Literature Review:
Creating a Blended Learning Program for Non-Graduated Adults Supported Through the Community of Inquiry Framework to Obtain BC Graduation Requirements

Introduction

Online learning is rapidly gaining popularity for delivery of the redesigned BC secondary school curriculum. The option to take courses in a virtual environment allows for flexibility of pacing and content choice, where students access content online through interactive technology (Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2004; Horn & Staker, 2015). Many BC school districts, such as Sea to Sky (#48), offered an online-only program for non-graduated adults to meet their high school graduation requirements. The rationale behind this shift to an online-only program supported lower overhead costs and a more open timeline; however, the question still remains how to best support these students who might not be comfortable or familiar with using Web 2.0 technologies in an educational context? A combination of online and face-to-face instruction, a blended delivery, can optimize learning opportunities and experiences for students.

Current research addresses the Critical Challenge Question: *How can educators support adult learners' success in a blended learning delivery model by implementing a Community of Inquiry framework?*

Research shows that motivation and engagement for adult learners can be increased by applying deliberate strategies for online learning and by building culture created through a blended program. These interventions can address many of the perceived difficulties in online learning such as the digital divide; where limited access to technological resources extends beyond connectivity as it also reflects on socio-economic backgrounds, where the issue is more about use than access (Hengstler, 2016; Hengstler

2017). Students may also have difficulties with transactional distance, and the level of interaction between learner and teacher that affects the rate of engagement with learning (Anderson, 2008; Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2004; Moore, 1997). Such interventions can build the adult learner's confidence and assist with follow-through to graduation and their Dogwood certificate.

Students who have been non-consumers - a term that can be defined as individuals who are not attending school nor actively pursuing education (Horn & Staker, 2015), often have a difficult time returning to their educational goals. A recurring theme in the research is that effective strategies can be implemented to support adult learners learning online through teacher initiatives, whether in online communications or in face-to-face interactions. However, gaps have been found in the ability to define what drives adult learners' motivation (or lack thereof) to reconnect with their education - it is not clear whether it is a lack of familiarity with technological tools; engagement with materials, peers and teachers; time commitment, or a combination of all factors which lead to whether or not a student will be successful in completing high school graduation requirements.

This chapter will outline research findings that connect to the themes of the CCQ. It is expected that the literature will confirm that adult learners need to be motivated intrinsically, and extrinsically, and supported by effective online learning designs through a blended program. Research shows that culture can be created within a Community of Inquiry framework (CoI), (Anderson, 2008; Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000; Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2004) to provide opportunity for students to reconnect in education and promote sustained learning. A dynamic adult program needed to be

designed and implemented to create a shift, to change students' attitude towards

education and learning. This initiative can be accomplished through disruptive

innovation, a paradigm shift to replace the existing online-online structure with

something new (Horn & Staker, 2015). This new structure, a blended program delivery,

helped support sustained change for adult learners to follow through to graduation. In

order to meet the specific learning needs for the adult, their unique attributes were

considered when designing an effective program.

Attributes of an Adult Learner

According to the province of British Columbia, adult students who are pursuing

high school courses in order to achieve high school graduation are referred to as "non-

graduated adults" (Adult Graduation Program, 2018, para. 6). Adult learners have

varying needs that differ from those of high-school learners. As such, they require

different tactics and scaffolds to encourage sustained learning. "Adult learners can be

characterized as self-directed, highly motivated and know what they want to achieve

from their education program" (Hashim,Tan & Rashid, 2015, p. 383). This is a well-

intended goal but not often achieved without careful program design and guidance.

The attributes of adult learners differ from those of school-aged learners and

therefore require their own classification. Malcolm Knowles developed the study of

"andragogy"-- (as cited in Afip, 2014; Pappas, 2013) the practice of teaching adult

learners. Knowles identified the adult learner through five unique characteristics: self-

concept; experience; readiness to learn; perspective of learning and motivation to learn

(as cited in Afip, 2014; Pappas, 2013). As adults see a need, and have a desire, to re-

engage with the school system, it is important to recognize these factors when designing an effective adult graduation program.

Oftentimes, non-graduated adults consider obtaining their high school requirements but this endeavor is not always well thought through. Although they have the best intentions, the execution of the plan is not factored into their already busy lives. As noted by Afip (2014), "adults constantly live in an accelerated and multi-tasking mode and thus, prefer learning programs that cater to their hectic lifestyle" (p.37). Hence, the adult favours flexible schedules and learning modes that can be tailored to their preferences and needs. Adults need programs that are accommodating and accessible and can clearly direct students to pursue goals to increase their motivation for completion.

However, it is noted by Hashim, Tan and Rashid (2015), that "lack of attention has been given on adult learners as they are said to have difficulties adopting online learning" (p. 382) because focus is on the regular secondary student. Although adults might be "highly motivated" (Hashim et al, 2015, p. 383), the online platform is often a new instrument to learn and to navigate and without specific support catered to their needs they are more likely to become disengaged and disinterested in finishing high school requirements. Intentional designs and strategies need to be implemented for the specific context, and unique challenges of online learning, to increase confidence and to promote engagement and motivation in the adult learner.

Effective Online Learning Designs for the Adult Learner

Definition. In order to create learning opportunities that are engaging and motivating to the adult learner, we need to first have a working definition of online

learning. As stated by Ally (2005), online learning is "the use of the Internet to access

learning materials; to interact with the content, instructor, and other learners; to obtain

support during the learning process, in order to acquire knowledge, to construct personal

meaning, and to grow from the learning experience" (p. 7). Online learning cannot be

merely paper resources transferred to a digital environment but [must be] designed to be

something new (Anderson, 2008; Bates, 2015; Staker & Horn, 2015). Educational

experiences delivered through technology need to apply specific design methods to create

a new learner experience. The environment and program needs to provide context to help

motivate and engage the learner. Effective online learning designs also connect pedagogy

to technology. Beginning with the end in mind, (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011) an

educator's credo, (as shared in Ch. 1), can direct and guide the overall learning goals for

all students; and also determine what skills we want students to apply; and knowledge we

want them to gain upon school completion.

As learning environments shift from delivering traditional, mainly paper-based

materials to more digital formats, it important to recognize that:

> …rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is
>
> changing the landscape of how learning is delivered to students. Education
>
> providers are using ICT as an alternative media to conventional face-to-face
>
> interaction between professor and students within a classroom setting (Hashim,
>
> Tan & Rashid, 2015, p. 383).

This can pose a problem when adult learners are unfamiliar with digital learning

environments, as they lack the digital literacy needed simply to access the learning

material (Afip, 2014). As noted by Lloyd-Smith (2010), as many as 50% of adult learners

have underdeveloped tech skills and experience computer-related phobia. Afip (2014)

suggests that in order for non-graduated, non-consuming adults to succeed in this new

landscape:

> …appropriate instructional methods, as well as meaningful curriculum, are the
>
> important elements in order to establish an effective learning environment... after
>
> the educator developed the curriculum, the educator must also consider on the
>
> instructional activities that cater to the needs of the learners (p.36).

Instructional methods for the online environment need to be clearly articulated so that

learning intentions are clear for the student. Learning opportunities also need to provide

multiple avenues for students to meet outcomes in a variety of ways.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Effective online learning designs take into

account both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation. The desire to continue

educational endeavours is connected in the student's original intent to pursue graduation,

illustrating that they are intrinsically motivated to reach this goal. Student confidence in

online learning hinges (or results from) their familiarity using the Web 2.0 tools required

for program success. When students are given training and 'how to' information to

master the basic skills required to navigate online learning platforms prior to the start of

their courses, then their motivation is increased. The teacher extrinsically affirms

students' motivation by providing clear, well-planning learning opportunities to establish

success (Afip, 2014; Anderson, 2008; Bates, 2015; Hashim, Tan & Rashid, 2015).

Students are then intrinsically motivated to continue with course progression because the

learning expectations and pathway to success has been outlined in a cycle of support

through both intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Strategies for motivation and engagement. Students need to know that their initial reasons for returning to school are supported by the teacher and through the program they enroll in. To increase motivation and engagement, learning activities need to be relevant and the Learning Management Systems (LMS, as defined in Ch. 1) that host these activities need to be easy to navigate. Research argues that students need to be encouraged and motivated to continue to learn (Afip, 2014; Anderson, 2008). Once intrinsically motivated, the motivation needs to be sustained for follow-through that happens when adult learners see a purpose, and know there is a benefit, to using a specific technology. To encourage adult learners, and to increase engagement, Hashim, Tan and Rashid (2015) contend that effective online learning needs to capture the "ability of the medium to allow … personal fulfillment and a pleasant experience when using the medium" (p. 388). For adults, and all learners, learning also needs to connect to life experience and prior knowledge for authentic application and relevance (Afip, 2014; Anderson, 2008; Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2014). When students can see the connection between what they are doing in the classroom and their personal experience, they consider completion of high school credentials to be important to furthering their life and career goals.

Uses and Gratification Theory. Hashim, Tan and Rashid (2015) discuss the motivational Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT, as defined in Ch. 1) where students' motivation can be classified into three categories: "(1) cognitive need, (2) social need and (3) affective need", (p. 384). "Students are more likely to have positive attitude toward adopting a medium if it (the medium) is able to provide them with a wide range of information and also ensure the quality and accuracy of the information" (p. 385).

Learners need motivation to use a tool or learning platform. Although familiarity with technology is important, it is the social aspects and motivations for learning that should be the focus when designing online learning opportunities. The teacher's responsibility "is the design of the educational experience … [and] facilitation is a responsibility that may be shared among the teacher and some or all of the other participants or students" (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000, p. 90). As noted by Hashim et al, (2015) motivation and engagement increases when students actively participate and take partial responsibility in their learning. With adults, communication should be a two-way relationship, as this educational experience is their initiative. The intent of instructional design uses technology to provide opportunities for quality learning outcomes (Afip, 2014).

ARCS Model. Designed by Keller (1983), the ARCS motivational model encourages learner independence - A: attention; R: relevance: confidence; S: satisfaction. ARCS encourages independence for learners. Keller creates strategies for relevance: goal orientation, motive matching and familiarity (as cited in Afip, 2014; Anderson, 2008; Hogle, 2017; Keller, 1983). The ARCS model could be effectively applied specifically to online activities and communications to help meet the needs of adult learners and can also support the navigation of technology by connecting relevant application of the tool with future knowledge.

Digital divide and cultural lag. By designing learning experiences for non-graduated adults that encourage engagement, and include social and communicative aspects of learning, motivation is increased; therefore, resistance to eLearning is decreased (Calvin & Freeburg, 2018; Lloyd-Smith, 2010). As these adult learners

reconnect with the school system, they are most likely learning in a new way and may

have limited access to Internet based learning resources and tools, creating a digital

divide, as noted by Hengstler, (2016). Additionally, adults may lack the knowledge of

how to use the technology in a specific learning context, thus experiencing 'cultural lag'

and a knowledge gap, which makes the organization of learning a task in itself, as they

try to catch-up with technological advancements. Although lack of access is problematic

in the digital divide, the issue now encompasses bandwidth and skills to use tech tools

(Hengstler, 2016). Gunawardena and McIsaac (2014), argue "learners who do not have

the basic skills required to use the interface of a communication medium spend inordinate

amounts of time learning to interact with the technology in order to be able to

communicate with others or learn the lesson" (p. 362). When the learning curve for

building a technological skill set is steep, students find the learning daunting and might

not proceed to actual interaction with the curriculum needed for graduation. The

acquisition of skills is broken down into manageable steps to keep motivation levels high.

Although the fastest growing demographic for web-based learning is adults, the

drop-out rate for these learners remains very high (Calvin & Freeburg, 2010). Their study

(2010) reported mixed findings about varying level of skill and confidence towards

course completion and success rates. Students had varying perceptions of learning, and

experiences with learning, that lead to varying experiences with technology. This study

provided an alternative perspective, in that, no solid findings were found correlating

technology use and skill to confidence itself but rather in the delivery, schedule and

accessibility to teachers and helping resources that caused varying obstacles for course

completion. "In order to better assist online learners, instructional designers and

instructors should re-evaluate the directions provided for assignments and the frequency and type of guidance being provided to online learners" (p. 70). Teachers should provide training so that students may navigate the online platform more effectively and support learners who are new to learning online. These students need to be explicitly taught how to use the learning platform so that they can dedicate time to the learning activities themselves.

Transactional distance. The theory of Transactional Distance states that as the level of interaction between teacher and learner decreases, learner autonomy must increase (Moore, 1997). It is also noted by Gunawardena and McIsaac (2004), that "distance is determined by the amount of dialogue which occurs between the learner and the instructor, and the amount of structure which exists in the design of the course" (p. 361). Distance is not necessarily determined by geography but rather by the time between dialog and interactions of the learner and teacher. When students are supported in timely communication with teachers they subsequently will be more familiar with the technological tools needs to support their eLearning endeavours. The more communication is present, the less transactional distance there is between the learner and the instructor (Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2004; Moore, 1997) and the more confidence the learner will have in their abilities when a teacher provides guidance and support (Afip, 2014; Anderson, 2008; Moore, 1997). Effective programs have sustained communication that supports social interactions and cognitive skills overseen by the teacher as a facilitator.

Community of Inquiry

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Community of Inquiry, n.d.;

Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000) is an effective instructional model in which to

support the learner as a whole-- connected by distinct three presences: social presence,

cognitive presence and teacher presence. These presences connect together for a well-

rounded [learning] experience (Afip, 2014; Garrison et al, 2000). As referenced in my

credo from chapter one, the CoI framework supports the presences to create a holistic

learning approach for the student. The student does not merely learn curriculum but

connects it to build relationships and a support network for lifelong learning (Borsoff,

2018). For non-graduated adults who often feel disconnected to learning, CoI illustrates

that "the concept of interaction is fundamental to the effectiveness of distance education

programs" (Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2004, p. 362). CoI is used to build a person as a

learner by meeting individual needs and encouraging meaningful learning, and

interaction within a community of these three elements (Akyol and Garrison, 2011;

Anderson 2008; Garrison et al, 2000; Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2004). It is important

that "adult learners should be able to interact with the course materials, discuss and

collaborate between instructor and other students, and integrate their past experience with

the course content or assignment" (Hashim, Tan & Rashid, 2015, p. 384). All elements

help to build rapport in education that is particularly important in maintaining motivation

and engagement and to building relationships.

Building relationships. Murphy and Rodríguez-Manzanares (2012) support the

importance of building rapport with learners. In distance education it is especially

important that students know that teachers support them in their education re-connection.

Rapport is linked with "enhanced learning, attention, motivation, attendance and

involvement for students" (p. 168). It is also true for teachers that increased rapport leads to more rewarding teaching experiences (Murphy & Rodríguez-Manzanares, 2012; Horn & Staker, 2015). Rapport supports dialogue, which is a crucial element in connection of teacher and student and decreases transactional distance (Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2004; Moore, 1997).

The CoI framework connects the interactions of the student with both the curriculum and the teacher to increase engagement and to promote sustained motivation to learn. The importance of relationship and interaction is built upon established rapport. Murphy and Rodríguez-Manzanares (2012) recognize that specific rapport indicators help to develop a positive and meaningful relationship between learner and teacher that also supports pedagogical ideals that model strategies for lifelong learning. Students need to know they are not learning in isolation, but rather through a community, in which social support is critical to the follow-through of course completion.

Social presence. When students are supported through social connection it reflects that "Attitude... is influenced positively by the students' cognitive, affective and social needs" (Hashim, Tan & Rashid, 2015, p. 384) and promotes success. Non-graduated adults expect the traditional interactions of the face-to-face classroom so it is important to uphold this familiarity and discourse between learners and teacher. Social presence is the key factor that makes the difference between a "collaborative community of inquiry and a simple process of downloading information" (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000, p. 96). Students are given opportunity for interactions in a group that promote motivation and collaboration in learning process (Garrison, 2007; Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2004; Hashim et al, 2015) which results in a person feeling "socially present"

(Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2004, p. 363) and are more likely to stay in the [educational] program (Garrison et al, 2000). It is important that social presence is developed, even when it proves challenging, when conducted in less conventional ways where students do not feel completely at ease with the technology that supports collaboration (Lloyd-Smith, 2010). Purposeful communication gives recognition and encouragement and promotes collaboration for group cohesion (Akyol, Garrison & Ozden, 2009).

It is noted by several sources, (Akoyl, Garrison & Ozden, 2009; Calvin & Freeburg, 2010; Hashim, Tan & Rashid, 2015; Horn & Staker, 2015; Garrison, 2007) that social presence can be limited in an online exclusive environment and is better supported by a blended community where adults have the ability to connect and interact with a teacher face-to-face when needed.

Cognitive presence. Although cognitive presence is created through deep and meaningful approaches to learning (Akyol & Garrison, 2011) and increases engagement and participation; it is difficult to separate cognitive experience from social experience as they work in tandem to provide overarching support for the learner. "Collaboration is seen as an essential aspect of cognitive development since cognition cannot be separated from the social context" (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000, p. 92). Once a student extends their intent to reconnect with learning the cognitive presence builds student confidence in gaining new skills and knowledge. As the adult learner is in an environment where they might not be completely comfortable they need to be reassured that how, and what they are learning, is worthwhile; currently and in the future. Learner preparation (review of study skills) can give students the background for success in courses when they can participate in pre-learning activities (Ally, 2005; Anderson, 2008)

to increase digital literacy. It is also important to connect pre-existing skills to assist in learning new ones. Adults are "usually aided by their life experience, and their reflections and actions are integral components of the adult learning process" (Hashim, Tan & Rashid, 2015, p. 384). Assessment of prior knowledge needs to be acknowledged when working with adult learners. Their experience, whether positive or negative, will shape their learning experiences.

A wide variety of learning activities can connect soft skills like time-management, tech application and communication skills to the learning experience as a whole (Bates, 2008; Schultz, 2014). Soft skills are just as important as hard skills learned through the curriculum and, it can be argued, they may be even more vital for the connection of learning and cognitive skills. As adults need to see relevance in learning (Afip, 2014; Anderson 2008; Hashim, Tan & Rashid, 2015), soft skills should be integrated into learning activities for students to apply existing skills and see potential for learning new ones. By implementing these skills, teachers take into account the importance of reshaping learning habits of adult learners for better success and to construct and confirm meaning in educational activities (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000).

Teaching presence. When teachers create opportunities that connect students' prior experiences and abilities, they support cognitive and social needs to provide the connection adult learners often lack when deciding to come back to school (Anderson, 2008; Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000). The teacher's active participation in "continual tutor presence, characterized by short messages acknowledging a student's contribution and followed by guidance, increases student activity" links all presences together. (Garrison et al, 2000, p. 96). Teacher presence is crucial for guiding and

facilitating students' interactions with curricula and with each other. Motivation and engagement are supported by the teacher's ability to check in with students on an ongoing basis.

Social presence reflects "the development of climate and interpersonal relationships in the community. Cognitive presence provides a description of the progressive phases of practical inquiry leading to resolution of a problem or dilemma. Teaching presence provides leadership throughout the course of study" (Akoyl & Garrison, 2011, p. 235). Despite findings by Akyol and Garrison (2011) that some students have no need or desire to create a network, others argue that "'if one of those presences is missing, you do not get the same degree of inquiry'" (p. 244), which reflects that different approaches are needed for differing needs of adult learners.

Moore (1997) also suggests that the structure of the program contributes to the level of interactions and dialogue where the teacher facilitates the social and cognitive components Teachers have control over a program's effectiveness. The presentation of the program supports the learner's motivation; stimulates analysis; gives advice; arranges practice, application and evaluation and also gives opportunity for student creation of their own knowledge. Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) also reconfirm Moore's structures—it can be noted that the teacher presence is directly responsible for integration of social and cognitive presences in distance education.

Blended Learning Environments

CoI is a framework that can provide organization and guidance for online and blended learning environments (Akyol & Garrison, 2011; Akyol, Garrison &Ozden,

2009; Garrison, 2007). When students have the opportunity for both online and face-to-face interactions, such as in a blended delivery program, studies show that there are higher perceptions of learning, satisfaction, cognitive presence, teaching presence and social presence (Akyol & Garrison, 2011; Akyol, Garrison and Ozden, 2009; Garrison, 2007). When learning communities are built, it helps to enhance student autonomy in participation and equips them with applicable skills for life-long learning (Borsoff, 2018). Students need the opportunities in both the flexibility of online learning as well as having the option to connect with a teacher face-to-face for support when needed.

Since there is a challenge, especially when educators are trying to assess the content required for graduation, rather than the work habits or social skills, to develop community in an asynchronous and text-based virtual environment (Akyol & Garrison, 2011; Bates, 2015; Murphy & Rodríguez-Manzanares, 2012), "it is imperative that adult learners have access to the support necessary to successfully engage in the online portion of blended course delivery" (Lloyd-Smith, 2010, n.p). It can be a challenge for non-graduated adults with limited computer proficiencies to overcome anxiety and self-doubt (Lloyd-Smith, 2010) when attempting online courses without the option of face-to-face support.

Another advantage of blended programs allows for collapse of time and space and control of place and pace (Anderson, 2008; Horn & Staker, 2015) giving flexibility to learners. Learners "can improve their information, communication and technology skills by using a blended learning mode, because they can interact with friends and facilitators at any time and the course [is] flexible in term of learning location, time and process" (Afip, 2014, p. 38). "Returning adult students are sometimes surprised at the time

commitment involved when one returns to school" (Lloyd-Smith, 2010, n.p). By seeing a teacher face-to-face students can learn how to best manage their time in web-based courses (Calvin & Freeburg, 2010).

Students can chose to engage in learning both in the online environment and face-to-face as needed, which is important as many non-graduated adults may not have positive experiences with school so it is imperative to build relationships for support and is critical for retention and success (Lloyd-Smith, 2010). Blended programs allow for flexibility that is beneficial for tailoring courses for varying needs of students (Afip 2014; Anderson, 2008; Horn & Staker, 2015) and can support various formats of materials to maximize student engagement (Lloyd-Smith, 2010). Blended delivery is suggested to encourage non-graduated adults to pursue their education when they may have been let down previously by the traditional educational structure.

Disruptive innovation. Change for adult educational programs needs to come about, creating something new to change the existing structure (Afip, 2014; Arnett, 2014). A paradigm shift is needed for "developing new attitudes and behaviours in which it requires peer-to-peer interaction and a risk-free environment" (Afip, 2014, p. 38) and can be tailored to individual in an alternative environment to the traditional system (Afip, 2014; Horn & Staker, 2015). Disengaged students, non-consumers, need to feel encouraged and reassured in a safe and supportive environment. Teacher and social presence is heightened in a blended environment where students can find a new direction and sense of belonging where they can contribute to the direction of their learning (Akoyl, Garrison and Ozden, 2009).

Because an exclusive online environment can be isolating and disengaging for non-consuming students, a blended environment to support non-graduated students is supportive of sustained change. Through disruptive innovation we can create a program to support non-consuming students over time. An online-only program loses opportunity to include all students (Christensen, Raynor & McDonald, 2016) due to the fact that adult learners in particular might lack the resources to fully engage with learning. A blended program can lessen the digital divide and shrink the cultural lag by providing one on one assistance and access to technology (Hengstler, 2016; Hengstler, 2017).

Another positive attribute of a blended delivery is that learning can be more personalized. The traditional factory-based, industrialized model of schooling does not differentiate well. A blended program creates something new by allowing for customization and personal fit for differing student needs (Anderson 2008; Bates 2015; Horn & Staker, 2015). As an adult grad program can meaningfully assess prior knowledge (Adult Graduation Program, 2018; Hashim, Tan & Rashid, 2015), personalization is crucial for sustained engagement and course completion.

Blended Delivery Models

Personalization can be delivered to students through a variety of models. To support non-graduated adults, voice and choice is important to reengage in the educational system (Horn & Staker, 2015). As adults have established schedules and other commitments (Hashim, Tan & Rashid, 2015; Lloyd-Smith, 2010) flexibility is key for course completion (Horn & Staker, 2015). Courses can be still delivered online in an asynchronous environment but can be supported by a blended approach, which accommodates synchronous check-ins and offers guidance when needed. Disruptive

models of blended learning can provide non-consuming adults something new that will

allow them to reconnect with the school system (Horn & Staker, 2015). When traditional

approaches no longer work, the engagement is gone and therefore a new vision is needed

moving forward to support student success.

To best serve adult learners, are several blended learning models that work best to

effectively deliver the hard skills of course content and also to support the soft skills

needed in order to complete the coursework. The "a la carte model [and] enriched virtual

model" (Horn & Staker, 2015) are two suggested models that support disruptive

innovation, and are needed to transform traditional ways of learning, providing new

opportunities for non-consuming students. A successful graduation program for adult

learners integrates disruptive models to allows for own-paced learning and for tutorials

and courses to be available anywhere [and at anytime] (Afip, 2014; Anderson, 2008;

Arnett, 2014; Bates 2015; Horn & Staker, 2105; Lloyd-Smith, 2010).

A La Carte model. This model supports learning where students take a course

where the teacher of record (the course teacher) is not physically present (Horn & Staker,

2015). The student is supported though technology for communication and discourse.

Stronger students may opt for this model as they may only need limited face-to-face

support to work autonomously.

Enriched virtual model. In this model a physical space is provided that

compliments the learning being completed online (Horn & Staker, 2015, White, 2016).

Here, students can get face-to-face help with course content or help with the specific

technology needed to complete assignments. In an enriched virtual environment

accommodations can be made for personalization and access (Arnett, 2014; Horn &

Staker, 2015; Lloyd-Smith, 2010) and there is an expectation to attend on some pre-determined schedule (Horn & Staker, 2015; White, 2016).

Since traditionally-delivered education has suffered from lacking resources, especially to support adult learners, a blended approach can provide opportunity for personalization and access as well as keeping costs lower (Arnett, 2014; Horn & Staker, 2015; Lloyd-Smith, 2010). Blended learning models also allow for more student control, something which is key for adult-learners who are incorporating their educational goals into their already busy lives (Afip, 2014; Calvin & Freeburg, 2010; Hashim, Tan & Rashid, 2015; Lloyd-Smith, 2010).

Promotion of Culture.

As noted by several sources, interaction to promote engagement and motivation is supported in a community and establishes culture (Afip, 2014; Anderson, 2008; Bates, 2015; Hashim, Tan & Rashid, 2015; Horn & Staker, 2015). Creating a positive learning environment is essential to the success of a blended learning program. Cultural norms need to be established for a positive culture where students will be more motivated to attend school and learn (Horn &

Staker, 2015). Culture can promote personalized learning goals, social experiences and open communication with the teacher. As argued by Schein (as cited by Horn & Staker, 2015):

> …culture is a way of working together toward common goals that have been followed so frequently and so successfully that people don't even think about trying to do things another way. If a culture has formed, people will autonomously do what they need to do to be successful (p. 250).

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Culture is formed through repetition and is better promoted in a blended environment rather than one delivered exclusively online. Blended learning offers learners and teachers the opportunity create culture to potentially increase the effectiveness of the teaching and learning [experience] (Lloyd-Smith, 2010).

Conclusions

Adults, more so than school-aged students, need to be reassured that their re-commitment to the educational system will be safe and inclusive. Teachers take special care to provide a welcoming, non-threatening environment and provide effective strategies for the promotion of culture. As supported by the literature, "increased interaction results in a more inclusive environment, leading all students to experience a richer and more diverse learning experience" (Lloyd-Smith, 2010, n.p). As argued, a blended program is best of both worlds.

A program tailored to the specific needs of students can be formed through a blended delivery to help increase accessibility for support, reducing cultural lag and anxiety concerning an adult learner's return to school. Relationships can be built to increase course interaction with effective strategies to navigate online learning and support social, cognitive and teacher presences in a Community of Inquiry framework. Building a successful culture of learning can encourage pedagogical effectiveness and student success.

The reviewed literature indeed suggests that adult students need the support of a blended program to sustain their motivation and engagement for follow-through of their high school graduation requirements. Non-graduated adults need specific resources and time frames in which to structure their schedules for follow-through. As adults who have

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been disconnected from the education system for a prolonged period of time, their

technological skills need to be supported through soft skill development, which can be

transferred beyond graduation requirements. As argued by Calvin and Freeburg (2010),

although as important as these skills are, the evidence does not fully support that

increased levels of computer proficiency directly effect students' success for graduation.

To ensure success for all learners an effective adult program must have clear intentions,

resources and processes to support all levels of students (Afip, 2014; Anderson, 2008;

Bates, 2015; Hashim, Tan & Rashid, 2015).

The need to provide resources for both teachers working with non-graduated

adults, and non-graduated adults themselves, as strategies for connection and support is

crucial for engagement, follow-through and student success. Students need to understand

the learning environment in which they are expected to interact before they understand

the context of the curriculum. Designing a virtual space to serve as a 'landing spot' for

help and resources will engage learners through social, cognitive and teacher presence

and increase motivation to meet their high school graduation goals.

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