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2007

ABSTRACT

Adult Retraining Programs and Reemployment for Dislocated
Workers

by

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B.S., Bluefield College, 2002
M.B.A., American InterContinental University, 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Applied Management and Decision Sciences
Leadership and Organizational Change

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ABSTRACT

A variety of government sponsored programs provide retraining and income assistance to dislocated workers, yet it is unclear whether these initiatives are effective in providing workers the essential skills needed for new careers. Using Mezirow's transformational learning theory, this study was designed to evaluate programs in selected counties in the states of Virginia and North Carolina. Using self-administered surveys, data were gathered from college instructors, dislocated workers, and local business owners. Data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and related to each research question. Results showed that instructors were effectively using adult training methods, the majority of students perceived their retraining as successful based on the academic results achieved, and local employers were willing to hire retrained workers emerging from the programs. The one area of concern was poor communication among the colleges and the employers. Having the colleges increase correspondence would help employers identify open positions and help workers connect with these companies. The positive steps taken by these programs and the recommendation for improved communications may help other programs overcome retraining obstacles, especially in remote geographic regions of the country.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to Arnold and Gladys Perry, my father and mother, for all the encouragement and support through this process. I would also like to dedicate this study to the men and women who find themselves displaced; this study was done in their interest.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Introduction

In the mid-1980s many factories began decreasing their workforce. Over time, the workforce decreases became relocations to lower cost labor markets or closures as corporate officers ascertained certain locations were no longer profitable. Facility relocations to foreign countries continued to rise. The facility relocations, in turn, affected the Appalachian region, where jobs were limited and there were few prospects for other employment for the dislocated workers with their current aptitudes (Rosen, 2003).

For many years the rural South relied on manufacturing as the primary means of income for residents. The factory employment made it possible for Appalachian people to learn simple, routine tasks while receiving a livable income to support their families. Over time, wages increased with the experience of the worker, and the local cost of living remained low, so many individuals in the these areas attained middle-income status (Grayson County Economic Resource Group & Virginia Tech Public Service Programs, 2001).

The closing of factories affected the local economy, and many small local establishments were forced into bankruptcy. This situation aggravated an already strained employment market. The United States government recognized the need for action in rural American communities and devised a strategy to address this growing problem. One of the ways federal and state governments are working with dislocated workers is through the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA). These programs are part of the federal government's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. Adult education programs, regardless of whether they are conducted by community colleges or other nonprofit organizations, obtain funds for their operation under Title II of the WIA. This law requires all training locations to report data to the government regarding the performance of their overall adult retraining programs (U.S. Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration, 2006). All state adult-retraining programs must comply with federal mandated core measures of performance as outlined in the WIA.

In the state of Virginia, these core measures are monitored by the Virginia Department of Education's Virginia Adult Education Quality Works Accountability

System. This system was instituted in 2000 in order to guarantee that all federal guidelines were being met by state retraining institutions. In North Carolina, the federal core measures are monitored by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the Commission of Workforce Development (North Carolina Public Schools Workforce Development Program Fiscal and Policy Guide, 2005). These core measures include:

1. Receipt of a recognized academic credential.
2. Educational gains in overall learning literacy levels. This also includes reading, writing, and additional general education goals.
3. Follow-up on employment and postsecondary success including unsubsidized employment or vocational career advancement.

In addition to the federal core measures of performance, any state educational organization requesting grants for program funding can file a petition to add additional performance indicators for their retraining programs. These additional measures must be outlined in a 5-year plan and placed on file with the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training (U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 2006).

TAA was started by the federal government in 1962 to provide income support to individuals who lost their positions because of increased globalization and increased imports. To qualify for TAA, an individual must file a petition with the United States Department of Labor's Division of Trade Adjustment Assistance (DTAA). This program certifies whether or not the individual qualifies for assistance based upon whether the worker was adversely affected by foreign trade. If workers meet the federal mandates for inclusion by the DTAA, they must then apply for individual benefits through their local employment commissions.

Once dislocated workers are approved to receive benefits from their local employment commission, they will be enrolled in either the TAA or Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATAA). TAA training seeks to retrain dislocated workers in a new profession where their new income would be comparable to their previous income. ATAA is available for any dislocated workers age 50 or over and who are willing to accept a lower paying job and receive a wage subsidy.

In 2002, a change to the TAA affected the Trade Readjustment Act (TRA) benefit, which stipulated that

workers whose jobs were eliminated because of increased imports are eligible for income maintenance, job search, training funds, and relocation assistance for 78 weeks, which is in addition to the 26 weeks of funds dislocated workers receive from unemployment insurance (UI).

Dislocated workers must be enrolled in retraining to receive their income assistance (Rosen, 2003).

Funding for these programs is provided by the federal government through Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The funds are then allocated to each state. Employees of the state enroll dislocated workers into their retraining programs locally. Unemployment insurance and other state-funded payments are made to each eligible dislocated worker (Virginia Employment Commission, 2005). Federal and state grants reimburse educational facilities for their services while training adult dislocated workers. While dislocated workers are undergoing retraining, their fees and other expenses are paid by TAA benefits.

Problem Statement

Government funding is used to support dislocated workers enrolled in retraining programs. The problem is that it is unclear whether the workers who have completed the retraining program are well-prepared and whether they

secure employment. To determine the effectiveness of the retraining programs, four aspects of the situation will be studied, (a) the nature of the instruction students receive, (b) the opinions of the students about the retraining, (c) the efforts to help graduates secure employment, and (d) the opinions of local employers about the preparation of the graduates. Dissemination of the results to the principal participants might stimulate renewed efforts toward reemployment of displaced workers.

It is important for the funding process for educational and governmental organizations to work together to measure the effectiveness of the dislocated worker training programs by monitoring and helping displaced workers find employment after individuals complete the programs. Figure 1 was developed by this researcher in order to illustrate how an effective worker-retraining program could function. Figure 1 represents a sequence of events and circumstances informing the reeducation/reemployment process and acts as a guide to anticipated research, including the individual variables inherent within such a process structure. This explanation of conditions begins with the adult dislocated workers enrolling for training. These newly enrolled students are

identified by whether they are traditional students or adult students. Adult dislocated worker students then begin the retraining process.

Differing training methods could be used during the dislocated worker retraining process or the same methods could be used for both the traditional age (18 to 23) and adult (24 and above) students. Once all students finish their course work and graduate from their local educational institutions, the search for permanent employment may begin. If the training locations offer job search assistance, some students may decide to work with their institutions in order to obtain job placement, others may decide to seek employment independently. Frequent communications between the training location personnel and local employers may determine which students find employment more quickly. If communication between the local employers and the training location personnel are limited, the students seeking employment independent of the training locations may be just as successful as those working with the institutions. However, if the trainers are very active in terms of communicating with local employers, the students working independently may find themselves in a more reactive situation because they are

not benefiting from the structured processes used by training locations in order to maximize employment possibilities. They are being forced to adjust their job search to counter the activities being conducted by their former training institutions on behalf of other students. The overall goal of retraining programs is to prepare graduates with the skills needed in order to find employment as quickly as possible. If graduates have not found employment within 3 months of program completion, it may suggest a problem exists within the program structure. An evaluation of the steps inherent in the dislocated worker retraining process should be completed in order to determine whether the training programs or job search assistance services need to be restructured.

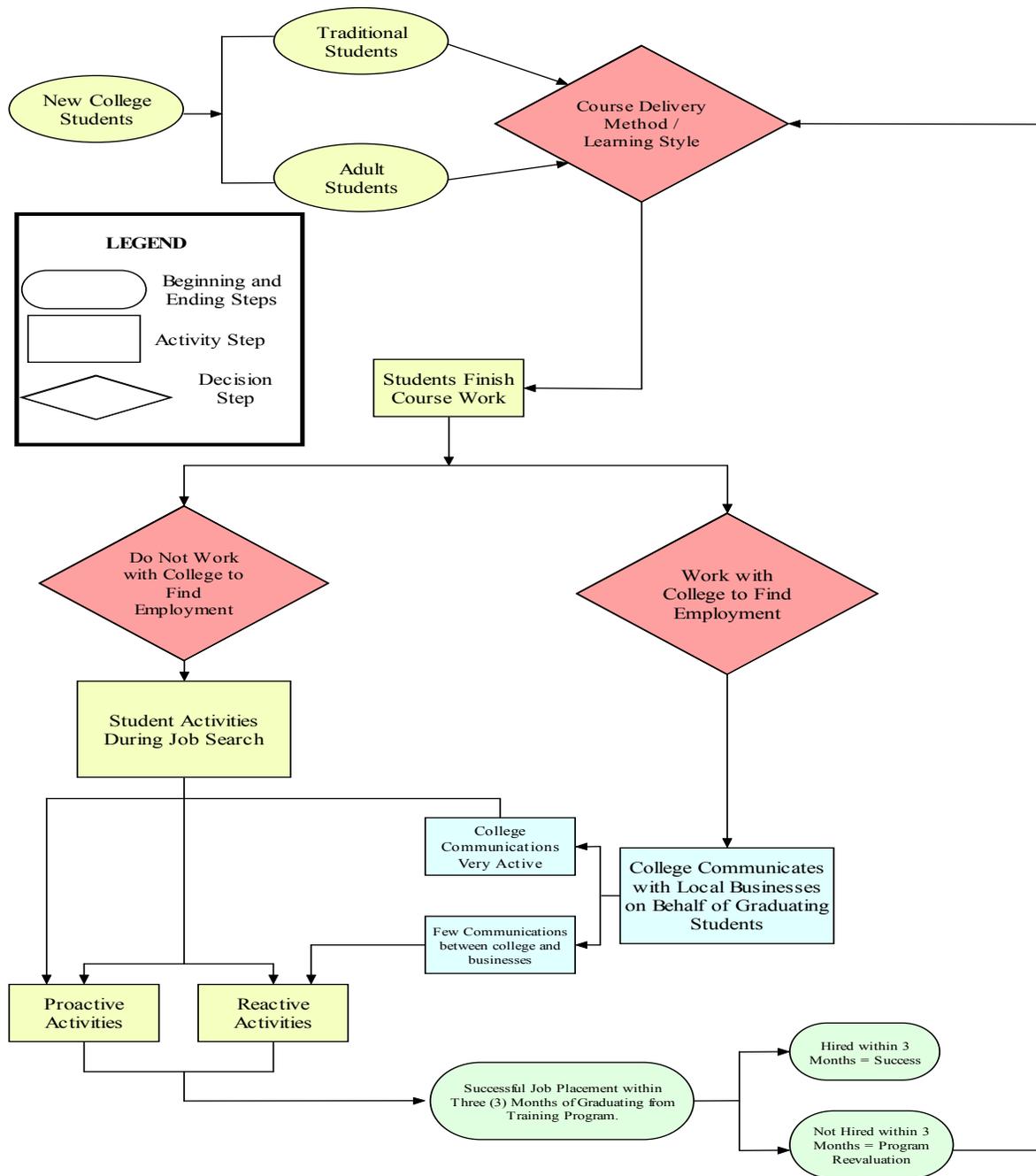


Figure 1. Process chart shows variables between each step in the reeducation/reemployment process. Beginning with student enrollment and continuing through course delivery, employment job search activities/communication and successful job placement. Chart developed by this researcher for this study.

The nonmanipulated independent variable in this study is the teaching approach of faculty in local community colleges. Since the target participants are adults, it would seem reasonable to expect that the college instructors would use adult teaching techniques. The teaching technique impacts the learning styles of both traditional and adult students (Knowles, 1998). Some students prefer a high degree of structure, while others prefer a more independent and open learning environment. The learning environment in any course is dependent upon, and varies with, each course instructor. The dependent variable in this study is the effectiveness of the adult retraining and employment programs.

It was the intent of this study to determine if the techniques used in the classroom are related to the preferences of the students. This study also intended to determine if the educational organizations work with local business in order to help these retrained workers find permanent employment. Finally, this study determined local employer's opinions about the preparation of graduates in the retraining programs in regard to employment after program completion.

Background of the Problem

Over a 5 year period (2001-2005), 51 companies either closed facilities or reduced the number of workers in the region of the local office of the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC); this includes areas in Alleghany County, North Carolina (VEC TRA Office, 2005). In 2001, Grayson County administrators presented a written report from the Grayson County Economic Resource Group in cooperation with Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University entitled "Economic Development Planning Activities and Recommendations Report." The report contained goals for the county with regard to business and industry development and provided a wish list of target industries the county would like to attract. Surrounding counties were also involved in this project analysis. A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis revealed that despite having excellent geographic conditions for tourism, the transportation and utilities infrastructure needed to attract new industry and draw a large tourism base does not currently exist. If the county were to actively engage in fixing these infrastructure problems, it would be costly (Grayson County Economic Resource Group & Virginia Tech Public Service Programs,

2001). It was also deemed important to focus on the development of small businesses rather than larger enterprise. This is because closing of small businesses employing only a few individuals would not be as detrimental to the county, in terms of economic loss, as would the loss of 200 to 300 jobs, which would be possible if a large industry closed in the area.

In terms of educational conditions, there are no community colleges located in Grayson or Carroll counties; an adult learning center operates out of Woodlawn, Virginia, located in Carroll County. To the south, Alleghany County in North Carolina has a satellite branch of Wilkes Community College; no other educational facilities exist at this time. On June 27, 2005, the Crossroads Institute opened in the city of Galax, Virginia. The goal of this new business is to help facilitate economic growth and development in Grayson and Carroll counties and the city of Galax. The roots to the formation of the Crossroads Institute can be traced back to the work done since 1997 by local residents concerned about the future of their communities (McDowell, 2005).

In May 2005, the Virginia Employment Commission indicated the unemployment rate in the state at 3.6%. When

examining the unemployment rates for the three Virginia locations under study, one finds Grayson County with an unemployment rate of 4.4%, Galax city with an unemployment rate of 4.4%, and Carroll County with an unemployment rate of 5.2% (Virginia Employment Commission, June 2005). For North Carolina, as of May 2005, the Employment Commission of North Carolina indicates the unemployment rate in the state at 5.1%, which, according to their records, matches the unemployment rate for the nation (James & Parker, June 29, 2005). Alleghany County, one of the target counties, has an unemployment rate of 4.9% (James & Parker, April 17, 2005). The unemployment statistics for this study's target area are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Unemployment Statistics per County as of May 2005

Location	County level of unemployment	State level of unemployment
Grayson County, VA	4.4%	3.6%
Carroll County, VA	5.2%	3.6%
City of Galax, VA	4.4%	3.6%
Alleghany County, NC	4.9%	5.1%

Note. From Virginia Employment Commission, 2005, and James & Parker, 2005, showing county and state unemployment statistics for the month of May 2005.

All areas under study have unemployment rates higher than those of their respective states as a whole with the exception of Alleghany County, which is 0.2% below the

unemployment rate for the entire state of North Carolina. In the following months since the original statistics were gathered for this study, the state employment offices for each state updated their statewide unemployment statistics. As of February 2006, the Virginia Employment Commission indicated the unemployment rate in the state at 3.3%. When examining the unemployment rates for the three Virginia locations under study, one finds Grayson County with an unemployment rate of 6.4%, Galax city with an unemployment rate of 8.5%, and Carroll County with an unemployment rate of 6.3% (Virginia Employment Commission, February, 2006). For North Carolina, as of February 2006, the Employment Commission of North Carolina indicates the unemployment rate in the state at 5.1% (Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, February 2006). The target county under study, Alleghany County, has an unemployment rate of 6.1%. An overview of the unemployment statistics for the target area for this study is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Unemployment Statistics per County as of February 2006

Location	County level of unemployment	State level of unemployment
Grayson County, VA	6.4%	3.3%
Carroll County, VA	6.3%	3.3%
City of Galax, VA	8.5%	3.3%
Alleghany County, NC	6.1%	5.1%

Note. From Virginia Employment Commission, 2006 and Employment Security Commission of North Carolina, 2006, showing county and state unemployment statistics for the month of February 2006.

A comparison of the statewide statistics show that while Virginia statewide statistics had fallen, the counties under study all escalated in their unemployment rate statistics. In North Carolina, both statewide and county unemployment rates had increased. These statistics show there is a need in these communities to determine factors that could improve employment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose in this study was to gather data that might be used to improve the employment opportunities for displaced workers. Data were gathered from three sources so that all principal participants in the retraining efforts provide input. Analysis of the data revealed areas for improvement in the process of moving unemployed people back into the employed workforce.

Theoretical or Conceptual Support for the Study

Jack Mezirow's transformational learning theory is the theoretical foundation for this study. There are a variety of learning theories, with each broaching the subject from various specific perspectives such as behaviorist, cognitive, humanist, and socialist. Mezirow is considered by some (Cooper, n.d.) to be one of the most important scientists in the field of humanistic learning, most notably in the study of transformational learning. Mezirow's theory on adult learning centers on three themes; experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow believes life experiences are the starting point for transformational learning, a type of learning that, according to Mezirow, goes deeper than just examining life experiences as an instrument for change. Mezirow (1991) advocated that adult learners, anyone enrolled in secondary courses from the ages of 24 and above (Dornan & Justice, 2001; Youngman, 1995), need to understand the reason for changing the way they think about a particular topic or issue and thus change their meaning scheme before they can fully grasp the importance of what they are studying. Clearly stated, transformational learning occurs when someone is openly exposed to differing

ideas or situations than what they currently believe or ideas they hold to be true. Being exposed to these new situations and ideas, students change their internal meanings and thinking about the idea or phenomenon (Mezirow, 1991). Only through lived experience, rational discourse, and critical reflection can an individual undergo transformational learning. Mezirow advocates a learning environment where individuals have access to full information, are not coerced by their instructors/facilitators, are critically reflective of assumptions, and willing to search for common ground or a synthesis of different points of view held by others in the course. Mezirow placed importance on the processes of critical reflection and rational discourse as part of transformational learning theory. Mezirow believed that as individuals learned, they must also critically reflect upon their current world views and share those world views with others around them in order to question whether or not their ideas about their surroundings are actually sound.

The theories of Mezirow provided the theoretical and conceptual support for this study. His ideas and beliefs are compared and contrasted with those of Malcolm Knowles to study how each can inform the other, while at the same

time provide a rational roadmap to help a rural Appalachian setting overcome a presently perceived problem. These theories and theorists are explored in more detail in chapter 2.

Assumptions

Assumptions in this study include:

1. Using adult learning strategies for adult dislocated workers meet the retraining needs for those individuals better than traditional pedagogy.
2. Most adult students prefer a high degree of interactivity within their learning environments which fosters transformational learning.
3. Instructors located in rural educational institutions have limited knowledge of adult education techniques.
4. Adults who have lost their local manufacturing positions in rural areas have a bias against college courses. These students do not understand the benefits of completing college courses that help provide background framework of course content that may benefit them later in new jobs.
5. Many of the students are not willing to accept a job that does not measure up to their expectations.

6. Finally, it is likely that dislocated workers are enrolled in retraining courses because it is the only way for them to receive income assistance from federal and state governmental agencies.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study included surveys completed by executives of the firms that employ the largest number of workers. In the interest of substantive survey results, ten employers were approached. For this study, any business which employed a minimum of 75 individuals to a maximum of 800 was considered appropriate. Faculty from five local educational institutions serving the dislocated worker population was contacted to complete a survey. A minimum of 25 individuals from these institutions were approached. Finally, a minimum of 200 dislocated workers were approached to participate in this study.

This study was bounded by the geographic region in which the study takes place. This study included dislocated workers who live in Grayson and Carroll counties in Virginia and Alleghany County in North Carolina as well as the city of Galax which is located on the border between Grayson and Carroll County.

Limitations

State and federal confidentiality laws limited access to needed data and acted as a limitation for this study. Another limitation involved the actual cooperation of the local community college personnel. If permission is not given by the instructors, the overall chances of generalizing from the study would decrease, but given the geographic limitation, generalizing is already doubtful. This researcher could not control attrition of participants in the study. Therefore, it was important to have potential study participants identified before active research commenced. Confidentiality laws were a limitation within this study because student participants in these retraining programs could not be contacted for follow-up on unreturned surveys. Another limitation for this study was that job availability for retrained workers in the target area may have affected the evaluation of program performance if the success of the program is tied to employment after program completion. The overall concept of this study is pragmatic because of all the underlying variables inherent throughout the retraining/reemployment process. A limitation for this study was the lack of access to data in order to identify, itemize, and quantify

all of the various variables that exist at each step in the retraining process. It is presumed that contamination within this study is low due to contradiction of all the variables.

Research Design

The design of this study consisted of survey research. The three populations that inform this study, instructors, adult dislocated students, and community business leaders were surveyed in order to gain a greater understanding of the issue of dislocated worker retraining and reemployment. A survey research design is the most appropriate design because the researcher could not interview all parties involved or give training to individuals about how to carry out a successful interview at the various locations within the target area. The research design for this study is addressed in more detail in chapter 3.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as per their use in the study:

1. *Dislocated workers*: The Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) defines displaced workers, which in this study are called dislocated workers, as individuals who have lost their jobs due to a plant closing,

relocation, downsizing or position elimination (Society for Human Resource Management, n.d.).

2. *Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)*: As defined by Rosen (2003, p. 3), this program allocates funds to each state in order for them to provide training and a portion of income maintenance regardless of the situations causing individual unemployment.
3. *Rural*: Refers to the isolation of individuals away from opportunities offered in surrounding localities.
4. *Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)*: The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) defines the TAA as a federal program that provides assistance to workers who lose their jobs or whose hours of work and wages are reduced as a result of increased imports. The current provisions of the TAA program are effective for petitions filed on or after November 4, 2002 and will end September 30, 2007 (Commonwealth of Virginia: Virginia Employment Commission, n.d.).
5. *Trade Readjustment Act (TRA)*: Federal program initiated in 1974 which allows unemployed individuals to apply for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and other government benefits.

6. *Workforce Investment Act (WIA)*: The United States

Department of Labor defines this act as a federal program initiated in 1998 to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy and vocational rehabilitation programs in the United States, and for other purposes (United States Department of Labor, 1998).

Research Questions

The following research questions helped provide organization and focus throughout the course of this research. The research questions are focused on the three participant populations mentioned earlier.

1. What are the various course delivery methods instructors in local community colleges use in adult-retraining classes?

2. How do the students in a retraining program assess the learning environment and the instructional techniques used in their classes?

3. What are the communication processes used by local facilities in order to share information about graduating students with local businesses to improve chances for graduate employment?

4. How do instructors of retraining programs evaluate and revise adult learning programs based upon successful job placement of their adult dislocated worker students?

5. What are the opinions of the local employers regarding the preparation of the graduates of retraining programs?

Significance

The results of this study are important for all of the communities involved. The results of this study could provide a listing of best practices for instructing adults and how the colleges could go about revitalizing their enrollment and student success by restructuring their current course content layout and/or delivery methods. This research could also add to the body of knowledge of educational methodologies for adult students and the body of knowledge in regard to adult education in rural settings.

Local businesses could be made aware of the quality of students and the diversity of skills adult learners possess after they graduate from local colleges. Retrained dislocated workers not only bring knowledge from their past employment history, but also fresh, new knowledge learned while in the retraining programs. These adults can bring

other skills to their new employers that traditional aged college graduates may not bring. If adult students do not feel that their time or energy is justified in a college course and that they are not receiving the information they need from the course work, they will simply drop the course or under perform (Wlodkowski, 1999). This study could help identify reasons adult learners do not feel a connection to course material while actively engaged in retraining programs.

The results from this study might add knowledge about the challenges facing this remote geographic region that have not been the subject of previous research regarding these issues. This researcher believes this study could have an important social impact on local areas, and although the study is limited to what was examined, possibilities for future research are unlimited and, so far, have gone untapped. This research could also have a possible social impact for surrounding communities not a part of the target population.

Summary and Overview

Chapter 1 contains information regarding the background of the problem under study. The purpose of the study is presented and the research design is described.

Finally the significance of the study and the overall social impact is explained. Chapter 2 contains differing educational theories proposed by Malcolm Knowles and Jack Mezirow. An appropriate literature review was conducted in order to examine all aspects of adult teaching methods which inform this study, including the different approaches/methods used in adult education and how those methods are different for traditional and adult students in community college settings. Chapter 3 is a description of the research methods. Chapter 4 contains an analysis of collected data using descriptive statistical techniques. Chapter 5 is a summary chapter providing recommendations and implications for social change.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review is structured around adult learning techniques and theories supporting learning programs. The issue of adult learning, also known as andragogy, will be examined in a broad general sense in the beginning, narrowing down to more current research and findings until concluding by drawing attention to unanswered questions and other gaps within the research as represented by the research questions presented in chapter 1. This literature review will incorporate the most fundamental aspects of andragogy with past and current research with regard to the issues addressed and the bounds with which this study is being conducted. This literature review will also include an in-depth review of Mezirow's transformational learning theory. The intention in this section will be to compare and contrast Mezirow's theory with the work of Malcolm Knowles. Writings about Mezirow's theory from some of his contemporaries, both positive and negative, on his transformational learning theory will also be explored. Finally, literature concerning adult learning programs will be reviewed as well as contrasted with

learning programs for adults versus techniques used for traditional aged students.

The research strategy used to search the literature began with a basic search for an appropriate theory which could help provide a theoretical foundation for the proposed problem under study. After settling on Jack Mezirow's transformational learning theory as the foundational theory for this study, research was then conducted in order to find counterpoints to Mezirow's writings as well as support for Mezirow's theory. A contrasting theory that will serve as a comparison is that of Knowles andragogical model. Finally, research was conducted to serve as background in explaining the need for this study based upon the research questions posed in chapter 1. It is important to understand the origins and conceptual framework of andragogy in order to contrast adult learning techniques against learning methods used for younger students. This information provides background support for the various theories described later in this chapter and how the theorists differentiated their theories from Knowles's original writings. The various forms for training techniques advocated by many of these theorists

could be informative with regard to the type of training adult dislocated workers experience in a classroom setting.

The Origins of Andragogy

In 1968 Malcolm Knowles introduced the idea of andragogy to the United States. Before that time, much research had been written and published on pedagogy, the learning processes of children, but not much was known about the different ways adults and children assimilated and retained information (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). However, as Knowles (1998) pointed out, European philosophers and scientists had been theorizing on the adult learning process as far back as 1833, when German school teacher Alexander Kapp first used the term *Andragogik*. Since Knowles's original article in 1968, many social and educational scientists have continued the study of andragogy. Since that time, the aspect of how adults learn differently from children has birthed a variety of views on the subject and allowed for many different models and processes to emerge.

Adult Learning - The Theories of Knowles and Mezirow

Malcolm Knowles's Principles of Andragogy

Malcolm Knowles outlined six fundamental principles for adult learning. These six issues are (a) the learners

need to know, (b) the self-concept of the learner, (c) whatever prior experience the learner brought with them into the learning experience, (d) their readiness to learn, (e) their learning orientation, and (f) their motivation to learn (Knowles, 1998). Knowles placed value on adults wanting to take control of their learning environment, which is a repeated theme throughout adult learning literature. However, Knowles (1998) does caution that when adult learners are developing their self-concept in a new learning environment, much care must be given to foster their new mental image as individuals or their learning experience might be compromised through conflict between the learner and the learning facilitator.

Notice the importance placed on previous experiences brought into a classroom setting by adult learners. It is these experiences that enrich the learning process for many adults and expose the learners, not only to each other, but also to lived experiences outside of their own. Knowles (1998) also described the differences between children and youth, who have a subject-centered orientation to learning while attending school. Adults' learning orientation is life-centered, or their concerns are more tied to problem solving or task completion. If adult learners, according

to Knowles, are to be successful, then they must recognize the importance of their learning and how the new information being presented will help either solve a current or upcoming problem they may be facing or allow them to complete a task that would have eluded them without the new information presented in the learning environment.

In the years since Knowles first published his original text, adult learners are no longer overlooked in society (Knowles, 1998). According to Knowles, universities and businesses recognize the potential that adult learners and employees possess and are trying to capitalize on that potential (Knowles, 1998). When using the andragogical model, Knowles suggests a three-dimensional thinking process for those undergoing adult learning. That thinking process states the core principles of andragogy and provides a solid foundation for course planning and execution. Programs should be analyzed to identify the strengths of the adult learners, the subject matter under study and the reason the adult learners are actively seeking to learn said subject matter. Each of these principles of andragogy, when analyzed, could change how course instructors interact with their adult students (Knowles, 1998).

Finally, Knowles pointed out that if adults are entering the learning environment from what he terms an *organizational human resource development* perspective, then their instruction must be different from other adult students. This is especially true for adult students undergoing *basic adult education*. Knowles (1998) also concluded his overview of the principles of andragogy by stating how flexible the principles are when being put to use in a classroom setting. It is this flexibility, according to Knowles, which allows instructors the ability to restructure their adult learning classrooms to emphasize the strengths of their adult students.

Jack Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory

Jack Mezirow is the pioneer of research in the field of transformational learning theory. His theory includes individuals' experiences, or their view of the world around them, to build what Mezirow calls *meaning perspectives*. He then continues to elaborate what he terms *meaning schemes* which contain specific beliefs held by a person that help define who that person is (specific knowledge, values, and the meaning of experiences they have encountered in their lifetime) (Mezirow, 1991).

Mezirow places importance on a person's experiences and how they interpret those experiences. Just as Knowles concept of andragogy has generated a firestorm of research and publication, so too has Mezirow and his transformational learning theory. Some social scientists have taken Mezirow's basic premise of transformational learning theory, that of making meaning, into new and unexpected directions (Baumgartner, 2001). However, transformational learning theory is a hotly debated theory in the field of adult learning, with some social scientists supporting it while others point out flaws. Still it has captured the attention of the foremost leaders in adult learning theory and they continue to debate the impact of the theory on the field as a whole.

Knowles and Mezirow: Side by Side

These two theorists can be compared and contrasted. Knowles's and Mezirow's theories explicate the nonmanipulated independent variable in this study. That variable, as outlined in chapter 1, details the various forms of teaching methods used in the training of adult students. Knowles began his six assumption model with a learner's need to know, meaning the adult learner would have to understand why they need to learn something before

they actually committed the time and energy required to do so (Knowles, 1998). This statement echoes the first stage of what Mezirow dubbed *the phases of transformation*, with the first stage being a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow stated that major lifestyle changes can force one to examine their own meaning schemes, which in turn influence their meaning perspectives in order to understand why they must change something in their life, or in other words, they come to understand why they need to learn new skills and/or information.

Knowles's second step, which was once the first step in his assumptions in the andragogical model but modified and changed in later writings (Knowles, 1998; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), addressed the individual learners' self-concept. Knowles defines this concept as the way individuals see themselves. They have reached a point in their lives where they have become responsible for their own actions and want to be seen by others as being responsible for their own actions, or, as Knowles writes, "their self-direction" (Knowles, p. 65). Knowles used self-direction as the psychological foundation on which to build his case. Knowles talked about the pedagogical model of children and youth and their dependency on teachers

presenting them with new information in a traditional school setting. When adults return for training or additional education, they fall back on previously learned actions and take on this dependant mode in their new surroundings. Knowles describes this as, "they hark back to their conditioning in their previous school experience, put on their dunce hats of dependency, fold their arms, sit back, and say 'teach me'" (Knowles, p. 65). This is a problem for adult education programs because of the fact that independent adult self-concepts battle with psychologically dependent reasoning within the adult learners, which can cause strife within the individual and act as a barrier between the students and their instruction. When examining Mezirow's phases of transformation, which take place during transformational learning, one can see that the two distinct steps mirror rather closely the second assumption in Knowles andragogical model. These two steps are (a) self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame and (b) a critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow's theory of meaning schemes must be examined to shed light on the meanings he ascribed to these two steps. By looking inward and

challenging preexisting beliefs, Mezirow advocated that these individuals must deal with their feelings of guilt or shame about whatever situation led them to seek personal change, or transformational change, based on learning. For example, if an individual were fired from his job and felt guilt, either perceived or actual, over the situation, he would have to face that guilt and move past it in order to continue through the change process.

The third step on Mezirow's process of transformation uses critical reflection to spur transformational change. One can see the interdependency between these two steps Mezirow outlines. To move past guilt or shame, individuals would have to look inward and challenge their previously held beliefs, assumptions or motives, thus realigning their meaning schemes. They will change their meaning perspective, or their overall view of the world around them as defined by their personal experiences (Mezirow, 1991).

The third step in Knowles' assumption model is the role of the learners' experiences. Dealing with learned experience is an aspect of Mezirow's theory as well. Knowles details in his writings the differing quality and volume of experience adult learners bring into a classroom environment. He detailed the differences adult students

have that differentiate them from younger students. According to Knowles, "Any group of adults will be more heterogeneous in terms of background, learning style, motivation, needs, interests, and goals than is true of a group of youths" (Knowles, 1998, p. 66). Knowles described why adult experiences dictate different methods of instruction for adult learners which ties into Research Question 1 of this study. The emphasis is placed on teaching and learning strategies that tie into past experiences adults have encountered, thus the course work becomes relevant to their lives and applicable in their current daily activities. It is this fostering of experimental teaching, as Knowles describes these learning strategies, which can help keep adults in adult learning programs and help curb adult student dropout rates that often plague adult retraining/education programs (Knowles, 1998). Knowles suggested experimental techniques as an avenue to tap into past experiences for adult learners. Some of the interactive techniques include, "group discussion, simulation exercises, problem-solving activities, case method, and laboratory methods" (Knowles, p. 66). These activities spur interaction not only between the learning activity and the adult student, but also with

fellow students and the course facilitator. Students learn from others' past experiences and feel free to share their experiences with their peers when these types of experimental teaching strategies are used. Knowles concludes his discussion on learner' experiences by pointing out that children form their self-identity largely from others around them (family, peers, neighbors), but as people mature into adults, their experiences begin to define them as individuals, thus they are the sum of their experiences; what adults have lived through helped shape the person they have become (Knowles, 1998). If in adult education programs, their experiences or insights are devalued or ignored, Knowles (1998) cautions that adults will see this as a rejection, not only of their lived experiences but of them as persons and, if this happens, these adults may cease their involvement in the learning programs.

When examining Mezirow's fourth and fifth phases of transformation, certain parallels become apparent. According to Mezirow (1991) these two phases of transformation are (a) recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change and (b)

explorations of options for new roles, relationships, and actions. In comparing these to Knowles andragogical model, one can see that Mezirow is talking about a person recognizing that others have also been through the situation that person is currently facing and they too can weather whatever particular storm they are encountering. He is also drawing attention to the fact that adults undergoing transformational learning begin questioning their own beliefs and seek out new options for completing tasks, new paradigms begin to form and their understanding of the situations they face begin to change. As individuals are exploring new ideas and facing new situations, they forever change the foundation of understanding they use to understand the world around them, or their meaning perspective continues to evolve as they are exposed to new information (Mezirow, 1991).

The next step, according to Knowles, is an adult's readiness to learn (Knowles, 1998). According to Knowles, adults must time their learning to events happening to them that will reinforce the material they are learning in class. By connecting life events with new learned skills, adults are better able to adopt the new information into their daily routines. A question that comes to mind

immediately after having read this view is how can an instructor teach someone who is not ready or has not had life experiences that allow them to see the importance of the material? Knowles wrote, "It is not necessary to sit by passively and wait for readiness to develop naturally, however. There are ways to induce readiness through exposure to models of superior performance, career counseling, simulation exercises, and other techniques" (Knowles, 1998, p. 67). Again one can see the importance of varying the course delivery methods when trying to engage adult learners while learning course content.

Mezirow's next phase of transformation is planning a course of action, or what are individuals going to do to bring about a change in their lives and broaden their understanding of the situation they face (Mezirow, 1991). The Sixth phase of Mezirow's transformation learning theory leads directly into his seventh phase, acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans. Once individuals have their plan, then can then carry through and implement the plan (Mezirow, 1991). For example, if an individual has lost a job and determines that returning to school would help to gain new skills for employment, that person has made returning to school their plan of action.

The next step is to become enrolled and start attending classes. This may seem simple, but Mezirow warns, "A crucial dimension of adult learning involves the process of justifying or validation communicated ideas and the presuppositions of prior learning" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 5). If individuals' past experiences with formalized education were interpreted as (a) a failure to perform appropriately, (b) too difficult, or (c) a waste of time when they could have been doing something else, then one might recognize they could change their world for the better. However, the individual may still resist implementing their plan based on their past experiences within a formalized educational setting. Their past is dictating their future actions. It is only when they determine they must move beyond their past experiences that they begin the process of true transformational learning.

Malcolm Knowles's fifth assumption in the andragogical model is the individual's orientation to learning. Knowles suggested that in childhood, school courses were designed to emphasize subjects such as reading and writing, while adults are concerned about completing tasks or solving problems, so their learning should be geared to life-centered situations and solutions (Knowles, 1998). It

should be pointed out again that it is the teacher/facilitator of the adult training program that is responsible for fostering an open learning environment where all students feel comfortable sharing their various experiences for the enrichment of all in the classroom. When people face a new problem, talking to others who have experienced the same problems in the past might help them face the new problem with a positive attitude. Zachary (2002) wrote about the important influence adult teachers have on their students. In her studies, she asked adults to reflect on their most meaningful mentoring experience. Zachary reported that almost all adults described one of their teachers and how that teacher impacted their learning and development. Knowles also spoke of the importance of positive reinforcement from instructors when dealing with adult learning. He noted that adults want to make sure they are interpreting the new information correctly, so they have a tendency to lean on their instructors for support and encouragement.

Mezirow's eighth and ninth phases include provisional trying of new roles, and building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships (Mezirow, 1991). It is during this time that adult learners are actively

engaged in learning and are learning the new information which will help them continue through the transformation process. Once the adult learners are fully integrated into their new surroundings, by working with their teachers and successfully completing course requirements, the students will begin to build their individual levels of self-confidence. Mezirow (1991) described this as:

The goal of adult education is to help adult learners become more critically reflective, participate more fully and freely in rational discourse and action, and advance developmentally by moving toward meaning perspectives that are more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative of experience. (p. 225)

Adult learners must achieve a high level of self-confidence in order to participate more fully and freely in adult learning situations, whatever form those situations may take. One must also be open to the differing opinions and new information presented to them, in order to move forward in Mezirow's transformative learning process.

Knowles final assumption, added to his theory in 1984, addresses adults' motivation to learn. According to Knowles (1998), internal motivators are stronger for adults than external motivators. Internal motivators include the desire for increased job satisfaction, quality of life and other intangible wants/needs. According to Knowles (1998),

it is these intangible wants that spur individuals forward, or motivate them to return to school to learn new skills which enable them to fulfill their goals and ultimately satisfy those intangible wants in their lives. This ties in nicely with Mezirow's final phase of transformative learning, which is a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (Mezirow, 1991). Plainly stated, Mezirow's final phase of transformation deals with individuals reintegrating into the life they led before seeking out new knowledge and information in an educational environment. They then can resume their daily routines, except they should now be changed individuals with newly acquired knowledge/skill and have a broader understanding of the world around them and be able to interpret other limitations within their own meaning perspectives. It is this ability, through rational discourse and critical reflection, which leads individuals, throughout their lives, to continually challenge their beliefs and understandings through the transformative learning process. This process of taking what is learned in an adult training program and using it actively outside of a classroom setting helps reinforce the dependent

variable in this study. The dependent variable deals with the outcome of the adult training programs.

In summary, by examining the andragogical model of Malcolm Knowles and the phases of transformation described by Jack Mezirow, one can see their beliefs mirror, to an extent, the various factors involved in successful adult education programs. The focus remains on the students and how individual facilitators/teachers can foster adult learning by understanding the factors that impact this field of study. Although, Mezirow dealt with how individuals interpret their *frames of reference* (Mezirow, 1991), Knowles was concerned with a broader picture of how and why adults learn differently than children. Mezirow has built on the work laid out by Knowles, as are all adult learning scientists, since Knowles first brought attention to andragogy in 1968.

Transformational Learning Theory - The Debate

Although Jack Mezirow's transformational learning theory is considered by some to be a foundational theory in the field of andragogy, others take a different stance and advocate that Mezirow overlooked certain aspects of learning theory or that certain parts of his reasoning are flawed. In this section of the literature review,

Mezirow's theory is examined by comparing the literature supporting his theory against literature that is critical of his theory.

To begin, Mezirow seems to find support in the writings of Merriam who wrote, "In summary, andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformative learning theory are familiar pieces of the adult learning mosaic, as is informal and incidental learning" (Merriam, 2001, p. 95). Merriam (2001) also advocated that individuals not label these aspects of adult learning theory as *old*, but rather consider them as being foundational steps to other theories as time progresses. Cranton (2002) described Mezirow's transformative learning process in an article that very much supports Merriam's view that transformative learning theory is a foundational consideration when examining adult learning processes. Cranton observed that one can not teach transformation, in and of itself, to students, but a teacher can hope to be successful enough to engage the students to question their own individual beliefs and, through critical reflection, seek out other facts which lead to a broader understanding of the world around them.

Collard and Law (1989) described Mezirow's adult education theories as mirroring theories and adult learning

activities earlier described by Habermas. This would be a very compelling argument against Mezirow's theory, and probably did raise some concerns at that time in history, however, as time progressed Mezirow continued to refine his theory and in his 1991 published book, *Transformative Dimension of Adult Learning*, Mezirow wrote, "Habermas's theory of communicative action (1987, 1984) provides the social theoretical context for the transformation theory of learning, and his writings are very helpful in understanding transformation theory" (p. 7). So Mezirow recognized the importance of Habermas and in his own writings gives credit to Habermas for laying the groundwork for further examination, thus eliminating that type of critique from happening in the future, or so he might have thought.

Pietrykowski (1998) debated the relevance of Mezirow's transformative model. Pietrykowski stated that Mezirow's progression model was a modernist concept and brought into the debate the type of role the facilitator/course director has in the emancipatory phase of transformative learning theory for each student. Again, Pietrykowski referred to Habermas's earlier works and freely admits that some of his and Mezirow's differences

can be related to different understandings and/or interpretations of Habermas's writings (Pietrykowski, 1998). Finally, Pietrykowski (1998) related Mezirow's work on perspective transformation to a "micro-level of personal transformation rather than a macro-level of social and political change" (p. 68). A repeating action occurs for each of the critiques in peer-reviewed journals of Mezirow's works. Mezirow frequently responds to his critics. Mezirow responded to Pietrykowski that he does not believe in stages of development or that development in adults is any different than adult learning in general (Mezirow, 1998). Notice that Mezirow states he does not believe in stages of development, yet he entitled his transformative processes as the phases of transformation. Could it be possible that Mezirow is placing different meanings on the terms *stages* and *phases*? Differences in wording critics of his work never recognized while reviewing his writings? Only Mezirow knows for sure, but from reading his writings and comparing them to those of his critics, this author contemplates whether or not Mezirow was only being misinterpreted and his repeated responses to his critics the only avenue in which he has to explain himself and his theory in more detail to his peers.

It is easy to see that Mezirow's transformational learning theory causes debate within the adult education community. One must first be able to identify whether or not the use of his theory is actively engaging adult learners through a transformative process with appropriate course content and the educators own course delivery methods for that particular content. This part of the theory places much responsibility on adult educators and educational institutions who train adult learners. If course content and course delivery methods are organized and carried out correctly, adult learners should automatically enter into a phase of critical reflection and start questioning their previously held beliefs and ideas. Only through this process does transformational learning actually take place and individual transformation happen per student.

After this review of theory, it seems appropriate to examine adult learning programs and how they are structured with regard to adult learning techniques and methods. Learning programs in adult education must be structured in a way that best meets the needs of the adults undertaking the reeducation process. This review of adult learning

programs includes the impact a variety of training techniques have had on adult education.

Training Methods for Adults

The Impact of Diversity in Adult Education

Research Question 1 in this study dealt with the various course delivery methods used in local community colleges when training dislocated worker students. Many scholars in the field of adult education have advocated the use of different tactics in regard to facilitating adult learning (Caffarella, 2002; Dirkx & Prenger, 1997; Fiddler, Marienau, & Taylor, 2000; Galbraith, 2004; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Each of these social scientists provided examples of differing strategies and training techniques which could be used in an educational setting to improve not only informational retention of course material, but methods which could be replicated in other learning courses by the adult students to improve their overall learning experiences throughout their lifetimes. In the next section, some of the various training methods/techniques will be examined in more detail. Mezirow (1991) pointed out that adult learners needed to move past their issues of dependency in order to use new information in a transformational context, by using a

variety of training techniques in a classroom environment, it is believed transformational learning is more likely to occur than when using traditional collegiate learning practices (lectures, essays, or written assignments).

Training Methods Recommended for Adult Learners

Dirkx and Prenger (1997) studied the concept of using a theme-based approach for adult learners. They describe various techniques such as group learning with skill building and task groups which focus on specific learning goals which the learners complete as a team, which also fosters group trust. Feedback is also very important. According to Dirkx and Prenger, adult learners must feel comfortable in their learning environment and they must feel free to give feedback to their instructors on what learning activities are, and are not, working for them. They also point out that course instructors must also be open to criticisms about their own individual style of teaching and must take this type of feedback as a constructive observation made by the class and make the appropriate changes to improve class performance.

Caffarella (2002) wrote extensively about the importance of preplanning adult learning programs and how those programs must be organized in order to affectively

engage an adult audience. In an ideal world, adult learning environments would all strive to achieve what Caffarella terms a *high involvement* atmosphere. However, it is up to the individual course instructor to create and maintain this atmosphere. Caffarella (2002) stated, "Capable instructors of adults also are aware and use well the principle of active learner participation in choosing [instructional] techniques" (p. 179), a concept Caffarella credits to Malcolm Knowles and other scientists. Adult learning courses which use a variety of teaching techniques other than lectures and symposium type teaching methods can improve a learning environment for an adult learner. Caffarella lists the interactive types of exercises as comprising a *high involvement* atmosphere (Caffarella, 2002; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). These exercises include case studies of the problem or concept under study, real-time relay chats between the students in the classroom, storytelling in order to clarify information, simulations or role-play, and application sharing (Caffarella, 2002; Galbraith, 2004).

Three very important elements are present in successful adult training programs. These elements are (a) student backgrounds, (b) course material organization, and

(c) instructor knowledge of adult education principles.

All three of these elements are crucial to successful adult training programs, however, it is also evident that the course instructor is primarily responsible for (a) learning the various backgrounds of their students, (b) organizing the classroom environment, and (c) making sure they are familiar with proven adult education practices.

Why are some adult education programs more successful than others? Perhaps it is because of the course instructors and not necessarily course content or student body makeup. This does not, however, take away the importance of how effective adult learners perceive their learning experiences to be, individually. That aspect of adult learning is still important and works in tandem with the elements put into place by their course instructors. In the course of this study, it became clear that the focus on course effectiveness as perceived by individual adult students was of paramount concern for student success. This is tied to the diversity of training methods used by course instructors. The level of involvement the adult education facilities have with helping adult learners use their newly learned skills in the outside world through

employment assistance with local businesses is also a key component of this study.

Research Question 3 in this study is related to the level of communication which exists between local educational facilities and the community at large. The level of communication between the community colleges and the local businesses could have a direct impact on whether local businesses hire the newly retrained students to work in their organizations. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) wrote about community-based learning opportunities. During this type of interaction, members of a community were likely to gather in a nonthreatening atmosphere and discuss a perceived problem within their community. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) pointed out that community-based learning was usually action oriented and aimed at social reform in some fashion. It becomes obvious that open communication between all parties involved in taking action within the community should be paramount within the proceedings. Pratt (1998) wrote of *communities in practice* which dealt with the concept of apprenticeship. Pratt proposed that as learners are learning job skills, they are often able to move to a higher level, or sphere, of recognition within the community. Applying this concept to research question

three of this study, one can see that Merriam and Caffarella (1999) proposed working with the community to solve problems while Pratt proposed on-the-job training as an avenue for community stability.

Research Question 4 in this study addressed the avenues in which adult retraining programs are evaluated and revised. Revising educational programs involves looking at a number of factors, one of which is whether the course achieved its desired outcome. In the case of this study, the desired outcome of adult dislocated worker retraining is new employment for dislocated adult learners. However, in an academic setting alone, the overall desired course outcome is usually tied to the overall course objectives for the learning program (Caffarella, 2002).

Caffarella (2002) noted:

Within this approach, the objectives may address changes in individual participants; the procedures and practices of the education or training unit or the program itself (for example, program format; instructor competence, program coordination); the organization; and/or in the community or society. If these objectives need to change as the program evolves, so too might the evaluation purpose, approach, data collection and analysis tools, and criteria. (p.249)

Another social educational scientist, Galbraith, notes that many educational facilities have instituted the use of rubrics to help the institution and faculty measure the

success of their learning objectives in regard to their student population (Galbraith, 2004). Galbraith also wrote about how some facilities use learning contracts and other interactive techniques to measure the performance of their students. However, there is very little written about measurement of learning objectives outside of the educational environment. From the research conducted, it appears that educational institutions measure their program success based upon individual learning objectives and federally mandated core measures of performance developed before training was begun. This would mean, in the context of this study, that help in finding employment after dislocated workers finish their retraining programs falls to other area organizations if appropriate resources are not already present within local educational institutions.

Summary

The first part of the literature review was a comparison of the theories of Malcolm Knowles with those of Jack Mezirow. A more thorough examination of Mezirow's transformational learning theory followed with both positive and negative critiques from his peers. A review of adult learning methods, successful practices, programs and techniques was completed. Finally, an overview of the

literature review was conducted with regard to the overall research questions proposed for this particular study.

This final section also detailed areas within the research questions where research is limited and gaps within the research exist.

CHAPTER 3:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The content of this chapter includes a detailed description of the research design used to measure the factors within the study. The sampling procedure is described and the sample is explained in depth. Finally, information pertaining to the instrumentation used for the study is presented. How the data collected by those instruments was analyzed is explained at the end of the chapter.

Research Design

The research was quantitative with self-administered surveys as the primary data gathering method. In most cases, studies determining transformational learning and adult learning techniques have utilized qualitative designs, such as interviews, case studies, and biographies. However, researchers in Europe have used quantitative techniques in their studies of adult learning and training methodologies (Chou, Fisher & Taylor, 1999; Entwistle & Tait, 1990).

Because of issues of confidentiality, this researcher was unable to know who actually participated in this study

at each data collection location. Since information pertaining to the adult students was withheld by some local community colleges because of state confidentiality laws, face-to-face contact with study participants would have been difficult, thus, the most appropriate data-gathering tool was surveys where participants can remain anonymous. As a data-gathering tool, surveys are not only used by social scientists, but other individuals outside of the scientific community (Singleton & Straits, 2005). Some of the more common uses of surveys include opinion polls, marketing research, and customer satisfaction studies. Singleton and Straits (2005) describe one of the strengths of survey research as being capable of providing social description of the target survey participants. Surveys can also provide researchers detailed information about large heterogeneous populations. Further, survey research can be used to address a larger range of interrelated topics than experimental research. Survey research can uncover unanticipated concepts which can lead researchers to develop additional research questions and/or hypotheses.

The costs of self-administered questionnaires are usually lower than other survey methods. A major advantage is that respondents can choose the most appropriate time to

respond to the questionnaire, thus eliminating the instant unpleasantness of being caught at a bad time or in a bad mood, which could happen during a face-to-face interview or telephone interview (Singleton & Straits, 2005). The flexibility of surveys is an advantage of survey research. Disadvantages of survey research include lower response rates, the inability to determine cause-and-effect relationships easily, and questions being left unanswered, which could prove to be troublesome for accuracy (Singleton & Straits, 2005). Other disadvantages of survey research include increased reactivity error, which can lead to systematic measurement errors when data are analyzed. Some individuals taking the survey are likely to answer survey questions the way they think the researcher, or other survey participants, expect the survey question to be answered. This can skew survey results in a negative direction and lead to inaccurate study results. Finally, Singleton and Straits (2005) warn that researchers must remain aware that surveys only gather perceptions and opinions rather than actual behavior.

Target Population

The primary target population for this study was unemployed manufacturing workers in the counties of Carroll

and Grayson in the state of Virginia, the City of Galax in Virginia, and Alleghany County in North Carolina. Surveys were used to measure three factors that might impact the overall success for dislocated worker retraining programs. Those factors were (a) adult students involved in the reemployment training process, (b) educational institutions performing the adult retraining, and (c) local businesses to determine opinions about retrained workers and the workers opportunity for reemployment within the community. The overall target populations for this study included adult displaced students, adult educators, and local business personnel. The adult student population included individuals who worked for local manufacturing companies. Some of these individuals had worked for many years while others may have only worked for only a short time. Either way, both long term and short term employees found themselves without steady employment. Most of these individuals had only completed high school, while some of the younger workers may have completed at least two years of community college and have earned associate degrees.

The educators in this study all work to retrain dislocated workers, however some may also teach courses to traditional students. These educators tend to work closely

with their institutions and community training initiatives to enroll their courses with adult dislocated workers seeking retraining. Using this method, all students in their classrooms have a common ground for mutual support. Each student is there to receive retraining to prepare them for employment.

The business executives included in this study represented firms that employ the largest number of workers within the geographic area. Business leaders hire some retrained workers after their training is complete. Most of these businesses are healthcare, education or some type of manufacturing.

Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure in this study involved only unemployed manufacturing workers taking part in retraining classes. One educational institution which offers retraining for adult workers within the target population agreed to participate as an organization, and was part of the sample. Individual adult retraining instructors from four additional local facilities also agreed to complete the educational institution survey. Individuals from five local education institutions were asked to participate. Individuals from four institutions participated. A

combination of purposive and convenience sampling was used based upon courses instructors teach. Since most dislocated worker students enter into the business or nursing fields, those instructors were identified on their institution's online directories and were sent an email inquiring whether they would be interested in participating in this study. One institution did not list faculty by teaching category, thus all instructors were sent the participatory invitation. For the instructors who were identified, based upon their teaching specialty, purposive sampling was used. Convenience sampling was used for the one institution where all instructors were invited to participate because of the lack of information regarding teaching specialty. All students taking part in this study were identified using purposive sampling. From all students taking courses, only those students who are dislocated workers and who met this study's inclusion criteria were included.

For employers included in the sample, local business contact information was obtained from the Chambers of Commerce for Grayson, Carroll, and Alleghany Counties. Using this information, purposive sampling was undertaken. The firms that employ the largest number of workers were

identified to participate in this study. For this study, any business which employed a minimum of 75 individuals to a maximum of 800, or over, was considered appropriate. Including local businesses made it possible to generalize the findings to all businesses operating within the geographic area, or beyond, if other areas closely mirror the demographics of the target area.

The sampling frame used in this study included unemployed manufacturing workers, local business leaders, and instructors at local colleges. The sampling frame for the local colleges included Wytheville Community College, Bluefield College, Wilkes Community College - Alleghany Campus, Surry Community College, and New River Community College. Each of these organizations service the reeducation/retraining needs within this target population.

Sample

The sample in this study was comprised of a minimum of 25 educational personnel responsible for the instruction of dislocated workers. All educational personnel who participated in this study are located outside of the originally stated target area with the exception of a satellite campus in Alleghany County, North Carolina. No actual community college campuses are located within the

target area and dislocated worker students must travel outside of the target area to receive any retraining. Each of the educational facilities in the sampling frame offer retraining to dislocated workers who reside within the originally stated target area. Because of this fact, surveys were sent to all colleges and/or college personnel located in neighboring counties in both Virginia and North Carolina because the retraining students for these institutions are residents within this study's target area. Only students who resided within the originally stated target area completed the survey at these locations.

A minimum of 200 dislocated workers were approached to participate in this study with the intention of attracting at least 100 dislocated worker students to participate. Finally, executive officers from firms that employ the largest number of workers were asked to participate by completing the business survey. If any of the businesses declined to participate, additional businesses were approached in the interest of obtaining optimal survey response.

Instrumentation

Data for this study were gathered with self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaires were

cross-sectional in nature, where all information was gathered at one point in time (Creswell, 2003). This allowed for a type of snapshot of the opinions of participants. Portions of a survey instrument developed by Hilary Tait and associates were used. The ASSIST Questionnaire measures how adult students see their learning environment and what learning methodologies they prefer. This researcher received permission from Dr. Tait to use the questionnaire and modify it as needed. A copy of the ASSIST instrument is in Appendix C. It became clear that all of the questions were not relevant for this study, thus the student survey used for the data collection contained only questions that addressed the scope of this research project. The questions presented on the ASSIST questionnaire also allowed for patterns to be drawn within the research between teaching methods that foster transformational learning and that of transformational learning theory as proposed by Jack Mezirow.

The educational institution and local business surveys were written with respect to the variables as outlined in chapter 1 of the study. The business surveys were focused on communication between the businesses and the educational institutions. The educational institution survey was

designed to measure the type of teaching methodology the instructors use when instructing their classes and their views on whether or not their facilities are working actively to help retrained adults find employment post graduation. This researcher developed the surveys for the educational instructors and local businesses. It is also important to understand the mindset of local business leaders and their attitudes and opinions as formed by past experiences dealing with retraining workers. All three surveys, when used in tandem, provided an in depth overview of the dislocated worker retraining and employment process as it currently exists. A matrix representing questions written to measure the concepts inherent within the research questions for this study is shown in Tables 3 through 7.

Table 3

Survey Question Matrix Based on Research Question 1

What are the various course delivery methods instructors in local community colleges use in adult retraining classes?

EDUCATIONAL SURVEY ITEMS

1. This educational facility recognizes the differences found within our student body with regard to educational methods used for instruction.
 2. I am familiar with adult education theory and learning methods.
 3. I use lecture as my primary teaching method.
 4. In my classroom students are encouraged to discuss course material in the classroom during class time
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5. I use written assignments such as written question and answers and essays as a primary teaching method.
 6. I use case studies, role play and interactive activities as part of my method of instruction.
 7. I do NOT think using varied instructional methods will impact how my students perform in the classroom.
 8. My courses are structured in such a way as to maximize the past experiences and knowledge held by the adult students in my class.
 9. Personnel at this educational facility communicate to students the importance of the coursework in regard to future employment after graduation.

ADULT STUDENT SURVEY ITEMS

SURVEY SUBSECTION A: "WHAT IS LEARNING?"

1. Making sure you remember course content well.
 2. Building up knowledge with facts described in textbooks.
 3. Building up knowledge by collecting new information.
 4. Being able to use the information you have acquired.
 5. Understanding new material.
 6. Seeing things in a different way.
 7. Seeing things in a more meaningful way.
-

Table 4

Survey Question Matrix Based on Research Question 2

How do the students in a retraining program assess the learning environment and the instructional techniques used in their classes?

ADULT STUDENT SURVEY ITEMS

SURVEY SUBSECTION B: "APPROACHES TO STUDYING"

1. I usually set out to understand the meaning of what we have to learn.
 2. I look at the evidence carefully.
 3. I try to reach my own conclusions about the topics I study in class.
 4. I try to relate ideas I come across to those in other topics or other courses whenever possible.
 5. I often find myself thinking about ideas discussed in class when I'm doing other things.
 6. When I read an article or book, I try to find out for
-

-
- myself exactly what the author means.
7. When I'm working on a new topic, I try to see how all the ideas fit together.
 8. I often find myself questioning things I hear in class or read in books.
 9. I find that studying academic topics can be quite exciting at times.
 10. When I am reading, I stop from time to time to reflect on what I should be learning.
 11. Ideas in textbooks or articles often make me think about my own beliefs.
 12. When I read, I examine the details carefully to see how they fit in with what's being said.
 13. I find some of the ideas I come across in course Textbooks really exciting.
 14. Before tackling a problem or assignment, I first try to work out the conclusion based on previous information.
 15. I like to play around with ideas of my own even if they don't get me very far.
 16. It's important for me to be able to keep track of Classroom discussions.
 17. It's important for me to understand the reasoning behind what I have to learn.
 18. I sometimes get 'hooked' on academic topics and feel I would like to keep on studying them.

SURVEY SUBSECTION C: "PREFERENCES FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF COURSES AND TEACHING"

1. Instructors who tell us exactly what to put down in our study notes.
 2. Instructors who encourage us to think for ourselves.
 3. Instructors who show us how they think about a topic.
 4. Exams that allow me to show that I've thought about the course material.
 5. Exams or tests that need only the material provided in our lecture notes.
 6. Courses in which it's made very clear just which books we have to read.
 7. Courses in which we're encouraged to read more about a subject for ourselves.
 8. Books that challenge your beliefs and provide explanations that goes beyond the lectures or classroom discussion.
 9. Books that give you definite facts and/or information that can be learned easily.
-

Table 5

Survey Question Matrix Based on Research Question 3

What are the communication processes used by local facilities in order to share information about graduating students with local businesses to improve chances for graduate employment?

EDUCATIONAL SURVEY ITEMS

1. Personnel at this facility are in regular contact with local businesses in order to help our graduating students find employment after graduation.
2. Personnel at this facility work closely with local labor offices in order to inform recently jobless adults of the training opportunities offered by this institution.

BUSINESS SURVEY ITEMS

1. I have regular communication with local institutions with regard to students currently enrolled in retraining programs.
2. Educational facilities are in contact with my company regarding their graduates and training programs on a consistent basis.
3. I do NOT think that increased correspondence with local educational settings would affect my company's hiring practices
4. I believe that increased correspondence between the local educational facilities and local business would help me fill open positions within my company
5. This company relies solely on the local employment offices for filling vacated positions.
6. This company does NOT use the local employment offices for filling vacated positions.
7. My company is very likely to hire a recently retrained adult worker.

ADULT STUDENT SURVEY ITEMS

SURVEY SUBSECTION B: "APPROACHES TO STUDYING"

1. I am aware of how this educational institution works with students regarding employment assistance services.
 2. I plan on working with this educational facility to find employment once my course work is completed.
-

Table 6

Survey Question Matrix Based on Research Question 4

How do instructors of retraining programs evaluate and revise adult learning programs based upon successful job placement of their adult dislocated worker students?

EDUCATIONAL SURVEY ITEMS

If a student is performing poorly in my class, I talk with the student to try to understand the reason for their poor performance.

Personnel at this educational facility follow up with recent graduates to determine the effectiveness of the adult learning/retraining program.

Table 7

Survey Question Matrix Based on Research Question 5

What are the opinions of the local employers regarding the preparation of the graduates of retraining programs?

BUSINESS SURVEY QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS

1. I have a strong knowledge of the adult retraining programs currently being offered at local community colleges.
 2. Within my business, some present employees have undergone some form of retraining program offered by local educational facilities.
 3. I believe that the educational institutions within this area do a very good job in retraining adult workers based on my past experiences with these workers in my business.
-

4. I believe that retrained workers possess experience useful in my organization.
 5. I believe retrained workers have adequate knowledge about the job duties and functions.
-

For all surveys, pretesting was conducted to make sure that all questions are clear and understandable. Questions that seem to have associated problems were revised. A redraft of survey items helped clarify misunderstandings which occurred between what the questions on the survey were designed to measure and unanticipated misconceptions held by the survey pretest participants.

The issue of the reliability and validity of the ASSIST Questionnaire is vague. The articles reviewed by Entwistle, Tait, and associates (1990, 1991, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2003, and 2005) do not address the subject of internal or external reliability or the validity of the instrument. Other scientists, however, did address the issues of reliability and validity of the ASSIST Questionnaire in their writings. One of the earliest of these articles was by Chou, Fisher, and Taylor (1999) who addressed the reliability and validity of the data collected on the RASI questionnaire, a forerunner of the ASSIST Questionnaire. The RASI test involved surveys that contained 29 items. The overall survey was designed to

measure three distinct styles of learning (deep approach, surface approach, and the strategic approach). After completing a Cronbach alpha test, it was found that for each factor, the Cronbach alpha was acceptably high (deep approach = .6242, surface approach = .8198 and strategic approach = .7379) (Chou, Fisher, & Taylor, 1999).

Duff (2000) wrote about the Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI), another forerunner to the ASSIST Questionnaire, that previous studies found internal consistent reliabilities of the scores produced on the short form ASI questionnaire (Duff, 2000). According to Duff (2000) those alpha coefficient values were between 0.29 and 0.78. However, only alpha coefficient scores greater than 0.70 can be acceptable (Santos, 1999), one must wonder what aspects of the ASI scored 0.29 in reliability. This information is not presented. Duff then examined the RASI with regard to instrument reliability. Duff stated the reliability scores obtained by testing of the RASI by other scientists. Tait and Entwistle found in a study completed in 1996 that high internal consistency existed with the RASI questionnaire with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.73 to 0.83. According to Duff (2000) this study also had high construct validity as indicated by

exploratory factor analysis. Factor analysis is the primary means for computing data from the ASSIST Questionnaire; however one must be measuring all three approaches to learning and using the complete questionnaire in order to complete a factor analysis study. Duff also conducted a study in 1997 that showed high internal consistency reliability and high construct validity of the RASI. Alpha coefficients ranged from .80 to .82 in reliability, and validity was indicated, again, by exploratory factor analysis (Duff, 1997). These findings between the two studies at different points in time would seem to suggest that the RASI had concurrent validity, meaning results correlated with findings of previous research. Duff also pointed out longer versions of the RASI tend to have better internal consistency reliability but are not favored by instructor or student test subjects. However shorter versions of the RASI are favored by both instructors and students, the internal consistency reliability of the shorter questionnaires becomes questionable because of lack of testing (Duff, 1997).

Background Information for ASSIST Questionnaire

This researcher used questions contained within the ASSIST Questionnaire as the primary data collection tool

when surveying the displaced worker student population within the target population. The ASSIST Questionnaire is the latest version of many different questionnaires that came before it and has been used extensively in research studies in Europe. In a study completed by Entwistle and Tait published in 1993 on the subject of preferences for teaching and various approaches to studying between passing and failing students found that variances between failing students and their preferences regarding the two factors under study varied significantly. The researchers faced the same challenge and reached the same conclusion when examining findings for failing students and their preferences within the study inventory itself. Entwistle and Tait (1993) hypothesized that perhaps the *academically weak* students fail to see the *connectedness* between their individual experiences and those ideas/concepts proposed in their coursework. Entwistle and Tait (1993) pointed out that some students want to be challenged mentally while others prefer to be given just the facts relevant to their course assignments. The authors agree that this variance between passing and failing students' perceptions and the implications of the variances on future studies must be examined further. The researchers later used a computer

program known as the Personalized Advice on Study Skills (PASS) to gather data from 345 first year students in an interactive environment with the computer program. The PASS program ran information from three distinct *shells* which ran concurrently. This computer based PASS system worked extremely well. From this successful computerized version of the RASI, the authors remark that the RASI could now enter its final phase, a paper-and-pencil questionnaire which they termed the Approaches and Study Skills Inventory for Students (ASSIST). The final written version of the ASSIST Questionnaire was presented in an article in 1998 by Entwistle, Tait, and McCune (Entwistle, 2000).

From 1998 to 2000, the ASSIST questionnaire was used extensively in Europe. Many times, the questionnaire was altered, to an extent, in order to meet the needs of the particular study environment or variables researchers found to be the most interesting (Entwistle, 2003). The questions pertaining to the deep approach to learning is of interest in this research study and it is those questions which were used in the student questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedures

Letters with instructions on how to complete the student surveys were left with or emailed to all

educational institutions or instructors who agreed to take part in this study. Since all students, both traditional and adult, regardless of why they are taking part in the class, are combined in some classroom settings, the instructors asked the students if they meet the following criteria:

1. Are you undergoing reeducation due to dislocated worker training?
2. Was your previous job in manufacturing?
3. Do you live in Grayson County, Carroll County, the city of Galax, or Alleghany County?

Any students that answered in the affirmative to all qualifying questions were given the letter of participation to complete the survey via the internet or they completed a hardcopy survey if their access to the internet was limited. Self-addressed stamped envelopes were provided for all participants completing the hardcopy surveys. The survey participation letter contained a section explaining the reasons for and scope of this research study. Potential participants were assured of confidentiality and asked to sign a consent form. If individuals agreed to take part in the study via email after receiving the invitations to participate, but failed to return the signed

consent form, implied consent was assumed when the surveys were completed after active data collection began. All individuals were given 10 days to respond to the initial inquiry. An additional one week period was given in order to maximize the number of surveys returned if return results were low.

Data Analysis and Review

Following the collection of data, examination and analysis of that information is presented in tables for each of the population groups. By aggregating the data, selected items from the questionnaires were connected to each of the five research questions. Descriptive statistical analyses were completed for the student questionnaire. The 1st research question in this study was the basis for analyzing the various course delivery methods instructors in local community colleges use in adult retraining classes. This research question was measured with data from the student survey and the educational institution survey. Each question detailing the types of methodologies used was analyzed using averaging and percentage scales to convey the percent of agreement or disagreement for each statement provided on the educational institution survey and the adult student questionnaire.

The educational institution survey focused on the type of teaching instructors use in their particular classroom.

The 2nd research question was measured using the student questionnaire, which sought to measure the type of instruction adult dislocated students prefer. This measurement of preference was gauged by measuring the level of preference, from 1 to 5, for a deep approach learning environment. The higher the deep approach learning environment average, the more transformational learning occurs. Answers obtained from the student questionnaire were averaged and percentage information was presented. The scores from the student questionnaire were compared with the average scores computed from the educational institution survey. This allowed for comparisons between the actual methods used in the classroom, as reported by the educational instructors, against the training methods preferred by the adult dislocated students.

The 3rd research question dealt with the concept of information sharing between local community colleges and local businesses. The educational institution survey, adult student survey, and local business survey each contained questions to measure the informed communication aspect of the study. It was intended that a comparison of

the averages from all three surveys might reveal a measure of negative or positive aspects of communication between local organizations and those preparing adults in retraining programs in terms of employment. The opinions of local business leaders were measured using the local business survey and tied directly into research question five.

The 4th research question was related to concept of program revision of the adult retraining programs. This was measured by items on the educational institution survey. The scores given for the items measuring this concept were averaged and presented as percentage data. Since the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 dictates that information is reported regarding the employment of retrained workers post secondary training, this research question served as a measure of performance based upon whether local educational institutions actively monitor their programs for revision and make appropriate changes if problems appear to be present.

Finally, the 5th research question dealt with the perceptions of local business leaders with regard to retrained dislocated workers. This question was measured using the local business survey and data were reported

after scores were averaged and graphical representation using percentage data was completed. Demographic information was collected from the local business survey and the adult student questionnaire. The local business survey inquired about the type of recruitment techniques used in attracting and hiring new personnel and what type of industry that particular business services within the community. The demographic data for the Adult Student Survey included gender, age, ethnic background, and length of time enrolled in retraining services.

Measures Taken to Protect Participant's Rights

All raw data will be maintained by the researcher in a secure location, and will not be shared with anyone. In an event where a particular participant or community stakeholder wants to review collected raw data, they will be asked to make such a request in writing directly to the researcher. A summary of the research findings will be presented to any interested party if asked. This summary information will be presented in an anonymous fashion, which will maintain confidentiality for all study participants and community stakeholders involved in the overall project.

CHAPTER 4:
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter contains the research findings of the study. Descriptive statistical methods were used to provide graphic representation of responses collected from three different surveys. This chapter is organized around each of the five research questions stated in chapter 1. The presentation of data will follow the organization provided in Tables 3 through 7 in chapter 3. As presented in chapter 3, Research Question 1 was measured with items on the educational institution survey and the adult student survey. The adult student survey contains a series of items to determine how adult students define the term *learning*. It is important to understand how adults define learning if instructors are to design instructional programs to meet their needs. The educational institution survey items were directly related to instructors' knowledge of adult education theory and various forms of course delivery. Research Question 2 was measured with items in the adult student survey to determine how adult students assess their learning environment and their preferences for different types of teaching techniques.

Research Question 3, as outlined in Table 5 in chapter 3, was to determine communication processes between local educational facilities and local businesses in order to help adult dislocated worker students find employment after their retraining is complete. All three surveys used in this study had different items addressing this issue for their respective respondents. Research Question 4 was measured using items from the educational institution survey to determine how instructors of retraining programs evaluate the programs within the classroom. If revisions are needed, how do the educational institutions monitor and revise those programs to better serve the needs of their students? Finally, the intention of Research Question 5 was to gauge the opinions of local business leaders with regard to the preparation of graduates for real world employment after their retraining is complete. Items used to measure Research Question 5 were stated in the local business survey. A summary of research findings is presented at the end of the chapter and provides a logical context in which to report study interpretations, social implications, and recommendations for action and other research in chapter 5.

General Demographic Data

For the local business survey, 30 businesses in the target area were approached to participate in this study. Of those invited, 14 businesses responded either by completing the survey online or notifying this researcher via e-mail their decision not to take part in the study. Two declined to participate. Of the remaining 12 surveys received, 3 failed to meet the minimum employment benchmark set for inclusion in this study, a minimum of 75 employees, and their responses were removed from the data analysis. The remaining nine business survey responses comprised the results reported in the data analysis section of this chapter. For this survey, an overall response rate of 47% was obtained from the 14 initial respondents, after deducting the study fallouts and the two businesses that declined to participate, the response rate for respondents which fell within the study criteria dropped to 30%. Table 8 is an illustration of the total number of respondents from each county within the target area and the percentage of survey responses obtained from each.

Table 8

Response Rates for Local Business Survey per County

Location	Total number of businesses approached per county	Total number of survey respondents per county	Percent of overall responses per county nonadjusted	Total number of survey responses per county adjusted for declines and fallouts	Percent of overall response per county adjusted for declines and fallouts
Grayson County, VA	7	5	71%	3	43%
Carroll County, VA	6	2	33%	2	33%
City of Galax, VA	8	4	50%	3	38%
Alleghany County, NC	9	3	33%	1	11%
Overall Study Stats.	30	14	47%	9	30%

Note. Low response in Alleghany County, North Carolina, could be attributed to unfamiliarity between business leaders and researcher. Decline = Individuals who refused to complete a survey for this study; Fallout = Individuals who completed study surveys, however did not meet minimum inclusion criteria.

Table 9

Recruitment Techniques Used to Fill Job Openings for Local Businesses

Recruitment techniques	Response Percentage
1 Employment Commission	75.0%
2 Temporary Staffing Company	37.5%
3 Recruitment Agencies	25.0%
4 Online Job Postings	62.5%
5 Ads in Area Newspapers and Industry Magazines	87.5%
6 Mass Mailings to Industry Professionals	12.5%
7 Other	50.0%

As presented in Table 9, with 87.5%, using ads in area newspapers and industry magazines is the predominate form of recruitment technique used by area businesses in filling vacated positions. The local employment commission is used for 75% of all employee recruitment and 62.5% utilize online job postings. Fifty percent use other forms of recruitment techniques. Among other techniques listed were resumes directly submitted for consideration, in-house referrals, job fairs, and word-of-mouth inquiries within the community. The primary functions of the responding businesses are education, local government, financial services, and manufacturing. The number of employees in the businesses included in this study ranged from 100 to 599.

For the Educational Institution Survey, 253 instructors from five local educational facilities were invited to take part in this study. The invitations were distributed via e-mail correspondence and hardcopy mailings of the consent forms and surveys. Responses were received from 47 instructors willing to participate in the study from four of the institutions that were initially approached to participate. However, during the time period for data collection, only 40 instructors returned their

surveys to this researcher. Instructors from two education facilities utilized the online survey forms while the two other educational institutions requested all surveys be completed as hardcopy documents. The cumulative response rate based on the total number of instructors invited to take part in this study was 15.81%. If the response rate is adjusted for only the instructors who initially agreed to participate, the response rate becomes 85.11% for the Educational Institution Survey.

The Dislocated Adult Student Questionnaire, which included questions taken from Entwistle and Tait's ASSIST Questionnaire, was used to gather data from students in retraining programs. The baseline minimum number was set in the sample at 100 students. This was based on the input of instructors from all five colleges used in the sample. After data collection began, when the instructors approached their student population, it was found that only two institutions had dislocated workers from the counties represented in the target area enrolled during the current semester. Both institutions were public, 2-year liberal arts institutions that offered their students associate degrees. Because some of the dislocated workers in the target area were younger than 24, all dislocated worker

students undergoing retraining were included in the survey results regardless of their age. All surveys were completed using the hardcopy version of the student survey. Combined, 252 adult dislocated worker students were approached to take part in this study. Completed surveys were received from 56 adult dislocated worker students. The total response rate for the student survey was 22%. Table 10 details the survey response rates for each of the three study populations.

Table 10

Response Rates for All Surveys Used in Study

Study Population	Total number of participants approached	Total number of survey respondents	Percent of overall responses nonadjusted	Total number of survey responses adjusted for declines and fallouts	Percent of overall response adjusted for declines and fallouts
Educational Institutions	253	47	15.81%	40	85.11%
Adult Dislocated Worker Students	252	56	22%	56	22%
Local Businesses	30	14	47%	9	30%

Data Analysis

Research Question 1. What are the various course delivery methods instructors in local community colleges use in adult-retraining classes? The intention of this question was to determine if a variety of teaching techniques were being used by instructors to improve dislocated students' chances of learning more effectively.

Questions measuring whether or not a variety of course delivery methods were used at local educational institutions are included on the Adult Dislocated Student Questionnaire and the Educational Institution Survey. Table 11 contains details about the importance adult dislocated worker students attach to statements regarding their definition of the term *learning*. The response scale for these items consisted of *very important, important, neutral, not important, and not very important*. These questions were presented on the Adult Student Questionnaire under the subheading *What is Learning?*

Table 11

Response Averages from ASSIST Questionnaire in 'What is Learning?' Category

Question	Majority response %	Category rating
Making sure you remember course content well.	51.8%	Very Important
Building up knowledge with facts described in textbooks.	50.0%	Important
Building up knowledge by collecting new information.	48.2%	Very Important
Being able to use the information you have acquired.	71.4%	Very Important
Understanding new material.	64.3%	Very Important
Seeing things in a different way.	44.6%	Important
Seeing things in a more meaningful way.	46.4%	Important

It is interesting to note that students considered the most important item as one relating to being able to use new information, which could be related to the fact that the same material might help them find employment. They do not

seem to be as interested in seeing things in a different or more meaningful way.

Table 12 contains the response averages for the nine questions measuring research question 1 from the Educational Institution Questionnaire. Optimal scores which deal with concepts found in transformational learning theory should rate as close to 5.00 as possible. The response scales for all items on the educational institution survey consisted of *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neutral*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*. Items were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with one being *strongly disagree* and five being *strongly agree*.

Table 12

Items Used to Measure Course Delivery Variety in Adult Dislocated Worker Retaining Programs

	Question	Response average
1	Educational facility recognizes differences within student body.	4.33
2	I am familiar with adult education theory and learning methods.	4.15
3	I use lecture as my primary teaching method.	3.33
4	In my classroom students are encouraged to discuss course material during class time.	4.75
5	I use written assignments as a primary teaching method.	2.93
6	I use case studies, role play and interactive activities as part of my method of instruction.	3.85
7	I do NOT think using varied instructional methods will impact how my students perform in the classroom.	1.35
8	My courses are structured in such a way as to maximize the past experiences of my students.	4.03
9	Personnel communicate to students the importance of the coursework in regard to future employment after graduation.	4.23

Critical factors in effective adult education include understanding adult learning theory, class discussions, use of varied instructional strategies, building on past experience, and relating course work to future employment. The self-ratings for items that relate to effective adult education were all above average, with five of them considerably above average. One instructor who completed the educational institution survey took issue with Question 7 in Table 12. Although a place for comments was not provided on the survey, the instructor wrote "What!! Are you kidding? Don't patronize us" on the survey next to

that item, this feedback from the instructor may have been because that particular item was reverse scored, which caused the item to take on a negative connotation. That question was meant to gauge an instructor's openness to using varied techniques in a classroom environment and tie back into the theoretical foundation for this study. However, one instructor did score this item with a natural response, which would seem to indicate they were uncertain whether or not using varied instructional methods would impact the performance for the adult learners in their class. The same instructor who wrote the comment then rewrote Question 8 to an extent that drastically changed the meaning of the item. That person wrote, "My classes are structured to encourage students to maximize the benefits of learning from past experience on previous periods of instruction." The intention of that item was to determine whether or not instructors were using the experiences adults bring into the classroom from outside the educational setting. Nowhere was it mentioned that this item was to measure past experiences within an educational setting or previous periods of instruction. Thus a misunderstanding could have led to a wrong scoring for this item from that particular instructor. Another

instructor addressed the differences in methodology to their particular teaching specialty. That respondent stated "I teach nursing clinicals, so it is different than classroom." This may have also had an impact on the measurement of teaching methods used at local educational facilities.

Research Question 2. How do the students in a retraining program assess the learning environment and the instructional techniques used in their classes? The intention of this question was to assess how adult students feel about the learning environment during their retraining. All questions measuring how adult students assess their learning environment were included on the Adult Dislocated Student Questionnaire. Table 13 includes the response averages given under the *Preferences for Different Types of Courses and Teaching* section found on the ASSIST Questionnaire. The response scales for these items consisted of *definitely dislike, dislike, neutral, like, and definitely like*. Items were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with one being *definitely dislike* and five being *definitely like*.

Table 13

Response Averages from ASSIST Questionnaire in Preferences for Different Types of Courses and Teaching Category

	Question	Response average
1	Instructors who tell us exactly what to put down in our study notes.	4.32
2	Instructors who encourage us to think for ourselves.	4.25
3	Instructors who show us how they think about a topic.	3.93
4	Exams that allow me to show that I've thought about the course material.	3.68
5	Exams or tests that need only the material provided in our lecture notes.	3.86
6	Courses in which it's made very clear just which books we have to read.	4.16
7	Courses in which we're encouraged to read more about a subject for ourselves.	3.77
8	Books that challenge your beliefs and provide explanations that goes beyond the lectures or classroom discussion.	3.45
9	Books that give you definite facts and/or information that can be learned easily.	4.23

Items pertaining to passive learning, Numbers 1, 6, and 9 or learning which requires very little effort from the student, rated high in this study. While all the ratings were above average, adult students in this study rated the items related to specific information needed to succeed in a given course highest. However, the second highest rated item, Number 2, asks whether or not students like instructors who encourage them to think for themselves. This item had a score of 4.25, which appears to support the idea that adult students do like to think for themselves about academic topics as advocated by Mezirow as part of the critical reflection process

(Mezirow, 1991, p.88). Thus, a possible inconsistency exists between the ratings of students on specific directions and thinking for themselves. Mezirow advocated that individuals must recognize the reason why the subject they are learning would be beneficial. The following 18 questions found on the Adult Student Questionnaire measured the various approaches to studying that adult students either exhibit or neglect while undergoing retraining. The optimal response for each of these items would be 5.00 if the students' study habits mirrored transformational learning theory and their preference was for a deep learning environment. The average response rate for each item is presented in Table 14. The response scales for these items consisted of *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neutral*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*. Items were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with one being *strongly disagree* and five being *strongly agree*.

Table 14

Response Averages from ASSIST Questionnaire in Approaches to Studying Category

	Question	Response average
1	I usually set out to understand the meaning of what we have to learn.	4.27
2	I look at the evidence carefully.	3.98
3	I try to reach my own conclusions about the topics I study in class.	3.86
4	I try to relate ideas I come across to those in other topics or other courses whenever possible.	4.00
5	I often find myself thinking about ideas discussed in class when I'm doing other things.	3.82
6	When I read an article or book, I try to find out for myself exactly what the author means.	3.64
7	When I'm working on a new topic, I try to see how all the ideas fit together.	4.05
8	I often find myself questioning things I hear in class or read in books.	3.73
9	I find that studying academic topics can be quite exciting at times.	3.87
10	When I am reading, I stop from time to time to reflect on what I should be learning.	3.73
11	Ideas in textbooks or articles often make me think about my own beliefs.	3.70
12	When I read, I examine the details carefully to see how they fit in with what's being said.	3.96
13	I find some of the ideas I come across in course textbooks really exciting.	3.75
14	Before tackling a problem or assignment, I first try to work out the conclusion based on previous information.	3.30
15	I like to play around with ideas of my own even if they don't get me very far.	3.66
16	It's important for me to be able to keep track of classroom discussions.	4.11
17	It's important for me to understand the reasoning behind what I have to learn.	4.36
18	I sometimes get 'hooked' on academic topics and feel I would like to keep on studying them.	3.59

Based on an examination of the scores from the *approaches to studying* section of the ASSIST Questionnaire, it seems apparent that the five highest rated approaches to studying have to do with cognitive understanding and the importance

adult students place on trying to understand and retain the information being presented to them in a classroom setting.

Research Question 3. What are the communication processes used by local facilities in order to share information about graduating students with local businesses to improve chances for graduate employment? The intention of this question was to determine how information is shared between staffs of local educational facilities and area business personnel. Items used to measure communication processes were addressed on all three surveys. This was done to gauge how all three study populations perceived communications by local educational institutions and area businesses in regard to the retraining programs within the community. The response scales for all three surveys for these items consisted of *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neutral*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*. Items were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with one being *strongly disagree* and five being *strongly agree*. Table 15 represents the overall average response rating for all questions related to Research Question 3.

Table 15

Response Averages from ASSIST Questionnaire in Approaches to Studying Category, Educational Institution Survey, and Local Business Survey in Regard to Community Communications

	Question	Response average
<u>Educational Institution Survey Questions/Statements</u>		
1	Personnel at this facility are in regular contact with local businesses in order to help our graduating students find employment after graduation.	3.85
2	Personnel at this facility work closely with local labor offices in order to inform recently jobless adults of the training opportunities offered by this institution.	3.92
<u>Local Business Survey Questions/Statements</u>		
3	I have regular communication with local institutions with regard to students currently enrolled in retraining programs.	2.78
4	Educational facilities are in contact with my company regarding their graduates and training programs on a consistent basis.	2.89
5	I do <u>NOT</u> think that increased correspondence with local educational settings would affect my company's hiring practices.	2.89
6	I believe that increased correspondence between the local educational facilities and local business would help me fill open positions within my company.	4.00
7	This company relies solely on the local employment offices for filling vacated positions.	2.00
8	This company does <u>NOT</u> use the local employment offices for filling vacated positions.	2.11
9	My company is very likely to hire a recently retrained adult worker.	4.00
<u>ASSIST Questionnaire - Approaches to Studying Category on Adult Dislocated Worker Student Survey</u>		
10	I am aware of how this educational institution works with students regarding employment assistance services.	3.30
11	I plan on working with this educational facility to find employment once my course work is completed.	3.38

The two questions from the Educational Institution survey dealing with community communications, Statements 1 and 2, reported average response rates of 3.85 and 3.92 respectively. These averages are very close to the 4.00

agree category. However, ratings from local business leaders show extremely low scores on five of the six items measuring community communications between the community colleges and local businesses. Low scores on Items 5 and 8 are preferable in regard to the communication processes. Item 5 indicates that increased correspondence would affect how companies within the target area hire employees. Item 8 indicates that local employers do use local employment offices for filling at least some of their open positions. The other 3 items which fell into the 2 category of the response scale indicate disagreement for those statements presented to the local business leaders on the survey. Item 6 scored favorably (4.00) from the local businesses and that statement indicated that increased correspondence would help local businesses fill open positions in their companies. This is also reflected in the low disagreement score for Item 5. Further, two items on the Adult Student Survey measured whether or not the students plan on working with the educational institutions to find employment after their training is complete. The average response rate for awareness of what educational institutions do to help students find employment was 3.30, while the average response for students planning on working with their

institutions scored 3.38. This seems to suggest that more students are planning on working with their educational institutions to find employment opportunities than are actually aware of the processes used by the institutions to help the students find employment after training is concluded.

Research Question 4. How do instructors of retraining programs evaluate and revise adult learning programs based upon successful job placement of their adult dislocated worker students? The intention of this research question was to determine how local educational institutions deal with the revision of their adult retraining courses based on previously outlined criteria. Retraining programs must meet federally mandated guidelines of performance. Two surveys used in this study contained items pertaining to program monitoring and revision. Table 16 contains the average responses for the educational institutions for each of the items measuring this aspect of the study. The response scales for the survey for these items consisted of *strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree*. Items were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with one being *strongly disagree* and five being *strongly agree*.

Table 16

Survey Average Response based on Items Measuring Program Monitoring and Revision

	Question	Response average
Educational Institution Survey Questions/Statements		
1	If a student is performing poorly in my class, I talk with the student to try to understand the reason for their poor performance.	4.73
2	Personnel at this educational facility follow up with recent graduates to determine the effectiveness of the adult learning/retraining program.	3.46

The average response scores measuring research Question 4 indicate that instructors do speak to poorly performing students and try to determine the reason behind the poor performance. This particular item on the survey, Number 1 in Table 16, has an average response of 4.73. The educational institutions rated their follow up activities with graduated students with regard to retraining success at 3.46. One instructor wrote on their survey "I assume this happens; just don't know it to be factual" for Item 2. While the local businesses indicated, with a 4.00 average for Item 9 in Table 15, in the affirmative they would be very likely to hire a recently retrained worker. Table 17 details how the adult dislocated worker students rated their current academic performance.

Table 17

Response Percentages given by Students Evaluating Their Individual Academic Performance

Category scale		Percentage of response
1	Rather badly	2%
2		0%
3	Not so well	4%
4		0%
5	About average	24%
6		10%
7	Quite well	29%
8		14%
9	Very well	18%

A very small percentage of students in the retraining programs rated themselves as performing badly or not so well in their courses. This seems to indicate that most of the adult dislocated worker students are responding favorably to the teaching methods. The majority of students seem to be content with their current level of academic performance in the retraining programs.

For the adult dislocated worker students, certain items on their survey did not have an average response; those items are presented by using percentage data. Those items were basic demographic data as well as the grade approximation item. The results reported in Table 17 represent the dislocated worker students' feelings about their performance in the academic setting. When the

participants were asked to rate themselves in accordance to their perception of how well they were doing in their classes, 29% reported they were doing quite well, 24% scored themselves as about average, while only 18% scored themselves as doing very well. Two percent of student respondents scored themselves as performing rather badly in their coursework, while another four percent indicated they were not doing so well in their academic endeavors. Three student respondents wrote general comments about their performance in the classroom on their surveys. For confidentiality purposes those individuals will be referred to as A, B, and C. The statements made came directly from the students without editing. A wrote, "I need all the help I can get, I'm 49 and this is hard, challenging, but I look at it like the job I once had 40 hrs. a week." B wrote:

I was a factory worker and I know very little about how to find out what I am supposed to do about my classes in college; which classes I need first. Everything is so rushed. We need more time to learn.

The longest response came from C, who wrote a letter explaining her difficulty in the classroom. C wrote:

I don't know if this information will be helpful, however I wish to express myself.
I personally do not think most of the teachers know how to teach the older students.

They don't realize after 20 + years of being out of school, we have lost our studying skills, our concentration, our organization skills making us need more explanation at a slower pace. Most teachers are use to teaching students straight out of high school.

Computer's were not introduced into our school until my senior year. I have only self taught computer experence, yet I'm expected to go my classes on line with out training.

It is very stressful to keep up.

When reading the above comments, one can understand the frustrations adult dislocated worker students face when returning to an academic environment. Age may be a factor for some of this frustration. Examining the student respondents by age, 30% fell between the ages of 45-55. Two percent of students were above the age of 56, while 28% were between the ages 35-44 and 26% were between the ages of 24-34. In terms of ethnic background, 93.8% of all respondents were Caucasian. The majority of all respondents in the student survey had been enrolled in active classes for at least one year. Twenty-eight percent of all respondents were new students, meaning they had only been enrolled for less than 3 months, 21.7% of students have been enrolled for 3-6 months and 21.7% have been enrolled for 6 to 12 months. The majority of surveys (66.7%) came from female students.

Research Question 5. What are the opinions of the local employers regarding the preparation of the graduates of retaining programs? It was the intention of this research question to gauge the opinions of local business leaders about the preparation of graduates for reemployment. Table 18 contains the answers given by local business leaders to items on the Local Business Survey used to measure their opinions on this subject. The response scales for the local business leader survey consisted of *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neutral*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*. Items were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with one being *strongly disagree* and five being *strongly agree*.

Table 18

Opinions of Local Employers Regarding the Preparation of Graduates of Retaining Programs

	Question	Response average
1	I have strong knowledge of the adult retraining programs currently being offered at local community colleges.	3.67
2	Within my business, some present employees have undergone some form of retraining program offered by local educational facilities.	3.89
3	I believe that the educational institutions within this area do a very good job in retraining adult workers based on my past experiences with these workers in my business.	3.67
4	I believe that retrained workers possess experience useful in my organization.	3.89
5	I believe retrained workers have adequate knowledge about the job duties and functions.	3.67

Table 18 indicates that local business leader responses fell within the three section of the response scale for all five statements related to Research Question 5. When dealing with the knowledge of adult retrained workers, the performance of local educational facilities in regard to training, and their own knowledge of the adult retraining programs, local business leaders averaged 3.67. While questions relating to the already retrained workers currently working in their companies scored higher with a 3.89 average response. This suggests that employers have a positive perspective on retraining based upon their interaction while working with past retrained individuals, but do not have a good understanding of how those individuals were actually retrained by local institutions.

Summary

In analyzing data, average responses were used as descriptive statistical analysis, where average responses were not justified, percentage data was presented. Tables were used to present the data collected from three surveys distributed to adult dislocated worker students, local business leaders, and educational institutions within the target area. This study was comprised of 5 research questions. Research Question 1 focused on the various

course delivery methods used in adult retraining courses within the target area. Adult students indicated that being able to understand and use new material and knowledge was very important. Instructors in educational institutions within the area had high scores with regard to course delivery. Research Question 2 was related to how students assess their learning environment. The average responses indicated most students preferred instructors who allowed them to remain passive. Research Question 3 related to the communication processes between local businesses and the training facilities within the target area. While educational institutions rated themselves high with regard to community communications, average responses from local businesses counteracted that claim. Local businesses indicated increased correspondence would help them fill positions. Research Question 4 related to how institutions monitored the success of their retraining programs for dislocated adult workers. Dislocated worker students rated themselves as performing quite well in their courses. In contrast, however educational personnel were not as confident in their responses regarding follow up with graduating students after program completion to ascertain if they those students were actually able to find

employment. Research Question 5 focused on the opinions of local employers regarding the preparation of adult retrained graduates for employment after they finished the retraining programs. Employers indicated that some of their current employees had been retrained and they were likely to hire retrained individuals in the future. Chapter 5 contains a summary of how this study was conducted, conclusions for each research question, recommendations for related research, recommendations for practice, and a statement of possible social significance.

CHAPTER 5:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Unemployment in the target area for this study has affected the lives of many people. Many of these individuals enrolled in retraining programs in order to gain new skills in the hopes of finding employment after their training was complete in other disciplines. Three populations affect a study of this type, educational instructors, dislocated worker students, and local business professionals. The target area for this study included Grayson County, the city of Galax, and Carroll County, in the state of Virginia, and Alleghany County, in the state of North Carolina, where many individuals have recently become dislocated. Three surveys were used to gather data for this study. The Educational Institution Survey was distributed to 253 instructors from five local educational institutions. Forty instructors submitted a completed survey. Although five institutions were approached, all responses came from faculty at four institutions. Nine local business representatives, who met the study criteria of at least 75 employees, completed the Local Business Survey. The Adult Student Survey was distributed to 252 adult

dislocated worker students at two local educational institutions, only two institutions out of the five approached currently have students enrolled who reside within the target area for this study. Fifty-six students returned their surveys within the designated time period. The research questions in this study were designed to provide data regarding course delivery methods used by local institutions, how dislocated worker students assessed their learning environment, the communication techniques used by local training facilities and area businesses in regard to sharing information which would benefit retrained students, how adult training programs were monitored and revised, and the opinions of local employers in regard to the preparation of retrained workers for new occupations.

The findings in this study indicate that students are receiving instruction using accepted adult training techniques and most are performing well. Findings also indicate that communication between education personnel, students, and local businesses should be improved and guidelines for program monitoring should be made be accessible for students to better evaluate their individual training.

Conclusions

Research Question 1. What are the various course delivery methods instructors in local community colleges use in adult-retraining classes? Data collected in this study indicate that instructors are using accepted adult education practices. Instructors also indicated they minimize lectures (3.33) and written assignments (2.93) in favor of class interaction (4.75) and other alternative forms of instruction such as role play and case studies (3.85). These types of teaching techniques have been proven to be effective in studies completed by Dirkx and Prenger (1997), Galbraith (2004), and Merriam and Caffarella (1999).

Research Question 2. How do the students in a retraining program assess the learning environment and the instructional techniques used in their classes? The conclusion based upon the data collected in this study is adult dislocated worker students measure the success of the retraining programs based on being able to understand and use their knowledge after program completion. Responses gathered from the students indicated that if students feel as if they are not learning the topics in an in-depth manner, then they may judge the retraining program a

failure. Consequently, a noticeable group of students indicated they preferred to remain, in terms of time enrolled and activities undertaken, as passive in their learning as possible due to the uncertainty they feel while undergoing the retraining process, yet the students also indicated they wanted the opportunity to think for themselves. This inconsistency could be grounds for future study. The conclusion for Research Question 2 is based on the average responses provided by the dislocated worker students. The majority of responses indicated that students rated instructors who tell them what to study (4.32), what books to read (4.16), and books which give them definite facts able to be learned easily (4.23) higher averages than items pertaining to self motivation and personal responsibility for their learning. However, one item which addressed instructors who encourage the students to think for themselves scored favorably (4.25). When examining scores found on other items used to measure this research question from the adult student survey, high averages were found on questions pertaining to understanding using new information in a real world setting.

Research Question 3. What are the communication processes used by local facilities in order to share information about graduating students with local businesses to improve chances for graduate employment? The overall conclusion for Research Question 3 is that poor communication is hampering successful job placement between adult dislocated worker students and area businesses. Poor communication between the training institutions and student body and local area businesses could undermine a soundly designed adult retraining program. Data collected during this study indicated that while educational institutions rated themselves favorably with regard to community communications, this was not reflected on the average responses tabulated from local businesses. Local education institutions indicated their belief that they were in regular contact with local businesses (3.85) and employment offices (3.92) in order to help their graduating students find employment, local businesses indicated that increased correspondence would help them fill open positions within their companies (4.00). The local business personnel also indicated they were not in regular communication with area personnel of training facilities as indicated on items 3 (2.78) and 4 (2.89) on Table 14 in chapter 3. A lack of

planning on the part of the students appeared when examining the adult student survey with regard to working with the educational facility to find employment post graduation. The majority of students indicated they would be working with their educational institution in order to find job placement upon course completion(3.38), however, a lower average response was indicated on the item measuring their understanding of their institutions placement procedures (3.30). Local businesses indicated that they were very likely to hire a recently retrained individual (4.00).

Research Question 4. How do instructors of retraining programs evaluate and revise adult learning programs based upon successful job placement of their adult dislocated worker students? The conclusion reached is that personnel at local educational facilities are not using job placement as a central factor when measuring the success of the retraining programs. However, federal core measures of performance dictate that all facilities report placement data to the federal government in order to receive Title II funds. The conclusion reached for this research question is based on data collected from two surveys. Although the majority of adult students (29%) rated themselves as doing

quite well in their courses, which reflects well on the educational methods used in the retraining programs, the instructors for the educational institutions gave a low average response score (3.46) for personnel at their institutions on following up with the students to determine whether or not those students were able to find employment. The data also indicates that the instructors involved in these programs are also not aware of how these programs are monitored.

Research Question 5. What are the opinions of the local employers regarding the preparation of the graduates of retaining programs? Based on the data, the overall conclusion reached for Research Question 5 is that area business personnel are willing to employ dislocated workers who have completed a training program. The data indicates that local employers need to be made aware of how the retraining programs operate, what courses are taught, and what experiences these students possess upon completion of a retraining program. If this information were provided to local business professionals, they would be better prepared to offer substantive evaluations of these programs for the educational facilities providing training. This feedback could be beneficial to both parties. Local businesses

indicated that some of their employees had previously undergone retraining and that those employees possess experience which is useful for their organization (3.89). However, slightly lower average responses were given regarding knowledge of the retrained students with regard to job duties, the business leaders own knowledge of local retraining programs, and whether local institutions are doing a good job retraining adult students based on their previous experience with retrained workers (3.67).

Recommendations for Practice

Given that many of the students are older and have not been in formal education for a period of time, those teaching the retraining classes should make sure they are using adult education techniques. Some comments volunteered by dislocated adult students give credence to the fact that some older students enter these programs with some level of trepidation. Older students may not have adequate knowledge of current technologies which may hamper their academic performance. A basic computer or general study tutorial program could lessen this trepidation and increase student productivity while also fostering a positive self-image and increased self-confidence for older dislocated worker students.

Instructors need to understand the dichotomy between students wanting to be told what to study and read as contrasted against those students' need for individuality. The instructors are, in effect, providing adult dislocated worker students the guidance those students need for program success. Instructors should recognize the dual roles they play in the retraining programs, that of instructor and that of guider.

The educational institutions should take a proactive role in helping the retrained workers find employment. Programs designed to help dislocated workers affect the entire communities with which they service. If taking a more proactive role in helping students find employment positively correlates to increased program effectiveness, then the entire communities benefit from the proactive stance taken by training facility personnel.

Guidelines for how retraining programs are monitored and revised should be made public so that all students would have a common benchmark with which to evaluate their retraining. Also, these guidelines would help local businesses understand how the retraining programs function and what services, if any, the local businesses could

provide to help the training institutions better serve the student body and thus, themselves.

Communication between educational institutions and local businesses should be frequent and substantive. Local business indicated their willingness to hire locally retrained workers if only they were aware of the skills those students possessed. By increasing the quantity and quality of communications between training facilities and local business, retrained workers have an increased opportunity to find employment locally.

Recommendations for Future Research

For further study, the long version of the ASSIST Questionnaire can be used to complete a factor analysis study to determine which of the three styles of learning (i.e., deep approach, surface approach, and the strategic approach) dislocated worker students prefer. It should also be noted that this study only used items to measure an individual's preference for the deep approach learning style and it is possible that some of the survey respondents would have preferred either the surface approach or the strategic approach instead.

A pretest/posttest study could be conducted using the same survey for the adult dislocated worker students. The

scores from each survey could be compared to see if average responses change from the beginning of a semester to the end of the semester. This would help determine if certain courses were benefiting these students more than others. The treatment procedure could involve two different classes of adult dislocated worker students. The ASSIST survey would be administered to both classes. The average scores would be computed. For instruction, one class could utilize acceptable interactive adult learning techniques, while the other class is taught in a more traditional approach using written assignments, some class discussion, and lectures. The ASSIST survey would again be administered at the end of the semester to both classes. The scores would be averaged and compared with the scores obtained at the beginning of the semester. This would allow instructors to determine which teaching method actually benefited adult dislocated worker students more during the semester.

As presented in this chapter, communication processes appear to be the overall weakness for dislocated worker retaining programs within this target area. Questions that need to be asked that were not asked in this initial study need to address communication issues. What types of

communications are used between local training institutions and area businesses? How often do these communications take place? Who is responsible for sharing data at both the educational institution level and community level? What can be done to streamline communication between involved parties for the benefit of all? Each of these questions could generate new research regarding dislocated worker retaining programs for this target area. These questions could also help other researchers be better prepared when investigating this topic in the future and allow them to better design a survey instrument which contains items detailing these communication issues.

Mezirow (1991) states that for many scientists wanting to study transformational learning theory, the biggest obstacle is gaining access to, or understanding of, the meaning schemes and meaning perspectives of the study participants. This is due to many people having a hard time explaining to the researcher how they really feel about a topic or situation. Mezirow cautions that observations can only reveal behavior, but individuals can try to inform the researcher as to why they behave in that fashion. Many times these explanations are filtered through the individuals own current understanding and that

understanding can change, as can their behaviors, drastically from day to day (Mezirow, 1999, p. 221).

When analyzing the results of this study, it becomes clear that regardless of the training methods used in the classroom and the overall knowledge and skill level of the retrained students, poor communication between the training institutions and student body as well as poor communication with local area businesses could undermine a soundly designed adult retraining program. With federal funds tied to the success of adult retraining programs for retaining facilities and the economic health of the community dependent upon employment, such communication breakdowns are not innocuous. Restructuring how information is shared between all parties involved could greatly enhance the success of these programs and make monitoring the results easier for educational facilities. More research should be conducted to determine exactly how local education facilities monitor and revise their training programs

Implications for Social Change

Unemployment is a fact of life. When a person becomes unemployed, there is a ripple effect in the community. If unemployment becomes widespread, as it has in some areas of the country, the ripple effect extends farther. The

economy of an area can be negatively affected. When the economies of rural areas are impacted by unemployment and limited entrepreneurial ventures exist, the individuals who have become unemployed, or dislocated, must find new ways to support their families and their community. Many of these individuals return to local retraining facilities in order to gain new skills. It is their hope that the new skill-sets they will obtain will allow them to find new employment.

These retaining programs offer dislocated workers the opportunity to gain new skills in an effort to find new employment. When retraining programs work efficiently and effectively, dislocated workers are retrained and find new employment upon program completion. Once the retrained workers find employment, they once again begin to support their local economy by shopping at local businesses and, in some cases, opening new businesses of their own. However, if there are weaknesses within the infrastructure of the retraining/reemployment programs, then the benefits that can be attributed to a successful adult retraining program will not be reflected within the community. If these weaknesses are identified and corrected, the overall results can benefit the previously dislocated worker as

well as the entire community in which that worker resides. This process also creates a ripple effect which positively impacts the entire geographic region in terms of employment opportunities and economic benefits.

Concluding Statement

Based on the results of this study, even if accepted adult training techniques are used to instruct dislocated worker students and those students perform well, poor planning from educational institutions with regard to information sharing within the community could cause the retraining initiatives to be ineffective for the students and the community. On the other hand, using the results of this study to instigate improvement of communication processes between local business personnel and educational facility personnel could facilitate students finding meaningful reemployment and set a precedent for future programs.

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APPENDIX A:

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS - INSTRUCTORS AND BUSINESS LEADERS

Dear Educational Instructor or Business Leader:

You are invited to participate in a research study of reeducation and reemployment programs for dislocated workers. You were selected as a possible participant due to the fact that you met one of the following study criteria. For an individual to take part in this study they must:

- *Be undergoing retraining due to losing their jobs due to their company's closing and are seeing retraining in another subject area.*
- *Their previous job was in manufacturing.*
- *The dislocated workers must live in Grayson County, Carroll County, the city of Galax in Virginia, or Alleghany County in North Carolina.*
- *Act as an educational institution or instructor which services students who are dislocated workers and meet the previously mentioned inclusion criteria.*
- *Act as a possible employer for dislocated worker students once retaining is complete.*

This study is being conducted by Tony Jackson Perry, a doctoral candidate at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of local community college training methods while training dislocated adult learners within the context of Jack Mezirow's transformational learning theory and how these factors impact varying degrees of successful job placement.

Procedures:

If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be asked to complete a survey via the internet. The survey should take between 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with any educational institutions or other community partners involved in data collection within the target populations of Grayson County, Carroll County and the city of Galax in the state of Virginia or Alleghany County in the state of North Carolina. If you initially decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time later without affecting those relationships.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no risks associated with participating in this study. In the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation in the study you may terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any report of this study that might be published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Tony Jackson Perry. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Lilburn Hoehn, lhoehn@waldenu.edu. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact them via telephone at (276) 773-8112 or tperr002@waldenu.edu. The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Leilani Endicott, you may contact her at 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210, if you have questions about your participation in this study.

If you agree to be a study participant, please print and keep a copy of this form for your records.

(Continued)

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Name of
Participant

Participant
Signature

Signature of
Investigator

Tony J. Perry

APPENDIX B:

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS - STUDENTS

Dear Student:

You are invited to participate in a research study of education and reemployment programs for dislocated workers. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently enrolled in job skill retraining and met the following other criteria:

- *You are undergoing retraining due to losing your job due to their company's closing and are seeing retraining in another subject area.*
- *Your previous job was in manufacturing.*
- *You live in Grayson County, Carroll County, the city of Galax in Virginia, or Alleghany County in North Carolina.*

This study is being conducted by Tony Jackson Perry, a doctoral candidate at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of local community college training methods while training dislocated adult learners. This information will be examined within the context of Jack Mezirow's transformational learning theory.

Procedures:

If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be asked to complete a survey online. The survey should take between 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no risks associated with participating in this study. In the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation in the study you may terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider to be private or stressful.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any report of this study that might be published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Tony Jackson Perry. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Lilburn Hoehn, lhoehn@waldenu.edu. If you have questions, you may contact Mr. Perry via telephone at (276) 773-8112 or tperr002@waldenu.edu. The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Leilani Endicott, you may contact her at 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210, if you have questions about your participation in this study.

If you agree to be a study participant, please print and keep a copy of this form for your records.

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Name of
Participant

Participant
Signature

Signature of
Investigator

Tony J. Perry

APPENDIX C :

ASSIST SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADULT DISLOCATED WORKER
STUDENTS

ASSIST
Approaches and Study Skills Inventory for Students
(Short Version - Modified)
Survey Questions Developed by Tait, Entwistle & McCune (1998)

Adult Dislocated Worker Student Questionnaire

This survey has been designed to allow you to describe how you go about learning and studying. The technique involves asking you questions which overlap to some extent to provide good overall coverage of different ways of studying. Most of the items are based on comments made by other adult students. Please respond with the first response that comes to mind to each of the questions. This will provide the most accurate measure of these concepts as they relate to you as a student. This survey is for academic purposes only and all information will remain confidential.

A. What is learning?

When you think about the term ‘LEARNING’, what does it mean to you?

Consider each of these statements carefully and rate them in terms of how close they are to your own way of thinking about learning.

How important are these items to you in terms of learning? Please place your choice in the space provided beside each numbered question.

Very Important	Important	Neutral	Not Important	Not Very Important
1	2	3	4	5

1.		Making sure you remember course content well.
2.		Building up knowledge with facts described in textbooks.
3.		Building up knowledge by collecting new information.
4.		Being able to use the information you have acquired.
5.		Understanding new material.
6.		Seeing things in a different way.
7.		Seeing things in a more meaningful way.

B. Approaches to Studying

The next part of this survey asks you to indicate your relative agreement or disagreement with comments about studying made by other students. Please work through the comments, giving the first response that comes to mind.

Please rate the following questions on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) as you think the questions would apply to your experiences in an academic setting. Please place your choice in the space provided beside each numbered question.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					
15.					
16.					
17.					
18.					
19.					
20.					

C. Preferences for Different Types of Courses and Teaching

The final part of this survey asks you to rate your agreement or disagreement with comments about different types of teaching methods and course work made by other students. Please work through the comments, giving the first response that comes to mind.

Please rate the following questions on a scale from 1 (Definitely Dislike) to 5 (Definitely Like) based on how the questions apply to your experiences in an academic setting.

Definitely Dislike	Dislike	Neutral	Like	Definitely Like
1	2	3	4	5

21.		Instructors who tell us exactly what to put down in our study notes.
22.		Instructors who encourage us to think for ourselves.
23.		Instructors who show us how they think about a topic.
24.		Exams that allow me to show that I've thought about the course material.
25.		Exams or tests that need only the material provided in our lecture notes.
26.		Courses in which it's made very clear just which books we have to read.
27.		Courses in which we're encouraged to read more about a subject for ourselves.
28.		Books that challenge your beliefs and provide explanations that goes beyond the lectures or classroom discussion.
29.		Books that give you definite facts and/or information that can be learned easily.

Finally, how well do you think you have been doing in your assessed work overall, so far? Please rate yourself *objectively*, based on the grades you have been obtaining. Please circle the appropriate choice.

Rather Badly		Not so Well		About Average		Quite Well		Very Well
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

D. Demographic Data

You have finished the official survey. Now please provide some background information about yourself. Rest assured this information will remain confidential; it is needed for demographic purposes only. Please circle the appropriate choice.

Sex: Male / Female

Age: 17-23
24-34
35-44
45-55

56-Above

Ethic Background: Caucasian
African American
Hispanic
Native American
Other (Please Explain): _____

How long have you been enrolled as a student in active classes?

New Student (less than three months)
3-6 Months
6-12 Months
13-18 Months
18-24 Months
24 Months or Longer

Thank you very much for spending time completing this survey, it is very much appreciated.

APPENDIX D:

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Survey Questionnaire – Educational Institution

This survey will be used to measure the amount of variety used in instructional methods for adult students. This survey is for academic purposes only and all information will be kept confidential. Please rate the following question as closely as possible as you perceive them.

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	---------------	--------------	------------	---------------------

1. _____ This educational facility recognizes the differences found within our student body with regard to educational methods used for instruction.
2. _____ I am familiar with adult education theory and learning methods.
3. _____ I use lecture as my primary teaching method.
4. _____ In my classroom students are encouraged to discuss course material in the classroom during class time
5. _____ I use written assignments such as written question and answers and essays as a primary teaching method.
6. _____ I use case studies, role play and interactive activities as part of my method of instruction.
7. _____ I do NOT think using varied instructional methods will impact how my students perform in the classroom.
8. _____ My courses are structured in such a way as to maximize the past experiences and knowledge held by the adult students in my class.
9. _____ If a student is performing poorly in my class, I talk with the student to try to understand the reason for their poor performance.
10. _____ Personnel at this facility are in regular contact with local businesses in order to help our graduating students find employment after graduation.
11. _____ Personnel at this educational facility communicate to students the importance of the coursework in regard to future employment after graduation.

12. _____ Personnel at this facility work closely with local labor offices in order to inform recently jobless adults of the training opportunities offered by this institution.
13. _____ Personnel at this educational facility follow up with recent graduates to determine the effectiveness of the adult learning/retraining program.

Appendix E:

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LOCAL BUSINESS LEADERS

Survey Questionnaire – Businesses

This survey will be used to measure the amount of communication between local businesses and educational institutions in our immediate area. This survey is for academic purposes only and all information will be kept confidential. Please rate the following question as closely as possible as you perceive them.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1. _____ I have a strong knowledge of the adult retraining programs currently being offered at local community colleges.
2. _____ Within my business, some present employees have undergone some form of retraining program offered by local educational facilities.
3. _____ I believe that the educational institutions within this area do a very good job in retraining adult workers based on my past experiences with these workers in my business.
4. _____ I have regular communication with local institutions with regard to students currently enrolled in retraining programs.
5. _____ Educational facilities are in contact with my company regarding their graduates and training programs on a consistent basis.
6. _____ I do NOT think that increased correspondence with local educational settings would affect my company's hiring practices.
7. _____ I believe that increased correspondence between the local educational facilities and local business would help me fill open positions within my company.
8. _____ I believe that retrained workers possess experience useful in my organization.
9. _____ I believe retrained workers have adequate knowledge about the job duties and functions.
10. _____ My company is very likely to hire a recently retrained adult worker.

11. _____ This company relies solely on the local employment offices for filling vacated positions.
12. _____ This company does NOT use the local employment offices for filling vacated positions.
13. What types of recruitment techniques do you use in your company to fill new or vacant jobs? Please circle all that apply.
- a) Employment Commission
 - b) Temporary Staffing Company
 - c) Recruitment Agencies
 - d) Online Job Postings
 - e) Ads in Area Newspapers and Industry Magazines
 - f) Mass mailings to Industry Professionals
 - g) Other, please explain:

The following demographic data is used only to classify the type of service your facility fills within the community.

Please circle the appropriate choice:

14. What type of service does your company primarily provide to the community at large?
- a) Healthcare
 - b) Raw Materials (steel, lumber, etc.)
 - c) Textiles
 - d) Retail
 - e) Food Service
 - f) Other, please explain: _____
15. At any given time, how many individuals are employed by your company? Please enter this information as a range (example – Between 75 to 100 employees). Please count both full-time and part-time employees in your response.
- Between _____ to _____

APPENDIX F:

EMAIL FROM DR. HILARY TAIT GRANTING PERMISSION TO USE
ASSIST QUESTIONNAIRE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

From: "Tait, Hilary" <H.Tait@napier.ac.uk>
To: "Perry, Tony" <tperr002@waldenu.edu>
Sent: Monday, November 28, 2005 4:34 AM
Subject: RE: ASSIST Questionnaire Permission

Dear Mr Perry

I haven't been involved in the development of ASSIST for a few years since moving away from University of Edinburgh. However, I can still grant permission for you to use it (it is not copyright) but cannot offer user support.

There have been a few recent updates. Have a look at the web site <http://www.ed.ac.uk/etl/> which provides measurement instruments plus some supporting documentation.

I don't know specifically about a teacher awareness instrument I'm afraid.

Good luck with your research.

Hilary Tait

From: Tony Perry [mailto:tperr002@waldenu.edu]
Sent: 27 November 2005 23:49
To: Tait, Hilary
Subject: ASSIST Questionnaire Permission

Dear Dr. Tait,

My name is Tony Perry and I am currently enrolled with Walden University and am completing my Ph.D. In doing my research, I have come across the Approaches and Study Skills Inventory for Students (ASSIST) Questionnaire. I am writing to ask your permission to use some, if not all, of the inventory in my dissertation research. It is my belief that this questionnaire will be of great use to me in determining reasons students are underperforming within my projected study environment (rural Appalachia - USA).

Also, if I may ask, do you know of a good survey/measurement tool for determining teacher awareness of differing training techniques in a college environment?

I will be looking forward to your response and I thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Tony J. Perry
Walden University
tperr002@waldenu.edu

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CURRICULUM VITAE

TONY JACKSON PERRY

2648 Graystone Road
Independence, VA 24348

EDUCATION:

Doctor of Philosophy; Majored in Applied Management and Decision Sciences with a Specialization in Leadership and Organizational Change. Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2007

Master of Business Administration with a specialty in Global Technology Management, American Intercontinental University, Hoffman Estates, Illinois, 2003

Bachelor of Science Degree in Organizational Management and Development, Bluefield College, Bluefield, Virginia, 2002

Associate of Specialized Business Degree in Business Management, ICS Center for Degree Studies, Scranton, Pennsylvania, 1999

Computer Applications Specialist Diploma, King's College, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1994

PROFESSIONAL:

January 2004-May 2004;
As needed

Adjunct Instructor, Wilkes Community College - Alleghany Campus, Sparta, North Carolina
Instructor for Principles of Marketing course for Associate level students during spring 2004 semester. Theories and practices of marketing, both past and present, were studied as well as modern day methodology for marketing research and design.

1999-present

Accounts Payable Specialist, Twin County Regional Healthcare Inc., Galax, Virginia
Currently performing Accounts Payable duties for hospital and two hospital subsidiaries which include a wellness center and several family care clinics. Duties include maintaining accurate Accounts Payable files, invoice processing, statement reconciliation, matching of Accounts Payable invoices and payments, scanning and maintaining computerized files on all invoices and checks, coordinating smooth processing between Materials Management Department receipts within the Account Payable/Materials Management Interface. Maintains pleasant relationships with hospital vendors and other customers. Maintains current Accredited Payables Specialist Certification

from the Institute of Management & Administration (IOMA) and membership in the Accounts Payable Network.

1995-1999

Performance Improvement/Inservice Education Clerk, Twin County Regional Healthcare, Inc., Galax, Virginia
Performed clerical duties for Performance Improvement Department. During this time, formulized automated computer functions for record keeping and employee education tracking. Scheduled all employees for annual continuing education programs. While in Performance Improvement, monitored surgical charts for Joint Commission Accreditation standards and procedures.

STATE OFFICES:

2000-present

Notary Public for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

REFERENCES:

AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST