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Adult Learners' and Instructors' Perceptions of the Andragogical Instructional Method Used at a Northern Mississippi Community College

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Renee' LaJune Hall

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Adult Learners' and Instructors' Perceptions of the Andragogical Instructional Method

Used at a Northern Mississippi Community College

by

Renee' LaJune Hall

MS, Jackson State University, 1981

BS, Jackson State University, 1983

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Higher Education Leadership

Walden University

April 2020

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand adult learners' and instructors' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method used at a Northern Mississippi Community College. In addition, this study explored how well the andragogical instructional method worked as a way to educate adult learners. A qualitative phenomenological design was used to examine the perceptions of six returning full-time adult learners and six full-time instructors regarding the use and impact of the andragogical instructional method via purposeful sampling. Data was collected by face-to-face interviews. Through the participants' shared experiences and reviewing the interview transcripts, several themes emerged regarding their perceptions of the andragogical instructional method. The common themes that influenced student success of the returning full-time adult learners were blending, support, and institutional fit. Full-time instructors identified sharing and engagement as being the success of the returning adult learners. With these findings, it was recommended that a professional development workshop be created to train instructors regarding this instructional method as a means of enhancing instructors' understanding of the andragogical instructional method and provide helpful tools and resources. The emergent themes in this study not only necessitate the need for future research but also provide needed insight for institutional leaders to understand returning full-time adult learners' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method. This research study may assist and benefit instructors to gain the knowledge and expertise to excel positvetly and socially chage from practicing a teacher-centered approach versus the andragogical instructional method.

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This section described the methodology that addressed the research questions of

    this projected phenomenological study. Guiding this study, the approach

    to data collection and analysis were included. The description of data

    collection, the process of selecting participants as well as the number of

    participants, the role of the researcher and the process of gaining informed

    consent were all addressed. In addition, ethical measures of

    confidentiality, the justification for using the phenomenological method

    and ethical measures were also a part of this section. The concluding

This section described the rationale for using a three-day professiona development

      workshop. Additionally, this section provided a review of the literature

      for professional development workshops, a project description, aproject

      evaluation plan, and a project implications. The literature demonstrates

      the need for professsiona development workshops to assist faculty with the

      implementation of the andragogical instructional method. This study

      profiled the adult learners' and instructors' perspective of the use and

Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The transformation of the American economy for a more knowledge-based workforce has increased the value of higher education (Biag, Jirst, & Scott, 2017; Charmorro-Premuzic & Frankiewicz, 2019; DeMillo, 2017; Gillen, Selingo, & Zatynski, 2013). Due to the demands of increasingly competitive work, nontraditional adult learners continue to seek out postsecondary education (Chen, 2017). As a result of this demand, there has been an increase in the enrollment of adult learners nationally and at a local community college in the Mississippi Delta area (Bryant, 2015; Chen, 2017). Between 2000 and 2011, the enrollment of adult learners in college courses at institutions of higher education increased by 41%, and it is expected to grow another 14% through 2021 (Bryant, 2015).

To provide adults with the resources they need, instructors must be aware of adult learners' unique needs inside and outside of the classroom on the college campus must occur. Knowles (1984) identified four major principles that characterize this student population. The first principle noted that adult learners are self-directed, take responsibility for their own actions, and resist having information arbitrarily imposed on them. Next, adult learners have an extensive depth of experience, which serves as a critical component in the foundation of their self-identity. The third principle was adult learners are ready to learn. As most adult learners return to college voluntarily, they are likely to actively engage in the learning process. Lastly, adult learners are task motivated and attend college for specific goals (Knowles, 1984).

These characteristics provide needed insight as to how to accommodate and adapt instructional methods for adult learners (Darden, 2014; Johnston & Rondon-Berrios, 2016; McCall, Padron & Andrews, 2018). With a firm understanding of these unique characteristics, institutions of higher education should be prepared to meet the needs of adult learners. One proposed method of meeting the needs of adult learners involved using the andragogical instructional method.

A Northern Mississippi Community College (NMCC) had decided to use the andragogical instructional method as the college-wide instructional strategy to understand its impact on adult learners. Andragogy is a structured teaching methodology based upon meeting adult learner needs in the classroom setting as it might differ tremendously from younger learners (Ferreira & Maclean, 2017). According to an English instructor at NMCC, andragogy encouraged independence and gave the adult learner the capability to guide his or her own learning.

With this in mind, the NMCC president wanted to find out more about how adult learners and instructors perceived the andragogical instructional method. Adult learning is a distinctive practice that requires a supporting process and resources and adaptability from colleges and universities to ensure the success of adult learners. Adult learning theories play a pivotal role in the design and implementation of education programs. In order to provide these resources for adult learners inside and outside of the classroom, the andragogical instructional method may be used to address the needs of adult learners.

This study focused on a community college located in the Mississippi Delta. The Mississippi Delta is located within the northwest region of Mississippi. Currently, 8% of

adults in the Mississippi Delta have postsecondary degrees (Marcus, 2014). Key

educational policymakers have set a goal for 60% of residents in Mississippi to have

postsecondary degrees by 2025 (Marcus, 2014).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Designed to enhance student learning and help NMCC fulfill its mission to

educate, the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is a strategic course of action designed to

proactively address issues identified through implementing strategies to meet the needs of

all students. The QEP included information that the andragogical instructional method

was being used to serve adult learners at NMCC. The theory of andragogy is the method

and practice of teaching adult learners. More specifically, the andragogy is structured

based upon meeting adult learner needs as adults undertake a course of learning with

much more sophisticated needs (Andrade, Dragnov, Neves, & Sanna, 2013; Ferreira &

Maclean, 2017). The andragogical method allows the instructor to serve as a guide and

facilitator rather than simply delivering lectures. To find out if the andragogical

instructional method was effective at NMCC, it was important to understand the

perceptions of adult learners and instructors regarding its effectiveness.

According to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at NMCC (2016), adult

learners represented 73% of students enrolled from 2013-2016, which was a slight

increase from 70% 3 years prior. With this amount of adult learners, it was imperative

that an appropriate instructional method be used to increase chances of academic success.

According to Hammer & Hinojosa (2017), adult learners are more involved than more

traditional students (18-24 years of age) in the planning of their learning, normally

resulting in more academic success (Aragona, 2014; McCauley, Hammer & Hinojosa,

2017). However, this type of academic success did not appear to be evident at NMCC.

According to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (2015), the adult learners' retention

rate dropped from 35% to 31% from 2013 to 2014 and 31% to 27% from 2014 to 2015

respectively.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

As more adult learners return to institutions of higher education, the opportunity

to use their prior experiences in the classroom becomes important to enhancing their

learning experience. According to Palis and Quiros (2014), the andragogical

instructional method was designed for the planning, preparation, and delivery of lectures

which are useful, effective, significant and memorable learning experiences. The

recollection of adult learners' prior views and perspectives in the classroom setting offers

a unique opportunity to provide resources that may enable adult learners to matriculate

through their respective programs.

To increase the chances of success for adult learners, institutions must understand

the unique characteristics of adult learners and provide the resources needed to benefit

them. However, gaps still remain in the current literature as it pertains to how certain

instructional styles could improve the academic performance or success of adult learners.

Though some research has considered the effectiveness of andragogy, limited research to

date has focused solely on the usage of the andragogical instructional method. Thus, this

qualitative study approach was to better understand adult learners' and instructors'

perceptions of the andragogical instructional method used at a community college in the Mississippi Delta.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for this study:

Adult learners: Students who are no longer financially dependent on parents or guardians whose principal identities have evolved beyond the role of a full-time student, usually 24 years or older (Brckalorenz, Rabourn & Shoup, 2015).

Adult learning: The process of adults gaining knowledge and expertise (Holton, Knowles, & Swanson, 2015).

Andragogy: The methods or techniques used to teach adults

Andragogical instruction: A term used to describe self-directed learning or an approach whereby the instructor functions as a facilitator of learning. Additionally, the instructor prepares the learners to learn, involves the learners in planning for their learning and designing and carrying out their own learning plans (Holton et al., 2015).

Pedagogy: the method, and practice, of teaching which encompasses teaching styles, teaching theory and feedback and assessment (Aragona, 2014).

Straight lecture: Formal in-class presentations by instructors (Aragona, 2014).

Traditional students: Students whose ages range from 18 to 24 years and are pursuing an undergraduate degree (NCES, 2014).

Significance of the Study

Going to college and obtaining a degree is critical. As a result, colleges and universities campuses across the United States are seeing more adult learners

(BrckaLorenz et al., 2015; Ross-Gordon, 2011; Ubell, 2019). Instructors must adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of adult learners. According to Ubell (2019), institutions in the United States are racing to recruit new students but not taking the time to understand how to truly accommodate and make room for students.

This project was unique because it was designed to provide more insight regarding the use and impact of the andragogical instructional method for instructors at NMCC. Moreover, the study provided information to determine how well the andragogical instructional method was working as a way to educate adult learners at this particular local college. Hence, community colleges should be able to accommodate and provide resources to adult learners.

<div align="center">**Research Questions**</div>

The following questions guided this study:

RQ1: How do adult learners perceive the andragogical instructional method used at this community college?

RQ2: How do instructors perceive the andragogical instructional method used at this community college?

By addressing these questions, this study provided a better understanding of adult learners' and instructors' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method as it pertains to educating adult learners.

<div align="center">**Review of the Literature**</div>

The purpose of this study was to better understand adult learners' and instructors' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method used at a community college in the

Mississippi Delta. This literature review started with an overview of the conceptual framework used for this study, Knowles' theory of adult learning. It then moved to the current landscape involving student populations in higher education, education in the Mississippi Delta, and different perspectives from instructors regarding the use and impact of pedagogical and andragogical approaches. Additionally, the literature review provided an overview of the impact that the andragogical instructional method may have on adult learners, challenges that adult learners encounter while attending colleges and universities, and information regarding learning styles of adult learners and the impact that motivation has on their academic success.

Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by Knowles' theory of adult learning. The conceptual framework for this study will be Knowles' theory of adult learning. According to Knowles (1984), one of the ways to increase the success of the student is to understand the role of the adult learner's prior experience or perspectives. In addition, Knowles advocated that instructors/adult educators employ andragogical instructional tactics when teaching adults. Knowles' theory is a practical fit for this particular study because his andragogical framework is based on the following assumptions. The theory suggest that adult learners move from dependency to increasing self-directedness as he/she matures and direct his/her own learning. Next, adult learners draw on his/her accumulated reservoir of life experiences to aid learning. Next, adult learners are ready to learn when he/she assumes new social or life roles. Addionally, adult learners are problem-centered

and want to apply new learning immediately. Lastly, adult learners are motivated to learn by internal, rather than external, factors.

With an understanding of these assumptions, instructors at NMCC were able to devise strategies to improve and enhance the academic experiences of adult learners. More specifically, the more adult educators are familiar with the andragogical instructional method the more effective their practice can be and the more responsive their practice can be to the needs of adult learners (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). With organizations and businesses desiring to hire more educated employees, their need for a more knowledge-based workforce has increased the value of higher education (Charmorro-Premuzic & Frankiewicz, 2019). As a result, institutions of higher education are seeing a change in the landscape of their student population. In 2014, about 74% of 25- to 34-year-olds with a bachelor's degree or higher in the labor force had year-round full-time jobs, compared with 66% of those with an associate's degree, 62% of those with some college education, 65% of high school completers, and 55% of those without a high school diploma or its equivalent (NCES, 2016).

In 2015, the unemployment rate of 5% for young adults with at least a bachelor's degree was lower than the rate for young adults with some college, and the unemployment rate for young adults with some college was lower than the rate for those who had completed high school (NCES, 2016). Bell (2012) found that 18-22-year-old students are now the minority in higher education and students over the age of 25 are projected to increase 23% by 2019. In 2014, there were about 12.0 million college students under age 25 and 8.2 million students 25 years old and over (NCES, 2014).

Specifically, adult learners comprise nearly 40% of the total student population in the United States (Bryant, 2015). Due to this increase in adult learners, Caruth (2014) suggested that institutions of higher education must be prepared to serve adult learners.

This study focused on a community college located in the Mississippi Delta. The Mississippi Delta is located within the northwest region in the state of Mississippi. Like in the United States, the number of adults at the local community college in the Mississippi Delta is steadily increasing. According to NCES (2014), in 2011-12, 20% of lower-level (first or second year) undergraduate students in public and private 4-year institutions were 25 or older, compared to 44% in public tw2o-year sector and 59% in the for-profit sector. Among full-time lower-level undergraduate students in 2011-12, 10% were 25 or older in the public and priviate 4-year institutions, compared to 35% in the public 2-year sector and 58% in the for-profit sector. Additionally, 22% of public 2-year students began their postsecondary studies between the ages of 20 and 24, and 20% began after they turned 25.

In order to prepare adult learners, institutions must identify and implement the best approaches to provide the resources adults need to be successful. This section of the literature review will provide information regarding the most effective instructional methods for meeting the needs of adult learners. In order to truly understand the best approach to meeting the needs of adult learners, a comparison of pedagogy and andragogy must be considered. Aragona (2014) believed that with a pedagogical approach, the teacher is the main decision maker in terms of what, how, and when

information will be learned. As a result, the teacher is solely in charge of the learning

presented to all students. With this format, most of the learning occurs via lecture.

According to Palis and Quiros (2014), lectures have been the main approach in

teaching students in higher education and medicine and the most common method of

knowledge transfer in medicine. Yet, the effectiveness of the lecture has been questioned

to suggest that the lecture approach lacks relevance in many instances. The

implementation of the andragogical methodology may provide more relevance as it is

needed to increase the academic success of adult learners (Shahi, 2016). With

andragogy, the instructor is considered to be more of a facilitator in the classroom

(Aragona, 2014). More specifically, the instructor is more of a process manager and

designer of learning which allows students to build relationships and share personal

views and perspectives. Additionally, students are more involved in the planning of their

learning, normally resulting in more academic success.

When adult students are planning their learning, it should include active and

reflective strategies and connect to experience and previous knowledge. Reflection on

learning can help train students to gather information from their everyday lives and apply

it to solving problems by using their own knowledge and experiences (Hwang, Chen,

Chen, Lin, & Chen, 2018). Hwang, Chen, Chen, Lin, and Chen (2018) continues to add

that when learners are able to reflect on the instructional materials provided during the

learning process, they are able to gain a better understanding of the information

presented.

Andragogical instructional method design principles for the planning, preparation and delivery of lectures can transform lectures into useful, effective, significant and memorable learning experiences. Additionally, they might capture the experiences of adult learners. According to Shahi (2016), the maturation of adult learners enables a self concept that moves the adult from being a dependent personality toward being a self-directed human being that displays a readiness to learn. Additonally, the adult learner becomes oriented to the developmental tasks of their social roles and are able to use these experiences in the classroom.

Johnston and Rondon-Berrios (2016) suggested that andragogy instruction is an provides an opportunity for adult students to use their existing knowledge foundation and apply their life experiences to their own professional development. Using adragogy could be of benefit to adult students in the online setting. Darden (2014) noted that online education is more prevelant at institutions of higher education in order to make the opportunity to learn more accessible. Darden (2014) suggested that online courses are becoming the preferred way for adult learners to pursue higher education as it allows students to access the class from anywhere. In a typical online environment, the instructor and the student alike have duties that need to be fulfilled for the learning process to be successful. Darden (2014) insisted that instructors must function as process designers and managers. Correspondingly, Abel (2016) stated that online education is quickly becoming a major form of engaging in higher education. As more universities move online they will need to find models that create successful business outcomes.

Adult learners present unique challenges for colleges and universities (Bell, 2012). Darden (2014) found that adult learners' self-prospective moves from dependency to independency or self-directedness. The instructor must have a more practical, relevant, and self-directive and self-motivated instructional style. Hence, the andragogy theory is relative and is not a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to adults following the assumptions outlined by the andragogy model. The andragogical instructional method allow institutions of higher education to identify and remove barriers and challenges that adult learners' face (Henschke, 2013; Shahi, 2016) These institutions must be prepared to address the needs of adult learners and provide the resources needed.

Lin (2016) focused on the barriers and challenges for adult female learners. Lin (2016) found that the commitments of multiple roles, lower level of self-confidence, and insufficient family and social support were the most significant variables related to the barriers and challenges for female adult learners. Lin (2016) suggested that family, peers, schools, and communities should offer more help to this special student group. Baker (2016) claimed that because of diverse adult learners who differ in age and developmental learning styles and levels, institutions and instructors must address the needs of its adult learners by understanding and addressing their learning preferences.

Baker (2016) found that the students preferred the instructors' use of active approaches to learning and receiving instruction that met the needs of their different learning styles. With an understanding of the learning styles, instructors are able to identify the approach more beneficial to adult learners - andragogical or pedagogical approach. Hence, Caruth (2013) questioned and studied whether pedagogy or andragogy

was the more suitable learning theory for adult education. Caruth (2013) proclaimed that the best way to adjust to the learning styles of adult learners was to make the learning accessible for adult learners via an online curriculum. Caruth (2013) discovered that andragogy encouraged a relationship of mutuality and reciprocity between learner and instructor. Both the learner and instructor are involved in designing the learning experience and in evaluating the learning experience. and the welcoming nature of it is critical for the academic success of adult learners.

With more accessibility for learning, Caruth (2014) noted that the number of students 25 years of age and older enrolled in higher education has increased. Caruth (2104) uncovered that there was a substantial increase of adult students enrolled in college and university classes but institutions of higher education appeared to be unable to teach adult learners effectively. As a result, Caruth (2014) proposed that adult learners should be taught andragogically because it provides a positive effect on learning and student satisfaction outcomes. Cozma (2015) noted that those who teach adults must be aware of the differences between teaching and learning patterns specific to adults. These learners' motivation, determination, and life experience can bring a wide range of benefits to the context of instruction. Thus, instructors must be more flexible and more responsive in adult education contexts.

Education in the United States needs effective innovations of scale that can help produce the needed high-quality learning outcomes across the system (Crichton, 2015; Serdyukov, 2017). Adjusting to the learning styles of adults, not only appears to be an issue in America but can be seen internationally (Chen, 2017; Hussin, Mohamad, and

Shahruddin, 2015). According to Hussin, Mohamad, and Shahruddin (2015), many

higher institutions in Malaysia have begun to integrate conventional teaching with these

two technologies. The researchers focused on 'blended learning' which in their opinion

offers significant benefits, namely time and location shifting. Yet, the principles applied

to activities designed as a blended course must be taken into consideration especially

when the students are off-campus adult learners with minimal opportunity to attend

conventional tutorials. The results of the study indicated that the andragogical approach

was critical to meeting the needs of adult learners in a blended classroom and allows

instructors to use the experiences of adults to facilitate their learning.

Life experiences play a significant role in how students view their educational

experiences. Thus, it is important to better understand their experiences to ensure this

population is supported to succeed (BrckaLorenz, Rabourn, & Shoup, 2015). Instructors

must understand this phenomenon if instructors intend to meet the needs of adult learners

(Clerk, 2012). According to Clerk (2012), educators are encouraged to understand that

adult learners enroll in education with different needs than pre-adult learners. More

significantly, adult learners have pre-formed biases and ideas about education. Hence,

these pre-formed biases and ideas developed through life experiences could unfortunately

represent potential barriers to the education of adult learners and their matriculation

through their programs of study. Thus, colleges and universities must create programs or

environments that remove those pre-formed biases and barriers.

Ekoto and Gaikwad (2015) understood the needs of adults and the importance of

andragogy for adult learner success. According to Ekoto and Gaikwad (2015), andragogy

emerged as a popular learning framework in the past four decades for adults. Ekoto and Gaikwad (2015) found that gender, marital status, the program of study, age, the field of study, work experience, and coursework completion do not influence learning satisfaction of adult learners. However, adult learners do believe their learning satisfaction occurs because of the andragogical environment in which they are taught. Likewise, Alhramlah, Erickson, Lambert, Lindbeck, Rhoton, and Sammons (2014) recognized the increase of adult learners in higher education and their potential needs. According to Alhramlah et al. (2014), adult learners usually bring experiences and expectations that can affect their educational needs, progress, and activity in the classroom. Understanding these challenges, Alhramlah et al. (2014) reviewed literature that ultimately suggested that instructors in higher educational settings need to review their current teaching methodologies as a result of the increase in enrollment of adult learners.

McCallum (2012) examined the relationship and satisfaction levels between adult learners' educational experiences by recognizing the differences within the adult learner population. McCallum found that immutable and conditional variables did indeed influence the adult learner's perception of the teaching they encountered. McCallum (2012) concluded by suggesting that there is a need for institutions of higher learning to understand the unique learning requirements of the adult learner in order to organize and deliver an educational experience tailored specifically for each individual. However, due to increased enrollment in the adult population, the hiring of many adjunct instructors to facilitate the learning of adult learners had increased. Scherling (2013) found that adjunct instructors brought a rich background of experience and expertise to the classroom but

lacked experience in designing and implementing effective instructional practices for adult learners.

Effective instructional practices for adult learners is critical (Johnston & Rondon-Berrios, 2016). Alhassan (2012) recommended that institutions attempt to fully understand how adults learn. In doing so, Alhassan (2012) studied the concept of adult learning, systems theories and factors influencing persistence in schooling. Alhassan (2012) found that universities should understand the importance of adult learners to its overall enrollment. As a result, institutions of higher education have been highly successful in capturing this student market and have adapted to the individual needs of the adult learners, rather than expecting them to assimilate into the more traditional college environment. Being able to understand how adult students learn is vital to their ability to matriculate through school (Aikens-Alston, 2016; Fishman and Ludgate, 2017; Lin, 2016). According to Fishman and Ludgate (2017), colleges and universities need to find new ways to effectively support their students on the path to graduation. By the same token, motivating the student is equally important to their academic success. Hence, colleges and universities must consider the adult learner population by identifying new modes of motivation (Justice & Luke, 2016). Goncalves, Lemos. and Rothes (2016) found that learners who have high autonomous motivation in the beginning of a course score higher in self-efficacy.

According to Lin and Wang (2015), adult learners must be motivated in order to be successful in higher education. Thus, Lin and Wang (2015) conducted a study that examined motivational factors that affect both International and American domestic

learners to return to graduate school. Lin and Wang (2015) found that both gender and student status groups had the strongest motivational orientation among all in professional advancement, while family togetherness was the weakest of all. Topala (2014) added that adults are more self-aware, due to their experience and reflective capacities, and have greater self-management abilities, given their status requirements and multiple social responsibilities, which means that they are more likely to exhibit a high level of confidence when it comes to handling a situation. On the hand, Sogunro (2014) noted that students who lack motivation tend to achieve low academic success in higher education.

Implications

It is imperative that institutions of higher education provide adult learners with the resources they need to be successful (Bell, 2012; Caruth, 2014; Chen, 2017; MacDonald; 2018). The primary implication of this research study was to understand and deliver the appropriate instructional method for adult learners. Thus, Knowles' adult learning theory was used as it suggests that the use of the adult learners experiences was critical in ensuring their academic success.

With the increase in more adult learners at colleges and universities, the use of the andragogical instructional method is receiving more attention as the best means of teaching adult learners (Aragona, 2014; Bell, 2012; Ferreira & Maclean, 2017; Gillen, Selingo, & Zatynski, 2013; Quadros & Sarroub, 2015: Quiros, 2014; McCall, Padron & Andrews, 2018). More importantly, the use of the andragogical instructional method is critical in the Mississippi Delta because currently only 8% of the adults in the Mississippi

Delta now have a postsecondary degree (Marcus, 2014). Hence, this study may be able to address this concern.

In an effort to address these concerns, interviewing adult learners and instructors was the methodology to use in obtaining information. It was critical for instructors to have ongoing professional training. It kept them up-to-date on new research on how students learn.

Summary

Colleges and universities must identify and implement specific practices that enable them to provide the resources adults need to be successful (Aragona, 2014; McCall, Padron & Andrews, 2018; Quadros & Sarroub, 2015; Quiros, 2014). The best approach to implementing these strategies is by using the andragogical instructional method as it has been used to increase the academic success of adult learners (Shahi, 2016). To better understand how this strategy can be used regarding the perceptions adult learners and instructors have on andragogical instructional methods, the Knowles Theory of Adult Learners was used as the conceptual framework.

According to Knowles (1984), understanding and using the role of the adult learners' experiences is a great way to increase their success. In addition to the conceptual framework, this section provided information about the current landscape of the student population in higher education, the different perspectives regarding the pedagogical and andragogical approach, the impact that the andragogical instructional method may have on adult learners, the challenges that adult learners encounter while

attending colleges and universities, the learning styles of adult learners, and the impact that motivation have on their academic success.

The next section of this study focused on the research methodology, setting, and sample population, methods used to protect participants, data collection, instrumentation, materials, data analysis, assumptions, and limitations. Section 2 provided information about the qualitative methods used to assess the perceptions of the andragogical instructional method by adult learners and instructors. Additionally, the research design and approach, the rationale for chosen design, the ethical protection of participants, data collection, storage and handling of data, the role of the researcher, data analyses, validity measures used, and findings of this study were provided in Section 2.

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this study was to better understand adult learners' and instructors' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method used at a community college in the Mississippi Delta. To successfully collect and analyze data, the researcher selected an appropriate methodology for the study. This study used qualitative methods for data collection in order to obtain detailed and descriptive information. A qualitative research design was selected to explore how adult learners and instructors perceived the andragogical instructional method used at NMCC. Qualitative research ask broad, open-ended questions designed to explore and understand an area of interest and participants are purposefully selected because their answers are essential to what is being studied (Creswell, 20014; Merriam, 2009).

According to Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio (2019), phenomenology is positioned to help scholars learn from the experiences of others. Creswell (2018) said that a phenomenological study describes the meaning of lived experiences for individuals regarding a concept or phenomenon. According to Yin (2012), the phenomenological research study is used to understand people's perceptions of their experiences. Additionally, a phenomenological study involves understanding how human beings experience their world and provide researchers the opportunity to understand another person's experiences (Austin & Sutton, 2015). For this study, the phenomenology approach was the most effective design for focusing on the understanding of adult learners' and NMCC instructors' perceptions of their experiences with the andragogical

instructional method. The phenomenon identified for this study was adult learners' and

instructors' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method used at NMCC.

There were two approaches that could have been used to study the problem. A

quantitative approach is a type of study in which the researcher decides what to study,

asks specific and narrow questions, collects numerical data from participants, and

analyzes these numbers using statistics and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased and

objective manner (Creswell, 2018). In contrast, a qualitative approach relies on the views

of participants, asks broad and general questions, and involves collecting data consisting

largely of words from participants and describing and analyzing these words for themes

(Creswell, 2018). In addition, qualitative studies provide an opportunity to examine a

phenomenon of which relatively little is known (Austin & Sutton, 2015). Since there was

a dearth of information regarding the impact of the andragogical instructional method on

adult learners at a community college in the Mississippi Delta, this study gave selected

adult learners and instructors a voice to share their views and perspectives.

Participants

NMCC had approximately 2,200 students, with females and males representing

59% and 41% respectively of the overall student population. Of the total number of

students, approximately 4% were White, 93% were Black, and the remaining 3% were

comprised of Asian, Alaskan, Hispanic, American Indian, and students whose ethnicity

was unknown. In respect to the potential subjects of this study, the average age of the

students was 25. Of the 2,200 students, 497 full-time and part-time students were 25 and

older. Of the male students, 126 were full-time and 17 were part-time. Among females, 289 were full-time and 65 were part-time. There were approximately 497 adult learners.

As reported by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (2017), there were approximately 60 full-time instructors and 51 part-time instructors at NMCC. Males comprised 45% of all full-time instructors and 55% were females. For part-time instructors, males comprised 47% and 53% were females. Of all full-time instructors, 16% were White and 84% were Black.

A sample of this population was invited to participate in the study. The participants were chosen based on the design and a review of similar studies. This qualitative phenomenological study targeted six returning full-time adult learners and six full-time instructors. The nature of phenomenological studies requires in-depth interviews with participants who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). The site selected for this study had seven academic departments. The participants were chosen from six programs that were currently using the andragogical instructional method. Fusch and Ness (2015) noted there is no one size fits all model when selecting participants needed to reach saturation. Data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible (Fusch and Ness, 2015) Depending on various factors, saturation occurs in case study research at about 12 participants (Aitkins & Buremeister, 2012). Padilla-Diaz (2015) stated that for a phenomenological study, 3-15 participants would be sufficient to reach saturation.

Participants were recruited via purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a process that ensures the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. More specifically, purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced in terms of the phenomenon of interest. In addition, it is essential that available participants are willing to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner.

Prior to gaining access to the selected participants, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval application was received by Walden University as well as NMCC. Once approval was given by both institutions, data collection began. Following IRB approval (05-31-18-0381449) the population of six returning full-time adult learners and six full-time instructors were issued a brief demographic survey to determine whether they identify themselves as an adult learner and instructor (see Appendix A for demographic survey for students and Appendix B for instructors). The instructions directed the participants to clearly define the group in which they belonged.

To establish a comfortable researcher-participant working relationship, the purpose for interviews and related processes were explained and ethical measures of confidentiality were addressed, as well as information regarding how long the interview would take and the format of the interview. Participants were allowed to ask questions. All interviews were held in a private setting near the office of the researcher with little distraction to ensure the privacy and the confidentiality of each participant.

Confidentiality was essential to the protection of participants. According to Creswell (2018), ethical protection of participants during all steps of the research process is important. The researcher abided by the Research and Ethics Compliance standards required by Walden University and sought approval from the NMCC Institutional Review Board. A letter of cooperation from NMCC was approved.

To ensure confidentiality, pseudonymous names were used to avoid using real names. The nature and purpose of the research were explained to each participant. They were informed of the procedures and risks involved. Participants were also informed that they could refuse to take part in the study or leave at any given time without penalty, reprimand, or questioning. The consent form and procedures were addressed, and participants were asked to sign the consent form (See Appendix C for consent form).

In an effort to maintain confidentiality, following each interview, immediate care was given to electronic data that was stored on a jump drive and password protected. In addition, physical raw data including audio recordings and printed transcripts were kept in a home placed fireproof locked file cabinet under lock and key that was only accessible to the researcher. All research documents per IRB requirements at Walden University will be destroyed 5 years after completion of the research.

Data Collection

The phenomenological approach and the interviews conducted allowed me to gain more insight into the lived experiences of the participants. Interviews were a far more personal form of research than questionnaires. The main advantage of interviewing was to obtain detailed information about personal feelings, perceptions, and opinions. The

data collection method for this study was semi-structured one-on-one interviews with six

returning full-time adult learners and with six full-time instructors who presently use the

andragogical instructional method in the classroom (See Appendix D for interview

questions for adult learners and Appendix E for instructors). The interviews were 45

minutes to an hour with questions developed by me based on the literature and

documented field notes.

Furgerson and Jacob (2012) emphasized the importance of using interviews to

assist in collecting data for a first time qualitative researcher. According to

DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), in-depth interviews are commonly used in qualitative

research and are the most frequent qualitative data source in research. There was no

certain order the questions were asked to afford me the flexibility that helped provide the

relation between the mutual experiences of the selected group of individuals (Creswell,

2018). A digital audio recording device was used during the interviews to capture an

accurate summary during the process with the participants' permission. The recording

was useful during the transcription of the answers, which is necessary for including

relevant quotes from the participants.

Once approval was given from IRB, the data collection process began by

identifying individuals who meet the criteria for inclusion. Hence, the social science

chair at NMCC served as the gatekeeper to arbitrate access to the adult learners and

instructors. The chair was provided the contact information for potential adult learners

who meet the requirements for the study by other instructors. In addition, the social

science chair made contact with instructors who use the andragogical instructional

method in their classrooms. The prospective adult learners and instructors were sent an invitation letter via email (See Appendix F for invitation letter). The email contained information regarding the purpose and significance of the study, request participation in the study and provided contact information for the researcher. The invitation letter asked participants to contact the researcher via email if they were interested in participating in this study. During the email exchange with willing participants, the details of the interview (time, location, date) were established.

The role of the researcher was a major consideration with respect to credibility and the assurance of validity and trustworthiness within the study (Merriam, 2009). The researcher brought forth a total commitment to the process yet always remembering that there was a lot to learn about conducting research. However, Fusch and Ness (2015) stated whether intentionally or unintentionally the researcher bias/world was always present. As the researcher, the role was to understand biases and reserv views as well as opinions by applying the epoche approach (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Epoche is the act of refraining from drawing conclusions (Creswell, 2018).

Currently, the researcher is the Student Engagement Counselor at NMCC. The researcher's position was to provide crisis management services, character education, assist with educational and career planning, provide personal counseling, make referrals, and respond to student life crisis. Furthermore, the researcher is a part-time Orientation instructor for incoming freshman and transfer students. Therefore, all adult learners from the researcher's orientation class were excluded from the study. In order to minimize bias, the researcher maintained integrity throughout the entire research process by not

pursuing a pre-determined conclusion. For instance, during and at the conclusion of each interview, the researcher took detailed field notes of the observations to remain aware of how the information gathered might influenced the reseacher.

Furthermore, the researcher sought the assistance of a peer debriefer to ensure that the interpretation of the data, especially when they contradict initial preconceptions, emerge from the voices of the participants and not the researcher. In addition, the research and analysis procedures were conducted with a fair and objective assessment and detailed methods assisted in strengthening the credibility of this study so that others can replicate it. Moreover, the researcher met with the participants on an individual basis to explain the role as the researcher and their role as a participant. The participants submitted their signed consent forms via email which documented consenting to be a part of the study. The voluntary status of their involvement with the process was reiterated and they had the right to withdraw at any time.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2018) contended that the analysis of qualitative data works simultaneously with data collection. The method of analyzing qualitative data required the researcher to organize, manage, synthesize, search for patterns, discover themes, and disseminate the findings relative to the data (Rahman, 2016). The participants' interviews were recorded and transcribed. Afterward, the transcribed data were analyzed to identify themes.

According to Creswell (2018), data analysis requires that researchers analyze the data, represent it in tables, figures, and pictures, and explain it to develop answers to

research questions and statements asked in the research. The first step of data analysis was to review all interview transcripts and then to begin the coding process. The matrix approach was used for analyzing the data. The matrix consists of the coded elements and data chunks categorized by the participants' pseudonym. This approach allowed the researcher to organize notes in a format that was easy to analyze.

Data Analysis Results

This section included the findings from the data analysis. The outcome expanded on the findings from the data analysis and also was compared to the conceptual framework and existing literature. Additionally, the conclusion included a description of the project grounded in the findings. The research questions guided the analysis of the data to understand the adult learners' and instructors' perception of the andragogical instructional method used at a community college in the Mississippi Delta.

During the interviews, integrity was maintained throughout the entire research process by not pursuing a pre-determined conclusion. In addition, the role as the researcher and the participant's role was explained to each participant on an individual basis. All interviews took place in a private setting near the researcher's office with the main front door locked during the duration to prevent any interruptions. The process for the interview was conducted as followed:

The consent form was reviewed and collected prior to the start of the interview via email. When emailed, participants marked with an "X" that they would participate. During the start of interviewing the consent form was read and any questions addressed. The participant acknowledged that they marked the "X" indicating that they would

participate via email. The researcher reminded participants again that their participation was voluntary and that the interview was recorded for future transcription and analysis. In addition, the researcher reminded participants of the confidentiality of the information they shared.

At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher transcribed the recorded words of each participant verbatim. In an effort to maintain anonymity, the names of the participants or the name of the institution were not used during the interview. Once the recordings were transcribed, the researcher listened to each recording and read the transcript to ensure the accuracy of the transcript. Moreover, field notes taken during and after the interviews prevented the researcher from being influenced by the data. After confirming the accuracy of the transcript, the data were analyzed.

According to Creswell (2018), data analysis indicates that researchers analyzed the data, represented it in tables, figures, and pictures, and explained it to develop answers to research questions and statements asked in the research. The first step of data analysis was to review all interview transcripts to begin the coding process. The coding process in qualitative research involved me making sense of the data by dividing it into segments, labeling or coding the segments, examining the codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapsing these codes into themes (Creswell, 2018). Both interview transcripts and notes were coded in order to maintain consistency for research methodology. Coded responses were compared and then narrowed down to five to ten themes, because numerous codes and themes may result in reporting on general or redundant information (Creswell, 2018).

In all, data were gathered from twelve participants during the spring and summer of 2017. Participants included six returning full-time adult learners and six full-time instructors at a public, two-year institution (Carnegie, 2018). This study was conducted at a community college in the northern part of Mississippi. In addition, location and accessibility was a factor in the site selection process. As a result, the selected site for this study was identified as Northern Mississippi Community College (NMCC) to ensure the anonymity of the participants and the institution.

NMCC had approximately 2,200 students with females and males representing 59 and 41 percent, respectively of the overall student population. Of the total number of students, approximately 4 percent were White, 93 percent were Black, and the remaining 3 percent were comprised of Asian, Alaskan, Hispanic, American Indian, and ethnicity unknown students.

In respect to the potential subjects of this study, the average age of the students was 25. Of the 2,200 students, 497 full-time and part-time students were 25 and older. Of the male students, 126 were full-time and 17 were part-time. As far as the females, 289 were full-time and 65 were part-time. There were approximately 497 adult learners.

The information in Tables 1 and 2 provides a synopsis of the participants and their appropriate pseudonym.

Table 1

Returning Full-Time Adult Learners at NMCC

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Major
Sandy	Male	36	Black	Sociology
Tracy	Female	46	Black	Nursing
Kathy	Female	49	Black	English
Dian	Female	34	Black	Nursing
Sam	Male	26	Black	Psychology
Paula	Female	25	Black	History

Table 2

Full-Time Instructors at NMCC

Name	Gender	Tenure	Race	Degree	Discipline
Instructor 1	Female	11 years	White	Masters	Social Sciences
Instructor 2	Female	2 years	White	Masters	History
Instructor 3	Female	1 semester	Black	Masters	African Am. Studies
Instructor 4	Female	6 years	Black	Masters	Criminal Justice
Instructor 5	Male	8 years	White	Doctorate	Paralegal Studies

Instructor 6   Female   5 years   Black Masters   Pschology
_____

This study was guided by Knowles' adult learning theory. According to Knowles (1984), andragogy offers two criteria for determining whether a learner should be considered an adult. First, the person obtained the roles that had been conventionally defined as adult roles. Second, the person's self-concept was that adults were self-directing individuals and responsible for their own life (Knowles, 1980). As a result, andragogical educational practices are best suited for adults who have unique characteristics and required strategies that were different from others (Caruth, 2014; Ekoto & Gaikwad, 2015; Knowles, 1980).

Today, students return to school for a number of reasons. According to Lin and Wang (2015), students return to school for professional advancement, personal satisfaction, and more meaningful curricula. In this study, Pauladecided to return to school because:

> My best friend was attending NMCC and he encouraged me to attend as well. By me being an introvert he said it would be best that I attend a community college close to home to work my way out of my shell before moving on to a bigger, better and a faster pace institution.

Kathy decided to return to schoo for the following reason:

> I want to better myself and be a role model for my son. I realize that I did not want to be in a dead-end job the rest of my life. Therefore, I needed to go back to school to get a little more education under my belt.

Regardless of the reason for students returning to school, it is imperative for institutions to provide students with the tools and resources they need to be successful while they are there. According to Quadros and Sarroub (2015), institutions must understand the unique characteristics of adult learners and provide the resources needed to benefit them in order to increase the chances of success. Just as important as understanding the unique characteristics and providing resources is the approach that the instructor takes to reach the students.

The andragogical instructional method could and should be sued to meet students where they are. According to Baker (2016), instructors must be able to adjust their practices and provide resources, which will enable them to adjust to the way adult students learn. Baker (2016) claimed that because of diverse adult learners who differ in age and developmental learning styles and levels, institutions and instructors must address the needs of its adult learners by understanding and addressing their learning preferences.

In order to determine how well the andragogical instructional method was working as a way to educate returning full-time adult learners at NMCC and to address RQ1 and RQ2, the researcher interviewed returning full-time adult learners and full-time instructors and transcribed the recordings from the interviews of the participants. Constant comparison coding, editing, and thematic analysis were used to identify, refine, and consolidate patterns in the field notes and transcripts (Flick, 2014).

The results of this study were organized by listing the themes and including summaries and specific quotes of the participants' responses. Twelve participants, which

included six returning full-time adult learners and six full-time instructors, discussed their

perceptions of the andragogical instruction method. The participants' identities were

confidential and pseudonyms were used to refer to the participants. The two research

questions in this study were as followed:

RQ1: How do adult learners perceive the andragogical instructional method used

at this community college?

RQ2: How do instructors perceive the andragogical instructional method used at

this community college?

Emerging Themes

The descriptions of the participants in this study and their perceptions of the

andragogical instructional method provided insight into the themes that evolved during

data analysis. Several themes emerged relative to the use and benefit of the andragogical

instructional method, which in turn clearly influenced student success. These themes

from the returning full-time adult learners were identified as blending, support, and

institutional fit. Overall the returning full-time adult learners felt the andragogical

instructional method provided a better transition to being acclimated to the rigor of a

college setting after being away for some period and provided the support needed to gain

the confidence required to be successful.

Themes From the Students

Theme 1: Blending. Being away from anything for a period of time makes it

more difficult to blend in and become acclimated to ideas or concepts that might not be as

familiar. One of the participants had reservations about being able to blend with other

classmates. Sam expressed that "blending in was a concern of mine due to the various age groups."

However, several participants in this study discussed how the andragogical instructional method encouraged or forced students to blend. Five of the six participants shared their experiences with the ability to blend. Sam said:

> As an adult learner, I had been out of school for a minute and was a little overwhelmed about how things and the times have made a difference. I am a people person so everything turned out great in the end. I even made new friends.

Sandy expressed a similar view on blending but initially had reservations. Sandy stated that:

> I felt like I was on unfamiliar territory; I felt a sense of not belonging. I have been out of school for so long it was challenging at first but this method is a way to get students involved instead of an instructor lecturing all the time.

Similarly, Tracy's comments support the group concept but emphasize the importance of individual work. Tracy stated:

> Most of the time we are in groups working on the work that the teacher has assigned for us. However, there are times we work individually but in the end, we have to present to the class where there is a question and answer session so everyone gets to participate.

Dian shared the same sentiments as Tracy. Dian said:

> This method allows us (the students) to be able to express ourselves and to give our perception on whatever the topic at hand is about. It is a method that permits

us to branch off into small groups and help each other to get a clearer

understanding of what one or the other didn't know.

Dian elaborated more about how the approach was used by saying:

My instructor will explain the assignment for the day and then assign us to

groups. She will always assign a captain, a co-captain, and a writer. She allows

us to be free-spirited and pull together to make the assignment come together.

The captain and co-captain are in place to make sure everything is handled in

order. The writer captures all that has been said in order to sum everything up in

the end. Group activities are fun and there is nothing like teamwork. It works

every time.

Dian believed that:

The method has challenged me to think more, work harder and learn how to work

with others. When working in a group you get so much support from each other,

others are willing to assist you to the point that you understand what is going on

and what is expected of you.

Theme 2: peer support. Supporting student integration has become an

important educational objective since adequate student integration has been considered

with improved performance. Participants in the study expressed that their classmates

were instrumental in their success with this approach. Sandy stated:

This method has been very supportive. I have received assistance from my peers

as well as my instructor. I seem to get a clearer and better understanding of the

information when it comes from a peer because somehow they break it down into

the language I understand by giving me street examples which is something I am

very familiar with that relate to what we are working on.

Kathy added:

My support came from the other students and instructors as we all worked

together to strive for the same goal. I was challenged by my peers in assignments,

debates, deadlines, extra credit and it made me push to be a better student.

Tracy concurred and stated:

I receive so much support from my classmates and instructor. I never feel lost on

any assignment because if a classmate see that I am struggling they always step in

and lend a helping hand. It has been somewhat of a challenge but that only comes

from being out of school for a while and now returning whereas things have

changed so much.

Often times there are barriers to student learning especially when instructors try

new approaches. Yet, it is necessary for instructors and institutions of higher education

to identify and remove barriers and challenges that adult learners' face with the

andragogical instructional method. Sometimes the approach is seamless when it fits the

students learning styles and preferences as shared by Sam. Sam insisted, "there were no

obstacles because my instructors and classmates have been very helpful. I found out

quickly that NMCC is a college that cares about the students."

Not only did the students feel the help from their peers but also it was detected

and intentionally utilized by instructors to get more out of the students. Instructor 6,

acknowledged, "I group the students accordingly to what I know about them that will

help bring out the best in them as well as the next person." Instructor 2, shared that "the students seem to do better helping each other versus coming to me when help is needed." As a result, instructors are excited and find happiness in the students' ability and willingness to learn. Instructor 1 affirmed the following:

It is a joy as an instructor to see the students working together, helping each other and not afraid to come to me as their instructor to make sure they understand the classwork.

Theme 3: institutional fit. College students contended with belonging or fitting in concerns due to a perceived mismatch between their own values and the values implicit in institutions of higher education. This can also be seen in the classroom when the instructional method does not match well with the learning styles of the students. With many adult learners returning to school, institutional or classroom fit was paramount.

Several of the participants in this study discussed their fit with the use of the andragogical instructional method. Kathy said:

I was used to an instructor lecturing all the time so there was no need for me to have anything to say. Now, that we have been introduced to the andragogical instructional method I see things in a different light now and I like the method. Now, I feel like I have the opportunity to speak out, debate or whatever it takes to get my point across. I am definitely TEAM A.I.M.

Dian said:

I really like the andragogical instructional method. It beats listening to an

instructor lecture all day, which always causes me to lose interest. It appears to

be more hands-on and set up where we can be interactive. I like when we have

group assignments and reports where we have to get up in front of the class and

do presentations. This method makes me feel like I play an important role in the

classroom and my voice is being heard. It truly challenges me.

Not only did individual students see and feel the impact, but they also noticed a better fit

with their peers. According to Sam:

Every instructor should use this method in their classroom. The method is a great

way to get to know your classmates and the instructor due to everyone interacting

at all times. I noticed how the shy people in the classroom and not so talkative

students slowly came out of their shell after group activities more so than when

the semester first started. I believe the method played a big role in that

transformation.

Themes from Instructors

The themes identified in this section from the instructors were sharing and

engagement. The descriptions of the instructors' perception in this study about the

andragogical instructional method were also critical to understanding its impact. The

themes discovered by the instructors created an environment that was more conducive to

learning for adult learners. This was shared when the instructors were asked to give their

definition of the andragogical instructional method.

Theme 4: sharing. With student diversity in college classrooms increasing, teachers must make assignments diversity-effective as the chances that students will learn with classmates of varying ethnicities and preferences increase every term. Sharing was noticed as instructors used the andragogical instructional method. Instructor 3 indicated:

They learn how to lean on each other for answers and opinions. They are never placed in the same group. I mix and match as I see fit to what we are setting out to accomplish. As we resume as a whole, individuals will speak about what their overall group had to express. Never the same group and never the same spokesperson. Everyone gets a chance to speak.

Instructor 2 believed this occurred naturally as students worked together to accomplish specific tasks for the course. Instructor 2 said:

I will give them an assignment, explain and they will take it from there putting their heads together and sharing their perceptions. I find that they end up correcting each other, working as a team, and sticking together to solve whatever the assignment is.

Instructor 1 shared similar experiences by stating:

The method allows the students to interact and help each other to understand the connection to the real world as they all speak of their individual experiences. It is all a work in progress and the students slowly identify with their type of learning style. I observe interaction with one another and it is amazing how their grades improve when they work together versus lecturing.

Sharing was certainly helpful in group assignments. According to Instructor 5, it allowed everyone to share his or her concerns. Instructor 5 said, "group discussions seem to work well for all of my classes. The interaction lets everyone have a chance to speak and not feel left out." If the students are willing and able to share their ideas and perspectives, it allows them to be more engaged.

      Theme 5: engagement. Engagement was a critical component of the impact of the andragogical instructional method. Instructor 1 believed the andragogical instructional method was "a method used specifically for adult learners. This is where the students can take the initiative to diagnose their learning needs. This is a method that allows for real-world answers." Instructor 4 said:

      The andragogical instructional method allows the students to participate rather

      than myself as an instructor to just lecture to them. When using this method the

      students are allowed to take notes in their own words so they will be able to

      reflect back and comprehend the message for the day in the classroom. It is a

      good learning strategy and tool to use especially for adult learners.

      Students that are engaged are more likely to be retained and be successful. Working collaboratively with peers was related to higher achievement, increased problem-solving, communication skills, and persistence through college. Meaningful interactions with diverse others affected students' identity development and improved critical thinking.

      All instructors interviewed at NMCC recognized the impact that the andragogical instructional method had on causing students to be more engaged. Instructor 1 suggested:

This is a great method for adult learners. In order to provide adults with the resources that are needed for them to succeed, as instructors we need to have an awareness of what needs to occur. As the instructor, I am designing the learning structure for the class and monitoring the process, however the students are managing the process when they engage with one another in the various group sessions.

Several students mentioned how they did not prefer the typical lecture approach and preferred the andragogical approach as it allowed them to interact with other students more, which essentially enabled students to be more, engaged. According to Tracy:

This method is one of the reasons why I am so glad I came back to school. Years ago teachers were lecturing (talking too much) mainly about themselves, getting off-topic, and not allowing the class to speak. However, now the students have a voice, we are allowed to express ourselves and be made to feel a part of what is being taught. The andragogical instructional method allows room for interaction, less lecturing, and having a sense of feeling like what we say matters.

Comparably, Instructor 2 echoed these comments by indicating that "this is a method where very little lecturing is taking place and the students are more engaged with each other."

As adult learners returned to colleges and universities, the opportunity to use their previous encounters in the classroom became more important to enhancing their learning experience (Ekoto & Gaikwad, 2015; Knowles, 1984). Instead of the typical lecture approach to teaching, adult learners required different instructional methods such as the

andragogical instructional method (Aragona, 2014; Palis & Quiros, 2014; Quadros & Sarroub 2015). In the local setting, the andragogical instructional method had been very impactful in the academic success of returning adult learners. Some instructors were unable to imagine an instructional method being as successful as the andragogical approach. One instructor noted their intention to continue to use this strategy. According to Instructor 5, "I say that if a vote had to be taken as to whether or not to use the method or just lecture all the time...I would say the andragogical instructional method should be here to stay".

Instructor 6 said:

Time brings about a change so there is an increase in the enrollment of adult learners. Lecturing is now just a thing of the past. We have to meet our students where they are. The andragogical instructional method allows the instructor to manage the process and design the learning but at the same time allows the students to build relationships, share personal views and perspectives. I have no intention of returning to the lecturing phase. The andragogical instructional method is what's happening all over.

The purpose of this project study was to examine the perceptions of the andragogical instructional method of adult learners and instructors at NMCC. In this section, the phenomenological approach used in this study allowed me to collect qualitative data to better understand the lived experiences of students receiving the andragogical instructional method and instructors who used this approach. I conducted in-person interviews to collect qualitative data. Each transcript was read several times,

then coded and examined for themes. The qualitative interview questions (Appendix A)

for the returning full-time adult learners provided answers to the research questions in

this study. From the interview questions and responses from the students, three themes

were identified. The themes were blending, peer support and institutional fit.

Overall, the adult learners believed that the andragogical instructional method was

beneficial as it allowed the returning full-time adult learners to blend in more with their

younger peers, provided more support from peers, and allowed them to quickly determine

if the school and the instructor's approach was a fit for them. Similarly, instructors

perceived the use of the andragogical instructional method for returning full-time adult

learners as a needed component. The qualitative interview questions (Appendix B) for

the full-time instructors provided answers to the research questions in this study. Two

themes stemmed from the interviews of instructors. Those themes were sharing and

engagement.

The results suggested that the andragogical instructional method was a strategy

that should be implored more across NMCC. Understanding returning full-time adult

learners' perceptions of this instructional method can assist instructors in their attempt to

learn more about this approach and in their utilization of this approach. With these

themes in mind, it would be advantageous to provide more opportunities for returning

adult learners to take classes that use this approach. This could be done by creating

professional development workshops designed to share best practices regarding the

andragogical instructional approach for instructors. Providing professional development

may increase the use of this approach across the institution. Additionally, a larger sample

of students should be surveyed to determine if there are some other themes that could of benefit. The findings from this study will be presented electronically to deans and administrators as it could be significant in improving the efforts on enrollment, retention, and completion of degrees in the local setting for returning adult learners.

Limitations

According to Creswell (2012), limitations are potential weaknesses or problems in qualitative research that were identified by the researcher. For this study, the findings of the study were limited in terms of generalizability. Hence, the small number of participants and the utilization of only one site may not have allowed the findings of the study to be generalized. Nonetheless, the findings of this study contributed to the sparse literature available on the perceptions of the andragogical instructional method on adult learners and instructors.

Conclusion

This section described the methodology that addressed the research questions of this projected phenomenological study. Guiding this study, the approach to data collection and analysis were included. The description of data collection, the process of selecting participants as well as the number of participants, the role of the researcher and the process of gaining informed consent were all addressed. In addition, ethical measures of confidentiality, the justification for using the phenomenological method and ethical measures were also a part of this section. The concluding section of this chapter described by what means and what given time data was examined and how confirmation of quality and credibility of the discoveries were authenticated.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this project study was to better understand adult learners' and instructors' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method at NMCC. To collect data for this study, the researcher conducted interviews with full-time returning adult learners who took classes that used the andragogical instructional method and instructors who also used this approach. In this study, the data showed that adult learners and their instructors recognized that the andragogical instructional method influenced the academic success of returning adult learners. With these findings, it became evident that the andragogical instructional method could be useful to other adult learners if it was employed the right way. As a result, a professional development workshop to train instructors on this instructional method was created.

The goal of the 3-day professional development workshop was to enhance instructors' understanding of the andragogical instructional method and provide helpful tools and resources. The workshop will be led by NMCC instructors who are using the andragogical instructional method. According to Macias (2017), workshops that are led by instructors enable the instructors to plan their own conference that serves the needs they feel are most relevant. Additionally, this model for instructor-led professional development can promote understanding, engagement, and positive interactions among instructors.

With these goals in mind, this workshop will be created to help NMCC instructors learn more about the impact of the andragogical instructional method on student success.

This section consists of the rationale and a review of the literature to explain why a professional development workshop was the best project for this study. A description of the project, the project evaluation plan, and implications for social change are included in this section as well.

Rationale

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used in this study to examine the perceptions of returning adult learners and instructors on the use and impact of the andragogical instructional method. Prior to completion of the study, the researcher considered many options including seminars, workshop series, and other developmental opportunities. From the results of this study, the researcher determined that it would be beneficial to provide more opportunities for returning adult learners to take classes that use this approach. Thus, a 3-day professional development workshop will be developed to share best practices regarding andragogical instructional method approaches for instructors.

The decision to choose a professional development workshop over other possibilities was made because the workshop provides instructors with the tools and resources needed to be successful in using the andragogical instructional method and allow instructors to work with each other to share ideas and perspectives regarding this approach. Additionally, it allows instructors to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the andragogical instructional method. Being able to share and discuss information regarding the andragogical instructional method will help identify and possibly develop what adult learners need to enhance their overall learning experience. Moreover, this 3-

day workshop will give participants opportunities to provide valuable input regarding next steps toward possible implementation of the andragogical instructional method across NMCC.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review was to discover ways to provide professional development opportunities in order to implement the andragogical instructional method. Based on the findings and literature review, an interactive professional development workshop will help NMCC determine the best course of action to prepare instructors with the resources to understand and implement this method to improve the academic performance of returning adult learners.

An exhaustive search of the literature was done through the purchase of books, visits to on-ground libraries, internet sites, and computerized means via the Walden University library using CINAHL, ERIC, and Proquest Central to help the researcher decide what the best project choice would be based on data collected. An exhaustive search of the literature was conducted through books, visits to libraries, web sites, interviews, and Walden University Library databases CINAHL, ERIC, and MEDLINE to assist the researcher in determining what the best project choice would be based on data collected. Online searches primarily used the terms *andragogy, pedagogy, workshops*, *adult learning*, *traditional students, professional development*, and *staff development*.

Data from this study indicated there were perceived benefits of using the andragogical instructional method for returning adult learners for both adult learners and instructors. Each day, participants will have the ability to ask questions and have small

group discussions to enhance their learning. Small group discussion enhance interaction, improve communication skills, and provide a platform to exchange ideas (Joshi, Padugupati, & Robins, 2018).

Professional Development and Instructor Efficacy

The theory of andragogy is structured based on meeting adult learners' needs. If needs are met, adult learners are more likely to be successful. Instructors need to be able to provide all students with opportunities for deep and meaningful learning, thereby fostering their holistic development (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015; Hwang, Chen, Chen, Lin, & Chen, 2018). Ensuring that instructors are appropriately equipped with the knowledge and insight needed to implement the andragogical instructional method increases the potential academic success of the adult learners.

Today, there's a need for more high-quality professional development that produces improved adult learner outcomes and increased instructor effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). The idea that professional development foster improvements in teaching are widely accepted. However, agreement about its importance varies tremendously. Kennedy (2016) said that there is little consensus about how it works, how it fosters instructor learning, and how it is expected to alter teaching practice. Hence, it was important for instructors to receive training that is based on their own motivations and interests. Professional development should be designed to intellectually engage instructors with content instead of simply presenting prescriptions or presenting bodies of knowledge (Powers, Kaniuka, Phillips, & Cain, 2016). More

importantly, professional development must promote real learning rather than merely adding more noise to their working environment.

Hence, there is growing recognition that instructors can only continue to act like professionals if they are engaged in further professional development throughout their entire career (Van der Klink, Kools, Avissar, White, & Sakata, 2016). In Van der Klink et al.'s study, the instructors' concerns varied but initially, after being hired, it focused on survival. As they matured in their careers, there concerns transformed into their own professional identity and their students as individuals. Recognizing one's professional identity is critical. Often times, through repeated professional development workshops, instructors get the training that they need to properly implement and utilize instructional methods for their students (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). According to Prenger, Poortman, and Handelzalts (2017), the best way to prepare adult learners for the workforce demands of the 21st century, instructors need to become high-level knowledge workers who constantly learn professionally. Professional development workshops for instructors are necessary to improve the quality of education, in order to ensure that all instructors are able to meet the needs of diverse student populations.

Instructor-Led Professional Development

Instructor-led professional development is considered to be an important approach to the improvement of the quality of education (Thurlings & den Brok, 2017). This workshop will be led by instructors who are presently using the andragogical instructional method. Instructor-Led professional development activities such as peer learning and coaching promote adult learner-instructor learning. Thurlings and Brok

(2017) noted that instructor-peer learning contributed to instructor growth as it enhances

outcomes at the personal, classroom, student and school level. With consistent and

frequent opportunities to gain more training, share ideas with peers, and to learn best

practices from peers, instructors will become increasingly prepared to handle the

challenges associated with the andragogical instructional method. According to

Amolloh, Lilian, and Wanjiru (2018), experiential learning requires educators to equip

each other with opportunities for effective preparedness in teaching through professional

development. The experiential learning opportunities, preparedness, and performance

during teaching practice provide the basis for predicting, understanding and adjusting to

accommodate the needs of the adult learners.

   According to Rhodes (2017), peer coaching allows two or more professional

colleagues to work together to reflect on current practices, expand, refine, and build new

skills, share ideas, teach one another, conduct classroom research, or solve problems in

the workplace. Rhodes found that when the novices participated in peer coaching that

used collaborative inquiry, they responded by emphasizing the adult learners' needs,

evaluating and reflecting on their own practice, and actively becoming members of a

learning community. Thurlings and den Brok (2017) added that coaching and

collaborating instructor professional development were impactful as they yielded

outcomes on each of the four domains of the interconnected model of instructor growth

which were the personal domain, the domain of practice, the domain of consequences and

the external domain.

Professional Development Impact on Instructional Strategies

In order to implement and maintain the skills set needed to be successful with the andragogical instructional method, instructors must establish and maintain the highest level of expertise possible (Cepic, Vorkapic, Loncaric, Andic, & Mihic, 2015). Cepic et al. (2015) identified three concepts that were important for the instructor's professional development. The three concepts were the instructor's reputation, competence to perform student development, and their personalities. Cepic et al. (2015) noted that with training specific to the interests of the instructors, they are more likely to be satisfied and benefit from the training rendered. It is also important to ensure that instructors are able to be developed in areas that are of benefit to them. Dengerink, Lunenberg, & Kools (2015) showed that most university-based instructors were mainly interested in improving their teaching and the less experienced school-based instructors were more focused on aspects such as coaching skills and attempts to better their craft and reach the adult learners. Professional development that train instructors to implement instructional change plays a key role in supporting this transition. The most effective professional development experiences are those that not only help an instructor redesign a course, but that also result in a permanent realignment of the teaching beliefs of participating instructors (Pelch & McConnell, 2016).

Saroyan and Trigwell (2015) argued that the need to improve quality teaching has never been as compelling or as challenging as it is today and instructors in higher education must continue to evolve as the need for improvement pushes change. Saroyan and Trigwell (2015) suggested that professional development for instructors should

change as students' learning change. Hence, Saroyan and Trigwell (2015) emphasized the significance of professional development in relation to student performance. As a student learning change, the instructional approach should change as well. In order to implement a new pedagogy such as the andragogical instructional method successfully, one must take into account how instructors learn and what motivates them to adapt and change their way of teaching. In most instances, instructors need time to test and adopt a teaching design to fit the needs of their classroom practice and the students' needs (Hermans, Sloep & Kreigns, 2017).

Professional Development and Andragogy

For andragogy, the recollection of adult learners' prior views and perspectives in the classroom setting can be of a great benefit to adult learners if the instructor is equipped with the tools and resources needed to deliver the content in this way (BrckaLorenz, Rabourn & Shoup, 2015; Sogunro, 2014). Thus, proper orientation and development for instructors to be carried out with effective preparedness that aligns theory to practice are essential (Amolloh, Lilian, & Wanjiru, 2018). The following section provides a description of the three-day professional development workshop that has been designed for NMCC. Additionally, this section consist of potential resources and support needed potential barriers, implementation, the sustainability of the program, roles and responsibilities, program evaluation and implications.

Project Description

Providing a workshop will allow instructors to learn more about the andragogical instructional method and its potential impact on student success. The researcher will be

the facilitator for the workshop and current instructors that have used the andragogical

instructional method with respectable levels of success will be the presenters. The

workshop includes a PowerPoint presentation, a workshop packet indicating in-house and

online resources, an agenda for each day, a fact sheet, group work among participants,

and question & answer sessions with the presenters.

During the 3-day workshop, participants will be given a general overview of the

andragogical instructional method and the different ways it has been utilized at NMCC.

Participants will gain an understanding of the method, the differences between the

method and the typical lecture approach, the types of adult learners that have shown

success with this approach, and any barriers or concerns that could come with

implementation. Participants will be able to ask questions and share views and

perspectives on the andragogical instructional strategy during the interactive workshop.

With proper implementation of this professional development workshop,

instructors will be able to share best practices and challenges regarding the andragogical

instructional method.   Prior to the training sessions being scheduled, the researcher will

meet with instructors from this study to formulate and review the overall goals. The

researcher's duties will include organizing the workshop and preparing the needed

materials which include PowerPoint slides and the evaluation tool.

Professional Development - Day 1

The objective of the first day for the professional development workshop is to

provide an understanding of the benefits of the andragogical instructional method and

how to use the method in the classroom. The day will begin with a welcome from the

facilitator who will also introduce the instructors for the workshop. There will be an icebreaker for the participants to get to know one another and the instructors. The next phase of the morning session will consist of learning the benefits of the andragogical instructional method. There will be a short video on the benefits of andragogy and best practices. The video will be followed by instructors sharing and giving insight on how they have employed the andragogical instructional method and the impact that it has had on their adult learners.

The second half of the day is to focus on how to use the andragogical instructional method in the classroom. The participants will watch a short video. Upon completion of the video, there will be a breakout discussion with instructors who are using the andragogical instructional method who will share specific examples they found to be successful in the classroom. Then the participants will be divided into groups and have a discussion on how the method could be applied within their classrooms. At the conclusion of the breakout discussion, there will be a short quiz and wrap up session. In addition, participants will fill out an evaluation of the daily activities.

Professional Development - Day 2

The objective for day 2 is to describe how to modify current course content to apply the andragogical instructional method and to create a lesson plan that uses the method. The morning will begin with an icebreaker that focuses on the participants' level of understanding in deploying the andragogical instructional method. The next phase of the morning will consist of a lecture from instructors that have used the method. During the lecture, the instructors will also share and provide examples of how they have

embedded the method into their classrooms. The goal of this activity is to show instructors how they can modify and use their current content and activities to utilize the method.

The second half of the day is to focus on creating lesson plans that involve using the andragogical instructional method. Thereafter, the participants will work in small groups to discuss and assess each other's work and provide feedback. After small group discussions, the participants will have the opportunity to come back together as a group and work with the instructors to engage in discussion about how the strategies could be applied to different content areas in the classrooms. Finally, each of the participants will be asked to complete an exit survey as the day ends.

Professional Development - Day 3

The objective of day 3 is to focus on teaching demonstrations using the andragogical instructional method by the participants. The day will begin with an icebreaker. This icebreaker will serve as an introduction of adult learners who will join the participants, facilitator, and presenters for this session. The instructors will partner with adult learners to create a lesson that uses the andragogical instructional method. Adult learners will give their input on what has been working and what has not been working for them. Next, participants will demonstrate the andragogical method based on the lesson plan created on day 2. Then each participant will provide a 10-minute demonstration.

The second half of the day is to continue with the demonstrations. After the time allocated for the demonstrations, each group will share feedback. Day 3 will end with a

debriefing and a wrap-up summary. Participants will share their goal setting and plans toward the next steps to improving student success with the use of the andragogical instructional method. Finally, each of the participants will be asked to complete an exit survey as the professional development workshop ends.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

After collecting and analyzing the data in this study, it became apparent that the participants in this study truly saw the value of the andragogical instructional method. Overall, the participants blended in better, found support from their peers, and recognized a better fit with the class and the institution. Similarly, the full-time instructors in this study suggested that the andragogical instructional method created an environment that was more favorable to learning for adult learners as it allowed them to be more engaged because they were able to share and relate some of their life experiences to the content in class. In essence, the data from the lived experiences from the participants serve as the existing support needed to move this project forward.

It is also important to identify more potential resources and support. If the professional development workshop is successfully implemented, this will establish more buy-in and support. Additionally, instructors from neighboring institutions using the andragogical instructional method not only can serve as additional resources but may also serve as presenters for future workshops. Lastly, attending professional conferences for adult learning may also serve as potential resources to learn more about the andragogical instructional method.

Potential Barriers

Often times, the implementation of a project does not go as planned. Logistically, there may be an array of concerns that range from the time and location of the event, availability of presenters, adequate preparation, support from deans or administration, and lack of enthusiasm and participation regarding the project. With that said, the first barrier for project implementation would be having access to potential participants.

A second potential barrier is being able to identify presenters that are willing and knowledgeable of the content to adequately deliver to the participants. It will be necessary to identify instructors that have taught in this format with some success. Additionally, preparation could be seen as a barrier. Those that are presenting, especially instructors, will have to find time to prepare in addition to all of their teaching responsibilities and other duties.

A third potential barrier is the lack of funding for the project and a lack of support from superiors and colleagues. Financial resources will be needed to successfully implement this event on an ongoing basis. This will be challenging because of recent budget cuts. Thus, understanding when and how to budget and demonstrate a need for this is critical.

A fourth potential barrier is varying degrees of interest from administrators and colleagues. Some administrators may be apprehensive about supporting this project due to not having enough information about it and instructors may lack support, as they may not have any desires to change how they have done things in the past. Hence, proper and

timely communication to boost support and enthusiasm will serve as either a barrier or an opportunity.

Implementation

After determining through data analysis that returning adult learners and instructors acknowledge the benefits of the andragogical instructional method, the researcher decided to plan a three-day professional development workshop on this strategy to improve the learning experiences of adult learners. The purpose of the workshop is to share best practices and challenges of the andragogical instructional method and seek feedback on the participants' experiences from the workshop and on possible implementation strategies.

Sustainability of Program

Implementing change or developing a new project or initiative can be two-fold. First, it may bring about some excitements as it is deemed new and may improve certain processes or performances. Some individuals may be reluctant to change however, that may wear off after a certain point. This study has identified the favorable views and perspectives of the andragogical instructional method from returning full-time adult learners and instructors. This study used a professional development workshop to discuss the weaknesses and strengths of this instructional approach is critical to ensuring instructors understand how to properly utilize this strategy.

Regardless of the intent and potential benefit of conducting the workshop, not all participants will be supportive of this approach as they may have their own perspectives on what is needed and may not be willing to change. Hence, it is safe to assume that

there may be some reservations and barriers to implementing and sustaining the

professional development workshop. Some instructors may be apprehensive about this

approach if they have had successes using other strategies in the classroom. Others may

choose not to attend the workshop because they are not scheduled at times that fit within

their own individual schedules. Others may opt-out because they haven't had the needed

support to make a change. According to Evers, Van der Klink et al. (2016), developing

an effective means of supporting instructors is crucial to creating a quality learning

environment for adult learners and a supportive work environment for instructors.

Understanding these barriers, the researcher plans to promote the workshop by

identifying the specific dates in advance, providing a summary of the workshop, and

utilizing subsequent question and answer sessions to address all concerns. Further, the

researcher plans to use surveys to gather feedback from the workshop and share those

results on a continuous basis. Doodle will be used initially to identify the best days and

times to conduct the workshop. Doodle is an online scheduling tool that can be used

quickly and easily to find a date and time to meet with multiple people. It can be a

valuable tool for coordinating a large event. The goal is to pick the best days and times

to offer the workshop to accommodate as many participants as possible from the results

from doodle.

In an effort to sustain those that have attended and to keep them engaged, the

researcher plans to follow-up with all participants and use surveys to identify areas of

improvement. Furthermore, feedback from those that have seen improvement in the

performances of their adult learners will be captured and shared with chairs, deans and

other administrators. With proven success, the researcher plans to seek funding to

increase the availability of tools and resources and to identify and bring in motivational

speakers to share their perspectives and expertise regarding the andragogical instructional

method impact of adult learners at NMCC. According to Laist (2015), inviting guest

speakers is a classic teaching strategy that provides access to other perspectives, adds

variety to the routine, and demonstrates that learning is a collaborative enterprise.

Having the professional development workshop to maintain resources and tools regarding

the andragogical instructional method will be significant as NMCC aims to improve the

learning experiences of it returning adult learners. By sharing best practices and

feedback, educating the instructors, and analyzing the data, the researcher believes that

the andragogical instructional method will be a change in the experiences that the adult

learners encounter.

Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others

The data found support the impact and benefit that the andragogical instructional

method can have on returning adult learners. As a result, the researcher must market and

share the results to motivate instructors to get this needed training and to enroll more

adult learners in courses that offer this instructional strategy. When accomplished, the

researcher will identify meeting times and locations, inform participants, share the

workshop agenda, and select and identify facilitators for the professional development

workshop. The researcher will ensure that all information is shared well in advance to

increase the amount of participation and to give the presenters adequate time to prepare.

Project Evaluation Plan

The sustainability of this project will be dependent on the feedback from the participants and the ability to adapt and adjust the three-day workshop accordingly. This feedback will inform the researcher as to how things are going. Thus, at the end of the workshop, all participants will be surveyed to ascertain whether the workshop met the objectives and goals. At the beginning of the professional development workshop, the facilitator will share the objectives and goals. After completion, formative and summative evaluations will occur.

The evaluation process will be outcome-based ensuring that all objectives of the workshop have been met. Formative and summative evaluation will be used for this project evaluation. According to Kibble (2016), formative assessment should be an integral part of the instructional plan for a course while summative assessment plan must align with the overall course goals. Formative evaluation will be done to help the facilitator know throughout the workshop if the participants are acquiring the information that they need to properly implement the andragogical instructional method strategy in their classes. Kibble (2016) suggested that formative assessments are those assessments that are intended to enrich the learning process by providing nonjudgmental feedback. The facilitator will ask questions throughout the workshop to gather the participants' comprehension of the information presented.

At the end of the workshop, the facilitator will use summative evaluations to determine the overall learning and satisfaction with the presentations. Kibble (2016) implied that summative assessments are usually applied at the end of a period of

instruction to measure the outcome of student learning. Kibble (2016) added that there are high stakes for all concerned to assess teaching effectiveness. Thus, the facilitator will use surveys to gather feedback from the workshop.

According to Ponto (2015), surveys are useful and provide a legitimate approach to research that has clear benefits in helping to describe and explore variables and constructs of interest. More importantly, after the analysis of the feedback, the researcher can make the necessary adjustments to address any concerns or needs. The results of the feedback from the surveys will be communicated with all of the participants and administration. The three-day workshop is the first step in promoting the use of the andragogical instructional method. Lastly, capturing positive feedback from the workshop to share with all stakeholders is essential to its sustainability.

Project Implications

Over the last several years, NMCC has had a slight increase in the overall enrollment of adult learners (Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 2016). Adult learners are more involved in the planning of their learning to connect their experiences and previous knowledge to increase their student success (Aragona, 2014; Palis & Quiros, 2014). In an effort to increase the academic success of returning adult learners, the andragogical instructional method must be employed. If used correctly, returning adult learners are more engaged and are willing to share more previous experiences. Additionally, the returning adult learners tend to blend in more, benefit from peer support and are identifying their fit with the institution.

In order to effect social change, those promoting the change must be community-focused and globally-minded. By being community-focused, changes occur within the local community and by being globally minded, change can be far-reaching. Using the andragogical instructional method to increase the academic success of returning adult learners can increase their presence and success in the local and global communities.

Local Community

NMCC's QEP for 2015 is designed to proactively address issues identified through implementing practices/methods to meet the needs of all students. Thus, the focus of this plan is to use the andragogical instructional method to serve returning adult learners. With this approach, the andragogical instructional method will benefit returning adult learners at NMCC as it will allow instructors to manage the process and design the learning which allows the students to build relationships, share personal views and perspectives (Donald, Lapum, Miranda & Nguyen, 2016; Shahi, 2016).

With proper training and development, the three-day workshop will serve as a great way to implement this approach across all departments at NMCC. With this research and the initial feedback from the workshop, all stakeholders will be informed as to how this approach might transform the learning experience for returning adult learners. The findings from this study have shown that returning adult learners and instructors from this study believe that the andragogical instructional method is critical to the success of the adult learners. Creating a larger platform to share and express the impact that this strategy may have can create social change throughout NMCC. The workshop

and data found could influence administrators to give the support needed to maximize all efforts with this approach.

Far-Reaching

If the 3-day workshop is properly facilitated, participants will receive the training they need to implement the andragogical instructional method in their classes. If student success continues to replicate what this study has presented, the best practices used could be shared beyond the doors of NMCC. Research has indicated that the andragogical instructional method is helpful for returning adult learners. Thus, this approach is certainly being utilized at other institutions. As a result, this serves as an opportunity to collaborate with other institutions to share experiences and practices that can and will lead to a more global impact.

Conclusion

This section described the rationale for using a three-day professiona development workshop. Additionally, this section provided a review of the literature for professional development workshops, a project description, aproject evaluation plan, and a project implications. The literature demonstrates the need for professsiona development workshops to assist faculty with the implementation of the andragogical instructional method. This study profiled the adult learners' and instructors' perspective of the use and impact of the andragocial instructional method.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this project study was to better understand adult learners' and

instructors' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method at NMCC. This study

used a phenomenological approach to examine the perceptions of adult learners and

instructors. The qualitative data that was generated through face-to-face interviews

provided valuable information regarding participants' perceptions of how well the

andragogical instructional method worked as a way to educate adult learners at NMCC.

The findings from this study will provide a better understanding to instructors at NMCC

of how to increase student success via the use of the andragogical instructional method at

NMCC. This section will review the project's strengths and limitations. Additionally,

this section will address possible alternative solutions and present a discussion on

scholarship, project development, and leadership and change. The section concludes with

the researcher's analysis of self as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer as well as

the project's potential impact on social change.

Project Strengths and Limitations

In this project study, face-to-face interviews with returning full-time adult

learners and instructors took place to gain insight regarding their perceptions of the

andragogical instructional method. The project included an initiative that allowed

instructors to attend a professional development workshop. This professional

development workshop occurred over 3 days. During this workshop, instructors at

NMCC who used the andragogical instruction method were able to facilitate a workshop

for their peers in which they discussed the importance of the andragogical instructional method used in their classrooms.

Bringing participants together created an opportunity to share their perceptions of the andragogical instructional method and ideas regarding how to incorporate the method in the classroom. In addition, instructors had the opportunity to discuss other ways to work in partnership with each other and other institutions in the future. Lastly, adult learners were invited to attend the 3-day professional workshop to share their perceptions regarding how the andragogical instructional method was working in the classroom for them and their peers.

A strength of this project was the ease through which the professional development workshop could be replicated at other institutions, as it requires minimal outside resources and funding. In this study, the researcher was the primary facilitator and the instructors at NMCC were the presenters. With the use of the andragogical instructional method across NMCC, instructors were able to share their views, perspectives, and experiences with participants.

While the project had strengths, there were also some limitations. Without a clear understanding of the possible benefits that the project would provide, not all instructors were interested in the professional development workshop. Instructors must be open to the idea of being observed by other instructors and should be willing to give and receive constructive feedback. Developing and implementing a successful professional development workshop could be difficult if all involved do not buy into the change and it does not preserve an open-minded approach.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Even though the 3-day professional development workshop was ideal for this project study, other possible alternative approaches could address the local problem. The first alternative approach would be to create a syllabus for all instructors that would allow them to use the andragogical instructional method at NMCC, which would ensure consistency across the institution. The syllabus would be designed to help instructors meet the needs of students. Prior to the implementation of the campus-wide syllabus, instructors would benefit from ongoing professional development workshops in order to gain a better understanding of the importance of the andragogical instructional method.

The second alternative approach to address the local problem would be to conduct a survey on adult learners and instructors to determine the success rate of using the andragogical instructional method. The surveys would focus on the instructional strategies used in the classroom that impact student success. Results from the survey and instructional strategies would capture valuable insight and feedback.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

During the process of conducting this study, scholarship became a part of the researcher's everyday life. The doctoral process has allowed a better understanding of how important research is in terms of education when it comes to solving issues in the realm of teaching. Visiting the library became an integral part of the research process. The researcher's critical thinking skills and ability to analyze and interpret data improved during this process. These skills will benefit the researcher tremendously when future

research opportunities present themselves in the future.

Project Development

This project study presented a number of challenges for the researcher. Considering that this was the reseracher's first opportunity to do high-level research, developing the study was challenging. When attempting to create a 3-day professional development workshop, patience was needed to allow the study findings to guide the overall purpose and goals of the project. Project development was a matter of planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling resources to pull the project together for it to make sense. In Section 1, learning how to identify a problem, presenting the rationale for the problem, defining terms that were associated with the problem, presenting the significance of the study, developing research questions that would investigate the problem, and developing potential solutions were all perplexing.

In Section 2, there was an opportunity for the researcher to learn about the research design and approach, data collection, data analysis, and interviewing strategies. With these insights, the overall methodology was developed. Similar to the previous two sections, Section 3 explained issues related to creating a 3-day professional development workshop that would properly address the problem. Initially, the workshop did not consist of enough activities to provide participants with the needed tools and resources to make it through one day. However, moving forward, all curricula and materials needed for the workshop were considered and implemented.

Finally, participants completed an exit survey on each day of the 3-day

professional development workshop. The surveys revealed participants' views and perceptions of the workshop and any recommendations for improvement. The project supports Knowles' theory of the adult learner and has the potential to promote social change for adult learners and students across NMCC that may perhaps extend outside the local community.

Leadership and Change

The researcher has learned a great deal about leadership and change while working on this project study. It is not an easy task for an instructor to be a leader of change standing alone. There are obstacles that can hinder the path to making effective changes. However, a leader must be able to meet all the oppositions. Leadership comprises visualization, a sense of direction and finding a way to implement the vision that may cause for a change. A major lesson learned about leadership and change was that leadership must come from the "ranks". Because of the disconnect between the decision to use this instructional strategy and instructors' perceptions of its effectiveness, the NMCC's President would like to find out more about how adult learners and instructors perceive the andragogical instructional method. Within this project study, instructors, as well as the president of NMCC, had a desire for more creative teaching for adult learners in order to bring about a positive change. The educational journey with Walden University has provided a clear understanding of what it means to be a leader and the impact of change if educators want to keep moving forward or be innovative.

Analysis of Self as a Scholar

The information learned during this study has improved the researcher's scholarship. As new information was obtained and embraced, it was very challenging to not let biases influence the research and the results. The researcher's was a major consideration with respect to credibility and the assurance of validity and trustworthiness within the study (Merriam, 2009). As the researcher, the role was to understand biases and reserve views as well as opinions by applying the epoche approach (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Epoche is the act of refraining from drawing conclusions (Creswell, 2013). During the data collection process, thoughts about the data were not shared with the participants. As a result, the experiences and ideas from the adult learners and instructors could be used to inform the campus community at NMCC. Overall, researching literature on the andragogical instructional method has provided a better understanding of the topic and its impact on student success.

Analysis of Self as a Practitioner

Every practitioner should be an enduring learner and willing to support others in increasing their knowledge and competency. As a practitioner, the researcher realized it was just like looking in a mirror and describing what was seen. Prior to this work, the thought of being a practitioner was never considered. However, looking back on this entire experience, from having a vision of a professional development workshop to actually creating it, makes the researcher a practitioner in the field of higher education leadership.

Being an adjunct instructor for 20 years, the researcher has first-hand knowledge of what the instructors at NMCC are faced with when teaching adult learners. During the interview process with the instructors, the researcher learned how important the role was as a practitioner in education. Even though there are many limitations that are placed upon instructors, they are still committed to educating students. The six instructors voiced how they went about educating their adult learners and the six adult learners voiced how well they felt about the andragogical instructional method and how well it was working for them.

Analysis of Self as a Project Developer

In the role of a project developer, the researcher had to bring ideas from thought to a finalized production, which was a challenging task. The researcher had to review a number of dissertations from the Walden library to gain an understanding and the logic of the project developer. One of the goals as a project developer was to develop a project that would address the adult learners' and instructors' perceptions about the andragogical instructional method. To develop such a project, data collection and analysis was essential to providing information that could be helpful to NMCC and others. Through the data collection process, the researcher learned how to support the notion that a problem exists and how the numerous literature reviews supported the study.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

During this project study, the researcher has grown as a doctoral candidate from the first day of this journey. Working with the chair and committee member, the researcher was able to develop the skills needed to complete this project study.

Reflecting on the importance of the adult learners' perceptions and how they expressed the excitement of having committed and dedicated instructors who employed the andragogical instructional method made this project study a success. Moving forward, the researcher believes that NMCC will benefit from the strategies shared and learned from the three-day professional development workshop.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Over the last several years, NMCC has had a slight increase in the overall enrollment of adult learners (Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 2016). Adult learners are more involved in the planning of their learning to connect their experiences and previous knowledge to increase their student success (Aragona, 2014; Palis & Quiros, 2014). In an effort to increase the academic success of returning adult learners, the andragogical instructional method must be employed. If used correctly, returning adult learners will be more engaged and will be willing to share more previous experiences. Additionally, the returning adult learners tend to blend in more, benefit from peer support and are identifying where they fit in at the institution as well as in the classroom.

The purpose of this project study was to better understand adult learners' and instructors' perception of the andragogical instructional method at a Northern Mississippi Community College (NMCC). The researcher recognizes the level of concerns voiced by adult learners and instructors. All of the participants willingly shared their perception, ideas, and opinions. Participants not only wanted to have a voice on what was needed for student success but also to express how much the andragogical instructional method was

needed in the classrooms. The three-day professional development workshop is a well-thought-out starting foundation toward the modification of student success at NMCC.

The implication for social change centered upon the use of the andragogical instructional method provided in the classroom. During the entire interview process, adult learners and instructors voiced the effect the andragogical instructional method had on them individually. In order for social change to be effective, all parties must be willing to buy-in. Using the andragogical instructional method to increase the academic success of returning adult learners can increase the probability of success and retention.

The theoretical framework from Knowles (1984) was appropriate for this project. Although the six assumptions from Knowles theory are associated with how adults learn, there is a clear connection between the learning process and the instructional model. When these core principles of andragogy are applied, learning can be effective because the characteristics of adult learners are unique. Adult learners comprise 40% of the total student population in the United States (Bryant, 2015). In an effort to increase the chances of success, institutions must understand the unique characteristics of adult learners and provide the resources needed to benefit them (Quadros & Sarroub, 2015).

Even though the researcher has explored the perceptions of adult learners and instructors' understanding of the andragogical instructional method at NMCC, more research could be explored by looking at this study from a different perspective. Whereas the researcher looked for the in-depth importance behind the findings, the next researcher could focus on the initial interpretation (Kornbluh, 2015). The following future research recommendations are suggested based, on the study's findings.

The first recommendation is to replicate the study using a larger sample size of adult learners and instructors at a community college. Next, replicate the study to investigate other instructional methods that meet Knowles criteria for effective andragogical instruction. Third, replicate the study using the participants' cumulative grade point average (GPA) as the primary measure of academic performance. Finally, replicate the study at a 4-year institution.

Future researchers might consider these recommendations as a need for continuous improvement in student success amongst returning adult learners. Educators have the oath to fulfill as they strive for a greater social change for each student they teach. The researcher is hopeful that this project will be used to expedite positive change and improvements as well as to help the adult learners meet academic gratification and attainment standards in education.

Conclusion

A qualitative research study was used to understand adult learners' and instructors' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method used at NMCC. There were six adult learners and six instructors interviewed who completed a three-day professional development workshop. The purpose of the three-day professional development workshop was to allow instructors to expand their knowledge of the andragogical instructional method. The facilitators that conducted the workshop had used the andragogical instructional method with varying degrees of success. As a result, they were able to provide some valuable insight as to how the andragogical instructional

method could be utilized to increase the learning experience and academic success of adult learners.

In this section, reflections concerning the project's strengths and limitations were presented. Additionally, this section addressed possible alternative solutions and presented a discussion on scholarship, project development, and leadership and change. This project has truly been impactful in the researcher's quest to develop as a scholar. Even though the researcher has reached the end of the doctoral journey, the efforts to be a change agent who strives to motivate growth in others will continue.

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Appendix A: Demographic Survey for Adult Learners

By completing this demographic survey, you are giving the researcher permission to use the data collected in a doctoral project study at a Northern Mississippi Community College (NMCC). Information provided by the participants in this study will be kept confidential.

Please read items one through eight and respond by placing an X in the appropriate space

1. What is your gender?   _____   Male   _____   Female

2. What is your age?   ____   18-24   _____   25-34   ___ Over the age of 34

3. What is your ethnicity   ____   Black or African American   ___

    White/Caucasian

     ____   Asian/Pacific Islander   ____   Native American   ____   Other

4. What best describes your employment status?

     _____   Employed   _____Unemployed

5. Are you currently enrolled as a full-time student?   _____   Yes   _____   No

6. Are you a returning student?   _____ Yes   No _____

7. Are you the first in your family to attend college?   _____   Yes   _____   No

8. How did you receive your high school diploma?

    High School Graduate   _____   GED   _____   Other   _____

Thank you for your assistance in this research study.

Appendix B: Demographics Survey for Instructors

By completing this demographic survey, you are giving the researcher permission to use the data collected in a doctoral project study at a Northern Mississippi Community College (NMCC). Information provided by the participants in this study will be kept confidential. Please read items one through seven and respond by placing an X in the appropriate space.

1. What is your gender?   _____   Male   _____   Female

2. What is your ethnicity   _____   Black or African American   ___

   White/Caucasian ____   Asian/Pacific Islander   ____   Native American

   ____   Other

3. What best describes your employment status?

   _____   Full-time   _____   Part-time

4. How long employed?   1-5 years   _____   6-10 years   _____   11+   _____

5. What best describes your highest degree? Bachelor ___   Masters   ___   PhD ___

6. What best describes your discipline? (For example): Sociology

7. Do you presently teach using ……..

    _____   andragogical instructional method   _____   teacher-centered approach

Thank you for your assistance in this research study.

Appendix C: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study about the adult learners' and instructors' perception of the andragogical instructional method being used in the classroom. The researcher is inviting adult learners who are enrolled full time and instructors who teach at NMCC to be in the study. I obtained your name/contact info via NMCC Social Science Department Chair. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part. In order to participate in the study, you will need to give informed consent.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named ███████████, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You might already know the researcher as the ████████ █████████████████, but this study is separate from that role.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to better understand adult learners' and instructors' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method used at a Northern Mississippi Community College and how well it is working as a way to educate adult learners.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a digitally audio-recorded interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes.
- Sign a consent form.
- Give your perception of the andragogical instructional method used in the classroom.

Here are some example questions:

- Can you give me an example of barriers/obstacles (if any) you experience under the andragogical instructional method?
- Can you give me an example of how the andragogical instructional method supported or challenged your learning style and how it is working for you?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. No one at NMCC will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. If you decide not to be in the study or decide to discontinue your participation in the study at

any time, there will be no penalty. Please note that not all volunteers will be contacted to take part in the research study but the researcher will follow up with all volunteers to let them know whether or not they were selected for the study.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress or becoming emotional when asked specific questions about your experiences. This study asks students to discuss their perceptions of using the andragogical instructional method in the classroom. Being in this study should not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. In order to minimize the risk of harm, participants will be briefed about the contents of the interview when they arrive.

In terms of benefits, the study may lead to a better understanding of the adult learners' and instructors' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method and how well it is working as a way to educate adult learners.

Payment:

There is no payment to be received by the participants for participation in this study.

Privacy:

Reports coming out of this study will not share the identities of individual participants. Details that might identify participants, such as the location of the study, also will not be shared. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. If references or quotations from the interview transcripts are used in the final paper of the research study, they will contain no identifying information. Data will be kept secure and placed under lock and key in a fire proof file cabinet. Computer file data will be password protected, and individual participant files will be saved with pseudonyms. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. Your confidentiality will remain secure.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or email: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Institutional Effectiveness Director at my community college at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. Walden University's approval number for this study is ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

Please print or save this consent form for your records.

Obtaining Your Consent

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By replying to this email with the words, "I consent", I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above and I agree to be audio taped.

I CONSENT _____

I DO NOT CONSENT _____

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Adult Learners

1. Can you walk me through your decision for pursing a degree at a Northern Mississippi Community College?

2. Tell me what it is like being an adult learner in your program?

3. Can you give me a definition of the andragogical instructional method in your own words?

4. How is the andragogical instructional method being used in the classroom?

5. In what ways do you feel the andragogical instructional method has supported or challenged you?

6. Can you give me an example of any barriers/obstacles you have experienced while in the program and how did it make you feel?

7. Discuss your likes/dislikes about the andragogical instructional method?

8. What is your overall impression of the andragogical instructional method?

Appendix E: Interview Questions for Instructors

1. What is your definition of the andragogical instructional method?

2. How much experience have you previously had with the andragogical instructional method?

3. In what ways do you use the andragogical instructional method in your classroom?

4. How beneficial do you think the andragogical instructional method is for the adult learners?

5. How do you feel the method is being received with the adult learners?

6. What is your overall impression of the andragogical instructional method?

Appendix F: Invitation Email

Research Invitation (Adult Learner)

Adult Learners' and Instructors' Perceptions of the Andragogical
Instructional Method used at a Northern Mississippi Community College

Dear NMCC Student:

I am conducting interviews as part of a research study on the adult learners' and
instructors' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method used in the classrooms
at NMCC. As an NMCC full-time returning adult learner who is being taught by this
method, you are in an ideal position to give valuable first-hand information from your
own perspective.

The informal interview takes about 45-60 minutes. I would like to capture your thoughts
and perception of the andragogical instructional method being taught in your classroom.
Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interviewee will be
assigned a pseudonym name to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed
during the analysis and write up of findings.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will
be a valuable addition to the research and the findings could lead to a greater
understanding of how adult leaners' and instructors' perceive the andragogical
instructional method used at NMCC.

If you are interested in participating please email me directly indicating your interest by
sending the words "I ACCEPT".

Should you have any questions, please contact me via email at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or via phone at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ .

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Educationally yours,

Renee' L. Hall (Interviewer)
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix G: Invitation Email

Research Invitation (Instructor)

Adult Learners' and Instructors' Perceptions of the Andragogical
Instructional Method used at a Northern Mississippi Community College

Dear NMCC Instructor:

I am conducting interviews as part of a research study on the adult learners' and
instructors' perceptions of the andragogical instructional method used in the classrooms
at NMCC. As an instructor who teaches by this method, you are in an ideal position to
give valuable first-hand information from your own perspective.

The informal interview takes about 45-60 minutes. I would like to capture your thoughts
and perception of the andragogical instructional method being taught in your classroom.
Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interviewee will be
assigned a pseudonym name to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed
during the analysis and write up of findings.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will
be a valuable addition to the research and the findings could lead to a greater
understanding of how adult leaners' and instructors' perceive the andragogical
instructional method used at NMCC.

If you are interested in participating please email me directly indicating your interest and
complete the demographic survey attached (link to be provided).

Should you have any questions, please contact me via email at ███████████████ or via phone at ███████████ .

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Educationally yours,

Renee' L. Hall (Interviewer)
Doctoral Candidate