ARE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS ADULT LEARNERS?

by

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ABSTRACT

Providing support services and programs to undergraduate students is well recognized as of critical importance in the United States, where many graduate programs and specialized training opportunities exist for student services professionals to learn about the unique and diverse population known as traditional undergraduate students. In Canada, the academic and professional development opportunities for studying undergraduate education are significantly limited. This project is an exploration of the theoretical perspectives of student development theory and a review of academic literature to determine the unique characteristics, barriers, motivations, and teaching strategies for both traditional undergraduate students and adult learners. The purpose is to consider how adult learning principles can apply to undergraduate students.

In considering how to best meet the needs of undergraduate students, a workshop series was created to enhance professional development opportunities for individuals who provide programs and services to undergraduate students at one mid-sized Canadian University. The workshops seek to encourage participants to consider the characteristics, barriers, and motivations of traditional undergraduate students from the theoretical perspective of student development theory and adult learning principles. The workshops incorporate a review of adult learning principles and how they can be applied when providing programs and services to undergraduate students. The workshops have been designed as a four-workshop series to be offered sequentially between October and March. Workshops may be taken individually but are designed as a series where knowledge builds over the course of the workshops.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As an Academic Counsellor in the Faculty of Arts and Science at Queen’s University, I have significant opportunities to learn first-hand about the undergraduate experience of both individual students and the overall undergraduate student experience at Queen’s. Although academic planning is the primary focus of my role, during half-hour advising appointments undergraduate students often seek assistance with complex situations involving several aspects of their experience as a student. Referrals to services such as Personal Counselling, Disability Services, the Queen’s International Centre, the Ban Righ Centre for Mature Women Students, Athlete Services, Career Services, and other student life programs and services are frequently provided. These services are in addition to the more formal academic supports to which students tend to be referred, such as the Registrar’s Office, Student Awards, Learning Strategies, and the Writing Centre. As I have transitioned into the Academic Counsellor role one of the key strengths, I believe I have brought to the position was an educated understanding of the experience of the typical undergraduate experience at Queen’s.

Seven years ago as a new student services professional within Student Affairs at Queen’s University, I wondered why certain programs and services were offered to undergraduate students. The priorities and goals of programming and services shifted with changes in leadership, and questions of funding were an off and on priority. In my own undergraduate experience, I attended the University of Toronto and lived in residence on a campus where the majority of students continued to live in their family home and commuted to and from classes. My personal experience with undergraduate
education was considerably different from what I frequently heard termed The Queen’s Experience. It seemed that The Queen’s Experience included specific events that contributed to a framework where the tremendous personal and academic development that is expected throughout the four years of undergraduate education grew with clearly defined expected outcome. I began to hypothesize that the insular and residential nature of undergraduate student life at Queen’s, on-campus in Residence Halls with significant programming and supports during the transition into first year and in shared houses in the near-campus neighbourhood in upper years. The campus community also included continued support throughout undergraduate education through services and programs, and provided a foundation for the shared personal and academic experiences that contributed to what I understood to be The Queen’s Experience.

When I began to study the profession of post-secondary education through coursework in the Queen’s Masters of Education program, I discovered a body of academic literature that was helpful in informing and developing my understanding of undergraduate education. As I read about theoretical perspectives on undergraduate student motivation, development, and student success, in addition to those on moral, psychosocial, and intellectual development, I began to recognize that an informed understanding of how and why the undergraduate student experience typically unfolds provided me a better perspective from which to provide services and programs to undergraduate students at Queen’s. While the vast majority of this research is focused within the United States where cultural perceptions towards undergraduate education are somewhat different to those of the Canadian experience, I found many opportunities to inform my practice. The breadth and depth of theoretical knowledge available surprised
me, in that I had rarely heard colleagues, Managers, Directors, or Deans referring to theoretical perspectives, academic literature, or the work of those who are considered experts in the field of undergraduate education. This discovery led me to question why academic literature on transitions, academics, and most importantly student programs and services was not openly incorporated into providing services and programs to undergraduate students at Queen’s.

As I transitioned through seven years of successive roles within Student Affairs, I witnessed opportunities where services and programming decisions seemed to be missing valuable perspectives that were available through academic literature. In searching for a professional opportunity where my skills and experiences were a most appropriate fit, a department where theoretical perspectives and academic literature are considered to inform professional practice became a very important consideration.

The current workshop series came as a result of considering that other professionals who provide program and services to undergraduate students may have had a similar professional development experience to my own, and a desire to share the theoretical learning that I thought was particularly helpful. In creating the workshop series, I attempted to integrate adult learning principles into the material on undergraduate student development theory, student success theory, and the application of adult learning principles to the practice of providing services and programs to undergraduate students. Most importantly, I attempted to respect the prior learning and professional experience that each learner would bring to the workshop series and provide opportunities for the workshop participants to interact and learn from each other.
Context of the Study

In studying the practice of providing educational opportunities to learners registered in undergraduate education at Queen’s University, the term *undergraduate students* is used to describe the largest student body on campus. This designation reflects the relatively homogeneous group of traditional students pursuing their first to fourth year of study at one mid-sized Canadian university. Queen’s University is a unique institution that attracts a distinct group of students with very high academic achievement. An overall average of 88.7% is required for undergraduate admission with many professional programs requiring averages greater than 90% (Queen’s University, 2012a). To attain entry to Queen’s, students must have academically out competed the majority of their peers and spent considerable effort pursuing academic achievement, which requires opportunities to practice and demonstrate self-discipline, motivation, and an ability to prioritize goals, in addition to academic skills.

The majority of first-year students entering Queen’s are between 17 and 22 years of age, with no significant family responsibilities, who pursue a full-time university education immediately after secondary studies, and complete their undergraduate degree in four consecutive years. To facilitate the transition into first year at Queen’s, most students live on-campus for the academic year in university-managed residence halls. Undergraduate students who fit the above profile are termed *traditional students* at Queen’s.

In reviewing the mission of Queen’s University, the goals of the university are quite clearly articulated.
The mission of Queen’s University has been articulated in a number of different forms and formats over the past decade. In all of the presentations, the key elements have remained constant:

The University will build on the strength that is Queen's - students, faculty, staff and alumni - to be among the best of internationally known universities in Canada, recognized for:

- the exceptional quality of undergraduate and graduate students and programs in the arts, sciences and professions;
- the intellectual power and value of research and scholarship by faculty members and students;
- the exemplary service of the University and that of its graduates to the community and the nation and the community of nations. (Queen’s University, 1996)

The Queen’s University goals as defined by university administration speak to the desired outcomes from the perspective of the university, where the institution itself rather than the students is benefited by the outcomes in the mission statement. With this proviso in mind, the outcomes of undergraduate education that traditional students could expect to gain from the significant investment of time and money to their undergraduate experience are not so clearly defined at Queen’s University.

When considering the undergraduate student experience, there are often opportunities for the professional staff who provide services and programs to make a significant contribution to the students’ individual experiences. The interaction could be positive or negative, depending on the circumstances surrounding the interaction, and the degree to which the staff member is in a position to directly address the students’ concerns. Professional staff at Queen’s who provide programs and services typically fall under position titles such as: Program Coordinator, Program Assistant, Educational Coordinator, Advisor, Counsellor, Peer Learning Coordinator, Event Planner, or Program Manager. Staff members who regularly advise undergraduate students through programs
and services would benefit from an understanding of how student development theory, student success theory, and adult learning principles could be applied to working with undergraduate students.

**Purpose of this Project**

The purpose of this project is to understand the experiences of undergraduate students in non-academic programming and activities, often termed non-academic or co-curricular, through an adult education perspective. To accomplish this purpose, I integrate the literature on student development theory, student success theory, and adult education. Additionally, I provide a series of four workshops intended to help program providers incorporate literature-based adult education principles when engaging traditional undergraduate students at Queen’s University in non-academic services and programs.

Teaching to adult learners is well represented in empirical literature (e.g., Knox, 1986; Knowles, 1973; Lieb, 1991). Within undergraduate education, there is also a considerable field of literature to support the application of educational theory and teaching practices to enhance undergraduate learning (Chickering, 1993; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). In examining the two bodies of knowledge concurrently, however, there is very little reference to undergraduate students as adult learners, despite post-secondary education often being mentioned as a component of adult education. As a result, the extent to which undergraduate learners meet the definition of adult learners and how adult learning principles and practices might be considered when planning educational services and programs for traditional undergraduate students has been underexplored. What follows is
a review of the adult learning literature, a review of the relevant literature related to undergraduate students, and a synthesis connecting traditional undergraduate students at Queen’s using Lieb’s (1991) Principles of Adult Learning. The goal of this inquiry is to inform the practice of providing inclusive and exceptional non-academic services and programs to undergraduate students at Queen’s University.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

To recognize the extent that the principles and practices of learning apply to any one group of learners, an overview of the relevant learning theory and practices and a profile of the specific student populations are warranted. To understand how adult learning principles can increase learning for undergraduate students, an examination of the characteristics, motivations, barriers to education, and teaching strategies for both adult learners and traditional undergraduate students is useful.

Adult Learners

Characteristics of Adult Learners

Adult learning characteristics are rooted in the concept of andragogy, a term coined by Knowles (1973) to differentiate the requirements of adult learners from the elements that contribute to learning in children and youth. Knowles pioneered the development of adult education as a concise discipline within the field of education through his work in the latter half of the 20th century. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2011) described the characteristics of adult learners where adults: need to personally understand the relevance of the learning; require autonomy over the decision making in their learning; bring a wealth of personal experience and unique perspectives to the learning experience; seek learning experiences that can be readily applied to personal life circumstances; see learning as a holistic experience; apply the learning within a personal or professional context; experience intrinsic motivation as a positive force; and are less motivated by extrinsic factors.
Lieb (1991) incorporated Knowles’ characteristics of adult learners into a larger yet concise framework describing principles of adult learning. Lieb’s characteristics of adult learners describe adult learners as: being autonomous and self-directed; having life experience and prior knowledge; being goal-oriented and relevancy-oriented; being practical; and, above all, requiring respect to thrive as learners. Lieb’s Principles of Adult Learning framework also includes barriers, motivation, and teaching practices specific to adult learners. Adult learners experience distinct barriers and motivations while learning as they are often juggling the role of learner in addition to multiple other identities such as employee, partner, parent, caregiver, or community member (Ross-Gordon, 2011). The distinct barriers and motivations that adults experience are so pervasive in the adult learning experience that they should be considered as an unequivocal characteristic of adult learners.

A common thread running through the characteristics that are meant to define adult learners is that the learning must involve adult learners pursuing an experience that is somehow personally meaningful and relating the learning back to themselves as individuals, with specific goals and expectations to be achieved through the educational opportunity. To facilitate learning of the material presented, adults must first choose whether or not they wish to learn the new material, and then integrate the learning with their previous knowledge and life experience to meet a personal goal. This autonomy speaks to how adult learning is often a self-directed experience where adult learners have the ability to make active choices to shape the depth or limits of their experience (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). These choices may be related to life
experience with the subject matter, prior positive or negative experience with the content or the teaching method, perceived ability or skill, or personal confidence.

**Barriers to Education**

The term *barriers to education* has been coined to describe the obstacles learners typically experience. Barriers to education can be internally situated, such as personal self-confidence, or externally controlled, such as scheduling conflicts (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). They may be minor inconveniences or significant situations that require an adult learner to not meet the requirements of a course or be forced to withdraw from the educational opportunity. Barriers to education that adult learners often experience include financial or time constraints, scheduling conflicts, degree of interest, personal confidence, unawareness of the opportunities available, child care or transportation concerns, or other factors that are unique to the individual (Lieb, 1991). The most frequently cited reasons for why adults choose not to engage in learning experiences are lack of time and money, factors that consistently appear in longitudinal studies of adult learning (Merriam et al., 2007).

Barriers to adult education impact the learning experience when adult learners encounter internal or external challenges to their individual goals. The barrier or barriers adult learners experience may be intermittent, such as a temporary scheduling conflict, or pervasive, such as ongoing child care requirements. The reality of adults as learners is that they are often pursuing learning opportunities while at the same time maintaining significant responsibilities such as family, employment, personal obligations, interests, and previous commitments (Ross-Gordon, 2011). In handling the multiple roles or self-
identities, adult learners must effectively balance competing priorities with their personal goals for life and learning.

In a national survey of Canadian adults, Livingston (1999) found that the majority of respondents planned to engage in further education, a workshop, or training course. The majority of adults surveyed also indicated that they did not plan to engage in their desired learning experience in the near future as they were experiencing material barriers to course participation. The primary barriers provided included lack of time, family responsibilities, scheduling conflicts with the desired time or place where the educational opportunity was offered, and financial constraints (Livingston). Livingston found adults engaged in equal incidents of informal learning, regardless of previous level of schooling attained. The relatively equal participation of adult learners in informal learning opportunities, regardless of the level of previous schooling, speaks to how adult learners pursuing informal learning opportunities experience fewer barriers to their education than when pursuing formal opportunities.

Merriam, Mott, and Lee (1996) discovered that not all adult learning experiences are positive. In a study of negatively interpreted life experiences, the authors concluded that supportive environments, which include mentoring, encouragement from others, and structured supports, are crucial elements for positive growth-oriented learning to take place for adult learners. Kemp (2002) described the increased ability to cope with unexpected or externally controlled events as resiliency, a concept that is quite crucial to adult learners overcoming barriers to their education. Resiliency is typically required of individuals in circumstances when negative conditions are experienced. However, at the core of the concept of resiliency is that the individual will be able to manage or cope
effectively with stress or adversity and through the experience develop an increased ability to respond to future stress or adversity (Kemp, 2002). Learning to positively cope with stress or adversity whether it is situational or long-term, internally or externally derived, is a benefit to adult learners as barriers will inevitably arise throughout the duration of a typical adult’s learning experience.

When the principles of adult education, including the characteristics and motivations of adult learners and the barriers to education, are expressed in practice, there are considerable challenges that adult learners must overcome before they begin or complete a learning experience. Most particularly, it can be challenging for adults to balance lifestyle responsibilities in addition to learning opportunities or requirements.

**Motivation**

Unlike learners in the primary or secondary school systems, adults typically have a choice as to what they study and the method by which the learning is pursued. Thus one way to frame the concept of why adults choose to pursue learning opportunities is through the lens of motivation. Motivation is typically defined as the factors that contribute to an individual being energized to do something (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The motivations of adult learners have been found to be specific to this unique learning population. Lieb (1991) identified six factors as sources of motivation that adults experience: social relationships; external expectations; social welfare; personal advancement; escape or stimulation; and cognitive interest.

The key to individuals being moved to take action is the desire to pursue their own personal goals. Goals have been defined by Van Horren et al. (2008) as internal perceptions that shape and define how individuals relate to their surroundings. Goals
provide meaning and structure to life. In choosing to pursue a personal goal through an adult learning experience, the adult learner may be motivated by either intrinsic or extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation is understood as an individual being moved to do something for the personal internal fulfilment, rather than a reward or consequence that will follow completion of the task. Intrinsic motivation is in direct contrast to extrinsic motivation, where an individual engages in behaviour for reasons outside the activity’s enjoyment (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Of Lieb’s (1991) six motivational factors for adult learners, external expectations are clearly identifiable as motivated extrinsically. When adult learners embark on a learning opportunity to meet an external expectation that has been placed upon them, rather than to fulfil an internally generated expectation, the learning experience will be less internalized and more superficial (Deci & Ryan, 2008). An example of an adult learning experience motivated solely by external expectations would be an adult participating in a training workshop that was completely unrelated to the learner’s portfolio or interests but a requirement of the workplace.

In contrast to extrinsically motivated forces, social relationships, escape or stimulation, and cognitive interest are motivational factors for adult learners that can be easily identified as rooted in intrinsic motivation. The connection to intrinsic motivation is supported by how the drive for adult learners to engage in the learning opportunity comes from within learners based on their individual values, goals, and desires to utilize the knowledge, rather than something that has been placed on them by an outside requirement or situation. In a study on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, Deci and Ryan (2000) found that high quality learning results from intrinsic motivation and that intrinsic
motivation can be supported within a learner when the learner’s feelings of competence, autonomy, and ability to relate to others are encouraged through the learning experience.

Social welfare and personal advancement are two of Lieb’s (1991) motivational factors for adult learners that are considered to be rooted in extrinsic motivation. Within extrinsic motivation, several types of motivation have been described. Motivation can be classified as extrinsic and be completely externally driven where learners are moved to do something to achieve a separable outcome or extrinsic and personally adopted with a sense of resolution (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The degree to which these motivational factors are perceived as either adopted internally with a sense of resolution or completely externally driven would depend on the extent to which the desire for a change in social welfare or personal advancement arose internally, and therefore became self-endorsed and somewhat personally driven, or was externally thrust upon the learner. The nuances of how the learner perceived the motivational situation would define whether the learning experience was more likely to result in superficial learning to demonstrate performance (extrinsic motivation) or mastery of a task (intrinsic motivation; Pintrich, 2000).

Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2011) suggested that self-directed learning should also be considered a motivational characteristic of adult learners. Self-directed learning is broadly defined as adults actively engaging in decisions to shape the depth and breadth of their personal learning experience (Merriam & Brockett, 2007). Self-directed learning is seen as an opportunity for learners to self-teach by making active choices that guide the elements of their learning experience, such as the method of learning and choice of topics. The concept of autonomy is tied to self-directed learning in that learners experience a profound shift in their understanding of knowledge, so that the knowledge is
understood to be contextual and openly questioned by them (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011).

Self-directed learning is related to motivation, particularly for adult learners, in that self-directed learning encompasses any learning experience that adult learners actively choose to pursue. Learning experiences may be informal, such as reading an interesting article and discussing it with a friend, or more formalized, like a professional development workshop or a credit course. Regardless of the intended outcome of the learning experience, self-directed learning is an opportunity for adult learners to actively choose to pursue knowledge or experiences through learning that is motivated by personal values, desires, and outcomes.

**Teaching Strategies**

In teaching adult learners, there are a number of considerations that must be taken into account to provide a learning environment that is inclusive and accessible to the unique needs of these learners, while minimizing barriers to learning that they often experience (Lieb, 1991; Russell, 2006). The role of an individual who leads adult learners’ experience is fundamental to creating a positive learning opportunity for them (Merriam & Brockett, 2007). Given that many aspects of adult learning experiences are self-directed, the individual leading the learning experience may identify as a facilitator, instructor, host, mentor, teacher, colleague, learning assistant, or administrator. The term *teacher* has been chosen for the purposes of this research to simplify the understanding of the roles of teacher and learner within the scope of adult learning. The identification of the teacher can be an important concept in shaping the learning experience so the
personal learning goals of adult learners can be met through that experience (D. Stockley, personal communication, July 2013).

Adult learning is frequently found in professional contexts such as workplaces where there is tremendous opportunity to apply learned knowledge, also known as knowledge to action or more commonly knowledge translation (Graham et al., 2006). Literature related to knowledge translation is particularly prevalent within the formalized environments of human resources development (Black & Earnest, 2009; Dirkx, 1996; Gauld & Miller, 2004) and health care (Bryan, Kreuter, & Brownson, 2013; Noel-Weiss, Bassett, & Cragg, 2006; Nutbeam, 2008). There are two common threads connecting the human resources development and health care environments in that adults are the primary clients of the services provided, and the primary purpose of teaching to adult learners is to facilitate knowledge translation. The concept of knowledge translation is based upon the principle that teachings must be internalized by learners to the degree where they can then independently apply the teachings within their own contexts (Graham et al., 2006).

Knowles (1984) identified knowledge translation as

the insight that learning is transferable in the discovery that it is usable – that the learner can, as an act of conscious intention, adapt an ability she developed elsewhere and apply it to the present situation in order to influence the outcome. (p. 114)

A number of elements should be considered to provide a positive framework for the learning experience and facilitate knowledge translation for adult learners. The most important aspect to facilitate self-directed learning is to provide choice. When teaching to adult learners, the course material should be presented so that learners can pursue self-
directed learning, incorporate their past experience into their learning, and apply the learning to a personal task or problem (Ross-Gordon, 2011). It is also helpful for adult learners to have a high degree of autonomy over the mechanics of the learning experience, such as the pace of the course, choice in the type of assignment, method of deliverable, and reasonable flexibility in deadlines (Ross-Gordon, 2003).

Most learners, including adult learners, tend to learn best through one or a combination of approaches to learning. The most commonly recognized learning styles are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (Felder, 2010; Russell, 2006). An awareness of differences in learning styles and effective teaching skills in presenting learning materials in a way that meets the needs of adult learners with preferences towards each learning style is an asset when teaching to adult learners. To facilitate positive adult learning experiences a number of aspects must be considered within the parameters of the course requirements. By not providing adult learners with opportunities to adapt the curriculum and course requirements to methods that work best for their personal learning style, an opportunity for a positive learning experience could be lost or even transformed into a negative learning experience (Merriam, Mott, & Lee, 1996).

**Traditional Undergraduate Students**

**Characteristics of Undergraduate Students**

Academic literature related to undergraduate students is immense and ranges from theoretical perspectives (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010) to teaching strategies for undergraduate learners (Biggs & Tang, 2007). Chickering’s (1993) seven vectors of student development are often cited as a foundational theoretical framework in
undergraduate education for traditional students (Evans et al., 2010). These seven vectors were initially proposed by Chickering in 1969 and most recently revised in 1993.

Chickering’s (1993) seven vectors theory focuses on how a personal identity is formed by an individual with a particular focus on psychosocial development during the college years. The seven vectors are: developing confidence; managing emotions; moving through autonomy towards independence; developing mature interpersonal relationships; establishing identity; developing purpose; and developing integrity (Evans et al., 2010). The personal development of the individual’s self-identity is a common theme to the vectors where the development is completely internal to the individual. Within this theory, there is no mention of undergraduate learning as a function of building capacity for knowledge translation. Other student development theories, such as Perry’s (1981) theory of intellectual and ethical development or Erikson’s (1980) identity development theory, also focus on the period of undergraduate education as a time of personal growth and development of the undergraduate student as an individual (Evans et al., 2010).

A focus on personal psychosocial development, without any mention of knowledge translation, is quite prevalent within the literature on traditional undergraduate student development (Chickering, 1993; Evans et al., 2010; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). Although considerable academic learning is acquired through undergraduate education and is often a primary goal of undergraduate students during the academically formative years of undergraduate education, students typically choose to pursue an undergraduate education to increase skills and knowledge to advance their post-graduate employment opportunities (Gedye, Fender, & Chalkley, 2004). To describe
the desired outcomes of the undergraduate learning experience for traditional undergraduate university students, the term “student success” has been adopted. In a review of literature related to what matters to student success, Kuh and colleagues (2006) defined student success as “academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational objectives, and post-college performance” (p. 7).

Where the concept of student success seems to be most relevant to characteristics of traditional undergraduate students is the inclusion of the intellectual and academic components of undergraduate education, as well as implying that the skills and experiences gained through the undergraduate learning are typically intended to be applied within the workforce upon graduation. These key components of traditional undergraduate education are prevalent within student success theory and noticeably absent from student development theory. The intention to apply undergraduate students’ personal psychosocial development, learned skills and experiences, and pursuit of a career post-graduation could collectively be considered characteristics of traditional undergraduate students.

**Barriers to Education**

In pursuing an undergraduate education, students may experience a variety of barriers that impede success throughout their undergraduate experience. The number, scope, and effect of the barriers are unique to each undergraduate student’s personal experience; however, traditional undergraduate students experience a number of common challenges: financial challenges, personal confidence and self-efficacy challenges, short-
or long-term health issues including mental health concerns, a lack of academic skills, and external pressures such as family or cultural expectations (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Kuh, Kinzie, Bucklye, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Levine, 2006). Undergraduate students who identify or are identified as: first-generation; mature; of low socioeconomic status; a member of a minority group; international; or transfer often experience particular barriers related to their identity. When undergraduate students’ experiences are defined by their identity as different from those of a traditional undergraduate student, they are classified as non-traditional students. While it is acknowledged that many non-traditional students experience barriers to their success as students because of their particular non-traditional identity (Kuh et al., 2006), such barriers are outside the scope of the present work.

Within the traditional undergraduate experience, many students experience financial barriers to their education. Costs for undergraduate tuition, student fees, and living expenses for domestic students attending university at Queen’s University average between $20 000 and $25 000 or more per year based on the living arrangement and program of study (Queen’s University, 2014). For many students choosing post-secondary education, the cost of undergraduate education may be prohibitive, yet each year approximately 60 000 high school students choose to apply for admission to at least one of the 18 universities in the province (Drewes & Michael, 2006). Within universities, financial awards, such as bursaries and scholarships, are available, in addition to partially forgivable government student loans and private loan arrangements.

In transitioning out of the family home and into their first independent living experience to begin their first-year of undergraduate studies, many traditional students
experience tremendous personal transformation (Donahue, 2004). Personal confidence and self-efficacy concerns are fairly common with many students experiencing their first onset of mental health concerns (Stallman, 2010). Estimates of prevalence of mental health concerns amongst undergraduate populations range from 15.6% for generalized anxiety disorder (Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, & Hefner, 2007) to 19.2% for a generalized mental health problem (Stallman, 2010). A 2009 survey within the province of Ontario found that 53% of university students indicated they felt overwhelmed by anxiety and 36% felt difficulty functioning due to their level of depression (Queen’s University, 2012b). For students with mental health concerns, the personal and academic requirements may be problematic depending on the degree to which they are affected by their illness at any one point in time. For students experiencing mental health concerns, the capacity to function can be significantly reduced when they are experiencing symptoms, which may impair their ability to respond to stress, process information, organize information, control behaviour, or communicate with others, depending on the mental health concern (Queen’s University, 2013).

Academic challenges that may present as barriers for some undergraduate students include learning within a self-directed environment, where students are responsible for independent time management, completing and submitting assignments, contributing to discussions or group work, learning through labs or case studies, and demonstrating their learning through exams or final assignments. Many on-campus programs and services are available to undergraduate students to assist them with overcoming academic and personal challenges that may present as barriers to education.
The breadth and depth of how students choose to participate in programs and services that are often complementary to the requirements of academic learning are generally described as student engagement. Student engagement has been defined by Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, and Gonyea (2008) as representing “both the time and energy students invest in educationally purposeful activities and the effort institutions devote to using effective educational practices” (p. 542). Students who are actively engaged with programs and services throughout their undergraduate years tend to experience desirable outcomes such as critical thinking, grades, retention, and completion (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Zepke & Leach, 2010). Programs and services are diverse and range from clinical health centres, to academic skill tutorials, housing support, and career building resources. Student engagement is a concept that can be used by universities to provide programs and services to help reduce personal confidence or self-efficacy barriers to education that undergraduate students often experience.

An additional barrier that many undergraduate students experience is external pressure from parents or family, or culturally derived pressures to achieve particular goals or outcomes that may or may not be shared by the student. University advisors across Canada have been reporting an increase of student concerns around external family pressures, as well as parents who are increasingly involved in their child’s undergraduate experience. The external pressure to achieve goals and outcomes that are often extrinsically derived can create personal challenges for students who experience conflict with their own intrinsically set goals and outcomes (Levine, 2006; Travers, Bohnert, & Randall, 2013).
Motivation

In studying the types of motivations that exist in undergraduate students and the relationships among the motivations, Jacobs and Newstead (2000) found that undergraduate student motivations could be described as either related to interest in a particular discipline, including the related skills and experiences associated with a field, or related to the general personal, academic, and psycho-social development of undergraduate education. Undergraduate students wishing to pursue a career in a particular field attached higher importance to subject-specific skills and experiences than undergraduate students who were motivated by the overall undergraduate experience. Furthermore, undergraduate students typically experienced a loss of motivation after their first year of studies, a phenomenon known as the second year blues. However, motivation tended to recover by the final year of undergraduate study, which supports the concept of exit velocity, where undergraduate students experience an increase in both motivation and academic achievement as their opportunity for graduation approaches.

In an extensive literature review of what matters to student success in undergraduate education, Kuh, Kinzie, Bucklye, Bridges, and Hayek (2006) reported the primary indicators of undergraduate student success to be post-graduation employment, pursuit of graduate or professional school, and pursuit of lifelong learning. These indicators of undergraduate student success can be considered as goals or sources of motivation for undergraduate students. While these indicators are valid sources of motivation for completing undergraduate education, they must be considered long-term goals, as the outcomes can only be achieved over many years of effort and persistence.
Pursuing undergraduate education for the purpose of increasing employment prospects and future income potential is a powerful motivator that many undergraduate students experience (Gedye, Fender, & Chalkley, 2004). Within the undergraduate student experience, long-term goals, such as graduating and obtaining employment, are considered performance goals. Performance goals have been described as students being motivated by their personal abilities being ranked higher relative to others, where the goal is to achieve more highly with respect to others and avoid the perception of incompetence or less ability in relation to others (Travers, Bohnert, & Randall, 2013). Performance goals are typically seen as extrinsically motivated and therefore generally considered less beneficial in terms of motivation, although performance goals can result in increased performance and achievement (Pintrich, 2000). Standardized mid-terms, exams, labs, assignments, and quizzes are all opportunities where undergraduate students could experience performance goals as powerful sources of motivation. This motivation may be particularly powerful in learning environments such as large first-year classes or academically focused living/learning communities in Residences where the learning experience is fairly autonomous yet the experience is shared by a large number of peers.

A mastery goal source of motivation is in direct contrast to performance goals where motivation is experienced through personal growth measured in comparison to past achievement. The pursuit of lifelong learning and learning professional skills would connect more closely to mastery goals where personal development and competencies are intrinsically driven. Mastery goals have been linked to higher levels of focus, efficacy, interest, effort, persistence, performance, and learning about a particular task (Pintrich, 2000).
Beyond the motivational goals suggested by Kuh et al. (2006), undergraduate students may be experiencing family or peer pressure to succeed in a particular program, degree level, or even institution. In a study of class privilege and career options, privileged young women experienced significant expectations to achieve within a limited range of socially acceptable academic and extracurricular options (Lapour & Heppner, 2009). The fear of negative outcomes was a powerful motivator where expectations and self-efficacy combined to influence how the youth interpreted their interests, goals, and choices (Lapour & Heppner, 2009).

While external pressures from family, peers, or other sources may be a powerful motivator for many undergraduate students, the potential for these sources of extrinsic motivation to be insufficient when difficult circumstances are experienced can be problematic. In experiencing the personal and academic challenges that are part of undergraduate education, the majority of traditional undergraduate students find sources of motivation to move them to continue with their undergraduate education, despite experiencing difficulties along the way (Levine, 2006).

Teaching Strategies

The depth and breadth of the undergraduate learning experience is dependent on a variety of factors. While motivation and goals impact both the quantity and quality of undergraduate student learning (Jacobs & Newstead, 2000), considerable research on post-secondary learning has demonstrated that a critical, and perhaps the most influential, factor influencing undergraduate student learning is the teaching strategies utilized by the instructor (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Biggs & Tang; 2007; Felder & Brent, 2005; Fink, 2010). In creating teaching strategies that are most appropriate for undergraduate learning,
instructors must consider the learning styles, approaches to learning, and goals of their students, as well as appropriate assessment methodologies. To accurately describe teaching strategies for undergraduate students, key concepts relevant to undergraduate student learning must also be considered.

Teaching pedagogy frequently refers to learners having a preference to receive and process information through auditory, visual, or kinesthetic methods (Felder, 2010). Traditional teaching strategies for undergraduate education typically appeal to a narrow range of learning styles and can disadvantage students who learn through a broader spectrum of learning styles (Felder & Brent, 2005). Purposeful and deliberate teaching strategies have been identified to assist instructors to build curricula that appeal to a broad range of learning styles for undergraduate students. Instructional design is a concept where instructors purposefully build course content to provide learners with a variety of opportunities to engage with the course material and demonstrate their learning through assessment methodologies that are appropriate for the student (Fink, 2013). Regardless of the learning style preference, teaching strategies should include activities where learners have multiple opportunities to actively engage with the learning material, rather than passively accepting the information presented.

Approaches to learning have been defined as surface, deep, or strategic (Felder & Brent, 2005). When teaching to undergraduate students, material has historically been presented in lecture format by an instructor who is considered to be an expert in the subject area. While lectures are often favoured by instructors due to their flowing narrative and relative ease of presentation, learning from a lecture relies on the ability of undergraduate students to listen, document, and subsequently demonstrate their learning.
Typical assessment of lectures requires students to recall details and facts from the material presented to demonstrate the extent of their learning. This process encourages undergraduate students to take a surface approach to learning (Fink, 2013). Through a surface learning approach, undergraduate students experience low levels of cognitive engagement with the material, and instead rely on memorization of facts to receive an acceptable grade for short-answer and multiple-choice tests (Biggs & Tang, 2007). The outcome of the lecture style of teaching and the recall-based assessment generally encourages learners to take a surface learning approach to demonstrate their learning experience (Felder & Brent, 2005).

Through a deep approach to learning, undergraduate students are motivated to meaningfully engage in their learning experience and understand the material by using the most cognitively appropriate strategies to facilitate their learning (Felder & Brent, 2005). Teaching strategies to foster deep learning in undergraduate students include: presenting the subject to build on previous learning; asking questions; requiring discussion and communication amongst students; posing problems to be solved that encourage students to draw connections across the material; and creating complementary teaching strategies and assessment methodologies (Biggs & Tang, 2007).

When a strategic approach to learning is employed, an undergraduate student may adopt either a surface or deep approach to the learning, depending on which technique is required to achieve a high grade (Felder & Brent, 2005). The learners need to rely on a high degree of organization and considerable understanding of which learning approach should be engaged to demonstrate learning. Instructors would benefit from actively structuring the course material so that undergraduate students are required to constantly
engage with creating connections across the material and reflect on their personal learning experience (Fink, 2013). To prepare undergraduate students to internalize learning and gain confidence in applying learning to a professional context upon graduation, undergraduate instructors should purposefully utilize teaching strategies and assessment opportunities to engage undergraduate students in opportunities to support deep learning and actively discourage a surface or strategic approach to learning.

Learning outcomes are purposefully designed statements to guide the students in what and how they are expected to learn from the educational opportunity (Biggs & Tang, 2007), while emphasizing the appropriate approach to learning (deep, strategic, or shallow). Carefully designed learning outcomes are a critical piece of instructional design and are important to ensure the course content, teaching style, and assessment methodologies are aligned. They provide the student with a framework for how the learning will unfold and set clear expectations for what and how well the assessment methodologies will require undergraduate students to demonstrate their learning (Biggs & Tang, 2007).

While learning outcomes describe the intended learning of the course, it is important to consider the level of development and personal goals of undergraduate students, both for individual courses and the overall program of study. Throughout undergraduate education, students typically move through several stages of personal psycho-social development (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). As students gain experience in undergraduate learning, they also progress through several stages of intellectual development (Felder & Brent, 2005). To effectively guide students through learning experiences that are appropriate for their level of intellectual development,
instructors should be aware of learning opportunities to appropriately challenge students. If the challenge is insufficient, a surface approach to learning is encouraged. If the challenge is too great, the student may be incapable of engaging with the material through either surface or deep learning (Felder & Brent, 2005).

The structure of educational practices such as seminars and tutorials inherently provide increased opportunity for instructors to engage in open dialogue with undergraduate students. For instructors to understand the needs of their students and engage in constructive two-way communication, they must be actively listening to feedback provided. The quality of how students feel about the climate for learning is determined by the instructor (Biggs & Tang, 2007). To engage in a teaching practice that is truly reflective and adaptive to the needs of the learners, instructors must be confident with their teaching practice to be able to adjust their teaching strategies and learning approaches to lead students in a learning experience that is both challenging and appropriate to the students’ level of intellectual development (Felder & Brent, 2005).

Appropriate assessment methodologies are essential to determine if the instructor’s teaching strategies provided students an opportunity to fulfil the intended learning outcomes. Formative assessment refers to an instructor providing ongoing direct feedback on a learner’s performance, with the intention of accelerating and increasing learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Summative assessment is an overall indicator of the student’s success in meeting the learning outcomes when teaching is complete (Biggs & Tang, 2007). For undergraduate students to gauge an understanding of their learning throughout the learning experience, consistent and high quality feedback is recommended to empower students as self-regulated learners (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick,
Reflective opportunities, such as learning journals, peer assessment, and self-assessment, are examples of teaching strategies for supportive and ongoing formative assessment, in addition to more formalized feedback on the students’ performance.

**Similarities and Differences between Adult Learners and Traditional Undergraduate Students**

**Characteristics**

Within the adult learning literature, undergraduate education is included as an opportunity where adult learners often pursue education (Harrell, 2002; Knowles, 1973; Trueman & Hartley, 1996); however, traditional undergraduate students are noticeably absent as a distinct group of students within the adult education literature. This absence may be because the intended outcomes of undergraduate education are rarely defined by universities and therefore the knowledge obtained through undergraduate learning is not always seen as immediately transferrable by undergraduate students. Having undefined outcomes is not typical of adult learners who generally pursue educational opportunities to meet a desired outcome (Russell, 2006). An exception to this hypothesis is undergraduate professional programs where student learning is focused on training the learner for a specific occupation or accreditation (Felder & Brent, 2005). When undergraduate education does appear in the adult education literature, mature students are frequently described as a student group with unique learning needs within the undergraduate population (Kuh et al., 2006). To connect the undergraduate student literature with the profile of traditional undergraduate students through the principles of Lieb’s (1991) adult learning framework, a detailed review of each adult learning
characteristic, as well as the similarities and differences of motivations and barriers experienced by adult learners and traditional undergraduate students, is warranted.

In examining Lieb’s (1991) six characteristics of adult learners, relevant themes begin to emerge for comparing undergraduate students and adult learners. Knowledge transfer is the first of three broad categories within the context of undergraduate education that can connect the characteristics of adult learners and undergraduate students as being autonomous and self-directed, and applying an accumulated foundation of life experience and prior knowledge. Lieb (1991) described these characteristics in the context of adult learners, where incorporating the personal goals that an adult learner would like to have met by the learning experience is fundamental to the learning process. It also connects the need for learners to have autonomy over their learning so that topics and methods of assessment are connected to the interests of the learners. The application of adult learners’ formal knowledge base and life experience to the learning material, often related to education or professional experience, is important to provide adult learners an opportunity to relate the learning to their personal experience and see value in the learning. According to the autonomous and self-directed nature, and foundation of life experience and prior knowledge characteristics of adult learners, it is important for adult learners to have the opportunity to readily apply and internalize the new knowledge and relate it to personal circumstances.

In transitioning from high school to university, most traditional undergraduate students experience their first truly autonomous academic learning experience. As they move from secondary studies and the family home into what is typically their first independent living situation, traditional students embark on a personal and academic
learning journey that is very self-directed. Program of study is a choice but is often constrained by offers of admission and external pressure from parents or family members. Within programs, course selection requires undergraduate students to choose a path to follow based on their own goals or interests. Undergraduate students build their own degree path based on academic entrance requirements and carefully select required courses based on interest, while ensuring their grades are adequate to be accepted into and maintaining good academic standing in a program of study. As such, with respect to autonomy and self-direction, the principles of adult learning may well apply to traditional undergraduate students.

Soliciting a learner’s input into course material is not common practice in undergraduate studies where course content and method of assessment are typically determined by the instructor. In considering how an undergraduate student’s personal knowledge and experiences contribute to learning, it is likely that undergraduate students have sufficient opportunity to choose the details of their learning experience, so that undergraduate learning should be considered truly autonomous and self-directed. While most undergraduate students have limited full-time ongoing work experience or significant family responsibilities, the depth of their connections to workplace-related life experience and prior knowledge cannot be discounted enough for them not to benefit from adult learning principles, even if these connections and knowledge have been ignored in the past.

The second theme to emerge from Lieb’s (1991) framework is the need for a pragmatic learning experience that incorporates the goal-oriented, relevancy-oriented, and practical characteristics of adult learners. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), having
a well-defined goal is an excellent motivator for learning, and is particularly relevant for adult learners. In the relatively short two 12-week terms within an academic year, undergraduate students have considerable opportunity to both set and achieve short- and long-term goals. Given the considerable personal and financial commitment required to pursue undergraduate education, the goal of graduating from university can reasonably be assumed to be held by the majority of undergraduate students. The relevancy and practicality of the majority of generalized undergraduate degree programs can be questioned, in that the skills and experiences traditional students acquire are fairly generalized in nature, such as reading, writing, and critical thinking. This overarching statement does not include professional programs where curriculum is designed to meet the requirements of external organizations, such as licensing bodies and professional associations. There is little question that traditional students build a broad skill set through their undergraduate experience; however, the link between skill development and practical application of the skill upon graduation could be seen as weak if undergraduate students have not yet had an opportunity to apply their skills in the workplace. Still, if the goal of undergraduate education is to develop broad skills, incorporating a focus on how the skills can be practically applied within the workforce, such as internships, co-op placements, and other experiential educational opportunities, would better serve the needs of students through meeting the practicality component of adult learning characteristics.

Respect is the final characteristic of adult learners that has been left in its own category for the purposes of this framework to reflect the importance of respect in all learning environments. To facilitate a positive learning environment for learners of any age, reciprocal respect must be shown between the teacher and the learner, as well as
amongst the learners. A climate of respect is essential for learners to feel safe enough to push their boundaries and have the freedom to explore, fail, ask questions, seek knowledge, and come to terms with their role as developers of a knowledge base. This characteristic applies equally to learners of all ages, but is most relevant for those who have a choice to pursue educational opportunities, such as adult learners and undergraduate students.

Based on this brief synthesis of the characteristics of undergraduate students and adult learners, it seems that the significant difference between the two groups of learners is the motivation of adult learners to take a more pragmatic approach to learning where the knowledge can be rapidly transferred and directly applied. In contrast, undergraduate education serves the dual purpose of enhancing personal psychosocial development and academic learning with undergraduate students generally content to initially acquire knowledge for their own personal development, with the intention to translate the knowledge and apply the learning at some point in the future (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). This contrast may arise from the breadth of life experiences that adult learners bring to their educational journey and the personal psychosocial development traditional students typically undergo throughout their experience of undergraduate education.

**Barriers to Education**

In examining why undergraduate students and adult learners are unable to participate in a desired learning experience, the most significant differences between the two groups can be understood through an examination of the similarities and differences in barriers. The most frequently cited barriers to education for adult learners include time,
financial, or confidence constraints; minimal interest in the subject matter; and challenges with scheduling, transportation, or child care (Lieb, 1991). The most frequently cited reasons for why adults choose not to engage in learning experiences are lack of time and money, factors that consistently appear in longitudinal studies of adult learning (Merriam & Brockett, 2007). In examining these barriers, there is a similarity across the barriers in that the majority of factors are external to the individual, with the exception of personal confidence constraints. While some external barriers may be influenced by adult learners, it is more likely that adult learners have less of an opportunity to overcome barriers to their education as professional and family responsibilities, previous commitments, personal interests, and other obligations become competing priorities with the learning opportunity. The extreme significance of the externally derived barriers, such as the requirement to work to support a family or not having time available to dedicate to the learning opportunity, differs significantly from the barriers undergraduate students experience to their education.

The most commonly cited barriers to education for undergraduate students encompass financial constraints, personal confidence and self-efficacy challenges, short- or long-term health issues including mental health concerns, a lack of academic skills, and internalized pressures felt through family or cultural expectations (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Kuh, Kinzie, Bucklye, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Levine, 2006). With the exception of financial challenges, these barriers can be seen as internally focused and strongly related to the personal experiences of undergraduate students. The internally focused barriers of undergraduate students may be related to the personal psycho-social development that emerging adults typically experience at approximately
similar ages to traditional undergraduate populations. As undergraduate students gain experience with academic learning, independent living, and increased autonomy, they may experience less personal and self-efficacy challenges. Given the profile of the traditional undergraduate student, and the amount of financial aid, academic advising, and personal support that is available to all undergraduate students, it is unlikely the major barriers to education that undergraduate students typically experience are unable to be overcome by them.

The strongest similarity in the barriers experienced between adult learners and undergraduate students is that the barriers exist as an impediment to the learning opportunity. Barriers can be encountered in a number of ways, and the learner must find a way to overcome the barriers to continue the educational opportunity. Financial constraints are cited as the most common barrier to education by both adult learners and undergraduate students. This commonality speaks to the significant financial commitment that educational opportunities require and that learners from each group must be cautious of taking on educational opportunities if they are not in a position to accept the financial or time commitments required.

**Motivation**

Motivation is a critical aspect of learning for adult learners and undergraduate students (Jacobs & Newstead, 2000; Knowles, 1984). Deci and Ryan’s (2008) Self-Determination Theory of human motivation addresses several basic issues including life goals and aspirations, a key component of both undergraduate and adult learning. Self-Determination Theory focuses on types of motivation and includes internal motivation, related to life goals such as personal development, and external motivation, related to
goals such as wealth and fame (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The principles of adult learning (Lieb, 1991) highlight six factors that are described as sources of motivation for adult learners; social relationships, external expectations, social welfare, personal advancement, escape or stimulation, and cognitive interest. These sources can be grouped based on the internal or external nature of the goals. The externally motivated factors include external expectations and personal advancement, whereas social relationships, social welfare, escape or stimulation, and cognitive interest are the internally motivated factors of motivation for adult learners. The intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of traditional undergraduate students can be linked to Lieb’s (1991) factors in that undergraduate students experience tremendous external expectation pressures from parents and society at large to pursue and graduate from undergraduate education and attain personal advancement (Levine, 2006). The traditional undergraduate experience is a highly social environment where new friendships are formed (social relationships), in new and fairly temporary living and learning environments (escape or stimulation), where learning for personal and professional development is the primary purpose (cognitive interest and social welfare). The traditional undergraduate student seems to experience all of the sources of motivation for adult learning as defined through Lieb’s (1991) Principles of Adult Learning and few, if any, significant differences exist between the two groups.

Teaching Strategies

According to Kuh et al. (2006), the key factors that contribute to student success and post-university outcomes of university students (described as college students for American institutions) are detailed in Figure 1. In Figure 1 What Matters to Student
Success (Kuh et al., 2006), a number of student behaviours, such as study habits, time on task, motivation, and the all-encompassing “other,” could also be considered to fall under Lieb’s (1991) characteristics of adult learners. The institutional programs and services provided to undergraduate students, such as first year transition support, peer support, campus environment, and teaching and learning approaches, could all benefit from the application of adult learning principles. The post-university (college) outcomes of employment, graduate and professional school, and lifelong learning are presented within the context of learner-focused results. These three outcomes rely on the ability of undergraduate students to apply the knowledge gained through undergraduate education into their chosen post-graduation plans, also known as knowledge translation. Knowledge translation is relevant for both undergraduate students and adult learners. While the terms knowledge transfer or knowledge translation do not appear in Kuh et al.’s (2006) review of student success literature, instructors can support knowledge translation in undergraduate students by utilizing teaching strategies such as Lieb’s (1991) adult learning principles, which have been shown to support knowledge translation in adult learners (Ross-Gordon, 2011).

Many additional similarities in teaching strategies between undergraduate students and adult learners have been identified. Best practices in teaching to undergraduate students encourage instructors to provide learners with multiple opportunities to engage with the learning material through a deep learning approach; ensure teaching is accessible to learners from a variety of learning styles; and utilize assessment methodologies so that both formative and summative feedback are provided.
The adult learning principles outlined by Lieb (1991) provide similar direction for teaching to adult learners, where the focus of the teaching strategies is supporting the
learner to personally connect with the material in a deep learning approach and recognize the common barriers to education experienced by adult learners.

In considering differences in teaching strategies for undergraduate students and adult learners, the barriers that each group often faces to pursuing an education should be considered. By recognizing the generally internally focused nature of barriers for undergraduate students and the generally external nature of barriers for adult learners, instructors have a greater ability to respond to situations with appropriate flexibility and provide alternate educational arrangements, where appropriate.

**Conclusion**

In a review of student success literature, Kuh et al. (2006) found employment, graduate and professional school, and lifelong learning to be the outcomes of undergraduate education. The student development literature focusing on personal development differs considerably from the adult education literature in that the function of the knowledge is primarily related to development of self-identity rather than translation of knowledge. Overall, the barriers experienced by traditional undergraduate students through academic programs at Queen’s are more likely to be related to the psychosocial developmental phase experienced by youth transitioning into independent young adults such as financial pressures, mental health concerns, confidence, academic achievement, and family pressure.

Non-academic or co-curricular services and programs and services require the learner to actively seek out the learning opportunity and make a choice to engage with the learning material. These optional services and programs, combined with academic
programming, may lead to traditional undergraduate students experiencing a learning environment that is often defined as exclusive to adult learners. If the goal of undergraduate university education is solely to provide psychosocial development, then adult learning principles do not appear to apply; however, if the goal of post-secondary education for undergraduate students is beyond psychosocial development and extends to acquiring a breadth of skills and experiences that can be applied to further education or in the workplace upon graduation, the adult learning principles should be embraced by undergraduate education institutions.

In the past, undergraduate education has focused on a narrow view of the needs of undergraduate students. As undergraduate education becomes increasingly beneficial to accessing employment opportunities, the classification of traditional undergraduate students must widen to reflect the diverse and varied population of youth who now pursue undergraduate qualifications. To understand this relationship, one must understand the characteristics, motivations, and barriers, in addition to effective teaching strategies, for both undergraduate students and adult learners. In the chapter that follows I present a series of four workshops. Each workshop has been designed to inform university staff how to incorporate adult learning principles when providing services and programs to traditional undergraduate students at Queen’s University. These staff members include program coordinators, advisors, counsellors, assistants, and any other support staff who provide non-academic programs or services to undergraduate student populations. The participants in the workshops may additionally include faculty members, although program and service providers are the intended audience.
CHAPTER 3: WORKSHOPS

Workshop Series Overview

Purpose

To create a program to introduce non-academic service and programming staff at Queen’s University to student development theory, student success theory, and the principles of adult learning. To provide an opportunity for student services professionals at Queen’s University to consider how learning about undergraduate student development and the principles of adult learning could help to inform their professional practice.

Rationale

Although Undergraduate Student Services represent a recognized career path with specialized training programs in the United States, they are still considered to be an emerging profession within Canada. Many student services professionals at Queen’s University come to their roles by way of training for another profession. A variety of transferrable soft skills are vital for success in providing student services; however, a rudimentary knowledge of student development theory and student success theory is helpful to understand the unique needs of traditional undergraduate students.

Definition of Traditional Undergraduate Students

For the purposes of this workshop series, traditional undergraduate students is used to define the undergraduate educational experience of the largest student body at Queen’s University, a relatively homogeneous group of students pursuing their first to fourth year of undergraduate study. Queen’s University is a unique institution that attracts a distinct group of students with very high academic achievement. The majority of first-year students entering Queen’s are between 17 and 22 years of age, with no significant family
responsibilities, who pursue a full-time university education immediately after secondary studies, and complete their undergraduate degree in four consecutive years. To facilitate the transition into first year at Queen’s, the majority of students live on-campus for the academic year in university-managed residence halls and near campus in shared houses for the remaining three years.

Prerequisites

Student Services professionals who choose to participate in this workshop series must be employed at Queen’s University and work directly with students. Typically, they are not expected to have any previous theoretical knowledge or academic credentials related to undergraduate education.

The Workshops

This is a four-workshop series. The workshops will be offered sequentially between late October and March. All workshops will be 1.5h in length. They will be offered through the Queen’s University Learning Catalogue. Workshops may be taken individually but are designed as a series where knowledge builds over the course of the workshops.

Workshop 1: Student Identity

Workshop 2: Barriers and Motivation

Workshop 3: Adult Learning Principles

Workshop 4: How to Apply it All
Workshop 1: Student Identity (Activity Plan)

Objective
To introduce the concept of considering traditional undergraduate students as a unique group of learners.

Purpose
• An understanding of how traditional undergraduate students experience undergraduate education.
• An appreciation of how undergraduate students experience differences in motivation depending on their personal goals and life experiences.
• A broad knowledge base of the theory related to undergraduate student development.

Timing
As this is the first workshop in the series, it should be offered in late October. The timing of this workshop within the academic year has been purposeful to maximize opportunities for program and service providers to attend the workshop and avoid the beginning of the semester when workload is typically very high. Professional development is often not a priority or is unavailable to staff during peak periods.

Materials
• Classroom with tables, learners seated in groups of 4-5
• Projector, screen, and laptop
• White Board or Large Sheets of Paper and Markers
• PowerPoint slides for referencing materials during group discussions
• Scrap paper and pens
Content

While somewhat prescriptive, the content of the workshop has been designed as a suggestion to provide instructors significant opportunity to adapt the learning to reflect their own teaching styles and the needs of learners. Content may be revised or adapted based on the preferences of the instructor.

- **Slide #1: Introduction with workshop title**
  To be visible when participants enter the room and take their seats. Instructors should introduce themselves, provide an introduction to the workshop, welcome the learners, provide details on the format of the workshop, outline when breaks are planned, and explain the location of washrooms and water fountains. Any additional welcoming remarks should be included at this point.

- **Slide #2: Introductions**
  Have learners go around the room and introduce themselves and the department they are from. For the second round of introductions, encourage learners to share with which of the primary student populations they are working on a daily basis and the context of these interactions. The context may speak to the type (phone, email, in person), the length, and the primary purpose of the interactions with students.

- **Slide #3: Quick Facts - Traditional Undergraduate Students at Queen’s**
  Provide an overview of the Undergraduate Student Population at Queen’s. Here is some content to consider:
  
  - In studying the practice of providing educational opportunities to learners registered in undergraduate education at Queen’s University, the term
“undergraduate students” is used to describe the largest student body on campus. This designation reflects the relatively homogeneous group of traditional students pursuing their first to fourth year of study.

- Queen’s University is a unique institution that attracts a distinct group of students with very high academic achievement. An overall average of 88.7% is required for undergraduate admission with many professional programs requiring averages greater than 90% (Queen’s University, 2012a). To attain entry to Queen’s, students must have academically outcompeted the majority of their peers and spent considerable effort pursuing academic achievement, which requires opportunities to practice and demonstrate self-discipline, motivation, and an ability to prioritize goals, in addition to academic skills.

- In the highly competitive undergraduate environment, the best and brightest young minds are expected to thrive within the wide variety of academic and social challenges that are experienced throughout the academic cycle.

- The majority of first-year students entering Queen’s are between 17 and 22 years of age, with no significant family responsibilities, who pursue a full-time university education immediately after secondary studies, and complete their undergraduate degree in four consecutive years.

- To facilitate the transition into first year at Queen’s, the majority of students live on-campus for the academic year in university-managed
residence halls where significant programs and services are available to support challenges with transition.

- Undergraduate students who fit the above profile are termed “traditional students” at Queen’s.

Have learners pair up to map out how they would define a traditional undergraduate student at Queen’s, based on their experience with undergraduate students. Have learners come back to the larger group where you lead a group discussion with the purpose of reaching a definition for traditional undergraduate students at Queen’s, in group brainstorm. Write the key points on a White Board or large sheets of paper.

**NO SLIDE: Additional Aspects of Queen’s Student Identity**

- Lead a Group Discussion around ADDITIONAL aspects of student identity. The points of discussion can be noted on a White Board or large sheets of paper visible for the remainder of the workshop. Additional aspects of student identity may include:
  
  - First-generation
  - Mature
  - Disability (physical or mental, permanent or temporary)
  - Member of a minority group
  - International or Exchange
  - Transfer student
  - Student athlete
  - Resides at home
o Of a particular socioeconomic status
o Castle kids
o J Section
o Out-of-province
o Significant family responsibilities
o Faculty affiliation
o Distance Studies Student
o Part-Time Student

**Slide #4: Theoretical Learning**

A suggestion of content to share with learners as an introduction to the theoretical perspectives is below in bold. Mention concepts related to millennial students and why they are not the focus of this theoretical exploration. Think about your learners and consider their points of reference as theoretical concepts are presented and discussed.

**Psycho-social development: Chickering’s Seven Vectors**

- Chickering’s (1993) seven vectors theory focuses on how a personal identity is formed by an individual with a particular focus on psychosocial development during the college years. The seven vectors are: developing confidence; managing emotions; moving through autonomy towards independence; developing mature interpersonal relationships; establishing identity; developing purpose; and developing integrity (Evans et al., 2010).

- The personal development of the individual’s self-identity is a common theme to the vectors where the development is completely internal to the individual. Within
this theory, there is no mention of undergraduate learning as a function of building capacity for knowledge translation.

- Other student development theories, such as Perry’s (1981) theory of intellectual and ethical development or Erikson’s (1980) identity development theory, also focus on the period of undergraduate education as a time of personal growth and development of the undergraduate student as an individual (Evans et al., 2010).

**Student Success Theory**

- To describe the desired outcomes of the undergraduate learning experience for traditional undergraduate university students, the term “student success” has been adopted. In a review of literature related to what matters to student success, Kuh and colleagues (2006) defined student success as “academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational objectives, and post-college performance” (p. 7).

- Where the concept of student success seems to be most relevant to characteristics of traditional undergraduate students is the inclusion of the intellectual and academic components of undergraduate education, as well as implying that the skills and experiences gained through the undergraduate learning are typically intended to be applied within the workforce upon graduation. These key components of traditional undergraduate education are prevalent within student success theory and noticeably absent from student development theory.

- The intention to apply undergraduate students’ personal psychosocial development, learned skills and experiences, and pursuit of a career post-
graduation could collectively be considered characteristics of traditional undergraduate students.

**Slide #5: Student Profiles**

Show student profiles and engage learners in a think, pair, share exercise with profiles. Be reflexive in questions posed to learners. Work with theoretical learning content through the profiles. Have learners review two student profiles and consider how each traditional student would be experiencing undergraduate education based on Chickering’s Seven Vectors or Kuh’s definition of Student Success. Encourage learners to consider how to best help students in the context of the workshop participants’ professional roles.

**Slide #6: In Conclusion**

Provide a summary of the discussions and themes that emerged while incorporating an overview of characteristics of Traditional Undergraduate Students at Queen’s. Emphasize that multiple aspects of student identity may be present. Summarize learning and thank learners for their active participation.
**STUDENT IDENTITY: TRADITIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT QUEEN`s**

**INTRODUCTIONS**

- Introduce yourself and the department you are from.
- Share the primary student population you are working with on a day-to-day basis and context of these interactions.
TRADITIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT QUEEN`S

Overview of Undergraduate Student Population at Queen`s

Who are YOUR students?

THEORETICAL LEARNING

- Student Development Theory
  - Psycho-social development
    - Chickering's Seven Vectors:
      - developing confidence; managing emotions; moving through autonomy towards independence; developing mature interpersonal relationships; establishing identity; developing purpose; and developing integrity (Evans et al., 2010)

- Student Success Theory
  - Outcomes of Undergraduate Education
    - Student and Institution Goals
  - Kuh and colleagues (2006) defined student success as "academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational objectives, and post-college performance" (p. 7).
STUDENT PROFILES

Charlie
- First year
- From GTA
- Living in Res
- Joined Rec Dodge ball League and Cooking Club
- Not sure what to declare (Psych Devs Geog)
- Plans for professional employment after graduation, not sure what field
- Plans to work at summer camp again this year

Ashley
- Third year
- From Vancouver
- Living off-campus with friends
- Volunteers at KGH and at Mentorship for Youth Program
- Studying Life Sciences
- Plans for Graduate School after Undergraduate education
- Plans to live at home to study for MCAT, take prep course, and write MCAT exam over summer

IN CONCLUSION

- Overview of characteristics of Traditional Undergraduate Students at Queen’s
- Multiple aspects of student identity that may be present
Workshop 2: What’s Stopping Them? Barriers and Motivation (Activity Plan)

Objective
To understand the relationships among motivation, barriers, and student success in undergraduate education.

Purpose
• Learners will be able to define and understand typical barriers and motivations that undergraduate students often experience.
• Learners will make relevant links between challenges students present and barriers or motivations the students are experiencing.

Timing
As this is the second workshop in the series, it should be offered prior to mid-December. The timing in the academic year has been purposeful to maximize opportunities for program and service providers to attend the workshop, and avoid the end of the semester when workload can be very high or vacation and lieu time is typically taken. Professional development is often not a priority or is unavailable to staff during peak periods.

Materials
• Classroom with tables, learners seated in groups of 4-5
• Projector, screen, and laptop
• White Board or large sheets of paper and markers
• PowerPoint slides for referencing materials during group discussions
• Scrap paper and pens
• Hand out: Conversations Exercise
Content

While somewhat prescriptive, the content of the workshop has been designed as a suggestion to provide instructors significant opportunities to adapt the learning to reflect the needs of learners and their own teaching style. Content may be revised or adapted based on the preference of the instructor.

Slide #1: Introduction with workshop title

To be visible when participants enter the room and take their seats. Instructors should introduce themselves, provide an introduction to the workshop, welcome the learners, provide details on the format, outline when breaks are planned, and explain the location of washrooms and water fountains. Any additional welcoming remarks should be included at this point.

NO SLIDE: Icebreaker: Conversations Exercise (see page 7)

Begin with a brief description of barriers to education:

Have learners go around the room and introduce themselves to each other and engage in a brief conversation around their personal experiences working with undergraduate students. Learners will be provided a hand-out to complete as they meet other learners.

- Conversations Exercise: Start with exercise to connect with colleagues who have experience working with a student facing particular barriers:

  Ongoing financial concerns, a parent with a serious illness, studying as an adult learner, temporary mental health concerns, significant family responsibilities, ELL communication challenges, unrealistic academic expectations, cultural challenges, a temporary physical disability, academic
skills challenges, emergency financial concerns, problems with personal
confidence, housing concerns, ongoing medical health concerns, family or
cultural pressures, struggles with transition.

Debrief the exercise by reviewing the experiences of learners working with
students with barriers. Not every barrier needs to be reviewed, but it is helpful to
encourage learners to engage with their colleagues and share stories of students
facing barriers that had a particular impact on the student’s undergraduate
experience.

**Slides #2 and #3: Quick Facts - Traditional Undergraduate Students at
Queen’s**

Provide an overview of the geographic origin, gender, academic qualifications,
retention and graduation rate, and financial reality for Undergraduate Students at
Queen’s.

**Slide #4: Additional Aspects of Queen’s Student Identity**

- Have learners pair up to map out how they would define barriers for traditional
undergraduate students at Queen’s based on their experience with undergraduate
students. Have learners come back to larger group and lead a group discussion
with the purpose of considering additional barriers that undergraduate students
face at Queen’s. Slide #5 can be used as an overview after the group discussion or
as a starting point for the group discussion.

- Points of discussion can be noted on a White Board or large sheets of paper and
remain visible for the remainder of the workshop, if desired.
Slide #5: Theoretical Learning: MOTIVATION

- A suggestion of content to share with learners as an introduction to the theoretical perspectives is below in bold. Think about your learners and consider their point of reference as theoretical concepts are presented and discussed. Be prepared to adjust the depth and breadth of the discussion to meet the needs of the learners.


  - Pursuing undergraduate education for the purpose of increasing employment prospects and future income potential is a powerful motivator that many undergraduate students experience (Gedye, Fender, & Chalkley, 2004). Within the undergraduate student experience, long-term goals, such as graduating and obtaining employment, are considered performance goals. Performance goals have been described as students being motivated by their personal abilities being ranked higher relative to others, where the goal is to achieve more highly with respect to others and avoid the perception of incompetence or less ability in relation to others (Travers, Bohnert, & Randall, 2013). Performance goals are typically seen as extrinsically motivated and therefore generally considered less beneficial in terms of motivation, although performance goals can result in increased performance and achievement (Pintrich, 2000). Standardized mid-terms, exams, labs, assignments, and quizzes are all opportunities where undergraduate students could experience performance goals as powerful sources of motivation. This motivation may be particularly powerful in learning environments such as large first-year classes or academically focused living/learning communities in Residences where the
learning experience is fairly autonomous yet the experience is shared by a large number of peers.

- A mastery goal source of motivation is in direct contrast to performance goals where motivation is experienced through personal growth measured in comparison to past achievement. The pursuit of lifelong learning and learning professional skills would connect more closely to mastery goals where personal development and competencies are intrinsically driven. Mastery goals have been linked to higher levels of focus, efficacy, interest, effort, persistence, performance, and learning about a particular task (Pintrich, 2000).


- Intrinsic motivation is understood as an individual being moved to do something for the personal internal fulfilment, rather than a reward or consequence that will follow completion of the task. Intrinsic motivation is in direct contrast to extrinsic motivation, where an individual engages in behaviour for reasons outside the activity’s enjoyment (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

- **Interest in a particular discipline (including related skills and experiences associated with a field) or general personal, academic, and psycho-social development of undergraduate education: Jacobs and Newstead (2000)**

- In studying the types of motivations that exist in undergraduate students and the relationships among the motivations, Jacobs and Newstead (2000) found that undergraduate student motivations could be described as either related to interest in a particular discipline, including the related skills and experiences associated with a field, or related to the general personal, academic, and
psycho-social development of undergraduate education. Undergraduate students wishing to pursue a career in a particular field attached higher importance to subject-specific skills and experiences than undergraduate students who were motivated by the overall undergraduate experience. Furthermore, undergraduate students typically experienced a loss of motivation after their first year of studies, a phenomenon known as the second year blues. However, motivation tended to recover by the final year of undergraduate study, which supports the concept of exit velocity, where undergraduate students experience an increase in both motivation and academic achievement as their opportunity for graduation approaches.

- **Fear of Negative Outcomes: Lapour and Heppner (2009)**

- Beyond the motivational goals suggested by Kuh et al. (2006), undergraduate students may be experiencing family or peer pressure to succeed in a particular program, degree level, or even institution. In a study of class privilege and career options, privileged young women experienced significant expectations to achieve within a limited range of socially acceptable academic and extracurricular options (Lapour & Heppner, 2009). The fear of negative outcomes was a powerful motivator where expectations and self-efficacy combined to influence how the youth interpreted their interests, goals, and choices (Lapour & Heppner, 2009).

**Slide #6: Student Profiles**

- Show student profiles and engage learners in a think, pair, share exercise with profiles. Be reflexive in questions posed to learners. Work with theoretical
learning content through the profiles. Have learners review two student profiles and consider how these traditional students would be experiencing undergraduate education based on their personal barriers or motivation. Encourage learners to consider how to best help students in the context of the workshop participants’ professional roles.

**Slide #7: In Conclusion**

Provide a summary of the discussions and themes that emerged, while incorporating an overview of barriers and motivations experienced by Traditional Undergraduate Students at Queen`s. Emphasize that multiple barriers and motivations may be present. Summarize learning and thank learners for their active participation.
Workshop 2: What’s Stopping Them? Barriers and Motivation (Conversations Exercise Hand-out)

Each square represents a student who has experienced a particular barrier to undergraduate education. Rotate amongst the group and find the name of a colleague who meets the criteria in each of the squares below. Write their name in each square. You may only use a person once for any square, and you must talk to that person directly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ongoing Financial Concerns</th>
<th>A Parent with a Serious Illness</th>
<th>Learning as an Adult Learner</th>
<th>Temporary Mental Health Concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant Family Responsibilities</td>
<td>ESL Communication Challenges</td>
<td>Unrealistic Academic Expectations</td>
<td>Cultural Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Temporary Physical Disability</td>
<td>Academic Skills Challenges</td>
<td>Temporary Financial Concerns</td>
<td>Problems with Personal Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Concerns</td>
<td>Ongoing Mental Health Concerns</td>
<td>Family or Cultural Pressures</td>
<td>Struggles with Transition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discover a colleague who has worked with a student who has experienced…
Workshop 2: What’s Stopping Them? Barriers and Motivation (PowerPoint Slides)

- **WHAT'S STOPPING THEM?**
- **QUICK FACTS:**
  - Where is home?
    - 77.5% from Ontario
    - 16.4% from other provinces and territories
    - 6.1% from international location
  - Gender split
    - 58.4% female
    - 41.6% male
  - Top countries of citizenship for international students:
    - Undergraduate: China, US, South Korea.
    - Graduate: China, US, India.
QUICK FACTS:
TRADITIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT QUEEN`S

- Academic Qualifications
  - Class entry average = 88.9%

- Retention and Graduation Rates
  - Year 1-2 retention rate: 94.5%
  - 7-year 2012 graduation rate = 92% (Ontario average = 81%)

- Financial Concerns
  The 2013 Exit Survey found that 39% of undergraduate Arts and Science students, 39% of Engineering and Applied Science students, and 53% of commerce students graduated with no debt. Approximately 40% of undergraduate students receive Queen`s student financial aid totaling more than $20M per year.


ADDITIONAL ASPECTS OF QUEEN`S STUDENT IDENTITY

- Additional aspects of Queen`s student identity all come with particular barriers attached:
  - First-generation
  - Mature
  - Disability (physical or mental)
  - Member of a minority group
  - International or exchange
  - Transfer student
  - Student athlete
  - Resides at home
  - Of a particular socioeconomic status
  - Castle kids
  - J Section
  - Out-of-province
  - Family responsibilities
  - Faculty affiliation
THEORETICAL LEARNING: MOTIVATION

- Motivations related to:
  - Mastery or Performance Goals
    - Pintrich (2000)
  - Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation
    - Deci and Ryan (2000)
  - How importance is placed on skill building by undergrads
    - Jacobs and Newstead (2000)
  - Fear of negative outcomes
    - Lapour and Heppne (2009)

STUDENT PROFILES

Charlie
- Enjoying classes and Queen’s experience. Likes living in Residence and excited to live in a house with friends next year
- First-year marks lower than expected: exams didn’t go so well
- Plans to focus more on academics next year and work harder for increased academic success
- OK with C+ average for first year; parents OK with it as well
- Ongoing financial concerns (OSAP + private loans)
- First Generation Student. Older sister went to university but lived at home

Ashley
- Enjoys Queen’s experience. Likes Life Sciences program
- No financial concerns, parents and grandparents paying for education
- Both parents hold graduate degrees
- Confident in academic skills but struggling with pressure to achieve high marks; CGPA is 3.5
- Experiencing ongoing mental health concerns (anxiety and depression), currently seeing counsellor, has been on medication in the past
- Trying to maintain scholarship and receive distinction on transcript
- Chose to stop participating in volleyball this year to focus on academics
IN CONCLUSION

- Overview of Barriers and Motivations experienced by Traditional Queen's Students

- Multiple aspects of Barriers and Motivations that may be present as undergraduate students navigate their own personal undergraduate student experience
Workshop 3: Could Undergraduate Student be Considered Adult Learners?

Yes/No/Sometimes? (Activity Plan)

Objective
To understand adult learning principles and consider how adult learning principles can be applied when providing programs and services to undergraduate students.

Purpose
• Learners will be able to make relevant links between adult learning principles and experiences of undergraduate students.
• Learners will develop willingness and ability to consider the variety of factors that can influence the traditional undergraduate student experience.

Timing
As this is the third workshop in the series, it should be offered after the winter break but before Reading Week. The timing has been purposeful to maximize opportunities for program and service providers to attend the workshop, and avoid the end of the semester when workload can be very high or vacation and lieu time is typically taken. Professional development is often not a priority or is unavailable to staff during peak periods.

Materials
• Classroom with tables, learners seated in groups of 4-5
• Projector, screen, and laptop
• White Board or large sheets of paper and markers
• PowerPoint slides for referencing materials during group discussions
• Scrap paper and pens
Content

While somewhat prescriptive, the content of the workshop has been designed as a suggestion to provide instructors significant opportunity to adapt the learning to reflect the needs of learners and their own teaching style. Content may be revised or adapted based on the preference of the instructors.

Slide #1: Introduction with workshop title

To be visible when participants enter the room and take their seats. Instructors should introduce themselves, provide an introduction to the workshop, welcome the learners, provide details on the format, outline when breaks are planned, and explain the location of washrooms and water fountains. Any additional welcoming remarks should be included at this point.

Slide #2: Introduction Exercise

Begin by encouraging learners to consider if they believe the characteristics or behaviours listed would apply or be appropriate to describe undergraduate students with whom they work.

Introduction exercise should be done in a think, pair, share format. Learners should have a predetermined time period to think about their responses, discuss their perspectives with a colleague, and share some key points of the paired discussion with the larger group, if desired. Not all pairs need to share their experiences; it is helpful to encourage learners to engage with their colleagues and share stories of working with undergraduate students.
Slide #3: Theoretical Learning: Adult Learning Principles

- A suggestion of content to share with learners as an introduction to the theoretical perspectives is below in bold. Think about your learners and consider their point of reference as theoretical concepts are presented and discussed. Be prepared to adjust the depth and breadth of the discussion to meet the needs of the learners.

Overview of Characteristics of Adult Learners: A common thread running through the characteristics that are meant to define adult learners is that the learning must involve adult learners pursuing a learning experience that is somehow personally meaningful and relating the learning back to themselves as individuals, with specific goals and expectations to be achieved through the educational opportunity. To facilitate learning of the material presented, adults must first choose whether or not they wish to learn the new material, and then integrate the learning with their previous knowledge and life experience to meet personal goals. This autonomy speaks to how adult learning is often a self-directed learning experience where adult learners have the ability to make active choices to shape the depth or limits of their learning experience (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). These choices may be related to life experience with the subject matter, prior positive or negative experience with learning or the teaching method used to convey the learning, perceived ability or skill, or personal confidence.

Slide #4: Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2011): Adult learning characteristics are rooted in the concept of andragogy, a term coined by Knowles (1973) to differentiate the requirements of adult learners from the elements that contribute
to learning in children and youth. Knowles pioneered the development of adult education as a concise discipline within the field of education through his work in the latter half of the 20th century. Knowles et al. (2011) described the characteristics of adult learners where adults: need to personally understand the relevance of the learning; require autonomy over the decision making in their learning; bring a wealth of personal experience and unique perspectives to the learning experience; seek learning experiences that can be readily applied to personal life circumstances; see learning as a holistic experience; apply the learning within a personal or professional context; experience intrinsic motivation as a positive force; and are less motivated by extrinsic factors.

**Slide #5: Lieb (1991):** Incorporated Knowles’ characteristics of adult learners into a larger yet concise framework describing principles of adult learning. Lieb’s characteristics of adult learners describe adult learners as: being autonomous and self-directed; having life experience and prior knowledge; being goal-oriented and relevancy-oriented; being practical; and, above all, requiring respect to thrive as learners. Lieb’s Principles of Adult Learning framework also includes barriers, motivation, and teaching practices specific to adult learners. Adult learners experience distinct barriers and motivations while learning as they are often juggling the role of learner in addition to multiple other identities such as employee, partner, parent, caregiver, or community member (Ross-Gordon, 2011). The distinct barriers and motivations that adults experience are so pervasive in the adult learning experience that they should be considered as an unequivocal characteristic of adult learners.
- Points of discussion can be noted on a White Board or large sheets of paper and visible for the remainder of the workshop, if desired.

**Slide #6: Student Profiles**

- Show student profiles and engage learners in a think, pair, share exercise with profiles. Be reflexive in questions posed to learners. Work with theoretical learning content through the profiles. Have learners review two student profiles and consider how each traditional student may be experiencing adult learning principles based on his or her personal undergraduate experience. Encourage learners to consider how to best help students in the context of the workshop participants’ professional roles.

**Slide #7: In Conclusion**

Provide a summary of the discussions and themes that emerged while incorporating an overview of adult learning principles. Encourage learners to consider how the undergraduate students with whom they work may benefit from being considered as adult learners. Summarize learning and thank learners for their active participation.
Workshop 3: Could Undergraduate Student be Considered Adult Learners?

Yes/No/Sometimes? (PowerPoint Slides)

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**INTRODUCTION EXERCISE**

- When would you see the following characteristics or behaviours in undergraduate students? Would any of the following be appropriate to describe the students with whom you work?
  - Being autonomous and self-directed?
  - Having life experience and prior knowledge?
  - Being goal-oriented, relevancy-oriented, and practical?
  - Above all, require respect to thrive as learners?

- Need to personally understand the relevance of the learning; require autonomy over the decision making in their learning; bring a wealth of personal experience and unique perspective to the learning experience; seek learning experiences that can be readily applied to personal life circumstances; see learning as a holistic experience; apply the learning within a personal or professional context; experience intrinsic motivation as a positive force; are less motivated by extrinsic factors?

- Yes or No? Why or why not?

- Think Pair Share
THEORETICAL LEARNING:  
ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES

- Lieb (1991) and Knowles (1973): Characteristics of Adult Learners

The distinct barriers and motivations that adults experience are so pervasive in the adult learning experience that they should be considered as an unequivocal characteristic of adult learners.

KNOWLES (2011) DESCRIBED THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS WHERE ADULTS:

- need to personally understand the relevance of the learning
- require autonomy over the decision making in their learning
- bring a wealth of personal experience and unique perspectives to the learning experience
- seek learning experiences that can be readily applied to personal life circumstances
- see learning as a holistic experience
- apply the learning within a personal or professional context
- experience intrinsic motivation as a positive force
- are less motivated by extrinsic factors
### LIEB’S (1991) CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS DESCRIBE ADULT LEARNERS AS:

- Being autonomous and self-directed
- Having life experience and prior knowledge
- Being goal-oriented, relevancy-oriented, and practical
- Above all, require respect to thrive as learners
- Lieb’s framework also includes barriers, motivation, and teaching practices specific to adult learners.
- Adult learners experience distinct barriers and motivations while learning as they are often juggling the role of learner in addition to multiple other identities such as employee, partner, parent, caregiver, or community member

### STUDENT PROFILES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charlie</th>
<th>Ashley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prefers tutorials over lectures</td>
<td>Contributes in every class to get full participation marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure what to write down and study to prepare for exams</td>
<td>Very organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys participating in class when possible by asking questions and contributing to discussion</td>
<td>Dislikes group work (relying on others, shared marks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys group work and iClickers</td>
<td>Understands how to do well in class and confident in her academic skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure what on-campus resources are available</td>
<td>Often refers to course syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking all first-year classes</td>
<td>Regularly seeks out study skills workshops and other on-campus resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoys smaller third and fourth year classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IN CONCLUSION

- Overview of Adult Learning Principles
- How these principles can apply to undergraduate students
Workshop 4: Teaching Strategies: How to Use Adult Learning Principles to Connect with Undergraduate Students (Activity Plan)

Objective

To consider teaching strategies that incorporate adult learning principles to enhance connections amongst program and services staff and undergraduate students.

Purpose

• Understand the relationship between undergraduate student success and adult learning principles.

• Reflect how traditional undergraduate students may experience undergraduate education as adult learners and apply appropriate teaching strategies.

Timing

As this is the fourth and final workshop in the series, it should be offered over the month of March. The timing of this workshop within the academic year has been purposeful to maximize opportunities for program and service providers to attend the workshop and avoid the final weeks of the semester when workload is typically very high. Professional development is often not a priority or is unavailable to staff during peak periods.

Materials

• Classroom with tables, learners seated in groups of 4-5

• Projector, screen, and laptop

• White Board or large sheets of paper and markers

• PowerPoint slides for referencing materials during group discussions

• Scrap paper and pens
Content

While somewhat prescriptive, the content of the workshop has been designed as a suggestion to provide instructors significant opportunity to adapt the learning to reflect their own teaching styles and the needs of learners. Content may be revised or adapted based on the preferences of the instructors.

Slide #1: Introduction with workshop title

Instructors should introduce themselves, provide an introduction to the workshop, welcome the learners, provide details on the format of the workshop, outline when breaks are planned, and explain the location of washrooms and water fountains. Any additional welcoming remarks should be included at this point.

Slide #2: Who Teaches at Queen’s?

Provide each table with markers and a few sheets of flip chart paper. Have learners make a list of every position at Queen’s that has a teaching component. Include the position and the learners. Note any questions that come up and possible solutions. Have each group present its findings and encourage the participants to highlight positions or learners that have not yet been mentioned.

Slide #3: What Matters to Student Success (Kuh et al., 2006)

Walk the learners through the key elements of the graphic that combine to form student engagement, according to Kuh et al. (2006). Review the Post-College outcomes. Question if the learners agree with the outcomes and factors that contribute to Student Behaviours and Institutional Conditions.

Frame the discussion around how the chart may or may not apply to the Undergraduate Student Population at Queen’s. Here is some content to consider:

- A number of student behaviours, such as study habits, time on task, motivation, and the all-encompassing “other,” could also be considered to fall under Lieb’s (1991) characteristics of adult learners. The institutional programs and services provided to undergraduate students, such as first
year transition support, peer support, campus environment, and teaching and learning approaches, could all benefit from the application of adult learning principles.

- The post-university (college) outcomes of employment, graduate and professional school, and lifelong learning are presented within the context of learner-focused results. These three outcomes rely on the ability of undergraduate students to apply the knowledge gained through undergraduate education into their chosen post-graduation plans, also known as knowledge translation.

- Knowledge translation is relevant for both undergraduate students and adult learners. While the terms knowledge transfer or knowledge translation do not appear in Kuh et al.’s review, instructors can support knowledge translation in undergraduate students by utilizing teaching strategies such as Lieb’s (1991) adult learning principles, which have been shown to support knowledge translation in adult learners (Ross-Gordon, 2011).

**Slide #4: Key Factors for Student Success**

Student Behaviours:

- Study Habits
- Peer Involvement
- Interaction with Faculty
- Time on Task
- Motivation
- Other (what else could be included in this category?)
Institutional Conditions:

- First Year Experience
- Academic Support
- Campus Environment
- Peer Support
- Teaching and Learning Approaches
- Other (what else could be included in this category?)

Slide #5 and #6: Teaching Strategies Using Adult Learning Principles

Suggestions of content to share with learners when apply teaching strategies to undergraduate learners, within the framework of adult learning principles, are highlighted below. Encourage group discussions. Engage learners with questions to challenge their perspective. Think about your learners and consider their points of reference as theoretical concepts are presented and discussed.

- Many additional similarities in teaching strategies between undergraduate students and adult learners have been identified. Best practices in teaching to undergraduate students encourage instructors to provide learners with multiple opportunities to engage with the learning material through a deep learning approach; ensure teaching is accessible to learners from a variety of learning styles; and utilize assessment methodologies so that both formative and summative feedback are provided.

- The adult learning principles outlined by Lieb (1991) provide similar direction for teaching to adult learners, where the focus of the teaching strategies is supporting the learner to personally connect with the material
in a deep learning approach and recognize the common barriers to education experienced by adult learners.

- In considering differences in teaching strategies for undergraduate students and adult learners, the barriers that each group often faces to pursuing an education should be considered.

- By recognizing the often internally focused nature of barriers for undergraduate students and the often external nature of barriers for adult learners, instructors have a greater ability to respond to situations with appropriate flexibility and provide alternate educational arrangements, where appropriate.

- Non-academic or co-curricular services and programs and services require the learner to actively seek out the learning opportunity and make a choice to engage with the learning material. When seeking learning and actively engaging with optional services and programs, in addition to meeting the requirements of required academic programming, traditional undergraduate students may be experiencing a learning environment that is often defined as exclusive to adult learners.

- Understanding the unique needs of traditional undergraduate students from the perspective of adult learning would be most beneficial for program and service providers seeking to engage traditional undergraduate students through a non-academic or co-curricular education model.

- If the goal of undergraduate university education is solely to provide psychosocial development, then adult learning principles do not appear to
apply; however, if the goal of education for undergraduate students is beyond psychosocial development to acquire a breadth of skills and experiences that can be applied to further education or in the workplace upon graduation, the adult learning principles should be embraced by undergraduate education institutions.

- In the past, undergraduate education has focused on a narrow view of the needs of undergraduate students. As undergraduate education becomes increasingly required to access meaningful employment opportunities, the classification of traditional undergraduate students must widen to reflect the diverse and varied populations who now pursue undergraduate qualifications. To understand this relationship, one must understand the characteristics, motivations, and barriers, in addition to effective teaching strategies, for both undergraduate students and adult learners.

**Slide #7: Staff Profiles**

- The profiles have been reworked to consider staff perspectives. Encourage learners to engage in a think, pair, share exercise around what it would be like to learn from each of these staff members.

Consider from the perspective of undergraduate students, colleagues, managers, and the staff member themselves. Be reflexive in questions posed. Encourage learners to work with theoretical learning content through the profiles. Consider how to best help students in the context of the learner’s role. If you were a student, which person would you prefer to go to with questions? Why?
Slide #8: In Conclusion

Provide a summary of the discussions and themes that emerged while incorporating an overview of the characteristics of traditional undergraduate students, barriers and motivations, and adult learning principles. Encourage learners to consider how this knowledge can apply to their professional practice when providing services and programs to undergraduate students at Queen’s. Summarize learning and thank learners for their active participation.
Workshop 4: Teaching Strategies: How to Use Adult Learning Principles to Connect with Undergraduate Students (PowerPoint Slides)

TEACHING STRATEGIES: HOW TO USE ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES TO CONNECT WITH UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

WHO TEACHES AT QUEEN'S?

- Professors
- Teaching Assistants
- Research Assistants
- Post-Doctoral Students

All staff who work with students have opportunities to teach!

According to Kuh et al. (2006), the key factors that contribute to student success and post-university outcomes of university students are:

**Student Behaviours:**
- Study Habits
- Peer Involvement
- Interaction with Faculty
- Time on Task
- Motivation
- Other

**Institutional Conditions:**
- First Year Experience
- Academic Support
- Campus Environment
- Peer Support
- Teaching and Learning Approaches
- Other

(what else could be included in this category?)
TEACHING STRATEGIES USING ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES

- Best practices in teaching to undergraduate students encourage instructors to:
  - Provide learners with multiple opportunities to engage with the learning material through a deep learning approach
  - Ensure teaching is accessible to learners from a variety of learning styles
  - Utilize assessment methodologies so that both formative and summative feedback are provided.

- The adult learning principles outlined by Lieb (1991) provide similar direction for teaching to adult learners, where the focus of the teaching strategies is supporting learners to personally connect with the material in a deep learning approach and recognize the common barriers to education experienced by adult learners.

- In considering differences in teaching strategies for undergraduate students and adult learners, the barriers that each group often faces to pursuing an education should be considered.

TEACHING STRATEGIES USING ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES

- If the goal of undergraduate university education is solely to provide psychosocial development, then adult learning principles do not appear to apply; however, if the goal of undergraduate students is beyond psychosocial development and to acquire a breadth of skills and experiences that can be applied to further education or in the workplace upon graduation, the adult learning principles should be embraced by undergraduate education institutions.

- In the past, undergraduate education has focused on a narrow view of the needs of undergraduate students. As undergraduate education becomes increasingly required to access meaningful employment opportunities, the classification of traditional undergraduate students must widen to reflect the diverse and varied populations who now pursue undergraduate qualifications. To understand this relationship, one must understand the characteristics, motivations, and barriers, in addition to effective teaching strategies, for both undergraduate students and adult learners.
STAFF PROFILES

Madeline
- Seven years of experience with post-secondary education
- Just doing job
- Doesn’t understand big picture
- Territorial
- Prefers not to work closely with others
- Must check with supervisor before making decisions
- Not a lot of communication with other colleagues

Stephanie
- Eighteen years of experience with post-secondary education
- Enjoys work, interaction with students
- Building career, sees opportunity for successive roles
- Enjoys collaboration with colleagues
- Prefers team environment
- Empowered to make decisions within scope of role
- Considered a go-to person within the department

IN CONCLUSION

Summary:
- Characteristics of Traditional Undergraduate Students
- Barriers and Motivations
- Adult Learning Principles

How can all this knowledge apply to YOUR professional practice when providing services and programs to undergraduate students at Queen's?
CHAPTER 4: LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD

Looking Back: Coming to Understand Myself as an Adult Learner

As a fairly recent graduate and new professional to the field of university administration, I began the Master of Education (MEd) program with a limited understanding of the commitment, engagement, and level of scholarship required to successfully complete a master’s degree. At the time, my primary motivation for pursuing graduate studies was more of a reaction to take advantage of an opportunity for free education than a measured response to an internal desire to pursue scholarship at a graduate level. The opportunity to pursue financially subsidized graduate studies was available as part of a total compensation package offered by Queen’s University under the terms of my employment as a Student Services staff member. I have always enjoyed learning through formal education and felt the opportunity for a financially subsidized master’s degree was too good to pass up.

In pursuing part-time coursework in the Faculty of Education, initially under special student status and subsequently while formally enrolled in the MEd program, I quickly came to realize the level of mindful engagement necessary to earn the MEd qualification. While doing coursework, I enjoyed the collegial nature of thoughtfully planned and expertly taught seminar-based classes and quickly recognized the irony of learning from poor quality instruction within the Faculty of Education. As a new part-time student eager to build my self-identity as a graduate student, I attempted to engage in events and co-curricular programming offered through both the Faculty of Education and the Education Graduate Student’s Society. Through conversations with fellow graduate students who were often traditional students studying full-time and occasionally
with faculty members, I tended to feel out of place and as though I somehow didn’t fit
with what it meant to be a master’s student in the Faculty of Education at Queen’s.

As I progressed through my course requirements and gained a strong and
supportive mentor who provided much needed leadership and guidance to my self-
directed studies, I felt increasingly supported yet disengaged with both my studies and
fellow learners. Only after struggling for the better part of two years to independently yet
half-heartedly flesh out a thesis topic did the reality of my situation begin to set in.

The aspect of my graduate studies that I had not previously acknowledged yet
played the most significant role in my progress was a realization that the path to graduate
education that I had been pursuing for the better part of four years was no longer meeting
my needs, and hadn’t been for quite some time. During one of the more honest
conversations of my life, my mentor and supervisor frankly pointed out that as part time
student and new mother with a young child, full-time career, and a fulfilling personal life
filled with experiences and adventures I actively pursued and enjoyed, I was not going to
obtain my MEd by pursuing the thesis stream. The actualities of my life circumstances
were not something I considered to have a significant impact on my graduate studies. In
reality, the consideration of my experience as a whole person and part-time student led
me to explore my own educational goals and focus on meeting my personal learning
outcomes rather than the expectations that I understood to exist for master’s students in
the Faculty of Education.

The final course of my graduate studies was the ideal capstone to my course-
based studies. In learning about the unique characteristics, barriers, and motivations of
adult learners, I immediately saw the connection between my own experience as a
graduate student and the punctuated progress I had made over the years. In considering how to develop my professional practice as a provider of programs and services to primarily undergraduate students, with the help of my supervisor, I began to focus my independent research on how undergraduate students may also be experiencing similar barriers, motivations, and characteristics as adult learners. What followed was an exploration of literature, theories, and professional best practices that ultimately changed my life in the most positive ways. In pursuing theoretical and practical knowledge directly related to my professional practice, I was able to expand my understanding of how to provide exceptional services and programs to undergraduate students and ultimately demonstrate that knowledge when needed, which resulted in the offer of what I consider my dream job as an Academic Counsellor in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Queen’s University.

**Moving Forward: Leveraging Resources**

In completing the requirements for the MEd project, I created a workshop series that, in hindsight, would be most appropriately targeted to the person I was when I began my graduate studies. The workshops have been created for Student Services professionals who would like to expand their theoretical knowledge of student affairs administration to improve their own professional practice. By creating this learning opportunity for others, I have also created opportunities for expansion of my own professional practice where I could explore if this type of professional resource would be a desired addition to professional development resources available to Queen’s staff through the Human Resources learning catalogue. Providing the workshop series and therefore expanding my
own teaching experience is something I intend to pursue. In considering my past experience with taking an opportunity as a reaction to the possibility of the opportunity being available rather than carefully considering my own goals and objectives in light of my holistic experience in life, I believe that purposefully engaging in the chance to share the workshop series when I am motivated to freely pursue the workshops and not experiencing significant barriers will result in the best possible outcomes for myself as an instructor and ultimately the learners as well.

On a daily basis, I have several opportunities to advise individual undergraduate students on their academic progress through individual counselling appointments. Although academic advising has traditionally been focused on the details of degree and course planning, the total experience of a student’s academic and personal circumstances is typically considered in an advising session. Many traditional undergraduate students experience significant barriers to their undergraduate education and only by including this reality in the recommendations and referrals of the advising appointment can appropriate and accurate advice be provided. In expanding my understanding of motivations and teaching strategies for both adult learners and undergraduate students, I feel I am in a much better position to listen to undergraduate students and respond to the needs of each individual student in a way that is most appropriate for her or him.

By thoroughly researching and considering the primary components of the traditional undergraduate student experience and reflecting on my own personal learning experience, I have recently experienced a newfound confidence in my professional practice as an academic advisor. In carefully choosing personal and professional experiences that are meaningful and fulfilling, I hope to appropriately leverage the
resources gained through my master’s project to continually improve my professional practice of providing academic counselling to undergraduate students at Queen’s.

**Final Thoughts**

In completing the learning objectives I set for my own graduate studies experience and becoming settled in my new professional role, I have come to recognize an additional goal of my master’s studies that is now being met, where I am in a position to apply my academic knowledge on a daily basis while pursuing a career I thoroughly enjoy. Most importantly, I have learned to consider the various aspects of my own self-identity as interwoven. By recognizing my own personal characteristics as an adult learner in addition to the motivations and barriers that I experienced throughout my graduate studies, I have had a significant and fulfilling learning experience that has by far exceeded any expectations I could have set for myself.
REFERENCES


