

**WEAVING A COMMUNITY: INCLUSION AT THE POSTSECONDARY LEVEL FOR
PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

by

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Abstract

This study sought to determine the impacts of quality of life for students with intellectual disabilities who attend an inclusive post-secondary program using a person-centered approach. The purpose of this study was to explore the potential effect of quality of life for students with intellectual disabilities who have attended a post-secondary institution. Specifically, this was a qualitative study that included an auto-ethnographic component. Information was gathered by means of interviews conducted with post-secondary institutions in British Columbia that use a person-centered approach to offer inclusive educational experiences for diverse learners. Results suggest that inclusive programs may have positive influence in improving quality of life.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my brother. During my time in University, he told me his dreams of being a student at my school. My response was always that he was welcome to come and visit while I knew it was not possible for him to attend. My hope is that through this work, more post-secondary institutions and, specifically, Christian post-secondary institutions would become more inclusive for people like my brother to attend.

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In many ways, this Capstone Project feels more like a team project where many minds have come together to help me produce something that may hopefully inspire universities to not only add inclusive programs but to improve meaningfully. First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Ken Pudlas who has been with me on this journey since 2009 when I first began taking courses at the undergraduate level for Special Education at Trinity Western University. Thank you for your many suggestions and for encouraging me when this work has felt endless. I would also like to thank Dr. Lara Ragpot for being my second reader and for providing me with input during my coursework. My parents, I thank you for believing in me and even providing ways for me to accomplish more work during my summers. Whenever you provided me with snacks it helped me to finish one more step. Mom, I especially thank you for dialoguing with me over the phone and editing my work. There are many aspects of this project that would not be in this project if it were not for you and your ideas.

Chapter 1

Historically there have been various narratives or discourses that describe education and educational paradigms. Fraser and Shields (2010) suggest that many educational practices persist because of long-held assumptions about the nature of schooling and the respective roles of educators and students (p. 7). They later discuss Foucault, the French intellectual, and his theory of discourse analysis where systems of ideas emerge as systems of power. Those who have power, control the dominant discourses, which historically often excluded members of minoritized groups, including those who require some kind of adaptive educational support. In terms of education for atypical learners, or “special education” an informative historical overview that explores changing dominant discourses is offered by Winzer (2006). Furthermore Wolfensberger (2000) offers further discussion of how society influences the perception of the value of persons in what he calls Social Role Valorization. Further discussion of these topics is presented in Chapter Two. This research seeks to add to the narrative or the discourse regarding the inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities.

Definition of Terms

In presenting the problem addressed by this research various terms are used. To provide clarity, for the purpose of this study some basic terminology is defined below.

Faith-Based – Faith-based is the notion that organizations are built upon a certain belief or religious standing. For example, Christian schools could be considered faith-based schools. A further discussion of this topic is provided in chapter 2.

Inclusion - The term often refers to students with disabilities taking part in the regular classroom as opposed to being segregated in their own programs (Armstrong, 2012; BC – IPSE,

2020; Inclusive Education Canada, 2017). Although, over the last few decades, there has been a positive progression in which students of varying severities of disabilities are valued as members of the classroom community, there is still much room for improvement in this area (Armstrong, 2012).

Intellectual Disability- An intellectual disability is a neurodevelopmental disability (Piotrowski, 2019). Individuals have cognitive and adaptive challenges and may have physical abnormalities. The DSM – V considers people who score below 70 on the IQ scale in the cognitive, social and practical domains as having an intellectual disability (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Young Adult – These individuals are marked by age and life stage. Erikson & Erikson (1998) marked this age by its psychosocial development and references the ages between 18 and 40 (McLeod, 2018). Arnett (2015) coined the term emerging adult to specify adults who have finished high school and have not yet entered fully into a career or marriage. Typically, people in this stage are between the ages of 18 – 25. This term is further discussed in subsequent chapters.

Statement of the Problem

Over time, education has become more inclusive, at least in regards to intent (Moore, 2016). The use of the term inclusion is becoming more common in the narrative in all levels of education. For instance, in British Columbia and the rest of Canada, inclusive education is not only a goal but a requirement for Kindergarten to grade 12 (BC Ministry of Education, 2016; Inclusive Education Canada, 2017). The term inclusive education may be both a philosophy and a method of service delivery. The Ministry of Education in BC defines inclusion as “the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education (2016, p.7) Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education in

Alberta defines inclusion as “an attitude or approach that embraces diversity and learner differences and promotes equal opportunities for all learners” (Government of Alberta, 2021). In summary, inclusion at its best strives to place all students first, regardless of ability or disability, with equal access to learning.

In addition to mandated inclusion in some K-12 systems, some postsecondary institutions are adopting inclusive practices (BC-IPSE, 2020). While in the past, postsecondary institutions may have provided accommodations for people with learning disabilities or non-intellectual disabilities such as those with physical disabilities like cerebral palsy or vision impairment, schools are now starting to build programs for people with intellectual disabilities (Inclusive Education Canada, 2017). These programs include a variety of opportunities for young adults such as work experience, academic development, sports, arts, and social skill development.

As of 2020, Alberta is the province in Canada with the most post-secondary institutions that have inclusive education programs (Inclusion Alberta, 2020). In addition to public institutions, faith-based postsecondary institutions are also included in this list of inclusive post-secondary schools in Alberta. The term faith-based is discussed more fully below. British Columbia offers far fewer postsecondary education options for individuals with intellectual disabilities than does Alberta (BC-IPSE, 2020; Inclusion Alberta, 2020). Programs that are offered by faith-based organizations in BC are also rarer than in Alberta (BC-IPSE, 2020; Inclusion Alberta, 2020). The relevance of public versus faith-based programs as they relate to inclusion in post-secondary opportunities will be discussed below.

One of the goals of inclusion is community. Community is also at the heart of faith traditions that hold in common spiritual or religious values. And, as will be discussed more fully, community is a significant factor in determining quality of life (Liégeois, 2014). Inclusive

postsecondary education can be a rich and rewarding option for the members participating. A sense of belonging and community can be developed while cultivating important skills for adulthood.

In summary, education at all levels seeks to be intentionally inclusive. Quality of life is influenced in part by a sense of belonging which is one of the goals of inclusion. There appear to be a lack of educational opportunities at the post-secondary level for people with intellectual disabilities, which may have a strong negative impact on quality of life these individuals (Friedman, n.d.).

This lack of opportunity and the consequent impact on the quality of life of young adults with intellectual disabilities is the problem this research sought to explore. Research questions are addressed below, but it is important to note the personal contextualization of the issue.

Personal Perspective - Lived Experience

This research project was inspired and informed by my lived experience of being a sister of an individual with diverse abilities and an intellectual disability. He has given consent to be an example referenced throughout the study. My younger brother, Daniel, has been diagnosed with autism and intellectual disabilities. He is a young adult who lives with my parents. His social, cognitive, and daily living skills are such that he requires the support similar to that of a five or six-year-old. Yet, he desires to have experiences like his peers. Like me, he wanted and still wants to attend a Christian University and participate in all that the community has to offer. Unfortunately, this has not been the case for Daniel. He wanted to attend the faith-based university that I graduated from but programs for people with intellectual disabilities have not existed. This experience will be more fully described in chapter 2.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

In summary, as will be explored more fully, the study of post-secondary education for people with intellectual disabilities has received limited scholarly scrutiny. In addition, the delivery of post-secondary educational experiences is limited. Due to the gap of equality in this educational sector and my lived experience, the subsequent chapters more fully describe the reasoning for movement in this area. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore difficulties that adults with intellectual disabilities experience and how inclusive postsecondary education can help improve quality of life for these individuals. That is, a person-centered approach to education for emerging adults with disabilities fulfills needs for betterment of life.

Furthermore, as there is a gap in research in inclusive post-secondary schools, a secondary purpose of this study is to explore current practices in a few institutions offering inclusive education. In this sense, the study may be considered an exploratory or feasibility study.

The following research questions defined and provided structure to this study:

- 1) What are the practices of inclusive post-secondary programs?
- 2) How does post-secondary schooling impact quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities?
- 3) How does a person-centered approach enhance the success of the inclusive education post-secondary programs?
- 4) Why is inclusive education important for faith-based post-secondary programs?

Overview of the Study

This is a qualitative autoethnographic study. Mertens (2016) describes, “qualitative methods are used in research that is designed to provide an in-depth description of a specific program, practice, or setting” (p, 243). She later explains that “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p.243). One form of qualitative study is an autoethnography in which researchers conduct their study by engaging with participants in their natural setting (Mertens, 2016). These studies are usually small scale and are usually not based on experimental situations. In addition, information was sought from inclusive post-secondary education programs, to provide perspective. The participants were faculty members of these programs located in British Columbia who completed interviews with the researcher. The questions in the interview were both closed and open ended. The interviews pertained to general information about the program and perspectives on the success of the program. Themes were derived by highlighting responses that were similar amongst two of the three interviews. Sometimes answers were unique with only one participant giving that type of answer. These answers were sometimes discussed as they related to the discussion in chapter 2. Throughout the study, participants were informed about their rights and gave written consent.

As is common with many studies, there are limitations. Some of these limitations include generalizability and geographical context. Further information about the methodology is discussed in chapter 3.

Significance of this Study

This study may be beneficial to postsecondary institutions considering developing their own inclusive education program for students with intellectual disabilities. In addition, postsecondary institutions who already have inclusive education programs may find it helpful to learn from other institutions and what they have established. Educational settings of all types and stages may find additional theory of inclusion helpful to their practice. Finally, faith-based (see the previous definition) institutions may want to give greater consideration to the inclusion and support of people with disabilities.

The reasons for inclusion are paramount: In one video on inclusion, it was stated that students should be included “not in spite of their diversity but because of their diversity” (Kunc, 2017). In other words, students with disabilities bring positive attributes to the classroom that other students may not be able to bring. Further discussion on the rationale of inclusion is included in chapter 2.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

As previously stated, the general purpose of this research is to explore quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities who attend a postsecondary institution with a person-centered approach. This chapter will further explore issues introduced in the previous chapter pertaining to individuals with disabilities. The chapter begins with describing the life stage of young adulthood and how this pertains to people with intellectual disabilities as the population of interest as described in chapter one. Then, the chapter describes factors related to quality of life as a lack of post-secondary educational opportunities could negatively impact quality of life for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The chapter then describes examples of inclusive postsecondary programs and its benefits for individuals with intellectual disabilities followed by a brief discussion on benefits for their peers without intellectual disabilities. The chapter concludes with describing how faith-based K-12 schools can exemplify the Body of Christ that may be replicated at the postsecondary level.

Young Adulthood as a Developmental Life Stage

Young adults with disabilities have likely had a different life experience in comparison to their typically developing peers due to the lack of post-secondary education opportunities. According to Statistics Canada (2010), during the year 2007, the majority of students attending university were between the ages of 18 and 24. This is likely because these individuals have completed high school and are now looking to obtain education for a career of their choice. For many of these students, the tendency is that these years happen before beginning a family (Statistics Canada, 2018). As of the year 2011, the average age at first birth for mothers was 28.5

years (Statistics Canada, 2018). Along with school, young adults may use this time that is relatively free of many responsibilities to travel, try new activities, become involved in new social circles, and enter romantic relationships.

The period of young adulthood has been defined as a life stage only in the last several decades (Arnett, 2015). Therefore, the impact on people with intellectual disabilities could also be more defining. Historically, after finishing school, young people would typically marry. The woman would bear children and tend to household needs while the husband would work (Arnett, 2015). Since the 1960's in the United States, the age of marriage has increased by six years (Stritof & Stritof, 2014). While this is a statistic representative of the United States, there is likely a similar trend in Canada. According to Arnett (2015), there are three reasons for why this is likely the case: One, technology has advanced resulting in more training for diversified careers. Two, contraceptives became available for women meaning that people could engage in sexual intercourse without becoming pregnant. Three, more women started attending college. Finally, in the 1970's and 1980's there was a youth movement that emphasized the importance for young people to have a period of time to enjoy socializing, travel, and activities without major responsibilities.

As previously mentioned, young adults are believed to go through a psychosocial stage of development in which they are learning how to form close relationships known as intimacy (Erikson, 1998; McLeod, 2018). Erikson's claim is that those who struggle in this area face isolation and loneliness. For individuals with intellectual disabilities in the young adult life stage this might become more amplified as there may be less opportunities to socialize and meet peers in the same life stage.

Emerging adulthood is described differently as the focus is not on age as a distinguishing factor but instead on the lack of career and family (Arnett, 2015; Long & Chalk, 2020; Schwartz, Tanner, & Syed, 2016). There are many unique psychological and social challenges of this age. For example, young adults or emerging adults tend to enter a phase of creating a different type of relationship with their parents as they are no longer completely dependent on their parents but still often need their support. Another example is that individuals at this age often date to discover the type of person that they would want to be with in a long-term relationship which can be particularly difficult for people with disabilities (Long & Chalk, 2020). Finally, young adults typically want to find a career that not only provides a means for living but also passion and purpose in life (Arnett, 2015; Olenik-Shemesh, Heiman, Keshet, 2018). These three challenges are a few of the demands that young people experience while they go to school and find work.

Essentially, the role of being a young adult is not easy. Lack of learned responsibility in regards to independence is coupled with heightened pressures to start a life path that is fulfilling. Fortunately, post-secondary institutions are often places where students can find learning experiences, friendships, and guidance to support their life crises. Unfortunately, many young adults with intellectual disabilities may not be afforded the opportunity to receive such support at a post-secondary institution. For example, this was the case for my brother who desired to go to a post-secondary school but no opportunities were offered to him. Instead of being championed in a unique place with peers that recognizes this unique stage of life, they are often forced to begin jobs and programs the same as that of those with intellectual disabilities who are in middle adulthood. The lack of these opportunities can lead towards a trend of poverty, instability, and isolation and these in turn are indicative of a lower quality of life (Morris et al., 2018; Ryan et al., 2018).

Quality of Life

The following section defines and describes quality of life. This is important as it pertains to people with intellectual disabilities as their quality of life may be impacted by lack of opportunities especially within the education sector. The World Health Organization defines quality of life as “A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease” (2020). Expanding upon this idea is the notion that quality of life is multifaceted. According to Liegeois, “there are eight domains of quality” which include “emotional well-being, interpersonal relations, material well-being, personal development, physical well-being, self-determination, social inclusion, and rights” (2014, p.305). Furthermore, factors such as one’s environment and independent living skills impact quality of life.

Given the foregoing definition, emerging adults with intellectual disabilities may be at risk of experiencing a (large) disparity in quality of life compared to that of their peers (Friedman, n.d.). For instance, as of 2018 in the United States people with intellectual disabilities overall had a lower employment rate compared to people without intellectual disabilities (Ryan et al., 2018). The comparison is also low in terms of wage, full-time work status, and work benefits. Results of this include the need for these individuals to live with family or in supported homes and receive financial assistance. In Canada, the situation has been similar where people with more severe disabilities including those with intellectual disabilities have higher rates of unemployment and poverty (Morris et al., 2018). Youth in this category between the ages of 15 and 21 have higher rates of being unemployed and not in school.

Another area that young adults with intellectual disabilities may be at risk of experiencing a disparity of quality of life is emotional well-being. Unfortunately, people with

severe disabilities are also much more likely to develop mental health difficulties (Lunksy & Weiss, 2013). According to Lunksy and Weiss (2013), “Largescale studies indicate that people with developmental disabilities are three to six times more likely to develop a mental health disorder than other people” (pp. 3-4). Some people with disabilities such as Down Syndrome more commonly demonstrate comorbidity with mental health (Startin et al., 2020).

As mentioned, another area that impacts quality of life is physical well-being. One area that has been researched is quality of life for children who have experienced traumatic brain injury (Anderson et al., 2012). According to Anderson and others (2012), the children’s quality of life was impacted significantly post-injury. Furthermore, Rajati and others have demonstrated that having a physical disability is a risk factor for lower quality of life (2018). In one section of the article, the researchers claim that “Higher anxiety and depression were associated with lower mental and physical health scores” (para. 27). As evidenced, physical well-being is important not only for overall quality of life but other areas of quality of life such as emotional well-being.

Unfortunately, persons with intellectual disabilities often have more physical challenges than the general population (Cooper et al., 2015). In a study by Cooper and others (2015), people with intellectual disabilities have a higher rate of early mortality often due to other health challenges compared to people without intellectual disabilities. Having more physical conditions would lower a person’s quality of life based on the reasoning described earlier.

It is interesting to note how social inclusion could change quality of life for the positive or negative for people with intellectual disabilities compared to their typical developing peers. For instance, one study reported that individuals with intellectual disabilities who have opportunities for social engagement in their living situations have an improved quality of life (Grogan et al., 2019). Grogan and others further clarify that these living situations promote

autonomous decisions such as the choice to spend time with peers. This is an important area for consideration amongst inclusive post-secondary programs due to the need for individuals with intellectual disabilities to have options to socialize. This could be in classes, in on-campus housing, or extra-curricular activities.

Also related to social inclusion is the interpersonal domain of quality of life. A person with strong interpersonal skills has the ability to communicate and relate to others. Garcia and others, who saw the gap of research in this area, completed a study in this area (2020). The results indicate that adults who have lower communication skills have an overall lower quality of life especially within the domains of “self-determination, social inclusion, interpersonal relationships, emotional well-being and personal development” (p. 1). Garcia and others (2020), at the end of their study, discuss how interpersonal skills can be addressed with supports. Fortunately, this is an area that inclusive post-secondary institutions have the opportunity to address through courses and social activities.

The domains of personal development and self-determination are described in one section due to the nature of their similarity. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research in this area. One study described how children with William’s Syndrome show disparity in quality of life compared to their typical developing peers most specifically in the area of self-determination (Moraleda Sepulveda & Lopez Resa, 2021). Due to the nature of intellectual disabilities, there is a strong potential that it could be difficult for emerging adults to seek out means to develop personally (personal development) and try tasks that may seem challenging (self-determination).

Finally, Liegeois demonstrates that spirituality is also part of quality of life as it fits into the domain of emotional well-being (2014). He states that “Spirituality is the experience of meaning in life through the connectedness with a transcendent reality” (p.305). Furthermore,

Palmer defines “spirituality as the eternal human yearning to be connected to something larger than our own egos” (p.2, 2003). Spirituality is connected to faith and religion. While an in depth exploration of the various terms such as faith and religion is beyond the scope of this research, nevertheless it is important to gain an understanding of the terminology in order to understand how spirituality related to Quality of Life. A brief interpretation of “faith,” “religion,” and “Christians” is provided for clarification. Faith, by way of functional definition for this study, is the belief in something or someone which often connects to a way of life to follow this something or someone. Meanwhile, religion may be seen as a set of rules that are followed in order to obtain afterlife. When individuals with intellectual disabilities are denied opportunities to be part of spiritual or faith communities, they lose out on a space to belong and grow together in finding their sense of meaning and relationship with God. For people who follow Christ’s teachings, also known as Christians, this is a large part of their religious or faith life.

One domain of quality of life that has not been discussed is rights for the person. There is a lack of research in how rights impact quality of life. It is, however, important to know what the rights of people with disabilities are as rights will impact other domains of quality of life. In the 1990’s the CRPD (Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities) created rights to avoid disability discrimination amongst forty countries (World Health Organization, 2011). One of these rights is the “full and effective participation and inclusion in society” (World Health Organization, 2011, p. 9). Another right is equal opportunity (p.9). With this basic knowledge is the understanding that people with intellectual disabilities have the right to attend university like their peers. Knowing that education impacts quality of life, the next sub-section highlights example inclusive education programs and how they may benefit individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Example Programs

The following paragraphs provide theory and practical outworking of example post-secondary education programs for people with intellectual disabilities. The theory describes the values and perspectives that educators should prioritize in order for the students to be best served and for the program to be worth their time and effort for success. The practical outworking describes how many programs are taught and uniquely created for this specific population.

Person Centered Planning

Many post-secondary education programs employ the methodology of Person-Centered Planning (Greene, Clearly & Canella-Malone, 2017; Kelley & Westling, 2013; Rogan et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2019). Person Centered Planning utilizes many of the same approaches as strength-based education which is described by Armstrong in his literature about educational planning at the K-12 level (2012). The purpose of these approaches is to create a program for learning that elevates and focuses on strengths. The idea is that these strengths can support learning of skills that are more of a challenge for the individual. Dependent on the program and the individual, Person-Centered Planning may use a variety of tools. Interviews, visits to the home, surveys, and meetings with high school teachers are some of the ways that the program may learn what is best for the student (Rogan et al., 2014).

Throughout the program, there are two vital skills for the individuals to learn to continue the Person-Centered Planning process: Self-advocacy and self-determination (Yamamoto, Stodden, & Folk, 2014). These skills can be taught through courses and mentorship. The purpose is not only for ensuring that the post-secondary education is meaningful but also that individuals learn these life-skills for transitioning into employment and potentially independent living. As

individuals near graduation of the program, the desired outcome is that they receive less support with Person Centered Planning.

Person-Centered Planning upholds the value of autonomy in that individuals are given support and tools to be able to express their needs, goals, and desires (Armstrong, 2012). When autonomy is given the individual is more likely to see the learning opportunities as important to their own growth and individuality. This is in part due because autonomy and self-advocacy are aspects that benefit quality of life.

Levels of Inclusion

There are a variety of models of inclusion at the post-secondary level. The programs that were first developed with inclusive programs began in the 1970's (Kelley & Westling, 2013). These programs were often labeled as substantially separate in which individuals attended colleges but had their own classes segregated from their peers without intellectual disabilities. Life skills programs and employment opportunities have been and are often included in these programs. Later-on, mixed programs began in which students with intellectual disabilities have their own learning opportunities while they are invited to participate in campus events and enroll in other courses. Finally, fully inclusive programs include many opportunities for individuals to learn with their peers in skills about daily living and other areas that are necessary for preparation into adulthood (Baker, Lowrey, & Winnerlind, 2018). Regardless of the type of program, incorporation of Person-Centered Planning is important for the success of the individual's program. Evidence suggests, however, that full incorporation into the school setting is not only beneficial for the individual but for the community supporting the student (Kelley & Westling, 2013).

Courses

The intended outcome of being a college or university student is taking coursework that prepares for a vocation even though social gatherings may be emphasized in the students' personal lives. While the course load of students with intellectual disabilities will often look different than their typically developing peers, programs tend to have course requirements that include a variety of types of involvement in different courses (Daviso, Baer, Flexer, & Meindl, 2016; Rogan, Updike, Chesterfield, & Savage, 2014).

There is little research to demonstrate the level of involvement that students with intellectual disabilities have in their coursework. In a recent systematic review, it was suggested that the majority of coursework is audited in inclusive programs in the United States (Think College cited in Becht, Blades, Agarwal, & Burke, 2020). Audited courses often still include academic rigor in content delivery and assignments. In this sense, courses are modified and non-credited yet still provide opportunities to learn and engage with peers. With the use of Person Centered Planning, students are able to take courses that are of interest and use to them (Rogan et al., 2014).

For students with intellectual disabilities auditing courses without guidance and support can become a challenge. Wintle (2014) has suggested that students with intellectual disabilities who would like to enroll in post-secondary education programs have the opportunity to have a formal preparation process. In Wintle's study, a class of adults with intellectual disabilities enrolled in a three day-a-week course that provided students learning for post-secondary education settings such as trips to a university setting, social skills, and literacy skills. This study demonstrates the need for needed coaching and mentorship that scaffolds the university learning experience and lessens anxiety. During the course, students may receive support from peers.

In other situations, students with intellectual disabilities may have segregated classes. These classes may be more specific to the needs of the student including employment skills, life skills, and social skills (Ryan et al., 2018). These are areas in which their typical peers may not need intense support. The curriculum tends to have direct application to their current work experience and personal life that they may practice immediately after the learning takes place.

Work Experience

As mentioned previously, research indicates that young adults who have completed post-secondary education programs are more likely to be employed, work more hours in a week, have and have a higher income (Morris et al., 2018; Ryan et al., 2018). Furthermore, it can be argued that employment skills are cost effective as viewed from the taxpayer's point of view (Cimera et al., 2018). As such, employment skills and work experience ought to be included in the post-secondary education program goals.

One example of a model for developing employment skills is a program includes a variety of internships that last one month (Ryan et al., 2018). In the first year, students experience a variety of industries including food services, retail, and supply centers. As the students progress throughout the program, they transition to paid programs and focus on their interest areas. Meanwhile, students are coached. The goal is that students will be able to build a resume and possibly work the same job that they have during their internship after they finish their postsecondary program.

Extra Curriculars

Beyond academic and employment training, campus life can provide opportunities that extend into other aspects of life. These groups can provide unique spaces for healthy living that

includes physical activity, socializing, and creative outlets. At one example of a university program, students have opportunities to bowl, take Zumba classes, and attend lunch clubs (Ryan et al., 2018). Meanwhile, students work with their mentors to create social and behavioural goals that are embedded into their program.

Graduation

Upon graduation, students in the example programs above tend to receive a type of documentation of completion to demonstrate employment readiness (Kwantlen Polytechnic University, 2021; Vancouver Island University, 2021). These certificates are unlike other graduation certificates in that they do not show extensive knowledge in one or two areas, but instead show preparedness for involvement in the community. This is similar to graduation programs in British Columbia for people with mild to moderate intellectual delays. Instead of receiving a “Dogwood” certificate that demonstrates qualification for typical postsecondary programs, they receive an “Evergreen” certificate which claims success in their independent learning goals (Government of British Columbia, 2021).

Peer Mentorship

Learning how to be a university or college student has the potential to be a struggle for people with intellectual disabilities. There are schedules to follow, maps to navigate, friendships to form, and study skills to be acquired. Peer mentors can provide support across multiple domains (Griffin et al., 2016; Kelley & Westling, 2013) According to Kleinert, Jones, Sheppard-Jones, Harp, and Harrison (2012), there are different types of mentors: formal and informal. Formal mentors sign up for a program and volunteer their time usually on a weekly schedule. For instance, they may attend classes with the student, act as an exercise coach, help with studying,

or provide social outings (Griffin et al., 2016). In some examples of mentorship programs, students had up to 14 mentors or more within a given week (Griffin et al., 2016; Kelley & Westling, 2013). Informal mentors aid the student with intellectual disabilities without any obligation or contractual agreement (Kleinert et al., 2012). These mentors tend to be in interaction with the student because they share common activities, living arrangements, or classes.

Mentorship programs have the potential to be both beneficial for the student with intellectual disabilities and their mentor. Some examples of benefits for the mentee include having social relationships, opportunities to attend campus events, community living skills, and support with personal care (Kelley & Westling, 2012). There have been a limited number of studies on the benefits for the mentors. In one study, 17 mentors enrolled in a formal mentorship program were interviewed and given a survey on their motivations and experiences (Griffin et al., 2016). One of the main themes reported was the benefit of friendships formed with the students that often expanded beyond the formal mentoring process. Participants also reported on having a better understanding of people disabilities and developing skills for their future careers. 46% of the mentors in this program were enrolled as a Special Education major suggesting that their volunteering would provide direct experience as Special Education teacher. At the Western Carolina University, the mentorship program is given as a practicum experience in which the mentors are given evaluations that can be used for job applications (Kelley & Westling, 2012). In summary, mentorship experiences that include a student with intellectual disabilities and a student without intellectual disabilities tend to provide community and learning for both parties involved.

Benefits for the Campus Community

Mentors are one example of people who receive multiple types of benefits in having an inclusive postsecondary education setting. Several studies have indicated positive perception changes towards people with disabilities through inclusive programs (Folk, Yamamoto & Stodden, 2012; Griffen et al., 2016; Kelley & Westling, 2013; May, 2012; Yamamoto, Stodden, & Folk, 2014). The majority of these studies have included peer participants rather than faculty members or parents of individuals with intellectual disabilities. In one study, 138 female students were divided into two Introduction to Psychology classes (May, 2012). One class included students with intellectual disabilities and the other course did not include students with intellectual disabilities. Participants completed a survey that measures individuals' acceptance and awareness of diversity at the beginning and end of the fourteen-week course. Results indicated that students who were in the inclusive course demonstrated a significant change in their perceptions towards diverse groups compared to people who were in the non-inclusive course. This study supports the philosophy of the "Front Door First" used by the University of Hawaii in which students with intellectual disabilities are integrated into all aspects of campus life (Folk, Yamamoto, & Stodden, 2012). The purpose of this philosophy is to utilize pre-existing supports and promote levels of inclusion in which all community members are impacted.

Christianity and Inclusive Education

It was previously established that spirituality is an aspect pertaining to Quality of Life. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to fully explore inclusive education at Christian or faith-based institutions, this section provides a brief discussion on some of the practical and theological purposes of faith-based schooling. A definition of spirituality is included above.

Christian or faith-based institution provided education and development of spirituality. A further section on Christian faith communities, also known as the Body of Christ, is included below.

K – 12 Education

British Columbia, amongst other provinces, has established the requirement of public schools to be inclusive of all disabilities (BC Ministry of Education, 2017). While this is not a requirement of independent schools including faith-based or Christian schools, many of these schools have adopted this practice (Society of Christian Schools in BC, 2020). Some of these schools allow students with disabilities to enter when administration has deemed that they are able to meet the needs of the individual student. This is because some schools lack proper funding and training to have a well-established special education system. One example of a faith-based inclusive school in B.C. is Langley Christian School (Fricke, 2018). This school includes a variety of life skills and employment programs for high school students with intellectual disabilities while they interact with their typically developing peers.

The B.C. Teachers' Federation states that "there has been a 58% increase in number of students with low incidence (high needs) designations in B.C. over the past 16 years" (2020). This includes students with intellectual delays. To date, this information is not available at the post – secondary level. It can, however, be assumed that the number of young adults with intellectual disabilities is growing as well. At the K-12 level in British Columbia, there is specialized funding for children with disabilities (Government of BC, 2021a). This means that these children have access to Individualized Education Plans, assistive devices, in class and pull-out support, and the involvement of outside agencies. Once children graduate from high school, funding decreases despite the reality that it is unlikely that the prevalence of individuals with intellectual disabilities decreases. Therefore, while there is a need for ongoing funding,

unfortunately the decrease in funding means that there are less opportunities for young adults with intellectual disabilities than children and youth.

Body of Christ

Based on Biblical theology, it can be argued that inclusive education is not merely an added ministerial component of school but an essential requirement. In Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul discusses how the Christian community or Church is called the “Body of Christ.” In Romans 12:4-5 Paul asserts, “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” In essence, each person is different but equally important and needed for the well-functioning of community

With this teaching, there is no place for elitism or segregation between people with disabilities and those who do not have disabilities (Anderson, 2006). Rather, there is a notion of interdependence in which each person is needed just as much as the next person. According to Anderson,

A school culture based on a theology of interdependence builds on concepts of reconciliation in which disabled and non-disabled persons are brought together in true community; it is a school culture that actively seeks removal of the alienation created by ‘handicapism.’ (2006, p.47)

It is based upon this idea that a community without people with disabilities is not in ‘full operation.’ There is something missing and vital about the unique qualities that people with all types of disabilities bring that can only be celebrated and learned when they are present.

A fully inclusive education community is one in which people with disabilities are not simply in the physical presence of their typically developing peers. Pudlas (2004) describes that an inclusive community means that students, those with disabilities and those without, participate fully in school activities and are growing towards the development of a positive self-concept. In other words, all members are vital and are given tools to know their distinct giftings, experiences, and inherent value. A classroom setting that exhibits this upholds strengths above deficits and creates spaces for each individual to contribute (Armstrong, 2012). For example, a student with autism who struggles with writing but loves photography may become the classroom photographer for class activities. In another situation, the child with Down Syndrome who thrives in dance may be the class exercise leader. The main idea is that each child fulfills a role in the classroom that fits their unique abilities.

Expanding on this idea is teaching from the late theologian Jean Vanier. In his book, *Becoming Human* he describes many of his learnings about community, identity, and theology through living with people with severe disabilities (Vanier, 1998). He explains how living in a setting with people with disabilities brought him to his own understanding of his humanity including his own weakness and, in a sense, disabilities. He furthermore describes how it is from this place of humility that people can find belonging amongst others regardless of exceptionalities. This belonging aids in further forms of growth. From this notion, it can be seen that inclusive education is not solely important at a functional level, but also at a level of understanding of the self as image-bearers of Christ.

Finally, inclusive Christian education provides a model for and carries out the work of reconciliation (Anderson, 2003; Lane, 2017). This is also known as the Gospel. The theological definition of the Gospel may be termed through a brief description of the Biblical narrative. In

summary, God created the world including humankind. The world was perfect, but man sinned which caused great consequences. Since this day, the world has been imperfect. It is through God's son Jesus' death on the cross that we are brought back into union with God. Until Christ's return, however, we live in a broken world that has sin. As followers of Christ, we are told to restore the effects of sin through loving others.

Throughout the Bible, there are many instances of reconciliation with people with disabilities. In the gospels alone, Jesus was seen encountering and healing many people with disabilities (e.g., Matthew 9:1-8, 17:14-6; Mark 3:1-6, 10:46-50, Luke 17:11-17, John 5:1-18). In 2 Samuel 4, David gives Mephibosheth, a young man who was lame, a place of honour. An act of dignity given to a person who is 'handicapped' at this at this period of time would have not been common and might have been questioned. Nonetheless, David demonstrated the importance of this man to God and to humanity regardless of his disability. In doing so, he brought restoration the relationship between people with disabilities and those without.

In following Biblical examples, Christian communities, including education institutions, have the opportunity to bring reconciliation to the community of people with disabilities. As noted, kindergarten to grade 12 schools have been doing this type of reconciliation for a few decades. Using their example, Christian postsecondary institutions should be able to the follow the same model and carry out God's plan of rebuilding a community between people groups that has been severed throughout history.

Lived Experience

The previous topics, including exploring quality of life for emerging adults with intellectual disabilities and inclusion in faith communities were also a part of my lived

experience as the sibling of a brother with intellectual delay. Witnessing the effects of inclusive education was a large part of my childhood. For the most part, these effects were positive and have given me a look into the possibilities of how people with intellectual disabilities can thrive when they are not only integrated but integral to the community. At the same time, I have also witness how exclusion has had a negative impact. The following narrative is an autoethnographic study of the lived experience of having a brother with autism.

When I was two and a half, my brother Daniel was born. In the early weeks of his development, it was evident that he was a different baby than I was. While I was peaceful and easy-going, he cried constantly and had great difficulty sleeping. Daniel did not walk until he was two. He wore diapers until he was four and a half. His speech was delayed and his fine motor skills struggled. He screamed and hit himself when he was frustrated. He was limited in what he was able to eat due to a strong gag reflex.

I grew up going to many appointments with my brother. Speech therapists, occupational therapists, horseback riding therapy, or behavioural therapists were among those in this list. We also seemed to have many adults unknown to me come into our house to observe my brother and give my parents recommendations. There were other adults known as respite workers who would come over to provide my parents with a break as they would attend to chores, go out on dates, or simply take a nap. Daniel was diagnosed with autism at the age of 5 but did not receive autism funding from the government until he was 12.

My brother and I both attended the same school together from kindergarten to grade 12. We had many of the same teachers and similar experiences. Daniel and I have shared many similarities despite our evident differences. While I played on a local soccer team, he played with other children who had disabilities. When I started carrying a basketball to school, he brought his

own mini basketball. When I attended summer camps he also wanted to go. I had a vibrant social life as a child. He enjoyed joining my friends and me even though I often did not want to have him with us. There was even a brief time that I joined rhythmic gymnastics. I did not enjoy the classes which meant that he participated for me.

Daniel also wanted to attend Youth Group when I attended. He enjoyed praising and worshipping God while spending time with friends. When I came home from overnight youth camps, he would watch the memory videos more than I would watch them. He knew the videos so well that he would act out the moments as they played on the screen.

In my grade 12 year I was accepted to the Christian university that had I hoped to go to since I was nine years old. Daniel came along on the trip four hour away from my hometown with my parents to drop me off for my first year. He was able to experience a chapel service, meet my new friends, see a sports game, and watch a relay competition. He enjoyed every minute of it. Throughout my time at university, Daniel would ask me again and again if he could be a student at my University. I always had to say “no” and would tell him that he would be too far from home and his cat. The real answer was that this school did not have a program suitable for someone with autism and intellectual disabilities. My answer of “no” always filled me with disappointment knowing that I was able to live my dream life while Daniel was not. He would have to live his life on my sidelines. In fact, on the day of my graduation he asked everyone in the restaurant at Boston Pizza to stand up and applaud for me. They did.

Ten years after this Christian university experience, I wonder what it would have looked like for my answer to Daniel attending been “yes.” Besides my parents likely having to move to support him, maybe there could have been a way for him to attend chapel and sing along with his favourite worship songs. Maybe he could have been a manager for a basketball team. He could

have attended classes on history and sports. He could have learned with peers like himself to volunteer and have a resume. He would have loved to put up signs around campus for special events and make people feel special by cheering for them when they won awards.

Although I will never know for sure what Daniel's time would have been like at this Christian university, I can hope that people like my brother with intellectual disabilities will one day be able to attend as thriving and equal members who are needed for their unique position in life. Thus, the purpose of this study is to describe the benefits to quality of life of inclusive education at the postsecondary level.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter discussed issues relating to quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities specifically at the young or emerging adult stage. Through an understanding of example education programs for young adults with intellectual disabilities it is argued that programs that use Person Centered Planning have the potential to improve an individual's quality of life. The lived experience of my young adult brother with autism who was not given the opportunity to attend post-secondary schooling but desired to demonstrates the need for existence of more of these programs. The following chapter outlines the methodology used in this study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The focus of the study was to determine the possible connection between attendance at a post-secondary institution and quality of life for young adults or emerging adults with intellectual disabilities. This chapter describes the methods employed in this study that explore the relationship between quality of life and post-secondary attendance. Research design, participants, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and possible limitations are detailed.

Research Design

In order to explore the potentially positive impacts on quality of life of the previously mentioned programs, an autoethnographic qualitative study as per Mertens (2016) was used. Qualitative studies seek to gain understanding through subjective information rather than numerical data (Mertens, 2016). Often these data are about a person or a group of people. According to Mertens (2016), “Qualitative research is useful because of the need to individualize education for students with disabilities” (p. 245). These types of studies may use a variety of tools such as artifacts, stories, and case studies that attempt to bring context to basic facts of a situation. People with disabilities have a vast variety of needs and accommodations required to support those needs. Qualitative research allows for the researcher to use specific information in context (Mertens, 2016). Furthermore, qualitative research studies “describe people’s knowledge, opinions, perceptions, and feelings as well as detailed descriptions of people’s actions, behaviours, activities, and interpersonal interactions” (Locke et al., 2009; Roberts, 2010, p. 143). As such, information was collected through semi-structured interviews.

Quantitative studies, on the other hand, use statistics and mathematics to analyze data usually from a larger sample size.

An autoethnographic study was chosen as this type of study allows researchers to draw upon their own context and experience (Mendez, 2013). Due to having a brother with autism, many of the questions and ways that interacted with participants was related to my understanding of young adults with intellectual disabilities.

As mentioned, the qualitative method was chosen in order to explore and discover deeper understanding into how quality of life needs of young adults with disabilities are met and have the potential to be met in inclusive postsecondary programs. In order to add to that understanding, faculty of inclusive education programs were asked to participate in an interview. To keep the answers to questions of the interviews open ended rather than limited to scales or multiple-choice options, closed and open-ended questions were used (see Appendix 1). For example, participants were asked, “What is the level of inclusion?” They were also asked, “What benefits have graduates seen in the program?” This gave the participants opportunities to expand upon their answers and for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions when necessary. There were also times throughout the interview that some questions did not apply and were, therefore, not asked. Additionally, there are questions to help categorize information such as how many students are in the program. This aspect of the study was intended to explore how aspects mentioned in the scholarly literature that was reviewed in chapter two might be evidenced in functioning programs.

Participants

Participants included program coordinators or other faculty members of inclusive postsecondary education programs throughout B.C. Participants were selected through websites that have listed inclusive education programs (Inclusive Education Canada, 2017; Think College, 2020). The researcher then contacted the coordinators or faculty members to conduct an interview. Participants signed read an introduction letter and signed an informed consent to be part of the study.

Each participant was either a faculty member or coordinator of a postsecondary inclusive program. The schools were all located in different geographical regions in B.C. Participants had been involved in their respective programs for at least five years. All participants had teaching roles in their programs as well as other administrative duties.

Of the ten programs contacted, four people responded and agreed to have an interview. Two other people responded that they were interested but did not respond to future e-mails. More e-mails were sent to remind faculty members of the opportunity for an interview. Ultimately, four interviews were conducted and three were deemed usable for the purposes of this research. The interview that was not used did not directly apply to this research as the person coordinated a program for people completing undergraduate degrees who have do not have cognitive disabilities.

As the research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, some programs were not in operation. This may be one reason for the small number of participants. Additionally, COVID-19 may have placed additional stressors on people that limited their time to volunteer. In the end, it was decided that the three interviews were sufficient as the participants provided diverse responses with many details.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted via an online video messaging platform called Zoom. Participants signed a release of information to have answers recorded over video and in writing. Participants were allowed to withdraw their information at any time. The interviewer created a list of questions that were included in the interview. See Appendix A for a list of questions.

After the interviews were conducted, the conversations were typed into transcripts. Areas of similarities amongst interviews were highlighted to derive common themes. Due to having only three participants, scripts were highlighted when there was commonality between two transcripts. These themes are discussed in the subsequent sections.

Possible Limitations

This study included a small number of participants in one province of Canada. As such, the findings should not be generalized. Furthermore, the researcher interviewed faculty of programs that are public and have some government funding. The research lacks engagement with private institutions. Furthermore, the study was also limited to inclusive post-secondary institutions that have their own classes rather than opportunities that allow for students to attend mainstream classes with their typically developing peers. Further study in these areas is suggested.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting an autoethnographic study means that the researcher is highly involved in the personal interactions of the study. In this study, the researcher had interaction with the participants and determined questions of clarification and further investigation when a topic was deemed important for the study. The researcher also analyzed the transcripts. As such, there is inevitable researcher bias (cite).

In order to keep participants and the programs anonymous, names were replaced with pseudonyms. When detailed descriptions of students were included, this information was also altered in order to keep make individuals unidentifiable.

The video recordings were kept for the duration of the study and deleted upon completion. Transcripts are included in Appendix 1.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter included the methods and delivery of an autoethnographic qualitative study in the form of interviews. A qualitative autoethnographic study was applied in order to explore this topic and receive personalized answers. The following chapter gives a summary of results.

Chapter 4

Research Results and Conclusions

The previous chapter gave a description of the way in which qualitative information was collected. This chapter describes common themes throughout the interviews. Themes were decided when more than one participant gave similar answers to the same prompts. At times, individual results are described due to the reality that there were only three interviews as well as that each participant represented a school in a unique geographical area. Transcripts are included in Appendix B, C, and D.

Responses to the questions posed revealed that the majority of the participants' students have cognitive and intellectual disabilities. Most commonly, students lived with their parents at the time of their studies. Some students lived in on-campus residence, apartments, or support housing. To enter program, students were required to complete an intake process which included interviews, resumes, transcripts, and written work. Typically, students are required to demonstrate a level of independence to be allowed entrance in the program. While accommodations can be made, students are generally required a minimum level of math and language abilities. The common factor in accepting students into the program is, "Is this student a good fit for the program?" Sometimes, after a few weeks of a program, students are told to try doing something else.

Similar to many of the aforementioned programs in the literature review, students take a variety of academic and practical courses over one to two years. They learn skills in employment, involvement in the community, and reading, writing, and math. Sometimes programs often a few different tracks such as food services, retail, and trades. Usually, the goal

of a program is for students to gain employment. There are inherent goals as well such as students broadening their social circles and becoming more independent.

In order to gain employments skills, students complete internships. They are paired up with companies in the university or in the community. They learn from people who already have these jobs and act as volunteers. As the program continues, generally their hours of internship per week increase. Sometimes at the end of the program, students are employed in these companies.

Each of the programs had a relatively small student size. Programs range from 20 to 50 students depending on the year. Classes remain small at about 8-12 students per class. Some programs have had waitlists in the past. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and pivoting to online classes, many programs were smaller than average during the 2020-2021 academic year.

While the programs vary slightly in their level of inclusion, all three of the programs would be defined as “segregated.” This is because the programs are held on the university campus, but the courses are separate from programs that are to obtain degrees. Typically, the ways in which students are included on campus are through involvement in extracurriculars, coffee carts, use of the library, and sometimes on campus housing. Suffice to say, the programs are in a rudimentary phase of what is truly an inclusive educational setting.

Themes

Recently, there have been several studies that delve into programs for postsecondary students who have intellectual disabilities (Rogan et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2018; Sannicandro, 2019; Wintle, 2014). Some studies have focused on success of programs while other studies have focused on mentorship within programs (Griffin et al., 2014; Kelley & Westling, 2012; Kleinert

et al., 2012). Embedded within these studies is the importance of the recognition of the emerging adult stage of life for people with disabilities.

To date, there has been a lack of studies that specifically seeks to understand postsecondary school for people with intellectual disabilities in British Columbia. There is importance in this as B.C. has its own governing body for education separate from other provinces. As such, there are several themes that have emerged from the interviews that are unique to B.C. Furthermore, there are themes that have developed that could be applied to other provinces and territories and possibly even other countries. The themes include success of programs and therefore the necessity of the programs. Other themes include funding barriers, needs for improvement, and changes that have occurred because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Success of Programs

A predominant theme that was spoken about many times throughout the interviews is the theme of success of the programs. Success means that there are positive results in quality of life for individuals who have attend the programs. As mentioned, postsecondary programs for people with intellectual disabilities recognize this unique stage of life and the growing and maturing process in this time.

In the interviews it was indicated that a main goal of the program is employment skills (See Appendices B, C, and D). Through the help of coursework and internships, many students have been employed through the programs. Others have been able to find long term volunteer jobs. Sometimes but infrequently, students go onto other postsecondary programs. Participant 3 claimed in the interview that the students often become quality employees (See Appendix D). When she was at a store one day, she needed help. An alumnus of her program was working at

the store. She claimed that her past student “went above and beyond.” Also in the interview she stated that “It’s the students who do want to work who do get employment.” In other words, there needs to be a degree of self-motivation for the program to be successful.

There are two common secondary successes to the program. First, each of the three participants stated that many of the student had become friends (See Appendices B, C, and D). Participant one described how some have gained friends and two students met and became married (See Appendix B). According to participant one, several students had been bullied in the past at their K-12 schools but feel the relief of being in an adult environment where they are not bullied. Second, the participants also described maturity gained through the program. Participant one stated that “A lot of [students] feel better equipped and [grew in] skills to move out independently” (See Appendix B) Participant two described how students gained “critical thinking and digital literacy skills” (See Appendix C) Participant three described the maturation process as “the unofficial curriculum where just being on campus, being surrounded by other adults, and being able to see how adults behave” helps them grow (See Appendix D).

Benefits for the Postsecondary Institution

Employment, developing social relationships, and growing and becoming more independent are all important skills for successful living as an adult. While these are aspects of the program that provide benefit for the students, there are additional benefits to the postsecondary institution in having programs for students with intellectual disabilities. For instance, participant one stated that, “in our institution’s overall value statements we state that we value diversity and inclusiveness and I think the S program represents that really well” (See Appendix B). In other words, this program fosters the goal of diversity and inclusiveness. Participant two acknowledged that their program provided practical support to the campus such

as volunteer work in the cafeteria (See Appendix C). Participant three described how having people with intellectual disabilities on campus has helped other students and faculty members learn and feel more comfortable with interacting and creating relationships with diverse populations (See Appendix D). In summary, each of these postsecondary institutions would lose something vital to the heartbeat or character of their campus if people with intellectual disabilities were missing.

Needs for Improvement

When participants were asked what they saw as needs for improvement within their program, several answers were given. Generally, the themes centered on prioritizing the individual students in their unique situations. Participant two believed that it is important for inclusion to become more authentic where students are not just visibly present but present in all aspects of community (See Appendix C). Related to this, is the notion that collaboration between faculty could help students be included in more courses and special offerings. Participant one stated that this could help foster “mentorship for students” (See Appendix B)

The theme of collaboration as needs for improvement continued when participant three said that “collaboration between [this university] and the school district where students came on campus from the high school to experience university” benefitted students in their transition from K-12 schooling to postsecondary schooling (See Appendix D). In the past, when this university offered a preview day it helped faculty understand the needs of prospective students and if they would be a fit for the program. It also helped students to have an understanding if this program would fit their needs and goals.

Additionally, offering more choice and flexible schedules was seen as a need for improvement. Participant three said that there needs to be a general shift in the “preoccupation in adult special education that students need to get jobs. And that whole idea of learning for the sake of learning doesn’t seem to apply to this student population” (See Appendix D) Finally, participant one said that additional funds would allow for more program offerings (See Appendix B). The feeling is that at this point, there are not enough Adult Special Education programs offered in British Columbia.

Funding Barriers

Each of these needs are essential for the ongoing development of the program and some would argue vital for the program to continue successfully. There is one major barrier for many of these improvements to take place. In each of the interviews, participants described funding as being a barrier (See Appendices B, C, and D). Although participant one commented on students having access to specialized funding called an Adult Updating Grant, often this funding is not enough (Student Aid B.C., 2021) (See Appendix B). Participant one portrayed a picture of a thriving program due to the fact that many staff work well beyond their paid for hours. In order for extracurriculars, community events, and internships to thrive, many of the staff volunteer hours. The participant called the staff a “skeleton” for what it really needs to be. The participant also claimed that “when there are budgets and stuff they often tend to look at these programs since it’s the first ones to cut.”

Historical reality: COVID -19

As mentioned, the interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in the middle of the 2020-2021 academic year. As such, each of the programs had to undergo major

program changes. In order to meet health and safety requirements for the province of B.C. during this time, each of the schools was required to change their instruction format to mainly online (See Appendices B, C, and D). Participant one commented on how they were concerned that some students would have difficulty accessing the program due to the changes (See Appendix A). What they found, however, was the opposite. Many students adapted well to the changes and even thrived. While they would have preferred to meet in person, the online opportunity allowed for students from other geographical areas or students who have difficulties with transportation to attend. In the future, some of the programs hope to continue to offer online and in person options.

Another advantage to switching to online programming was the need for the program to update curriculum and improve methods of assessment. Programs began using common online platforms that many other programs from Bachelor's Degree students had been using for several years. Participant three described how these platforms resulted in a consistent way to keep students accountable for their work and a way for all of their assignments to be in one place (See Appendix D).

Given the review of literature, discussions of terminology, including Quality of Life, and the role of spirituality in fostering inclusive communities, data were gathered and reported from three institutions regarding their programming for students with intellectual delay or other specific challenges to learning. Based on the previous chapters and the data collected, the next chapter explores potential means and important considerations for implementing postsecondary programs for students with intellectual delays.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

The foregoing chapters have explored post-secondary education opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities. Using a person-centered and strength-based approach in the educational sphere has the potential to improve quality of life for a person with disabilities. The previous discussion of interviews with coordinators of post-secondary programs for people with intellectual disabilities provided anecdotal evidence of this improvement. Based on a review of literature and results of interviews, this chapter provides a guideline for implementation. The guidelines are based on whether postsecondary institutions have inclusive education programs or not yet. For the purposes of this paper and providing as much support as possible, the guidelines are for postsecondary programs which do not yet have inclusive education programs. With this said, current programs may choose to take into consideration some of the guidelines listed below.

Possible Implementations

First and foremost, it is important to recognize that each postsecondary institution is different and has a unique clientele. Furthermore, people with disabilities have their own strengths, interests, and background. Suffice to say, the recommendations are generalized. Each institution would be advised to take into account their own unique situation. The following guidelines are based on research from the literature and the interviews in this study.

1. Understanding Vision and Goals – One of the first steps is to have a team who works together to decide the purpose and vision of the program. This will become the driving force for all other steps to creating a program. For many programs the main goal will be

for students to gain employment and independence. There will be other inherent goals such a socialization and learning skills.

2. Collaboration – Before even beginning a program, it is helpful to know what a school already has. Collaboration allows for ways to integrate students into courses and clubs that are already established. This also promotes inclusion that is authentic. Furthermore, collaboration is beneficial once students have been admitted into the program. There will likely be students who have specific interests and abilities who might fit into a school’s specific niches. For example, a students might really enjoy organizing. This student might become part of the team who works in the school mailroom. Another student might be interested in sports. These students may want to join others in the weight room.
3. The Intake Process – Taking the time to know the prospective students before they become current students helps to understand what their needs will be. This can involve interviews, reading resumes, visits, and reviewing high school transcripts. The reality is that some programs may not be a good fit for everyone. It is better to serve the students well than to try and fit everyone in without having the support needed.
4. Courses – Offering a variety of courses and choices emphasizes students’ strengths. There are some courses such as employment skills that would be required. There are other courses that might be more specific to the students’ needs. Based on the interviews, offering online options for classes creates a means for students who are not able to attend classes in person. Offering choices in classes both in time and type recognizes that students have lives outsides of school and may be adept to certain types of courses over others.

5. Internships – When students learn work skills, it is helpful for them to have a place to practice these skills. Having the opportunity to work while in school means that students can discuss what they are learning with their peers and teachers. These places of internship can turn into future employment options.
6. Mentorship – Mentorship between typically developing students and students in the specialized program is a great opportunity for new friendships. While it may not be possible to pay additional trained staff to support the students with intellectual disabilities, there may be students who want to gain volunteer or practicum hours. These students may want to gain skills in working with diverse populations. There would also likely be students who want to develop unique relationships authentically simply because they have the option.
7. Person Centered Planning – Person Centered Planning helps to ensure that each individual student has their own goals met. In order for this to happen, personal progress reports and meetings allow for accountability for all stakeholders. These plans could look similar to an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) typically developed in K-12 education.

Funding Issues

Special Education programs do not tend to make money for a university program. This may be in part because for programs to be successful, there needs to be a level of student support that results in a high teacher to student ratio. Often these programs need to remain low cost. This is because students may not have financial means or support such as academic or athletic scholarships to use towards a program. Another reason may be that it is difficult for young

people with disabilities to find jobs to support their schooling (Ryan et al., 2018). As mentioned, this is one of the main goals of postsecondary programs for people with intellectual disabilities.

Post-secondary institutions would benefit from looking through their funding issues to find a way to include people with intellectual disabilities. As mentioned, there is great benefit to the students and to the campus as a whole. Furthermore, Canada as a nation values equality for all peoples regardless of ability (Government of Canada, 2021b). This includes the right to education. Unfortunately, there are several universities not yet upholding this value.

Even more important is upholding this value as a faith-based university. As discussed, members of a faith community are like a body. To not include specific populations is to lose a part of the body. Furthermore, Jesus preaches in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5) to look after “the least of these.” Often in society, people with disabilities are seen as “the least of these.” To include people with disabilities is to be obedient to Jesus’ teachings. There simply is no way around this. The benefit is a community that is diverse where people can learn from others unlike themselves.

Furthermore, faith-based communities such as churches have an opportunity to play an important role in the lives of their young people. Some churches such as the Victoria First Church of the Nazarene in Victoria, B.C. provide scholarships students attending post-secondary institutions (Victoria First Church of the Nazarene, n.d.). This scholarship increases when students attend a faith-based institution. This act demonstrates the support of attending an institution that can develop an individual’s faith and spirituality. Other faith-based communities have the opportunity to follow suit not only for the typical student but for students with intellectual disabilities. This is a financial demonstration of being the Body of Christ.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

This study was conducted with three participants in one province in Canada. As such, there are limitations in how this study should be applied in the future. Furthermore, only faculty members were interviewed meaning that a broader perspective of the programs is limited. Therefore, the results of this study should not be considered reliably generalizable to the broader community. However, the results were consistent with what would be expected, based on the review of the extant literature. In order to generalize and apply the results of this study to other settings, more research should be completed with a much larger sample.

If this study were to be completed again, more programs would be consulted and given opportunities for interviews. Faith based institutions would be included in this list. The geographical area of participants would be diversified to include institutions from provinces outside of B.C. Using a broader range of participants representing different post-secondary institutions would diversify responses and provide further evidence which might support the importance of these programs.

Future Research

Future research could expand the geographical regions for interviews. For instance, interviewing coordinators of postsecondary programs from other provinces and the United States would provide information for how programs compare depending on government legislation and financial support. In order to understand context of faith-based institutions, it would provide further depth to have coordinators from these institutions interviewed. Furthermore, to broaden the scope of understanding it would be beneficial to interview program students, alumni, and parents. Using multiple perspectives could clarify whether themes are specific to roles in the

programs or more generalized. Within this further research it would be important to acquire information from students with a variety of disabilities. When possible, including people groups who are marginalized such as the BIPOC community or LGBTQ community would add to the variety of responses and help recognize that some people may be more advantaged than others in their access to programs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine how inclusive education at the post-secondary level has the potential to impact quality of life for emerging adults. Furthermore, the study sought to understand how using person centered practices has the potential to benefit students. While there are limited studies in this area, there are no studies to date focusing on inclusive post-secondary education in B.C. The researcher used a qualitative ethnographic approach to answer the questions and fill the information gap. Based on the interviews, the theory of using a person- centered approach produces many short- and long-term benefits for students who attend inclusive education programs. The interviews also indicate that there is need for improvement in the programs to provide benefits that are meaningful. Often, a lack of funding is the barrier to more improvements. Additionally, what is seen is that community thrives when all members are able to contribute and participate. This is also the case of post-secondary institutions. When students with intellectual disabilities are given a space to learn that fits their needs, the rest of the campus receives the advantages. Finally, the students who complete the program are often able to contribute and thrive in their communities which benefits themselves and others.

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APPENDIX A – Interview Questions

- 1) What is your position in the program?
- 2) When was the program established?
- 3) What is the level of inclusion in the program? (Eg. Segregated, partial inclusion, full inclusion)
- 4) What types of disabilities do the students have?
- 5) What is the intake process like?
- 6) What are the types of living arrangements that the students have?
- 7) What kind of academic education do the students receive?
- 8) How is life skills training involved in the program?
- 9) What kind of work experience do the students receive?
- 10) What else is involved in the program? (Eg Mentorship, extra curriculars)
- 11) What benefits have graduates seen in the program?
- 12) How has the campus benefitted from the program?
- 13) What are the barriers to students attending your program?
- 14) What do you see are needs for improvement in the program?

APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW 1

Researcher: So just some like basic questions to start. What is your position in the program?

Participant 1: So I am the program chair of the X programs at Y University. So that entails the S program which is the workplace essential skills and training program and we also have a program called then D program. S is the acronym in that side cooperative entrepreneur training program. It's a fairly new program. It's been in operation for its in its third year of delivery at the university.

Researcher: OK awesome. So when was the overall program established?

Participant 1: The S program are you referring to?

Researcher: Yeah

Participant 1: OK so that program has been in existence, it was under a different name. It was called the V program, probably over twenty years ago that program was there.

Researcher: Oh, okay. So quite a while.

Participant 1: Yeah. But in the last eight years we completely revamped that program. Um, and made it more industry accepted to be more offered at the university level. We did a lot of modifications with the curriculum and everything. So it went over a complete program modification and so for the last eight years, I believe it's going into it's ninth year of the S program.

Researcher: Okay, um, so what is the level of inclusion in the program? Like is it segregated, partial inclusion full inclusion?

Participant 1: We try very much to include our students with everything that is being offered at the university. So for example, when it was face to face, we would have annually, it was a [Make-It] conference. It was invited to all students at the university, to you know, um, present big research projects or something of significance. And so, a lot of, for about three years with our students, we got them engaged with that. Um, **but in terms of classes, they're completely just our programs.** They are not. However, when students do graduate from our program, if they are able to, **we transition them into other programs at the university.** We try very, very hard. So, out of every grad year, we have, I would estimate at least two graduates out of 12 – 16 students that latter into another program at the university.

Researcher: That's great. Oh, cool.

Participant 1: Yeah.

Researcher: Very cool. So what types of disabilities do the students have?

Participant 1: **I would say the majority of the students have, are on the spectrum. And we also have intellectual, mild intellectual, FASD. We've had um, so, more or less cognitive barriers that they have.**

Researcher: Right, okay.

Participant 1: A lot of students, we were getting lots of applicants of students who are on the spectrum.

Researcher: Okay, cool. Um, and what is the intake process like?

Participant 1: So it's, so now, we've gone online, they would have applied just like any other student that's applied to a university. So we are BCEd planner. So they first apply to the university. Then registration contacts me with the list of applicants and then I contact those applicants and we have a very specific [name of] program application. And then I would invite them to come in for, what I refer to as, an intake meeting. So I get to know them. Um, if they don't have certain levels of numeracy or literacy levels of reading and writing, um, I note that so I can note how I can accommodate and share that information with the faculty. So it's a fairly big process. I would say from beginning to end about a three-hour intake process.

Researcher: Wow, okay.

Participant 1: So it's quite intense. So we just want to make sure that we get all the information as possible so that we can provide a good service to these applicants and to make sure that they are at the appropriate fit for it. Because it's not a program for everyone because it is at the university. There are outcomes, um, it's not a community-based program. It, and that used to be what the old program was so we really want students by the time they graduate to either be working, or you know, a form of volunteer work, more independence. Um, a form of employment or enter into another program at the university.

Researcher: Oh, okay, interesting. So it has transformed a bit over the years.

Participant 1: Yeah, quite a bit.

Researcher: Yeah, neat, okay. Um, and what are the types of living arrangements that the students have? Are they, I guess, X isn't really a dorm?

Participant 1: Well, funny enough Kelsey, is we have students who have come from other parts of the Island or I have had a student come from the mainland for the program and they have lived in res. There's three I can think of. Um, most students are from the island. So they still live at home or they live in some supportive apartment living arrangement with a support worker.

Researcher: How has it gone for the ones who have lived on campus?

Participant 1: The three who were on campus loved it. They did great. One student lived on campus and they met some friends through the campus and they ended up, for the second year of the program, um renting with other people. Not like on campus but they found it less expensive.

Researcher: Right, haha, I understand that.

Participant 1: So it was a positive experience.

Researcher: Oh good!

Participant 1: It's not for everyone. Um, but um, the one's that are fairly independent enough, for sure. It's a good experience.

Researcher: Yeah, that's really cool!

Participant 1: It's helps transition them too and you see personal growth and everything.

Researcher: Definitely. Oh, that's great.

Participant 1: Yeah.

Researcher: Very cool. So what kind, I am just going to ask about a few different areas.

Participant 1: Yeah, if I could just elaborate on that inclusive part.

Researcher: Sure!

Participant 1: So when we went, so something to note I think for you is, what is important for us, when we were mandated to go completely online a lot of people were like, "Well, how are you going to do that with an [Adult Special Education] program?" **But we treated our students just like any other university students and give them that opportunity and do everything we could to keep the program running. So are numbers are stellar. Like, we've lost maybe two students that went online.** So they're very included and very supportive that way even though it was a lot of blood, sweat, and tears to get them all online.

Researcher: Yeah, so much work.

Participant 1: Yeah, so I felt like we had the backup though of definitely my team was definitely supportive of that.

Researcher: Great, yeah, because I don't think it has always been a priority.

Participant 1: It isn't. No it isn't. Yeah.

Researcher: Oh good, that's encouraging. Um, yeah, so I am going to ask about a few different areas.

Participant 1: Sure.

Researcher: So what kind of academic education do the students receive?

Participant 1: So literacy levels. We have embedded literacy levels to prepare them for work. Mostly if you are familiar with national occupation codes. So it wouldn't be higher than a level 1 or a level 2. So they do lots of, they do courses, **they do reading and writing but it's very workplace related and same with numeracy – math.** So we do more consumer type of math, where students can calculate their own payroll or they can calculate, you know, their grocery bill. They do a personal budget in our course. In terms of reading, if they can read information and respond to an email. Those are the types of literacy that we teach them. If students want to get into other programs then we, that's where I connect them with, my other, the faculty that work with. It's called um, Adults Basic Education. So some students ladder into those programs, if

they are missing a grade 10 English or something to get into another program. So those students that are able to we connect them with that.

Researcher: Okay.

Participant 1: So we are very much of a literacy level. I don't know if you are familiar with, like, because there are lots of adult special education programs in BC. So a lot of those programs are articulated. So if you go onto the articulation guides on the website for BC you can see exactly what the programs are offering in terms of academics and who is offering what. So that might be useful for your research.

Researcher: Yeah, thank you that is great. Very helpful. Um, okay, what about life skills training?

Participant 1: I hate that term for one. The reason why I hate it is because I have also taught in the school system and I feel like it is such a labeling word. So instead of life skills we try to call them essential skills. Essential skills for employment, essential skills for work, essential skills for life. So that is very much embedded. We have embedded like um and renting and right certificate program where they learn how to live independently. What are their rights. We do health and wellness. We do things on food issues. There is also a great course we have called citizens of the world. Being a good citizen. What are your responsibilities of being a citizen. So lot of essential skills as a human being living as a community member, we have really tried to embed in the two years of the program.

Researcher: Ok, great.

Participant 1: And also, you can look on our website, Kelsey, with the S link and you can see all the courses we offer per module. Because the way our program is set it's a two-year program and they we have what are called what are called six modules within each program. Each module is 11 weeks and they have courses embedded in each one. So on the website they have specific, like, it will give you a name of the course and a synopsis of the course to see what we are covering.

Researcher: Yeah, I will definitely take a look at that. Very cool. That's helpful. So, is that kind of how the work experience, is that part of the courses as well?

Participant 1: So what it is, 50% they are in the classroom and 50% they are in the community taking what they are learning in the classroom and transitioning out into the workplace. So the skill that, so for instance, if we are doing the food service module. They take Food Safe and they talk about healthy living and diets and stuff. And then out in community we set them up the work experience at a restaurant where they could practice those skills with Food Safe and practice, etc. So we try treat, in the first year they go out into a work experience with a maximum of eight students with one trainer and then the second year their work experience is our independent, so targeted to what there areas are. So the second year they're kind of treated like a real job. They go out and then they do a full-on work experience two days a week

Researcher: Okay, awesome. Well that's great.

Participant 1: They love the work experience piece at the program.

Researcher: Right, yeah, that is really helpful.

Participant 1: Yeah, because they go those uh, what I like to refer to it as is experiential learning. They get the hands-on learning, not just the classroom, but they get to practice those skills in community. Because most of our student don't even come any volunteer work experience or very little paid employment.

Researcher: So yeah, getting their feet wet for the first time. Great, okay. So is there any other things involved in the program like mentorship or extra curriculums?

Participant 1: So we try to connect them. We do have at our institution, now, we created what is called a S Café. So we have a little, when we were back face-to-face, it was great because it was really taking off. Um, where our students could work. We actually paid a grad and we rotate that position every year. We have it, so the grad works as a big mentor for current students. So they're able to make some food and recipes and they serve coffee and lunch and breakfast in a café. **They can practice customer service skills, money skills, making, all of those hospitality skills. So that we have set up as kind of like a mentorship piece.** It's really, it's quite successful. Students love it and it's really well received institutionally.

Researcher: That's great. That sounds fun. I want to get involved.

Participant 1: Yeah, it's a good opportunity. Yeah, because what we find challenging is, yes, we can set up great work experiences, but because of like, insurance purposes, a lot of them weren't getting the experience with cash handling or dealing with the cash. So we were kind of able to provide how to use a debit machine and stuff. So it's really good.

Researcher: Yeah, those are all important. Hmm... Very cool.

Participant 1: We also, um, one of my colleagues, her husband, made this, it's like airport kind of cart. It's a S Café, the coffee cart. So we go around to neighbouring buildings, and so um, just to sell coffee and muffins and snacks to students and other faculty. And that's how they're very included in part of the community there. **People know the coffee cart, which is really good.**

Researcher: Yeah, that's great, it sounds like that kind of model is starting to come more into high school and stuff too, yeah, getting that training in them. That's good. Um, okay, so, what benefits have graduates seen in the program like if they've come back to you or you've heard of things?

Participant 1: Success stories for sure, employment. A lot of students if they are looking for employment, **more often than not they will get employment through our program.** They get offered a lot of jobs. We've got lots great community partners on the Island. They got independence. **A lot of them feel more better equipped and skill to move out independently.** Um, so we've seen a lot of students, you know, maybe move out and they support workers from there to help them move out. **They feel more confident,** I see. Um, **other successes ladder into other programs – maturity is huge.** We actually had a couple of students in my years that have met more friends, so a lot of **social skills.** We see inclusiveness which is nice. In fact, my first year

that I started, it's going onto more like 13 years ago, my first class, a couple met. And they are living very happily both working and they got married. So those are the things you like to see.

Researcher: For sure, that's exciting. Yeah. Very cool. It's such a crucial part of life to be supported through.

Participant 1: It is. And it's just the social aspect. That's a goal in itself in our program. Connecting with other people and having those friendships and connections. So that's a big part. Connecting them with community too, community resources.

Researcher: Right, yeah. Definitely. Cool. Um, how have you seen the campus benefit from the program?

Participant 1: Um, I think it's benefitted greatly because in our institutions overall value statements we state that we value diversity and inclusiveness and I think the S program represents that really well. And especially over the last three years. Um, we're becoming more recognized. People know now. "Oh, the S program." Right? Where as years ago, when I first started, "What, there's a program for people with disabilities. I didn't know about it and I've worked here." So I think it's getting more recognition. So I see that and I think it's just, even there's more room for that to develop though for sure.

Researcher: Yeah, always. Okay, cool, um, what are the barriers to students attending your program?

Participant 1: So barriers right now definitely could be technology. So that's a learning thing for us. Um, not so much financial barriers, because if students are on it, persons with disabilities income, they can get a full grant for the tuition and their textbook is fully paid. Sometimes a barrier could be location because we only have the program offered right now in X city and Y city. So someone, say from [a different city], it could be a transportation issue. Um, other than that, um, I can't really think of anything.

Researcher: Oh, that's great. It seems like it is a pretty welcoming place.

Participant 1: It is. If there, if the demand keeps up high though it could be a barrier that they want to the year that they apply. Yeah, we saw that happening. Like for instance, before COVID hit, the year prior to that, because I only have room 16 students which is small. So one year, I had over like, 50 applicants so we were fortunate enough to get extra funding that year to offer a second cohort. So if it keeps going in that direction I am not sure what September is going to look like with the impact of Covid and registrations. That could be a barrier, like not getting in when you want to.

Researcher: Right, definitely. And then finding something to do for that year.

Participant 1: And that's when I find, yeah, and that's where I find, you know, maybe that is a barrier when there are budgets and stuff they often tend to look at these programs since it's the first ones to cut. It always seems like we are constantly fighting for more funding or money. And you know, we're a skeleton staff so that can be exhausting. So these things that I am sharing with you like the West café and everything, um, that's something that our faculty, our very small

faculty does at the side of our desks above and beyond, you know, our everyday work. So I feel like, like that's a barrier in itself.

Researcher: Yeah, totally. Yup.

Participant 1: Getting the right people in. And if you don't have the right people in the position none of this would be happening because all of the stuff is behind the scenes. We don't have a big budget, very little budget. And so we've had to resort to, you know, doing our own fundraisers or doing things like that so.

Researcher: Yeah, that is a lot of extra work on top of what you are already doing.

Participant 1: I know.

Researcher: Wow. I guess you have to be passionate to be doing what you are doing.

Participant 1: You do and I am very grateful that I work with some amazing people because it takes amazing people to run programs like this.

Researcher: Absolutely, yeah,

Participant 1: Because I know people work far beyond their regular 9-3 schedule.

Researcher: Right, yeah, definitely. Great. Um, and then what do you see are need for improvement in the program?

Participant 1: Need for improvement would be, well, obviously now with Covid I see that we could modify our, there's opportunity to embed more technology even though we have that. Because I think that our students if they want to keep progressing and offering this program. And they're very capable people. We can embed a little bit more online stuff. And that could address the issue of transportation. So I think there's an opportunity of a nice balance of face-to-face and online. It's worked really well. Um, more money. More programs like this. I would like to see, um, it's shameful that we only two programs of ASE at the postsecondary level where they could be much more. So I think there's lots of room for more program growth, program development. I would also like to see more collaboration between faculties. You know, can we, can our students benefit from working with other mentors and other faculty somehow. So an example was the entrepreneur program and some business students work with these entrepreneur student and be their mentors. So I see a lot of that happening too.

Researcher: Right, yeah, that's great, that's cool. It's good to see where it could go.

Participant 1: Yeah, I am hoping.

Researcher: Yeah, right, gotta get people on board for it.

Participant 1: Yeah, you do, and just connecting more with even more like, like other, you know, make it more known. Programs like this do exist. And that, because the island is fairly small that, you know, we're really well received in this area. You know, and maybe on the mainland and stuff people don't know. There's waitlists for these types of programs. So I think there's an opportunity across the board to have more programs like this.

Researcher: Absolutely. That's why I am doing this.

Participant 1: I know, good for you. And even, because they're so labeled coming from high school that they think, "Okay, we're just going to get them a job right away, well, when there's opportunity for more postsecondary for a lot of these guys. They fall, you know, they just, they don't fit. And you know, with offering our programs, there's gotta be a place for them.

Researcher: Absolutely. Yeah, that's cool. Yeah, um, anything else that you want to add or anything that would be helpful for me to know.

Participant 1: Um, no. I think you've asked some really good questions but if something, Kelsey, in your reviewing things, just feel free to shoot me an email and I can refer to you other people if you want to, some colleagues want to talk other people. Take a look at the ASC articulation guide and there's some contacts in there because you will be able to talk to other program chairs and instructors who have been there a long time of other programs. Because we're pretty good and we're pretty fortunate at [this university] to have, even our president is very inclusive and comes and talks to my class and knows my students. And I don't think you see that at other institutions. The first time there's budget cuts, where do they turn to, ASE programs. It's like that everywhere right, so.

Researcher: Uh, so rough.

Participant 1: It's frustrating, yeah, it is. Like a parent, you know, you are always fighting for the rights of this vulnerable population.

Researcher: Absolutely. Yeah, no, that's great, thank you.

Participant 1: So if I can be of anymore help just let me know.

BREAK – due to personal conversation.

Participant 1: One thing that I find frustrating, Kelsey, because I have lots of students that love working with children. They are great daycare providers. I see them in community work experiences but to get into even an ECE program at the university, like you need grade 12 English. They write these huge research papers. **I wish there were more programs like assistant programs or something offered**, that you know, that they are capable of doing. And that they can, you know, get their certificate for a daycare and say, "Hey, I work in a daycare and I am certified worker here." Whereas, there's lots of bureaucracy to go through to get to that level which is challenging.

Researcher: Yeah, it is challenging for sure. Yeah.

BREAK due to more personal conversation.

Participant 1: So hopefully I helped a little bit.

Researcher: Oh, so much.

Participant 1: It was so nice meeting you.

Researcher: Thank you so much. Have a great day.

APPENDIX C: TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW 2

Researcher: Alright, so, I am just going to start with some basic questions to start and then go into more in depth ones. Um, so what is your position in the program?

Participant 2: I am a faculty member in the X programs at [University]

Researcher: Okay, awesome. Um, and when was the program established?

Participant 2: Uh, in 19 about 82.

Researcher: Oh, okay. Wow, that's a bit older than I thought it would be.

Participant 2: Yeah, Adult special education has been in the province for over thirty years. You know, like the deinstitutionalization movement in the early eighties.

Researcher: Right, okay, great. Um, so what is the level of inclusion program like is it completely segregated, is there partial inclusion, or is it full inclusion?

Participant 2: Um, how are you defining inclusion?

Researcher: So inclusion would be like they are actually in classes with their peers that are typical.

Participant 2: Uh, so it would be a segregated program. Students spend all the class time is with other students with disabilities.

Researcher: Okay.

Participant 2: Yup and then go, um, they spend part of the time in class and they go on unpaid work experiences.

Researcher: Oh, okay. Great, yeah so I will be asking a bit about that after. That's great. Um, so what types of disabilities do that students have?

Participant 2: Uh, our definition or our entrance requirement uses words similar to "students that have barriers to learning that hinder scholastic success."

Researcher: Oh, okay. Gotcha.

Participant 2: So it's fairly open in terms of the labels that students come to use with. Um, most many of the students have gone through a special education stream through the k-12 system. They come with labels that are closely associated with intellectual disabilities.

Researcher: Mmm, k. Perfect, yeah, okay. Awesome. And what is the intake process like?

Participant 2: The student is lengthy and yeah, challenging for a lot of people. The students um, this year has been a little bit different obviously because of Covid but I will talk about historically what has happened. So students have to attend an information session on campus. Um, and then if they meet the admission criteria which is they have to have uh show a certain level of independence in the community to be able to navigate the community independently.

They need to meet [the university's] admission criteria. So there is some wording around whether they are a mature student or they have to have completed some kind of certificate from high school. If they are a mature student than that criteria is waved. Um, and then they have to do an interview with the faculty person.

Researcher: Okay, great. Excellent. Um, what are the types of living arrangements that the students have?

Participant 2: Uh, well, I don't really know because it's not something we really talk about in class or we would cover in the curriculum. But I would say that **most of our students live with their parents**. Um, some **students live on their own that I know** of. We don't have residence so we don't have anyone in residence. Um, yeah, that's not really something we ask our students where they live.

Researcher: Okay, no problem. Um, great. What has it looked like this year with Covid?

Participant 2: Yeah, we are online this year with our delivery. So we're, and so the students come in on zoom or Teams, we use Teams for a morning hour session and an afternoon session for an hour. **And then in replacement of community work experiences they're doing activity-based job employment type skills.**

Researcher: Right, okay, so you have had to switch things up a bit. Yeah, the year of being flexible.

Participant 2: Yeah.

Researcher: Um, what kind of academic education do the students receive?

Participant 2: Like in terms of certificates?

Researcher: Yeah, more like, do they do any language or reading skills or math skills or kind of the more things that you would learn in like K- 12 type settings?

Participant 2: Yeah, we don't offer upgrading. There are courses at [the university] aside from special education to do upgrading. Our students, our curriculum focus is on three sort of areas. **One is employment. Um, one is community engagement and one is further education.**

Researcher: Oh, okay.

Participant 2: So the majority of our curriculum is **focused on employment skills**. So those are things, they do a resume, interview skills, being safe on the job. Um, advocacy skills, leadership skills, those kind of things.

Researcher: Oh, okay, very cool, so this is where they get put into work experience type programs?

Participant 2: Yeah, so typically the programs, the students would **be in class for a month**, you know, doing employment but also the other **two sort of pathways around community engagement and further education**. And then they **go on these unpaid work experiences which are entry level positions**.

Researcher: Okay.

Participant 2: So they're not necessarily something that they have, you know that they're training vocational skills. They are sort of minimum wage part time jobs. Some of our students come to us with jobs already. Lots of them don't. **We don't guarantee employment at the end but, it is an outcome.** If the student is looking for and the employer matches then sometimes the students get jobs.

Researcher: Great, that's awesome. Um, is there any essential or life skills involved in the program?

Participant 2: We definitely don't use that term. It is definitely a deficit kind of term around special education. So um, hmm, the goal of our program, the stated goal is for students to become more independent in the community. We're shifting away from because **it is very deficit thinking.** You know, **we are sort of making the assumption that are students aren't independent already.** And this year for sure has highlighted that we are incorrect our thinking because we were concerned about the students accessing technology and whether they were capable of learning online. I mean, and those were all just negative assumptions that educators hold towards students with disabilities. So, **we are doing a program revision next year.** Our program is going to look totally different than what we have been offering or what we are offering for the last thirty years. And in my opinion, adult special education is very dated in the province in terms of how it's delivered. You know, and we use words like inclusion and, but when you actually look at the programs, they aren't inclusive. I would argue that very few, if any, of the adult special education programs in the province are actually inclusive in the way that you are defining them and the way that lots of people define them, so. Yeah, so we don't necessarily do what we would refer to as life skills, but we would definitely do some of those essential skills.

Researcher: Right, so maybe more as it comes up and what the student, or what the individual needs, or?

Participant 2: Yeah, yeah, **you know we used to focus more on things like bus training and hygiene.** We are definitely moving away from that kind of curriculum focus.

Researcher: Right.

Participant 2: It's about time. You know, hygiene is not an issue. It's a perception that students come with issues around hygiene and if there is there is usually secondary social sort of concerns around having access or living arrangements, or poverty, kind of thing.

Researcher: Right, definitely, oh, that is good to know. Um, is there anything else involved in the program like mentorship or extracurriculars or anything like that?

Participant 2: Um, we, nothing is structured in the program in terms of getting students involved in extra activities on campus. We are always open to it and educating our students about the options. **Very few of our students, um, or access them.**

Researcher: Oh, okay, gotcha. So it's there.

Participant 2: So it is something with our redesign that we are hoping to embed a few students into the campus life, more authentically. So that they are not, you know, sort of this add on. It is welcomed on campus but not really involved in the campus.

Researcher: Hmm, yeah, definitely, okay. That sounds like a great thing to happen. The benefits of Covid I guess.

Participant 2: Yeah, well, you know, it mirrors what the K-12 system has been struggling with, with what true inclusion actually looks like. That conversation, and I don't know if that is part of the research that you are doing, um, that um isn't happening. You will probably find very little literature. You will probably find very little literature on adult special education.

Researcher: Oh yeah, I have found very little. That's why I am doing this.

Participant 2: I just finished my dissertation in [specific month]. I wrote a critical ethnography on adult special education. If you want the link, I mean it's public. I was at the [other university].

Researcher: Yeah, I would love that.

Participant 2: I have only been able to find probably three or four articles, even closely related articles on adult special education in the province. I am sure you are familiar with Think College down in the States. They are very different often than what we, um, what we offer.

Researcher: Right.

Participant 2: Have you seen the adult, from 2006, there was some research done by the ministry. It's called like the Cohort of Special Education.

Researcher: I don't think so.

Participant 2: Oh, okay, that would be a good document for you to look at. I can find it for you and send you the link.

Researcher: That would be awesome, thank you.

Participant 2: That's probably one of the last, uh, provincial like research that was done. I mean, you've gotta think the millions of dollars that adult special education receives in the province. We are talking almost 10 million dollars for have, for the fifteen institutions, that deliver it. So there is a lot of money that is being funneled into these programs with very, sort of, unmeasurable outcomes.

Researcher: Right.

Participant 2: So that was sort of the last big provincial research and it will tell you, um, on average, who the students are by their labels. So they will kind of give you a breakdown of the percentage of students that have autism and you know, all that sort of thing. The percentage that the students spend in class. It talks about um, what the focus of the curriculum is across the province. So that would be a good document for you to...

Researcher: Yeah, great, that is super helpful thank you. Awesome. Um, okay, so it sounds like you have already mentioned some of the benefits like, in terms of employment. Have you seen other benefits from the program?

Participant 2: Um, yeah, there's definitely for students attending, um, and I think this is true for any postsecondary experience, you know you see **students becoming more independent**. You know, learning skills around critical thinking and the **digital literacy** obviously this year. We definitely see **development of friendships among our students**. Often our students are very lonely and isolated and so, um, you know, our program does offer a place that students meet friends. Um, **sometimes students get jobs. Sometimes students get volunteer work. Sometimes students go off and do further education after they leave us. Sometimes they go to other adult special education programs in the province.** You will see students who do cycles. So you will see students who go from [A University] to [B University] to [C University]. You know, often there is no other option for them. And often they are just covering the same material that they covered at the previous year, but they don't, you know, there is no other option, you know, for people to continue their education so.

Researcher: Wow, that's hard.

Participant 2: Yeah, it's not ideal.

Researcher: Yeah, definitely, hmmm. How have you seen [the university] benefit from the program?

Participant 2: Uh, well [the university] as a community, our students do do, I mean, I think there is benefit it terms of having our students on campus. We could argue that they are not included but they are integrated onto the campus. So our student **do work experiences sometimes on campus**. So they may be doing a work experience in the library or the book store or in the cafeteria. So, I think there is benefit for that. I think that there's benefit to highlighting disability related issues that come forth as a result as having, you know our student on campus. **I think it benefits communities because, you know, our people are able to go to postsecondary in their community as opposed to having to leave their communities.** So that is a strength there as well.

Researcher: Definitely, yeah okay. Yeah, that's great. What are the barriers to students attending your program?

Participant 2: Oh, gosh, **attitudinal barriers would probably be the first one**. I think we have policy barriers that prevent students, you know from pursuing studies of their interest. You know, we have **physical barriers**. Some of our building aren't accessible. Uh, there's **financial barriers** for students that are, you know, coming from low-income housing family situations. Um, I think there's another barrier because, uh, the focus is so limited that students only have one option. So **I think that sometimes students get funneled into adult special education even if it's not what they want or it's not what they are looking for, but just the lack of choice.**

Researcher: Yeah, no, that's good.

Participant 2: Um barriers, from _____ between campuses. Our students don't pay student fees so, in reality, they are not supposed to access the shuttle that goes back and forth between campuses even though most bus drivers let our students on. Again,

Researcher: Right, okay.

Participant 2: I mean, it's a barrier. Not only can you not come on. Everywhere you look there's lots of barriers for our students.

Researcher: Yeah, wow, okay, that's good to know. Yeah, I guess you kind of touched on this in terms of what's happening in terms of what's happening with, um, things that have changed or are coming up with changes during Covid. But yeah, what would you say are the needs for improvement in the program?

Participant 2: Uh, well, I think that there are redesign, that's a very basic principles that we're following are that we want the students to be able to have choice in what it is that they're studying. And that we don't feel that it needs to be. There's a preoccupation in adult special education that students need to get jobs. And that whole idea of learning for the sake of learning, um, doesn't seem to apply to this student population. So we are trying to shift our program away from this idea that, you know, that all they need to do is get a job, and all of a sudden there lives will be perfect or great or you know, their postsecondary is complete. So I think choice is definitely guiding our principles. Um, inclusion, like real inclusion authentic inclusion around having students embedded in the community, campus life. So you know, I mean, being involved with other [university] students that don't have disabilities. That's ways that we can do that. Um, and yeah, choice is a really big one because we are looking, right now the program, well, you know, before Covid, it used to run from Monday to Thursday from 9-2:30. From Monday to Thursday, yeah, which is very much like a day program if you think about it. So the day programs that are happening in community living organizations. And so the students have no choice. The students go dropped off and they were there until 2:30. So you know, we're looking at offering part time and full time options for students. We're looking at offering in class and also online, so sort of a hybrid model. Yeah, there's lots of changes I think that need to happen.

Researcher: Definitely, yeah, that great. That's great to hear that it's coming more up to date with what the needs of the students are.

Participant 2: Yeah, the desires, yeah, our students, you know, some of our students coming through from inclusive experiences in the K – 12 system and then all of a sudden, you know, they're in a program, where it's got disability slapped across the title.

Researcher: Hmmm, yeah, wow.

Participant 2: So, yeah.

Researcher: Great, Are there, is there anything else that you would like to add? Any other things that you think of that I should know about your program?

Participant 2: Yeah, so what is your research question? Like, what are you...

BREAK due to personal conversation

Participant 2: Okay, so it might be Steps Forward. But I will send you some links. You know, inclusive postsecondary in it's truest form, um, actually came out of Calgary about thirty years ago. And um, they, so yeah, this is, the students are not congregated with other students with disabilities. They come in and if they want to take a class in psychology then the student goes into the psychology class. They make an agreement with the instructor around, you know, what the assignments might look like. The student, you know, has sort of a contract, and does the work and does all the um, group work and everything else.

Researcher: Right.

Participant 2: Um, so. Um, it's an interesting field because there's lots of movement. You have to be really careful about the language that's being used because, you know, this word inclusion is being apprehended and used in different ways. And you know, it's a funding tool right now so people are using it to apply for funds even though. When you look at Think College, uh, what they are doing down there, for the most part is very similar to what we do up here in Adult Special Education. They've got segregated coursework that people with disabilities and they do work experience. The U.S, has so much money right now that is being funded into their programs there, millions and millions of dollars and they've got this big huge sort of housing place call Think College. But when you actually look at what they're doing, we've been doing it up in Canada, well, thirty years our program has been going for. Right, we're only one of many that have been around for that long. So it's a very interesting field and to look at it from a critical perspective, is sort of when you really open your eyes and think, "Oh my god, a lot of this is just reinforced and reinvented rhetoric." You know, but the experiences for the students are the same.

Researcher: Right. Okay, interesting, yeah.

Participant 2: My dissertation presents a very critical approach to adult special education.

Researcher: Hmm, so it sounds like what is needed right now.

Participant 2: It's needed, yeah. Otherwise, it's going to be thirty years later and we're going to be doing the same thing and getting the same results. Even though adult special education in the province has been here for thirty years, our employment rate hasn't changed in the province. So, the same number of people, minimum number of people have jobs that they did thirty years ago. So what we're doing isn't working, right. Like it's sort of status quo.

Researcher: Right, hmmm.

Participant 2: Definitely time.

Researcher: Yeah, well, I am glad that you took that on. That must have been a lot of work.

Participant 2: Yeah, oh yeah, it was a ton of work and I had no idea how much work it was going to be until I finished. But definitely look at Steps Forward. I'll send you that link too.

Researcher: Yeah, thank you so much.

Participant 2: It will broaden your eyes. It will give you a different context to compare to think about other practices that you are hearing about.

Researcher: Right, no definitely. Yeah, that would be helpful. Yeah, thank you so much. A very fruitful conversation.

BREAK due to personal conversation.

Researcher: Alright.

Participant 2: Well, I will send you those links.

Researcher: Thank you so much. Have a good afternoon.

Participant 2: Okay, bye.

Researcher: Kay, bye.

APPENDIX D: TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW 3

Researcher: So what is your position in the program?

Participant 3: Okay, well, at [this university] we have promotion and ten-year which is fairly unique um, for a program such, uh, somebody like myself teaching in a program, um, and so, I am an associate teaching professor at [This University]. I teaching in the [Adult Special Education] program.

Researcher: Excellent. How long has the program been established for?

Participant 3: Um, a version of the program started in 19, in the early 1990's, probably around 19. Well, it depends on how far you want to go back. But uh, so I have a colleague who retired, I think she retired about 5 years ago and she was at [this university] for almost thirty years. Um and so, I think there was some initial programs that were offered in the 1980's as well. But the program that I teach in, um, really took form in the early 90's and I started at [this university] in 1994.

Researcher: Oh wow, so you have been there quite a while. That's awesome. How many students are in the program?

Participant 3: Well right now, um, our students, our intake is a bit lower than normal just because of our Covid situation. So, we've started to call the program that we normally offer [name] classic informally and that would be career exploration, the kitchen, service program, and retail and hospitality. And so, um, the kitchen program would typically have about 10 students. Um the retail program would have about 8-10 students. The career exploration program would have about 15. We now put the cap at 12.

BREAK Due to technical difficulty.

Participant 3: So we are lower in numbers. Each program started with few students. Career explorations started with 9, retail, I think, all of them were down maybe 2 or 3 students this year.

Researcher: Yeah, makes sense with this year with Covid? So what is the level of inclusion in the program? Are the students segregated from their peers? Are they included in any of the classes? Or are they always with their peers?

Participant 3: Yeah, so, we're real fortunate to have designated classrooms so classrooms that are primarily for our use. And that's not unusual so if you think of the education program, there's other programs at the university that have the early childhood education program. They have designated classrooms. Um, and that's been tested at times. They've wanted to take our classrooms. But, um, it does provide a safe place for the students to be and a comfortable place for the students to be. About, it's coming on maybe, it might actually be 10 years now, our kitchen and retail program started to run a small business on campus. They started with a sort of pop-up cart. It was really well done. It was well designed and they would work in our student street which is a main focus area of the campus, probably the highest traffic area of the campus. That gave them retail experience. Um, and so they did that for a couple of years and then, um, it expanded, and so now there's, when it's not covid, there's a market, again in a very high.

Fortunately, our classrooms are close to the highest traffic area of the campus – student street. There was a significant renovation done to one of our classrooms and that became [name] market. If you look on our website, imagine that there is quite a bit, I am pretty sure that there's some images there that show you what [name] market is about.

Researcher: That sounds really neat.

Participant 3: Yeah, and that has evolved and so when it's not Covid, the kitchen students prepare meals. So they prepare a couple of soups every day, other meals. It's a really become a hub and really increased the profile of the [name of] program. You know, when it, again when it's not Covid, you would be hard pressed to somebody who doesn't know about the program. So it's sort of become like our culinary arts where everybody knows what to go to culinary arts for, uh, lunch. They also know that you can go to [name] market, and um. And the food's really good. They cater to different dietary needs and they really sort of found a niche there. And during Covid, not be outdone by Covid, my colleague, she arranged a popup market that had online orders. You could order online and there would be curbside delivery going into Christmas. And you know, they just rolled with the punches. And uh, they are going to do another one in the spring in March.

Researcher: That's really smart.

Participant 3: Yeah, it's really brought a profile of the program. And, I'd say, integrated the students into the university. And brought them in the limelight actually. And then, you know, other than that, they you know, we support, we encourage, we facilitate as much as possible that they are, that they go, that they know about as many of the university activities as possible. And again, because of our proximity to student street, you know, most non-Covid days, um, we're right at the doorstep of any activity that's meant to engage students. I think we're really working, you know we've really attempted to make it as inclusive and integrated into university life as possible.

Researcher: That's great. Yeah, well you've answered a lot of my questions just in that one question which is great. So, typically what types of disabilities do the students have?

Participant 3: Well, there is, yeah there's a cross section. I am going to preface this because I am always uncomfortable with putting students a box according to their diagnosis. What really aim to do is look at them as a student, a person, as opposed to their disability. The only time that we know about their disability is during their intake. Um, and to be in the program, um, our definition, one reason or not why academic programs wouldn't work for them. So that's pretty broad range. So it could be difficulty with a mental illness. You know, high anxiety. It could be a number of things and it could be a temporary thing as well. But within that, we certainly have students that are on the autism spectrum. Um, we have and had students with downs syndrome, FASD. You know, and then there's students who have been diagnosed with learning challenges, significant learning challenges. And so we try not to focus on the disability. It is a program. What I do often get, is if I generally speak about the program people will say, "Oh, I have a nephew that needs to be in your program." And that's when I start to go, "Well, it is a program for students with learning challenges or a mental illness." Does that answer your question?

Researcher: Totally. And yeah, I understand like, we're trying to get away from the challenges and becoming more strength-based, so I definitely understand where you are coming from with that. So you talked a little bit about the intake process, could you go into a little more depth about that?

Participant 3: Yeah, so, um, you know, it starts with the recruitment. We have become quite well known in the, you know, not only [this city], but in the feeding communities that feed [this university] and even beyond. So you know, it's that dance between not having people feel like they are being labeled. But generally, people have a good sense. You know, people who teach in school districts or support people, um, with learning challenges or a mental illness know about our programming. And so, they typically, and also past students, you know, there's programming where they socialize with each other. And, so then they're encouraged to apply. And so, **we do have an admissions package**. And, um, within that package, we ask that they have a referee, that there's somebody that writes. There's a number of questions that we ask them to talk about the candidate. Um, we do, ask for, I am just trying to think now what is on the admissions package. We do ask that the candidate, and likely it is with support, write down what work experience they've had in the past. You know, it's broad-based volunteer experience. Basically, if anybody asks me, I generally say, anything you've done for somebody else. It can even include chores at home but it's in the service of other people. Um, and yeah, so those two documents are part of it. There's the application package. We do get transcripts from their high schools. So we get the package and we look at the package. And um, and then, they move onto an interview. We typically have two or three faculty that interview. And we meet, when it's face-to-face, non-Covid, we generally meet with the candidate and their support person at first because we know that that's the most comfortable for them. And also, it allows their support person to ask questions that they have. And then **we move onto interviewing the candidate by themselves** because we also know that if the support person is in the room likely the support person is going to answer most of the questions. Or, there's just a different dynamic. Um, there's a different dynamic. In the same way, I have a son who's a university and I would never dream of going to his interview. So you know, we do try to make it as usual as possible. And then so we interview the student. And so, honestly, **our key factors that we're looking for are motivation**.

Researcher: Right, yeah. A desire to be in the program probably.

Participant 3: Yeah, a desire to be in the program and a desire to work. Because we're very clear, **our goal is to prepare students for entry level work**. And, um, do they want to work? And do they want to be in the program? And then also **independence**. Um, so, you know, are they able to come on campus? You know, sometimes there's an initial support that's needed. That they learn the bus route and they learn the campus. Again, the fact that we're a very central and designated area helps with that. But do they have that independence? And, and then, it's hard to tell from an interview, but generally, would they be successful? **We're really just trying to decide, will they be successful?** And, um, generally, if a student isn't accepted it's because, um, we've got indications that they're not going to be successful. Um, and, so at point, we will meet with them, we won't necessarily do it at that meeting, we will do it at another meeting. We will have talked about and we will try to think of and give recommendations as to what they could do

to become more ready. One thing we know that, if a student is accepted and they're not ready, they'll typically last only a couple of weeks. And we know, as anybody, if you are unsuccessful, like going to university, it's a big deal. And, um, if you are unsuccessful at it, you are likely not to want to come back. So we want to really avoid that. So we really do want the students to be successful. Fortunately, we do have some programs in the community. [Name of Agency] is a strong agency in [this city]. And they also have some programming. In some cases, I guess it would be considered, we rent space to them. We have a classroom. It's a situation that evolved. So typically, if students aren't ready for our program, we encourage them to look into and apply to the [Name of Agency] program as a way to get ready.

Researcher: That's good. Wow, cool. Um, so what types of living arrangements do the students have? Do they mostly like live with parents? Do they live on their own? Do any of them live on campus?

Participant 3: Yeah, well, all of the above. I would say the highest percentage are students that live at home. And the highest percentage are students that have moved from high school to university. That is our biggest group. But within that, we do have students that come from out of town. And they, we often have one or two students that live in on campus housing. Right now we do have a student on campus, he's in dorms and in the retail program. I have a student who moved from [a different city] and he lives with a home share. So some of our students from out of out of town, they qualify for CLBC support and they connected with a family and they have a home share type situation. Um, we do have mature students. Typically, I would say one student a year. Yeah, typically one student a year. Right now we have a kitchen student. She certainly lives on her own [other personal details]. So, yeah, we do have a cross section of students.

Researcher: Yeah, quite a wide variety. Interesting, that's cool. Um, so you know, I think you talked quite a bit about some of their work experience and, you know, involvement in the campus and that kind of thing. Is there anything else that you would like to add about the type of education that they receive?

Participant 3: Yeah, so, one of the things that I've, that I really value is, that this profile, it's hard to say, but this group of students have access to postsecondary as all. Because I think that's a privilege and I really appreciate that that privilege is offered to students who in the past or in other parts of the world don't have access to postsecondary. And you know, we do prepare them for employment. Um, but there's a maturation that happens at university that is really a big part of the programming. So I call it the unofficial curriculum where just being on campus, being surrounded by other adults, and being able to see how adults behave. Um, you know, my typical, um, situation when it's not Covid again, is about the end of September I have a class where we talk about what is the difference between high school and university. And what comes out of the discussion is just the relief of being in an adult environment. Unfortunately, a lot of these students have been bullied, have had bad experiences. You know, they will talk about that. Even actually during Covid, it came up even though we are not on campus. So I am teaching my program entirely online. The students, um, talk about and need to talk about, and want to talk about a relief that they're in an adult environment that they value that. And what I find, so typically a student will be with us for two years. Sometimes they take careers explorations, the

kitchen program, and then retail program. And just the changes in those individuals towards the end, it's just amazing. They're different people. And that happens, you know, a little bit over time, some for more than others, but all of them. But, you know, I can still recall a student who was really struggling. It was daily. It was like, "And how are you doing today?" And finally, we got to "not so great but I will get over it." I was just like so much progress for her to see that um, what she was dealing with would pass. She had the power to do that. So you know, you can look, on the, you know, on our website. I can show you what our curriculum is. **But I think what's really important is that hidden curriculum of maturing as adults and gaining independence.** And often times there's also, **they become, a cohort of friends that stay together. I'll have students that come back to visit from you know, 5 or 6 years or longer.** They'll know somebody who was from their cohort or class and they've either been a roommate of theirs at some point. Some of our students have even gotten married to each other. And yeah, they stay together, just as you likely do as a university student. And just like I do. I have my university friends that I will know for the rest of my life. And so, yeah, that's a really important part and it's also a sign of the connection that they made.

Researcher: Yeah, so true. Oh, that's so good to hear. I'm glad to hear for that. Well, I was going to ask you "what benefits have the students seen?" but, I think you just said it right there. So that's great. So, along those lines, how has the campus benefitted from the program? Like the campus as a larger community?

Participant 3: Yeah, You know, and that's, I really give a lot of credit to my colleagues that teach in the kitchen and retail program that, um, **that have created the [name of market] market,** because I do think that, uh, the **interactions with, it's not only that, given that I have taught in the program for as long as I have, um, I notice a real change in people.** Um, in the early years, if a student of mine was in the library and, you know, something happened, I would get a call and say "your student's here." And I go, "Can't you talk to them? They're a student." So, you know, there was earlier on this perception that the student needed some special guidance from only their instructor. I think that has changed and society has changed, that people... And it rears it's head every now and then. And I might even have an administrator say, "oh but you're so good with your student population. And it's like, they're people. They're people. And um, you know, treat them like a person. And the most telling actually was for me, when I did my Master's, so I started at [information about personal education] But anyway, the, it was so telling, we had a big plenary session with 52 learners and we were put in groups. There was a point, when I look at this group people that I was going to do my Master's and I thought, "Some of the behaviour that's going on. It's what I see in my class." And it was. I think that, it was just so telling for me. They're learners like all learners. What you are going to experience in any university class, um, you're going to experience in my class as well. There is some, you know, there is... There are some differences. Often times there is, as I mentioned before, this can be some of the times that they felt the most relaxed and comfortable because I think we create environment and that just fosters learning and a feeling like they belong.

Researcher: Right, yeah, so important. Very cool.

Participant 3: Yeah, the other thing is, during the pandemic, I don't go out very much like everybody else, but some of the places that I've gone. So I have students that um, he let me think, he would be back from, so he's worked at, he's worked at [store] and he may have worked there for 15 years. Um, or longer. I am trying to place when I had him as a student, but it would have been early on. He came up to me and he said, "I turn 40! I can't believe I am during 40!" And so, I couldn't believe it either actually. I think he's been working, it might be coming on 20 years actually. Um, because I would have had him when he was 19 or 20. So he's probably been for about 18 years. And then I have two other young men that I see when I go to [another store]. One has worked there for 8 years and the other has worked there for 7 years. And what was really telling over the holidays was to ask a question at customer service, and there was a woman there, and you know, she looked experienced. But she gave me a really short kind of brushed off, you know, didn't really, wants to. But what I didn't know was one of my past students heard this. He came up to me and just answered my question to full the degree. And then I had another occasion, I guess I have gone to [another store] more than most places, we couldn't find what we were looking for. And so we asked somebody to help us, the person that came was, again, **one of my students and just went above and beyond.**

Researcher: That's so cool.

Participant 3: Yeah, so one thing is the **students do get employment.** It's the students who want to work who do get employment. And that's important because, you know, if they don't want to work, then, nothing is going to prepare them for employment. **But the students who really want to work, they do get work.** And they're loyal because that's the job that they want to do. That's their end goal. And so they become very valuable employees for businesses.

Researcher: Hmm, definitely. That's great. Hmm, very cool. So, on a different note, what are the barriers that you see to students attending your program? I mean, you kind of mentioned the intake process, but are there other barriers that keep students from coming to this program?

Participant 3: Yeah, um, so, you know we do try to reduce the barriers. I'm just trying to... I think, you know, it's the being prepared. Um, **I think it is being prepared,** you know, one of the things is in the program, there isn't a teacher assistants. So it's an instructor and them. So I've had occasion where a **student was overly reliant on having a teacher's aide and that became a challenge because they don't have that at university.** And, um...

Researcher: Is there a cap on the size of the program?

Participant 3: We have had, yeah, we do have a **cap now at 12 students.** And that's for each program. So career exploration would be 12 students, retail would be 12 students, kitchen would be 12 students. We also have had a trades program that's been running this year and that was with some extra money that came from the government to do programing. And that program has had, they've had 11 students in their program. It really, the cap comes down to that, there is quite a diverse group, um, in the program. So we'll have students with low literacy, um, we'll have students that have graduated with Dogwood. Um, so, um, depending on what their particular situation is that um, **if the program will suit for them.** And we have students that have, um, **you know a lot of it is getting comfortable in a classroom, in a university, in a classroom social**

setting without a teacher's aide. Um, so, you know, it's those factors that have us look at our class size. But with that said, I have had classes as big as 15 or 16 actually. But generally, um, and that's sort of where it's evolved. We use to run programming a little bit differently where we'd have, we would start with the first 12, and then as we got more, we'd add a different section. But for right now it does seem, we're not, if I look at our intake the last couple of years, um, it hasn't been our caps that have meant that we haven't accepted students.

Researcher: Okay. So you get pretty good funding then?

Participant 3: Well, it's an expensive program because of our student to instructor ratio. Um, but the majority of students qualify for what is called an Adult Upgrading Grant. And so this, throughout my time in this program there has always been student funding. Right now, the funding is the least restrictive. There have been years where it has been harder to get the funding. But now, it is, **so the majority of students are funded.** Every one of my students are funded this year. Sometimes we've had families come in and say that they want to be fee bearers or sometimes parents will have done education savings plans and they want to use that money. But, the funding is there. The funding takes care of their tuition and it takes care of required books and materials.

Researcher: Oh, wow, you don't always hear that so it's good to hear.

Participant 3: Yeah, it's good because the students do not qualify for student loans.

Researcher: Oh, okay.

Participant 3: Yeah, so they don't qualify for student loans. I think the logic, and I shouldn't go down the path here, because I don't know the reason for that. They do have, it would just be my speculation. The majority of them are funded. They have to apply for it through our Awards Office. Um, but um, but as long as they apply, typically they are successful. The one thing that they don't, that doesn't fit with that, for us at least, is their application fee. So they do have to pay their own application fee.

Researcher: And uh, what do you see are needs for improvement in your program?

Participant 3: Um, you know, one thing that, it's interesting have this interview, being two thirds of an academic year in a pandemic year, um, because, you know, we had to do quite the change in our programming. I will say that the skills training, so kitchen, retail, and trades, they have had some face-to-face instruction with protocols in place that are **skills training.** Because this year I am teaching only the careers exploration students and, for the most part, those, a lot of those classes, well, I designed it so that they could do it from home. Um, and we did practicums at home. **One thing that I am really appreciating is the use of a learning management system and having the students do their coursework through a learning management system and working on that.** For me, that's been quite a significant change because there's a, the instruction lives in a place. And the coursework that the students do live in a place. And so, student if they miss a class, or one reason or another they are absent, um, the work is still there for them to catch up on. Because you know, in the past there's been instruction, you miss that class, so much of the instruction is interpersonal and discussion based and moving the students through group work so

that they learn together. But if they're not there, then they've missed that. There's no way to replicate that. So moving out, so I would really say that this accountability piece, having it attached to a learning management system. I think that, I know, that moving out of the pandemic. You know, there'll be a, we'll use [the management system]. We'll continue to use [the management system]. So I think that has really benefitted. **An assessment, I would say, it has forced to be better at assessment.** I would, we clearer on it. And there's accountability for the students. Right now students are going through WHIMIS 2015. And it's a requirement to be on campus now. And, you know, it's hard for some of the students. Um, but they're really having to apply themselves and there's an additional motivation for them because they want to be on campus. You know, one of the things that I would like to see is, if we had programming if students, we did have some programming that was called Mind the Gap. It was **collaboration between [this university] and the school district where students came on campus from the high school to experience university.** It was across the university. Every program had the ability to do this programming. You know, that was really useful, was to come on campus and to see what the program was really about. You know, it was kind of like a "Day in the life of a university student." Um, you know, what I think would be useful is to have a little bit more of that. Also from the perspective of our intake because that would allow us to see how that student feels comfortable and is ready. I think that, the [name of program], one day on campus was really useful for the students to find out if that's what they wanted to do. And for us to get to know them a bit.

Researcher: Hmm, yeah, is there anything else you want to add? We're kind of nearing the end.

Participant 3: No, I think your questions have been very, sort of, full spectrum. The one thing is, there is, I can look for it for you, there was a longitude study that I came across. It looked at people with disabilities and what is the best programming for them. Um, and, what came from that study was that vocational training, preparing young people for employment, is what they found was the best for those individuals because people get so much value from being employed. So it's not just a job it's a place to belong. It's contributing to society. It's normalcy that it provides. And so if I, I know that, I've had occasion where someone has asked me if they have had a young child with a disability, um, you know really that, allowing them to be as independent as they can. Focus on their independence, focus on their employment, or their employability. If you had to choose, because I've had, there's one student that really stands out where heroic measures went towards having her earn her Dogwood at the expense of her independence and ability to function in a group and be employable.

Researcher: Interesting.

Participant 3: And, she couldn't stay in the program. She left just before Halloween and that was after a lot of work of trying to have her fit within the group. You know, so, for me, that longitude study was really, it reinforced what we did that this useful work.

BREAK to do irrelevant conversation.