

Adult High School Learners: Engaging Conditions in the Teaching and Learning Process

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[Abstract] This Canadian study investigated the various conditions of engagement for adult high school learners guided by Wlodkowski's motivational framework for culturally responsive teaching. Using a qualitative case study design, adult learners and instructors from two different academic upgrading programs participated in the study. Results indicate the framework is a useful tool for understanding intrinsic motivating conditions for basic education learners. The findings also shed some light on how extrinsic motivators play a role in engaging students in the teaching and learning process.

[keywords] Adult learners and intrinsic motivation; teaching process; learning process; Wlodkowski's motivational framework; Culturally Responsive Teaching

Introduction

Over 9 million Canadians have low literacy and essential skills with a large percentage of those adults not able to find entry into the labor market (HRSDC, 2013). Practitioners, researchers, and policy makers are becoming more aware that Canada's economic future requires finding new ways to increase literacy and essential skills for different groups of adults, especially those who are returning to school and retraining programs (Canadian Literacy and Learning Network, 2013). As the fluid literacy situation continues to evolve due to changes in both provincial and federal government funding strategies, a target group at risk is the adult high school student. This adult learning system is just beginning to develop a reliable data base with respect to accountability policies and practices and is the most vulnerable program of delivery due to changes in federal competency frameworks and the potential impacts of the new International Survey of Adult Skills (OECD, 2013).

It is important to recognize that the path for adults who return to high school to obtain a grade 12 equivalency or participate in short-term retraining programs has often been met with a multitude of obstacles (Quigley, Folinsbee, & Kragland-Gauthier, 2007; Taylor, Quigley, Kajganich & Kraglund-Gauthier, 2011). Some of these barriers are related to negative past experiences with teaching methods that were neither relevant nor meaningful. St Clair (2010) maintains that many of the traditional ABE programs that offer GED preparation, high school credits, or remedial preparation for college courses emphasize academic skills in formats similar to K-12 education. Instruction in such programs tends to be teacher-driven where learners assume more of a passive role. As a result, this style of teaching and learning contributes to student decisions around persistence and drop out (Comings, 2009).

In an attempt to understand this pedagogical problem, Taylor, Abasi, Pinsent-Johnson, and Evans (2007) investigated how adult students learn collaboratively with other peers in both formal and non-formal adult literacy programs. A multi-site case study research design was used involving several different literacy organizations in Canada and the United Kingdom. Important to this current study were two components of the emergent model-instructor's philosophy and collaborative teaching and learning strategies. Instructors' philosophy and teaching perspective encompass their philosophical orientation towards adult education and the values, intentions, and actions of the instructors. Instructors have certain conceptions of their roles, the nature of learning, and how student learning can be supported (Pratt, 2002; Zinn, 2004). In the Canada-UK study, instructors taught from a developmental and nurturing perspective as opposed to using a transmission of knowledge approach. They also used teaching and learning strategies that favored collaboration, such as creating real-life, problem-solving situations, peer learning, scaffolding, and the use of technology-rich environments.

Although the findings provide some evidence on how teaching perspectives and adult-learning

strategies can form an integrated collaborative framework for improving literacy provisions, it was restricted in its theoretical approach to identifying the different motivational conditions that can be created by teachers and learners. While Vygotsky's social cultural approach to learning (1999) attributes all human higher mental functioning, including literacy, to semiotically mediated social interactions of the individual with the more knowledgeable others, it does not focus on the dynamic and powerful influences of learner motivations, especially for mature adults who already have a reservoir of life experiences. Furthermore, as much as conceptual ideas, such as cognitive apprenticeship, communities of practice and social literacy (Rogoff, 1995; Taylor & Blunt, 2001; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002) that were used in the Canada-UK study have some explanatory power in understanding adult literacy learning in different programs; they fall short in disentangling the complex relationship of motivation and culture in adult learning.

The purpose of this study was to better understand how teachers of adults can plan and apply a range of motivational strategies that will enhance the learning situation of diverse adult students. The research questions for the investigation were (1) What is the explanatory power of Wlodkowski's Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching for adults returning to high school? and (2) What are some of the key engaging conditions of a teaching and learning process for adults returning to high school?

Theoretical Framework

Wlodkowski's Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching is a model of teaching and learning intended to serve as a guide for teachers to use when planning instruction in a way that fosters all adults' motivation to learn (2008). It is based on the premise that motivation is inextricably tied to culture and, drawing on research from the fields of psychology, education, and behavioral neuroscience, among others, the model highlights four "essential conditions" (p. 114) that have been shown to affect intrinsic motivation. Briefly, the four conditions are establishing inclusion, developing attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence. Furthermore, Wlodkowski (2008) describes pedagogical strategies and provides multiple examples of learning activities that can be used by teachers in their classrooms to create these motivating conditions. In the present study, we expand the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching to consider how it applies to diversity in terms of not only cultures, but also to diversity in terms of career trajectories, age-related experience, the influence of social networks, and other factors that may vary across adult students returning to high school. As such, we consider how extrinsic motivators fit into the model. In the following sections we elaborate on each of the four essential conditions, as well as the framework in general.

Establishing Inclusion requires mutual respect and a connection amongst all learners in a classroom and with their instructor. It occurs in environments where everyone feels free to explore ideas, share knowledge and experiences, and make mistakes. Such an environment can be established by identifying common goals and learning objectives that unify a class. This, then, sets a stage for collaboration in which those present learn with and from each other.

Developing Attitude refers to a positive disposition toward learning, including one's attitude in regard to specific learning goals, the general subject area to be learned, one's own self-efficacy, and one's instructor. A positive attitude can be fostered by highlighting the relevance of learning goals and the personal value of knowledge to be gained. As well, when learners are provided with choices in the classroom, such as how they will display their knowledge during assignments and assessments, they tend to feel a sense of ownership of their learning.

Even if learners feel included and have a positive attitude toward learning, their motivation may wane if the course is not challenging, engaging, and interactive. Such factors, when present, lead to the essential motivating condition of *Enhancing Meaning*. Some strategies for enhancing meaning include employing hands-on learning activities, ensuring that all students are provided with frequent opportunities to respond to questioning, and encouraging all students to share their diverse knowledge and experiences.

A fourth essential motivating condition, *Engendering Competence*, arises from a belief in one's own ability and chance of success. A sense of competence can be facilitated through the adoption of effective

formative assessment techniques, including the use of varied assessment formats, frequent use of feedback that is clear, concise, non-judgmental, and low-stakes, allowing ample time for students to remediate following assessments, encouraging self-regulation, and promoting transfer of learning to new contexts.

As can be seen above, the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching focuses on how instructors can create a classroom environment that facilitates all culturally diverse students' intrinsic motivation to learn. If one feels included, challenged yet competent, and has a positive attitude, then their intrinsic motivation will be more likely to manifest in successful learning. However, Taylor, Trumppower, and Pavic (2013), drawing on the andragogy in practice model of Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2011), recognize the lack of homogeneity among adult learners, not just in terms of their culture and intrinsic motivation, but also in terms of the learning setting such as formal, non-formal, and informal and in terms of learner goals and purposes. According to Knowles et al. (2011), these purposes can be individual, organizational, or societal. Such differences may, too, impact learner motivation. Indeed, it has been shown that some extrinsic motivators – including tangible rewards, deadlines, directives, and competition – have the opposite effect. That is, they impede intrinsic motivation and often result in a decrement in learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Ryan and Deci (2000) extrinsic motivation is present when an activity is performed in order to attain some separable outcome rather than merely for the inherent enjoyment of it. They point out, though, that extrinsic motivation lies along a continuum of autonomy. Extrinsic motivation that is more controlling, or in other words out of the learner's control, tends to impede learning, whereas that which is more volitional tends to be more conducive to learning. For example, adult students who return to high school to up-skill a job-related requirement is only doing so to avoid losing their job, whereas those who return with a long-range goal of starting a career as a computer technician is doing so because they recognize the need for a high school diploma as the first step in acquiring the credentials needed for their preferred career. In both situations, the choice to return to high school is extrinsically motivated. However, in the former situation, the motivation is out of the learner's control, whereas in the latter situation, the motivation is more active or volitional. When learners feel a lack of control, it may be especially important for their instructors to provide choice among how learning occurs and in how it is demonstrated.

Because adult learners returning to high school programs differ in a variety of ways, we extend the motivational framework to consider both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. In this study, we look for instances of the four essential motivating conditions, including influences of other extrinsic factors and examine if and how instructors capitalize on these factors.

Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of the investigation, a qualitative case study research approach was employed using a sample of convenience (Stake, 2008). The cases within the bounded system included learners returning to an adult high school and their classroom instructors from two different programs in a local district school board in Eastern Ontario, Canada. This high school is open to adults of all ages, employment income recipients, displaced workers, and persons re-entering the workforce and resuming their education. It is funded through yearly grants from the provincial Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, as well as fees from learners enrolled in the high school credit program. In a "one stop shopping" fashion this adult high school offers a full range of upgrading services that include basic literacy instruction, ESL, pre-apprenticeship programs, employment preparation programs, career counseling, and grades 9- 12 course credits towards an Ontario high school diploma. The study focused on two program cases. The first case was a six-week job entry program called the Custodial Training Program (CTP) which prepared learners to work as janitors and as office cleaning personnel. It had both in class and work placement components. Classroom instruction focused on communication skills, financial literacy, workplace safety, and worker rights, while the work placement component offered learners an opportunity to work under the supervision of school board janitors for two weeks. Learners were recruited from advertisements on the local transit system, radio, and television and through social agency counselors. The CTP was offered twice during the data collection period.

The second case was the secondary school credit program. These credit courses, which range from grade 9 English to grade 12 Chemistry, are designed to meet an individual's learning needs and goals and to provide the necessary skills for entry into post-secondary education, apprenticeship, or employment. Students receive an individualized assessment, work with their instructor to develop a training plan, and then study at their own pace in a small-group classroom environment. The eligibility criteria for this program and the CTP were the same. Learners needed to be Ontario residents, 19 years of age and older whose literacy and basic skills were assessed as being less than end of Level 3 of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) or the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) and who were proficient enough in speaking and listening in English to benefit fully from the language of instruction. For the two program cases, learners were both male and female ranging in ages from 19 to mid-fifties. Some of the students were Canadian citizens whose first language was English, while others were immigrants from the Middle East and East Asia who had just completed second-language training within the school board system.

Data for the study were collected through observations, biographical profiles, interviews, and field notes over a four-month period of time. Observation field notes were compiled from 37 students of the two different programs during one-half-hour to one-hour sessions. In total, four male and seven female learners were also interviewed for 30-45 minutes using a protocol that included open-ended questions drawn from the adult education motivational literature and the various categories of Wlodkowski's motivational framework. The interview schedule was piloted in a literacy and essential skills program and revisions were made. In addition, five female instructors were interviewed for 45-60 minutes using similar questions but appropriately worded for a teacher. Demographic variables were collected on the biographical profile for both learners and instructors. Field notes from the observation sessions served to provide descriptions of various lessons, events, dialogues among learners, and interactions between learners and teachers.

The data analysis path was informed by Merriam (2009), Lichtman (2011), and Creswell, (2013). It included the transcription of the 16 interviews into narratives coupled with information from the biographical profile and observation field notes. These narratives were then later member checked. Using a holistic analysis approach, a detailed description of each of the two cases was developed. This was followed by the use of a coding system that was guided by Wlodkowski's motivational framework. Single words and phrases from all data sources were identified, reduced, and sorted into meaningful patterns that generally corresponded to the main framework components and new components (Merriam, 2009). A small team of doctoral students and project researchers established the connections among the sources of information and discussed the configured themes to make sense of the data (Creswell, 2013).

Findings

In answering the research questions, results from the qualitative data sources are presented around the main elements of Wlodkowski's motivational framework: establishing inclusion, developing attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence.

Establishing Inclusion

At the centre of this motivational condition is the idea of creating a learning atmosphere where students feel connected to each other and feel connected to the instructor. Together as a group, a mutual respect develops over time. Ellen, an instructor in a grade 12 English high school credit class states,

Whenever a new group starts, I always spend a session talking about how I will provide a safe and encouraging place to learn. I greet the students, know their names in the first day and we do an exercise where everyone gets to know each other right off. I try to teach them through example and conversation on how to deal with each other.

Being a student in a class ambiance such as this positively affects the day to day academic schedule,

which at times can be challenging given the different life circumstances of adult students that can change overnight. Kristen, a single mother whose extended family lives in another province, goes on to say, "I feel supported here in the adult high school. It provides a routine for my days, and I have met a lot of people who want to help me out." Short-term job readiness interventions, such as the 6-week custodial training program offered in the adult high school require that academic, workplace, and life skills are taught over a compressed period of time. Developing a respectful learning environment is crucial for students, especially second-language learners. Abdul, puts it this way:

I'm a new immigrant to Canada and have been here for six months now and I have foreign credentials. I need to start a new career and I need to start someplace. I don't want to be left behind. My teacher says I have personal motivation. She recognizes my efforts and I feel she respects me as a person trying to make my way in life. I appreciate this.

At the same, however, maintaining that social connection has its challenges, especially in short term training programs like CTP. Martha, the instructor in the program reflects on her own experience with the trainees said,

When the students come back to class after their work placement, it's a real rush to bring it all together. There are graduations to plan, work placement reports to discuss with each student, wrap-up exercises, certificates to prepare..... and then not everyone has a successful placement so the motivation to complete the program varies.

Adult education programs are more diverse now than they were several years ago when lines of distinction were quite obvious among, literacy, ABE, ASE and ESL. However, due to a change in provincial funding mechanisms and federal labor market agreements, all of these learner populations are often melded into the same programs that have more of an employment training focus. Making students with very diverse backgrounds feel like they are all moving towards the same employment goals requires more than a subject matter expertise. As Diana, an adult high school instructor mentions,

Not all of my students have people skills so I try and create scenarios to teach them how to wait their turn, polite conversation, greeting others and diplomatic ways of expressing disagreement. We often talk about what it's like actually working in a hair stylist salon or as an apprentice in the carpentry shop in the other building.

Developing Attitude

Developing a positive disposition towards the learning environment and the events that take place during a regular day in an adult high school helps to determine a level of eagerness in obtaining short-term and long-term goals. Adult learners in the mathematics credit course for a grade 12 certificate were often motivated by a long-term employment goal. Susan described it this way,

I dropped out of high school because I had personal issues. When I turned 25, I realized I didn't want to be a waitress for the rest of my life. So I joined up at this school. I hope to get my high school diploma and then go to university to be a teacher.

Another learner expecting to graduate later in the year explained that, "I took this course for my kids to send them the message that it is never too late to learn. After here I hope to continue to do hospitality or tourism at the community college." Doug also felt the same way, "I need to finish my high school first. I want to become a police officer or a teacher. This is a good place for me to think about it more." As well, learners in the credit program were motivated to learn skills that would be put to use once employment was found. For example, Curt went on to say, "I want to learn to establish work habits that are expected in any workplace; things like consistent attendance, punctuality, and basic problem solving skills." Adult

learners participating in the job readiness programs were also motivated to get off of social assistance and find work that would put them back into the mainstream. One learner who completed a 6- week custodial training program mentioned, "This has given me the chance to get back on my feet after having some health problems and the work placement really gave me confidence to apply for a job as a janitor." Another learner from a literacy program that feeds into the credit programs explained, "I find my routine is more structured now. I want to get up in the morning. I feel accomplished."

Instructors act as the catalyst in creating positive attitudes among their students. They need to be able to connect the classroom experience to the workplace and to be able to scan the learning environment for teachable moments. As Margaret put it,

More recently I find that my students are asking to see the relevance of the science lesson to the needs of the employer. So I set up both small groups and individual learning activities mixing up backgrounds and abilities. When we come back as a large class, it's quite amazing what they come up with.

In a similar vein, another instructor in the custodial training program added,

A lot of things come up at coffee break and I find ways to integrate them into the lesson - for instance, ways to increase your self confidence. This opens up conversations about awareness of personal strengths and limitations and in the end I believe it helps to change their worldview.

Overall, both students and instructors attested to the importance of maintaining a positive attitude and how it acts as a motivator. But it was Cheryl, a part-time instructor in the credit program who focused in on an age-related factor that she observed when teaching a communications class,

What I have noticed is that some of the younger students who are back in the adult high school program after a year or two of dropping out, have a hard time with developing a support group or social network with my older students. They are still not as clear as to their employment goals and I think this affects their progress.

Enhancing Meaning

Identifying both individual student and group interests early in a course helps to maintain a level of enthusiasm that helps carry them through some of the tough academic challenges that lie ahead. Sandi, a grade 10 communications instructor reports,

Many of my students tell me that they need to learn and establish routines and work habits that are expected in any workplace. So we do a brain storming exercise about values like consistent attendance, punctuality, concentration, effort and self advocacy and basic problem solving. As a group we decide to post these as ground rules for our class. Often when we get off topic, someone in the class will point out the ground rules and how we are not focused and everyone gets a chuckle out of it.

Another instructor in the literacy program that links students to the high school credit program believes that it was the role of the teacher to create challenging and engaging learning experiences that help motivate them to continue on the next step of their lifelong learning path. Susan explains it this way,

Sometimes, it is difficult when you've got the basic classes made up of very diverse student backgrounds. But personally, I embrace the difference and use them in a positive, inspiring manner. We celebrate everyone's language and culture in my class. We have regular parties for every occasion where food is brought in and made by students from each country. My second language learners LOVE when I talk about Canadian customs.

From a learner's point of view, being able to engage in a classroom experience that is employment-meaningful makes a big difference in maintaining that level of enthusiasm. Claire sums it up quite nicely,

My teacher knows that I want to do a veterinarian course and she brings in articles on animal care from the Department of Agriculture. I know I'm a long way off on getting there, but these stories and the conversations I have with my teacher make my dream seem a lot closer.

Another student, Phil, who had been in the adult high school for two semesters and knew his way through the guidance counseling services, thought about how he had changed because of his course selection and the experience he was having in that class, "I really like certain courses such as my course on Aboriginal beliefs and values. It influences my own beliefs and values that I didn't know I had. It's changing my opinion and the way I see the world."

But it was Chris, a trainee from the CTP who hit the nail on the head as he described what made the program work for him. This trainee was offered a term contract with the school board following his work placement report and a record check. He was also asked by the principal of the adult high school to make a speech at the small graduating ceremony that was attended by teachers and case workers connected to the school community. He said,

When I got interviewed to come into the program I knew right off that this was for me. I didn't mind starting off as a janitor because I knew I could progress. I just needed to find out how to get my foot in the door. I've had a lot of jobs over the years and I like the hands on learning. I wasn't shy to ask questions when I was on my work placement and I really got along with my supervisor.

Engendering Competence

Adult high school teachers need to help their students realize that they are learning something of value as they reach for their short-term and long-term goals. They need to open up new doors for learning. For example, adult learners who were enrolled in the custodial program developed a competency by seeking out advice from co-workers or supervisors. This type of job readiness program, which offers a work placement component acted like an apprenticeship where, through trial and error, trainees can learn a new skill, such as measuring the exact amounts of chemicals needed for cleaning solutions. Using manuals to understand company policies was also an effective way of learning a valued reading skill. As Jim pointed out, "When I was on my janitor placement at St. Theresa's, there was this accident on the third floor, and I remembered that they kept the manual in the lunch room so I found the part on how to report the accident, wrote it up the best I could and gave it to my supervisor to correct."

Getting students hooked on topics in the classroom can also lead to informal learning outside of the school, which helps to develop a desire for lifelong learning. Adult learners seeking further college education after grade 12 equivalency described informal learning as the most commonly used outside of the classroom. They consulted books online to complete homework assignments, learned information to fill out tax forms and to find out about topics such as school/life balance, government news, and politics. Often these new discoveries were brought back to the classroom or shared with other students during their smoke breaks throughout the day.

Instructors had a similar approach to engendering competence for both the high school credit course students and the adult trainees. Along with adhering to adult learning principles as the cornerstone of their teaching philosophy, instructors focused on active participation, sharing expertise with learners in the group and developing individual learning plans as tools for success during the course or workshop. There were also several common practices used by these instructors, such as making sure there was time during the course for students to talk about their goals and their families as a way of getting people connected with both the instructor and each other. This often spilled over into peer assistance, especially when the instructor was busy attending to an individual student and his/her learning plan. These teaching strategies often laid the foundational skills for practicing self-directed learning. Alia, a grade 12 student who was applying for the medical assistant program at the local community college went on to say, "I used to be shy to ask the teacher to correct my work but now I know that if I'm going to get a job in a doctor's office

I need to get my English right. My teacher is always patient even if I don't get the right spelling.

Another instructor in the credit program mentioned that leadership was a topic that often came up in the English class. As Pauline stated, "We would practice how to debate so that the students could see and model certain behaviors like active listening and how to ask questions, and in our high school we have a student council where I have seen some of our same students volunteer on the council as a way to learn these leadership skills." Maria, a trained life skills coach described it this way, "After the morning when Angie presented the social capital workshop the entire group wanted to talk about all of their contacts for employment. What was interesting is a couple of my ESL trainees who are often shy to speak in the group came forward to ask how they could learn to better network as they never did this in their mother country."

Implications for Adult Education Theory and Practice

Generally, based on the findings of this study, Wlodkowski's Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching proved to be a useful tool that helps explain how to encourage adult student motivation to learn. Because the model, which is tied to culture and diversity, had yet to be tested in an adult basic employment and upgrading program, this study provides some empirical evidence that supports the four essential conditions that can affect intrinsic motivation for this specific and growing target population. The investigation has also sought to explore other factors not depicted in Wlodkowski's framework that consider the important extrinsic motivators for adult learning.

One key extrinsic motivator drawn from the findings that needs to be considered in designing the teaching and learning process for ABE and ASE learners is the identification of employment goal. What we find in this study are two different types of adult learner career trajectories. The first is related to specialized short term training leading to direct job entry as in the CTP, and the second is long-term further education and training leading to employment as in the high school credit program. Adult learners in both types of program were motivated to continue in their education and training programs because of well defined job goals and career paths. For learners in the CTP, the actual custodial work placement component coupled with in-class exercises like practice interviews with full-time custodial personnel acted as motivators in the specialized training. Similarly, learners in the credit program received career counselling services upon admission, which set in motion the search for a career path involving some post-secondary education beyond the high school certificate. This path towards employment helped ASE students focus on career-discovery assignments, receive support from teachers and peers, and serve as a motivator, especially when barriers to persist were encountered.

As Zepke (2011) points out, external influences and quality teaching influence student engagement and, when coupled together, provide motivation in learning in post compulsory education. In this particular case study of basic education learners, the external influence of self-identified employment goal motivated adult students to become fully engaged in their learning. This form of personal and career growth encouraged learners to find meaning in their day-to-day learning activities in both types of programs. In a similar vein but from a sociological perspective, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) maintain that institutional practices impact student motivation and learning. What we find in this investigation is an institutional culture that embeds employment information, job search techniques, career planning, and links to work environments through the curriculum and through a humanistic philosophy espoused by the instructors and other staff of the adult high school. This unique external influence contributed not only to adult identity formation and cognitive development, but it also served to motivate second-chance learning for this target group.

Another extrinsic motivator may be associated to aged-related experience. Findings from the demographic information indicated that the typical age of trainees in the CTP was between 35 and 50, whereas the average age of students in the high school credit program was 24 years old. It may well be that the more mature trainees in the CTP were engaged in the program and motivated to learn because of the prospect of direct job entry, whereas the young adult learners in the credit program were motivated by the promise of a future career and reachable goals towards post-secondary education.

In a recent report by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, Kerr (2011) makes the claim that adult learners aged 26 and older reported that their main motivation for participating in a college continuing education program was looking for a job, whereas learners aged 25 and below were more likely to report career preparation and further post-secondary education as their main motivators.

Another motivating condition not explicitly described in Wlodkowski's framework is the influence of social networks developed through collaborative learning in each of the programs. One of the prevalent motivating themes that emerged across both cases was the unique way in which networks were formed as adult students collaboratively learned with peers. These social networks provided emotional and psychological support and encouraged learners to strive for their own self-identified employment and further education goals. Reder's practice engagement theory (1994), which builds on Fingeret's study of adult social networks, seems to corroborate these findings, as does the work of Taylor, Abasi, Pinsent-Johnson and Evans (2007), on the role of collaborative learning as a catalyst in communities of practice.

As we consider these motivational factors, it is important to keep in mind that not all extrinsic motivators are equal. As explained by Ryan and Deci (2000), extrinsic motivators that are perceived to be more under the learner's control are associated with greater engagement, effort, performance, psychological well-being, and retention than extrinsic motivators that are perceived to be less volitional. When considering career trajectories and age, it may be that the younger learners with long-range career aspirations may feel more autonomy around their motivations for returning to school; more mature learners in programs, such as the CTP, may feel less volitional control over their immediate job entry goals. It seems, however, that instructors can incorporate effective strategies, such as establishing social networks, peer assistance, and other self-directed learning opportunities, to compensate for perceived lack of autonomy.

Limitations of the Study and Areas for Further Research

Although the literature is abundant on adult student motivation, this study does offer one way of applying and extending Wlodkowski's Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching for basic education learners. However, only two programs were used in the case study design, and both of these programs were under the umbrella of one adult high school in one local school board. Further research is needed using other service providers, such as the Career and College Preparation programs and the General Arts and Science programs offered in most Canadian community colleges. In addition, other types of work placements, pre apprenticeships and job readiness programs that have an employment focus and attract different types of mature learners need to be considered. Such investigations may help better understand the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for different workers and students with low skills.

Another area that requires further study is the link between self-directed learning, social networks, and motivation. It has been suggested that providing opportunities for adult learners to form more extensive connections with others and engage in self-directed learning activities may help overcome any lack of engagement and effort that may result from externally imposed motivating factors. Further investigation with larger, more diverse samples will help establish the extent of such relationships.

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