on the people. Through the process of literacy education, Freire created learning situations in which the people were given the opportunity to reflect on their own understanding of themselves and their socio-cultural context. He coined concepts like "banking" of learning and "problem-solving education" that were very radical for his time. Even though his writing is not strictly concerned with developing a theory of education, it has had a great influence on the development of the work of others like Mezirow (1978, 1991), who first articulated transformational learning theory, a dramatic, fundamental change in the way individuals see themselves and the world in which they live.

Mezirow's initial ideas on perspective transformation, formulated in 1978, stimulated a great deal of discussion much like Knowles's (1980) theory of andragogy had earlier. Mezirow's theory is based on his study of women returning to school after a

prolonged absence. Taylor (1997), in his critique of Mezirow's theory, concludes that "the concept of a transformative learning process is representative of Mezirow's efforts to develop a comprehensive theory of adult learning" (p. 34). The essence of Mezirow's theory is that of making meaning of prior learning experiences by using reflective practices, a process that forces learners to assess or reassess previously held assumptions or premises. The learning becomes transformative when these assumptions or premises, if found to be distorted, are reframed into new meaning schemes. In other words, there is a change in consciousness. In his critique, Taylor found "no discussion . . . about transformative learning theory as a viable model for adult learning or about implications for practice based on empirical studies" (p. 35). Taylor concludes that even though Mezirow's basic premises about learning have become accepted practice in adult education, there have been no empirical studies relating to his theory. He makes a strong case for this kind of research.

Adult Learning Theories and Principles Applied to Practice

. In this section I review the literature on the application of theories and principles to practice. However, this task is not as clear cut as one might think because there are differing views concerning the value of theories and the universality of their application to practice.

Cross (1981), in her discussion of theory and practice, points out that in an applied profession "theory and practice must be constantly interactive. Theory without practice is empty, and practice without theory is blind" (p. 110). Jarvis (1991) also

believes that "adult education as a field of academic study cannot be separated from adult education as a field of practice" (p. 3). Cervero (1989) goes further; he notes that "in every day practice, adult and continuing educators make judgements, they do not apply principles" (p. 107). He argues that everyday practice cannot be understood by the application of standardized principles because most learning situations are unique. As a consequence, many educators are forced to make choices and/or judgements about how to deal with learning situations. In his later writing, Cervero (1991) examines the relationship between theory and practice. He delineates four categories of theory and practice. The first category is adult education without theory. Many people who subscribe to this notion "would argue that their 'common sense', which was developed through their formal education and practical experience, is the basis of their success as educators" (p. 22). The second category is theory as the foundation of practice. The premise on which this category is based is that theory should inform practice and that this theory should be generated through a systematic process of research. The assumption is that the theory derived from this method is more scientifically sound than theory emanating from experience. Theory in practice is the third category. This category is based on the belief that theory can be used to help educators interpret practical situations by "uncovering the tacit knowledge and values that guide their work. It holds that practitioners actually do operate on the basis of theories" (p. 26). Brookfield's (1986) work on critically reflective practitioners is a good example of this category. The fourth category, theory and practice for emancipation, presents theory and practice as "indivisible because they are part of a single reality" (p. 30). Earlier, Freire (1970) had

elaborated on this viewpoint in his writings. He felt that the people, during their

education, must have a say in how this education is to be formulated and delivered.

Without input from all the stakeholders, people who are oppressed have no way of lifting

themselves out of this oppression by way of education. In other words, a grassroots effort

is needed in order for the people to become empowered. Cervero concludes his

examination of the relationship between theory and practice by noting that theory is the

foundation for practice.

Merriam and Caffarella (1991), in their discussion of the relationship between

theory and practice, ask the following specific questions:

> to what extent is the knowledge that we have accumulated about adult learning,
> .... reflective of what actually happens in practice? Moreover, to what extent is
> the knowledge that we do have derive from practice, and to what extent does it
> inform our practice? (pp. 313-314)

In response, they refer to Cervero (1991) and his four positions presented in the previous

paragraph. They conclude that adult learners, themselves, will be a major source for

understanding adult learning in the future and of helping practitioners to develop

effective practices. Other writers such as Brundage and MacKeracher (1980), and Vella

(1994) are less vague about how theory and principles relate to practice.

Brundage and MacKeracher (1980), for example, derive 36 learning principles of

adult learning based on their research. For each principle, they suggest implications for

facilitating learning and planning programs. A good example is Learning Principle 11,

which states, "adult learning tends to focus on the problems, concerns, tasks, and needs

of the individual's current life situation. Adults are highly motivated to learn in areas

relevant to their current developmental tasks, social roles, life crises, and transition periods." (p. 103). The facilitating implications involve planning content that is relevant to the "current needs and problems, tasks and roles, developmental concerns, and life experiences" (p. 103) of the learners. In terms of planning implications, Brundage and MacKeracher (1980) recommend that program activities "need to be included which allow all group members to discover, acknowledge, and accept the learning needs of other learners" (p. 103). The activities also should "allow the learner to reflect on the indirect connections between past and present experience, new learnings, and future applications" (p. 103).

Vella (1994) also discusses adult learning principles. She begins with the assumption that a principle is "the beginning of an action" (p. 3) and that adult learning is best achieved through dialogue. She outlines 12 principles that guide her work. Two that are reflected in Brundage and MacKeracher's (1980) Learning Principle 11 are praxis and immediacy of the learning. To facilitate praxis, Vella suggests that case studies be used to invite "description, analysis, application, and implementation of new learning--that is, praxis" (p. 11). Immediacy flows from the recognition that adult learners need to recognize the usefulness of new learning. Vella contends that these principles are applicable across cultures, and that "informed decisions" should be based on sound educational principles.

Program Planning

In this section, I begin by examining the concept of program planning, the next logical step in designing educational opportunities for adults. Program planning follows from an assessment of the learning needs of adults based on their characteristics, life situations, and/or their changes in consciousness. I also present generic models of program planning and then review selected authors who have constructed models that fit with their ideas of practice.

What is Program Planning?

In education, the terms curriculum and program planning are often used interchangeably. Jarvis (1983) points out that curriculum is a term that is commonly used when referring to the education of children, whereas program planning is the term generally used for programs that are designed for adults. Verner (1964) refers to the planning of programs for adults as the "design of learning" and Houle (1996) uses the term "design of education."

As Long (1991) points out, "the literature on program planning is not usually identified with one person" (p. 82). Many authors have written on the subject, some even have attempted to define the term. Jarvis (1983), for example, defines program planning by comparing it with the definition of curriculum. As he sees it, curriculum "can mean the total provision of an education institution, it can also refer to the subject matter of a particular course of study or even to the learning that is intended" (p. 212). In contrast, program planning "reflects the content of the prospectus or the total number of courses

that are actually organized by and taught within the educational institution" (p. 215). Due

to a wide variety of learning experiences in adult education, program planning would

appear to be a more comprehensive definition.

Boone (1985), in his comprehensive work on developing programs in adult

education, offers a definition for what he calls the planned program that he describes as:

> the master perspective (plan) for behavioral change toward which adult educators
> direct their efforts. The planned program consists of (1) a statement of broad-
> based educational needs, (2) a statement of objectives keyed to those needs, (3)
> specification of teaching strategies for achieving the objectives, and (4)
> specification of macro outcomes of the planned program. (p. 16)

Boone's definition is consistent with the one that Verner (1964) offered 20 years

previously in which he defines a program as "a series of learning experiences designed to

achieve, in a specified period of time, certain specific instructional objectives for an

adult or group of adults" (p. 43).

Cervero and Wilson (1994) view program planning from a different angle. They

define it as "a social activity in which educators negotiate interests in organizational

contexts structured by power relations" (p. 249). From this viewpoint, program planning

is seen as a social activity rather than an activity that deals only with learning outcomes

and behavioural objectives. Moving away from specific definitions, writers such as

Brundage and MacKeracher (1980) view program planning as an extremely complex

activity and for this reason argue that it defies definition. They, however, offer general

statements about its nature based on adult learning principles.

Program Planning Models

Apps (1979) calls attention to what he refers to as a generic model of program

planning. It consists of a sequence of five steps: (a) assess the learners' needs; (b) based

on these needs, determine the objectives; (c) identify learning experiences that will meet

the objectives; (d) organize the learning experiences; and (e) evaluate the program in

terms of meeting the objectives determined in Step 2. This model has a linear flow from

start to finish. Brookfield (1986), in commenting on the use of this model in his

institution, points out that the three integral components of the model are: assessment,

instructional design, and evaluation.

Caffarella (1994) classifies program planning models as either simple or

complex, or closed or open. She notes that a model is defined as closed when all the

inputs in the system are known and the outcomes can be predetermined and ensured. In

an open model, outside factors may impact on the program outcomes and these factors

are beyond the control of the planner. She also identifies models as being linear, such as

generic models, or non-linear, such as system or conceptualized models in which there

are interacting components and various entry points. Caffarella gives reasons why

program planning models are useful. These include: resources are used more effectively,

teamwork is fostered, there is some basis for control of the process, and overall better

programs are developed. In addition, the worth of the program is verified by the

evaluation component of the model.

Not all writers agree that using models for planning programs is useful. For

example, Caffarella (1994) cites reasons such as time pressures in mounting programs,

the organizational climate in which crisis mentality is the norm, the lack of knowledge

about various models, and finally the idea that models may be too confining to be

helpful. Brookfield (1986) argues that there is a "disjunction between theory as depicted

in the major texts on program development and the real world of practice" (p. 206). He

suggests that it is time to question the rigid use of models. His main objection centers

around using predetermined objectives, the second step in the generic model. He

explains:

> The most fundamental flaw with the predetermined objectives approach, then, is
> its tendency to equate one form of adult learning—instrumental learning (how to
> perform technical or psychomotor operations more effectively)—with the sum
> total of adult learning. It neglects completely the domain of the most significant
> personal learning—the kind that results from reflection on experiences and from
> trying to make sense of ones's life by exploring the meanings others have
> assigned to similar experiences. (p. 213)

He continues with a discussion of felt needs versus actual needs. As he sees it, felt needs

are those that are perceived and consequently expressed by the learner. Actual or

prescribed needs, such as specific skills, knowledge, behaviours, and values, are those

that the educator believes the learners should acquire. His suggestion is to abandon the

institutional model, as he refers to the generic model, in favour of planning programs

based on learners' needs. He cautions, however, that programs need to have a balance

when using felt needs and prescribed needs as focus points for a program. Too much of

one rather than the other will not allow for adjustments to be made to programs,

especially in the context of ethnically diverse, multi-ability groups of adult learners. He

concludes with the following advice:

At the very least, practitioners who are engaged in the process of arranging educational activities for adults should be presented with a range of alternative models of program development. They should be encouraged to consider the extent to which the institutional model is culturally produced and reflective of a certain intellectual era and orientation. They should be made aware of the contextual variables that call into question the replicability of the textbook models of practice. They should be helped to realize that, by using the felt needs approach, the educator may simply be abdicating responsibility for making value-based judgements concerning appropriate curricula. (p. 236)

Flowchart/System Program Planning Models

Diamond (1998) offers one example of a systems or flowchart approach that is

learner-centered. Although this basic concept has been around since the 1960's, recently

Diamond has updated it. He maintains that the model is cost-effective and provides

visible results in the shortest amount of time. Actually, the time element is very

important because this is one of the criticisms of using models. His basic design

sequence starts with a statement of the needs of the student, the community, and the field

of knowledge. Next is a statement of goals from general to specific. Third is the design

of instruction and assessment. The final step is the implementation and assessment, and

ultimately revision as needed. Diamond believes that this systems model is unlike the

traditional generic model in that it is more comprehensive. In brief, "it forces us to think

in the ideal and uses a facilitator from another discipline to direct us through the process"

(p. 28).

Dean (1994) devised another flowchart or systems approach. He views his model

as a "systematic decision-making process that allows educators to identify the most

important elements of the learning process and to make decisions about what will be the

most effective way to plan and implement a learning activity" (p. 2). His model is

composed of four cells: assessing and developing skills, developing content and knowledge, learning about learners, and understanding the learning contexts. These four cells connect to each other in a linear fashion from one to four. Each connects to the central portion of the model which is designing instruction. This portion includes the following sub-topics: developing goals and objectives, developing learning activities, and developing learner evaluation. Dean contends that adult educators need instructional design models in order to provide a balanced approach to learner needs and the level of structure required in the learning process. He is of the opinion that anyone can benefit from using his model. The model can be used in any situation and by anyone because of its simplicity. He believes that traditional models are often very complicated systems, whereas his is easy to understand and use. In addition, traditional system models are often content driven and therefore are not easily adapted to a variety of settings and/or learners.

A third example of a systems approach to program planning is that of Murk and Wells (1988). As they see it, the success of programs in the future may not depend on content only, but on how well programs are designed and planned. Programs today need to be meaningful for diverse individuals. They also need to be flexible in order to accommodate the changing conditions in the learning environment that both learners and instructors often face. For this reason, they developed their own model known as the Systems Approach Model (SAM). The five components (needs assessment, instructional planning and development, administration and budget development, program implementation, and evaluation procedures) are viewed as being dynamically interrelated

and yet independent. All components must be used but they do not need to be followed in order. The authors claim that the strength of their model is that it allows for greater flexibility, practicality, and creativity. This model is readily understood, easy to follow, and can be adapted to many training situations. Its holistic approach is one that many program planners appreciate because it is compatible with adult education ideas.

Caffarella (1994) proposes an 11-step interactive model of program planning. In devising her model, she mainly draws on the work of Houle (1996), Knowles (1980), and Cervero and Wilson (1994). In commenting on these models, she draws attention to the commonalities among them with regard to:

> the attention paid to the learner and/or organizational needs as central to the planning process, the importance of the context in which programs are planned, and the idea that there are identifiable components and tasks that are important to the planning process. (p. 17)

She maintains that her model differs from the others in that attention is paid to:

> the combination and comprehensiveness of the components and tasks that are included, the suggested ways the model can be used by practitioners, and its focus on practical ideas for making decisions and completing program planning tasks for each component of the model. (p. 17)

The 11 components are: establishing a basis for the planning process; identifying program ideas; sorting and prioritizing program ideas; developing program objectives; preparing for the transfer of learning; formulating evaluation plans; determining formats, schedules, and staff needs; preparing budgets and marketing plans; designing instructional plans; coordinating facilities and on-site events; and communicating the value of the program (pp. 19-22). Her model, unlike those mentioned previously,

includes budgets and marketing dimensions that some may consider outside of the planning process, but which are an integral part.

A final example of a systematic program planning model is that of Houle (1996). In Long's (1991) classification of program models, Houle's model is viewed as a combination of flowchart/system and conceptual models. Houle views program planning as a system. He also refers to it as the "design of education" rather than a model. In formulating his design, he draws on some of the concepts and components of other systems, then integrates them into a pattern that he feels is different from these systems. From this perspective, his system is "sufficiently broad to accommodate the conceptions and guide the actions of all educators of adults" (p. 39). A brief overview of the system reveals that it is based on nine assumptions. Two of these are: "any episode of learning occurs in a specific situation and is profoundly influenced by that fact" (p. 41), and "any design of education can best be understood as a complex set of interacting elements, not as a sequence of events" (p. 49). Based on his assumptions, he outlines two complementary systems. The first system looks at the situation in which the learning activity occurs in order to determine the category in which it belongs. His large headings of categories are individual, group, institution, and mass. The second system is the application of a basic framework or model which is influenced by the category of learning (from the first system) in order to produce a design or program. In this second system, Houle designates seven decision points and components: a possible educational activity is identified, a decision is made to proceed, objectives are identified and refined, a suitable format is designed, the format is fitted into larger patterns of life, the plan is

put into effect, and the results are measured and appraised. As with the other

flowchart/system approaches, this one takes into account the common elements of

objectives, educational activity, implementation, and evaluation.

Conceptual Program Planning Models

Conceptual models of program planning, unlike the systems models, do not set

out a set pattern of tasks. Rather proponents of this approach acknowledge that the

planning process is very complex; consequently, they prefer to look at assumptions and

general principles.

Brundage and MacKeracher (1980) outline eight basic assumptions. Two of these

are: "planning activity can focus on content to be learned or processes to be used" and

"every discussion about planning implicitly involves a set of values about learners and

learning, teachers and teaching, the content to be learned, and the nature of the

relationships involved" (p. 78). After examining their assumptions, they return to what

might be referred to as a systems approach. They recommend that five basic steps of

planning be followed. These steps reflect the generic model mentioned previously. In

addition, Brundage and MacKeracher identify some basic issues that also require

planning, but are not included in the basic model. These include, for example,

developing and maintaining an environment conducive to learning; and identifying,

collecting, and making available resources for learning.

Boone (1985) offers a second model that takes a conceptual approach. He

contends that "concepts and constructs" are needed to provide a guide for thinking about

program planning in adult education and ultimately for establishing principles of

practice. He extensively reviews the literature on adult education concepts as they relate

to program planning. Next, he considers the construction of the process. Here he

identifies three major sub-processes: planning, design and implementation, and

evaluation. When viewed together, as he explains, they provide a "holistic systems

approach to programing and planned change" (p. 64). As in Brundage and

MacKeracher's (1980) case, the differentiation between conceptual and systems

approaches to program planning blurs when Boone (1985) defines his approach as a

"conceptual programming model" (p. 77).

The final example of a conceptual approach to program planning is that of

Cervero and Wilson (1994) who are concerned with the power and politics of program

planning. As they explain, most models only see these elements as "noise that gets in the

way of good planning" (p. 251). They identify two problems with conventional models.

The first is that planning programs is a process of applying the same generic set of

procedures to all situations, although they do acknowledge that Boone's (1985) model

attempts to incorporate the issue of context into the planning process. The second

problem is "that even contextually—sensitive planning theories offer an undertheorized

and fundamentally naive view of the relationship between planner action and social

context" (p. 252). In order to address these two problems, Cervero and Wilson (1994)

argue that:

> planning practice always has two outcomes: planners *construct* educational
> programs and, through their practices, they *reconstruct*—either maintaining or
> transforming—power relations and interests that make planning possible. We
> finally argue that planning has to be defined in terms of responsibility because
> planners are actively transforming the worlds in which they live. (p. 253)

The four concepts that they address are power, interests, negotiation, and responsibility.

They conclude that planners are really social activists, and for this reason:

> it is impossible to plan an educational program without attending to the interests
> of the institution or its power relations. Negotiating between these interests, along
> with those of the planner, the potential learners, those teaching in the program,
> and the affected public, is fundamentally a political act. (p. 266)

In rethinking planning theory, Sork (2000) proposes what he refers to as a

question-based approach to planning that has six basic elements. Each element represents

a cluster of possible questions, decisions, and actions involved in planning programs. In

his view, "one of the advantages of viewing these elements as clusters of possible

questions, decisions, and actions is that planners can substitute any cohesive set of

elements that they find more compatible with their context or style" (p. 181).

Program planning, as the above authors suggest, is not as simple as it might

appear at first glance. Whether the framework for planning follows the generic,

flowchart, or conceptual approach, program planners should keep in mind the learners

for whom the programs are being designed. One aspect common in each of the models is

program evaluation. The authors point out that the continued evaluation of programs is

important because in this way planners can assess whether or not they are effective in

meeting the needs of the learners as well as those of the organization and other

stakeholders. It is to this step of program planning that I now turn my attention.

Program Evaluation

There has been an abundance of literature written on the topic of evaluation. In this section, I limit my comments, however, to defining the concept of program evaluation and examining six models or approaches.

What is Program Evaluation?

Assessment, measurement, and evaluation are terms that have different meanings, and they can easily be confused if used interchangeably. Astin (1993) considers assessment to "include the gathering of information concerning the functioning of students, staff, and institutions of higher learning" (p. 2). He points out that assessment can refer to two different activities. One is gathering information, which can be seen as measurement, and the other is the utilization of that information in order to make improvements either institutionally or individually. This latter he refers to as evaluation, which he claims has "to do with motivation and the rendering of value judgements" (p. 2). Astin concludes his discussion of terms by pointing out that "since assessment and evaluation are inextricably linked . . . assessment policies and practices in higher education should always give full consideration to the evaluative uses to which our measurements will be put" (p. 3).

Brookfield (1986) also makes note of the difference between assessment and evaluation. He writes:

> Assessment is a value-free ascertainment of the extent to which objectives determined at the outset of a program have been attained by participants. Assessment of these objectives requires no value judgement as to their

worthwhileness. It is simply a nonjudgmental checking as to whether or not certain purposes have been attained. . . . Evaluation, however, is inescapably a value-judgmental concept. The word *value* is at the heart of the term, with all the normative associations this implies. (p. 264)

Boone (1985) hesitates to define evaluation because he feels that the task is very complex. When explaining his model of program planning, he offers the following working definition: "*Evaluation* is a coordinated process carried on by the total system and its individual subsystems. It consists of making *judgements* about planned programs on established *criteria* and known, observable *evidence* " (p. 179). A key word, which is also mentioned in Brookfield's and Astin's (1993) definitions, is judgement. This word underlines the fact that there is subjectivity in the evaluation process.

Caffarella (1994) defines program evaluation as "a process used to determine whether the design and delivery of a program were effective and whether the proposed outcomes were met. Evaluation is a continuous process that begins in the planning phase and concludes with follow-up studies" (p. 119). She distinguishes between formative evaluation, which is carried out during the program in order to improve or change it, and summative evaluation, which is carried out at the end of the program and focuses on the results. She agrees with Brookfield (1986) and Boone (1985) that judging the worth or value of a program is at the heart of the evaluation process.

In a slight departure from the above definitions of evaluation, Vella, Berardinelli, and Burrow (1998), in explaining their own specific programs at the Jubilee Popular Education Centre, define evaluation as:

a means of celebrating obvious learning and of getting feedback on perceived gaps between what we said we would do and what actually happened for the

learner. The learner's voice has always been central to evaluation in both immediate feedback and long-term (longtitudinal) responses. (p. 1)

Vella et al. challenge adult educators to look at evaluation in a different light. They believe that it is important for the learners to participate in self-evaluation. It is through this kind of evaluation that learners can actively make decisions that affect their learning. However sticky the problem of defining program evaluation has been, it has not hindered the development of the program evaluation models that I review in the next section.

Program Evaluation Models

In tracing the history of evaluation, Guba and Lincoln (1981) comment that measurement and evaluation are terms that were used interchangeably. Initially, both measurement and evaluation noted individual differences and both had little to do with the school's programs and curricula. For example, in the late 19th century Alfred Binet devised a test to measure a child's intelligence quotient (IQ). After World War I, the focus shifted from measuring individual students to looking at a school's programs. According to Guba and Lincoln, what is referred to as the second generation of evaluation began with Tyler (1949). He used the concept of educational objectives to measure changes in behaviour. Tyler defined evaluation as "the process for determining the degree to which these changes in behaviour are actually taking place" (p. 69). In commenting on Tyler's contribution, Guba and Lincoln point out that he separated measurement and evaluation. This was an important influence, because henceforth measurement took a back seat to evaluation; it simply became the tool to obtain data for

the evaluation process. Guba and Lincoln point out that the third generation concept of

evaluation, which developed in the late 1960s, resulted in the development of many

models of evaluation based on judgment, which was seen as an essential part of

evaluation. In these models, the evaluator assumes the role of judge.

With regard to evaluation, Brookfield (1986) argues that even though evaluation

is seen as one of the key components of the program planning process, it is often not

done with as much enthusiasm as the design of learning outcomes and the delivery of a

program. Although the reasons for this neglect often are the pressures of time and money,

Brookfield believes that the lack of a more formal evaluation of programs is due to the

absence of "an evaluative model that derives its criteria and procedural features from the

nature of the adult learning process" (p. 262). As he explains, the models that are most

often used are geared primarily towards secondary schools or higher education settings

and then are adapted to fit the adult learning process. In his view, Guba and Lincoln's

(1981, 1989) and Kirkpatrick's (1983) models are the most adaptable. He claims that

"we [adult educators] resist the temptation to adapt in a wholesale manner evaluative

frameworks prepared by professionals from other fields for nonadult educational

purposes" (p. 274). Rather than suggest a model of evaluation in his writings, he offers

his opinion regarding the merits of the various models of evaluation that have been

developed over the years.

Knowles' Model of Evaluation

Knowles (1980) equates evaluation with "confronting a sacred cow" (p. 198). As

he puts it, "nothing in all the practice of educators in general and of adult educators in

particular has produced more feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and frustration than

evaluation" (p. 198). He then continues, "Furthermore, I think that this very

overemphasis has caused an underproduction of practical, feasible, and artistic

evaluation in terms of program review and improvement" (p. 198). He agrees on the

importance of providing concrete data on a program's effectiveness, especially in

meeting its learning outcomes. This fact aside, he acknowledges the difficulty in

conducting worthwhile evaluations, because they are time consuming, and because it is

expensive to develop adequate evaluative tools. As a way to overcome some of these

barriers, he suggests an evaluation process consisting of four steps that he refers to as

"apparently simple" (p. 203). First, "formulate the questions you want answered

(benchmarks, criteria)"; second, collect the "data that will enable you to answer those

questions"; third, analyze the data and interpret "what they mean as answers to the

questions raised"; and, fourth, modify "your plans, operation, and program in light of

your findings" (p. 203). Knowles cautions that even though the steps seem simple

enough, there are many decisions that must be made along the way so the process is not

really as mechanical as it first seems.

Kirkpatrick's Model of Evaluation

Kirkpatrick's (1983) model of evaluation is comprised of four levels. The first

level evaluates the participant's reaction to a course. It is a measure of satisfaction; it

does not identify whether or not any learning has taken place. Because it is easy to

measure what Kirkpatrick refers to as a "happiness" rating, this type of evaluation is

most often done. Happiness, however, should not be frowned upon because it is an

important component to evaluate. If learners enjoy the experience, then they most likely will make an effort to learn the material being presented.

The second level measures "what knowledge, attitudes, and skills were learned in the training program" (p. 113). At this level, data is collected on the knowledge and skills that the learners can demonstrate as a result of the program. This is often done via classroom performance and paper-and-pencil tests.

Transference of behaviours learned in the training program to real-life settings characterizes the third level. At this level, Kirkpatrick (1983) acknowledges that there is a big difference between knowing principles and techniques, and applying them on the job. Because his focus is on industrial training, his examples of evaluation at this level are geared towards on-the-job performance on a before-and-after basis. Brookfield (1986), in commenting on this level of Kirkpatrick's model, claims that the same principle can apply to adult learning situations.

Kirkpatrick (1983) labels his final level, "results". He concedes that "it is difficult if not impossible to evaluate results because of the problem called *the separation of variables*" (p. 121). There are many factors that impact on the results of a program and it is often difficult to isolate the effects of a program on the wider community.

Kirkpatrick (1983) recommends that it is best to begin with the lowest level, because this type of evaluation is the fastest and easiest way to determine the effectiveness of a program even though it gives the least significant results. Moving on through the levels requires more complex evaluative tools, time, and money; the effort spent, however, provides a more realistic evaluation of the effectiveness of a program.

Boone's Model of Evaluation

Boone's (1985) process of evaluation fits with his conceptual model of program planning as its the final step. His evaluative process consists of five steps that parallel the planning process: (a) describe program outputs, intended and unintended, manifest and latent, with appropriate documentary evidence, (b) examine relations between activities/inputs and outcomes/outputs with the intent of inferring nominally causal associations, (c) review implementation of objectives in relation to the input/output associations, (d) scrutinize the translation of analyzed needs into objective statements, and (e) probe the adequacy of needs identification, assessment, and analysis steps (pp. 179-180). One of the main goals of Boone's program evaluation model is to relate the program outcomes to the actual results; therefore, the initial design of the program guides the way in which the evaluation is carried out. The findings of the evaluation are used to modify the other subprocesses of the program.

Guba and Lincoln's Model of Evaluation

Guba and Lincoln (1981, 1989) offer an alternative approach to evaluation. This approach they have called "responsive constructivist evaluation," is similar to Brookfield's (1986) naturalistic evaluation. This approach uses qualitative data instead of quantitative data. Tools for data collection are open-ended interviews, journals, and life histories rather than the pencil-and-paper tests and questionnaires that Kirkpatrick (1983) suggests. Users of this approach are also more aware of the political dimensions of evaluation and the competing interests of the stakeholders. One advantage of this naturalistic method of evaluation is that the results can be reported more effectively to

the stakeholders in terms that are meaningful to them, rather than providing them with reams of seemingly unrelated facts and figures.

Similar to Kirkpatrick's (1983) and Boone's (1985) models, Guba and Lincoln's (1989) model has four phases. The first is the identification of the stakeholders and the collection of statements of their claims, concerns, and issues. The second phase requires making all of the stakeholder groups aware of the claims, issues, and concerns of each other. In this phase, some of these may be resolved. In the third phase, those "claims, concerns, and issues that have *not* been resolved become the advance organizers for information collection by the evaluator" (p. 42). The final phase "negotiation among stakeholding groups, under the guidance of the evaluator and utilizing evaluative information that has been collected, takes place, in an effort to reach consensus on each disputed item" (p. 42). In examining these phases, it is important to note that data collection occurs in the next to last phase, whereas in the previous models, it is usually the first step in the evaluation process.

Caffarella's Model of Evaluation

Caffarella (1994) acknowledges that there is "no one acceptable systematic process for conducting a program evaluation" (p. 120). Due to the complexity of the evaluation process, she suggests the use of more than one model or approach in combination because, as she explains, this often results in a more meaningful evaluation. Based on current literature, Caffarella outlines a composite approach to evaluation. Her approach consists of 12 steps: (a) secure support for the evaluation from those who have a stake in the results, (b) identify the individuals to be involved in planning and

overseeing the evaluation, (c) define precisely the purpose of the evaluation and how the results will be used, (d) specify what will be judged and formulate the evaluation questions, (e) determine who will supply the needed evidence, (f) specify the evaluation approach to be used, (g) determine the data collection techniques to be used and when the data will be collected, (h) specify the analysis procedure to be used, (i) specify what criteria will be used to make judgements about the program or what process will be used to determine the criteria, (j) determine the specific time line and the budget needed to conduct the evaluation, (k) complete the evaluation, formulate recommendations, and prepare and present an evaluation report, and (l) respond to the recommendations for changes in the overall program, specific learning activities, and/or the educational unit or function (pp. 121-123). Several of the steps are consistent with phases mentioned in the above models. For example, Step b is similar to identifying the stakeholders in Guba and Lincoln's (1989) model. Another example, Step d, requires one to "specify what will be judged and formulate evaluation questions" (p. 121). This step is similar to step one in both Knowles's (1980) and Boone's (1985) models.

Caffarella (1994) believes that the "heart of program evaluation is judging the value or worth of an educational program" (p. 120). This view is consistent with those of Brookfield (1986) and Astin (1993). Caffarella concedes, however, that this is not an easy task because program outcomes are often elusive and subjective. She argues that it is easier to measure the program design and delivery components of program planning than program outcomes. What may be meaningful to one group of stakeholders, may hold little relevance to another group of stakeholders. However, this fact should not lead

to the elimination of the evaluation process, because it is an integral part of program planning. Caffarella's model offers enough flexibility in terms of data collection, the timing of the collection of the data, and the interpretation of the results to satisfy the needs of most program planners who are searching for a model to use.

Vella, Berardinelli, and Burrow's Model of Evaluation

Vella, et al.'s (1998) evaluation model is the final one I will review. It begins with the consideration of five evaluation questions and the ultimate decisions that flow from each question. In fact, each decision needs to be examined before an evaluation plan, as such, is formulated. These questions are: (a) What is the purpose of the evaluation?; (b) What should be evaluated?; (c) What are the sources of information?; (d) What are the methods for gathering information?; and (e) When should evaluation be completed? (p. 15). From these questions, Vella et al. have developed an accountability process for educational evaluation that they use at the Jubilee Popular Education Centre, where adult learning is based on concepts of popular education that emphasize participation, dialogue, and learning by doing. In brief, they describe a three-step process. First, two types of information are required. The first is information on the change in learners (knowledge, skills, attitudes); and the second is information on program design in order to assess the effective characteristics of the instructional activities, the resources used, and the personnel facilitating the program. Second, one must consider methods of gathering evaluation information. To evaluate knowledge, a more formal testing approach can be used. To evaluate skills, actual performance in the workplace or the observation of skills by the instructor can be used. To collect data on the evaluation of

attitudes, the perceptions of others, direct observations, or self-perceptions can be used. Vella et al. stress the fact that the type of evaluation at this second step can be either informal or formal, and it can occur at any time in the program. The final step requires one to evaluate program design elements. At this step, there is the need to identify "the elements that are considered critical to the success of the program" and then to "describe the characteristics of each element to be evaluated that will be used to determine effectiveness" (p. 58). Another task required at this step is to "name the anticipated and observable results of using the element" (p. 58). Finally, comes the "information-gathering procedures" that are used to assess each element (p. 58). Each of the steps outlined in the Vella et al. evaluation model differs very slightly from those identified in the previous models.

One key feature of the Vella et al. (1998) model is the Accountability Planner. This evaluation tool is divided into six columns corresponding to the three steps in the evaluation process. The six columns are labeled as follows: skills, knowledge, attitudes, content, and achievement-based objectives; educational process elements, learning tasks and materials; anticipated changes (learning, transfer, impact); evidence of change (content, process, qualitative, quantitative); documentation of evidence; and analysis of evidence (p. 37). Vella et al. claim that any existing program can be evaluated systematically and effectively by using this tool. As with the other authors reviewed in this section, Vella et al. concur that evaluation strategies can differ greatly from one situation to another, and that no one system is inherently better than another one.

With regard to models or approaches to either program planning or evaluation,

Sork (2000) alerts adult educators to what he refers to as the challenge ahead. He says,

"It is time that we shift the focus from finding the perfect planning model to asking the

right questions" (p. 186). He continues, "Maybe in an ideal world we would all be

motivated, self-directed, liberated learners who do not require organized

programs....[but] at least, during my lifetime, planning will continue to be of central

theoretical and practical interest in adult education" (p. 187).

Summary of the Literature

The literature on adult learning theories discussed in this chapter highlights the

debate concerning the usefulness of theories; there tends to be, however, a general

consensus that no single theory could ever explain the complex topic of adult learning.

The authors have their own interpretations of how theory is or cannot be applied to

practice. These range from the vague directions of some authors to the more specific

directions of others. In reviewing the theories and principles and applying them to

practice, there appears to be an overlap of ideas. What also becomes clear is that

principles of practice are derived from theory.

Program planning is a complex process. Many models have been developed

ranging from the simple five-step generic model through to complex conceptual

approaches that endeavour to look at all aspects of the process including concepts and

construction. Several authors argue that models are not necessary because they only

complicate the procedure and further remove it from what the learner really wants out of

the process. Those who advocate the use of models, do so with the= intent of making the process of program planning reflect the reality of the adult learner,_ the learning situation, and the demands of the educational institution. By using models, many authors believe that better programs for adult learners are developed.

In this overview of the program evaluation literature, several themes emerged. First, the process is complex; therefore, no one model or approach can be used in all circumstances. Second, even though the models differ depending o•n the perspectives of the writers, several steps or phases appear to be common. The first is deciding to evaluate. The second is gathering information. The third is analyzimg and interpreting this information in order to relay to those parties interested the outcomes of the program evaluation.

This chapter has presented a review of the literature related. to adult learning theories and practice, program planning, and program evaluation. The next chapter describes how the theoretical information presented in this chapter is used to redesign an existing program.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

This chapter describes a three-stage process I used to redesign a college level, post-diploma certificate program. The first stage consists of an evaluation of the original program to determine the factors that lead to its termination. In the second stage, I describe four phases of the redesign process: the first phase was to form a subcommittee and to develop a survey as a way to gauge the interest of the local early childhood education community in a Resource Teacher Certificate program. The second phase included tapping into the content expertise and the adult learning experiences of the members of the subcommittee as a way to update the learning outcomes of the existing program and formulating a sound philosophical base for the program in light of several adult learning principles. The third phase was to redesign the program. The fourth phase was the presentation of the final report to the Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee and the immediate planning for the program's implementation. The third stage includes a report on the courses offered so far in the program, concluding with a discussion of the findings of an evaluation of the redesigned program to date.

Preliminary Stage of the Study

At the November, 1998 Early Childhood Advisory Committee meeting, those present proposed that the department reactivate the Resource Teacher Certificate program, that had been offered in the late 1980s, but which ceased to be offered for a variety of reasons referred to in the first chapter. As a member of the faculty at the

College, I volunteered to study this proposal, and if it was feasible, to redesign the program so that it would more closely adhere to sound adult learning principles and to report back to the ECE Advisory Committee on the progress of my study.

Evaluation of the Original Resource Teacher Certificate Program

I began my evaluation of the program by gathering as much print material as I could. In the Department archives, I found the original program proposal that had been submitted to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities in the province where I work, and one of the original flyers. I discovered that the driving force behind the development of the original Resource Teacher Certificate program was the impending release in the early part of 1983 of the new Day Nurseries Act, in which new regulations regarding programming for children with special needs was being enacted for the first time. Staff qualifications, as outlined in the new Day Nurseries Act, included over-and-above an Early Childhood Education diploma or equivalent diploma or degree, an approved post-secondary program of studies that contained both theoretical and supervised field placement components geared specifically to children with special needs.

At the September 29, 1982 meeting of the Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee, a subcommittee was formed to investigate the resource teacher training opportunities being offered by other colleges in the province, and to bring back to the committee concrete suggestions for offering this training at the College. Once this first task had been completed, the subcommittee worked diligently throughout the fall of 1982 preparing the original proposal for submission to the Ministry of Colleges and

Universities. The proposal consisted of five pages and twelve supporting appendices that

outlined the following: the language of instruction, the duration of the program, the

format of the program, future employment opportunities, supporting documentation from

the Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee, the need for the program, the

program's purpose, and the content of the specific courses. What struck me as I read

these documents was the quickness with which the College administration of the time

responded to the incoming legislation regarding children with special needs by initiating

this post-diploma program. Only 6 others of the 23 colleges in the province had similar

programs in the planning or operational stages.

The purpose of the original Resource Teacher Certificate program was stated in

the proposal as follows:

> To provide post-diploma Early Childhood Educators with the knowledge and
> techniques necessary to work with children who have special needs. Graduates of
> this program will be qualified to become Resource Teachers as defined by the
> (proposed) Day Nurseries Act. The curriculum will focus on integration and
> programming for individuals and groups. The graduate will be able to help each
> child and his/her family lead a full, more productive and independent life in the
> community.

Following the purpose, the proposal outlined eight objectives. Of these, five were

particularly relevant as a starting point for redesigning the program. These are:

demonstrating a thorough knowledge of the categories of special needs, learning how to

access services available to children and families, designing developmentally appropriate

curriculum, understanding the role of the resource teacher, and acquiring knowledge on

the topic of integration.

The original flyer, printed on buff coloured paper with burgundy print, listed the reasons for taking the program. The most significant reason was: "You will have the required qualifications of a Resource Teacher as defined by the Day Nurseries Act." The flyer outlined, on the back, the eight courses that comprised the program. It also detailed the following specific entrance requirements: an Early Childhood Education diploma/degree, or a related human services diploma/degree, or a Bachelor of Education degree with a kindergarten to grade 3 speciality; and at least one post-diploma/degree year working with young children in a group setting. The work experience, which was mandatory, was considered to be an important entrance requirement. The final portion, on the front of the flyer, contained a section on employment opportunities. The College advised prospective students that this speciality was "a growing area of employment opportunities related to Bill 82 and the Day Nurseries Act." Of the eight required courses, there were two relating to aspects of program planning, two field placements, and the other four courses covered topics such as community resources, working with families, advocacy, and the role of the resource teacher with regard to issues like integration and normalization.

I obtained several of the old course outlines from a former program instructor and reviewed these to get a sense of the time frame and the delivery modes in which the courses had been taught. I found out that the majority of classroom courses had been taught in the evenings for a period of 3 hours over 12 weeks during the winter and fall semesters. Some courses had been offered during the spring/summer semester, twice a week for 6 weeks. For the classroom courses, the instructors seemingly used a variety of

delivery techniques including lectures, group discussion, case studies, in-class tests, and group/individual presentations. In one course, the instructor utilized a "diary" technique in order to provide "students who do not often speak out in class discussions an opportunity to have their say." Unfortunately, I was only able to locate a course outline for one of the two field placement courses. This outline stated "Students will be responsible for arranging their own placements and negotiating with the supervising resource teacher how they may best meet the objectives and assignments of this placement." It also noted that an "extended relationship" with two children and their families was required. This requirement, as I later found out, had been a stumbling block for many students.

My second step was to identify former students and instructors who had taken part in the program. From the College data base, I printed out class lists. I asked colleagues in the field to help me in locating former students. Luckily, I was able to contact and interview five people, two students and three instructors.

Interviews With Students

The first student I talked to had enrolled in the fall 1985 program. At the time of her entrance, she had her diploma in Behavioural Science Technology (BST) and had been hired at the College as an instructor in a program whose purpose was to assist disabled adults with life skills. While working in this program, she decided to enrol in two programs: the Early Childhood Education (ECE) as well as the resource teacher Certificate (RTC) programs. She graduated from the latter program in 1988. Her overall

comment was although the RTC program had been a positive experience, she found

some overlap with the BST program that she had completed earlier, especially in the area

of individual program planning. In her view, the field placement component of the RTC

program was a problem. Although she was able to manage her field placement while

working full time, she was aware that other students had a much harder time with this

component. When I asked her for ideas about how the program could be improved, she

suggested that the program should be individualized to meet the needs of people from

various educational and experiential backgrounds. To accommodate these needs, she

recommended offering a variety of assignments that would meet the individual needs of

students rather than the collective needs of the class. Her second recommendation was

that all students entering the program would be required to have a base level of

knowledge and experience in the field of early childhood education. Since this program

was a post-diploma offering, she felt that the education and experience entry

requirements should be strictly adhered to. Evidently, when the original program started

to fail, some students had been admitted who did not have the required practical

experience. In her view, this change in policy compromised the program, because these

students were not able to contribute effectively to the class discussions.

The second former student I consulted had worked in the field after receiving her

Early Childhood Education Diploma. After a few years, she had taken time off to raise

her family. Currently she is the director of a child-care center. When she enrolled in the

RTC program, she was working as a teacher in the field. She successfully completed the

first year of the RTC program (four courses), but did not complete the other courses. She

neither had the time to attend all the classes, held once a week for 3 hours a night, nor did she have the time to do the field placement component. During the RTC program, she had become the director of the center where she is currently working and had found that she could not take time away from her job to do the field placement. In our discussion, she pointed out the inflexibility of the field placement component. During the time she had taken courses, she remembered some discussion about work exchanges in lieu of field placement, but this idea had never materialized. She expressed an interest in finishing the RTC program in the future after she completes her degree program at our local university. She recognized the value of taking the program. As a director of a center, she would like to acquire additional knowledge and skills, so that she can be better prepared to serve families with children with special needs when they approach her center for childcare.

Interviews With Instructors

Fortunately, I was able to interview three of the former instructors who taught in the original program. The first one continues to work at the College and is currently involved in prior learning assessment. At the time the RTC program was being offered, she had a number of responsibilities in the Human Studies Department. She did some counseling with special needs students; and she also was a placement supervisor, who had visited students doing field placements within the geographical area as well as in our neighbouring large city. In reference to the field placement component of the program, at least in her opinion, the caliber of the work of the students she had supervised was

excellent. She had enjoyed the travel to the field placement sites, and the students had seemed pleased with her visits. I shared with her the learning outcomes of the original program and she felt that they were still very valid. Her only suggestion was to change the wording of some of the learning outcomes in order to reflect the current jargon in the field of early childhood education.

The second instructor, who has moved to another community, had taught in the RTC program on a regular basis. According to her, the main concern of the students was the time commitment for class. At one point, two courses had been offered per week, which meant that the students had to attend classes for 6 hours in the evening. Many had young families, so they could not sustain this commitment. When I asked her opinion about the learning outcomes, she suggested that more emphasis should be placed on communication disorders. She also expressed some ethical concerns relating to the use of families during the field placement courses. She felt that many times the students had latched on to a family simply to satisfy the program requirements rather than for the betterment of the child. Finally, she said that she would like the admission policy to be upheld especially with regard to the experience requirement. The student I had interviewed identified the same concern; both referred to the fact that the quality of class discussions had suffered when inexperienced students began to be admitted to the program. The experienced students seemingly objected to this compromise because, in their view, class discussions were a major part of each course; therefore, all students should be able to contribute by sharing relevant work experiences.

The third teacher I spoke with had been involved in the course work of the program as well as the field placement component. She and the second teacher had tried to maintain the program when the enrolment dwindled and the interest of the students in the program had faded. This third teacher also identified problems relating primarily to the field placement, and secondarily to course work. With regard to the field placement, she acknowledged that there were some difficulties. The two major ones were time commitment and funding. Many students could not take the time off from work to do the field placement, nor were they willing to use their holiday time for this purpose. Their requests to use work exchanges in lieu of field placements had been ignored. Alternative funding for placement had been discussed, but none was ever found. With regard to the program courses, she felt they were, for the most part, relevant and the content was useful. When the original program had begun to falter, she had suggested various delivery options ranging from weekend workshops to intensive condensed classes. These suggestions, however, were not acted upon.

Finally, to complete this stage of the project and before beginning the redesign process, I made out a tentative timeframe for the completion of the study. My purpose was to move the process along in a timely manner so that the redesigned program could be ready to be offered in time for the fall 1999 semester. I also needed time to get new flyers printed, marketing done, and instructors chosen and prepared. It was very important that I meet the College's deadlines. At the first meeting of the subcommittee, I presented them with my proposed timeframe.

The Redesign Process

The second stage of the study, the redesign process, involved receiving input from the community and potential students via two methods of data collection. I collected data from members of the Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee, who had agreed to sit on a subcommittee. I also gathered data from potential students by using a survey that I distributed to various child-care agencies in our catchment area. The redesign process also involved identifying adult learning principles that would underpin the program; in other words, these would form a sound philosophical basis for the redesign and implementation of the program.

Subcommittee Meetings and Tasks

At the fall 1998 meeting of the ECE Advisory Committee, seven people including myself volunteered to form a subcommittee that would determine the feasibility of offering the Resource Teacher Certificate program once again; later they agreed to work on its redesign. The eight members of the committee came from a variety of backgrounds which included: a full time ECE Program coordinator; a resource consultant who works for the local Association for Community Living and who graduated from the program; an owner of a private child-care center; the manager of the College's child-care center; the director of the Childcare Resource Center; a program supervisor working for the Ministry of Community and Social Services; a first-year ECE student who had an interest in exceptional children; and myself, an instructor in the ECE program at the College. The

first meeting was scheduled for November 25, 1998. Unfortunately, besides myself, only

three other members were able to attend.

The First Meeting

At this meeting, after asking for approval of the agenda, I presented my tentative

timeframe for the completion of the redesign process. In light of the commitments of the

members and the reality of my own teaching schedule, coupled with the time constraints

of the College with respect to marketing the program, the subcommittee considered the

timeframe to be realistic. The next item on the agenda was my suggestion that the name

of the program should be changed, although the name "Resource Teacher" is still used in

the Day Nurseries Act, it is not commonly used in the field of early childhood education.

Consequently, many colleges that offer RTC programs have changed the name of their

programs. For example, some use names like Early Interventionist, Childhood

Exceptionalities, or Resource Consultant programs. As I briefly explained in the first

chapter, changing the name of an established program is a lengthy process.

As a first step in the process of changing the name of the program, my school

manager directed me to request a place on the agenda of the College's Academic Council

meeting where I could ask permission to change the name. Subsequently, the Chair of the

Academic Council asked me to appear at the March 31, 1999 meeting. There I was

questioned quite vigorously by the Academic Vice President about the reasons for the

name change. The end result was a resolution of the Academic Council which read as

follows: "THAT Academic Council approve the name change of the current Resource

Teacher Certificate to reflect changes in the current trend, and that the final name will be

adopted pending provincial nomenclature." The College has changed the name of the

original RTC program to Studies in Childhood Exceptionalities (SCE). However, the

program is still referred to as the Resource Teacher Certificate program within the

College and the wider community until the official province wide name is adopted and

promoted. As noted earlier, no name change to date has been forthcoming from the

Ministry of Education and Training. When the name is finally changed, I will return to

the Academic Council with this information and recommend that the College adopt the

provincial name.

The Second Meeting

At the second meeting of the ECE subcommittee held on January 20, 1999, two

members sent their regrets. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the redesign

process. I began the meeting with the history of the Resource Teacher Certificate

program and also familiarized the subcommittee members with the original eight

learning objectives. When it came time to discuss these—now referred to as learning

outcomes by the College—it was unanimously agreed that the original eight learning

objectives for the 1984 program were still valid, and that these should be our learning

outcomes. However, some of the wording had to be changed to reflect current changes

and trends in the field of early childhood education. For example, the original first

learning objective stated that:

> Upon completion of this program, a graduate will be able to:
>
> Demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the causes, symptoms, prevalence,
> diagnosis, and treatment of the major categories of special needs in young

children such as: mental retardation, physical disability, sensory deficits, emotional disturbance, and language or learning disabilities.

After much discussion concerning the meaning of certain words such as mental retardation, a term which is no longer used today, the committee changed the wording to read as the following learning outcome:

Upon completion of this program, a graduate will be able to:

Demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the causes, symptoms, prevalence, diagnosis, and treatment of *developmental disabilities in young children such as: physical disability, sensory deficits, behavioural, language or learning disabilities.*

Of the remaining seven original learning objectives, the members agreed that changes in wording were only necessary in two others. The sixth learning objective read:

Serve as a consultant and provide support for a child with special needs, her/his family and teachers.

The subcommittee changed the wording of the learning outcome to read as follows:

Serve as a consultant and provide support for a child with special needs, her/his family and *caregivers.* (Note: Caregivers is a more inclusive term that is widely used in the field today.)

The seventh learning objective read as follows:

Integrate children with special needs into pre-school programs.

The subcommittee changed this objective to reflect a broader range of programs. The learning outcome reads:

Integrate children with special needs into *childcare* programs.

The next item on the agenda of the January 20, 1999 meeting was how the program should be delivered. We began with a discussion of how the original program

had been delivered. This was followed by an open discussion about how the College

must learn to accommodate the needs of post-diploma students who are juggling both

careers and family life. At this point, a few suggestions about how the program might be

delivered emerged.

I proposed that the program be divided into two sections. The first section could

accommodate the needs of those students who wanted to gain a greater comfort level

when working with children with special needs and their families. At the end of this

section, students could receive what I referred to as a *Statement of Achievement*. The

second section of the program would focus on the changing role of the resource teacher

from that of a person working with a child in a particular child-care center, to that of a

resource consultant, a person with a caseload of children in a variety of settings. I

recommended that at the successful completion of both sections of the Resource Teacher

Certificate program, students would receive a certificate. The program flyer would state

that this certificate will enable graduates to qualify for jobs as resource consultants or as

resource teachers working in agencies such as integrated child-care centers, school

programs, family support programs, and treatment centers for children with special

needs. This certificate would be recognized by the Ministry of Community and Social

Services as the qualifier for a job as a resource teacher.

The subcommittee members agreed with my suggestions and recommendations.

They recognized the merit of dividing the program into two sections in order to fit the

needs of prospective students. They agreed that the *Statement of Achievement* awarded

after the completion of Section I could act as a motivator for students to complete the

program, in fact they hoped it would. With regard to the ordering of the program courses, the subcommittee members agreed with placing the two field placements at the end of each section of the program instead of situating them as the third and sixth courses as in the original program. In this way the placements would serve to consolidate the theory learned in the classroom and through independent study. Several of the subcommittee members suggested that the final field placement could be done using a mentoring system. In response to this suggestion, I indicated that I expected to inaugurate a mentoring process during the spring 2001 semester. With regard to the mentoring idea, the subcommittee members expressed concerns about the lack of qualified people in the field who might be able and willing to mentor students. These concerns aside, they did agree with the direction and focus of the program that I proposed.

Another suggestion proposed by the subcommittee members was a combination of distance education and regular meetings. Apart from the appeal of doing some of the course work by distance and at a time that was convenient for the students, there was the appeal of reduced costs relating to offering some of the program via distance education. One of the main difficulties with on-site continuing education programs is the problem of enrolment in programs, especially with those that extend over a period of years. Unless there is a sufficient number of students, who register for the entire program, the College generally cannot afford to operate the program. The cost factor appeared to be only part of the problem that the original Resource Teacher Certificate program faced. With distance education programs, payment for the instructor and the overhead costs are

pro-rated to the number of students in the course rather than a set payment for a course regardless of the number of students in attendance.

Another problem we addressed was the fact that the College has a reputation for offering programs and then canceling them before the students are able to complete the requirements. The subcommittee members did not want this to happen to the redesigned RTC program. The consequence of a closure again would be the College's complete loss of credibility within the ECE community.

At the end of the session, I introduced the notion of adult learning principles, how these could be applied to practice, and how the redesigned program could reflect these principles. I proposed that the subcommittee members consider the following principles: (a) adults should be treated as learners who need to have their individual learning styles taken into consideration; (b) adults strive to be self-directed learners; (c) adults require that their learning experiences be relevant; (d) adults need to be provided with opportunities to reflect on their learning; (e) adults want to demonstrate in a variety of ways "how do they know they know" the material being presented; and (f) adults appreciate learning that is in a respectful, caring, social environment. Time for the meeting was running out, so discussion of these principles was delayed until the next meeting. In the meantime, I suggested that the members read and reflect on these principles and try to relate them to their practice. In this way we could anticipate a very lively and informative discussion at the next meeting.

At the November 25, 1998 meeting I had agreed to design a survey by which we could gather information that the subcommittee could use when redesigning the RTC

program, and that the subcommittee would be sending to selected agencies and child-care centers in the local area. At the January 20, 1999 meeting, I asked if anyone would volunteer to help me with the survey. The members suggested that I draft the survey and then bring it to the next subcommittee meeting for discussion and approval.

My Task Between Meetings: The Survey

The purpose of this survey was to gather information in two areas: interest in the RTC program, and suggestions regarding the delivery of the program. Therefore, I decided to divide the survey into two parts. Part 1 was concerned with child-care workers' interest in the program. I began the survey by explaining how the existing eight courses would be divided into two sections. I explained that the rationale for this division was to break the program into two manageable sections, of which the first section could be completed as a unit unto itself with a *Statement of Achievement* awarded at its completion. Students could opt at that point to continue on with the program in order to obtain the full certificate, or they could withdraw from the program with the option of returning at a later date to complete the second section. In designing the survey questions, I asked how many people were interested in taking the whole program, or only Section 1. With this information, I would be better able to determine the commitment level of the potential cohort of students. For example, I asked : "How many of your staff are interested in pursuing this post-diploma certificate?; How many of your staff are interested in taking only Section 1 at this time (the option to continue at a later date is available)?; How many of your staff are interested in taking both Sections 1 and 2?".

Part 2 of the survey dealt with the delivery of the program. Here I used a rating scale in order to gather information regarding students' preferences for delivery. I sought feedback on whether the students wanted the program to be offered by distance education, on-site delivery, or a mixture of the two. I asked the respondents to rate their preference on scale of 1 to 3 with 1 being the preferred option. Once the respondents had decided on their option, then those who opted for either on-site delivery or a mixture of on-site and distance education were asked to rate their preference as to the times for the class meetings. These times included the following options: "Courses offered for 2 to 3 hours per week on a designated night (same night for all semesters) in the classroom"; "Courses offered once a month for 4 hours on a week night with assignments due in between the meetings"; or "Courses offered by distance education with regular telephone contact from the instructor."

I also included questions in the survey about field placement; however, I did not offer options. Instead I outlined how the field placement component of the program would operate and invited the respondents to comment on this plan. For example, I explained that the second field placement "is taken after all of the other courses in the program have been completed." I continued by noting that "this placement should be completed in an agency other than the one in which the student is currently working. Students may need to arrange for leave days in order to complete the placement requirements." At this point, I wanted to make it very clear that even though the College was willing to individualize field placements for students, the students must make some personal commitments in order to complete the program.

The Third Meeting

The meeting set for February 24, 1999 was canceled due to scheduling difficulties with most of the members. March 10, 1999 was the date set for the next meeting. Even with this change, most subcommittee members could not attend. I found this reality to be very disheartening. At this point, I sensed a growing lack of enthusiasm with regard to the RTC program even though the subcommittee members, originally enthusiastic, had endorsed the concept of reactivating the program. I also felt that the members of the subcommittee were not genuinely interested in the redesign process, especially when it began to involve more of their time than first anticipated. The members were quite willing to let me do the research for the study and to redesign the program. My task would be to bring this information to the meetings for discussion and approval. The agenda for this meeting included two main topics: the survey and a discussion of adult learning principles.

I presented the survey, which I had drafted, that would be sent to various agencies and childcare centers in the local and surrounding communities. The purpose of the survey was to: (a) inform directors and staff that the College was proposing to offer the RTC program in a redesigned format, and to elicit interest in such a program; (b) to rate the preferred delivery options of prospective students; and (c) to inform prospective students of the field placement requirements. The respondents were also given opportunities throughout the survey to make general comments regarding the RTC program. The subcommittee members present at the meeting endorsed the survey. At least in their view, it should be well received by the ECE community, because many

child-care centers already were aware of the proposed reactivation of the program. I

informed the group that I would be sending out 52 surveys and that the return date would

be April 30, 1999.

The second item on the agenda was a discussion about the six adult learning

principles introduced at the January 20 meeting. Because most of the subcommittee

members had very little knowledge and understanding of adult learning principles, I

shared with them selected passages from various writers in the field of adult education

that I consider to be relevant to the study. In the handout I prepared for the meeting, I

included excerpts from Brookfield (1986), Knowles (1989), Merriam and Brockett

(1997), and Vella (1994). I distilled the writings of these various authors into five points

that I thought could be easily understood by the members of the subcommittee. I also felt

that these points generally reflected the members' views about adult education based on

our informal discussions over the years. In summary, these points—referred to henceforth

as the six learning principles—became the subcommittee's philosophy and the basis on

which I redesigned the RTC program (see Appendix A).

Due to the small number of participants in attendance at the meeting, we

adjourned to the cafeteria to talk informally over coffee about our hopes and aspirations

for the program. During the course of the conversation, I referred to the handout that

contains the key points that later became learning principles. For example, when one of

the members mentioned how advantageous it would have been when she was taking the

program if students had been given more opportunities to direct their own field

placement experiences, I referred to the handout's second point, in which Merriam and

Brockett (1997) emphasize the benefits of self-directed learning. As the conversation

progressed, the members who had been part of the original program, shared

remembrances of frustration in some classes when the information being presented did

not seem relevant to their needs. At the same time, they acknowledged that there were

many valuable learning experiences, most of which centered on dialogue with other

students. These had been times when they had shared personal experiences, concerns,

problems, and solutions. Seemingly, the opportunity for dialogue was what they

remembered most. This fact convinced me that opportunities for dialogue must be an

integral part of the redesigned program.

Between the third and final meeting, I distributed the survey to 52 centres in the

geographical area of the College with the direction that it be returned by April 30, 1999.

As with many surveys that come across the desks of managers, they are often put into a

file and sometimes forgotten. As the deadline approached, I phoned three-quarters of the

centers to remind them about the survey and to request that it be presented at the next

staff meeting so that a response could be given. My return rate was 33% (18 surveys).

Many of the surveys had multiple responses representing the views of various staff at the

centers.

The Final Meeting

The final meeting of the committee was held on May 12, 1999. Again attendance

was low. I reported the results of the mailed survey to the group. The findings of the

survey indicated that six people were interested in completing only Section 1 of the

revised program. They simply wanted a bit more knowledge beyond what they had

received during their ECE training, so that they could feel more comfortable in working with children with special needs when opportunities for this type of work was offered to them in the future. They did not want to commit more than one year to the program because becoming a resource consultant was not their aspiration. Twenty-five people were prepared to pursue the whole program. Five other people indicated that they were interested in the program, but at a later date. The first choice for the preferred delivery of the program was a mixture of on-site sessions and distance delivery, with the courses offered 2 hours every other week and working on assignments in between on-site sessions. The second option was offering all courses by distance education. Most respondents indicated that while they preferred to work at their own pace and according to their own timetable, they realized that there was great value in being able to get together to discuss various topics of concern and interest. The comments regarding field placements indicated that the respondents wanted these assignments to be as flexible as possible; that the College take into account their previous work experiences; and that the assignment be as individualized as possible. These comments were congruent with the views of some of the members of the subcommittee who attended the March 10, 1999 meeting.

The survey proved to be an effect vehicle to transmit information about the proposed direction of the revised program and to gather input from perspective students. Even before the survey was distributed, I was asked to present information about the revised program at the Children's Services Fee Assist Childcare meeting on February 23, 1999. Present at this meeting were most of the directors of child-care centers in the city

where I live. This meeting afforded me the opportunity to market the program, to ascertain potential interest in the program, to inform the directors about the survey I would be distributing, to encourage them to bring the revised program to the attention of their staff, and to return the survey to me by the deadline date.

In my opinion, the survey was a useful tool for marketing the program more so than for gathering information. I felt that the subcommittee accurately pinpointed the level of interest in the program and the method of delivery. The responses to the survey verified the need for the program to be delivered using a mixture of on-site and distance education.

The other item on the agenda was the philosophy of the program. In my view, it was important to come to grip with the philosophical base of the program before we decided how the courses of the original program would ultimately be delivered. In this regard, a number of subcommittee members had expressed a desire to see more experiential teaching in the program rather than an excessive amount of theory. What they wanted to foster in the graduates of the program was a comfort level when working with children with special needs. They concurred that this outcome was the key purpose of post-diploma training programs. In order to achieve this end, they suggested that the delivery mode should be flexible enough to allow for plenty of time for discussion and reflection during the classes. The independent learning activities also should be relevant for the individual students; in other words, they should not be blanket assignments that all students should be required to complete.

The final topic of discussion at the May 12, 1999 meeting concerned the logistics of delivering the first course. I had spoken with the manager of the Human Studies Department and had received permission, upon approval of the ECE Advisory Committee, to offer the first course in the fall of 1999 and to begin immediately to recruit suitable teaching candidates. I will comment on this aspect of the study later in this chapter.

The subcommittee meeting portion of the study ended at the conclusion of the May 12, 1999 meeting. I thanked the members of the subcommittee in attendance for their time commitment over the past seven months and for their input into the redesign phase. Even though I had chaired meetings in the past, I found that this group was a challenge. First, the group dwindled in size. Second, even though great enthusiasm for the study was shown initially, it was not sustained. As I mentioned earlier, they probably underestimated the amount of time that would be required when they volunteered to be on the subcommittee.

The Redesigned Program

As I pointed out earlier in this thesis, I was only able to change 10% (courses and/or hours) of the original program that had been approved by the Council of Regents in 1984. The Ministry of Education and Training imposed this restriction, and the College monitored it. Although I experienced some initial resistance to a few of my ideas, fortunately I had the support of the administration for the work I was doing, consequently we were able to arrive at a compromise. For example, I requested that the course instructor be paid for the full 36 hours of teaching time even though there were

only 18 student contact hours. In brief, each course consists of 18 hours of on-site time

and 18 hours of individual distance education. At first, the College administration would

consider only paying for student contact time, which would have cut the program time in

half (more than a 10% change), but I convinced them of the value of the individual

component. I assured them that the instructor would still be monitoring the students and

marking the assignments relating to the independent study component of each course.

While I was examining the archival documents relating to the history of the

original Resource Teacher Certificate program, as a way to shed some light on the reason

for the high drop-out rate, the thought struck me that students involved in the redesigned

program would need to be highly motivated in order to complete the program

requirements successfully. Although the time commitments of the students would be

demanding and would be especially hard to sustain over a 2 year period, especially in

light of their work and family commitments, I had to consider the motivation factor first

when redesigning the program.

At the January 20, 1999 meeting, I proposed that the program be divided into two

sections. The first section would be comprised of three courses and a field practicum. I

suggested that the name of the original first course, *Introduction to Resource Teaching*,

be changed to *Studies in Childhood Exceptionalities: Issues and Trends* in order to

broaden its scope. The second course, *Individual Program Planning I*, which involved

learning about the four main areas of program planning and how these areas related to

meeting the needs of children with special needs, remained the same. The course,

Working With Families, which focuses on how to be sensitive to the needs of families

and how to work with them for the betterment of the child, also remained the same. The final component of this first section would be the field placement. I recommended that this placement be implemented at the student's place of employment as long as there was a suitable family willing to cooperate with the student. For many of the students this requirement would not be a hardship because most have been working with families and children regularly and have built a rapport with them. This field placement could add more depth to their interactions with children and the families. The Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) option that is offered by the College could allow some students, who have worked for years with children with special needs, to opt for the development of a portfolio as a way to prove, based on their work experience, that they had met the learning outcomes for the particular course they wished to challenge.

At the end of the first section of the program, I recommended that the students receive a *Statement of Achievement*. From an administrative point of view, these are not difficult for the College to generate. In my opinion, an acknowledgment of the students' achievement in the program to date could motivate them to continue and complete the second section. Students, who wished to stop at this point, would have a tangible piece of evidence that they had pursued additional training in the area of special needs. At some point in time they might decide to continue with the program and take the second part. For those students who had already made the commitment to continue in the program, the *Statement of Achievement* would serve as a "pat on the back," congratulating them for reaching the halfway point in the program. As I reminded the subcommittee when I presented my suggestion, motivation is an important factor in adult education.

With regard to the second section of the program, I recommended that it focus on the role of the resource consultant because the primary task of a resource consultant is to work closely with the child-care center staff and other professionals in order to develop comprehensive programs that meet the needs of children and their families. Therefore, I suggested that the first course in the second section should be an advanced course in program planning that takes a more indepth look at programing from the perspective of a consultant. The original course, *Individual Program Planning II*, continued on from where the first course left off. In the redesigned program, this course focuses on the family model. The second course in Section 2, *Advocacy in Childcare and School Settings and the Community*, focuses on the broader issues of helping families with special needs children. This course continues the discussion about some of the topics touched on in the first course of the program, *Studies in Childhood Exceptionalities: Issues and Trends. Co-ordinating Resources*, the final classroom course, focuses on developing skills for conducting research into specific topics and on how to present the findings effectively to the public. I recommended that this course still be included in the program because resource consultants often must address groups of people as a way to educate or to augment peoples' knowledge about children with special needs. The final field placement, unlike the first one, which can be completed in the students' place of employment, is designed as a simulation of the role of the resource consultant. I suggested that the course include a formalized mentoring system that would facilitate this placement. Students taking part in this course would be required to determine their long and short term goals. The purpose of this field placement is that students simulate, under

the guidance of a mentor, the role of a resource consultant and, during this process,

become more self-directed in their learning.

In terms of the delivery of the individual courses, the subcommittee suggested

that the courses be offered on-site at the College every second Monday night during each

semester for a total of 18 hours. The remaining 18 hours would be devoted to

independent study on topics agreed upon by the instructor and students. This arrangement

fit with what the survey respondents indicated as their preferred delivery mode. The on-

site meetings would allow time for spirited discussion on topics in the course and on

issues that are of immediate concern for students in their daily work. The subcommittee

was of the opinion that time for these spontaneous discussions was important, because

students should have the opportunity to discuss issues of particular relevance to them.

The independent portion of the individual courses, the distance learning part,

could provide students with opportunities to delve into topics generated by the course

content that are of particular interest to them. As a rule, adult students want their learning

to be relevant, so this is one way that this principle could be incorporated into the

program redesign. For example, in the course, *Studies in Childhood Exceptionalities:*

Issues and Trends, students might research syndromes that are new to them; others might

take the opportunity to focus on a syndrome of a child they were currently working with

in their place of employment. In the *Individual Program Planning I* course, some

students might choose to study a particular assessment tool in depth; others might choose

to examine a variety of assessment tools and to compare the merits of each one. The

students also would be given the option to present their independent study material either

in a written or oral presentation. Because praxis is a large part of the independent portion of the program, each course now has a reflection piece in which the students comment on how their learning is affecting their practice and vice versa. This report can be shared with the instructor and with the other students, if desired, during classroom discussions. The instructor's task is to assure respect for the individual student's level of disclosure. Students will feel comfortable sharing their ideas, opinions, and thoughts with others in a respectful, caring, social environment that an adult learning classroom should promote.

I purposely promoted the idea of the cohort mentality in the redesigned program. My rationale for this inclusion is the fact that a cohort is a group of people who are connected together by some common factor, in this case the RTC program. In putting this idea into practice, I had three purposes: to create a feeling of cohesion within the group so that the students could motivate each other by their support and by their determination to complete the program; to foster within the group a comfort level with each other; and to promote the cohort idea, so that students could begin to network with each other and to continue this networking after they have completed the program. In other words, their cohort would serve as the beginning of their consulting contacts.

The Final Report

On Wednesday June 16, 1999, I presented my final report to the Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee. My presentation consisted of: the history of the original Resource Teacher Certificate program starting with the original proposal to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities in 1984 and ending with its demise in 1990; a summary of

my conversations with the former instructors and students; and an outline of the redesigned program including the six adult learning principles that guided the redesign process.

The members of the committee approved the division of the program into two sections with a *Statement of Achievement* awarded after the first section is completed. They recognized, as did the subcommittee members, the motivational effect this would have on the students. The committee was impressed by the return rate of the survey, because many surveys have a less than 20% return rate and we had a 33% return rate. Many members felt that the combination of classroom and distance education was the most viable method for delivering the program. They were pleased with the level of interest shown to date in the program.

I then presented the six adult learning principles that underpin the program. As each principle was mentioned, the members' heads nodded. During the ensuing discussion, many members recalled some of their learning experiences as adults in less than favourable conditions. One member recalled that her first college course reminded her "of being a little girl again entering grade one on the first day of school and feeling very inadequate." Another member told the story of the instructor "who never let us finish an argument as she always seems to have the right answer. It was her view or no view at all!" The Advisory Committee expressed the hope that the redesigned program would be able to live up to its philosophy. I assured them that it was my intention to see that it did.

Finally, I outlined the plans for the fall of 1999. I had spoken to the manager, prior to the meeting, about hiring an instructor to teach the first course pending the approval of the Advisory Committee. The outcome of the meeting was unanimous approval for the redesigned program. I was given the green light to proceed as planned and to act as the coordinator of the program.

Immediate Preparation

During the summer of 1999, I prepared the flyer for the Resource Teacher Certificate program. I met with the marketing person at the College and arranged for advertisements to be placed in the local newspapers. The first course of the program was also included in the fall continuing education flyer. In consultation with the manager, I approached a member of the subcommittee to teach the first course. I felt that she was the logical choice because not only was she a graduate of the original program and had been actively involved in the subcommittee meetings, but was well respected in the field. In fact, in October 1999, she was the recipient of the Children's Service Award given by the local branch of the Association of Early Childhood Educators. At first she was reluctant to accept the position because she had not done much formal teaching. I volunteered to act as her mentor her during the course.

Progress and Evaluation Stage

In this section, I first review the Resource Teacher Certificate program after the redesigned program had been implemented for one year. I discuss each of the courses

that have been offered. Second, I present the findings of a program evaluation that had as its purpose to determine how well the adult learning principles that underpin the program had been translated into practice.

After One Year

Twenty-seven students enrolled for the first course in the redesigned Resource Teacher Certificate program. They entered with a variety of experiences in the field. When I asked them what attracted them to the program, their responses varied from the reputation of the instructor, to the need for the piece of paper to retain their current job. To orientate them to the philosophy of the program, I spoke informally to the group at the beginning of the first course. I outlined the six adult learning principles that underpinned the program, and explained the weekly operation of the course. For example, I explained how they would become self-directed in their learning as they progressed through the program. In other words, we would prepare them for the final field placement, so they would be comfortable articulating their long and short term goals and objectives. I also explained that self-direction is also necessary in their work as resource consultants. One student commented that she "was not very good at planning goals," but that she hoped to become better at it.

The first course, *Studies in Childhood Exceptionalities: Issues and Trends,* focused on introducing the students to the role of the resource teacher, reviewing the major syndromes, discussing the concepts of integration and normalization, and identifying recent trends and issues in the field. I returned to the class again near the end

of the fall 1999 semester to elicit some informal feedback about how the students

thought the program was progressing. Most students found the course content to be very

useful in their daily situations. In terms of the delivery of the course, they liked the fact

that the class was offered every second week. All of the students found the independent

part of the course manageable. Some expressed their lack of enthusiasm for the reflective

report, but they understood the relevance of reflecting on how the theory they were

learning applied to their work situations. Of the 27 students who started in September, all

but 2 students completed the course.

The second course, *Individual Program Planning I*, began during the winter 2000

semester. Enrolment dropped because some members of the cohort chose to pursue the

prior learning assessment option that the College offered. The course instructor, a

resource consultant from a neighbouring geographical area taught the course. Her course

focused on planning programs for children with special needs using the child focus

model, that many of the students were already using in their work settings. I decided not

to meet with the students at the beginning of their course, instead I met with them near

the end of the course. Most were still satisfied with the program, but they expressed a

concern about the current course because some felt that they felt that they were not

learning anything new. Consequently, the instructor modified the assignments by giving

the students more leeway in choosing topics for their independent study. During this

meeting, the students told me that they were looking forward to completing Section 1 and

receiving their *Statement of Achievement*. This fact indicated how important this

seemingly small motivator was going to become.

The third course, *Working With Families*, was offered during the spring 2000 semester. The instructor, who taught in the program when it was originally offered, agreed to teach it again. She has had many years of experience of working with children and adults with special needs. When she presented the students with the reflective journal component of the course, they voiced their dislike for this assignment. She handled the situation well by asking the students for their ideas on how to fulfil this requirement for the course in lieu of the reflective journal assignment. The students suggested a broad spectrum of ideas ranging from scrapping the assignment altogether to instructor-student interviews. The final decision regarding the assignment was a variation of a journal. In other words, each time the students met as a class, they wrote a report on what they had learned in class and how it related to a particular situation in their work. As adult learners, they felt respected by the instructor and they found their report writing a good way to evaluate their learning.

The final course in Section 1, the field placement, was also offered in the spring 2000 semester. The instructor was a resource teacher at a local child-care center. Many students chose the PLA option based on their experiences in the field. For most students, the field placement component gave them the opportunity to be self-directed in their learning. They were required to locate their own placement sites if they chose not to do the field placement at their work place. Some students needed to negotiate time away from work in order to fulfil the course requirements. The instructor met with the students on an individual basis in order to monitor their work and to discuss any issues or

concerns that they had with the field placement assignment. All of the students, who

enrolled in the field placement course, completed it.

Program Evaluation

I spoke to many of the students in the program over the course of the first year of

its operation. They seem to be pleased with their learning not only in terms of the course

content, but also the delivery. At the end of the fall 2000 semester, I formalized the

evaluation process by asking each of the current students to complete a program

evaluation form (see Appendix B). I invited them to make comments regarding the six

key adult learning principles that underpin the program. For the first principle, adults

should be treated as learners who need to have their individual learning styles taken into

consideration, one student wrote, "In all the courses, I feel we have been treated as adult

learners, respecting the fact that we have outside jobs, families, etc." One student, in

commenting on the second principle, adults strive to be self-directed learners, wrote, "I

believe the program is headed in that direction. The first few courses were more teacher-

directed." Another student wrote, "I have been challenged to direct my learning."

However, another student expressed a concern. She noted that "self-direction is very

important and at the same time I felt more was required. Often when we asked for

clarification we were given no more information than what was in the original hand-out."

For the principle, adults require that their learning experiences be relevant, one student

wrote, "I have my ECE but this course somewhat veers in a different direction that I am

unfamiliar with and challenged by." Another student commented that "I feel we have had

excellent experiences and that we will have more interesting experiences in future courses." Concerning the principle relating to reflection on their learning, one student wrote "The reflection has made me aware of my personal strengths and needs which makes me aware of my biases. This material should then be reviewed and goals set from these reviews." The one principle that the students appeared to have the most difficulty with was demonstrating "how do they know they know" the material being presented. Some felt that the assignments in the courses were graded for effort rather than content. Others felt they needed more direction and detail in order to enhance the work taught and learned. Several of the students did not comment on this learning principle. The final principle, adults appreciate learning that is in a respectful, caring, social environment, elicited the most positive comments. Examples of some comments are: "Enjoyed coming to class with some familiar faces and knowing new persons coming from a distance"; "I felt understood when a class had to be missed due to home life"; and:

> Certainly the teachers and peers have been respectful of one another socially as we are professionally. This is so important as we work in a small community and we are required to act and treat others in a professional and respectful way.

For their part, the instructors have endeavoured to uphold the philosophy of the program through their teaching. The cohort is becoming more cohesive, a development that is viewed by the students as a positive aspect of the program. This feeling is expressed by one student who wrote, "Partly due to the fact that we have had the same group of people, this has been a very caring and respectful environment to learn in. Teachers and students have been very helpful." In the next chapter, I discuss the redesign

process, the implementation of the program, and the evaluation of the program up to the

end of the first year in terms of the literature reviewed in the second chapter.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF THE OUTCOME: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The purpose of my study was to redesign and implement a post-diploma program for early childhood education graduates based on adult learning principles. The data that I collected came from three sources: interviews with former students and instructors who took part in the original program; meetings with members of the ECE advisory subcommittee; and a survey of child-care workers in the College's catchment area. In this chapter, I discuss how I redesigned the RTC program based on the data collected and the literature reviewed, and how six adult learning principles, identified as relevant for the task, have been applied. I first discuss the consistency of my findings with the literature on program planning, in particular program evaluation. Next, I discuss how I applied the six principles of adult education to practice, in light of the literature. Following these two discussion sections, I provide conclusions and recommendations for adult educators engaged in redesigning post-diploma programs.

Program Planning

My study focused on the redesign of an existing program. The development of the program had been completed at the time that the original proposal had been submitted to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities in 1983. As I understood it, my task was to ascertain whether the program had value and whether a sufficient number of people had an interest in taking it. Once these questions had been answered positively, I then critically examined the original program to discover why it could not sustain a sufficient

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number of students in order to keep it functioning. Following this task, I began

redesigning the program based on adult learning principles. My first task was to examine

the literature on program planning in order to find a model that would help me in the

redesign process. In the section that follows, I briefly summarize my findings, discuss

these in light of the literature presented in chapter 2, and explain my conclusions with

respect to the various program planning models.

Program Planning Models

In my examination of the literature, I discovered Apps' (1979) generic, five-step

model that essentially involves three areas: assessment, design of instruction, and

evaluation. Flowchart or system program models such as those designed by Caffarella

(1994), Dean (1994), Diamond (1998), Houle (1996), and Murk and Wells (1988) all

follow a variation of the generic model. Each claim, however, that their models have

greater flexibility or are easier to use and understand. Another category of program

planning models is described as conceptual, because they are based on assumptions and

principles; for example, the Brundage and MacKeracher (1980) model is based on

assumptions and general principles, which can be applied to program planning using five

basic planning steps that are very similar to the generic model.

I found that these program planning models, either the linear or conceptual, did

not specifically address the process of redesigning an existing program. Actually, what I

needed to do was to start with an evaluation of what had gone on in the past before I

could make any changes to the program. Caffarella's (1994) model, even though it is

linear in nature, offers what she refers to as "practical ideas for making decisions"

(p. 17) in the planning process. Although I found her suggestions useful and her model

flexible, no mention was made of how her model could be used in redesigning a

program.

The conceptual models, however, offered a bit more flexibility in terms of

suggesting at what point evaluation could occur. Boone (1985) describes his model as

being "holistic". His approach incorporates a unified and comprehensive concept of

programming within a framework of three essential interrelated subprocesses which he

refers to as: planning, design and implementation, and evaluation and accountability. In

what order each occurred or how they interact, appears to be up to the program planner. I

found this concept to be helpful in the redesign process as I needed to examine each of

the subprocesses of the original program plan, not as individual entities, but as

interrelated units. I also found Cervero and Wilson's (1994) ideas useful. They caution

that program planning can not take place without considering the concepts of power,

interests, negotiations, and responsibility. In redesigning the RTC program, I realized that

these concepts were very important. For example, with regard to power, I had to

negotiate with the College administration the rate of pay for the instructors who would be

only in direct contact with the students for only 18 of the 36 hours of each course. In the

original program, the courses included 36 hours of student contact. However, in the

redesigned program, in response to student needs, this time was cut in half. I had to

convince the administration of the value of the independent study portion of each course

in order to justify full payment for the instructors. The redesigned RTC program also had to serve the interests of both the early childhood education field and the College. I had to convince ECE administrators and their associates that the program would provide the field with a greater number of qualified resource teachers. At the same time, I had to convince the College administration that its credibility in the ECE community would be reestablished by offering a post-diploma program that was badly needed in the community, and by delivering the program in such a way that students would be motivated to complete the program.

I concluded from my review of various models of program planning that although none of the models specifically addressed the redesign of a program, I could use the basic elements of the planning process for the work I was doing. For example, the subcommittee and I reviewed the original learning objectives and revised them to reflect current trends and jargon in the field. I also gathered data using a survey to assess the needs of potential students with regard to the delivery schedule of the program. I then redesigned the course delivery by dividing it into two sections and reordering the courses. On completion of the first section of the program, which took one year, the students received a *Statement of Achievement*. After completing both sections, which took 2 years, students received their resource teacher's certificate. I reordered the courses within each section so that the field placement component would come at the end of each section after the in-class theory work had been completed. In other words, field placement, in the redesigned program, is viewed as a consolidation of theory.

With regard to program planning models, I selected from those I reviewed what I considered best for the task I had volunteered to do. Therefore, I began my study with an evaluation of the original program, because in my view this was the logical place for me to start.

Program Evaluation

In some models of program planning (e.g. Boone, 1985, Brundage & MacKeracher, 1980, Caffarella, 1994, Cervero & Wilson, 1994), evaluation is one of the major sub-processes. Along with the other sub-processes (planning, design, and implementation), evaluation can occur at any point in the process. In other words, evaluation is viewed as a way to provide a holistic approach to program planning. Even though evaluation is recognized as being a key component of program planning, Knowles (1980) and Brookfield (1986) acknowledge that when left to the end, it is often frequently done half-heartedly. I wanted to avoid falling into this trap, because one of my objectives was to make a program that had originally failed, a success. The timeframe of my study dictated that I would not be able to determine the end results of the redesigned program until well after my study had been completed, specifically in the fall of 2001. Based on the work of Caffarella who defines evaluation "as a continuous process that begins in the planning phase" (p. 119), I quickly determined that I needed to conduct evaluations at various points in the redesign process in order to monitor its progress. By monitoring the progress of the redesigned program throughout, I would be able to address pressing concerns and deal with them before any disgruntled students decided to leave

the program. However, before I could put my evaluation plan in motion, I had to evaluate the original program.

The first formal evaluation occurred at the beginning of the study. My objective for this evaluation was to gather information about the original program as a starting point for its redesign. Using Caffarella's (1994) evaluation model, and ideas gleaned from Vella, et al.'s (1998) definition, I defined the purpose of this evaluation and how the results would be used. Vella et al. caution that it is important not to have "too many purposes for evaluation at one time or the design will be quite complex and the information gathered difficult to interpret" (p. 16). Keeping this point in mind, I limited the purpose of the evaluation to ascertaining from students and instructors, who had taken part in the original program, their perceptions of the program, reasons for its failure, and recommendations for the redesigned program. I used interviews as the data collection technique. Based on the findings, I made recommendations for changes in the original program. For example, former students interviewed had recommended that field placements have more flexibility, and that course content have some individualized components as a way to capitalize on students' interests. Former instructors had also recommended that the field placements be individualized and that the entrance requirements, specifically the one year of related experience in the field, be upheld.

The next evaluations were informal ones completed during the fall 1999 and winter 2000 semesters. In effect, these evaluations corresponded to Kirkpatrick's (1983) Level 1 evaluation, or what he refers to as the "reaction" level. I decided to do this type of informal evaluation because it was important, at this point in the RTC program, to

determine the reaction of the students to the redesigned program. Kirkpatrick defines

reaction as "how well the trainees liked the training program" (p. 101). From informal

conversations both with individuals and groups of students, I concluded that, for the most

part, they were satisfied with the RTC program, and planned to continue with the

program to its conclusion.

I completed a second formal evaluation of the RTC program during the fall 2000

semester. I took the opportunity, at the halfway point in the redesigned program, to ask

the students for their reactions, specifically with regard to the six adult learning

principles that formed its foundation. In defining program evaluation, Vella, et al. (1998)

explain that evaluation is a process of "getting feedback on perceived gaps between what

we said we would do and what actually happened for the learner" (p.1). This idea is

consistent with Brundage and MacKeracher's (1980) admonition to gather "ongoing

feedback or assessment of progress so as to modify further activities and define new

needs and problems" (p. 82). I, therefore, resolved that a formal evaluation at the midway

point of the redesigned program was crucial to my study.

For this particular evaluation, I used Knowles' (1980) evaluation process

consisting of four steps. First, I formulated the questions that I wanted answered,

specifically how the students regarded the redesigned program and how well the six adult

learning principles were being put into practice. Second, I gathered the data using a

written questionnaire. Third, I analyzed and synthesized the students' responses. Fourth,

based on the findings of this evaluation, I advised the instructors regarding better ways to

maintain a positive learning climate within the cohort. My approach was consistent with

the literature on adult learning. For example, Cross (1981), Brookfield (1986) and

Knowles (1980) urge adult educators to not only recognize individual adult learning

styles, but to validate them. Respecting these differences is a way to create a learning

environment that promotes self-worth, a factor which is very important to successful

learning.

Another insight from my study was the importance of the program delivery. As

mentioned previously, the original program consisted of 3-hour classes every week

during the semester. Unfortunately, this format was not one that appeared to work. In

redesigning the program, I decided that a different format was needed. Therefore I turned

Caffarella's (1994) program planning model because one of her steps is to determine

formats, schedules, and staff needs. As she puts it, one aspect of program planning is to

"devise a program schedule that best fits the format(s) chosen and the participants'

personal and/or job commitments" (p. 21). The key here is to decide on a format that fits

with the needs of the students. In the evaluation of the redesigned program, the students

touched on this point when they were asked to comment on the principle that calls for

learning in a respectful, caring, social environment. Because of their comments, I came

to understand that respect for their personal lives and job commitments is very important

for them. This respect was exhibited in many ways. For example, each instructor allowed

the students the choice of presentation dates which would fit with their personal

schedules. Combining this factor with the redesigned format for the program; that is,

classes every second week, signaled to the students that the course instructors and the

program planners (myself and the subcommittee) were listening to them when we asked

about their needs. Finally, in analyzing the findings of the formal evaluation of the redesigned program, I was struck by the fact of how important it is, especially in a post-diploma program, that the learning be relevant. This was consistent with Brundage and MacKeracher's (1980) Principle 11 which states:

> Adult learning tends to focus on the problems, concerns, tasks, and needs of the individual's current life situation. Adults are highly motivated to learn in areas relevant to their current developmental tasks, social roles, life crises, and transition periods. (p. 103)

This principle was obviously very important, because many of the students in the program were there to acquire the necessary certification as an assurance that their positions at work would not be put in jeopardy. Many of these students were already performing the job of resource consultant; therefore, the RTC program was not something they relished doing. For this reason, it was vitally important that their time would not be wasted. Once in the program, however, many found that they were learning new information, and could apply it directly to their work, thus they were motivated to continue with the program to its completion. Knowles' (1989) fifth assumption in his andragogical model, orientation to learning, also supports this finding. He believes that learning experiences in adult education should be "increasingly organized around life tasks or problems" (p. 84). In the next section, I discuss in detail the application of each of the six adult learning principles to the redesign process of the Resource Teacher Certificate program.

Applying Adult Learning Theories and Principles to Practice

When the decision to offer the program again was made, one of the key considerations was how to sustain the necessary level of enrolment. At this point I suggested that the committee redesign the program based on adult learning principles. This suggestion was based on my readings of various authors in the field of adult education (Brookfield, 1986; Cross, 1981; Knowles, 1980; Knox, 1977; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Vella, 1994). I was especially influenced by Brookfield (1986) who proposes six principles that focus on the facilitation of learning. These principles include participation, mutual respect, collaboration, praxis, critical reflection, and self-direction. These points are evident in the following principles: adults should be treated as learners who need to have their individual learning styles taken into consideration, adults strive to be self-directed learners, adults require that their learning experiences be relevant, adults need to be provided with opportunities to reflect on their learning, adults want to demonstrate in a variety of ways "how do they know they know" the material being presented, and adults appreciate learning that is in a respectful, caring, social environment.

Individual Learning Styles Should Be Taken Into Consideration

Both Knowles (1980) and Cross (1981) focus on how the adult learner is different from the child learner. One of the major differences is the acknowledgment that adults have comparatively richer life experiences than children. Furthermore, adults organize

these experiences differently. Knowles views this life experience as a reservoir that functions as "a rich source for learning" (p. 44).

A knowledge and understanding of how important life experiences are in adult learning as well as an understanding of adult life development can help the adult educator better understand individual learning styles. Jarvis (1983) suggests that the learner brings to every learning situation his/her "present concept of himself [herself]; memory and past experience; emotions and style of learning; physical body" (p. 80). I learned from my interviews with students who had taken part in the original program, that past educational experiences had an impact on their perceptions of what they consider to be important learning outcomes of a program. For example, one interviewee felt that the program overlapped with much of what she had already taken. Instructors also bring to the program their ideas of what should be learned. This fact was apparent when one instructor of the original program told me during our interview that some topics, which she had considered to be important, were not covered in the original program.

Jarvis (1983) points out that individual learning style is a combination of various types of learning styles, which have been identified, and that often overlap. He explains nine of the most frequently mentioned learning styles by comparing opposites, for example: active versus passive, focusing versus scanning, reflection versus impulsivity. Jarvis cautions adult educators to keep in mind learning styles when they plan programs and individual learning activities. Kolb (1984), too, reminds adult educators to keep individuality in learning in the forefront of the planning process.

In my study, both the subcommittee members and I clearly identified the need for the students, who took part in the RTC program, to be treated as adults and to have their individual learning styles validated. We agreed that this principle was important because many of these adults were returning to school after many years. Some subcommittee members remembered their past learning experiences as being quite painful because the programs they were taking were very much child-oriented, causing some of them to feel quite inadequate and uncomfortable. Consequently, students often left the programs disgruntled and disillusioned. Because the subcommittee did not want this to occur in the RTC program, one of our main objectives was to communicate clearly to each course instructor the importance of treating their students as adults, who have individual learning styles that need to be recognized. As Kolb (1984) explains, "The learning process is not identical for all human beings" (p. 52).

One of the complaints about the original program was that the courses were "pitched" too low because much of the content the students already knew from their experiences. Another complaint was that the courses were too difficult. Those who voiced this complaint, were usually the students for whom the admission requirements of at least one year of work experience had been waived. Although this example refers to the lack of experience as the problem, some of the complaints about the original program can also be attributed to differences in learning style. For example, students interested in abstract ideas might have found the content devoid of these ideas; students interested in the immediate application of ideas might have found the discussion of ideas a waste of time. The instructors, seemingly, did not account for these differences in ability and

learning style, and did not try to adjust their course content accordingly. The consequence was a general dissatisfaction with the program. Based on this information, I asked the instructors, who delivered the courses in the redesigned program, to use a variety of assignments and presentation methods that would cater to individual learning styles. As Brookfield (1986) puts it, adults learn throughout their lives and they "exhibit diverse learning styles, cognitive procedures, mental sets—and learn in different ways, at different times, for different purposes" (p. 31). Consequently, when students return to learning situations, they demand to be treated as adults, not children. In the evaluation of the redesigned program, students reacted favourably to being treated as adult learners, who had their individual learning styles recognized. As one student noted, "I believe that we have been treated fairly and on an equal level with that of the teacher. [I] Felt more comfortable to share comments."

Adults Strive to Be Self-Directed Learners

Brookfield (1986), in writing about self-directed learning, acknowledges that adults tend to "exhibit a tendency toward self-directedness in their learning" (p. 31). His sixth principle of effective practice focuses on self-direction. He encourages facilitators to assist learners in becoming self-directed, because in his opinion self-directed learning is "the most distinguishing characteristic of adult learning" (p. 65). He believes that in order for adults to become self-directed learners, they not only have to develop skills such as how to locate resources or to retrieve information, but they also must learn how to set their own learning goals and then identify an evaluative criteria to measure them.

After much discussion concerning the concept of self-directed learning, the subcommittee members decided to include it as one of the guiding principles of the redesigned program. They did, however, express concerns about how it would actually be translated into practice. At this point, I suggested that the independent study component of each course would lend itself very nicely to self-directed learning. Instead of the instructors assigning topics and directing the component, the students could take full responsibility for this task. The role of the instructor would be advisor and facilitator. I assured them that as the students moved through the program, each of the courses would become more self-directed until the final field placement was reached. At this point in the program, the students would be solely responsible for developing and demonstrating their long and short terms goals and objectives, and determining how they would evaluate themselves. This part of the program would prepare the students for their role as resource consultants/teachers, people who need to be very self-directed in their work.

Brookfield (1986) claims that self-directed learning is "a matter of learning how to change our perspectives, shift our paradigms, and replace one way of interpreting the world by another" (p. 19). He continues by noting that learners must be prepared to take control of their learning, particularly in institutions where a more traditional mode of learning prevails such as at the College, where the traditional model of learning is prevalent. Although inroads have been made by individual instructors in using nontraditional teaching methods, such as having the students generate learning outcomes for courses and encouraging them to take an active part in group assignments, unfortunately, the College administration continues to request that learning outcomes be

determined before the students begin any course. In the redesigned program, the theory

courses are designed with an independent component so that the students can at least be

self-directed in this part of the program.

Knowles (1980) agrees that self-directed learning is essentially an adult activity;

he stresses the fact that the learning-teaching transaction is one of mutual responsibility

between the students and instructors. This point is highlighted in the redesigned program.

Both students and instructors have a clear responsibility to ensure that the learning

environment is conducive to promoting productive discussions of the topics being

presented at each class meeting. Knowles refers to the instructor's role as that of a

"procedural technician, resource person, and coinquirer; more a catalyst than an

instructor, more a guide than a wizard" (p. 48). This role is evident in the redesigned

RTC program. The instructors view themselves as facilitators of learning, especially in

the field placement components of the program. The students are required to determine

their long and short terms goals and objectives, carry out their plans, and evaluate their

learning in consultation with the instructor. One student noted on her program evaluation

that "the program and courses facilitates self-directed learning. Many of the assignments

have been directed to us personally and what we want to learn for ourselves

professionally." She evidently viewed self-directed learning as important. As Merriam

and Brockett (1997) point out, self-directed learning allows learners to plan, implement,

and evaluate their own learning. Self-direction is a way that learning experiences become

relevant.

Adults Require That Their Learning Experiences Be Relevant

The need for relevant learning experiences is echoed in the works of Brookfield (1986), Brundage and MacKeracher (1980), Knowles (1980), and Vella (1994). The defining point of adult education for each of these authors is its orientation to learning, which shifts from being subject oriented to being task or problem oriented. For example, as Brundage and MacKeracher explain, adults are very highly motivated to learn when the focus is relevant to "their current developmental tasks, social roles, life crises, and transition periods" (p. 103). In facilitating relevant learning experiences, Vella points out that adults "need to see the immediate usefulness of new learning" (p. 16). Knox (1977) concurs with this fact, and suggests that effective adult learning involves "an active search for meaning in which new learnings build on current competence" (p. 465). By recognizing this fact, instructors can decide how to best organize their classes to achieve this end. In the RTC program, the instructors made every attempt to blend the necessary theory with relevant experiences. For example, in one course (*Individual Program Planning I*), the instructor asked the students to research an assessment tool that could be used for diagnosing the developmental level of children with special needs. In the subsequent field placement, they were able to use this tool to help in determining a child's level of development in order to plan a more effective program.

For the most part, the students in the revised program recognized the fact that their learning experiences were relevant. The following is typical of some of the comments on the evaluation: "The best learning experience was doing the *Working With Families* course. I felt the learning was more defined and it addressed the students'

concerns in this area." From informal conversations with several of the students early on in the program, some felt that several of the instructors seemed more attuned to the field of adult education and thus to the needs of the students. When appraised of this fact, I spoke with new course instructors to remind them of the program's commitment to principles of adult learning. In one case, I acted as mentor for an instructor, who was not familiar with teaching. I assisted her throughout the course by helping her to plan her course delivery so that it would reflect adult learning principles.

Adults Need to Be Provided With Opportunities to Reflect on Their Learning

Both Brookfield (1986) and Vella (1994) agree that reflection or praxis is an important component of adult learning. Mezirow's (1991) perspective transformation theory also has a strong grounding in reflection. In essence, each of these writers believes that reflection on past and present experiences is important in order to make meaning and to help learners recognize the usefulness of new information in their current situations. At the subcommittee meetings, when I presented the concept of praxis, the members were unsure of how it would be implemented in the program. For many of them, praxis was not a major component of their past learning experiences. To better acquaint the group, I guided them through a discussion of the term by referring to Vella who describes praxis as "description, analysis, application, and implementation of new learning" (p. 11). Once the term was explained to them, they began to recall times when they were asked to reflect on their learning. Most agreed that this was a good way to learn and that this type of learning should be encouraged in the redesigned program. Most of the

instructors relied on the use of case studies as a way to apply the principle of praxis. For part of each course requirement, the students had to write a reflective journal on their learning. In the first course, *Studies in Childhood Exceptionalities: Issues and Trends*, the students seemed to enjoy writing about their learning experiences as evidenced by the length of their journal entries. In the second course, *Individual Program Planning I*, the instructor reported an undercurrent of resentment regarding the reflective journal component of the course. This fact manifested itself in the quality of the journal entries; they were not as long or as indepth.

Unfortunately, the instructor for the third course, *Working With Families*, found herself faced with a class revolt when she announced that one of the course requirements would be a reflective journal. The students clearly did not want to write another reflective journal. Rather than demanding that they write one, she wisely suggested that the students decide among themselves what they wanted to do. In the end, they decided to do reflective reports based on the topics of discussion in each class. The students, although they recognized the value of reflection, seemingly were unwilling to do another reflective journal because they found the task arduous, and because it took too much time away from learning new information. I found this point significant. After consulting with the instructor and speaking informally with the students, I discovered that the students viewed praxis as being an isolated learning event rather than one that is an important part of the total learning process. As a way of addressing this problem, I suggested that the instructors try to build the reflective component of the course into each learning activity without singling it out, thus making it a more natural part of the learning

process rather than an evaluation requirement. This approach would be more in keeping with Vella's (1994) description of praxis as a process of "doing-reflecting-deciding-changing-new doing" (p. 12).

To Demonstrate a Variety Of Ways "How Do They Know They Know"

A program can be well designed and delivered, but if there is no tangible evidence of learning taking place, the question becomes, "Can the program be considered a success?" Boone (1985), in his model of program planning, addresses the issue of monitoring planned learning experiences. He maintains that once the learning is activated, which in my study was the delivery of the courses, the next task is to "develop and implement a systematic approach to observing, studying, and monitoring the learning activities" (p. 162). Boone maintains that effective two-way communication is vital to monitoring these learning activities. As a way of putting this idea into practice, I asked the instructors to keep in contact with me throughout their courses, and to let me know of any student's concerns.

Boone (1985) also asks, "Whose role is it to provide continuing feedback and reinforcement to adult learners?" (p. 164). He believes that it is everyone who is involved in the learning activities, from the instructors, to the resource persons, to the organization. Students in the RTC program were given feedback on a regular basis throughout their courses, either informally or through written comments. What becomes clear is that when one tries to put this principle into practice, much of the climate setting in the learning environment depends on the individual instructor and the rapport that she

or he establishes in the classroom starting right from the first night of the course. I

suggested to the subcommittee that I attend the first night of the program (fall 1999) in

order to "set the stage" for the learning journey of the students for the next 2 years. I did

so, and I have continued to visit the various classes at some point during the course in

order to get a feel for the mood of the students as they proceed through the program. As

the coordinator, I feel that it is my role to monitor the program as a whole in order to

determine both the students' and instructors' satisfaction with it. If problems occur, I can

address them immediately.

Dean (1994) notes that the reason for evaluation is to ascertain the students'

competence in the goals and objectives that have been established for the course or

program. In considering what to evaluate, he looks at seven areas: students' reactions to

the learning experience; information; problem-solving skills; psychomotor skills;

affective factors such as attitudes, values, and feelings; personal growth and

development; and changes in the organization and community. I solicited the students'

reactions to their learning experiences at the half way point in the redesigned RTC

program when I asked them to comment on the six adult learning principles. Based on

the students' reflective journals and reports, the instructors also evaluated affective

factors as well as evidence of personal growth and development. Dean suggests that there

are four time periods for evaluation: before the learning takes place, during the learning,

immediately following the learning, and at some time after the learning is complete. In

my study, I evaluated the program before the courses had been offered (evaluation of the

original program) and during the program (the informal and formal evaluations completed to date).

Diamond (1998) states that it is vitally important to keep in mind the relationship between the individual courses and the overall program. In the redesigned program, I made sure that the learning outcomes for each of the courses contributed to outcomes for the entire program. In other words, each course was a part of the whole. The learning from one course would be used in the subsequent ones. For example, all of the theory courses in both Section 1 and Section 2 of the program are completed before the students do the field placement components. It is during this component that students can demonstrate how they know the material presented in the classes. With regard to specific learning in the RTC program, I talked informally with several students regarding their first field placement. They found the placement to be very worthwhile because it enabled them to put into practice what they had learned in their course work. For example, they learned in the *Working With Families* course the theory about creating positive relationships with families of children with special needs. Once in their placements, their task was to integrate this knowledge with the practicalities of the placement in order to create a positive working relationship with the family of the specific child that had been assigned to them. In discussions with the field placement supervisor, she indicated that the students were very successful in putting theory into practice. This ability was demonstrated in their placement plans, during conversations with them, and in their written reflective comments.

Adults Appreciate Learning That Is in a Respectful, Caring, Social Environment

Brookfield's (1986) work served as a starting point in developing the overall

philosophy of the RTC program. The establishment of a respectful learning environment

for the redesigned program was of critical importance for myself and the subcommittee

members. We wanted to promote the concept of a supportive group mentality in which

the students, who would be together during their learning journey for 2 years, would feel

comfortable sharing their ideas, opinions, and relevant experiences. The question for the

subcommittee became how could we put this principle into practice. One of the first

suggestions offered was that the first night of program would be devoted to encouraging

the students and instructors to get to know each other. They suggested many different

types of ice-breakers to facilitate this process. As well, they recommended that an

orientation to the program be given by myself, as the coordinator. I readily agreed to

these suggestions and implemented them. During this orientation, I familiarized the

students with the redesigned program, both the courses and the philosophy. As a way to

get the students to know each other, I used an ice breaker for introductions. We spent a

longer time over coffee just chatting about our collective hopes for the program. At the

end of the first evening, I felt that the students were comfortable with me, the course

instructor, and their peers.

Houle's (1996) system for the design of education rests on nine assumptions, one

of which is the assumption that education is a "cooperative rather than an operative art"

(p. 44). He maintains that students must work in terms of their individualism as well as

in terms of the social interactions found in group learning. Instructors, as well, must work

within these boundaries. Each group must be aware of the way their abilities and

interests impact on others. He suggests that at times "it is possible to involve

learners....in planning and thus foster a collaborative approach" (p. 46). At other times,

however, the instructor must act alone in designing learning experiences, and be alert to

adjust them as necessary. In my study, instructors were responsible for designing their

courses. However, as witnessed in the *Working With Families* course, the instructor used

a collaborative approach to solving the dilemma of the reflective course requirement.

This approach created a feeling of mutual respect among the students and instructor.

Brundage and MacKeracher (1980) stress the fact that instructors need to "remain

flexible and responsive in situations which might involve anxiety and stress" (p. 73),

even if these situations are not necessarily related to academics. For example, all of the

students in my study were females and many of them have young children. One student,

who needed to take the program in order to retain her position at work, was anxious

about coming to class for a 3-hour period because she was breast feeding her infant.

When she approached the instructor with her problem, the instructor very wisely

presented the issue to the rest of the class. They all agreed that the student should bring

her infant to class to avoid being burdened with worrying about the well-being of her

infant.

Merriam and Brockett (1997), in discussing the three dimensions of the learning

environment (physical, psychological, social), note that instructors need to help students

feel welcome, at ease, and safe right from the first encounter. This includes attending to

the fears and doubts that students may be experiencing. Vella (1994) also addresses the

issue of establishing a positive learning environment in 3 of her 12 principles for effective adult learning. Principle 2 focuses on the issue of safety in the classroom activities. This principle exhorts adult educators to create an inviting atmosphere in which learners feel comfortable sharing their opinions and accepting the risk of trying new learning experiences. One of the students, who did not work in an agency like the others, told me that she felt intimidated at first by the other students because of her lack of experiences with children with special needs. Fortunately, the instructors made her feel that she had something of value to add to the class discussions, and her feelings of inadequacy disappeared.

In Principle 3, Vella (1994) points out how sound relationships for learning "involve respect, safety, open communication, listening, and humility" (p. 8). Many of the students, who participated in the study, rather than "stick" together, as often happens in such cases, chose to mix with the other students right from the outset. The instructors obviously had created a very comfortable and safe learning atmosphere right from the start of the first course. As Vella sees it, the establishment of sound relationships is paramount to effective learning, otherwise the group might become angry, disappointed, or even in extreme cases, fearful of the instructor, others in the class, or even of the learning experience itself.

Vella (1994) again returns to the importance of a respectful environment in Principle 6. She maintains that mentally healthy adults "resist being treated as objects, something that can be used by someone" (p. 12). In her explanation of this principle, she discusses the difference between adult learners making suggestions or making decisions

regarding their learning and stresses the fact that both have a valid role in effective learning. The third course, *Working With Families*, is a good example. The students rebelled when the instructor assigned a reflective journal. The instructor, rather than becoming confrontational, asked the students for their suggestions. Evidently each student felt comfortable enough to offer suggestions that would help the group come to a decision about how best they could satisfy this course requirement. The instructor, for her part, valued each suggestion and guided the group in a meaningful discussion. The result was a variation of the original reflective journal.

The comments from the evaluation regarding this principle ranged from a single word "great" to comments such as "partly due to the fact that we have had the same group of people, this has been a very caring and respectful environment to learn in." The idea of establishing a strong cohort appears to be working. One instructor, who has taught two of the five courses to date, commented that the students are "jelling" together nicely. In her view, there is more lively discussion as the students get to know each other better. There seems to be no hesitance in sharing differing opinions with each other.

Merriam and Caffarella (1991) believe that "learning in adulthood can be distinguished from childhood learning by the way in which context, learner, and learning process blend in adulthood" (p. 311). They have come to the conclusion that many of the theory-building efforts (Cross, 1981; Freire, 1970; Jarvis, 1983; Knowles, 1989) focus on some aspect of the context, the learner, and the learning process. As a result, this blending reflects a holistic perspective of adult learning that differentiates it from child

learning. In light of this fact, they continue by asking, "to what extent is the knowledge that we do have derived from practice, and to what extent does it inform our practice?" (p. 314). Merriam and Caffarella refer to Cervero's (1991) work in which he articulates four positions regarding the relationship of theory to practice. First is adult education without theory; second, theory as the foundation of practice; third, theory-in-practice; fourth, theory and practice are indivisible. Cervero concludes by stating that whatever position is taken, "the relationship between theory and practice must be negotiated by real people in real situations" (p. 35). Merriam and Caffarella concur with this position by noting that "we are more cognizant of the social and ethical dilemmas involved in the provision and practice of adult learning" (p.316). These writers suggest that there is still much to be learned about learning in adulthood.

In my study, each of the aforementioned six adult learning principles were grounded in sound adult learning theory and practice. By keeping them at the forefront of the redesign process, I was able to develop a sound philosophical base for the RTC program. To date, this approach appears to have paid off. In addition to their positive comments about the program, most of the students enrolled in the first course are continuing with the program and look forward to receiving their certificate. In the next section, I draw conclusions from my study and make recommendations for those involved in redesigning programs.

Conclusions

In this section I draw four conclusions from the preceding discussion of my study. The conclusions summarize the major findings of the study which involved the redesign and implementation of a post-diploma program.

1. Evaluation is a key component of the program planning process. It does not appear to matter at what point an evaluation is done, but rather that it is completed. An evaluation at the beginning of the planning process, especially when a program is being redesigned, can yield findings useful in the redesign process. Evaluation can be both informal or formal in nature, both of which have their place. The results of formal evaluations, however, can be reported in a more systematic manner. Evaluation at the midpoint of a program, which is often informal, can help the planners to make necessary changes in order to meet the overall goals of the program.

2. One cause of program failure, especially in post-diploma programs that are geared to adult students who have been out of formal learning experiences for a number of years, often can be attributed to the delivery of the program. Adult students want to be treated like adults; they want a say in the direction of their learning. By adhering to sound adult education principles, program planners can establish positive environments in which learners' experiences and their self-worth are respected. The students in this study unanimously agreed that being respected, as well as learning in a caring, social environment, were important to them as adult learners.

3. In order to retain students for the duration of the program, it is vitally important that they be given an orientation, not only to the course requirements, but also to self-

directed learning. For many adult learners, the transition from the traditional mode of learning to being self-directed is an uncomfortable shift. Without adequate support, students may choose to leave a program, not because of the content, but because of the expectation that they will be required to be self-directed learners.

4. Motivation is a key factor in adult education. Seemingly, recognition of their efforts motivates adults to continue with a program. In my study, I recommended that the College award a *Statement of Achievement* at the end of the first section of the program. This recognition has helped to encourage some of the students, whose interest might have been waning, to continue with Section 2 of the program. It has also helped to retain the numbers in the program cohort.

Recommendations

In this section I make several recommendations regarding the redesign and implementation of a post-diploma program. These recommendations may be useful for adult educators involved in a similar kind of task.

1. I recommend that the program planning process involve as many stakeholders as possible. Because the planning process is complex, the more knowledgeable the people involved are, the better the program will be because many different ideas and viewpoints can be utilized.

2. I recommend that program planners work closely with the organization with which they are connected. From a very early point in the planning process, positive relationships must be established. Without close cooperation, adult learning theories and

principles can not be effectively put into practice. Organizations are often resistant to change; however, they need to be convinced that flexibility is required when it comes to dealing with the needs of adult students.

3. I recommend that at the outset of all adult education programs, an orientation be given to both instructors and students regarding adult learning principles. Most instructors and students are familiar with traditional teaching and learning methodology only. A shift of paradigms is often difficult to achieve, but the needs of adult learners should be the driving force behind this shift.

4. I recommend that both formal and informal evaluations be conducted throughout the duration of a redesigned program in order to monitor its effectiveness. By keeping abreast of the mood of the students in a program, the program planner can make any necessary changes before the dissatisfaction level rises to the point where students leave the program.

5. I recommend that guidelines should be written on how to redesign existing programs. The processes and models available in the current adult education literature do not specifically address this topic. The need for redesigning programs based on adult learning principles is evident in existing programs that are losing students because of the inability of the program to satisfy the needs of adult learners

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Appendix A

Subcommittee Information Handout, March 10, 1999

Selected Passages from Various Writers in the Field of Adult Education

- In contrast to children's and youth's subject-centered learning (at least in school), adults are life-centered (or task centered or problem-centered) in their orientation to learning (Knowles, 1989).

- Self-directed learning involves learning activities that are planned, implemented, and evaluated primarily by the learners themselves (Merriam & Brockett, 1997).

- Transformation theory has implications for working with adults in that it shapes people, it can be a process for empowering learners, and it can develop critical thinkers (Merriam & Brockett, 1997).

- Effective practice is characterized by a respect among participants for each other's self-worth (Brookfield, 1986).

- Accountability means "how do they know they know" (Vella, 1994).

Appendix B

Studies in Childhood Exceptionalities

Program Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation, at this point, is to ascertain if the program is meeting the adult learning principles that serve to underpin the redesign of the program.

I invite your comments around the following adult learning principles.

1. Adults should be treated as learners who need to have their individual learning styles taken into consideration.

2. Adults strive to be self-directed learners.

3. Adults require that their learning experiences be relevant.

4. Adults need to be provided with opportunities to reflect on their learning.

5. Adults want to demonstrate in a variety of ways "how do they know they know" the material being presented.

6. Adults appreciate learning that is in a respectful, caring, social environment.

Thank you for your comments.