FACULTY MENTORING STUDENTS: MEETING THE AFFECTIVE NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN COLLEGE UPGRADING PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ADULT EDUCATION

BY

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SEPTEMBER, 2001

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if the establishment of a formal faculty-advisor program based on a mentoring model would be an effective way to respond to the various needs of students enrolled in an upgrading program for adults, which was offered at an Ontario community college. Beginning in1996, the upgrading program experienced a change in student demographics that resulted in declining graduation statistics. During this same period, the Ontario Ministry of Education required the upgrading program to include self-direction and self-management skills in its curriculum. This study actually began with a preliminary needs assessment of both the faculty advisor and advisee group as a way to gain a better understanding of the mentoring process and to surface ideas for implementing an effective faculty-advisor program. Eighty-eight students and 6 faculty took part in the 7-month study. Evaluation was conducted using questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews. Faculty who participated in the faculty advisor program gained a better understanding of the mentoring role and the competencies required, and a greater appreciation of the individual learning needs of adult upgrading students, especially their affective needs. The faculty advisor program helped students to become more self-confident and comfortable in the learning environment and more goal directed in their education. The study found that implementing a faculty advisor program in an upgrading program for adults offered at a college supports the various needs of the students and contributes to their educational success. Graduation statistics improved with the implementation of the faculty-advisor program. Faculty advisors and student advisees unanimously agreed that the program be continued.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is the result of the support and involvement of many people. I have been encouraged by my family, guided by my advisor, aided by colleagues and students, assisted by administration, and supported by friends.

I would like to thank Dr. Marie Gillen, my faculty advisor, for her friendship, her encouragement, and her skills as a guide. She personified the very role of mentor.

I thank my husband Darrell who helped me so that I would have the time and space that I needed to complete this work. To our daughters, Jennifer and Erin, thank you for having the uncanny ability to know when I needed encouragement and positive words to motivate me to continue my work.

I would like to thank Beverlie, another person who became a mentor during the time that I was working on this study. As a colleague and a friend, she has been instrumental in providing me with advice and direction throughout the process.

Finally, I offer my gratitude to my colleagues and the students in the upgrading program for adults who so generously offered their time and expertise. Without their cooperation and trust, I would not have been able to carry out this study. Dean Smith, and colleagues Brian, Lois, Tom, Bonnie, Bill, and Donna all willingly offered their time, their ideas, and their enthusiasm. The adult upgrading students provided honest dialogue about their experiences and were willing participants both in the study and in the evaluation. Thank you for your support.

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INTRODUCTION

Many students in college upgrading programs for adults are young adults. For some, the return to an educational setting, like a college upgrading program for adults, can be very stressful because they often experience social, emotional, or economic pressures that impede their academic progress. They often have many issues and problems to deal with such as multiple family roles, which require their energy and attention; social and economic problems, which act as barriers to their educational success; and previous educational experiences, which frequently were negative and consequently cause emotional stress and reactions. As students, these young adults often require personal and academic support so that they can be successful in the learning environment. A knowledge and understanding of the issues and problems that young adults often face could encourage adult educators to create a learning environment that supports the needs of these students.

As an adult educator who teaches in a college upgrading program for adults, I decided to explore ways that my colleagues and I could support students so that they could become more fully engaged in the learning process and successfully complete the upgrading program. In this study, I explore the role of mentoring as a technique that college faculty can use to encourage young adult students to participate actively in the learning process. I describe the characteristics of the students in the upgrading program and their needs based on these characteristics; the way these characteristics affect the

design of the learning environment; and the role adult educators can play in creating a supportive educational climate for students. I evaluate the mentoring program and report my findings. I draw conclusions based on these findings and offer recommendations for adult educators interested in establishing a mentoring program.

Background to the Study

The college's upgrading program for adults has been in existence since 1967. For 27 years, the college provided upgrading to adults who had lost their jobs. In order to find new employment, they had to improve their math, science, and English skills. Ninety percent of these adult students came from agencies such as Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), Workers' Compensation Board of Ontario, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and various insurance companies. Of these agencies that bought seats in the program for their clients, HRDC was the major purchaser. One hundred percent of the HRDC referrals to the college upgrading program for adults had work experience and a proven work ethic. In addition, these students generally were older adults; only 18% were under 30 years of age. Many had financial responsibilities like home mortgages and families including small children, so they required job skills that would enable them to compete in the labour force. These students had a strong desire to be successful in their educational pursuits, and they were also highly motivated. However, in 1996, HRDC discontinued purchasing seats for their clients in the college's upgrading program for adults. As a result, their clients went elsewhere for their education, and the profile of our students began to change. Sixty-one percent of our new student population,

many of whom receive social assistance benefits, are under 25 years of age and have had very little work experience. Few have financial responsibilities for others.

In addition to the change in our student demographics, the number of students graduating from the upgrading program for adults had decreased significantly even though our enrollment had not decreased. Some preliminary investigation suggested a cause/effect relationship between the changing student profile and the decrease in the number of students graduating from the program. This fact presented some tantalizing questions that required answers.

I first became interested in investigating how to meet the needs of our new student population when the Dean of Access and Skills, who is in charge of our program, asked the faculty for solutions to the problem of declining graduation rates. As I reflected on the problem, I concluded that our new students had different needs than our previous students and that these needs had to be met before they could become engaged fully in the learning process. I also concluded that there was a need to review the current program structure in light of the non-academic needs of the students and make changes accordingly. In my view, the role of the faculty as adult educators was to be proactive in finding ways to meet the individual needs of the students. One idea was to establish a faculty-advisor program, based on a mentoring model, that could provide contact between the faculty member and the student and could create a safe environment where honest dialogue could take place. I realized that not all students would require this kind of support because they received it from family and friends. However, many new students in

the upgrading program for adults seemed to have needs that were not being met either inside or outside the learning environment.

The Problem

The main issue this study addresses is how to respond to the changing needs of students in a college upgrading program for adults so that they could achieve academic success. To understand the problem better, I engaged in some basic research. I discovered in *The 1998-1999 Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program Statistical and Financial Report for Colleges Delivery System: Learner Demographic Profile: LBS Levels I-IV* that 68% of students at all levels of our college upgrading program for adults currently receive their source of income through Ontario Works. The focus of Ontario Works is preparing people for employment and getting them the help they need to find the shortest route to a paying job. This is accomplished through referrals to basic education; training for new and updated skills; practical work experience; job placement; and help with child care, transportation, and other work-related expenses. A person who qualifies for this social assistance program receives $6,240.00 each year. This information suggests that many of our new students face economic and social barriers with regard to educational opportunities. In addition, the demographic profile of students entering the adult upgrading program since 1996 points out that most of these students are younger than our students in the past. Sixty-one percent are 16 to 24 years of age, whereas in the past, only 18% were under 30 years of age.

In addition to these demographic changes, the faculty working in the upgrading program for adults found, based on initial assessments and in-class tasks and assignments, that many of our current students are young and immature. They have very little employment experience and usually a poor work ethic. The latter is manifested in their negative attitude toward developing job related skills. In the past, our students had extensive work experience, usually more than 20 years, and they generally had a proven work ethic. Faculty also noted that the students who receive social assistance benefits often have no personal reason for returning to school other than the fact that the Ontario government has determined that in order to qualify for social assistance benefits, they either have to go to work or return to school. Consequently, our new students have little or no intrinsic motivation for completing their education. In the past, in contrast, many students had family responsibilities that motivated them to finish and graduate.

In addition to a shifting student profile, our program requirements also were changing. According to a July 1998 draft of Working with Learning Outcomes: Validation Draft, literacy agencies in Ontario would be expected to teach self-management and self-direction skills as part of their programs. These skills were new additions to our upgrading program for adults.

Based on this basic research, I suggested to my colleagues in the upgrading program for adults that our students' needs and the implementation of changes to the program might be addressed best through a faculty advisor/mentoring program. Cohen (1995) describes the mentoring role as "a number of interrelated behavioural functions that are combined in the mentoring relationship to assist each adult learner" (p. 3). He believes

that the purpose of the role is to establish trust, offer tailored advice, introduce alternatives, challenge, motivate, and encourage initiative. Cohen explains that "mentors make a difference primarily because [these] competent mentoring behaviours enable them to transmit the essential quality of trust" (p. 3). I reasoned that these mentoring functions could create an environment that would help our new students to become active participants in the upgrading program for adults and would assist the faculty in teaching self-management and self-direction skills.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine whether or not a faculty advisor program, based on a mentoring model, could create an environment that meets the students' needs and helps them to achieve success in an upgrading program for adults. The success of the students would be measured by comparing the graduation rate of a group of students who had access to a faculty advisor/mentor program with previous groups. I chose a mentoring model for two reasons. First, a mentoring program would provide an appropriate means for faculty to get to know the students and to understand their individual needs. Second, mentoring would provide an effective means of involving the students in the learning process, thereby increasing their self-management and self-direction skills and ultimately their opportunity for success in an educational environment. One of my main tasks before launching the mentoring program would be to answer the following question: What kind of assistance do students and faculty need when they engage in a mentoring relationship? The answer to this question would help me in

designing a program and in developing a resource kit that would help to meet these various needs.

Scope of the Study

This study primarily addresses the use of mentoring in an upgrading program for adults. The particular aspect is the implementation of a mentoring program with faculty and a group of students. The emphasis is on gaining insight into the needs of faculty and students as they engage in a mentoring relationship and on the value of mentoring as a tool for motivating students to complete the upgrading program successfully.

The study took place over a 7-month period from October 1998 to the end of April 1999. It began with 6 faculty members and 53 students. Each month when new students arrived, I offered them the opportunity to participate in the mentoring program. All of the participants were students in the college upgrading program for adults. None had earned a high school diploma. Most were in receipt of some form of social assistance, and some of these students had family responsibilities.

The study was carried out in three phases: needs assessment, implementation, and interim and final evaluations. Prior to launching the program, I held orientation sessions for faculty members and a session for the students who had volunteered to be part of the faculty advisor program. In both groups, I stressed the fact that participation in the study was on a volunteer basis, and that there would be a no-fault termination option should any participants, faculty or students, choose to withdraw from the study at any time. During the first meeting with the faculty advisor group, I gave each one a binder that contained an

outline of the study and a resource entitled Principles of Adult Mentoring Scale: Postsecondary Education (Cohen,1995, pp.23-29). I used Cohen's mentoring scale because it not only provided faculty advisors with a self-assessment of their personal proficiencies, but it also provided a list of competencies to be developed as we embarked on this new role of mentoring students. It also was a good reference tool for faculty self-development as a mentor. I collected evaluation data through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups from all participants in the study.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was the paucity of responses to questionnaires. In early March 1999, I sent all the students involved in the study to date a mid-point questionnaire because I wanted to find out how the faculty advisor program was working, and I wanted suggestions with regard to changes to surface. The last question on the form invited the students to be part of a focus group during which we would discuss the results of the questionnaire. I found that many students chose not to complete the questionnaire, so I had only a few opinions on which to base mid-point changes to the faculty advisor program. Also, very few attended the focus group. In order to get a higher return on the students' final questionnaire, I conducted personal interviews with as many students as I could contact. This proved to be more time consuming, but I achieved a greater response because a broader cross-section of the students was represented in the final results. The greater response provided better insight into the usefulness of the faculty advisor program for the students.

A further limitation of the study was the increased responsibility that the mentor role added to the faculty's workload. In order to address this problem, I agreed to be responsible for and to coordinate the program. I was also very careful to keep meetings short and to a minimum, to acknowledge the increased workload of my colleagues, and to share with my colleagues the positive feedback that the students recorded on their questionnaires. I also tried to make the assignment of advisees as equitable as possible so that no faculty member would feel overburdened.

Assumptions

I made five assumptions in carrying out the study. First, I assumed that the use of faculty-mentors would be beneficial to the students because the faculty-mentor would help the students to meet their needs and would motivate them to become involved in their own learning. Second, I assumed that increased involvement of the students in the learning process would result in a change in their attitude and, as a result, they would successfully complete the upgrading program for adults. Third, I assumed that the students who really needed a mentor would sign up for the program. Fourth, I assumed that all the faculty would embrace the study and would be interested in developing their mentoring skills. Finally, I assumed that the needs assessments at the outset of the study would provide me with enough information to determine the program's operation and would help me in the development of the resource kit for the mentors.

Definition of Terms

Various terms used in the adult education literature have different meanings depending on the context in which the term is used. The meaning of terms as used in this study, which could be ambiguous or confusing, are defined here.

The word mentor, in this study, fits with Cohen's (1995) definition. He describes the mentor as someone who establishes trust, offers tailored advice, introduces alternatives, challenges, motivates, and encourages initiative. In this thesis the term mentor is used synonymously with faculty advisor.

The term needs assessment is a research method which provides researchers with information from all involved constituents of an organization about feelings and perceptions regarding their learning needs. A needs assessment is described as "adaptive, flexible and contextual" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 259).

College upgrading program for adults is an academic literacy and numeracy basic education program for adults who have not achieved a high-school diploma. Students are offered a grade 12 equivalency certificate upon successful completion of the required academic preparation. The students' required academic preparation is based on an assessment of their prior learning.

Plan of Presentation

Following this introduction, in chapter 2 I provide a review of the literature relevant to mentoring in a college upgrading program for adults. I begin the literature review with a discussion of adult education, the characteristics of adult learners, and the

learning environment as these topics relate to the environment of a college upgrading program for adults. In the next section, I examine the role of the adult educator/facilitator in the learning process. I conclude the chapter with a review of the literature on the role of mentoring in adult education.

In chapter 3, I describe how I implemented my study. I discuss the process of conducting the needs assessments, developing the resource materials, designing and implementing the program, and developing and administering the program evaluations. I also present an analysis of the final faculty and students' evaluations and my personal reflections regarding the effectiveness of the mentoring program.

In chapter 4, I present a discussion of the results of my study in light of the literature review. I conclude with recommendations and offer suggestions regarding the use of mentoring as a technique for faculty to use as a way to help students to be successful in a college upgrading program for adults.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I review literature that provides the theoretical background for the study. In the first section, I focus on literature that defines the field of adult education and describes the adult learner. My purpose is to situate students in college upgrading programs for adults within the field of adult education. I then identify characteristics of students who take part in upgrading programs for adults, giving particular attention to characteristics that are germane to this study. I pinpoint their needs based on these characteristics and explain how these needs impact on the learning environment. In the third section, I discuss the role of adult educators as facilitators of learning and as collaborators in addressing the learning needs of upgrading students. Finally, I explore the relationship between the mentoring role of adult educators and the effect of this role on the learning process.

Defining Adult Education

The field of adult education has struggled to define itself during the past century. Knowles (1970), and Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) suggest that adult education differs from that of child education. Indeed, the term *adult education* implies a separate and distinct field. To distinguish adult education from the education of children and youth, Knowles (1970) popularized the term androgogy, which he defines as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 38). Many use this term synonymously with adult education;

however, others object to this equivalency. The variety of definitions within the field of adult education reflects this dichotomy. Pratt (1993) questions those who equate the two terms because in his view the word androgogy has its limitations. As he sees it, androgogy can no longer be "the basis for a theory of adult learning or a unifying concept for adult education" (p. 21) because the term simply refers to a set of assumptions and is not inclusive enough. The following overview demonstrates the diversity in defining adult education.

Verner (1964) defines adult education as:

> a relationship between an educational agent and a learner in which the agent selects, arranges, and continuously directs a sequence of progressive tasks that provide systematic experiences to achieve learning for people whose participation in such activities is subsidiary and supplemental to a primary productive role in society. (p. 32)

Thirty-three years later, Merriam and Brockett (1997) describe adult education as "educating and retraining adults to keep [them] competitive in a global economic market" (p. 9). Both of these definitions suggest that adult education serves to prepare skilled workers for the marketplace.

During the 1980s, Knowles' (1975) concept of learners as self-directed appears to have influenced the emerging definitions of adult education. For example, Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) define adult education in terms of "persons whose major social roles are characteristic of adult status undertak[ing] systematic and sustained learning activities" (p. 9); Long (1987) explains adult education as "all systematic and purposive efforts by the adult to become an educated person" (p. viii). The terms *undertaking* and *purposive efforts* in these definitions reflect Knowles concept of self-directed learning. On the same

topic, Merriam and Brockett (1997) summarize their findings by noting that "some concept of adult undergirds the definition, and that the activity is intentional" (p. 8). However, some authors such as Barer-Stein and Draper (1993) express concern about defining the field of adult education. In their view, to define is to confine. They explain that "the term adult education frequently conceals an ideology related to who ought to be the participants or what the objectives ought to be. The various ideologies have to be identified as they occur" (p. 25). As a way to handle the problem of definition, they suggest leaving the definition of adult education open-ended to allow for growth within the field, and as a way to reflect evolving societal changes and realities. For example, Draper (1992b) describes rather than defines adult literacy education as "characterized by a community of interests shared by those who understand or wish to understand the issues related to illiteracy" (p. 76). Draper's description of a particular area of adult education serves to further the discussion about the field of adult education and to help understand the breadth of the field.

Some revisions in defining the field of adult education have begun. Collins (1998) points out the vicissitudes of society and the need for adult educators to be cognizant of how these changes affect the field of adult education. He provides an example of societal change in his writings about discourse in the field of adult education that now centres on what he describes as "lifelong learning and lifelong education [and] which refer to an expansive vision of learning and education" (p. 51).

According to Merriam and Brockett (1997), a person's experiences as an adult learner, and his/her experiences with planning, organizing, and perhaps teaching in an

adult educational setting often lead to varying understandings of the field. In other words, it is the impact of personal experience, environment, change, and the vastness of the field of adult education that has encouraged theorists to consider these understandings and to let the term adult education remain fluid, thereby allowing practice to inform theory. Accordingly, there is a need for adult educators to consider both the adult learner and the learning environment as key educational concepts that define adult education.

Describing Adult Learners and the Learning Environment

In this section, I present the literature on adult learners as a way to profile learners in college upgrading programs. I then examine the characteristics of adult learners and explain how their characteristics impact the learning environment.

Adult Learners

One needs to look at who participates in adult learning in order to appreciate fully the scope of the field of adult education. Cross (1978), in her research on the characteristics of adult learners, found that learning is more common among adults who are well educated, white, and rich. Kopka and Peng's (1993) profile of the adult learner supports Cross' findings. They claim that one of the greatest indicators of participation in adult learning is prior educational attainment. McCabe and Day (1998) also support Cross' claim. They call attention to a 1994 study conducted by Hartle and King (1997) which points out that the participation rate in higher education is 88% for high-income groups and 58% for low-income groups, a difference of 30 percentage points. Given this finding, it appears that Cross' 1978 research results are still pertinent today.

Norton (1992) maintains that adult learners most often seek work related courses and programs. She describes how staff at a youth drop-in centre in Winnipeg's inner city frequently seek opportunities to develop writing skills they need to complete their shift reports effectively. This finding reinforces the importance of learning opportunities that relate to skill enhancement. Kopka and Peng (1993) concur with these findings, and they point out that work related reasons are followed closely by personal development explanations.

Much of the research describes adult learners as self-directed, intrinsically motivated people. Cranton (1989) identifies adult learners as:

> those who become involved in a learning situation by choice. Since the adult has chosen to learn, he [she] will have clear and specific goals related to his [her] own needs, whether it be an improvement in job skills or social contact. (p.7)

Likewise, Waldron and Moore (1991) note that in adult learning situations, "individuals are often looking for material and techniques that can be used immediately to solve a problem or explain a phenomenon. They respond to learning situations that are highly related to their profession, employment, self development and life stage" (p. 23). These descriptors, however, do not typify college adult upgrading (literacy) students who are the subject of this thesis. In fact, there is a paucity of research on adult learners in college academic upgrading programs.

Fortunately, there is some useful literature that adult educators in literacy programs would be wise to consider. For example, according to McCabe and Day's (1998) projections, there will be a major increase in the number of underprepared students

entering upgrading programs in the twenty-first century due to poverty, poor parenting practices, increased immigration, low academic success rates for minorities, functionally illiterate students, and the changing nature of work. McCabe and Day point out that it will be necessary in the future to "provide a bridge for the working poor to cross over into the mainstream of [the] economy and society" (p. 17). This fact suggests that this group of adult learners will require support and direction in order to help them become active participants in a learning environment.

Draper and Taylor (1992), too, provide insight into Canadian adult upgrading students. Based on a compilation of case studies on literacy programs across Canada, they describe literacy students according to the particular cultural, social, economic, or political context from which they come. They make reference to aboriginal adults, adult with disabilities, recent immigrants, adults with developmental handicaps, the unemployed, welfare recipients, and psychiatric patients. Draper and Taylor also list the support systems that these students require. These include: providing transportation and child care; building a program on an assessment of their needs; stimulating discussion on the learning process, including self-reflection; making the program learner-centred; encouraging people to become involved with their own education; and developing self-confidence and the desire to be lifelong learners.

Although Brookfield (1992) does not directly refer to literacy students, he strongly believes that students need the kind of support that will help them to become involved in their own learning. In his view, the assumption that adults are innately self-directed is a myth. He argues that

> readiness for self-directed learning varies greatly according to several factors such as the learner's familiarity with the area in which self-direction is being encouraged, the nature of the educational task to be undertaken, the personality of the learner, the sub-culture from which he or she comes, and the political ethos of the time and culture. (p. 13)

Although these descriptions of adult literacy students differ from Cranton's (1989) and Waldron and Moore's (1991) generalized descriptions of adult learners, they are important because they provide a broader understanding of the adult learner and locate college adult upgrading as a legitimate activity within the field of adult education. An appreciation of who adult students are not only requires a knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of adult learners, but also the effect these characteristics have on their learning.

Characteristics of Adult Learners

Polson (1993) argues that "since there is no single definition of what an adult learner is, there can be no universal statements about what characterizes all adult learners. However, it is possible to describe some general attributes" (n. p.). This type of information is important because it supports the need for a framework in which to operate when dealing with adult learners, while at the same time continuing to see each situation and each person as an individual. This section on characteristics addresses only those that apply to college adult upgrading students.

One characteristic of adult upgrading students is multiple role expectations and the issues associated with each of these roles. Polson (1993), in reference to this particular characteristic, points out that

> adult students are engaged in multiple roles which impact both the time and energy they can devote to their role as a student. [Being a student] is often a secondary role to that of being a parent, a spouse, an employee and/or a community leader. (n.p.)

Not only is there role conflict, but as Home (1998) points out, many women students also suffer from "role contagion," which she defines as the difficulty women have of "performing one role while worrying about their other responsibilities" (p. 95). Home claims that understanding this role strain and how it can lead women to abandon their studies is important for understanding the value and necessity of dependable and accessible support. In other words, it is imperative that adult educators understand role contagion so that they can support their students, especially women, in achieving their goals. Polson agrees and offers a practical suggestion. "If an adult student misses a scheduled exam because he or she must take a sick child to the doctor, it would be unreasonable for the instructor not to provide an alternative opportunity for this student to take the exam" (n. p.). This suggestion reinforces the need for adult educators to be sensitive to and understand adult students' multiple roles. Adult educators, who are flexible with regard to students' needs, contribute to their success.

Another characteristic of many adult upgrading students is their reliance on social assistance for their economic support. Often the inability to complete high school is linked to lower economic status (Quigley, 1997). According to McCabe and Day (1998), The Educational Resources Institute and the Institute for Higher Education Policy *(1997)* reports that clients on welfare often have certain characteristics that act as barriers

to their educational success. For example, welfare recipients often lack resources needed to succeed. In addition,

> [they] do not fully understand the economic and social benefits of postsecondary education; lack support from their friends and family; have family responsibilities to maintain; and lack the financial resources necessary to attend college. [As well], 60 percent of welfare recipients have no work history or job skills. (p.16)

McCabe and Day exhort adult educators to respect adult learners as individuals with particular needs and to look at each situation on an individual basis. In this way, adult educators can gain a better understanding of how and why some adults may not be self-directed in seeking out educational opportunities.

Draper and Taylor (1992), MacKeracher (1993, 1996), and Malouf (1999) support the notion that adults have a great many past and present personal, professional, practical, or cultural experiences to draw on when they enter an adult education program. In this regard, Malouf maintains that it is important for educators to respect this kind of knowledge and to use it to maximize teachable moments in a learning situation. In his view, [it] "is important to help your course participants to match what's new with what they already know" (p. 13). He feels that this connection of personal experience to new information aids in meaningful learning.

The utilization of personal experience during the learning process, according to MacKeracher (1993), includes a gender distinction. She calls attention to an essential difference between adult education theory and feminist pedagogy with respect to personal experience. She points out that

> feminist pedagogy calls for a focus on the individual and her personal experience as both an initial learning activity and as an ongoing part of the entire learning process. . . .In adult education, such a personal focus is often used for climate setting purposes but may not be considered to be an integral part of all learning activities. (p. 83)

This difference highlights the importance of including personal experience as a component in learning activities, especially for women.

Malouf (1999) calls attention to the fact that adults often have strong feelings about their learning situations. Some of the emotions they bring to the learning process either come from past educational experiences or from their everyday lives. Earlier, Kidd (1973) noted that feelings of "love and associated feelings such as respect, admiration, generosity, sympathy, friendliness and encouragement...tend toward learning of quality and endurance" (p. 97). MacKeracher (1996) agrees. She says, "If the affective component is positive, our tendency is to move toward something or someone" (p. 63). Although this statement addresses the effects of a positive environment, it begs the following question: What happens to adult students if the feelings are not positive?

Polson (1993) claims that past experiences can "create barriers to learning" (n. p.). Attitudes, values, and beliefs developed from past experience can create a conflict with the material presented in new learning situations. When this happens, "[students] must be encouraged to remain open and flexible to other views" (Polson, n. p.). Draper (1992) also acknowledges the fact that if past experiences in a learning environment are unpleasant, these can "smother curiosity with anxiety and even fear" (p. 43). Because an adult has not fewer, but more emotional associations with factual material than children,

the feelings associated with learning can be very strong. In her writings on this topic, MacKeracher (1996) explains how adults have

> more emotional associations with material to be learned than do children. . . .Adults have more to be threatened about in learning situations than children do because their self-concept is already well organized. They stand to lose much of their previous gains in self-esteem and self-confidence if they try to learn and fail. Many adults would prefer not to try at all, and therefore appear to resist learning. (p. 67)

Additionally, Kidd (1973) points out that

> rage, anger, and similar feelings such as outrage, sense of frustration, being thwarted and rejected or fear and such concomitants as suspicion...tends toward resistance to learning and to forgetting as a means of ending the tension, or threat, or pain. (p. 97)

A knowledge and understanding of the various characteristics of adult learners in college adult upgrading programs can help the adult educator create an environment that respects and supports adult students and helps to allay their fears. These characteristics are an important consideration when structuring the learning environment. An important question is: How do these characteristics affect learning conditions?

Characteristics of the Learning Environment

Researchers such as Malouf (1999), Vella (1994), and Waldron and Moore (1991) put great emphasis on the impact of the learning environment with respect to adult learning. For example, Waldron and Moore are of the opinion that "an experience in a constructive learning environment will overcome many. . .fears" (p. 34). Malouf describes a positive learning environment as safe, respectful, tolerant, and fun. He suggests going slowly and gently when introducing new ideas to adult learners in order to eliminate barriers and to create a safe learning environment. Griffin (1993) suggests what she refers

to as "learner-selected risk rather than imposed threat" (p. 118) as a strategy for reducing anxiety in adult learners. Griffin's idea points to student choice as opposed to teacher-directed learning as a way to increase the learner's role in the learning environment. On this same topic, Taylor (1992) suggests that "adults learn best in environments which reduce potential threat to their self-concept and self-esteem and which provide support for change" (p. 23). Vella (1994), too, points out that "the rise and fall of learners' energy is an accurate indicator of their sense of safety" (p. 8). These statements suggest that creating a safe learning environment is paramount to the success of adult learning.

Vella (1994) puts great value on the experiences of adults and considers these experiences as an integral component of the learning environment. As she sees it, experiences enable adults to "be in dialogue with any teacher, about any subject, and...learn new knowledge or attitudes or skills best in relation to that life experience" (p. 3). This basic assumption regarding the value of dialogue also underscores the 12 principles for effective adult learning that she uses when setting up a learning environment.

With respect to the learning environment, O'Sullivan (1999) pleads for "quality-of-life education" (p. 237). He divides human needs into axiological and existential categories and maintains that these human needs are interrelated and interactive but not hierarchically organized. The axiological categories are those needs that require subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, idleness, creation, identity, and freedom. The existential categories embrace the verbs that involve being, having, doing, and interacting. O'Sullivan claims that these needs must be met in order to have quality-of-life education in learning situations. These two categories address the adult

students' affective, cognitive, spiritual, and physical needs that directly relate to the characteristics of the adult learner. O'Sullivan offers his matrix of needs and satisfiers to adult educators and suggests that his matrix be used as "a reflective diagnostic tool in assessing how our own culture is meeting the complexity of human needs" (p. 244). He claims that "our current educational ventures in the late twentieth century serve the needs of our present dysfunctional industrial system" (p. 7). To address this shortcoming, he challenges adult educators to address the problems of a global society and personal change in the new century in order to develop whole human beings. O'Sullivan's contribution to the literature on the learning environment is his holistic paradigm that can be used as an evaluative tool when designing a learning environment.

McCabe and Day (1998) have adopted Cross' (1976) four key recommendations for designing effective developmental programs. These are as follows:

> (a) programs should integrate skills training and instruction with other college experiences of the student, (b) attention should be given to the social and emotional development of the student, as well as to academic achievement, (c) staff should be selected for their interest and commitment to working with remedial students, as well as for their knowledge of learning problems, and (d) remediation should be approached with flexibility and open-mindedness--a spirit of exploration into student learning and success skills should be cultivated. (p. 20)

As McCabe and Day see it, in order for a learning environment to have the most effect, there needs to be "a variety of services designed to meet the cognitive and affective needs of a diverse student population" (p. 21). These recommendations underscore the importance of providing supports that address not only the academic, but also the emotional needs of developmental (literacy) students in order to ensure their success.

Accordingly, McCabe and Day urge community colleges to "respond to the realities of shifting demography and socio-economic needs by. . .continuing to involve students in the learning process" (p. 21). This advice appears to be an essential element for success.

Students in college adult upgrading programs have certain characteristics that adult educators need to understand and respond to in order to offer supports needed in the learning environment. The students' need for safety, respect, open dialogue, identity, choice, and understanding emphasize the importance of addressing their needs in the affective domain in order to build self-concept and self-esteem. McCabe and Day's (1998) suggestion to involve the students in the learning process provides a way of offering students support in the learning environment and meeting their needs for respect, open dialogue, and choice. This involvement of students in the learning process presents another key element in adult education; that is, the adult educator and the role he/she plays in involving the student in that process.

Describing the Role of the Adult Educator/Facilitator

In this section, I discuss the role of the adult educator as facilitator in the learning process and how he/she functions as director, enabler, and/or collaborator within that role. Following this discussion, I examine the literature regarding the role of the facilitator in conducting needs assessments. The reasons for this discussion are two-fold. One is to characterize my role as coordinator of the faculty advisor program in conducting needs assessments, and the second is to understand better how the role of mentor is an extension of the facilitator/adult educator role.

The Role of the Adult Educator

In his book, Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers, Knowles (1975) redefines the role of the adult educator from that of content transmitter to that of facilitator of learning. He points out that in order to encourage students to be involved in the learning process, and to be self-directed learners, the role of the teacher must change to that of facilitator. He argues that the focus of a facilitator's role shifts the emphasis from what the teacher is doing to what the student requires. In his view, the facilitator's role is primarily that of "a procedural guide and only secondarily as a resource for content information" (p. 34). According to Knowles, the andragogical process, that is, the art and science of helping adults learn, includes setting a climate that supports adult learning and creates a structure for participative planning that includes diagnosing needs for learning, setting goals and objectives for learning, designing and implementing the learning activities, and evaluating the outcomes.

MacKeracher (1996) presents descriptions of the three basic modes of facilitating: directing, enabling, and collaborating. She also describes the learners' involvement relating to each of these modes. As she sees it, one mode is not better than the others. Instead, as she points out, the learners, the situation, and the educational setting determine the mode of facilitating that is most appropriate to utilize.

The directing mode requires the facilitator to define and design the structure, content, and activities of the learning process and to provide feedback, reinforcement, and guidance to the learners. The directing mode works best when learners must acquire specific skills and knowledge. MacKeracher stresses the fact that this type of facilitating

involves the student's commitment to the program and the processes involved, and the willingness and ability of the student to learn from the feedback received. She points out that the drawback of this kind of facilitating is the lack of "interpersonal involvement with the individual learners" (p. 219). Another drawback is the potential threat to students if their needs are not met, that is, if they find feedback threatening to their self-esteem or if they are unable to withdraw from the program for one reason or another.

The enabling mode requires the facilitator to take responsibility for providing content and resources for the learning process or to share the responsibility with the students. The facilitator acts as a "catalyst. . .[and as a]. . .co-inquirer with learners" (MacKeracher, 1996, p. 220). When this mode of facilitation is used, "learners discover personal meanings within knowledge and skills already learned" (p. 220). This mode of facilitating works best when the learning does not require a logical sequence, as is often the case when basic ideas are clearly understood. Facilitators who use this mode take on the role "as manager of the learning process or as co-inquirer" (p. 221). MacKeracher maintains that this type of facilitation is "relatively threatening for learners since their personal meanings and self-systems are vulnerable to disconfirmation" (p. 221). If students feel that their way of thinking about things, or doing things, is under attack, this fact may threaten their self-concept. Because of this potential threat, she claims there needs to be time spent on "building a trusting relationship between facilitators and learners" (p. 221). MacKeracher stresses the importance of initially establishing trust with the students in the learning environment.

The collaborating mode supports the notion that "learners and facilitators share as co-learners in the discovery and creation of meanings and values" (MacKeracher, 1996, p. 221). This mode requires an environment in which the facilitator and the learners share equally in designing and defining their learning needs. It requires a great deal of trust among the group members because "both the facilitator and the learners are vulnerable within the process" (p. 221). Once again, MacKeracher points to the element of trust as a key component of learning.

MacKeracher's (1996) explanation of the various modes of facilitation identifies the role and the involvement of the facilitator and the learner within each situation. A common thread in each of the explanations is the necessity of a sound relationship between the facilitator and the learner that is based on trust. This sound relationship creates a climate that supports adult learning.

With regard to the role of an adult educator/facilitator, Vella (1994) believes that the main role is to engage in dialogue with adult learners and in this way involve the learners in the learning process. Like Draper and Taylor (1992), MacKeracher (1993, 1996) and Malouf (1999), she maintains that adults have many life experiences and that this experience encourages learners to be in dialogue with the facilitator. Vella discusses 12 principles which she maintains are "ways to begin and maintain and nurture the dialogue" (p. 3). The dialogue begins by diagnosing learning needs, which can be done by listening to the adult learners. This diagnosis, or what is commonly referred to as needs assessment, is the first of Vella's 12 principles for effective adult learning. Hill (1996) concurs with Vella on the importance of needs assessment. In her view, "our job as

helpers is to assist learners in identifying their needs, [but she adds] sometimes [this requires] helping them to see beyond their wants or created needs" (p. 6). In her view, it is important to heed this caution when conducting a needs assessment. Earlier, Brookfield (1992) made the same point with regard to learning needs. He argues that the belief, which alleges that good teachers only meet the felt needs of learners, is false. He says,

> advocating that learners define curricula according to their needs relegates the educator to the role of educational "go-fer". . . .[P]ractising adult education in a democratic way involves negotiation not capitulation. If educators deny their own aims and convictions, and never challenge learner's desires on the basis of fundamental values and beliefs, then they cease to be educators at all. (p. 13)

In other words, Hill and Brookfield stress the importance of including adult learners in determining their needs, but they also acknowledge the fact that the learners may need help in defining their needs. They, as well as Vella, maintain that a needs assessment is a necessary first step in any adult learning environment. In this way, the principal players can target better what and how things will happen and can refine their ideas. They view needs assessment as an ongoing process in any learning situation and as a primary role of the adult educator.

Needs Assessment: Determining Learners' Needs

There appear to be two distinct perspectives on the definition of needs assessment. Caffarella (1994) describes needs assessments as tools used in determining discrepancies and gaps "between what presently is and what should be" (p. 68). Gilley and England's (1989) definition is similar except for the addition of the directive that the needs assessment must measure this gap "as scientifically as possible" (p. 198). Gilley and

England use a medical model style to illustrate what they mean by needs assessment. This style of needs assessments determines a problem and then attempts to find out what is wrong with or missing from an organization or what is lacking in a learner. This is a restricted style that focuses simply on deficiencies. This type of needs assessment often "justif[ies] program planning," and implies "a reactive versus proactive process" (Caffarella, p. 68). Not all adult educators approach needs assessment as a deficiency in knowledge or skills.

Vella's (1994) definition of a needs assessment does not include inadequacies. Rather, Vella views needs assessment as the "participation of the learners in naming what needs to be learned" (p.3). She argues that adult learners should be encouraged to identify their needs so that the program is shaped to be of immediate usefulness" (p. 4). Her argument is consistent with Knowles' (1970) conviction that "programs that are based mostly on what somebody thinks people ought to learn will fail" (p. 79). Brookfield (1986) concurs with Knowles and at the same time acknowledges his "annoyance and resentment caused when outside experts are brought in who identify my problem and then suggest solutions that I should undertake" (p. 254). Brookfield's view reinforces the idea that adult learners want and need to be involved in program planning, and if they are ignored, the result can be dissatisfaction and ultimately program failure.

Vella's (1994) approach to needs assessments is proactive. As she explains, she "did not ask participants what they needed to learn, it would not have been useful, but in open dialogue, they spoke of real needs" (p. 50). Vella is constant in her vigilance regarding the use of open-ended questions to elicit information from people about their

learning needs. She claims that educational needs assessments involve three actions: observe, study, and ask. Vella carries out observations by visiting and talking to the people with whom she will be working. She studies their history and reads relevant literature to get a sense of the culture and the issues. Finally, she asks questions based on her observations and readings. In this way, Vella utilizes the communicative aspects of talking, reading, asking, and listening when she determines learners' needs.

Brookfield (1986), Knowles (1970), and Vella (1994) all agree that in a needs assessment, not only must the learners define their needs, but others in an organization must articulate their needs as well. Because there are many voices involved in defining needs, Vella and Brookfield agree that adult educators should not base needs assessments on a fixed set of rules. Rather, Brookfield recommends that needs assessments be "adaptive, contextual and flexible" (p. 259). As Vella explains, needs assessment is "a continuous process. . .we discover learners' needs, we meet them, and in doing so through engaging in tasks, we discover further needs" (p. 180). The facilitator of adult education should understand the necessity of adaptation of needs assessments as situations and environments change. The facilitator should realize that adaptiveness and flexibility are components in carrying out needs assessments, and this fact should be a source of comfort for the facilitator.

Models of assessing needs vary. Brookfield (1986) offers a critical incident exercise as a method for conducting a needs assessment. He describes this method as "a brief, written statement that forces participants to think about specific happenings [which are used to stimulate] a series of one-paragraph statements from staff about their feelings

and perceptions regarding the problems they face doing their jobs" (p. 22). By using an indirect approach to reveal concerns, this method avoids direct questions that may be threatening or embarrassing. Critical incident exercises offer learners an opportunity to voice their own needs, so that the concerns and needs are not just those perceived by an outside observer.

When Vella (1994) engages in needs assessments, her emphasis is on hearing and respecting what she refers to as learners' themes. She uses faxes, telephone conversations, small focus groups, and surveys to gather data. When she telephones students to inquire about their needs, they are often surprised. Many have never had this kind of request before. The result of this communication, according to Vella, is "adult learners who [know] themselves to be subjects in a healthy relationship with the teacher" (p. 8). A healthy relationship is one of Vella's educational principles. According to her, sound relationships "involve respect, safety, open communication, listening, and humility" (p. 8). All of these attributes are characteristic of the learner's needs in a responsive learning environment.

The literature in this section points out that the role of the adult educator is one of facilitator rather than lecturer because the facilitator role is predicated on learner's involvement and learner's needs. The act of involving learners in the learning process by engaging in dialogue and by listening and responding to their needs is an important element of the role of facilitator. Another element of the facilitator's role is to establish trust with the learners. This trust builds sound relationships in the learning environment, a principle that Vella (1994) feels is necessary for learning and development. In fact, trust is

one of the key attributes of the role of mentoring in adult education. Mentoring, as Anderson (1987) points out, requires a strong relational component. Learner involvement, needs assessment, trust, and sound relationships are all important ingredients of the mentoring role in adult education, a strategy that will be discussed in the next section.

The Mentoring Role in Adult Education

In addition to defining the mentoring role in adult education, I also discuss methods for selecting mentors, and several strategies that help to develop successful mentoring skills. Finally, I review the various facets of mentoring and the effect these have on the learning process.

Defining the Mentoring Role

The mentoring role in adult education is important because it not only helps the learner to become involved in the learning process, but by definition, it requires the learner's involvement. According to Huang and Lynch (1995), "[i]n Tao mentoring, each individual is interdependent in a relationship of mutual fulfilment, compassion, love, respect, in an atmosphere of openness, communication, and loyalty" (p. 10). The involvement of both the mentor and the learner (mentee) is inherent in an interdependent relationship.

As Anderson (1987) notes, mentoring is a process by which the "more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of

promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development" (p. 40). English (1998) uses Martin Buber's classical I-Thou/It distinction to illustrate the fact that the mentor relationship is more than a helping relationship. As she points out, when one regards the other as It, there is no partnership between the two because the other is not regarded as a person who needs to be understood in a holistic way. As a result, the relationship is impersonal and simply offers help with problems or situations. To make her point, she quotes directly from Buber: "An I/thou relationship facilitates mentor and mentee personal and professional development, the stretching to be more because someone believes in your potential" (p. 7). In other words, seeing the other as a whole person creates a personal relationship of caring and nurturing between the two people that offers ongoing support. English's attention to this definition of mentoring emphasizes the affective aspect of mentoring. Providing understanding and support and believing in one's potential demonstrates the emotional support that mentoring offers.

Cohen (1995) defines the mentoring role as "a number of interrelated behavioral functions that are combined in the mentoring relationship to assist each adult learner" (p. 3). He defines the mentor's role as one that establishes trust, offers tailored advice, introduces alternatives, challenges, motivates, and encourages initiative. Cohen notes that "mentors make a difference primarily because [these] competent mentoring behaviors enable them to transmit the essential quality of trust" (p. 3). Daloz (1986) also supports this view. According to Daloz:

> it follows that when we no longer consider learning to be primarily the acquisition of knowledge, we can no longer view teaching as the bestowal of it. If learning is about growth and growth requires trust, then teaching is

> about engendering trust, about nurturance--caring for growth. Teaching is thus preeminently an act of care. (p. 237)

If teaching is about engendering trust and mentoring transmits the essential quality of trust, then this line of reasoning implies that teaching involves mentoring as an important role of the adult educator. Daloz (1991) views the relationship between mentoring and learning as fundamental for educators.

Methods of Selecting Mentors

According to Daloz (1991), "most of the emphasis [on selecting mentors] has been on the ways in which mentors turn up in a 'natural' setting and on how they help their protégés to advance in the external world" (p. 205). However, Daloz sees the role of mentor as implicit in the role of adult educator. In an academic setting, he views the role of mentor as existing in many possible venues. The mentor role could be part of an academic advisor's responsibilities; it could be an inherent skill in a valued teacher; or it could be a formalized program tailored to mentoring adult students.

Ferguson, McCormick Ferguson, Singleton, and Soave (1999) propose a selection and matching process as a way of determining mentors. They also advise that "the criteria for selection of mentors and protégés will vary depending on who is mentoring whom and for what reason" (p. 31). Looking specifically at institutions of higher education, Kerr, Schulze, and Woodward (1995) based on Murray's (1991) ideas suggest that

> in response to an invitation to serve as a mentor, many people from throughout the entire organization are likely to volunteer. Each respondent should be interviewed by the program director, who will realistically describe the role and responsibilities of mentoring. The director must specify the type and frequency of involvement and reporting that will be required and include an accurate estimate of the time the mentor may be

> expected to spend and the type of activities he or she may be expected to use in developmental functions with the protégé. (p. 35)

The selection of mentors appears to cover a broad spectrum, ranging from being implicit in the role of adult educator, to a matching process, to self-selection, to a prescribed interview process involving specific criteria.

The literature provides evidence that the selection process affects the quality of the mentoring relationship because not everyone has the skills to be an effective mentor. For example, Johnson and Sullivan (1995) point out that "instincts of compassion, concern, and goodwill alone do not prepare prospective mentors" (p. 49). Cohen (1995) also tries to dispel another common belief about being a mentor. As he points out, adult educators often believe that they "intrinsically create successful mentor-mentee relationships" (p. 152), because of their training and experience in education. He argues against this belief. He cautions that such a belief can lead to a feeling of "competence without specific mentor training" (p. 153). He also believes that it may prevent teachers from "examining the distinction between their role as faculty. . .and their actual behavioural competency in the mentor role" (p. 153). The selection process is important as a method to avoid recruiting unsatisfactory mentors. Avoiding unsatisfactory mentors is imperative because, as Slicker and Palmer (1993) point out, ineffectively mentored students often suffer a significant decline in self-esteem. Undoubtedly, what happens within a mentoring relationship impacts the mentee.

Tools and Skills for the Mentoring Relationship

In order for mentoring to be successful and valuable to students, mentors need to learn about mentoring functions and the skills needed to support these functions. As a tool, Cohen's Principles of Adult Mentoring Scale: Postsecondary Education assesses the mentor's functions and behaviours "based on a composite profile of the complete mentor role" (p. 18). The scale "evaluates fifty-five specific mentor interpersonal behaviours relevant to establishing and maintaining an evolving mentoring relationship" (p. 18). After responding to the 55 statements, the mentor uses a scoring guide to develop scale scores, then enters the scores on a scoring sheet. These scores are transferred then to the mentor role competency sheet. This sheet lists six behaviour competencies that are characterized as follows: relationship emphasis, information emphasis, facilitative focus, confrontive focus, mentor model, and student vision. Each behaviour competency has five score levels: not effective, less effective, effective, very effective, and highly effective. Scale results offer mentors information about their competencies as mentors as well as areas where they are less effective as mentors. This information can be used as a springboard to learn more about the mentoring process and the skills required for effective mentoring practice. This scale is "designed for use by professionals who have consciously assumed mentoring responsibilities in their relationships with adult learners" (p. 18).

Bloom (1995) and Cohen (1995) view learning about the mentoring process and the competencies required as imperative for becoming an effective mentor. In Cohen's opinion, this kind of learning includes "the self-assessment of their individual mentoring competencies" (p. 15). He believes that learning about one's mentoring competencies is

imperative because "to assume the professional identity of a mentor is to fully comprehend and apply the equally important idea that what mentors do. . .considerably influences the learning of mentees" (p. 17). A mentors' influence on a mentee's learning supports the argument for helping mentors to develop the competencies necessary to promote effective mentoring practice.

Ferguson et al. (1999) document a set of skills that they feel is necessary for "the members of the mentoring pair" (p. 21). Because they view the mentoring relationship as interdependent rather than mentor dependent as Cohen (1995) contends it is, Ferguson et al. suggest that both the mentor and the mentee require knowledge, values, strategies, and skills in reflective thinking, both theory and practice. They are of the opinion that the mentoring pair also requires knowledge and skill in adult development, stage theory, and change theory. It is their view that both the mentor and mentee require skills in relationship building that include communication, conflict resolution, and problem solving skills, as well as an understanding and appreciation of differences. They reason that "mentors are better able to help protégés if they know what life issues and priorities are important at different stages in one's career" (p. 22). In addition, Ferguson et al. list skills in mentoring techniques that they believe mentors require such as coaching, modelling, observation, giving feedback, and goal setting. These suggestions for the educational preparation of professionals for the role of mentoring are helpful for those planning to establish a mentoring program such as the one reported in this thesis.

Value of the Mentoring Relationship

Mentoring relationships are valuable in that they serve to increase learner's involvement and learner's motivation. They offer adult students a safe environment for personal growth and development. According to Otto (1994), "adulthood...is not a state, but instead a process of learning and developing" (p. 15). In fact, the term lifelong learning implies the continuing development of adults. Gillen (1998) contends that adult educators help people to help themselves, and the challenge for adult educators is to help people realize their potential. Schulz (1995) points out the value of mentoring when adults are in periods of transition either on a personal or professional level. With regard to the value of a mentoring relationship, Schulz maintains that

> learning is a transformational journey that involves relating to other people in some kind of organizational setting. In adult learning, the facilitator has an important role of collaborating with the learner so that the learner can use new ways of thinking and acting in order to make changes and handle life's tasks. A mentor can act as such a facilitator, assisting adult learners in working through different phases of their work and psychosocial lives. (p. 57)

Mentoring, in such cases, assists the continuing development of adults and, in the process, helps mentees to realize their full potential.

Mentoring can help college students to get on with their learning by helping them to adjust successfully to their new environment, thereby creating a sense of safety and control. Schulz (1995) says that

> when students are paired with faculty in colleges and universities, they have access to information to make better choices in course selection and goal setting. They are aware of program services and can successfully learn how the system works. The knowledge and information provided by the

> mentor positively affects the student's ability to adjust to the college environment. (p. 61)

Schulz notes that this kind of help is particularly important for students at risk such as first-generation and minority students who are often burdened with feelings of frustration, rejection, or isolation in their new environment. These feelings can create an inability in students to cope and can prevent them from being able to become engaged fully in the task at hand; that is, functioning as a student. Daloz (1991) and Bloom (1995) also view mentors as guides in leading the students by acting as interpreters of the environment. As guides, mentors are able to explain the educational system because they have access to resources. They can also motivate by providing encouragement for the students.

Schulz (1995) believes that mentoring helps in personal and professional growth because, in her opinion, mentoring permits mentees the freedom to fail in a safe environment; that is, an environment of a one-to-one mentoring relationship. This type of relationship also encourages mentees to take risks in asking questions that they might otherwise be embarrassed to ask. This freedom of exploration of ideas without fear of recrimination is a "powerful growth and learning experience" (p. 61). Vella (1994) finds that the mentoring relationship allows for growth because it offers "the opportunity for disagreement, in a friendly relationship that not only allows but invites honest opposition. . .[S]uch a relationship address[es] errors in judgement and logic, challenge[s] incomplete thinking, and defend[s] and celebrate[s] cultural distinctions" (p. 68). Ferguson et al. (1999) refer to the kind of communication that takes place between mentors and mentees as "low risk dialogue" (p. 23). In other words, the mentee is free to

express opinions without fear of reprisal, ridicule, or rejection. Ferguson et al., Schultz, and Vella acknowledge the value of the safe environment that the mentoring relationship provides. This kind of environment provides a place that motivates learners to take risks with their ideas and to develop as learners because they took risks.

Bloom (1995) contends that mentors have multiple caring roles and that these roles can be instrumental in women's growth and development during the educational process. She relates these roles to a physical/psychological function and is careful to explain how these roles impact and are related to the different stages during the mentees' educational process and to the various feelings that they are experiencing at the time. Bloom suggests that a mentor initially stands behind a student; in other words, the mentor "holds the reentry woman by accepting her as she is" (p. 64). This function helps to affirm the student and support her self-esteem, thereby increasing her motivation. Earlier, Brundage and MacKeracher (1980) pointed out that "adults with positive self-concept and high self-esteem are more responsive to learning" (p. 26). They note that "adults with negative self-concept and low self-esteem are less likely to enter learning activities willingly and are often threatened by such environments" (p. 26). Understanding that an "individual's self-concept is a central factor in learning" helps educators to understand its importance as a motivator in the learning process (MacKeracher, 1993, p. 76).

Bloom (1995) uses the analogy of standing face to face as a way to describe the other functions of mentoring: listener, questioner, and connector. She explains that "mentors are concerned with the development of the student's voice, and they facilitate this development by listening" (p. 66). Daloz (1991) and Vella (1994) also refer to

listening in their discussion of the mentoring role. In this regard, Vella views listening as an important first principle in adult learning. Daloz, too, highlights listening as one of his primary methods for providing support to his mentees. He claims that listening "assures the student...a degree of control in the relationship" (p. 210). On the same topic, Bloom explains that "being heard confirms that [the female student] has something valuable to say and that her voice deserves to be heard" (p. 66). Similarly, Ferguson et al. (1999) note that

> [m]embers of the mentoring pair have a voice in the planning and evaluation of the mentoring activities. It is their relationship that is the focus of the model; their comments, concerns and considerations are essential to the success of mentoring. (p. 30)

They clarify the fact that having a voice is inherent to the mentoring process for both the mentor and mentee. In other words, the process of listening is a direct outcome and not a deliberate experience of mentoring.

Mentors not only help students to find their voice, they also question students in order to strengthen their learning (Bloom, 1995; Brookfield, 1992; Daloz, 1991). Cohen (1995) describes two behavioural functions that can help to strengthen student learning. The first of these is the facilitative focus that Cohen describes as "pos[ing] hypothetical questions to expand individual views; uncover[ing] the underlying experiential and informational basis for assumptions; and present[ing] multiple viewpoints to generate a more in-depth analysis" (p. 61). He argues that facilitation helps "mentees reflect upon and consider alternative points of view" (p. 61). In this regard, Ferguson et al. (1999) point out that questioning, analyzing, and planning make up the three reflective thinking

categories, and that one result of reflection is change. They see the reflective process as valuable because "members of the mentoring pair are in transition and use reflection as a means to create and make sense of change, integrating what they have learned into their practice" (p. 16). Cohen, and Ferguson et al. reason that questioning students offers new ideas, and as a result, these ideas guide students to reflect on and explore their beliefs, values, interests, and abilities. Reflection and exploration act as an impetus for learning.

Cohen (1995) maintains that constructive confrontation is another way to question students in order to strengthen learning. He claims that

> in the constructive confrontation focus of mentoring, the mentor respectfully challenges students'. . . .explanations for or avoidance of decisions and actions relevant to their educational and career choices. The mentor attempts to assist mentees--as adult learners--to attain insight into unproductive strategies and behaviors and to reflect on their motivation and capacity to change. (p. 75)

Cohen cautions that the mentoring function is very sensitive, and if introduced too early or too vehemently, it could jeopardize the mentoring relationship. The purpose of constructive confrontation, as he explains, is to help adult learners to recognize unproductive behaviours that are preventing them from achieving their stated goals. This purpose also suggests that this function may be used to motivate learners toward setting more realistic short-term goals as a method of reaching their stated long-term goals.

Bloom (1995) contends that a mentor is also a companion learner who helps learners with difficulties by providing direct guidance. She cites Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development as an explanation. According to Vygotsky, "there is a gap between the level of performance a learner can achieve on her [his] own and the level she

[he] can reach with a mentor's support" (p. 70). According to Bloom, "in traditional educational settings. . .cooperation or guidance is viewed as cheating" (p. 70). She agrees with Vygotsky's description of a mentor as companion learner because to think otherwise "not only denies the essentially social and interdependent nature of human learning and development, but it results in a flattened, inaccurate underestimation of students' capabilities" (p. 80). The mentor in fact helps to draw out the learners' potential, thereby motivating learners by confirming their capabilities.

Summary

Defining adult education requires adult educators to reexamine who is involved in adult education and how, why, and where they are involved. It also requires a sensitivity to personal, social, cultural, economic, and environmental changes that challenges adult educators to reflect critically on their beliefs, attitudes, and practices.

Adult students come to an adult learning environment from a variety of backgrounds and for a variety of reasons. These variables have an impact on their readiness to learn. Adult students also have many characteristics that can act as barriers to their educational success. These include reliance on welfare, negative past learning experiences that cause them to resist learning, and juggling several adult roles and responsibilities. These characteristics call for the creation of safe learning environments that support adult students and contribute to their success. An holistic learning environment must provide emotional support for the students. In addition, it must

respond to changing demographic and socio-economic needs of students by involving them in the learning process.

Adult educators can respond to student's ongoing needs by adopting the role of facilitator and by collaborating with the students in determining their needs. Assessing students's needs and responding to them is a first step in effective adult learning. Adult educators, who assume the role of facilitator, ensure that the students' involvement is central to the learning process. It is also the responsibility of adult educators to help students determine their needs. In this way, the adult educator establishes open dialogue, respects the students needs, and builds a sound relationship with the student.

Facilitators and mentors have many common attributes. They are responsible for developing social relationships and for creating a climate that supports adult learning. As well, they define learning needs collaboratively with the students. The learning they are involved in is often transformational because they frequently help adult students to work through different developmental phases of their lives. They help students with difficulties in meeting their needs by providing direct guidance. It is sometimes difficult to separate the role of facilitator and mentor as both roles focus on meeting the needs of the students in very similar ways. However, it is important to distinguish these roles because some adult educators often feel that mentoring is inherent to their role. This is a myth. The literature suggests that adult educators do not always understand or have the skills to be effective mentors, and for this reason, they must prepare themselves for this important task by learning the skills required for effective mentoring practice.

Mentoring plays an important role when trying to respond to the changing demographic and socio-economic needs of students in college upgrading programs for adults. Mentors can help students to meet their individual needs. Their purpose is to be part of a mentoring pair, in which students are supported through times of transition, helped maintain and build self-esteem, helped realize their potential, enabled to have a voice, offered opportunities to reflect on their own learning, encouraged, provided with information, challenged, and ultimately offered a caring environment that involves them in the learning process and helps them to be successful. In the next chapter, I describe the implementation of a college mentoring program for students in a college, adult, upgrading environment and report on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, I describe a 7-month study of a college upgrading program for adults in which the students and faculty developed a faculty advisor program based on a mentoring model. I describe how I organized the program, and the methods and procedures I employed to put the faculty advisor program into operation. I then describe the process that I used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program with regard to increasing students' retention and their graduation rates. I end the chapter with my personal reflections with regard to the study.

Organization of the Program

In order to establish consensus building and commitment of the faculty and students to a faculty-advisor program, I first met with the college's upgrading faculty to explain the program, invite them to participate as mentors, and help identify their needs in this capacity. Next, I met with the students who had volunteered to take part in the study in order to explain the program and to determine their needs. I then integrated the needs of the faculty with the needs of the students and designed a formal program plan. Once both groups had agreed with the plan, my next step was to arrange the faculty advisor and student partnerships before the program began.

In preparing for my study, I reviewed the literature relating to needs assessments. Based on my review, I decided to follow Vella's (1994) approach to conducting needs assessments because of its emphasis on open dialogue and on a continuous process of

discovering needs, meeting them through engaging in tasks, and then discovering further needs. I felt that her approach dovetailed nicely with my plan of study. I also consulted the literature regarding advising and mentoring students. I decided to use Cohen's (1995) Principles of Adult Mentoring Scale: Postsecondary Education as a tool for the faculty. In my view, this tool--henceforth referred to as mentoring scale--would be a good way to engage the faculty advisors in a self-assessment of their own proficiencies and as a way for them to evaluate the worth of the program in light of its objective.

Meetings With Faculty Members

I met with the college's upgrading faculty twice before the meeting with the students. In my view, establishing faculty commitment was an important first step. I reasoned that if faculty were not committed to the program, then it would not work.

Initial Meeting With Faculty Members

The organization of the faculty advisor program began on October 6, 1998 with an orientation session for the faculty advisor group. During this session, I outlined the three phases of my plan of study: needs assessment and design of the faculty advisor program, interim evaluations, and final evaluations. I provided time-lines for each phase. The purpose of this orientation was to present my plan for the faculty advisor program in its entirety and to ask the faculty to review it and offer suggestions for revisions. At the meeting, I emphasized the fact that this plan was a collaborative study, not my study. I stressed that my role was to facilitate the process and document the results. An important part of this session was to clarify the fact that participation in the study was on a volunteer

basis, and that there would be a no-fault termination option should any faculty member choose to withdraw from the study at any time.

At this meeting, each faculty member received a binder with the plan of study and a resource entitled Principles of Adult Mentoring Scale: Postsecondary Education (Cohen, 1995). This is a mentoring scale with instructions for completion and scoring. It contains statements to be answered in the spaces provided, a scoring sheet, a list of mentor role competencies, and a list of mentor role behavioural functions. The purpose of the mentoring scale was to engage the faculty members in a self-assessment of their advisory skills and to serve as a formative self-evaluation of these skills during the study. My reasons for including the scale were that it would help the faculty members to understand better the parameters of the mentoring task, and it also would enable us as a group to develop an effective procedure for faculty advising. I asked the faculty to take the mentoring scale home and complete it before our next meeting. The scale offered a list of competencies that faculty could consider as we developed our new role as faculty advisors. It also outlined the behavioural functions that accompanied each competency. For example, the mentor behaviours associated with the relationship competency are:

> responsive listening (verbal and nonverbal reactions that signal sincere interest); open-ended questions related to expressed immediate concerns about actual situations; descriptive feedback based on observation rather than inferences of motive; perception checks to ensure comprehension of feelings; and nonjudgmental sensitive responses to assist in clarification of emotional states and reactions. (Cohen, p. 29)

The other competencies appeared under the following headings: information emphasis, facilitative focus, confrontive focus, mentor model, and student vision. Each competency

had an accompanying set of mentor behaviours that served to explain the role of the mentor as it related to the particular competency.

The binder was also intended for storing future resource material as it was developed by and for the faculty advisor group. In my view, it was important for each faculty member who had volunteered to be a faculty advisor, to have a binder organized with information that could help and support them in their new role. In this way, they would have easy access to the forms and information that they needed to deal with their advisees effectively. Moreover, it offered information that they could go back to and review whenever they had a need. For these reasons, the binder offered a sense of security to the members of the faculty advisor group.

At this meeting, I also handed out a list of items relating to our role as faculty advisors that I thought we should consider before our next meeting. As I saw it, this list could serve as a template for dialogue about our role at the next meeting. It included items such as: type of involvement (what we do and what we do not do); frequency of involvement; meeting places; who we will mentor; opportunity for no-fault termination; and desired outcomes. Each item was followed by a space for comments.

We also discussed some faculty concerns at our initial meeting. The faculty voiced reservations about additions to their already busy workload. There were other questions about time commitments. For example, some faculty members wanted to know how long our faculty advisor meetings would be and how many meetings we would have during the study. Faculty also expressed concerns regarding the number of students they would be advising and the amount of time the advising would require. These were legitimate

concerns because there were only six faculty members available to act as faculty advisors. Together, we decided that the faculty meetings would last no longer than 2 hours and would be every 2 weeks at a maximum. With regard to students, our discussion resulted in an agreed-upon procedure where I would assign students equitably by first trying to match students' interests with the interests of faculty members, and second by making sure that no faculty member was given more students than another. We also discussed my role as coordinator of the faculty advisor program. I explained how I would match students and faculty, and how I would continue this practice each month with new intakes of students. I promised to do whatever was required to implement the program successfully.

During this first meeting, my objective was to create a environment wherein faculty would feel safe as they assumed a new role as mentor. I felt this objective was important for the success of the program especially in its developmental stage. Safety included making materials available for faculty to read, involving them in the process of developing the program, and carefully sequencing activities so that they would not feel overwhelmed.

Second Meeting With Faculty Members

On October 20, 1998, I held the second meeting of the faculty advisor group. We met to discuss the list of items relating to our role as faculty advisors that I had handed out at the first meeting. The purpose of the discussion was to establish a draft plan for advisory roles and duties. In actual fact, the meeting turned into a brainstorming exercise. Some of the ideas that the faculty members offered were obviously had gleaned from the mentoring scale I had distributed at our initial meeting, and some came from faculty who were familiar with the mentoring process. One of the faculty members volunteered to take

notes for me as I wrote the ideas on the blackboard. Some ideas that faculty put forward included: developing a relationship with students through a climate of trust, identifying ways of encouraging students, helping to direct students toward problem resolution, meeting with students on a regular basis, and working on strategies for student retention. In addition, we discussed the importance of the initial meeting with our advisees. We decided that this first meeting should be used to get to know each other (advisors and advisees) and to determine where and when meetings should take place and how often. In addition, we considered how we could add the role of faculty advisor to our already busy workloads. We decided to ask the Dean of Access and Skills to assign faculty advisors one hour of their regular teaching load time each week to meet with their advisees. Other appointments with advisees would be outside of class hours. After the meeting, I typed and duplicated the notes from the meeting and circulated these to the faculty advisors.

Meetings With the Students

On November 3, 1998, I sent a memo to all of our students (118) informing them of the new faculty advisor program that would be implemented at the end of the month. I told them that I would be visiting their classrooms on Friday, November 6, to explain the program, to answer any questions, and to sign up students for the program. The same option of voluntary participation that was offered to the faculty was also extended to the students. During the class visits, some students had questions about how they would be involved in developing the program; others wanted to know if participation in the faculty advisory program was mandatory. Many wanted an explanation of the mentoring process and the purpose of faculty advisors. In total, 53 students agreed to participate in the

program. My next step was to record their names and their student numbers, so I could contact them easily whenever I held meetings for the students participating in the program and at times when I needed to contact them during the study.

Meeting With Student Participants

I organized a meeting to be held on November 11th for those students who agreed to participate in the program. I planned it during lunch hour in one of our classrooms, and I agreed to provide pizza, which is popular lunch fare with college students. In my view, providing food is an effective mechanism for attracting people to attend a meeting and of increasing their comfort while there. I assumed that this addition would help to create an environment where the students could speak openly about their needs. One week prior to the meeting, I sent all students who volunteered to participate in the faculty advisor program a memo inviting them to the meeting. I explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss their needs as students in the college's upgrading program for adults. This step was a way to provide them with some ownership in the development of the faculty advisor program and to make it meaningful for them.

On the day of the meeting, approximately 50 students came. I began the meeting by explaining that faculty advisors in their role as mentors would help students to be successful in completing the adult upgrading program. I employed a participative, problem-based approach as I guided them through a discussion. I used open-ended questions such as "How often do you think you should meet with your faculty advisor?" In answer to this question, I had a variety of responses. For example, some thought they should meet weekly, and others thought they only should meet when they felt it was

necessary. I also encouraged them to think of times during their program when they would like assistance. Some of their suggestions included: tutoring, supplying information about postsecondary courses, and receiving and discussing monthly reports about their course work. They also indicated that they would like to have newsletters with information about what the program could offer a student. I recorded their answers on a flip-chart so that they could see what I was writing, and could edit what I wrote if it did not reflect their intent.

The students agreed that the meeting was very beneficial because it gave them a voice in the development of the program. I assured them that I would bring their ideas to the next faculty meeting. I explained that these ideas would be considered as part of the plan for the faculty advisor program because we would include their suggestions as we developed the program practices.

Matching Faculty Advisors' and Learners' Needs

I took the actual notes from my meeting with the students to the next faculty advisor meeting on November 24th and presented these to the group. After a brief discussion, I suggested that we try to integrate the students' concerns and ideas with the recommendations that the faculty members had put forward at their meetings. Together we developed a list of roles for faculty and students participating in the faculty advisor program. These lists reflected the needs and ideas of both groups. For example, one role for faculty was to provide appropriate information about services available at the college based on their advisee's needs. In order to fulfill this role, the faculty would need a list of services available at the college. Another faculty role was to meet with students on a

regular basis, weekly at first with a half-hour appointment scheduled either during our one-hour scheduled meeting time, or outside of class hours. Still another role was to encourage students to achieve their personal goals.

Advisees' roles included meeting with their advisor at scheduled times, informing their advisor when a meeting had to be cancelled, and following through on commitments to see or meet with people responsible for various college services. I compiled this information into what I referred to as role descriptions for faculty advisors and student advisees. I distributed these guidelines to faculty advisors and suggested that they add them to their binders as a resource. As a group, the faculty advisors decided that each of them would present the role descriptions for advisors and advisees to their advisees at their initial meeting. At that time, they would explain each role and allow time for discussion about the two roles. They planned to use this initial meeting as an ice-breaker and as an opportunity for each advisor and advisee to establish their own system of contact. The group felt that this aspect of tailoring the contact to meet the individual needs of the advisor and their advisees was important to the process as it allowed for individual preferences.

When I circulated the role descriptors from this meeting to all faculty advisors and the Dean of Access and Skills, who is in charge of adult upgrading, I received some feedback from the Dean. He informed me that I would have to change the information about the scheduling of advisor/advisee meetings because the faculty would not be given the 1 hour per week of class time that the group had requested in order to carry out their new role, nor would they receive credit for the time they spent as mentors on their

standard workload form. In other words, the advisors needed to schedule meetings with advisees outside of class time. This change was very upsetting for me because, in my opinion, people should be acknowledged for the work they do; otherwise, it is invisible, ergo, it does not exist. Nevertheless, I made this change and circulated the new document with a note explaining the reasons for the changes. I received some feedback from one of the advisors who suggested that we should make an addition to our list of information services. He suggested that henceforth we should refer advisees who needed changes to their learning plan to the coordinator of the upgrading program for adults rather than depending on mentees to refer themselves. In this way, we were helping students who were not self-directed to learn some skills in self-management I revised the referral list to include this information, and I distributed the revised information to the faculty advisors, so they could update the information in their resource binder.

During the November 24th meeting, we also discussed the limitations of our faculty advisor role and contingency issues in order to determine the scope of our involvement with the students. We talked about the sort of problems that advisees might bring to their advisors and how these could be handled. We decided that one of the advisor's duties would be to refer the advisee to the proper channels and/or contact these referrals directly on behalf of the advisee. In order to further define the scope of the advisor's role, we discussed when and where we should be referring the advisees. For example, we agreed that we would refer advisees to counsellors if they had serious personal problems that we were unqualified to address. As a result of this discussion, I developed two forms to be used by advisors. One was a faculty advisor referral list of our college's resources,

including the names and telephone numbers of the people providing the various college services. The other was a mentoring form. The purpose of this form was to document the times and places of meetings with advisees, issues discussed, any necessary follow-up or referrals, and the time and date of the next meeting. The form also served as a reminder and reference point for future meetings. I then distributed these forms to all faculty advisors through interoffice mail, and suggested that they add the forms to their binder of resources.

Faculty Advisor/Student Matches

While I was working with the faculty advisors and student advisees on the plans for the operation of the faculty advisor program, I also developed two forms that I could use in matching advisors and advisees: a *Learner Participant Profile* and a *Faculty Participant Profile*. I asked that these forms be filled out and returned to me as soon as possible so that I could begin matching student advisees and faculty advisors as soon as we had determined how the program would operate. I utilized Kerr, Schulze, and Woodward's (1995) criteria for matching the faculty advisor and advisee as a guideline in developing the form. I included career goals, hobbies, and interests as the three criteria for matching advisors and advisees. The form had plenty of space to fill in the information. I also asked students if they had a gender preference and if there was a particular faculty advisor they would prefer. I distributed these forms on November 9th by interoffice mail to faculty and to students through the student mail system.

As I received the completed forms, I began matching advisees and faculty advisors according to their profiles. For example, if an advisee was interested in doing crafts, and

a faculty advisor had the same interest, I would match these two people. I also considered the gender preferences of advisees and faculty advisors. With regard to faculty members, I also had to consider the number of advisees that each faculty advisor was assigned. Once I determined the matches, I contacted the advisee and the advisor through interoffice mail. I sent the advisees their advisor's name, and I sent the advisee's name and student number to his or her advisor. I explained to both groups that the faculty advisor would initiate the first meeting. I also kept a record of the matches and the number of advisees assigned to each faculty advisor. This record keeping was necessary because I made new matches each month with each new intake of students. I wanted to ensure that I was being equitable as I assigned new advisees to faculty advisors.

Each month, the upgrading program for adults offered incoming students the opportunity to participate in the faculty advisor program. To aid in carrying out this process, the program secretary sent me the list of new starts at the beginning of each month, and I contacted these students via the student mail system. I sent them a letter with a brief description of the faculty advisor program and a *Learner Participant Profile* to fill out. If they were interested in having a faculty advisor, I instructed them to fill out the *Learner Participant Profile* form and return it either to me or to the secretary. The letter also outlined the process that I would follow once I received their requests for an advisor. I made the matches as I received the requests. This process continued for the duration of the study. On average, a total of 6 to 10 new advisees were added each month. During the program, some advisees dropped out, but I did not keep track of this attrition.

Implementation Phase

Organizing the faculty advisor program took 2 months to complete. Following this process, during the first week of December 1998, faculty advisors began mentoring advisees. Initially, we had approximately 10 advisees assigned to each of us. During the first week of the faculty advisor program, we set up our initial meetings with our advisees either in person, or through the student mail system. Some advisors met their advisees in their offices; others met in the cafeteria or in their classrooms after classes had ended for the day, usually around 2 p.m.

As a faculty advisor, I met with my advisees wherever they wanted to meet with me. I offered them the choice and then set up a time after classes. I tried to meet with all of them during the first week of December, but I found that I did not have enough time, so I had to extend my meetings into the next week. Some advisees could not stay after classes because of personal and or family commitments, so I tried to have shorter meetings with them before classes began in the morning or during the lunch hour.

At our initial meetings, I began by informing my advisees that our discussions were confidential unless they agreed otherwise. I indicated that I would make notes about our meetings in order to keep track of what we had talked about, any referrals that I made for them, and the time and date of our next meeting. First, we usually talked about their goals and interests. I generally asked them if they needed information about or help with their goals or with the adult upgrading program. We discussed how they were progressing in the program and talked about obstacles they faced. If any advisee needed any help that I was not able to provide, I would refer the advisee to the correct person. Sometimes, if my

advisee requested, I would call and make the appointment during our meeting. If not, I would make the appointment later, and then give my advisee the information the next day. Sometimes we would talk about family and personal problems, but I found that this kind of dialogue did not usually take place during the first meeting unless I had already built a relationship with this person as a student in one of my classes. At the end of the meeting, we would either set a date and time for the next meeting, or we would agree that we would meet as needed. I would then remind my advisees to contact me any time that they needed information, wanted to discuss problems, or just talk.

The other faculty advisors carried out their roles according to the plans that we had developed, but in ways and places that met their personal needs and the needs of their advisees. For example, one advisor used E-mail as a means of on-going contact with some of his advisees. Another faculty advisor would go for walks with some of her advisees during which they talked about problems or asked for advice.

During the implementation stage, one of my colleagues, who had agreed to act as a faculty advisor, informed me that he was withdrawing from the faculty advisor program. Although he was very supportive of the program, he personally felt unable to take on the role of faculty advisor. As a consequence, I had to reassign his advisees. I discovered that even though we had agreed to no-fault termination for anyone who volunteered to take part in the program, I still felt a great sense of disappointment when this happened. Nevertheless, it was the right thing for him to do, and if I expected to have a successful program, I needed to respect his wishes. In my view, there would be nothing worse than making this program mandatory for either student or faculty member. In accepting this

fact, I realized, at least at a cognitive level, the value of allowing people the practice of freedom to decide what they want to do.

Our plan was for the advisors and advisees to carry out their mentoring partnerships for approximately 3 months. At the mid-point of the study, both groups would evaluate how the program was working for them and suggest changes that they felt should be implemented in order to improve the operation of the program as it continued.

Evaluation Process

At the mid-point and end of the study, I used a qualitative evaluation method for the faculty advisor program. According to Vella (1998),

> qualitative evaluation, often called naturalistic evaluation, examines the qualities and characteristics of a setting or experience to develop understanding and determine meaning. Rather than isolating and manipulating elements for study, the qualitative evaluator is directly involved in a broader process of study and interpretation. Qualitative evaluation is often used in an exploratory or formative way to gather information as a program is being developed. It allows study of a variety of program elements without clear definition of expected outcomes or clarification of criteria for evaluation (p. 29).

As I was directly involved in the process of the study, I felt qualitative evaluation was the best approach because I wanted to gather data about the faculty advisor program as it was being implemented, so that I could use that information to make changes to the program while it was in progress. In this way, the needs of the advisors and advisees would be better served. All of the evaluations were completed anonymously and confidentially, in order to ensure honest responses to the questions.

Three-month Program Evaluation

The 3-month program evaluation consisted of organizing a faculty advisor meeting, distributing questionnaires to the advisees, organizing an advisees' focus group, recording the comments from the two groups, and making changes as appropriate.

Faculty Advisors' Evaluation

I began the interim evaluation by organizing a faculty advisor meeting on February 16, 1999. I sent all faculty advisors a memo on February 11th informing them of the time and purpose of the meeting. I indicated that we would be discussing the faculty advisor program and how it was working for them. I wanted them to have an opportunity to reflect on the process they were using, to examine its effectiveness, and to share ideas about how the program could be improved. From the information gathered during the meeting, my expectation was that we could determine some best practices for mentoring.

During the meeting, I took notes regarding faculty advisors' concerns along with suggested solutions. I used an open dialogue during the meeting because this approach encourages individual comments and group discussion. Their ideas, suggestions, and concerns helped us all to understand and define better what we should be doing or not doing in order to meet the needs of the advisees and to become effective advisors. One general concern was that some advisees failed to seek out their faculty advisors or respond to invitations to meet. Advisors wanted to know how to deal with these advisees without offending them. One said, "Catch them in the hall." Another suggested, "Ask the school secretary if the students are still here; they may have left the program." We discussed how often we met with advisees and what frequency seemed to be most effective. Most faculty

advisors agreed that the initial contact was important soon after the advisees registered for the faculty advisor program, even if it was brief. It was noted that newly registered students, on the whole, were keeping their appointments. One advisor suggested that sometimes meetings were not necessary. She said, "Just asking students how things are going when you see them in the halls is enough. They will let you know then if they need to meet with you or not."

Following this meeting, I sent a copy of the notes about the concerns and suggestions we had discussed at the meeting to the faculty advisors. I suggested that these notes could be added to their binder of resources.

Advisees' Evaluation

In early March 1999, I sent all the advisees involved in the faculty advisor program a questionnaire to determine how the program was working for them and to ask for suggestions about how the program could better suit their needs. The last question on the form asked the advisees if they would be willing to be part of a focus group that would discuss the results of the questionnaire. Only 10 advisees out of more than 50 responded to the questionnaire. I was disappointed by this number, as I felt more responses would have given me more data on which to base my questions for the focus group.

To make matters worse, 3 out of the 10 respondents indicated that they had had no contact with their faculty advisors. This fact surprised me. As far as I knew, I had matched every student who had signed up for the program with a faculty advisor. I decided that I must have forgotten to reassign the advisees of my colleague who had withdrawn from the program, or that when I did reassign them, I had forgotten to inform

the new faculty advisor of the changes. I immediately contacted the three students and explained what I thought had happened. I apologized, and I asked if they would consider accepting me as their faculty advisor. Two of them agreed. The other one said that she would think about it, but she never got back to me.

Aside from the three students who had never met with their faculty, the others indicated that the faculty advisor program was working for them. When I asked, "How do you know it is working?", I received various answers. One advisee said, "If I need to talk, I can do so. I had problems, and I could talk about them." Another advisee referred to the opportunity to have dialogue with someone. She stated, "If I need someone to talk to, this program allows it. If I have questions, I know my advisor is there to answer." A third advisee felt the program was working for him. Very succinctly he wrote, "From support, questions answered, and no sarcasm." Another advisee echoed this feeling of respect. She said, "I know that I am not being put down because I don't know something that I should have learned before." The evaluation also indicated areas that needed further examination such as advisee/advisor matches and the scheduling of advisee/advisor meetings.

Focus Group

I contacted the nine advisees who indicated that they would be willing to be part of the focus group. I invited them to a meeting in my classroom on Wednesday, March 31, 1999 at noon and indicated that I would serve a lunch. Based on responses from the questionnaire, I developed a list of topics for discussion with the focus group. Six

advisees came to the meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, I reviewed the objectives of the focus group, explained how it would function, and then presented the topics.

At the beginning of the meeting, I informed the members of the focus group that their responses would be shared with the faculty advisors at our next meeting, but I assured them that their identities would be kept confidential. I sensed, based on earlier conversations, that anonymity was essential during the focus group process; otherwise, the advisees would find it difficult to be totally candid about the program. Anonymity was also important because it helped to create a safe environment.

I began by using open-ended questions. I asked the group to elaborate on the positive aspects of the faculty advisor program. They said that advisors "Gave helpful information," "steered people toward a more realistic goal," "enabled students to look at new prospects on what they wanted to do," and "got their hopes up!" They also indicated that they liked talking to one person because it was more informal and more relaxed and they were able to open up more about their fears and questions. I then asked them to list the things that they thought should be changed. They said that they felt "uncomfortable if they wanted to change their faculty advisor." They asked how I, as coordinator of the faculty advisor program, could make better matches to avoid that feeling of discomfort. With respect to meetings, they suggested that an agreement about appointments should be made between the advisor and advisee at the initial meeting. However, advisees felt that appointments with faculty advisors were not good enough; they simply wanted to "drop in" whenever they had a question or problem to discuss. When I asked them if they were comfortable approaching their faculty advisors to book meetings, they told me that this

made them uncomfortable because the process was too formal. In their view, a basic level of comfort with the advisor had often not been established. Some felt that the informal drop-in approach would remedy this problem.

Students' comments on the operation of the faculty advisor program were very enlightening. They claimed that the program needed more advertising and more visibility. They suggested that information could be handed out at orientation days held each month and that the faculty advisor coordinator could be introduced at the orientation and be given 5 minutes to hand out and explain the faculty advisor program to the new students. They further suggested that this information should be distinguished from the other handouts distributed during the orientation by the use of a different colour paper. They also suggested advertising the program in a student newsletter. When the idea of launching a student newsletter emerged, I asked them for ideas about what to include. One thought that there should be an editorial from students. Another suggested that a box be set up outside the main office so students could submit anonymous questions and suggestions that could be addressed in the newsletter.

Following the focus group meeting, I recorded the group's needs and sent them, along with an explanatory memo, to the faculty advisors for their perusal. My intent was to have them review the information gathered from the focus group and to consider possible changes to the faculty advisor program at our next meeting.

Results of the 3-month Evaluation

Based on the focus group's responses, the faculty advisors agreed, at their March 31st meeting, to some procedural changes with respect to providing information about the

faculty advisor program. Because the advisees felt that faculty advisors were important as an initial contact when the students first began the upgrading program for adults, I asked the coordinator of adult upgrading to add information about the faculty advisor program to the new students' orientation session, and he agreed. He also invited me to the orientation sessions to discuss the program and to hand out information to the new students. At the meeting, one faculty advisor suggested that faculty advisors introduce themselves at the orientation sessions; however, the faculty advisor group rejected this idea as most had teaching assignments during the time that the monthly orientation sessions took place. Instead, they suggested that senior students, who were involved in the faculty advisor program, could make presentations about its benefits during the orientation sessions.

The advisees' focus group had indicated that faculty advisor/advisee matches was a procedure that needed improvement. They suggested that faculty advisors consider how to make better matches in order to avoid the feeling of discomfort with a poor match. One advisee suggested that each faculty advisor could write his/her own personal profile and based on this information, the students could do their own matches. This suggestion was not possible because my original agreement with faculty members assured them that I would distribute the number of advisees each faculty advisor had in an equitable manner. If students chose their advisors, equal distribution would have been impossible. Nevertheless, I think it was a good idea.

The scheduling of the faculty advisor/advisee meetings was generally working out well. In response to the suggestion that the students should be able to drop in to see their

advisors without an appointment, the faculty advisors decided to promote a drop-in policy and inform their advisees of this policy. They also suggested posters and ads encouraging this kind of informal meeting.

The sharing of information from the advisee focus group with the faculty advisors helped the faculty advisors reevaluate current procedures and promote best practices in the program. The fact that the advisee's ideas had been acted upon demonstrated respect for the advisees. The 3-month evaluation provided direction for changes to the faculty advisor program that would ensure best practices for the duration of the study.

Seven-month Program Evaluation

At the end of the study, I developed two final questionnaires, one for faculty advisors and one for advisees. The questionnaires evaluated whether or not the faculty advisor program had met its objectives. Faculty advisors responded to their questionnaires in writing; I chose to interview the students for their final evaluation.

Faculty Advisors' Questionnaire

In developing the final questionnaire for faculty advisors, I asked myself the question, what should I evaluate? I found my answer in Vella's (1998) writings. She recommends that evaluations include "changes in learners' knowledge, skills, and attitudes resulting from the program" (p.15). Therefore, I asked the faculty advisors to evaluate their learning, their ongoing need for support, their professional and personal changes, and their feelings about the effectiveness of the faculty advisor program on student retention. In order to accomplish my intention, I used open-ended questions in their final questionnaire. I felt it was important that the questionnaire provide the faculty advisors

with a vehicle for reflecting on the past 5 months. Additionally, much of the questionnaire was based on the six behavioural functions of a mentor taken from Cohen' (1995) mentoring scale. As I had used this instrument at the beginning of the program, I wanted to use it again for the summative evaluation as a way to provide some consistency in the use of language in reference to the functions of a mentor. I also included questions on personal and professional change and on the objectives of the study. Before responding to the questionnaire, I asked the faculty advisors to reassess their mentor role competencies by completing Cohen's mentoring scale again to see if any changes had occurred in their scores. Finally, I requested that the completed questionnaires be returned to me by May 19, 1999.

Question 1 asked about the mentoring scale and whether or not the faculty advisors noted any changes in their behavioural functions as a mentor, and if so, in which areas had the change(s) occurred? Forty percent of the faculty advisors indicated a change in their scores on the adult mentoring scale; 40% indicated marginal change, and 20% indicated that they were unaware of any changes. Forty percent indicated a change in the following mentoring scale areas: relationship, facilitative, confrontive, mentor model, and student vision. In the area of information, 60% noted a change. Information refers to a specific function of the faculty advisor (mentor) that involves direct requests for detailed information from advisees about their plans and progress in achieving personal, educational, and career goals in order to ensure that the advice offered by the faculty advisor is based on accurate and sufficient knowledge of individual advisees.

In questions 2 to 8, I asked the faculty advisors about their approach to the six behavioural functions that the adult mentoring scale advocated. I used yes/no questions that included space for comments about each of the questions. I then compiled the answers to these questions and gave them to the faculty advisors with the expectation that we could use the information and ideas when we met in the fall to plan for continuing the faculty advisor program. The following are examples of some of the questions and the faculty members' anecdotal answers. Question 2 asked: "In general, what methods did you use to build a relationship with your advisee?" One stated, "Discussion, Socratic approach to goals and behaviours." Two others focussed on discussion of goals as well. Another mentioned, "Scheduled meetings, one at beginning, others at request of a student, or at my request (2 -3 meetings per student)." Another drew attention to the fact that she "Went out of [her] way to meet and encourage students in halls or class/ took a couple of advisees for coffee." Others emphasized building trust, establishing confidentiality, caring for each individual, encouraging enthusiasm, and taking an interest in their lives. One said that he used the information about the advisee taken from the *Learner Participant Profile.* He also "shared information about [himself]."

Question 8 asked, "Were you able to encourage advisees as they managed personal change and took initiatives in their transitions through life events as independent adult learners? If yes, how did you do this?" Forty percent indicated that they had not been able to encourage their advisees or that they were unsure how to answer this question if they had. The responses of two faculty advisors describe well this feeling. One said, "Unfortunately, I don't believe that I spent enough time with any single advisee to achieve

so grandiose a goal;" and another said, "I'm not sure how to answer this [question]." Sixty percent indicated that they were able to encourage their advisees. One said "I think for the most part, I was able to support and encourage their decisions;"and another added "Spoke encouraging words anyway." A third was more specific about his methodology. He said that he "questioned them about difficulties I knew they were dealing with" as a way to help them through transitions in their lives. Another faculty felt that her ability to encourage was confirmed because, as she explained, "I congratulated success; several students dropped in to my office to tell me about their successes. I don't believe they would have done that without this program."

In the questionnaire, I also tried to determine what kinds of professional development faculty advisors felt they needed in their role as mentors, so that I could plan and organize workshops or search out literature that would support these needs. Therefore, I asked the following question: "Was there a specific area in which you felt uncomfortable or lacked knowledge and for which you would have liked some professional development in order to support you in your role as faculty advisor?" One person replied affirmatively and stated, "I felt uncomfortable because I think some people were uncomfortable coming to see me. Some people did not seem to realize they could drop in to see me anytime." However, no one requested professional development regarding this concern. Eighty percent felt they did not need professional development in any specific area. This includes one person, who after responding negatively to this question noted, "Counselling in any area that would benefit the advisor/advisee relationship [would be helpful]."

With respect to personal and professional change, I asked two open-ended questions that would encourage the faculty advisors to reflect on the process and the impact that it had had on them either personally or professionally. First I asked, "How has being a mentor affected you personally?" Several shared the pleasure they felt in getting to know their students better. For example, one faculty noted, "I enjoy getting to know the students and I enjoy the interaction." Another stated, "I have certainly learned from them and been reminded of the need to be open to different life styles and values." One faculty advisor realistically stated, "Unfortunately, it did little to decrease my workload." He then added, "But it did help me to feel the gratification of working fruitfully with one or two of the participants."

Next, I asked "How has being a mentor affected you professionally?" Again, I had a variety of answers. Many responses alluded to a better understanding of their advisees as individuals. One felt that the experience had been a "Reminder of the need to understand and treat the student as an individual [and the] need to consider all facets of a person in order to contribute to their needs as a whole person." A second faculty advisor confirmed this feeling. She said, "I know my students more as a whole person now, not just as someone learning English or math. I think this allows me to try to accommodate them and be more flexible with my program." Others learned about the emotional needs of their advisees. One advisor "learned that many students feel helpless or hopeless and need someone to champion them." Another type of learning that a faculty advisor noted was the ability to "challenge a student more often now if his/her behaviour is negative or self-defeating."

Question 12 asked the faculty advisors, "Do you have reason to believe the faculty advisor program made a difference in student retention? Please explain why." Eighty percent indicated that they felt that the program had a positive influence on students' retention. The reasons for their conviction are conveyed in the following statements. One noted, "I had some advisees consider dropping a course or quitting until they talked to me. Together, we worked on a strategy to help them stay and be successful." A second indicated

> I had one student in particular who graduated into the college program. I believe the support she received played an important role in her advancement. I believe that many students who see their advisor on a regular schedule are more likely to speak with them if they are considering dropping out.

And a third believed that "some (perhaps several) of the students who opted to have a faculty advisor found the encouragement and guidance proffered by their advisor made continuation in the program a more viable option than withdrawal from it."

When I asked the faculty advisors if we should continue a formal faculty advisor program, 100% responded affirmatively. One person said, "Students learn better from, and with, a person they know. They are more willing to try new strategies." And another said, "It gives students an opportunity to bounce things off someone who cares and gives me a chance to help and know our students better." For the most part, the faculty advisors felt that the faculty advisor program was worth the effort.

Advisees' Interviews

When I evaluated the advisees, I decided to assess the design of the program, the methods and procedures used, and advisors' effectiveness. I also wanted information

about how the program had affected them personally and its usefulness as a mechanism for student retention. The method I chose to gather the information was personal interviews with the advisees. My rationale for using this method was based on the fact that very few advisees completed the 3-month questionnaire; consequently, I decided to conduct personal interviews with as many advisees as I could contact in order to get a better return on their final questionnaire. This method proved to be more time consuming, but I achieved a greater response, and a broader cross-section of the advisees. In addition, this form of open dialogue, at least in my opinion, showed respect for the students by recognizing them as part of the study team and engaging them more fully in the evaluation process than filling out a questionnaire would have done.

Some of the questions which I asked the advisees during my interviews dealt with the issues that the focus group had communicated in March such as their concerns about advisor/advisee matches. Other questions related to Cohen's (1995) six mentoring behaviour functions.

In response to the question, "Was the match between you and your faculty advisor a good match?", the majority of advisees (81%) believed that the match was a good match. The overwhelming response as to why the matches were favourable was attributed to the faculty advisors' ability to listen and communicate. Some of the comments included words and phrases like: "understanding," "listens," "gives good advice and is there whenever needed," "easy to talk to, and listened to what I had to say." Other comments were: "My questions were important," and "I can communicate with her." A small group did not

experience a good match. They said that the person was hard to talk to; they did not know who their faculty advisor was, or their faculty advisor was not too understanding.

Although I had indicated from the beginning of the study that there was a policy of no-fault termination, at least three advisees suggested that I should make it clearer that if a match is not working, it could be stopped at any time. I now realized that I should stress this policy more; however, my preference was to improve the matching process right from the start. In order to determine how matching advisees and advisors could be improved, I asked the advisees, "How do you think matches should be made?" Twenty-nine percent responded that they would like matches to be based on students' choices. One person said, "If [we] are put with someone [we] don't relate to, [we] won't go." Thirty percent thought the current practice of filling out a form indicating activities and interests and having the coordinator make the matches was a good method. However, when I asked the advisees, "Should students choose their own faculty advisors thereby making their own matches?", 76% said yes, 14% said no, and 10% had no response. Evidently, they did not think of this alternative until I asked the above question. The majority of advisees accepted this alternative as the best way to make a match. This method of making matches, although praiseworthy, was not possible given the fact that I had promised faculty members that I would distribute advisees equitably.

I also asked for suggestions about how I could change or what questions I could add to the two profile forms (faculty and students) so that better matches could be made. Suggestions included adding questions relating to what you do for fun, type of personality, age, what kind of person you would like as advisor, likes and dislikes, and what is your

favourite subject. Another good suggestion was to ask students to describe an ideal faculty advisor.

My major concern during the faculty advisor study was the relatively small number of students actually taking advantage of the program. Each month, only 6 to 10 students would sign up, which is less than half of the usual monthly enrollment. In the final evaluation, I asked the advisees, "Do you think that the faculty advisor program needs more visibility in order to have more students take advantage of this opportunity? Eighty-one percent responded affirmatively to this question. When I asked "Why?", they claimed that students sometimes had the wrong idea about the program at first, so they were reluctant to sign up. Some people felt that the program was almost secretive. Others felt that telling students about the program during orientation was not a good idea because there was too much new information to absorb on that day. I then asked them for suggestions on how I could improve the program's visibility. One advisee suggested that I isolate the information about the faculty advisor program on an independent, prominent, bulletin board as a way to draw attention to the program. Another suggestion was that after students had been in the upgrading program for adults for a month or two, I could remind them of the faculty advisor program by putting a letter in their mailboxes and setting up a time to talk about the program. Others offered ideas such as having teachers talk about the program in their classes at the beginning of each month, writing about the program in newsletters, posting a list of faculty advisors, and advertising the program on posters and in the monthly calendar schedule.

I learned from one of my colleagues, who was taking part in the faculty advisor program, that he was using E-mail as a form of communication with his advisees. I was anxious to get some feedback on this method of contact, so I asked the advisees if they would like to contact their advisor through E-mail. The majority, 67%, stated that this was a good idea. One said "If someone is at home, you can still talk." Another believed E-mail would help with the problem of enough time to meet. He said, "Faculty advising is hard on teachers--a little demanding on teacher's time. If it's too demanding, it takes away from their patience." One advisee, who noted that E-mail would make contact between faculty advisors and advisees more convenient, reasoned that "if you can't find your faculty advisor, you can E-mail them and they can E-mail you back." An advisee who was already using E-mail to connect with his faculty advisor provided evidence to validate the value of their E-mail connection: "I already do this. We can go back and forth and relay messages. I like to check my messages; it makes for a closer relationship and he doesn't have to attend a meeting."

However, 33% of advisees rejected the idea of E-mail. Their reasons fell into two categories. One group of advisees did not have E-mail available and knew nothing about how it operated. They would need to learn how to use E-mail and have access to a computer in order to respond in this manner. The other group preferred personal contact, or "talking face to face." I felt that this information was important for faculty advisors so they could understand the individual needs of their advisees and respond appropriately.

As well as determining the advisees' needs with regard to the operation of the faculty advisor program, I wanted to assess how the program affected them personally, so

asked, "How has a faculty advisor affected you?" Many advisees responded by emphasizing the value of having someone they could talk to and get advice from, "if personal issues arise or I'm having trouble in school." Another offered this opinion: "It seems that nobody wants to talk to you let alone meet with you; faculty advisors do. It makes you feel important." Other advisees talked about the encouragement they received and how important encouragement was to their success. One said, "The more people who have some expectations for your success--it's a motivating factor; if it's just you, you can slide a bit." Another explained, "It has had a positive effect in that I had some place to go if upset or if I had inability to accomplish something--it gave me encouragement." Advisees also valued the information and advice that faculty advisors offered. One declared, "[I] made changes in my life. I'm doing better in school than I was when I was taking two classes." In brief, a faculty advisor had a positive effect on the advisees. The following are some of the words they used to express their feelings: encouraged, listened to, motivated, important, confident, and comfortable.

In addition to wanting to know how the faculty program affected the advisees personally, I wanted to find out if the program had a positive effect on learner retention. When I asked, "Has a faculty advisor made a difference in whether or not you stayed in the upgrading program for adults?" Sixty-seven percent of the advisees stated that it had. I then asked, "Was there any time in which you considered quitting and would have quit if you had not had a faculty advisor to talk to?" Fifty-six percent confirmed the fact that they had considered quitting at one time or another during the course of the study.

Similar to the response from the faculty advisors on whether the faculty advisor program should continue, 100% of the advisees responded positively to this question. The main reason listed for continuing the program was that students could have someone to talk to and get help from when they needed it. Some of the comments indicated that there was help if help was needed. Others commented that faculty advisors helped to put things in perspective. Some claimed that faculty advisors helped with self-esteem and confidence. One indicated that faculty advisors provided information and this was more helpful than trying to figure everything out for oneself. Faculty advisors were described as friend, resource, and helper.

Final Faculty Advisor Meeting

On June 9, 1999, during a staff meeting, I briefly summarized two of the responses from the final advisee interviews. I read the advisees' responses to the questions regarding whether or not we should continue the program, and how the availability of a faculty advisor had affected them. I did this for two reasons. First, I wanted the faculty advisors to understand the benefits and immediate usefulness of the faculty advisor program that they had worked so hard to develop. Second, I wanted to emphasize the affective element of the faculty advisor program as a way to underscore for the faculty advisors the emotional needs of our adult students.

When I informed the group of the fact that the students unanimously agreed that the faculty advisor program should be continued, there was unanimous support from the faculty that it continue provided I agree to be coordinator of the program. I indicated that I would be willing to take on this task. I also told the faculty advisors that I would

circulate a summary of the findings of the final questionnaires to the group for their perusal. I would prepare, also, a final report about the study and submit it to the Dean of Access and Skills, and follow it up with an appointment to discuss the report, especially the recommendation section.

Graduation Statistics

Did the faculty advisor program actually affect retention, thereby contributing to higher graduation statistics and student success? The following graph of graduation statistics from 1994 to 1999 indicates that the number of students graduating from the college upgrading program for adults was higher in 1994, but when HRDC's seat purchase policy changed, the graduation rates decreased. The chart reveals that after low student graduation rates from 1995 to 1998, there was an increase from 20 in 1998, to 30 in 1999 following the implementation of the faculty advisor program. Of the 30 graduates, 10 had faculty advisors. The positive effects of the faculty advisor program on the students who participated became evident during my evaluation interview. However, before any final conclusion can be made about the faculty advisor program, it will have to be continued for a longer period of time in order to determine if there is a cause effect relationship between a faculty advisor program and student success in completing the program.

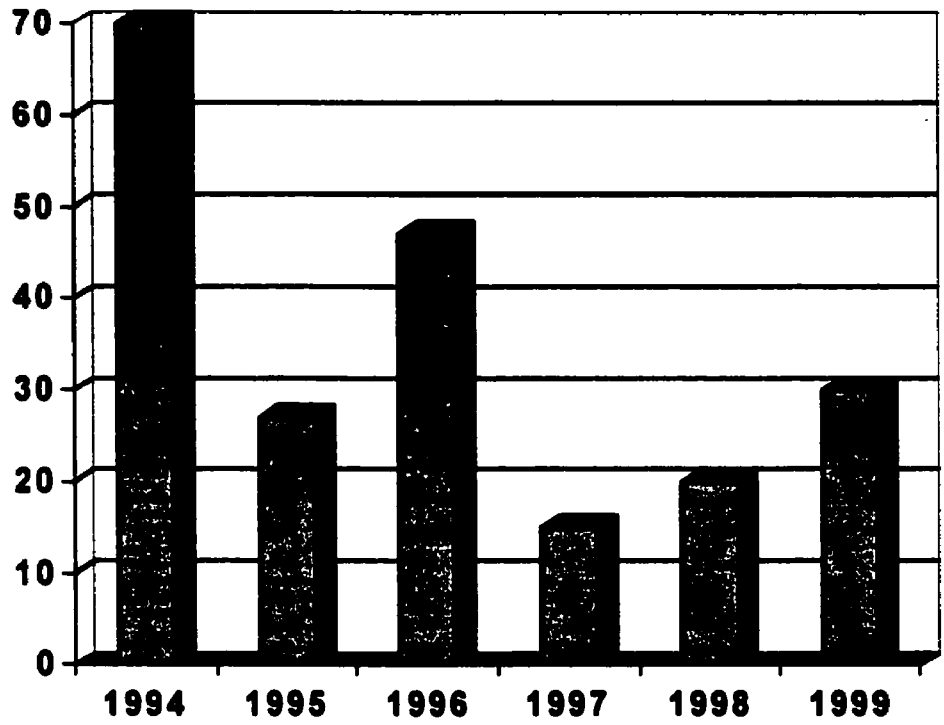

Figure 1. College's upgrading graduation statistics for the period 1994 to 1999. It notes the college's major decline in graduates after the change in HRDC policy in 1996. An improvement in graduation statistics is shown in the comparison between 1998 and 1999 after the implementation of the faculty advisor program.

Personal Reflections

The roles which I undertook during the implementation of the faculty advisor program provided me a variety of opportunities to reflect on the process and on the findings of the study. As the facilitator of the study, I applied the WWW question, "Who needs what as defined by whom? (Vella, 1994, p. 52), in order to define the needs of the students and the faculty during the initial stages of the study. This question helped me to apply the adult learning principles of inclusion and self-direction. It also presented a method for determining stakeholders' needs and ensuring that they were being met. The results of the final interviews reinforced my personal belief that college upgrading students need someone to listen to and encourage them, and this fact supports the theory that adult educators need to address not only the cognitive dimension of learning, but the affective dimension of learning in adult education programs as well.

As a faculty advisor, I often referred to the mentoring scale as a way to improve my competencies as a mentor. When I talked with my advisees, I realized how much they valued human contact on a more personal level and how it helped meet an emotional need. In my view, meeting the students' emotional needs in the learning environment is necessary, otherwise they will not become involved and be successful in an upgrading program for adults. I also became aware of the fact that many of my advisees had no goals. Without goals, they had little motivation to continue with their education, so I encouraged them to take the vocational interest test that was administered by a college counsellor. I also found a website that students could access, and this became another way for them to explore career choices. I shared this information with the other faculty

advisors, so they also could tell their advisees and encourage them to use these services. I encouraged students to take part as a "Student for a Day" in a postsecondary course. This type of encouragement helped my advisees to begin establishing goals that would motivate them to succeed in the upgrading program for adults.

As coordinator of the faculty advisor program, the advisee group reinforced for me the importance of students having a voice in constructing their learning environment. This was evident when they took an active role in the design and structure of the faculty advisor program, and when they requested a student question/suggestion box. Their requests for information prompted me to begin a monthly newsletter for them in December 1998.

I also tried to respond to the faculty advisors' needs. When I made advisor and advisee matches, I tried to do it in a equitable way. I was very conscious of the fact that advising 10 to 15 advisees on a regular basis added to my colleagues' workload and that they were not being compensated for this work either in time or money. I felt responsible for this situation and was most grateful to my colleagues for supporting me during the study and for their generosity in mentoring a group of students.

Finally, as mentor to my colleagues who participated in the faculty advisor program, I observed their engagement in the process. During our advisor meetings, they participated by suggesting new ways to improve the faculty advisor program. Some shared ideas about how they advised students, and others commented on how the matching done through the use of profiles helped to create a positive environment with their advisees. For me, these comments provided evidence that they felt safe when they engaged in the process; consequently, they were comfortable voicing their success. As

they shared their experiences of mentoring, I listened to them, affirmed them, and congratulated them on the work they were doing as faculty advisors. To encourage the faculty advisors, I provided food at meetings, sent them thank you notes for their contributions to the program, listened to them, and verbally applauded their successes.

Summary

The fact that the faculty advisors and advisees endorsed the continuation of the program for the following year supported my belief that a mentor program should be part of an upgrading program for adults. As a facilitator, faculty advisor, and program coordinator, I view the faculty advisor program as a way to meet the students' emotional needs and involve them in the learning process. I believe that these two components are necessary for their educational success. Education is more than a cognitive exercise. The learning environment must provide support for students that helps them to meet their individual needs and addresses the affective dimensions of learning. Mentoring students through a formal faculty advisor program provides for this support.

In the final chapter, I discuss my study in light of the literature reviewed in chapter 2. I present conclusions and offer recommendations relating to mentoring in a college upgrading environment for adults.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, and RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine mentoring as a way for college faculty to assist students in an upgrading program for adults to meet their needs and to successfully complete the upgrading program. I had three goals for choosing a mentoring model. First, I wanted to effect a positive change in the upgrading program for adults by establishing a faculty advisor program. Second, I wanted the faculty advisor program to provide an appropriate means for faculty to get to know the students better and to understand and respond to their individual needs. Third, I wanted to involve the students in a program that would increase their self-management and self-direction skills, and ultimately their opportunity for success in an educational environment. This chapter discusses the findings of my study and examines how they compare to the literature.

I begin this chapter by discussing college upgrading students as adult learners. In the next section, I discuss the methods that I used to gain insight into the needs of faculty and students when I implemented the faculty advisor program. The third section discusses the value of mentoring as a tool for student success. Following these three sections, I provide conclusions and a list of recommendations for educators interested in establishing a faculty advisor program in an upgrading environment for adults.

Understanding Adult Students

Adult education has responded to social changes over the decades by providing programs which meet the needs of society. However, adult students are not a static,

homogeneous group; therefore, research regarding who participates and the reasons for participation in adult education must be on-going. This approach is in keeping with Barer-Stein and Draper's (1993) contention that theories about who participates in adult education must remain fluid and must reflect the realities of the time and culture. Morin's (1998) research also highlights the need for adult educators to remain cognizant of current trends in adult education in order to identify what is happening and understand how they can prepare for that change. Morin contends that adult educators must understand current developments, or they will hinder the learning process. He also claims that when adult educators fail to respond to the current developments in the field of adult education, the status quo is retained. Consequently, the needs of adult learners in the changing environment are not met. A good example of a current trend in adult education is the change in clientele entering the upgrading program for adults at the college where I work as a result of a change in HRDC policy. I initiated a faculty advisor program as a way to respond to the needs of the changing clientele in the upgrading program.

Draper (1992), McCabe and Day (1998), and O'Sullivan (1999) call for a new approach to adult education that meets more than the cognitive needs of students. Their research calls for "a broader focus on education towards human development" (Draper, p.17). This study helped me and my colleagues to understand that adult upgrading students have emotional needs that must be met within the learning environment if we expected them to be successful in their educational endeavours. One student identified this need quite clearly during the focus group meeting. When I asked which had been more important, the personal value (relationship) or the practical value (information) of a

faculty advisor, the student talked about how it was scary to return to school because she was uncertain of her capabilities. She said, "I questioned if going back to school was right for me," and added, "This is where the emotional part comes in--when you're floating/questioning." During the final interview, 100% of the students indicated that we should continue the faculty advisor program. When I asked why we should continue it, most of the advisees' answers further reinforced the emotional value of a faculty advisor. One student said that the faculty advisor program was important "because people come to school and think it's so impersonal." Another said, "Your faculty advisor is not just a teacher, he/she is a friend you can talk to." A third said, "I find it is a benefit because when students have problems they can go to their faculty advisor about them." The words "impersonal", "friend", and "problems" are indicative of the students' emotional needs.

Adult education literature has rarely profiled students who participate in academic upgrading programs. Most authors like Cranton (1989) Knowles (1975), Long (1987), and Merriam and Brockett (1997) provide very general definitions. They identify adult learners as those who choose to become involved in a learning situation. In this study, the majority of students in the upgrading program for adults did not become involved by choice. Changes in government policy for people whose source of income is Ontario Works dictate that recipients of these funds must either work or go to school in order to be eligible for income. In other words, many of these students do not attend adult upgrading programs voluntarily. Since 68% of our learners receive their income from social assistance benefits, the consequence has been that many of our students have no choice but to return to school. A consequence of being forced to return to school has

been poor student retention, decreased motivation, and declining graduation statistics. In 1996, 48 students graduated; in 1998, only 21 graduated even though the number of student intakes remained constant.

Cranton (1989) claims that when "the adult has chosen to learn, he [she] will have clear and specific goals related to his [her] own needs, whether it be an improvement in job skills or social contact" (p. 7). However, adult upgrading students, who have been mandated to return to school as a condition of receiving financial benefits, rarely have clear goals. At the mid-point in the study, during the faculty advisor meeting on February 16, 1999, the faculty advisors discussed this problem of lack of goals. One advisor said, "Many students do not know what they want to do in the future." As a way to address this problem, the faculty advisors decided to refer advisees, who seemingly did not have a goal, to a college counsellor for a vocational interest assessment. Another suggestion was to remind the advisees of the "Student for a Day" program and to encourage advisees to take advantage of this opportunity. The faculty advisors also decided that we should offer a goal setting seminar/workshop, advertise it in one of our newsletters, and encourage advisees to take part. In this way, the faculty advisor group could help the advisees begin to set personal goals. As a group, we felt that self-direction in learning was not possible unless students had personal goals.

Knowles (1985) characterizes adult students as self-directed learners, but Brookfield (1992) argues that this assumption is a myth. Brookfield believes that many factors determine a person's readiness for self-directed learning. Two of these factors directly relate to students in adult upgrading programs. One factor that Brookfield

describes as "the political ethos of the time and culture"(p.13) could be applied to the Ontario government's changes that affect our students who receive social assistance benefits. Sixty-eight percent of students at all levels of the upgrading program for adults currently receive their income from welfare. The fact that these students must either go to work or school, or lose their financial support from the government, prevents personal choice and self- direction. The other factor that Brookfield describes as "the sub-culture from which [the student] comes" (p. 13), also has an impact on the students in adult upgrading programs. As a rule, adult upgrading students are literacy students whose subcultures include aboriginal students, adults with disabilities, recent immigrants, adults with developmental handicaps, the unemployed, welfare recipients, and psychiatric patients. As Brookfield points out, political ethos and sub-culture are both factors that affect readiness for self-directed learning, especially students in adult upgrading programs. The advisees' comments during the final interview strongly suggest that they still lack self-confidence. When I asked what they valued most about having a faculty advisor, the words they used like "encouraged," "listened to," "motivated," "made to feel important, confident, and comfortable," revealed that they needed emotional support in order to become more self-directed. In other words, self-direction has to be fostered in these students; it does not simply happen.

One characteristic of many adult upgrading students is their reliance on social assistance benefits. The faculty observed that many of the students receiving government assistance were young adults with little or no work experience. They also had many other social and economic barriers in their paths. Some of the barriers that the faculty noted

were: "anger," "feelings of incompetence," "bitterness in being forced to go to school," and "interpersonal confrontations." These observations are consistent with McCabe and Day's (1998) contention that people with financial struggles often are burdened with negative feelings that act as barriers to their success. Unfortunately, there is very little adult education literature that discusses this particular characteristic or provides suggestions for coping with this barrier. Programs, like the one reported in this thesis, help to fill this gap in the literature.

Another characteristic that Horne (1998), McCabe and Day (1998), and Polson (1993) identify as being a barrier to educational success is maintaining family responsibilities. Many adult upgrading students, who have children, are single parents with little support that often makes returning to school physically and emotionally demanding for them. They sometimes need help to put their life, with all of its demands, into perspective. One student told me that her faculty advisor helped to develop a better outlook on her life. After talking to her faculty advisor about her inability to be a good mother and a successful student at the same time, she was encouraged to reduce her course load rather than drop out of the program. She said, "[I] made changes in my life. I'm doing better in school than I was when I was taking two classes."

Many students in adult upgrading have had negative experiences associated with learning. Draper (1992), Kidd (1973), MacKeracher (1996), and Polson (1993) recognize the impact of these negative experiences. They claim that students who have had negative educational experiences in the past often experience fear, frustration, and threats to their self-esteem and self-confidence when they return to a learning environment like an

upgrading program for adults. These emotional reactions create barriers to learning. It is important, therefore, not only to understand the impact of negative experiences, but also to create a learning environment that dispels these reactions and enhances motivation to learn. As a way to deal with negative reactions, I decided to establish the faculty advisor program, and I asked my colleagues to join me in this venture. As faculty advisors, my colleagues reported that they used various means to build a relationship with their advisees, thereby creating a positive learning environment. One advisor said she "went out of [her] way to meet and encourage students in halls or class, [and] took a couple of advisees for coffee." Another advisor built the relationship on "trust--establishing confidentiality, caring for each individual, enthusiasm and interest in their lives. Respect for their individual choices and goals." The advisees provided evidence in their final interview that their faculty advisors provided encouragement, listened to them when they were upset or having trouble in school, and made them feel more comfortable in school.

These barriers to educational success suggest that adult upgrading students need support systems that will help them to become successful. The purpose of the faculty advisor program is to provide support for the students and to help them to meet their needs. Once barriers are eliminated and needs are met, students are more likely to be successful. Faculty advisors used various methods to respond to their advisees and to help them meet their needs. Most encouraged an open-door policy with their advisees. One took her advisees out for coffee. Another communicated by E-mail as a method of meeting his advisees' needs. In the literature, McCabe and Day (1998), and Brookfield

(1992) identify the necessity of providing supports for students in the learning environment, so that they can become active participants in the learning process.

Creating a Positive Learning Environment

There is consensus in the literature that involving students in the learning process is an essential element for enhancing student success. Knowles (1975) points out that involvement encourages students to become self-directed. Knowles and MacKeracher (1996) suggest that the best way to involve learners in the learning process is to change the role of the educator from content transmitter to facilitator of learning. The upgrading program for adults, which is the subject of this thesis, used a directing mode of facilitating whereby the teacher designs the structure, content, and activities of the learning process and provides feedback and guidance to the learners. The reason for this approach was the fact that the students were expected to acquire specific skills in literacy and numeracy. MacKeracher argues that this form of facilitation often lacks "interpersonal involvement with the individual learners" (p. 219). In her view, this kind of approach rarely meets the students' affective needs. As an adult educator, I agree with MacKeracher. It was for this reason that I advanced the idea of a faculty advisor program, which was based on a mentoring model. As I saw it, this kind of program would provide the interpersonal involvement with students that is a necessary component of a learning environment for adult upgrading students in a college environment.

One of the purposes of the program is to encourage students to be involved in their learning. Ferguson, et al. (1999), and Huang and Lynch (1995) point out that the

mentoring relationship is inherently interdependent; therefore it requires interpersonal involvement of both parties. According to McCabe and Day (1998), involving the students in the learning process helps colleges to respond to the realities of the shifting demography and the socio-economic needs of their students. As our adult upgrading program was experiencing both kinds of shifts, demographic and socio-economic, I assumed that the faculty advisor program would effect a change in the learning environment that would involve the students in the learning process, and in this way, respond to their individual needs. The evidence to date seems to indicate that the program is off to a good start in achieving its objective.

Student involvement also helps students to take ownership of their learning and consequently become more self-directed. During the final interviews, advisees indicated that their faculty advisor gave them confidence to want to come to school and helped them to feel confident and determined. Astin (1993) reports that student involvement with faculty enhances learning, academic performance, and retention. He characterizes this involvement as interest in a student's academic and personal problems; sensitivity to minority issues; accessibility outside of office hours; and regular availability for student-faculty interactions. The fact that the faculty advisors in this study supported a drop-in, open-door policy, was proof that they were serious about creating a positive learning environment.

Needs Assessment Process

Consistent with established adult education practice, I conducted a needs assessment as a way to understand students' and faculty's needs and to involve them in the planning process as I organized the faculty advisor program. Many authors (Brookfield, 1986; English, 1998; Knowles, 1970; and Vella 1994) believe that conducting needs assessments is an important role of facilitators and that it is an important first step for effective adult learning and as a way to meet individual and institutional needs adequately. When I first met with the students about the faculty advisor program, I used open-ended questions to explore their needs, then I listened and wrote down what they said. Similarily, Vella believes that listening is a very important part of the needs assessment. I found that the more I listened, the more I learned about the needs of the students.

When I conducted the needs assessment, I tried to create a physical and emotional environment that would offer a sense of safety to the students as we discussed their needs. To achieve this purpose, I provided food and familiar surroundings to assure the students' comfort level. I also stressed that their input to the planning of the faculty advisor program was important, otherwise it would not meet their needs. Creating this sense of safety is consistent with Malouf (1999), Taylor (1992), Vella (1995), and Waldron and Moore's (1991) recommendations that a safe learning environment is paramount for student involvement.

Not only was I working with students, I was also working with faculty's needs as I planned and implemented the faculty advisor program. As faculty commitment was important to the success of the program, I involved them in the design of the program

from the outset so that they would feel safe as well. I endeavoured to create a sense of safety for faculty by making materials available for them to read, by reviewing the objectives of the study, by involving them in the process of developing the program, and by carefully sequencing the activities. This type of involvement is consistent with Vella's (1994) principle of safety in the learning environment.

Another strategy that I used with the students during the implementation phase was to organize an advisees' focus group for the mid-term evaluation of the faculty advisor program. This was a part of what I refer to as the on-going needs assessment process. In my opinion, the original group of 53 advisees would have been too large for honest and open dialogue about the strengths and weaknesses of the program, so I asked for volunteers to take part in a focus group of 10 people. In fact, Vella (1994) suggests that whenever adult educators elicit students' feedback about a program, they should invite them to work in small groups because in this way they will find their voice, and their feeling of safety will increase.

I also paid careful attention to the learning environment. When the focus group met, it was in a room in which they were familiar and comfortable. I provided lunch for the group, reviewed the objectives of the meeting, and then presented the topics of concern. On the subject of safety, Vella (1994) finds that the atmosphere of the room, the design of the learning task, and the materials are all very important. I felt that my preparations for the meeting had established a positive climate in which the advisees felt comfortable and safe in discussing their needs. Proof that students feel safe, at least in my view, is the level of honest dialogue that takes place in the group. During this particular

focus group, there was a great deal of honest dialogue between the focus group and me. Another positive factor was that I assured the students of anonymity when I reported the focus group findings to the faculty members.

When the advisees spoke of concerns, I listened and wrote down their responses. I facilitated the discussion, but I was not part of the dialogue that took place about the issues. I invited the students to speak; I listened, and I wrote down what they said. Similarily, Vella (1994) recommends the practice of "waiting for information, listening" (p. 72). In her view, this approach is important because it provides for nonjudgemental discussion. As Vella points out, "judging stops spontaneity" (p. 72). I have found that listening is a good way to avoid making judgements. Providing for nonjudgemental discussion is important because it builds a sound relationship between the person facilitating the session and the participants. It seemed logical to me that nonjudgement would encourage candid responses from the participants, in this case students involved in a focus group.

Part of the needs assessment also included a summative evaluation of both the faculty advisors and advisees. I used a questionnaire for faculty advisors. The purpose of the final questionnaire was to encourage faculty advisors to reflect on the faculty advisor program and to evaluate how it had impacted them personally and professionally. I used open-ended questions to achieve this purpose. According to Vella (1994), "open questions that invite dialogue are a simple format for building confidence, creating a relationship for learning and developing and listening" (p. 72). For example, I asked the faculty advisors "Did you carry out your initial intentions as a faculty advisor? If not, why

not?" One advisor wrote, "Not entirely--constraints of time and workload made it difficult for me to be as conscientious about regular contact with my advisees as I would have liked." Another advisor remarked, "Not that well, in that I didn't meet regularly with students as I had intended; however, students didn't respond to written messages, didn't take any steps to meet with me, and I would like this to be at their initiative as well as mine." These responses demonstrate honest dialogue about faculty workload and provide input that needs to be considered in the fall when we revise the program guidelines. As Vella points out, "an open question invites reflection" (p. 73). A faculty advisor's reflections about scheduling meetings with advisees offered an interesting insight. She said, "I often think they [advisees] may have a concern, but feel it doesn't warrant a meeting. By scheduling a meeting, it gives them the opportunity [to discuss the concern]." The final questionnaire provided the faculty advisors with a vehicle for learning, developing, listening, and reflecting. In this way they could evaluate the program's impact on them personally and professionally.

For the advisees' summative evaluation, I conducted personal interviews. I did this for two reasons. First, I wanted to ensure an honest response from the advisees regarding the faculty advisor program. Second, I felt that an interview would engage the students more fully in the evaluation process than filling out questionnaires. Dixon (1990) cautions that the return rate for questionnaires is often poor, and the unfortunate consequence of limited responses is a limited representation of ideas. Vella (1994) claims that when students feel themselves respected and important decision makers or subjects of their own learning, it can lead to "changes in the effect of teaching: fewer dropouts"

(p. 14). As increasing the graduate numbers was a major objective of the faculty advisor program, I felt that the interview process would yield some good information on best practices.

Value of Mentoring as a Tool for Student Success

In this section, I discuss my findings in light of the literature about the value of mentoring on the affective domain. I elaborate on issues of motivation and self-direction. As well, I discuss the application of mentoring in a formal faculty advisor program and the skills required to assume a mentoring role.

Mentoring and the Affective Domain

Mentoring is a service that should be part of an upgrading program for adults because it helps meet the emotional needs of students. Addressing the affective domain helps students to build self-esteem and self-concept. When this happens, the students gain confidence to become self-directed learners. Mentoring involves dialogue between the faculty advisor and advisee. Through this dialogue, the advisee has a voice in determining his/her needs, and the faculty advisor acts as a guide in helping the advisee to define those needs. One advisee said, "Faculty advisors help put things into perspective." Another said, "It's a good helping tool. If I needed information [that] I couldn't get, she'd give it to me or find it out for me."

Brookfield (1992), and McCabe and Day (1998) believe that students need support in their learning environment that meets their emotional needs. One way that mentoring responds to students' emotional needs is through communication. The advisees in this

study support this theory. They claim that having a faculty advisor to talk to and to listen to their concerns was important in the development of their self-concept. One advisee said, "It seems nobody wants to talk to you let alone meet with you; faculty advisors do. It makes you feel important." Another stated, [I'm] "more self-confident--knowing that I have someone I can talk to. If I have problems, I can get them out in the open and feel better about myself." Bloom (1995) and Daloz (1991) concur that listening is a primary method for providing support to mentees. Bloom explains that being heard, especially for women, acknowledges the fact that the female student has something valuable to say. This type of affirmation and acknowledgement is important in building personal self-esteem.

Vella (1994) points out that communication builds healthy relationships which are paramount to student success. She believes that a sound relationship involves "respect, safety, open communication, listening, and humility" (p. 8). These attributes are required in any learning environment, and mentoring is one way that these attributes can be provided. Advisees indicated that safety was important. In their feedback, they indicated that having a faculty advisor made them feel comfortable and confident. One advisee said that he felt "more comfortable knowing I have someone I can go to if I have any difficulty." Another said, "It makes me feel more comfortable at school. It's like having a friend." Several advisees indicated that having a faculty advisor improved their confidence. Advisees often referred to their faculty advisor's ability to listen.

Mentoring is important in an upgrading program for adults because the students are in a period of transition. Schulz (1995) believes that a mentor assists the continuing

development of adults as they go through different phases in their learning journey. When asked why we should continue the faculty advisor program, one advisee said, "It's a transitional tool." Another advisee indicated that a faculty advisor "Makes the transition [to school] not so scary." Faculty advisors positively impact the emotional development of students by helping them to handle life's tasks and changes.

Faculty advisors also help to alleviate student's fears and frustration especially when the students are new to a learning environment. Schulz (1995) emphasizes the fact that helping students with information on resources and services and helping them to understand how the system works "positively affects the student's ability to adjust to the college environment" (p. 61). Most advisees in this study noted the value of having someone to help them figure things out. For example, one said, "It's a good helping tool. If I needed information I couldn't get, she would give it to me or find it out for me." Another added, "Relieves a lot of frustration." Bloom (1995) and Daloz (1991) share the view that mentors interpret the environment and are able to explain the educational system. One advisee noted, "There's a lot of not knowing where to turn." Two others said, "More helpful than trying to figure everything out for yourself," and "Faculty advisor [was] a good resource."

Many of the advisees in the study indicated that they valued the encouragement their faculty advisors provided. One said, "It's had a positive effect in that I had some place to go if upset or if I had inability to accomplish something. It gave me encouragement." Another said, "Subtle encouragement [was] there, and [my faculty advisor was] interested saying 'you'd be really good in that'." A third commented that his

faculty advisor "promoted encouragement to go on in English and get over hurdles in the course." Cohen (1995) sees the mentor's role as a way to "encourage mentees to develop talents and pursue dreams" (p. 121). English (1998) also believes that a mentor's role is to encourage. She explains that "the mentor is pleased with the mentees successes. . .and wants the mentee to fully realize his or her potential" (p. 9). Seventy-two percent of the advisees indicated that their faculty advisors had encouraged them during the process of personal change and as they made the transition to the college environment.

Many advisors viewed their mentors as a motivator. One advisee noted, "Any time you're meeting someone, it's an extra motivator for you to be doing well." Another stated, "The more people who have some expectation for your success--it's a motivating factor; if it's just you, you can slide a bit." A third added, "I think it helps people if they get discouraged or want to give up." Another confessed, "I wouldn't be where I am if I didn't get pushed somewhat." English (1998) quotes Martin Buber to illustrate this motivational component of mentoring. Buber explains the mentoring process as "the stretching to be more because someone believes in your potential" (p. 7).

Self-esteem is also an important component of student success. The advisees in the study reported that having a faculty advisor contributed to their self-esteem. They used the following phrases to indicate the importance of mentoring with respect to self-esteem: "[more] confident and determined," "helps with self-esteem," and "more self-confident." Self-esteem, as Brundage and MacKeracher (1980) claim, is a central factor in learning. Without self-esteem, adults are often threatened by the learning environment and usually try to avoid it. They are also less responsive to learning.

Considerations for Faculty Advising/Mentoring

This section addresses points relevant to setting up a faculty advisor/mentoring program. I discuss the importance of educating and compensating advisors, the significance of making compatible matches between advisors and advisees, and the value of establishing a formal mentoring program.

Tools for Mentoring

Bloom (1995) and Cohen (1995) and English (1998) believe that one of the most important considerations for a successful mentoring program is educating mentors in mentoring skills and functions either through professional development or through a self-assessment process. Cohen points out that many adult educators believe that they already possess mentoring skills because of their experience as educators. To avoid this potential problem, I initially supplied the faculty advisors with Cohen's mentoring scale as a tool for self-assessment and as a way to educate themselves about mentor role competencies. The faculty advisors' perceptions about their ability to mentor students proved to be consistent with Cohen's contention. On the final questionnaire, when I asked, "Was there a specific area in which you felt uncomfortable or unknowledgeable and in which you would like to have some professional development in order to support your role as faculty advisor?", 80% responded negatively to this question. It is interesting to note that one of the respondents who had responded negatively to this question also noted on the questionnaire that "counselling in any area that would benefit the advisor/advisee relationship." In other words, this advisor, contrary to her negative comment about the

need for professional development, admitted that professional development in the area of counselling would be helpful.

Matching Faculty Advisor and Advisee

Another important consideration when implementing a mentoring program is matching the advisors and advisees in order for healthy, sound relationships to develop between the mentoring pair. As a first step, Kerr, Schulze, and Woodward (1995) recommend the development of a profile that can be used with the advisors and advisees. They explain the various criteria that can be used to make compatible matches. I used criteria based on hobbies and interests, career goals, and gender preference because this information was easy to complete, and it provided a fairly simple form for matching. I matched advisors and advisees based on compatible profiles. However, matching proved to be an area of great concern for the advisees. Even though 81% of the advisees felt that the match between them and their faculty advisor was a good match, they made suggestions for improving the matching process. Seventy-six percent of the advisees who were interviewed indicated that they would like to make their own matches. The advisees also offered a list of questions that would provide a more comprehensive profile of a faculty advisor so that better matches could be made. These included questions regarding age group, subjects taught, type of personality, ideas regarding fun, and likes and dislikes.

Kerr et al. (1995) maintain that even with careful planning, some matches may not work out and that there should be a reserve pool of alternate mentors. At the beginning of the matching process, I informed both the faculty advisor and advisee groups that there would be a no-fault termination of the match if the two parties were incompatible.

Although I felt that I had planned for this occurrence, the policy of no-fault termination must not have been very clear because even during the final interview, at least 3 advisees commented that I should make it clearer that if a match is not working, it can be terminated at any time. The members of the focus group that met for the mid-point evaluation indicated that better matches would avoid the necessity of terminating matches. During the final interview the advisees suggested questions that could be asked of the advisees and faculty advisors that they felt would ensure better matches. One suggested asking, "What kind of person would you like?" Another suggested asking, "What characteristics make a good faculty advisor?" Ferguson et al. (1999) support the idea that one set of criteria will not necessarily work for everyone. They recommend that "the criteria for selection of mentors and protégé will vary depending on who is mentoring whom and for what reason" (p. 31).

Compensating the Faculty Advisors

When I was organizing the faculty advisor program, the faculty advisor group agreed that one hour of release time per week would help to compensate for the time they spent with their advisees. We began the study with the understanding that this arrangement would be possible. Unfortunately, the Dean of Access and Skills, who was responsible for the upgrading program for adults, informed me that this arrangement was not possible. If the study was to proceed, the faculty would have to do all faculty advising outside of class time. In this way, the role of faculty advisor became an add-on to our workload. Because we were not compensated, the role of faculty advisor became invisible work. English (1998) calls attention to this problem and points out the importance of

recognizing the time, resources, and professional expertise that mentors offer to an organization. She suggests that compensation can include "release time, public announcements, opportunities to share mentoring experience, recognition of knowledge and skills, professional recognition, ritualized celebration of mentoring contributions, and professional development" (p. xv). As coordinator of the program, I sent thank you letters to all the faculty advisors; I provided meetings where faculty advisors could share their mentoring practices, and I recognized their knowledge and skills during informal conversations about their mentoring experiences. In this way, I felt that I acknowledged their hard work. One faculty advisor offered his personal views about the effects of the Dean of Access and Skill's decision not to recognize the faculty advising role. When I asked on the final evaluation, "Did you carry out your initial intentions as a faculty advisor? If not, why not?", he responded, "Not entirely, constraints of time and workload made it difficult for me to be as conscientious about regular contact with my advisees as I would have liked."

Formal Versus Informal Mentoring

The faculty advisor program that was established for the upgrading program for adults at the college was a formalized mentoring relationship. Although some faculty and students often form successful mentoring relationships informally like English (1998) suggests, my goal was that each student in the adult upgrading program would have the opportunity for a mentoring relationship. In order to achieve this goal, I needed to establish a formal mentoring program. Daloz (1991) believes that although the role of mentor is inherent to the role of the adult educator, nevertheless the role could exist as

part of a formalized program tailored to mentoring adult students. In a formalized program, faculty advisors can be encouraged to use tools like Cohen's (1995) mentoring scale to learn mentor role competencies. A formalized program also offers more continuity than informal mentoring can provide. A formally organized faculty advisor program allows students the choice instead of the chance to have a faculty advisor/mentor. It also ensures that each advisor will receive professional help so that he or she can become knowledgeable in the various aspects of mentoring competencies that are necessary for establishing good mentoring relationships.

Impact on Faculty Advisors

My colleagues indicated that they learned from their experience as faculty advisors. One commented that "Understanding goals and personal situations does make a difference in what I insist upon in class." Another felt that it was a "reminder of the need to understand and treat the student as an individual. [I] need to consider all facets of a person in order to contribute to their needs as a whole person." A third learned "that many students feel helpless or hopeless and need someone to champion them." Kerr et al. (1995) agree that mentoring programs have a positive impact on mentors. Additionally, they believe that it fosters cohesiveness within organizations. This belief was consistent with a comment made by one of the faculty advisors when asked why the faculty advisor program should be continued. She said, "I see a community atmosphere continuing to grow within our school. I believe this program has directly contributed to this."

Another impact on faculty advisors was their belief that the faculty advisor program made a difference in student retention. One advisor stated, "I had some advisees

consider dropping a course or quitting until they talked to me. Together, we worked on a strategy to help them stay in school and be successful." A second said, "I had one student in particular who graduated into the college [postsecondary] program. I believe the support she received played an important role in her advancement." These statements are congruent with English's (1998) belief that mentors benefit from mentoring by "fulfilling their own developmental need of generativity" (p. 22). The faculty advisors' belief that the faculty advisor program had an impact on student retention is supported by Slick and Palmer (1993) who found that students who are effectively mentored are less likely to drop out of school.

Conclusions

In this section, I draw four conclusions from the preceding discussion of the process I used in designing and implementing this study. The conclusions summarize the major findings of this study relating to the benefits of mentoring as a way to satisfy the affective needs of adult upgrading students and the factors that adult educators need to consider when they mentor adult upgrading students.

1. The faculty in this study increased their knowledge and understanding of the students in the upgrading program for adults and the role that mentoring could play in helping these students meet those needs, particularly in relation to needs associated with the affective domain. They believed that this support was instrumental in the students' decision to stay in school and successfully complete the upgrading program for adults.

2. A formal mentoring program, such as the one offered via the faculty advisor program, is an effective way to ensure that all students in an upgrading program for adults have the opportunity to partake in a mentoring experience. Mentoring is an effective method for involving students in the learning process and in building their self-concept and self-esteem. These attributes of the mentoring process promote self-direction.

3. Engaging the students involved in the study in the planning and on-going evaluation of the faculty advisor program was important because this approach respected their feelings, knowledge, and ideas about the learning environment. It established a proactive versus a reactive approach to addressing the program's declining graduation rates.

4. The addition of a faculty advisor program as a support to the upgrading program for adults positively affected the learning environment. The students had someone they could talk to about their concerns and problems. In addition, the faculty advisor program acted as a form of on-going needs assessment for the students. It created a more personal, community atmosphere within the school by involving the students and faculty more directly in the learning environment.

Recommendations

In this section, I make several recommendations for developing and implementing a faculty advisor program based on a mentoring model in a college environment that offers upgrading programs for adults.

1. Students who participated in this study are typical of many adult upgrading students in that they are often socially and economically disadvantaged. Therefore, I recommend that college administrators of upgrading programs for adults in Ontario encourage their faculty to develop a formal mentoring program as a support for their students. I also recommend that the program be developed based upon the results of a needs assessment of both the faculty and students participants.

2. I recommend that upgrading programs for adults reexamine their learning environments and assess if they are offering the support that is necessary to meet the students' affective needs. To this end, I encourage colleges that offer upgrading programs for adults to implement a faculty advisor program based on a mentoring model as a way to help students meet their affective needs, and in so doing, help the students to build their self-concept and self-esteem that is necessary for self-direction and success in their educational endeavours.

3. Based on the findings of this thesis, I recommend that adult educators who engage in mentoring students engage in professional development as a way to learn about and/or improve upon their mentoring practices. In order to be successful in this role, they need skills in conflict resolution, problem solving, understanding differences, and goal setting as well as other skills mentioned in this thesis. In addition to workshops and group discussion, I recommend self-assessment tools like Cohen's (1995) Principles of Adult Mentoring Scale: Postsecondary Education as a good way to engage in the professional development process.

4. I recommend that faculty who take on the formal role of mentor in a faculty advising program be compensated for their time. In this way, administration acknowledges the faculty advisor's efforts and the impact that the program has on student retention. Time compensation should be agreed upon prior to the establishment of a formal mentoring program.

5. Finally, I recommend that further study be carried out to pursue ways of working with students who are socially and/or economically disadvantaged in order to help them overcome the negative feelings that act as barriers to their educational success.

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