St. Cloud State University

theRepository at St. Cloud State

Culminating Projects in Education Administration and Leadership

Department of Educational Leadership and Higher Education

5-2019

Blended Learning among Adult English as a Second Language Programs

Brigid Erickson

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/edad_etds

Part of the Educational Leadership Commons

Blended Learning among Adult English as a Second Language Programs

by

Brigid Erickson

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Education in

Educational Administration and Leadership

May, 2019

Dissertation Committee:
Frances Kayona, Chairperson
David Lund
James Johnson
John Madden

Abstract

The rationale for the study stems from the need to explore blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs as it develops as a new practice (Rosen & Stewart, 2015). Even though blended learning has been used in some K-12 schools for much longer than Adult Basic Education programs, it is not enough for leadership to make program decisions based on what is happening in typical K-12 schools. English as a Second Language (ESL) programs within Adult Basic Education programs have their own needs and "students today are electronically connected, and they expect their learning to be connected as well" (Dunn, 2011, p. 60). Thus, the distinctiveness of Adult Basic Education ESL programs and the onset of blended learning within those programs, was the inspiration for this study.

The problem of the study is to examine teacher perceptions of the type of use, reasons for use, and barriers to the use of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. This study was designed to gain a deeper understanding of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. Data was gathered from 11 Adult Basic Education ESL teachers in a state in the Midwest of the United States of America, using in-depth interviews during the summer of 2018.

The overarching understanding that emerged from this study is that the Adult Basic Education ESL educational setting is unique in ways that influence how blended learning should be used in Adult Basic Education ESL programs.

Acknowledgement

I am extremely appreciative to those who have helped me during the the Educational Administration and Leadership program and in writing my dissertation. Throughout the process, my family and friends have eased my stress and supported me in many ways that I will always be grateful for. My instructors, classmates, and dissertation committee made going through this program and writing the dissertation highly enjoyable and fulfilling.

My dissertation chair, Dr. Frances Kayona, guided me and built my confidence while maintaining high expectations for my study. I appreciate the many hours we spent discussing my writing. I felt energized and inspired after each of our meetings. Thank you Dr. Kayona.

The other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. David Lund, Dr. James Johnson, and Dr. John Madden, provided valuable feedback while planning, carrying out the study, and writing the dissertation. Thank you!

A special thank you to the study participants. Without you, this study would not have been possible. Thank you for your time and openness with sharing your unique experiences in Adult Basic Education ESL programs.

Table of Contents

Chapter

List of Tables

Chapter I: Introduction

As the world changes along with technology, so must classrooms. Holcomb, Castek, and Johnson (2007) concluded that the digital age has changed what it means to be literate. Literacy now includes not only the ability to read and write, but also the ability to search, find, and share information on the internet (Holcomb, Castek & Johnson, 2007). The creation and use of online content have become the norm for educational organizations (Holcomb et al., 2007). Blended learning is a term used to describe the blending of online technology with face-to-face delivery of class content (Allen, Seaman, & Garrett, 2007). This study focuses on blended learning in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses within Adult Basic Education programs.

Erying (2014) argues that, "there are very large numbers of people with low English literacy in the United States who are not enrolled in any type of English language program" (p.121). In a state in the Midwest of the United States of America, Adult Basic Education is offered through state and federally funded classes for those wishing to learn English for free (Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). Adult Basic Education programs offer courses for all adults, not only those who are learning English, but also those who are working toward high school graduation, learning basic academic skills for post-secondary education, or learning skills for employment (Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). Adult Basic Education is part of Community Education programming which offers a variety of learning opportunities for adults through the public school system (Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). A program within community education that is specifically catered to adults learning the English language can be referred to as Adult Basic Education ESL (Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). In this type of program, teachers and leadership are tasked with ensuring that students are improving in their

language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, as well as their basic life skills (Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). The basic life skills that are covered in Adult Basic Education ESL are meant to assist students in being successful in U.S. society and may include lessons on reading bus schedules, applying for a job, understanding grocery store advertisements, identifying types of insurance, and interpreting medical documentation, depending on the needs of the students (Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). A skill that has become increasingly necessary for success in society today is digital literacy (Holcomb, Castek, & Johnson, 2007). "A growing number of schools are piloting or implementing blended learning programs" (Brooke, 2017, p.1). According to Holcomb, Castek, and Johnson (2007), "True literacy nowadays, includes skills in information communication technologies" (p.1). Integrating digital literacy skills and computer-assisted language learning into programs can be achieved through the employment of well-tailored blended learning lessons (Holcomb, Castek, & Johnson, 2007).

Blended learning is defined as "learning experiences that combine face-to-face and online instruction" (Graham, 2013, p. 335). Because of the options that blended learning provides, it can be especially beneficial for students who have busy schedules (Brooke, 2017, p.1). Students can be provided with flexibility in how they use their time, a variety of learning options, and a variety of learning interventions for differentiation of course material (Al-Awidi & Ismail, 2012; Brooke, 2017, p.1).

Types of Blended Learning

Blended learning includes at least one-part online learning and at least one-part face-to-face learning in a school building away from home (Stacker & Horn, 2012). A blended class encompasses more than simply a technology rich learning environment; the content of the online

learning must be allied with the content of the traditional classroom curriculum (Brooke, 2017; Murray, 2019). With the integration of online learning, students are given more control over time, place, pace, and path of the content than a traditional classroom setting (Brooke, 2017; Staker & Horn, 2012). Students have control over time because they may have the option to learn the material in the morning, evening, weekdays, weekends, or at night (INACOL Staff, 2016). According to INACOL Staff (2016),

> The tools in blended learning environments can support flexible pacing, differentiated instruction, immediate interventions and anytime, everywhere learning. Blended learning enables personalized learning at scale, helps foster student-centered instructional approaches and facilitates student co-design with their teachers of how to approach meeting their learning goals. (para. 2)

According to INACOL Staff (2016), "blended learning is about empowering educators with the appropriate tools to support personalized pathways for learning" (para.2). A blended learning environment can take a variety of forms such as, a flipped classroom model, a rotation model, a flex model, a self-blend model, whole group model, or a distance learning model (Fisher, Bushko, & White, 2017; Staker & Horn, 2012).

Flipped classroom model. According to Flipped Classroom and Blended Learning Models (2019) the flipped classroom model, "has become very trendy over the past 5 years both in [kindergarten through twelfth grade] K-12 and Higher Education" (para. 1). The Flipped Classroom and Blended Learning Models (2019) article explains that "flipping the classroom means providing learning content to students outside the scheduled classroom time instead of using classroom time for lecturing" (para. 1).

The flipped classroom model reverses the traditional teaching focus from in-class to at home, by providing course content online outside of the classroom (Pavanelli, 2018). In a traditional class setting, students typically learn new content during class and then practice what they learned at home with homework (Pavanelli, 2018). With the flipped model of blended learning, the students primarily learn new content at home and come to class with the purpose of practicing their new skills with in class assignments (Brooke, 2017).

An example of a flipped classroom model using at-home videos was provided in a study by Pavanelli (2018), "By watching these instructional videos prior to the class meeting, students come prepared and are able to participate in class activities that deepen their conceptual knowledge of the newly acquired content" (p.16). Additionally, students may do collaborative projects during class time, practicing and reinforcing what they learned at home (Fisher, Bushko, & White, 2017; Staker & Horn, 2012).

Rotation model. There are different types of rotation models. The station rotation, the individual rotation, and the lab rotation model are all types of rotation models of blended learning (Fisher, Bushko, & White, 2017; Staker & Horn, 2012; Tucker, 2018).

According Fisher et al. (2017) the station rotation model is commonly used in situations where there are not enough resources for each student to have a device. Students within a certain classroom rotate on a fixed schedule between different learning stations (Fisher et al., 2017). For the learning to be classified as blended learning, at least one station should include online learning (Fisher et al., 2017). As explained by researchers, the students may rotate in a certain direction around the room and work at each station for a set period of time. A learning station could consist of a small group of students working together without computers, a small group of

students working with computers, a small group of students working with a teacher or tutor, a small group of students working with a teacher or tutor on a computer, a station for students to work individually or a station for a student to work one-on-one with a teacher or tutor on or off the computer (Fisher, Bushko, & White, 2017; Staker & Horn, 2012; Rosen & Stewart, 2015).

The individual rotation model is the same as the station rotation model except students move from station to station based on individualized schedules rather than the whole class rotating at the same time (Fisher, Bushko, & White, 2017; Staker & Horn, 2012). In the case of individual rotation, some students may not need to go to all of the stations, but all of the students still move on a fixed schedule (Fisher, Bushko, & White, 2017; Staker & Horn, 2012).

Also similar to the station rotation model is the lab rotation model. The unique aspect of the lab rotation model is that students leave their classroom to move to different rooms rather than staying in one room. In the lab rotation model, at least part of the learning takes place in a computer lab (Fisher, Bushko, & White, 2017; Staker & Horn, 2012).

Flex model. When learning with the flex model, students have individualized learning plans and fluid schedules (Brooke, 2017; Maxwell, 2016). According to Maxwell (2016), "Students move on an individually customized, fluid schedule among learning modalities" (para. 4). The flex model of blended learning includes flexible learning paths based on individual student needs and interests (Brooke, 2017). According to Maxwell (2016),

> This flexibility is what separates the Flex model from the Rotation models. In the Flex model, students do not transition between learning modalities at the same time. Instead, students operate independently and receive help from teachers when needed. (para. 4)

Learning with the flex model is primarily done on the internet with the option of other learning modalities such as face-to-face support, small-group instruction, or individual tutoring (Maxwell, 2016). The teachers, paras, tutors or volunteers are in the classroom for support and one-on-one instruction on an as-needed basis (Maxwell, 2016).

There may be supplements to the online instruction daily or very little face-to-face enrichment depending on the class (Maxwell, 2016). In the case of a flex model, the movement of students is more individualized because the student will spend more time using a certain learning modality depending on a particular need (Fisher et al., 2017). The value of this for learners is the ability to have voice in the decision-making process of their education and the flexibility to adjust learning plans for individual students (Fisher et al., 2017).

Self-blend model. The self-blend model of blended learning is the a-la-carte approach to blended learning (Apex Learning, 2014; Watson, 2008). Online content is provided to supplement traditional classroom content (Apex Learning, 2014; Watson, 2008). Supplemental material can be accessed in an online environment where students can go on their own time to explore areas of study for various reasons (Watson, 2008). The self-blend model provides opportunities to differentiate within class time as well as at home (Murray, 2019). In some cases, a student may need to learn more about a topic that was challenging or want to explore a topic that was particularity interesting (Watson, 2008). For example, the self-blend option might be useful for a student who is in a class that is focusing on housing, but that student needs more practice with a different topic such as applying for a job. With the self-blend model of blended learning, the lessons are online any time of day to enhance normal course material (Fisher, Bushko, & White, 2017; Staker & Horn, 2012).

Whole group model. The whole group model of blended learning, also known as Whole Group Rotation, involves the whole class staying in one classroom using digital devices throughout a lesson (Tucker, 2018). This is possible with funding and resources focused on making sure each student has their own device in school; sometimes referred to as a 1:1 initiative (Tucker, 2018). Learning is enhanced by interweaving online resources throughout a traditional lesson (Blended Learning Universe, 2019; Tucker, 2018). Each student must have a device at their desk for the whole group model to work because there is frequent rotation back and forth between traditional learning methods and accessing the internet to enhance that learning (Tucker, 2018).

As observed by Tucker (2018):

Instead of dividing the class into two distinct parts – offline with the teacher and online work alone – I'd love to see teachers weaving together the online and offline moments more seamlessly so that students can appreciate the connections between the online and offline work. (para. 2)

Distance learning model. The term distance learning, also known as enriched-virtual learning, refers to a full course that is online and students can learn from outside a school building (Blended Learning Universe, 2019). Learning takes place at home or anywhere there is internet access. The difference between the flipped learning model and the distance learning model is that distance learning students do not often go to the brick-and-mortar classroom, whereas a flipped lesson is used along with a typical school day schedule (Blended Learning Universe, 2019). A fully distance learning course where students never need to enter a school building does not fit into the definition of blended learning (Layton, 2017). If the students

interact with a teacher face-to-face for instruction related to the course content, then the mostly distance learning course can be considered a type of blended learning (Layton, 2017). The difference between a distance learning model and a self-blend model is that the distance learning model includes full course curriculum rather than supplemental options (Fisher, Bushko, & White, 2017; Staker & Horn, 2012).

Benefits of blended learning. Blended learning can be especially beneficial for adult English language learners because of the variety of language learning options available and the flexibility blended learning offers for adult students who have time constraints outside of school (Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). Students not only have the benefits of a more flexible learning schedule and learning options, but their scores increase as well (Rosen & Stewart, 2015).

Rose (2014) reported,

What we found in Texas through our state data (TEAMS: Texas Educating Adults Management System) is that adult learners who have some distance education hours, but no more than 50% of their total contact hours, outperform learners who only attend a traditional classroom AND learners who are primarily distance education students (more than 50% of their contact hours being at a distance). Those numbers are for ALL adult education students, but distance learning was even more beneficial to adult [English Language Learners] ELLs. In 2011-2012, 80% of students (2,602 of 3,252) who had some distance learning hours (but less than 50%) completed at least one level. Traditional classroom ELLs had a completion of 62%. That could be in part because they had, on average, 40 more hours of instruction than traditional classroom learners. (para. 2-5)

In other words, the Adult Basic Education ESL students in blended learning classes achieved the best test scores compared to the other two groups (1) students in purely face-to-face environments without online learning and (2) students who were taking their courses entirely away from school through distance learning. Students achieving higher test scores through blended learning was also shown to be occurring in one of the states in the Midwest of the United States of America (MNABE Distance Learning, 2019),

> Recent data shows the potential for ABE [Adult Basic Education] programs integrating in-person and distance learning to help students make significant NRS gains. For instance, statewide data for a recent year shows 49.7 percent of all participants averaged NRS gains – but 66.7 percent of students that participated in both traditional and DL (less than 50 percent of their total hours) made NRS gains! (para. 3)

The MNABE (Minnesota Adult Basic Education) website data summary shows that students who participated in Distance Learning (DL) along with their traditional face-to-face lessons increased their test scores more than students who only attended face-to-face classes. The National Reporting System (NRS) for Adult Education is used to measure student success in an Adult Basic Education programs in the United States of America (National Reporting System for Adult Education, 2018). An NRS gain means that a student is improving on their test scores (National Reporting System for Adult Education, 2018). Adult Basic Education ESL students take the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) or Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) tests (Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019).

Adult Basic Education ESL Learning Environment

Adult Basic Education ESL is one type of adult ESL program that is offered for adults wishing to learn the English language along with basic life skills (Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). Other types of adult ESL classes take place in a variety of different settings in the United States including intensive language programs, Departments of Corrections, community colleges, universities, private organizations, faith-based organizations, workplace programs, and Adult Basic Education programs (Erying, 2014; Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). Adult Basic Education ESL programs are state and federally funded and are free to foreign born students (Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). The students in Adult Basic Education ESL programs are generally not receiving college credit for their courses but may have higher education as a goal (Erying, 2014). According to Erying (2014), the classroom setting is complex because of the variety of cultures, ages, languages, and logistical challenges that come with teaching Adult Basic Education ESL. The students come from all over the world and speak a variety of languages depending on the location and size of the site (Erying, 2014; Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019).

Student workload can be full-time or part-time and last for as little or as long as is suitable for student goals (Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). Some programs have open-enrollment which means that students can register and start class any day throughout the school year while other programs have managed enrollment every few weeks or months with specific registration times and class starting dates (Erying, 2014). In both scenarios, there is a high turn-over rate of students as well as teachers (Eyring, 2014). Some teachers are bilingual, but it is not a state requirement to speak another language in order to teach Adult Basic Education ESL

(Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). Minnesota Statue 122A.26 § 3 titled Community

Education Teachers: Licensure Requirements (2018) states:

> A person who possesses a bachelor's or master's degree in English as a second language,
>
> applied linguistics, or bilingual education, or who possesses a related degree as approved
>
> by the commissioner, shall be permitted to teach English as a second language in an adult
>
> basic education program. (para.2)
>
> Some programs require a K-12 license or an Adult Basic Education teaching license

while others accept a master's degree as qualification for employment (Erying, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was developed throughout the process of completing this

dissertation. It was initially formed with a focus on blended learning in Adult Basic Education

ESL programs which didn't exist in research at the time of the study. Therefore, the conceptual

framework grew out of the research related to the ways that adult students learn. Since adults

learn differently than children (Knowles, 1973), the results of this study were analyzed based on

perspectives of adult educational theory rather than adolescent or child-based language

acquisition. For the purposes of this study, blended learning was considered through the lens of

adult learners. Knowles (1973) was one of the first to publish a scholarly work emphasizing the

unique needs of adult learners. Knowles (1973) argued that adult learners become more self-

directed with age; they are more cognitively advanced than children and have distinct life

experiences; this fact is neglected in the creation of adult curricula. The traditional classroom

was incongruent with the learning styles of adult learners because pedagogy was mainly based

on childhood knowledge acquisition (Knowles, 1973). Knowles (1973) concludes that the theory of constructivism was essential for the effective instruction of adults.

The theory of constructivism is an explanation of how learners acquire knowledge through experiences (Popp, 2017). People create their own subjective interpretations of an objective reality through actively engaging in life (Popp, 2017). In other words, different students have different ways of making sense of what they are experiencing (Popp, 2017). Constructivism through blended learning can be interpreted as actively engaging in online learning activities as well as face-to-face activities to construct new knowledge. According to Huang (2002), constructivism was important for adult learners as it enhanced learner ability to apply classroom skills and problem solve in real-life situations. The internet could provide a plethora of opportunities to explore areas of interest and construct new knowledge, "Thus, the Web becomes a common tool for learner-centered or constructivist learning" (Huang, 2002, p. 30).

The modern progression of constructivist theory was constructive-developmental theory (Popp, 2017). Constructivism described how students construct reality, while developmentalism explained the complexity of that perception of reality in that it develops and changes. According to Popp (2017), the constructive-developmental theory grew out of the field of psychology describing the stages of childhood development. The field expanded to include stages of adult development that can be observed across cultures and countries; among all adults. Three main mindsets emerged: concrete, socializing, and self-authoring (Kegan, 1982; Popp, 2017).

As described by Popp (2017), a person with a concrete mindset would be driven by self-interest and concerned with the cause-and-effect nature of interactions. "I'll do to you what you

do to me" (Popp, 2017, para.20). A student with a concrete mindset would believe that "learning and education is about getting information, facts, and skills" (Popp, 2017, para.20).

A person with a socializing mindset might argue that "education and learning is about learning new ideas to expand what I know so I can be more of an expert in my field" (Popp, 2017, para.25). This student's sense of belonging in a class would be driven by a fitting-in or having commonalities with the group. A student with a socializing mindset joining a new class may "make or break his learning experience and success" depending on if the student feels part of the group or not (Popp, 2017, para.27).

According to Popp (2017), a student with a self-authoring mindset has clear goals and may question why the teacher is teaching a certain way or why the class is studying a particular material. Popp (2017) explains that the student does this not to be disruptive, but to more deeply understand the material and understand different perspectives. A student with a self-authoring mindset might say, "Education and learning is about engaging new ideas to challenge my own, to expand my thinking, and challenge my assumptions" (Popp, 2017, para.29).

Constructive-developmental theory assists in understanding the motivations of adult students as well as the complexity of what students bring to the classroom beyond what can be detected surface-level such as a student's first or second language, country of origin, or culture (Kegan, 1982; Popp, 2017). The concepts of constructive-developmental theory align with the use of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs because the diversity in these programs on the part of the students is apparent (Erying, 2014). Blended learning is one method of differentiating and expanding instruction to address complex and varying needs of adult learners (Rosen & Stewart, 2015). Blended learning can address those needs by offering different

learning path options, and providing flexibility of time, place, pace (Brooke, 2017; Rosen & Stewart, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the study is to examine teacher perceptions of the type of use, reasons for use, and barriers to the use of blended learning in Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. This study was designed to gain a deeper understanding of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. There was little, if any, research available that identified teacher use and perceptions of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs at the time of the study. Data was gathered from 11 Adult Basic Education ESL teachers in a state in the Midwest of the United States of America, using in-depth interviews during the summer of 2018. The interview protocol includes 10 guiding questions, the responses of which were recorded electronically and transcribed. The qualitative data was first analyzed by coding. The data was then categorized according to themes that emerged and organized into tables. The interview protocol and analysis of the results were designed with informing leadership in mind.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to provide research that informs leadership about blended learning within the context of Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Although there was extensive research on the topic of blended learning prior to this study, there is little research on the use of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. Leadership of Adult Basic Education ESL programs need information from the field on blended learning in order to design programs that effectively use blended learning. "Blended

learning is about empowering educators with the appropriate tools to support personalized

pathways for learning" (INACOL, 2016, para. 2). Focused research will assist leadership in

making informed decisions about future initiatives to implement blended learning, and to support

blended learning practices that are already taking place in Adult Basic Education ESL programs.

There is an expectation that Adult Basic Education ESL programs prepare adult students

with the basic skills needed to be successful in the communities in which they live (Minnesota

Adult Basic Education, 2019). The significance of this study is that blended learning for Adult

Basic Education ESL is one way that programs can address the expectation that Adult Basic

Education ESL students acquire the basic skills they need to be successful in jobs, further

education, and a technology filled world. The research questions focus on specific aspects of

blended learning from the perspective of teachers.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. What do Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning report as
   the most common types of blended learning used with their students?

2. What do Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning report as
   the factors that influence their decision to use blended learning?

3. What do Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning report as
   barriers or challenges to using blended learning?

Delimitations

Delimitations of the study are features and variables of a study that the researcher can

control (Merriam, 2009). In other words, the researcher made certain decisions to limit the study

in order to make it feasible and specific to the field of interest. This research study is limited in scope to a state in the Midwest of the United States of America. The location was further specified to: within a three-hour drive from a chosen large metropolitan area in the Midwest of the United States of America. Demographic information such as age, teaching experience, race, sex, gender, and workload were not considered in this study. Participants of this study were limited to Adult Basic Education ESL teachers in a state in the Midwest of the United States of America. Teachers who were teaching solely distance learning courses with no face-to-face component were not included. For the purpose of this study, participants were selected using a purposeful sample including the following criteria:

1. The participant held either a state teaching license or a master's degree at the time of the study.

2. The participant was teaching Adult Basic Education ESL in a state in the Midwest of the United States of America at the time of the study.

3. The participant was using blended learning as an instructional method with their Adult Basic Education ESL class at the time of the study.

4. The participant was available for an interview during the summer of 2018.

5. The participant was available to meet in person in a state in the Midwest of the United States of America.

Assumptions of the Study

The following statements are assumed to be true for the purposes of this study:

1. Participants answered the interview questions truthfully.

2. Blended learning is beneficial for language acquisition.

3. Blended learning can be used to improve differentiation of class content.

4. Blended learning can be an effective tool for teaching adult learners.

5. Blended learning can be an effective tool for teaching English language learners.

Definitions of Terms

The purpose of the following definitions is to provide consistency and clarity to the study:

1. **Blended learning**: Blended learning is defined as "learning experiences that combine face-to-face and online instruction" (Graham, 2013, p. 335). Blended learning "provides a more personalized approach to learning, giving students control over time, place, path and pace of their learning" (Brooke, 2017, p.1). For the purposes of this study, in order to be considered blended the majority of the class period may occur face-to-face or the majority of the learning may take place online. As long as some amount of learning is taking place online and it is related to what is being learned face-to-face with a teacher, the class can be described as blended. Blended learning could be used for learning academic skills, computer-assisted language learning, digital literacy skills, or any of the other basic skills or topics offered within Adult Basic Education ESL. "Blended learning is not one thing. It comes in many shapes, flavors, and colors" (Graham, 2013, p. 96). A broad definition is employed in this study to explore all variations and innovations of blended learning currently occurring in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. There are versions of blended learning that are sometimes referred to as: "hybrid learning", "differentiated

instruction", or "computer-assisted language learning (CALL)" (Al-Awidi & Ismail, 2012; Distance Learning Policy, 2013; Graham, 2013).

2. **Community Education**: Community Education is part of public education in Minnesota and "has three goals: (1) to provide lifelong learning opportunities to all members of the community, (2) to promote and develop community support of the K-12 programs, (3) to build strong communities that allow citizens to achieve their greatest potential" (What is Community Education?, 2019, para. 4).

3. **Adult Basic Education**: "Adult Basic Education is an instructional program for the undereducated adult planned around those basic and specific skills most needed to help him or her to function adequately in society" (Legal Information Institute, 2017). Adult Basic Education is part of community education programming. Adult Basic Education is sometimes abbreviated to ABE. "The mission of Adult Basic Education in Minnesota is to provide adults with educational opportunities to acquire and improve their literacy skills necessary to become self-sufficient and to participate effectively as productive workers, family members, and citizens" (Overview of Adult Basic Education (ABE) in Minnesota, 2018, para. 1).

4. **English as a Second Language (ESL)**: ESL is used in Adult Basic Education to describe a course or a program designed specifically for the instruction of the English language to people who did not learn English as a native language (Overview of Adult Basic Education (ABE) in Minnesota, 2018). Some Adult Basic Education programs do not have ESL courses and some Adult Basic Education programs have programming and courses specifically designed for adults learning ESL (Minnesota

Adult Basic Education, 2019). According to the Overview of Adult Basic Education

(ABE) in Minnesota (2018), ESL is "instruction for learners whose native language is

not English" (para. 2). For the purposes of this study, Adult Basic Education ESL is

used to describe an ESL program within an Adult Basic Education program.

5. **English Language Learner (ELL)**: According to McFarland, Hussar, Wang, Xhang,

   Wang, Rathbun, Barmer, Cataldi, & Mann, (2018), an English language learner is a

   person "who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the

   English language to be denied the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms

   where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in the larger U.S.

   society" (p. 334).

6. **Leadership**: According to What is Educational Leadership? (2019), "Professionals

   working in educational leadership focus on improving educational programming.

   They hire and manage teachers and staff, prepare budgets, set curriculum standards

   and set school-wide policies. They might work on team building efforts or restructure

   the organization to affect necessary change" (para. 3). For the purposes of this study,

   leadership is used as a broad term that includes anyone in a leadership position given

   the power to make policy decisions for or within an Adult Basic Education ESL

   program. This includes administrators, directors, principals, lead teachers, technology

   leaders, and other stakeholders.

7. **Andragogy**: Andragogy is the pedagogy of adult learners (Knowles, 1973).

8. **General Educational Development (GED)**: According to the Overview of Adult

   Basic Education (ABE) in Minnesota (2018), the GED is a "National high school

equivalency assessment operated by GED Testing Service that includes a set of 4

tests: Math, Reasoning through Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies" (para. 2).

9. **Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)**: Computer assisted language

learning is a phrase used to describe the use of computers or other technology tools to

facilitate the learning of a language (Al-Awidi & Ismail, 2012; Moore, 2009; Pagel,

Lambacher, & Reedy, 2015). Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is a

category of CALL (Pagel et al., 2015).

10. **Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)**: The use of different types

of information and communication tools such as online conferencing, cellphone

communication, email, computer programs, video, and other technology tools to

enhance learning (Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Education,

2018).

11. **Professional Development (PD)**: PD is training for staff related to a skill for the

workplace (Minnesota ABE, 2009). The mission of PD from the Minnesota ABE

professional development system (2009) is "to foster practitioner development and

enhance the professionalism of Minnesota ABE" (para. 1).

12. **Public school**: According to McFarland et al. (2018), a public school is "a school or

institution controlled and operated by publicly elected or appointed officials and

deriving its primary support from public funds" (p.340). As part of public school,

"Adult Basic Education (ABE) is available statewide at no cost to adult learners and

is funded through the Minnesota Department of Education. Each year, more than 300

delivery sites serve approximately 66,000 adult students. About one-half of these

students are enrolled in English Learner (EL) programs. Licensed teachers provide

ABE instruction and are assisted by more than 1,400 trained volunteers." (para. 1,

Adult Basic Education, 2019).

13. **Smartphone**: A smartphone is a cellphone with internet access (Raine & Perrin,

2017). According to Raine and Perrin (2017), "Americans are using their phones for a

variety of nontraditional phone activities, such as looking for a job, finding a date or

reading a book" (para. 5).

Chapter II: Literature Review

This study focuses on blended learning as it relates to Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. The purpose of the literature review is to uncover connections between the development of technology in education, how blended learning has emerged in education, how it relates to adult learning theory and English language learning and the role of leadership in making decisions about blended learning in Adult Basic Education programs. At the time of this study, blended learning was increasingly being used in education, yet there was not consensus among researchers on a single definition of the term blended learning. Graham (2013) explained that, "despite current popularity of the term, it is defined with considerable variation across institutional contexts" and "the fact is that the landscape of [blended learning] is still evolving rapidly" (p.333). For the purposes of this study, blended learning is defined as "learning experiences that combine face-to-face and online instruction" (Graham, 2013, p. 335).

Blended learning is a term that has mostly been used in higher education and business contexts, but in the modern age it encompasses uses of online technology in kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) educational contexts (Graham, 2013). A goal of this research study was to expand those educational contexts to include Adult Basic Education ESL programs as well. Burnett (2015) added,

> In contemporary society, [information and communication technology] has been integrated into several aspects of education, as in the daily life of each person. Significant advances in [information and communication technology] have resulted in innovative reforms, in English learning and teaching. (p.1)

Research on blended learning has been focused on higher education and the K-12 educational

context with a lack of research focusing specifically on the topic of blended learning in Adult

Basic Education ESL programs (Bowman, 2010; Hanna, 2000; Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010;

Holcomb, Castek, & Johnson, 2007; Leung, 2003; McFarland et al., 2018; Rudolph, 2016; Staker

& Horn, 2012; Stonehocker, 2017).

The literature review connects relevant studies that are related to data gathered in this

study: teachers' perceptions of blended learning use in Adult Basic Education ESL programs.

The literature review focuses on four major themes: technology in education, blended learning,

adult learners, and teacher perceptions. Research related to English language learning and the

role of leadership are interwoven throughout the review of literature.

Technology in Education

The use of the internet has been common in educational institutions since the 1990s

(Leung, 2003). As stated by Burnett (2015), "As a consequence of globalization, the world today

functions as a homogenous entity because of the communicative capabilities provided by

technology" (p.8). In other words, technology has spread across the world and the internet is

being used constantly, especially with the rise of smartphone use (Burnett, 2015; Raine & Perrin,

2017). According to research conducted by the Pew Research Center, Raine and Perrin (2017),

77 percent of U.S. adults own a smartphone. Additionally, "globalization and technology are re-

making [the] economy" and Adult Basic Education programs are, "constantly adapting to meet

the changing needs of workers and employers alike" (Minnesota Adult Basic Education report,

2019, para. 2-3). According to Burnett (2015), "In every society, education plays an important

role in social and economic transformation; it equips learners with the necessary social and intellectual skills that enable them to be self-reliant and effective members of society" (p.5).

Literacy has been evolving with the increase of online technology in the world (Holcomb, Castek, & Johnson, 2007). Literacy now includes not only the ability to read and write, but the ability to search, find, and share information on the internet (Holcomb et al., 2007). Technology in education has come to mean access to and the understanding of, the internet and the use of online educational tools (Tuckett, 2012). More recently blended learning has emerged as a way to use the internet as a tool for integrating online content with traditional classroom content. Dunn (2011) stated, "Blended learning environments are becoming more common at the postsecondary level, some degrees and certifications are now available only through distance learning, and corporations are using online courses for professional development" (p.62).

Tuckett (2012) postulated that educational systems have the responsibility to employ the internet in all content areas. For example, a communications course or lesson should include interactions on the internet. Paying attention to content and communication outside of the classroom is crucial to ensuring that students are progressing with the times (Tuckett, 2012). As reported by Dunn (2011), "Students today are electronically connected, and they expect their learning to be connected as well" (p.60). College students, for example, expect an online component of their courses (Dunn, 2011). Furthermore, Burnett (2015) explained that "in this time of web and computer technology, adult learners are increasingly becoming involved in vocational learning and lifelong education" (p.12). "Minnesota's ABE system forges new partnerships with local employers, community and technical colleges, and community

organizations to support the varied needs of adult learners" (Minnesota Adult Basic Education report, 2019, para. 3).

Even though, online technology has the potential to better suit students' needs, in some cases it was not being implemented or it was not being implemented effectively (Dunn, 2011) and although educators have been enthusiastic about online technology in the 20th and 21st century, Jonassen (2013) believed that online technology was failing to provide students with a well-rounded education. For example, there are courses prepackaged through programs with no need for a human teacher. Online technology is meant to support not replace teaching, as Jonassen (2013), stated:

> Educators who seek to transform education, to recognize its fundamental goals and values, can emancipate learners from the obligation to regurgitate that which has no relevance to them, to empower them to reflect on and represent what is important to them. Technology can support that goal. (p.109)

Even with the increased importance placed on online technology use, Conole (2008) claimed that face-to-face support is a necessary element along with online education. According to Conole (2008), online technology use in classrooms was shifting from "passive to interactive" (p.136). Conole (2008) stated:

> The environment students are working in is complex and multifaceted; technology is at the heart of all aspects of their lives – a key question for institutions is whether institutional infrastructures match students' own rich technology-enhanced environment, and perhaps for importantly, whether courses are designed and delivered with these external influences in mind. (p.136)

Jonassen (2013) provided a proposal for how online technology can facilitate learning. According to Jonassen (2013), online technology has the potential to dramatically transform traditional education for the better. In order to empower students with technology in education, the internet must be used, not just as a static reflection of coursework, but as a tool for reflection and critical thinking. Only then will student engagement increase and lead to educational transformation using computers and the internet (Jonassen, 2013).

Technology and student learning. Researchers have found high potential for online technology to have a positive impact on student learning (Cain & Pitre, 2008; Dunn, 2011; Jonassen, 2013; Pagel et al., 2015). The potential benefits to students' learning were explained in Jonassen (2013): "When learners use technologies to represent what they know, they are learning *with* technologies rather than *from* technologies" and "the result of this intellectual partnership is that the whole of learning becomes greater than the potential of learner and computer alone" (p.106).

Another study of how online technology contributes to specific student learning outcomes was conducted by Cain and Pitre (2008). The findings of their study described how computer mediated learning tools aided students in their learning processes. These tools can be used to enhance discussion and collaboration (Cain & Pitre, 2018). Furthermore, Cain and Pitre (2008) declared that:

> Technology based learning resources provide important support in the classroom and complement what is being taught. Teachers should utilize technology-based resources to help learners be creators of knowledge through information research and content

evaluation. These types of skills assist learners in becoming critical explorers rather than passive observers. (p.42)

Watson (2008) also affirmed that though there was no predetermined optimal use for technology in the classroom, eventually online technology would be a common and fundamental part of education. The goal of which, according to Watson (2008), should be to encourage students to be active learners and interactive with the course material. Courses using online technology could be anywhere on a continuum from mostly online learning with very little face-to-face interaction to predominantly face-to-face interaction and limited online activities (Watson, 2008, p.6). Some examples are outlined in Watson (2008) such as: the virtual high school of Cincinnati public schools. In this virtual high school, the students came to school and went to the computer lab where they studied on the computer with the option of interacting with a qualified teacher who was standing by and available for student questions. The course content was highly personalized to each student and each student was provided individual attention from a teacher when needed. The students were also expected to study at home (Watson, 2008).

Another example from Watson (2008) was taken from Odyssey charter schools in Nevada where students participated in courses completely online, but were required to attend the school building at least once a week. During this time the students could pose questions to the teacher and receive one-on-one attention (Watson, 2008).

Online technology can be used in a variety of ways to supplement face-to-face instruction for students to work individually during class hours, to work outside of class hours, for more in-depth instruction of the material, or a variety of other combinations of traditional learning and

online technology integration (Rosen & Stewart, 2015; Watson, 2008). Even the use of video

games has been shown to have a positive impact on student learning (Gee, 2013).

Technology and language learning. In a study by Conole (2008), fourteen language

learning students were interviewed about their use and perceptions of online technologies. The

conclusion was that "students are using technologies to support all aspects of their learning

processes" (p.138). Conole (2008) "found that students used the web extensively to extend their

understanding of concepts and supplement course material" (p.131). The implication of which,

according to Conole (2008), was that the design of learning activities needed a "radical

rethinking" to include internet technology rich educational environments and support for teacher

implementation strategies (p.137).

Pagel, et al. (2015) examined teacher perceptions of computer assisted language learning

tools in their teaching of English as a foreign language. Data were gathered from English

language instructors abroad with teaching locations spanning from Europe to Asia. Results

showed that teachers perceived the use of online technology as beneficial to their students'

English language acquisition and reported a preference for the use of computer-assisted language

learning over traditional methods of instruction (Pagel et al., 2015).

According to Beeghly (2005), online discussion groups were especially beneficial for

quieter students or students whose first language was not English because the students were

provided more time to consider an answer and edit the answer before engaging in the class

discussion. Based on a study by Hlas, Schuh, and Alessi (2008), online technology leveled the

playing field for native and non-native English speakers due to a non-traditional learning

environment online. According to Hlas et al. (2008), non-native English speakers did not

experience as much pressure in an online environment as in the traditional classroom environment because there was time to consider, type, reconsider, and edit their comment before submitting it to the rest of the class. According to Hlas et al. (2008), the non-native English speakers felt more pressure in a traditional classroom environment because of the expectation of an immediate response with a teacher and classmates looking on. Online content was also beneficial to native speakers because they had an alternative learning environment that encouraged them to be engaged equally (Hlas et al., 2008). All students, non-native or native English speakers could share their ideas on discussion boards, in chat rooms, or a variety of other online forums (Hlas et al., 2008). In other words, "the dominant roles that may take shape based on language background, gender, race, religion and the like are muted online, creating an alternative, possibly more equal, playing field for education" (Hlas et al., 2008, p.337).

Blended Learning

"Research related to BL [Blended Learning] is relatively undeveloped compared to research in distance and traditional learning environments" (Graham, 2013, p. 338). Blended learning involves more than a substitution of content from face-to-face to online, as is the case in a purely distance learning course (Murray, 2019). Murry (2019) explained that,

> Blended learning is more than simply replacing lectures and books with web-based technology. If you follow the SAMR model, this type of substitution is the lowest level of the pyramid. When technology is mixed agilely with traditional teaching methods to deliver a more rigorous, more purpose-built program, it moves your class to the top SAMR levels - Modification and Redefinition - by replacing less-effective approaches (like pictures) with more-authentic methods (like a virtual visit to a zoo). (para. 3)

According to Stacker and Horn (2012), "Blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace and at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home" (p.3). Online learning provides a platform for all individuals to learn and share on their own time and place (Staker & Horn, 2012). More specifically blended learning can be used in multiple different ways to personalize and streamline course content for more optimal learning (Staker & Horn, 2012). There are many different definitions of blended learning, but according to Graham (2013), "The most common use of the term [blended learning] denotes a combination of face-to-face and online learning" (p.334). For the purposes of this study, this general definition of blended learning from Graham (2013) was employed. "Blended learning is not one thing. It comes in many shapes, flavors, and colors" (Graham, 2013, p. 96). Instead of using one model of instruction, blended learning encompasses traditional classroom instruction, hybrid instruction and distance learning (Graham, 2013). A blended learning classroom may include a wide variety of traditional learning activities as well as an assortment of online technology tools to enhance instruction such as computer assisted language learning tools, digital literacy programming, and technology tools for developing basic academic skills (Graham, 2013).

According to Brooke (2017), "The foundation of blended learning remains firmly rooted in the concept of empowering teachers to provide personalized and mastery-based instruction" (p.1). Brooke (2017) discussed four blended learning models including; the rotation model, the flex mode, the a la carte model, and the enriched virtual model. The rotation models involve moving around a classroom or a school during a class period (Brooke, 2017). Students can move

from computers or other online technology learning settings to face-to-face instruction at their

desks with whole group instruction, small group work, or individual work (Brooke, 2017). There

are different types of rotation models such as the station rotation, individual rotation, and lab

rotation models (Brooke, 2017). Brooke (2017) used the Clayton Christensen Institute to inform

definitions of rotation models. In a station rotation, students rotate between a set of planned

activities, one or more of which include computer or internet technology (Brooke, 2017). The

individual rotation model is similar to the station rotation model except that the activities are

planned according to the needs of individual students (Brooke, 2017). The lab rotation is a

rotation between the classroom and the computer lab (Brooke, 2017). In the flipped classroom

model, students learn course content via the internet outside of class and practice what they

learned during class with in class assignments (Brooke, 2017). The flex model of blended

learning includes flexible learning paths based on individual student needs and interests (Brooke,

2017). With the a la carte model, or self-blend model, students can access all course content

online and go as in-depth into each topic as their interest takes them (Brooke, 2017). In this

model, the teacher is present for answering questions and assisting with the use of online

technology (Brooke, 2017). Lastly, the enriched virtual model, or distance learning model, is

similar to the flipped classroom except the content is learned in a traditional class and practice is

completed using online technology outside of class (Brooke, 2017).

One example of an internet technology tool used in blended learning is an online

discussion group (Beeghly, 2005). Beeghly (2005) explained that the use of online discussion

groups can be a tool for learners to be more engaged with their readings and with school.

Chatting online, text messaging and instant messaging are already common and are often a

preferred communication method among numerous students (Beeghly, 2005). The online

discussion groups that Beeghly (2005) suggested, can be used as a method to encourage students

to discuss more than they would in a more traditional classroom setting. As Beeghly (2005)

stated, "using online discussion in conjunction with in-class discussion is a way to continue and

extend classroom conversations" (p.20) and Blondy (2007) argued, "Sharing ideas and

experiences with other learners online is an excellent way to gain insight into new information,

or expand one's own thinking on a particular topic" (p.125).

Though blended learning is still emerging as a practice, it was predicted to become the

common mode of instruction by Graham (2013). Blended learning entails the use of online

technology to "provide a more personalized approach to learning, giving students control over

time, place, path and pace of their learning" (Brooke, 2017, p.1). According to Rosen and

Stewart (2015), the online component of blended learning can be asynchronous and "since the

lessons are accessible via the Internet, students can access them at their convenience" (p.3).

Effectiveness of blended learning. Research studies have confirmed that blended

learning can be highly effective for adult students and even more effective than a learning

environment that is purely online or purely face-to-face (Rose, 2014; Toyama, Murphy, & Baki,

2010). Data from the Texas Educating Adults Management System in 2010 and 2011 revealed

that Adult Basic Education ESL students in blended learning environments completed English

language levels at a higher rate than those who were in a solely traditional learning environment

(Rose, 2014). More evidence of this was shown in the results of the meta-analysis by Toyama,

Murphy and Baki (2010) which stated that, "purely online learning has been equivalent to face-

to-face instruction in effectiveness, and blended approaches have been more effective than instruction offered entirely in face-to-face mode" (p.35).

There are multiple advantages to the use of blended learning with adult students (Bowman, 2010; Burnett, 2015; Pape, 2006). One of the advantages suggested by Bowman (2010) and Pape (2006) was that the students have more flexibility in terms of what time learning takes place. Bowman (2010) stated that, "The advantage of asynchronous learning is that as long as students complete their assignments by the weekly due dates, they can do the work whenever it suits them within that time frame" (p.4). Additionally, Pape (2006) stated that, "Blended learning enables classroom teachers to increase student learning opportunities beyond the school day and school year, more closely resembling the 24/7 model with which the current generation of students is most familiar" (p.1).

Other advantages of blended learning were explored by Pape (2006) and Burnett (2015). Pape (2006) asserted that, blended learning enhances engagement, has the potential to accommodate any and all learning styles, and provides opportunities for teachers to assess student learning online and see assessment results immediately. Other advantages, similar to those presented in Pape (2006), were presented by Burnett (2015) such as, "blended learning enriches learning by making use of different methods and catering to different learning styles" (p.ii).

Factors for implementation of blended learning. A major factor for the implementation of blended learning is teacher preparedness and comfort level using online technologies (Vanek, 2017). In order for blended learning to be effectively implemented, there must be buy-in from all involved and training for the teachers (Stonehocker, 2017).

Professional development. A section of Vanek (2017) is titled, "New Technological Reality Requires a New Approach to PD [professional development]" (para. 5). During the study by Vanek (2017), some problems arose when attempting to effectively carry out the professional development for teachers new to online technologies. The issues included, "inadequate time and resources to support the PD [professional development], a lack of trust in the online space, and a lack of shared priorities for PD" (Vanek, 2017, para. 32). Also addressing the issue of professional development, Pape (2006) asserted that:

> Blended learning requires the right mix of professional development, technical support and curriculum support to be effective for both the teacher and the student. It requires professional development of teachers, both preservice and in-service. Teachers need to understand the instructional benefits blended learning brings to students, how those benefits can increase content mastery and 21st century learning skills, and how to go about developing and delivering blended learning instruction. (p.1)

Funding. As pointed out by Moore (2009), there may be issues of access and cost of technology tools for the school or the students. According to Erying (2014) "because of recent funding requirements, more state and federally funded programs are beginning to focus on preparation for the workplace, career and college" (p.126). Flipped classrooms, a version of blended learning, have become an option for adult learners because of the budget requirements (Erying, 2014). Students learn the material at home and return to class for more focused attention on the content (Erying, 2014).

Time. According to Coryell and Chlup (2007), barriers to the use of blended learning include the cost of technology and the time needed for instructors to become familiar and

comfortable with the use of blended learning teaching styles. Coryell and Chlup (2007) explained that there is a "philosophical tension about how best to acquire English without complicating the process with difficult computer-oriented tasks" (p.264). Some students may need to spend time on digital literacy skills before the benefits of the addition of that computer or internet technology can facilitate English language acquisition (Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010). Some students may be familiar with internet surfing, but they need direct instruction on how to use resources for learning online (Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010). The *how* as well as the *why*, need to be effectively communicated to the students (Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010; Wiebe & Kabata, 2010). The results of Wiebe and Kabata (2010) indicated that there was a discrepancy between the students' awareness of the instructor goals for using new technologies and the importance instructors placed on computer-assisted language learning. Students need to know how to use the technology as well as understand why they are using technology as a supplement to the traditional methods of learning (Wiebe & Kabata, 2010).

Suggestions. Vanek (2017) proposed:

Firstly, teachers need more opportunities to try out new technology in thoughtful ways, but this is hard work. Secondly, real shifts in instructional practice and use of ICTs [information and communication technologies] cannot happen without adequate infrastructure and affective support for the teachers engaged in the work. Finally, the PD [professional development] itself must meet teachers where they are, not push beyond their current skill or comfort level, especially when it involves technology use. (para. 4)

Also, there may be limited opportunities for meaningful interactions and community building if there is not intentional emphasis on group work and collaboration surrounding online

technology use in the classroom (Moore, 2009). Teachers may use online technology as a substitute to instruction rather than a tool to enhance the curriculum (Moore, 2009). More, training, district and school support, curriculum resources, and planning may be required to effectively support the implementation of blended learning in programs (Moore, 2009). Brooke (2017) advocated for consensus building and building infrastructure as essential for leadership aiming at the implementation of blended learning in schools. "The reasons for engaging in blended learning play a major role in determining its success which is why it is vitally important that teachers, administrators, and students understand why blended learning is implemented" (Brooke, 2017, p.4). Then, infrastructure needs to be put in place if blended learning is to be implemented schoolwide (Brooke, 2017). The school may need computer or internet technology updates or a full overhaul of technology resources available (Brooke, 2017). An inventory should be taken of all teachers and students involved (Brooke, 2017). In the context of this study, the students are adults learning English which is a factor to consider when implementing blended learning. Moore (2009) concludes that even though there may be challenges to using certain technologies with adult learners, these can and should be overcome by ensuring social interaction and being aware of students' access to the technology tool at home.

Adult Learners

In a review of literature spanning from 1973 to 2016, Allen (2016) posits that traditional pedagogy of the past is not sufficient to engage adult learners. Even so, Allen (2016) states that:

There is not, to date, an overarching theory of adult learning. Most adult learning theorists agree that an adult-centered course involves: ceding control of the classroom from the instructor to the student; fostering collaboration among peers; incorporating

adults' lived experiences and real-world applications in designing lessons; and employing "deep" learning and assessment techniques. (p.31)

In the book, The Adult Learner: A neglected species, Knowles (1973) was one of the first scholars to heighten the concept of adult learners having unique needs. Adults seek education to gain the ability to promptly apply what is learned in the classroom to their lives (Knowles, 1973). When comparing the needs of children with those of adults, Knowles (1973) explained that,

The adult, on the other hand, comes into an educational activity largely because he is experiencing some inadequacy in coping with current life problems. He wants to apply tomorrow what he learns today, so his time perspective is one of immediacy of application. Therefore, he enters into education with a problem-centered orientation to learning. (p.48)

Knowles proclaimed that learners become more self-directed with age and thus have unique approaches to learning as compared to children. Knowles (1973) argued that adult learners are more cognitively advanced and have life experiences different than from children; this fact was neglected in the creation of curricula. The traditional classroom was incongruent with the learning styles of adult learners because pedagogy was mainly based on childhood acquisition of knowledge (Knowles, 1973). From the study by Knowles (1973) emerged andragogy, a field of study that focuses on the instruction of adults. Allen (2016) stated, "adult learning proponents generally largely agree adult learners can be afforded an authentic learning experience through a mix of learner autonomy, interactivity, and a real-world focus" (p.26).

An emphasis on a real-world focus in education aligns with constructivist theory. Constructivism is a theory that emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge through experiences

(Huang, 2002). According to Huang (2002), constructivist-based teaching is important for adult learners as it enhances a learner's ability to apply classroom skills and problem solve in real-life situations. Allen (2016) expands on the theory of constructivism by stating: "the principles of adult learning emphasize the agency of the learner, collaborative and interactive learning experiences, and the application of curricular content to real-world problems" (p.25).

The internet can provide countless opportunities to explore areas of interest and construct new knowledge, "Thus, the Web becomes a common tool for learner-centered or constructivist learning" (Huang, 2002, p. 30). Constructivism is particularly important for adult learners in the ever-changing world of technology and education (Huang, 2002; Allen, 2016). Coryell and Chlup (2007) stated that:

> Adult English language learner programs throughout the United States use a variety of instructional methodologies to increase English proficiency, English academic competency, and knowledge of English literacy and civics. An increasingly used modality of instruction in English language learner classrooms is computer technology. (p.1)

There are state policies for the use of computer technology in Adult Basic Education programs in a state in the Midwest of the United States of America (Computer Literacy Policy, 2004; Distance Learning Policy, 2013). According to the front page of the Minnesota Department of Education Distance Learning website, (2018),

> Across Minnesota many programs and consortia have found DL [distance learning] to be an effective way to increase access to ABE [Adult Basic Education] instruction for eligible students. In many cases DL is provided in a "blended" or "hybrid" model in

which a learner has some time in the classroom but also completes work outside of the

classroom using DL platforms. This can increase the quality of DL experience for

students by providing them with the opportunity for in-person support and instruction,

while also allowing for the flexibility of schedule and location that is the main advantage

of distance learning. (para.1)

Access to online technology. In some cases, access to online content improved as in

Hanna (2000), "barriers to accessing higher education learning opportunities are being reduced

globally because of improved learning technologies" (p.19). But, in the case of adult students not

yet in higher education, a recurring theme when considering adult learners and technology is

students' lack of access to the internet at home (Moore, 2009). Garcia and Abrego (2014)

reported that principals feel that schools may be the only place that some disadvantaged students

have access to digital and internet technology. There are similar trends worldwide, as stated by

Raine and Perrin (2017), "Around the globe – including in advanced economies – a digital divide

in smartphone ownership still exists between the young and old, and between more educated and

less educated people" (p.4). According to Garland (2009), the contributing factors to the digital

divide are: language, race and socioeconomic status and, "The principal has a duty to become an

informed activist in promoting access to technology by all students and teachers" (p.40).

Research by the Pew Research Center shows that although there is a digital divide worldwide

between higher and lower income countries, "adoption rates [of smartphones] have risen rapidly

among older and lower-income Americans in recent years" (Raine & Perrin, 2017, p.2).

The teacher has a duty to take these trends into account and teach digital literacy skills to

students, especially if online technology is used as a tool for learning in school (Dunn, 2011). A

student may be very adept at using a smartphone to access the internet, but may have very little

experience with a computer or another digital device, for example (Dunn, 2011). Dunn (2011)

revealed that even if adult learners do have access to the internet at home, they may not have the

computer skills to access all of the learning potential online. This may not be the case in the

future when most people have lifetime exposure to online learning tools, but the current skill

level of adult learners is important to asses (Dunn, 2011). Khan (2012) proposed that the internet

should be used to provide access to free quality education to all. The benefits of online education

include freedom to explore student interests deeper, ownership of learning, freedom to make

mistakes, the ability to rewind or re-watch episodes, the ability to archive videos for future

review, and the ability for students to catch up who missed class (Khan, 2012). In order to

provide access to education through online technology for all students, the entire curriculum

should be integrated online at all grade levels (Garland, 2009).

  Leadership and technology. Advances in technology have evolved the role of the

principal to include leadership skills in online technology (Garland, 2009). According to Garland

(2009), principals adopt new technology policies as technologies evolve. There is a risk that

principals, if not experienced with the creation and use of online technology resources, will make

uninformed program decisions (Garcia & Abrego, 2014). According to Rudolf (2016), as people

spend more and more time online, they are checking the news online, doing work online,

maintaining finances online, and learning rapidly. For leadership and educators to be

knowledgeable, they need to be conscious of their technological knowledge (Rudolph, 2016).

Rudolph (2016) recommends Twitter or other social networking sites as a good place to begin

for administrators who want to develop personally and professionally with technological advances.

According to Brooke (2017), it is important for administration to build consensus with instructors about the usefulness of technologies and blended learning strategies for student learning. Once this consensus is built, it is important to build infrastructure based on that consensus (p.2). Results of a study by Hathorn and Hathorn (2010) foster the argument that quality online teaching is as important and efficient as face-to-face instruction. Principals can assist in dispelling the misconception that online instruction results in an increased workload (Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010). A study by Garcia and Abrego (2014) of principals as technology leaders was based on the concept of constructivism and experiences that are viewed as social constructs. Their study was composed of online questionnaires and recorded interviews of sixty-seven elementary principals. The purpose of their study was to examine principals' leadership skills, experiences, and beliefs about online technology. The results of Garcia and Abrego (2014) illustrated that principals believed that online technology had a positive effect on education and enabled staff to work more efficiently and effectively. The key topic of their study was the effective use of technology. There must be adequate curriculum, training, planning, and evaluation of online resources to maintain the ever-evolving skills needed to maintain technological knowledge in our schools (Garcia & Abrego, 2014, p.21). "Principals felt that being skilled in and involved with technology made a difference in their leadership and campus goals" (Garcia & Abrego, 2014, p.21).

The role of a principal as a technology leader includes the maintenance of safety and the legality of internet use in schools (Garland, 2009). According to Bradley (2008), there were

policies created to address concerns about internet safety and to ensure that the internet is used

for educational purposes. These policy recommendations were specifically directed toward

school principals and policymakers (Bradley, 2008). Bradley (2008) states:

> The [National Association of Secondary School Principals] says school leaders need to
>
> become familiar with all aspects of the Internet, social-media networking sites, blogs, and
>
> the like; set up technology teams to advise on related issues; educate staff and students on
>
> the boundaries of the law; protect against cyberbullying; and guide teachers on using the
>
> Internet as a teaching tool. (p.1)

In addition to internet safety policies, there were considerations of student diversity

especially regarding access and equity (Garland, 2009). The internet has become more accessible

to a larger number of students in general across the world, but if a student does not have access

to a computer or internet technology, the educational inequity, or digital divide grows (Garland,

2009). Therefore, principals have a responsibility to become informed about online technology

and ensure that the technology environment provides equal opportunity for all students in their

school (Garland, 2009). Hathorn and Hathorn (2010) found that online instruction provides an

opportunity to address the needs of individual students who may be struggling and provides more

personally designed instruction for all students.

According to Conole (2008), internet technology use is "at the heart of all aspects of

[adult learners'] lives" which are "complex and multifaceted" (p.136). The complexity of

internet technology use of students necessitates flexibility on the part of leadership and

consideration of external influences when designing courses (Conole, 2008). "Good ideas that

are badly implemented lead to a chaotic learning environment" (Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010, p.213).

Therefore, according to Coryell and Chlup (2007), it is essential that instructors, school leaders, and students all have buy-in to online technology use in their schools. Based on a meta-analysis of empirical literature by Means, Toyama, Murphy and Baki (2013), "Policy makers and practitioners require a better understanding of the kinds of online activities and teacher supports that enable these students to learn effectively in online environments" (p.38).

Teacher Perceptions

The term "teacher cognition" was used by Borg (2003) to refer to how teachers think, what they know, and what they believe. Borg (2003) provided a visual representation of a framework of teacher cognition which included, "schooling, professional coursework, contextual factors, and classroom practice" (p.82). Borg (2003) stated that, "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (p.81). Therefore, Borg (2003) highlighted a variety of factors to be considered when conducting research related to teacher cognition. According to Borg (2003), "Teachers' cognitions emerge consistently as a powerful influence on their practices, though, as I discuss later, these do not ultimately always reflect teachers' stated beliefs, personal theories, and pedagogical principles" (p.91). This study employs interviews with teachers mostly about their practices, but also about their perceptions of barriers and reasons for choosing blended learning. This study can be viewed as one small step toward a better understanding of the whole picture of blended learning among Adult Basic Education ESL programs. Recommendations for further research with goals of

increasing the types of research conducted on blended learning among Adult Basic Education

ESL programs are in Chapter V.

Beliefs and practice. Along with other factors mentioned in Borg (2003), leadership

might want to consider teacher cognition in relation to practice when making program or policy

decisions. Farrell and Lim (2005), compared the beliefs of grammar teachers with their

classroom practices to reveal discrepancies and similarities. When considering the discrepancies

between belief and practice Farrell and Lim (2005) state that, "we take the stance in this case

study that it seems plausible to suggest that teachers' beliefs are the best indicators of the type of

instructional decisions they made during their teaching" (para.18). Farrell and Lim (2005)

suggested that the discrepancies between beliefs and practice among the participants could be

explained by external factors such as time or internal factors such as emotional attachments to

traditional teaching methods.

In a case study of one teacher Farrell and Ives (2015) found that, "overall, the findings of

this article indicate that the teacher's beliefs provided a strong basis for his classroom actions"

and "language teachers can learn about the importance and method of comparing their own

beliefs with their practices through reflection" (p.608).

Perceptions of blended learning. A number of researchers have focused on teacher

perceptions, before, during, and after the implementation of blended learning (Jokinen &

Mikkonen, 2013; Stonehocker, 2017). Though a study by Jokinen and Mikkonen (2013) was

from the perspective of nursing education, it can give some insight into teacher perceptions of

the use of blended learning in general. Their study was conducted using focus group interviews

of teachers who taught undergraduate nursing students, looking at those teachers' experiences of

planning and implementing blended learning courses. According to Jokinen and Mikkonen (2013), "The teachers experienced the blended learning approach positively; however, they found it to be very challenging from the viewpoint of planning and design" (p.527) and "for some teachers the experience of reducing the face-to-face teaching was the most challenging issue" (p.528). According Jokinen and Mikkonen (2013), teachers perceived collaboration with other teachers as beneficial and necessary to planning a blended course; "however, the teachers experienced collaborative planning as time consuming and arduous; moreover, they felt that it was not easy to move from solo-planning and working to collaborative planning and working - working alone is so deeply rooted" (p.526).

Stonehocker (2017) interviewed and surveyed graduate assistants serving as teachers of adult language learners in college about the use of computer assisted language learning tools with their students. The results suggested that the teachers had a positive impression of using computers in their classrooms and believed that internet technology promoted student motivation and was easy to use for instruction (Stonehocker, 2017). A practical implication from the study by Stonehocker (2017) was the need for teachers to be trained in any new technology tools that were intended to be used with students. "All four interviewees admitted that they were extremely hesitant, and even avoided the use of technology, software, or programs they were not comfortable with or didn't fully understand" (Stonehocker, 2017, p. 73).

Summary

This study aligns with the research in the literature review by focusing on the overarching theme of blended learning. A multitude of research studies have focused on blended learning in education (Brooke, 2017; Coryell & Chlup, 2007; Erying, 2014; Graham, 2013; Moore, 2009;

Pape, 2006; Rose, 2014; Toyama et al., 2010). These studies generally support the conclusion that blended learning is effective for learning in educational settings.

This study furthers the body of research that addresses the needs of English language learners. There are multiple researchers who explored the use of online technology in education and English language learning (Beeghly, 2005; Blondy, 2007; Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010; Stonehocker, 2017; Wiebe & Kabata, 2010). This study adds to the body of research that focuses on both blended learning and language learning. In addition, research is needed to explore how blended learning and English language learning relates to adult learners in Adult Basic Education programs. There is limited research on teacher perceptions of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL settings (Rosen & Stewart, 2015; Vanek, 2017). This study contributes to filling that gap in research.

There was an expectation among students that online technology tools would be used in school as part of their education (Tuckett, 2012; Dunn, 2011). Blended learning integrates an aspect of online instruction with face-to-face classroom instruction (Graham, 2013) and can be beneficial to adult language learners (Huang, 2002; Khan, 2012). At the time of this study, research was lacking concerning the topic of blended learning specifically among Adult Basic Education ESL programs.

Research studies that combine all of the topics that this study will address: blended learning, English language acquisition, and adult learners are virtually nonexistent (Rosen & Stewart, 2015). As stated by Picciano (2006), "While there are individual accounts and case studies, there has been little formal cross-institutional research of blended learning mainly because many administrations have not implemented adequate data collection processes for

identifying blended courses" (p.99). Leadership needs to stay informed about current technology in education in order to be effective as technology and school leaders (Coryell & Chlupp, 2007; Garcia & Abrego, 2014). For this study, the assumption is made that issues that arise when using blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs are unique to those that have been uncovered in research so far. Since theories of adult education were presented by Knowles in 1973, scholars have known that adults have unique needs compared to those of children. This research study highlights that difference while adding to the research related to blended learning and English language learning.

Chapter III: Methodology

The literature review reveals a noticeable gap in educational research on the topic of blended learning specifically related to the unique conditions of Adult Basic Education English as a second language (ESL) settings. In order to get a glimpse at the complexity of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs, in-depth interviews were chosen as the methodology for this study. The problem of the study is to examine teacher perceptions of the type of use, reasons for use, and barriers to the use of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. The purpose of the study is to provide research that informs leadership about blended learning within the context of Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Qualitative methodology was used to conduct and analyze in-depth interviews. The resulting data is intended for Adult Basic Education ESL leadership to evaluate and plan for the implementation of blended learning in their programs.

A goal of Adult Basic Education ESL programs is to prepare students with the basic skills they need to be successful in the communities in which they live (Rosen & Stewart, 2015). A great number of students are using the internet in their everyday lives; there is an expectation among students and the community that education will support learning with online technology (Tuckett, 2012; Dunn, 2011). The use of blended learning is one way that Adult Basic Education ESL programs can address this (Rosen & Stewart, 2015). This study provides much needed research into blended learning for policy decisions by leadership in Adult Basic Education settings.

Research has been conducted describing implementation of online technology use or blended learning in K-12 and university settings (Means et al., 2013). There is limited research

on teacher perceptions of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL settings (Rosen & Stewart, 2015). This is noteworthy because some teachers are already using blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs (Rosen & Stewart, 2015). Interviewing these teachers allows for a deeper examination of how blended learning is being used in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. The data adds to the body of Adult Basic Education ESL research and research related to blended learning.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. What do Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning report as the most common types of blended learning used with their students?

2. What do Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning report as factors that influence their decision to use blended learning?

3. What do Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning report as barriers or challenges to using blended learning?

Research Design

This study uses qualitative methodology with in-depth semi-structured interviews to gain a better understanding of blended learning among Adult Basic Education ESL programs. An overview of the differences between quantitative and qualitative research was described in a table by Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun, (2015) and showed that qualitative methodology is based on,

Preference for hypothesis that emerge as study develops. Preference for definitions in context or as a study progresses. Preference for narrative description. Preference for

assuming that reliability of inferences is adequate. Preference for expert informant

(purposive) samples. Preference for narrative/literary descriptions of procedures.

Preference for logical analysis in controlling or accounting for extraneous variables.

Primary reliance on researcher to deal with procedural bias. Preference for narrative

summary of results. Preference for holistic description of complex phenomena.

Unwillingness to tamper with naturally occurring phenomena. (p.424)

   Qualitative research. According to Merriam (2009), "The overall purpose of qualitative

research is to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the

process (rather than outcome or product) of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret

what they experience" (p.14). Hoepfl (1997) warns, "The decision to use qualitative

methodologies should be considered carefully; by its very nature, qualitative research can be

emotionally taxing and extraordinarily time consuming. At the same time, it can yield rich

information not obtainable through statistical sampling techniques" (p. 61). Additionally, "The

researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" so,

> The researcher can expand his or her understanding through nonverbal as well as verbal
>
> communication, process information (data) immediately, clarify and summarize material,
>
> check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or
>
> unanticipated responses. However, the human instrument has shortcomings and biases
>
> that might have an impact on the study. Rather than trying to eliminate these biases or
>
> "subjectivities," it is important to identify them and monitor them. (p.15)

   Complex context. Hoepfl (1997) explained that "qualitative inquiry accepts the complex

and dynamic quality of the social world" (p.48). The researcher of this study chose qualitative

methodology through in-depth semi-structured interviews, as qualitative research design is suited to the complex and unique context of Adult Basic Education ESL programs (Erying, 2014; Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). According to Erying (2014), the Adult Basic Education ESL classroom setting is complex because of the variety of cultures, ages, languages, and logistical challenges that come with teaching Adult Basic Education ESL. According to Hoepfl (1997), "Phenomenological inquiry, or qualitative research, uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings" (p.47).

When explaining internal validity and credibility of qualitative research, Hoepfl (1997) states, "The naturalistic researcher, assumes the presence of multiple realities and attempts to represent these multiple realities adequately" (p.58). Qualitative exploration is suitable and increases the validity of the study because Adult Basic Education ESL programs educate a uniquely varied student population in terms of ages, languages and cultures depending on the location and size of the site (Erying, 2014; Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019). In order to grasp the complexity of Adult Basic Education ESL programs through the lens of teacher perceptions, an in-depth interview of the teacher was employed.

Leadership. An assumption made by this study is that teacher perspectives could be useful to leadership in developing an understanding of blended learning use in Adult Basic Education ESL programs for the purposes of program decision making. According to Hoepfl (1997), "The particular design of a qualitative study depends on the purpose of the inquiry, what information will be most useful, and what information will have the most credibility" (p.50). Research suggests that blended learning is beneficial for student learning based on research summarized in the Literature Review in Chapter II of this dissertation. Though the purpose of

this study is not to explore student learning, a secondary focus on teacher perceptions of their

practices and barriers might also be helpful for leadership understanding of blended learning in

Adult Basic Education ESL programs. According to Borg (2003), "Teachers' cognitions, emerge

consistently as a powerful influence on their practices, though, these do not ultimately always

reflect teachers' stated beliefs, personal theories, and pedagogical principles" (p.91). While

Farrell and Lim (2005) state, "It seems plausible to suggest that teachers' beliefs are the best

indicators of the type of instructional decisions they made during their teaching" (para.18).

According to Hoepfl (1997), "The ability of qualitative data to more fully describe a

phenomenon is an important consideration not only from the researcher's perspective, but from

the reader's perspective as well" (p.49). The intent of the researcher when creating the interview

questions was to address the research questions about blended learning in Adult Basic Education

ESL programs. The results of the interviews would shed light on information that could assist in

informing leadership when making program decisions about blended learning. According to

Punch (2009),

> Very often, especially in a professional field such as education, they will come from
>
> practical and professional issues and problems. The starting point here is not a paradigm.
>
> Instead, the starting point is a problem that needs solution or a question that needs
>
> answers. This is a pragmatic approach." (p.20)

Interview questions. Guiding interview questions were developed to ensure that the

research questions are thoroughly addressed. Time was provided to expand on those questions

using additional probing questions as needed. Qualitative research is exploratory and in-depth

interviews with open-ended questioning is an optimal protocol for sharing opinions and reasons

for using blended learning. According to Hoepfl (1997), "qualitative methods are appropriate in situations where one needs to first identify the variables that might later be tested quantitatively" and "research problems tend to be framed as open-ended questions that will support the discovery of new information" (p.49). Considering the lack of information available in scholarly research about blended learning specifically in an Adult Basic Education ESL context at the time of the study, qualitative methodology seemed the appropriate choice for this study (Bowman, 2010; Hanna, 2000; Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010; Holcomb, Castek, & Johnson, 2007; Leung, 2003; McFarland et al., 2018; Rosen & Stewart, 2015; Rudolph, 2016; Staker & Horn, 2012; Stonehocker, 2017). Furthermore, the interview questions of this study were designed to be open-ended in that the assumption is not made that there are specific limits or boundaries to the answers.

According to Ellis (2018),

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not seek to be generalizable — that is, readily applicable to all similar persons and situations. Still, the findings from it may, and often are, used to inform practice. In qualitative research the applicability to other similar situations is termed transferability. If professionals choose to use the findings from qualitative research to inform their practice, they need to critique how good that research is first." (p.134)

Feedback on design. In order to get feedback on the interview protocol and research design in general, a pilot test was conducted with other doctoral candidates in the Educational Administration and Leadership program. The other doctoral candidates had a wealth of experience and knowledge about K-12 education from being in variety of different educator and

administrative roles. Some of the doctoral candidates involved with the pilot test had direct experience with Adult Basic Education and some did not. All of the candidates had some experience with and knowledge of English language learners and blended learning.

The pilot test was conducted to assess whether the research questions were adequately addressed by the interview questions. During the pilot test, feedback was provided about the interview questions and the research study in general. The feedback from the pilot test team was considered and adjustments to the interview questions were made accordingly.

The use of qualitative methodology enabled the researcher to examine the topic more extensively and to explore more of the details of the subject as they related to the research questions. Blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs is new to the field and scarcely represented in research (Bowman, 2010; Hanna, 2000; Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010; Holcomb, Castek, & Johnson, 2007; Leung, 2003; McFarland et al., 2018; Rudolph, 2016; Staker & Horn, 2012; Stonehocker, 2017). Therefore, verifying theories about blended learning through quantitative research are hardly possible within the setting of Adult Basic Education ESL. According to Punch (2009), "Research directed at theory generation is more likely when a new area is being studied, and exploration of that new area is more likely to use the less structured fieldwork techniques of qualitative research" (p.23). Specifically, in-depth interviews with a semi-structured interview protocol including open-ended questions were chosen for this study and allowed for the participants to have the freedom to expand on ideas surrounding the topic of blended learning. As stated by Hoepfl (1997),

> Qualitative interviewing utilizes open-ended questions that allow for individual
>
> variations" and "although it is prepared to ensure that basically the same information is

obtained from each person, there are no predetermined responses, and in semi-structured interviews the interviewer is free to probe and explore within these predetermined inquiry areas." (p.52)

The interviews gave the participants the opportunity to explain, in great detail, the experiences of what they encounter while using online technology with their Adult Basic Education ESL students. The interview protocol was designed with the assumption that these experiences would be varied and unique based on the variety of blended learning options available to teachers, the diversity of student backgrounds and the range of English language levels of students that the participants teach in Adult Basic Education ESL settings (Erying, 2014; Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019).

In summation, the research design of this study is based on a qualitative approach to research based on the adjoined assumptions, theories, and philosophies of qualitative researchers. The assumptions of qualitative research are described by Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2015) in a table titled: "Differing philosophical assumptions of quantitative and qualitative researchers" (p.427). Below are the assumptions of qualitative researchers from Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2015),

> The individuals involved in the research situation construct reality; thus, realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions. Research investigations produce alternative versions of what the world is like. It is impossible for the researcher to stand apart from the individuals he or she is studying. Values are an integral part of the research process. Facts and values are inextricably intertwined. The initial ambiguity that occurs in a study

is desirable. The purpose of educational research is an understanding of what things mean to others. Highly generalizable laws, as such, can never be found. (p.427)

Participants

The researcher interviewed 11 Adult Basic Education ESL teachers. When considering the nature of this study, the number of participants chosen made in-depth interviews more feasible because there was less time pressure to end the interview or not explore a topic of interest. Conducting 11 interviews provided time for the participants to be included in the interviewee transcript review. The participant sample size was also chosen based on feasibility of travel time to obtain participants who taught at different locations across an area including urban, suburban, and rural programs (between 30 minutes and 3 hours from a large metropolitan area in the Midwest of the United States of America), the length of time of each interview (between 45 minutes and an hour and half), the length of time of each transcription of each interview (between 6 and 8 hours without the assistance of transcription software), and the time for transcription analysis. Based on these considerations and the timeline of the researcher, a sample size of 11 was chosen. The participants for the study were selected using a purposeful sampling technique (Merriam, 2009). A purposeful sample technique entails using specific criteria from which to select participants (Merriam, 2009). The criteria used to identify the participants for this study were as follows:

1. The participant held either a state teaching license or a master's degree at the time of the study.

2. The participant was teaching Adult Basic Education ESL in a state in the Midwest of the United States of America at the time of the study.

3. The participant was using blended learning as an instructional method with their Adult Basic Education ESL class at the time of the study.

4. The participant was available for an interview during the summer of 2018.

5. The participant was available to meet in person in a state in the Midwest of the United States of America.

The participants were restricted to only teachers and not to leadership or students because of the impracticality of making the sample size larger. The Adult Basic Education ESL teachers selected for this study had a unique perspective on blended learning because they elected to employ this new mode of teaching. The intent of the study was not to analyze student learning for instructional implications. Interviewing students would require further permissions from IRB. It was determined that that would hold up the study's progress. Recommendations for further research are included in Chapter V.

The researcher had access to Adult Basic Education ESL teachers and leadership through professional contacts. The teachers and leadership were contacted about the potential of including their colleagues or employees as participants for the study, face-to-face, through text and via email. Additional participants were located using the snowball sampling method (Merriam, 2009). The snowball method for acquiring more participants that meet the criteria was executed by inviting the original participants to identify other potential participants for the study. The same process of correspondence and gaining permission was used to contact new participants until 11 participants that met the criteria and were in varying locations across a large metropolitan area in the Midwest of the United States of America were found (Merriam, 2009). To ensure that participants were from varying locations, no more than two participants were

selected who taught in the same district within a large metropolitan area in the Midwest of the United States of America.

Human Subject Approval

The researcher completed training and received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the rights of the human subjects in the study. In order to ensure consent and privacy of the participants, an Institutional Review Board approved a consent form that was signed by all participants. A copy of the consent form was provided to each participant and copies of the content forms were retained by the researcher. The participants were informed that their participation was always optional and that they could stop their participation in the study at any time. The researcher was available to the participants for questions about consent or questions about the study in general, before, during, and after the study was completed.

Data Security

In the case of a participant opting out, the researcher would dispose of the data pertaining to that participant and send a disposal confirmation email to the subject. Data and any documentation that were used in this study are confidential and were retained in a locked and secure location for the duration of the study. All audio and transcribed data was stored on an encrypted laptop with password protection. The laptop was in the possession of the researcher at all times when not in a locked cabinet inside a locked apartment. All printed documentation was stored in the locked cabinet in the locked apartment of the researcher. Upon awarding of the degree, all data and documentation will be deleted and destroyed.

Procedures for Data Collection

Once the initial potential participants were selected, the researcher gained consent from participants, set up an interview date and location, conducted the interview and followed-up with interviewee transcript reviews.

Participant consent. The potential participants were contacted in-person or via email with an invitation to be involved in the study. In the initial email, there was an explanation of confidentiality and opportunity to opt out from the study at any time. If interest was shown for participation, a date and time for the interview was arranged. The researcher informed the participant that a printed consent form would need to be signed before the interview started. During the interview, the participants signed two copies of the consent form. The researcher retained one copy for the sake of record-keeping and the participant took the other copy.

Interview overview. The location of the interviews was designated from among select public libraries, an educational conference, or the workplace of the interviewee; all within three hours of a large metropolitan area in the Midwest of the United States of America. The researcher reserved a study room or an office, for the date and time chosen by the participant. Study rooms secured privacy and silence for clear recording of the interview.

The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour and a half. After an initial greeting, the researcher turned on the recording device. The interview started with a review of the consent form that outlines the confidentiality measures that were taken and a reminder about the option to opt-out of the interview or to not answer specific questions, at any time. The researcher then provided a printed copy of the interview items to the interviewee and proceeded to solicit responses to the items in the order that they were listed. The interviews concluded with

a reminder of the researcher's contact information, the interviewee transcript review process, and an explanation of next steps. The snowball method of acquiring additional participants was employed by asking the interviewees if they knew any other teachers who fit the selection criteria for participation in the study (Merriam, 2009).

Compensation for participants. No monetary or prize compensation to participants was associated with the study, however each participant could be informed of how to get a copy of the complete dissertation online upon completion if so desired.

Interview Protocol

The researcher developed a structured interview to obtain an in-depth understanding of blended learning in the context of Adult Basic Education ESL programs (Gall et al., 2007). According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), "The interview is more commonly used in qualitative research than questionnaires, because it permits open-ended exploration of topics and elicits responses that are couched in the unique words of the respondents" (p.229).

Before conducting the interviews, in order to improve the validity and reliability of the study, the interview protocol was reviewed by a convenient sample of doctoral students in an Educational Administration and Leadership (EDAD) cohort. The members of the EDAD cohort all had some degree of experience with blended learning and had a familiarity with research techniques in order to provide appropriate feedback about the interview protocol. During the review of the interview protocol by the EDAD cohort, the researcher gained input on the quality of interview techniques and validity of the interview items related to the research questions. The interview items and techniques were then adjusted to reflect the feedback. The interviews were

scheduled and conducted within a three-month period and lasted between 45 minutes to an hour

and a half.

Before the interview, there were in-person explanations or introductory emails sent out to

the participants explaining the study, explaining sample selection criteria, and inviting

participation. Later emails gained consent and determine a date, place and time for the interview.

The final round of emails to the participant before the interview included a reminder about

informed consent, an overview of what was going to happen during the interview and a

confirmation of the date, time and location of the interview. Special attention was put on

building rapport with the participants during this process. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) explained

that,

> Skilled interviewers make an effort to build trust and rapport with respondents, thus
>
> making it possible to obtain information that the individual probably would not reveal by
>
> any other data-collection method. They can also follow up a respondent's answers to
>
> obtain more information and clarify vague statements. (p.228)

During the interview, audio data was gathered using two recording devices. The primary

device was a handheld device with the ability to record and upload to a computer. The brand and

model of this device is: Sony Digital Flash Voice Recorder ICD-PX312. The backup device was

a Lenovo ThinkPad laptop with a voice recording program that comes with Windows 10.

According to Hoepfl (1997), "Recordings have the advantage of capturing data more faithfully

than hurriedly written notes might, and can make it easier for the researcher to focus on the

interview" (p.53).

Interview items. The participants were provided with a printed copy of the 10 open-ended questions, labeled as *interview items* for clarity in organization of data in Chapter IV of this study. In order to increase reliability, the interview items were presented to all of the participants in the same order. In order to improve validity, the researcher created interview items that related to the research questions. According to Rudolph (2016), "the validity of the instrument improves when questions are open-ended, clear, avoid technical jargon, and are not biased or leading" (p.49). These are the interview items for the study:

1. What is your adult ESL class like?

2. What kind of technology tools do you use in your classroom for student learning?

3. What is your understanding of the meaning of blended learning?

4. How do you use blended learning with your students?

5. What types of blended learning do you use most often and why?

6. Why do you choose to use blended learning with your class?

7. What factors do you consider before implementing blended learning with your students?

8. Are there any blended learning techniques that you would like to use but have not? If so, what are they and what keeps you from using them?

9. Do you experience any barriers or challenges to using blended learning with your students? If so, what are they?

10. Do you think there are any barriers to other teachers adopting blended learning or in the field of adult ESL in general? If so, what are they?

A formalized version of the interview protocol can be found in Appendix II. The interview protocol includes probing questions below each item to ensure that the interview items are understood and addressed as completely as possible (See Appendix II). Questions based on participant responses were asked during the interview in order to allow opportunities to clarify and expand on topics discussed. After the interview was completed, the participants were given the opportunity to add any additional comments they had. The closing of the interview included a thank you, and an explanation of next steps. A follow-up email was sent to each participant with a transcript of the interview.

Interviewee transcript review. Then, the researcher employed an interview research method called *interviewee transcript review* to verify accuracy and provide opportunities for clarifications of comments during the interview (Hagens, Dobrow, & Chafe, 2009). Interviewee transcript review was put to use in this study by emailing the transcript to the participants after the interview and asking for any edits, deletions, or additions to the transcript. Hagens et al. (2009) warns that researchers need to weigh the potential advantages and disadvantages of interviewee transcript review before choosing this method.

A potential advantage of interviewee transcript review is an improved relationship between the participant and researcher. Lines of communication are kept open after the interview. Opportunities to follow up with participants are made available. The researcher can go directly to the source to fill in blanks where there are questionable data, increasing reliability (Hagens et al., 2009).

The potential disadvantages of using interviewee transcript review include increased time required to provide participants the opportunity to revise their transcripts and increased time

required for researchers to communicate with participants after the interview. In the study by

Hagens et al. (2009), participants were provided two weeks to revise their transcripts and this

amount of time was determined not detrimental to the overall timeline of the study. The

researcher for this study about blended learning among Adult Basic Education ESL programs,

informed the participants of the end of summer 2018 deadline and encouraged them to complete

the interviewee transcript review by that time.

Hagens et al. (2009) also warned that researchers must be aware of their own time

constraints and weigh the benefits and disadvantages of interviewee transcript review.

Interviewee transcript review was employed based on consideration of the potential benefits and

disadvantages. As can sometimes be the case, a verbal rendition of thoughts can come across

quite differently than a text version and should be assessed by the participant. The transcript was

sent out via email for interviewee transcript review including the following guidelines:

1. Make any revisions that you would like to make to your transcript by typing in "red."

2. Clarify any of your wording.

3. Add any additional information you have thought of since our interview.

4. Request to delete anything you would like to delete by writing "delete" in red next to

   the sentence you would like to delete.

5. Send the transcript back to me.

At the end of the guidelines, a sentence invited the participant to make any other

comments by typing them at the bottom of the transcript in red. All requests for modifications

were respected and followed. Only material from the final transcript was used in the collation of

data.

Treatment of Data

Data was collected during the interview via recording devices. The main recording device

was a handheld recorder specifically designed for recording interviews called a Sony Digital

Flash Voice Recorder ICD-PX312. The backup device was a Lenovo ThinkPad laptop with an

internal microphone. The purpose of multiple recording devices was to protect against loss of

data. All data was captured electronically to prevent the need to take extensive notes. The

primary aim of the researcher during the interview was to be engaged in listening to the

interviewee. If any notes were necessary during the interview, they were written using a pen and

paper to avoid typing noises while conducting the interview. The recording of the interview was

transcribed by hand by the researcher for accuracy of the transcription process. The initial

transcription of each interview was typed by slowing down the recording to a typable speed and

using headphones plugged into the computer to minimize background noise interference. Each

full transcript was typed by listening to the slowed down version of the interview and typing at

the same time. The transcription was then reviewed a second time by listening to the interview at

normal speed and pushing pause where there were discrepancies between the typed transcript

and the recording. The researcher rewound and listened to specific sections of the interview

repeatedly to improve the accuracy of the transcript. The researcher made edits such as retyping

mistyped words or adding missing words throughout the transcript. Each transcript was reviewed

a third time to confirm that every word was included accurately in the transcript.

The data was again collected after the interviewee transcript review process. The

interviewee transcript review process provided the interviewee the opportunity to verify accuracy

of the verbatim transcript of the interview and provide any clarifications thought necessary. In

doing so, the validity of the data and clarity of the intent of the responses was increased. The data was then open-coded, which was conducted through highlighting responses according to topic and category. Common threads of pertinent information were then typed and stored into a spreadsheet.

The data was memoed according to concepts and themes as they were revealed in the coding process. According to Punch (2009), "It is important in qualitative analysis to balance discipline and creativity, and it is in memoing where creativity comes in" (p.180). According to Hoepfl (1997), "Qualitative analysis requires some creativity, for the challenge is to place the raw data into logical, meaningful categories; to examine them in a holistic fashion; and to find a way to communicate this interpretation to others" (p.55).

Categories were chosen based on criteria from Merriam (2009), "categories should be responsive to the purpose of the research, exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitizing, and conceptually congruent" (p.186).

The next step for analyzing the data categories was further theorizing about the meaning of those categories in relation to the research questions. Punch (2009) asserts that the most important stages of analysis of qualitative data include abstracting and comparing. The purpose of abstracting is to summarize the data to develop "higher order concepts" (Punch, 2009). According to Punch (2009), "when we infer a concept from an indicator in the data, we are abstracting – going upwards from a piece of empirical data to a more abstract concept" (p.184). Throughout the process, reflections, thoughts, and ideas were noted on the margins of the printed transcripts as well as within the spreadsheets of data using comments for specific cells and columns. Comparing was then used to further identify abstract concepts by finding the

similarities and differences between participants' responses (Punch, 2009). Various quotes were

extracted from the interviews to enhance the explanation of the findings (Al-Awidi & Ismail,

2012).

Chapter IV: Results

This study was designed to gain a deeper understanding of blended learning in Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. The problem of the study is to examine teacher perceptions of the type of use, reasons for use, and barriers to the use, of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs.

The study participants included teachers of Adult Basic Education ESL who used blended learning in some capacity. The participants taught in urban and rural settings within a three-hour driving radius from a large metropolitan area in the Midwest of the United States of America. There were participants from programs in a large metropolitan area and other programs north, south, east and west of the large metropolitan area. The researcher deferred to the participant for choosing a location for the study interview, but encouraged a library or office setting for practical purposes. The interviews took place in libraries, classrooms, a participants' home, and at an educational conference. In each setting, the interview protocol was followed and data was gathered via a handheld recording device as well as via a laptop computer as a backup. The interview included an introduction, signing of the consent forms, interview items, and a wrap-up to the interview with a thank you and a summary of next steps. This chapter contains a summary of the findings of this study.

Interview Results Overview

The interview items, setting, and tone set by the researcher were meant to invite elaboration and this is evident in the extensive responses provided by the participants. Each of the interview questions is listed below as an interview item, for ease of organization of the data. These are the interview items:

1. What is your adult ESL class like?

2. What kind of technology tools do you use in your classroom for student learning?

3. What is your understanding of the meaning of blended learning?

4. How do you use blended learning with your students?

5. What types of blended learning do you use most often and why?

6. Why do you choose to use blended learning with your class?

7. What factors do you consider before implementing blended learning with your students?

8. Are there any blended learning techniques that you would like to use but have not? If so, what are they and what keeps you from using them?

9. Do you experience any barriers or challenges to using blended learning with your students? If so, what are they?

10. Do you think there are any barriers to other teachers adopting blended learning or in the field of adult ESL in general? If so, what are they?

A narrative description of participant responses follows each interview item below. Even though this is a qualitative study, some of the results are displayed in tables to more easily visualize the findings. According to Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2008), "When data are few and simple, readers can grasp them as easily in a sentence as in a table. If you present more than a few numbers readers will struggle to keep them straight" (p.213). Therefore, when patterns emerged during data analysis, the decision to add tables was made to add clarity for the reader.

Interview Item 1

What is your adult ESL class like?

Participants reported that their classes ranged from pre-literacy to advanced ESL with some classes presenting multiple levels of ESL in one class, or a one-room schoolhouse format. Participants reported their class sizes as between 15 and 35 students per class. Participants described their students as: ages 19 to over 65, from a variety of different countries around the world, with a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The participants reported that their students had a variety of educational backgrounds ranging from no formal education to the highest levels of graduate school. The participants also reported that the students in their classes had a variety of educational and life goals including obtaining a GED or diploma, improving English language skills to better communicate with staff in their children's schools, preparing for entrance into college, and pursuing a different career path or being promoted in their current job.

Interview Item 2

What kind of technology tools do you use in your classroom for student learning?

The types of technology tools used by participants for their Adult Basic Education ESL classes varied. Participants' reported on the types of technologies that they use with their students. A list of types of technologies used, how many participants used each, and a percentage (rounded to the nearest integer) of participants using each type is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Types of Technology Used*

Technology tools	Number of participants using each type	Percentage of participants using each type
Laptop computers	10	91%
Cellphones	6	55%
Computers in a computer lab	5	45%
Tablets	4	36%
Smartboards	2	18%

Laptop computers. Ten of the participants, or 91% of the participants reported using laptop computers for blended learning with their students. In the case of laptop computers, four participants mentioned preferring other types of laptop computers over Chromebook computers.

When explaining the difference between other types of laptop computers and Chromebooks, one participant stated, "*We have access to Chromebook computers, but I find it a huge waste of time to have to sign-in because if they don't use it every day they forget*." The participant further explained that the students did not need to sign-in to the other type of laptop. Along that same line, another participant stated, "*I used to use Chromebooks, but now I use MacBooks because they are easier for students to use.*"

Cellphones. Six of the participants, or 55% of the participants reported using cellphones for blended learning with their students. Though six of the participants reported facilitating and assisting with students' use of smartphones in class, only one of the participants reported actively

designing blended learning lesson plans around cellphone use. The teachers did encourage their students to use smartphones throughout the class and outside of the classroom for studying. Quotes from participants about cellphone use among students can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: *Cellphone Use*

Participants	Quotes
B	*Today during class, they learned how to use [a distance learning platform]. That's not for use in-class. That's distance learning. Students access my website via their cellphones.*
D	*Students are not supposed to use cellphones for personal use, but they look up new words during class.*
E	*It's definitely encouraged. I tell them to bring them [cellphones] and that it's a tool.*
F	*I use cellphone texting with my students for homework. They use their cellphones all the time.*
I	*It's a tool to use. The learning that they can do with the applications on their phone is very helpful.*

Computers in a computer lab. Five of the participants, or 45% of the participants reported using computers in a computer lab for blended learning with their students. In the case of desktop computers, three out of the five participants had access to computer labs with enough computers for all of the students in their class. The other two participants had access to desktop computers that numbered less than the students in their class. In these cases, the participants reported that they would use the rotation model of blended learning.

Tablets. Four of the participants, or 36% of the participants reported using tablets for blended learning with their students. All four of the participants who reported using tablets with their students also reported not having enough tablets for students to each use a device. One

participant reported only having one iPad to use with students. The participant made use of this one iPad with the lowest level student for tracing letters and learning the alphabet, one-on-one with a volunteer tutor.

Smartboards. Two of the participants, or 18% of the participants reported using smartboards for blended learning with their students. Both of the two participants who reported using smartboards, were the only teachers in their program that used a smartboard with their class. Both participants reported using the smartboard for whole group blended learning as a projector because it was connected to a teacher computer. One of the participants reported using the smartboard interactively with students, but only occasionally.

Interview Item 3

What is your understanding of the meaning of blended learning?

Although two of the 11 participants reported that the term blended learning was not clear to them, all of the participants reported that they had been using different techniques with their classes that would qualify as types of blended learning. A theme emerged from participant responses to the prompt: "What is blended learning?" The theme was a common understanding of the meaning of the term blended learning. Participants agreed that blended learning should be a blend of technology usage with the face-to-face curriculum to accelerate student learning and not be a disconnected piece of the educational process. A collection of quotes from participants who provided their definitions of blended learning can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: *The Meaning of Blended Learning*

Participants	Quotes
A	*It should be related to what you're teaching, extending that learning.*
B	*It is a folding in of digital resources where they are applicable to student learning. An important aspect is face-to-face.*
C	*Blended learning is like a blender, like mixed with technology.*
D	*Using technology along with learning face-to-face.*
E	*It's incorporated digital learning.*
F	*There should be a connection between what students are learning online with what they are learning in class.*
G	*It is an integration of using technology and classroom instruction in a way that helps the learner rather than just separate pieces that don't really interconnect.*
H	*Blended learning is a combination of using technology and traditional classroom instruction.*
I	*I think it depends. I see blended learning as distance learning with face-to-face.*
J	*Using a variety of modes and technology.*
K	*There is some teacher time and some online time.*

Interview Item 4

How do you use blended learning with your students?

In response to this question, participants described blended learning activities that they did with their students. Excerpts from participants responses are in Table 4.

Table 4: *Blended Learning Activities*

Participants	Activities
A	*First, they look in the textbook at a job ad, then they use [a word processing program] to create their own, and they use the internet to search [an online job search website]. I have them search for different jobs and then have them practice searching for that company. They use that information they find out about the company.*
B	*We had a discussion about freedom. I had them search more information about different types of freedom and then go to my website and click on the link that has today's date. This is our routine. This brings them to a [online form]. They complete a short answer question about which freedom is most important. Then there are multiple-choice questions and some grammar practice. For students who finish early I have options for them so they can link to some readings and read independently or practice typing, or do some vocabulary practice with [a vocabulary practice website]. Then, we come together as a whole class and look at the [online form] results.*
C	*I use it in pretty much everything. For example, to learn vocabulary on their own they use [a vocabulary practice website], but to practice together they use [a vocabulary practice website] in class. They love it!*
D	*We use [two different distance learning platforms].*
E	*Depending on where they are at, I use [an online English language learning website] or [a library system]. If a student has a question like: How do you make an appointment? I put it up on the screen so everybody in class can see as I type: Good morning, this is so and so, how may I help you? I can also go back and forth with [an online translation website].*

F	*The students read 10 minutes per week on the internet. They choose what to read. Then, they respond via text to the teacher. I give them sentence starters like: The most interesting thing I learned was…*
G	*They work on the computer for half an hour each class day. They also use cellphone apps. Last year we used [an online English language learning website]. We are also using things like [a beginner level online English language learning website], [a vocabulary practice website], or [another English language learning website],.*
H	*For example, they learn vocabulary using flashcards. Then, they find the word and write it next to the picture. So then, I find [an English language learning website], component that matches this. On [the English language learning website], they can listen, write, and match.*
I	*They are working on [an online digital literacy assessment]. They also use [an online educational website]. For the night students, [a distance learning platform] is one third of their education.*
J	*I get stories from [a college]. I project the stories on the smartboard and we read them as a group. Then, they read the story with a partner or a volunteer. Then, they go to the computer and they do them on the computer. Then, we go back and talk about the stories as a whole class.*
K	*We use [an online English language learning website] and show them how they can use it at home. We also do it in class.*

Interview Item 5

What types of blended learning do you use most often and why?

As reported by the participants, the types of technology available informed teacher choices about which type of blended learning to use with their class. The types of blended learning used with students varied from class to class and teacher to teacher. The participants reported their use of different blended learning models and this is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: *Blended Learning Models*

Blended learning model	Number of participants using each model	Percentage of participants using each model
Distance Learning Model	9	82%
Rotation Model	9	82%
Self-Blend Model	8	73%
Whole Group Model	7	64%
Flex Model	2	18%
Flipped Classroom Model	0	0%

As reported by the study participants, each program and each classroom had a variety of versions and approaches to each model.

Distance learning model. Nine of the participants, or 82% of the participants reported using the distance learning model for blended learning with their students. The distance learning model was reported to be one of the most often used blended learning models. Although, in general, participants reported that a disadvantage of the distance learning platform was that the

online content was not aligned to in-class content. Participants reported that only some of the students used distance learning and distance learning was only used at certain times of the year. One participant explained, "*Some of my students do distance learning during the summer. It's available for the motivated students*."

Another participant stated, "*I don't think our program does ESL distance learning. Instead, the reason I set up a [teacher website] was because it reinforces the websites that I think are valuable. They can use it on their cellphone at home*."

In some cases, only certain students were provided the option of distance learning as an addition to face-to-face classes, as reported by one participant. In this participant's class, there were two students who had degrees in higher education in their first language and were digitally literate. Those two students were having trouble with transportation and balancing school and their work schedule, so they were provided the option of distance learning to supplement in-class instruction.

Those participants that reported use of the distance learning model stated that their programs offered one or more of a variety of distance learning platforms.

One participant explained their program's distance learning option. According to this participant, teachers set up the daytime students with an account, but didn't monitor anything past that and night students were monitored only based on how much time they spend on the distance learning platform. Another participant reported that the night students were required to have three hours of distance learning a week because they were in class for less time than the day students.

Rotation model. Nine of the participants, or 82% of the participants reported using the rotation model for blended learning with their students. Those participants who reported using the lab rotation model, used it along with the station rotation model. None of the participants reported using the individual rotation model.

There were two participants who reported having a technology specialist, referred to as a "*tech person*" by one of the participants, facilitate the computer lab during the rotation model of blended learning. According to one participant, another group of students stayed in the classroom with the teacher who would facilitate the learning. Another participant reported including a third station where students worked with a paid classroom literacy assistant. According to this participant, in this classroom, groups of students rotated twice during the class according to a set schedule in order to learn from each station in the rotation model of blended learning.

Other participants reported rotating the whole class to the computer lab during designated computer lab time on a routine set schedule each week based on availability and sharing with other classes.

One participant reported using the rotation model out of necessity because there were only enough computers for a small group of students to be on computers at one time. In other words, this participant did not have much choice in the selection of the rotation model, while another participant would choose to use the rotation model, yet ended up not being able to use it with the class because of various reasons.

One participant reported having used the rotation model in the past and finding benefit in it, but discontinued this particular blended learning model because the number of students in the

class increased and it was too difficult for the students to move around the room. Thus, according to this participant, the rotation model would no longer be effective.

Self-blend model. Eight of the participants, or 73% of the participants reported using the self-blend model for blended learning with their students. The self-blend model of blended learning provided students the opportunity to take lessons of one's choosing at home or outside of class. One of the participants stated that a benefit of using the self-blend model: "*I use it [the Self-Blend Model] with my class. They can move at their own pace.*"

Participants reported using the self-blend model to provide more options for students to supplement what was learned in class. One participant described part of a blended learning lesson with an activity using an online form: "*Part of it is very topical about what we are doing in class and part of it is stand-alone options. Then, we come together as a whole class and look at [the online form] results.*" Another participant also gave an example of a self-blend lesson to describe the benefits of this type of blended learning. This participant explained the self-blend portion of one blended class as a form of differentiation:

> *After the main activity I told them to work on whatever they need to learn. For example, if I need to learn the pronunciation of those words, I click on pronunciation. I let them choose whatever they need to work on at their own pace. If they finish early, I have more to give them.*

Other participants reported using the self-blend model of blended learning as a way to provide students material about topics that would not be offered in class. There were three participants who reported creating class websites for this purpose.

One participant described that a student was using the self-blend model as a way to become literate in Spanish which was the student's first language. This participant explained that literacy in a first language can support literacy in a second. Other students in this participant's class were studying citizenship as a separate topic from class materials because it was specific to their personal situations outside of school.

Whole group model. Seven of the participants, or 64% of the participants reported using the whole group model for blended learning with their students. There were two main interpretations of the whole group model that emerged from responses by the participants. One interpretation of the whole group model was of a teacher led blended learning lesson. For example, as reported by the participants who used the whole group model, the teacher would project an online activity on the board for the whole class to work on together. In another version of the whole group model reported by the participants, the students would stay in the classroom in their usual seats, each student with a device, and working on the same activity simultaneously or switching back and forth between face-to-face focus and online focus. Quotes from participants about their use of the whole group model for blended learning are in Table 6.

Table 6: *Whole Group Model*

Participants	Quotes
A	*I look up pictures using [an online search engine] for the whole class to see and discuss.*
B	*A daily routine is to fill out [an online form] individually. We look at results together on the board.*
C	*I do [a live online activity] with them.*
E	*I have [a translation website] up on the board and we'll run through the lesson typing it out in English having it being translated into whatever the primary languages are and flip it back and forth.*
H	*We have a smartboard. The students can come up and interactively circle the word or type in things.*
J	*We do flashcards on [a vocabulary practice website] together. Then, the students practice vocabulary on their laptops.*

Flex model. Two of the participants, or 18% of the participants reported using the flex model for blended learning with their students. Both of the participants reported using the flex model for differentiation in teaching writing. The participants reported that those students who took longer to write or had more edits to make would continue to do so at their desks and those students who had higher English language levels in writing or had finished more quickly would type their edited writing on the computer. One participant explained that the flex model is helpful during writing lessons for students who missed class. The students in that participant class who

had missed class would first write using paper and pencil and then move on to the computer lab. The other participant used laptops in the classroom, so students who had missed class would stay at the same desks as they had previously written using paper and pencil or pen.

Flipped classroom model. None of the participants reported using the flipped classroom model, but this model was mentioned by three of the participants during the prompt about types of blended learning.

One of the participants declared that the flipped model wouldn't work because the students work all night, they need to get their kids ready for school, and they "*hopefully sleep after class*". This participant also cited not having managed enrollment and small class sizes as a reason for not using the flipped classroom model.

Another participant said that students not having access to the internet outside of school is the main reason against using the flipped classroom model and further explained that the students sometimes used the library for internet access, but that doing so was difficult for them.

Another participant also referred to access to technology as an issue for students at home. Instead of the flipped classroom model, this participant gave the students optional homework via email for over the weekend. Other optional homework was provided for the students who didn't have a computer at home. The participant stated, "*I would like to try flipped classroom, but some [students] work 60 hours a week already and are falling asleep in class or don't have computers at home*."

Interview Item 6

Why do you choose to use blended learning with your class?

Participants provided a variety of responses to this question that show reflection and consideration of students and their needs. Quotes from participants about why they choose to use blended learning are listed in Table 7.

Table 7: *Reasons for Using Blended Learning*

Participants	Quotes
A	*I think it is more interesting, students have more interest, it generates more conversation, and it's easier to explain things.*
B	*The printed curriculum is horrifying. The textbook provides woefully inadequate grammar support materials and reading materials. I would be creating my own curriculum anyway. With digital learning, it is so much easier and I can access it at home. Also, blended learning gives them the courage that they need to go out into the world and not be afraid. It is important to have hands-on the hardware as well as accessing the world of information that they need to live in this country.*
C	*Everyone uses technology in their life.*
D	*Because I think they need it. It's everywhere.*
E	*It's non-restrictive. It really helps. It's up to them. If they have the drive, I don't need to stand there with them. They are taking it and it becomes intrinsic. They're doing their own learning and it becomes their personal drive to set their own goals.*

| F | *I think technology is important for our students.* |

| G | *I think that students need to be able to use technology and I think that it leverages their ability to learn language.* |

| H | *There are so many learning styles that using blended learning can address. Languages are learned through repetition and it is one more way to get them to learn. It keeps them going also because we have open enrollment.* |

| I | *I believe learning can take place through a variety of means. Since they have language difficulties it is important to use a variety of methods in order to be sure that they are understanding what we are talking about.* |

| J | *The students need the visuals. There are many things you can do. The students can work at their own pace and not have to have a lesson that is all teacher directed. It keeps them more engaged. It's really hard to listen in another language for like 2.5-hour classes, so you have to break it up. You have to do a variety of things, not just listening to a teacher.* |

| K | *They have to use computers. It's just a fact this day and age. It's the world we are living in.* |

Interview Item 7

What factors do you consider before implementing blended learning with your students?

Categories emerged as participants discussed the factors that influence their decision to use blended learning. There were seven common factors that emerged, including positive and negative factors that influenced the teachers' use of blended learning. The categories of factors include student factors, time, technology and classroom environment, teacher factors, leadership, and support staff. The number of participants reporting each influencing factor and percentage of participants reporting each influencing factor is listed in Table 8.

Table 8: *Influencing Factors for Implementation*

Factors	Number of Participants Reporting Influencing Factors	Percentage of participants reporting influencing factors
Student factors	11	100%
Time	6	55%
Technology and classroom environment	5	45%
Teacher factors	4	36%
Leadership	4	36%
Support staff	2	18%

Student factors. All 11 of the participants reported considering student factors before using blended learning with their students. The results of the interview showed that there were a number of different factors about an Adult Basic Education ESL class that could directly or indirectly affect teacher perceptions of what should be taught. While interviewing the participants about the characteristics of their classes, a theme emerged. The theme that emerged was that, according to the participants' perceptions, Adult Basic Education ESL students were

unique as compared to students in their youth (K-12 schooling) because the adults had no requirement to attend class. In other words, the adult students chose to be in class. One participant stated, "*They don't have to be here. They are eager to learn.*" Another participant described the students' mindset as ready to go as soon as they arrive to class saying, "*Okay I'm here to get started with the learning.*" Another participant further explained, *"There is a wide-eyed desire to learn in adult ESL students. There is a sense of appreciation for education. They are intentionally being there and intentionally learning."*

The participants reported class sizes between 15 and over 35 students with an age range of students between 19 years old and older than 60. The participants all mentioned that they consciously considered the needs of adults as learners. One participant explained that:

> *Adults need some freedom about determining what they learn based on their learning style, interest, and energy level for that day. An adult learning person has so many layers for them to figure out while they're learning content. You can't just bring up the online program and give it to the learner.*

The uniqueness of an Adult Basic Education ESL class became evident as the participants continued to describe their students. Two of the participants stated that the Adult Basic Education ESL students have a wide range of backgrounds including education, jobs, and life experience. All of the participants reported having students from all over the world. Of the 11 participants, six of them specifically mentioned Somali and Spanish speaking students as the largest groups of students in their classes. According to the participants, English language levels varied from student to student. One participant reported teaching a range of three English language levels in one class. Another participant reported having a "*one-room schoolhouse*"

format for classes with students ranging from beginning to high intermediate English language

levels. Another participant stated, "*It can be hard to explain technology tools if students are very*

low level English. I have them do partner work, translating into a first language."

According to the participants, the students' reasons for attending Adult Basic Education

ESL class varied. One participant explained:

> *Some [students] are here because they want to get a better job, or they need childcare, or*
>
> *government assistance. Some people want to go to college. There are a variety of reasons*
>
> *why people are here [in Adult Basic Education ESL]*."

Student buy-in was also reported as a student factor. As one participant put it:

> *You have to get the students on board and explain what you are doing, to have them see*
>
> *value in it. My hope is that if I can get the students to buy-in, I blend it well enough, and I*
>
> *find activities that they find value in, that they'll put more time in. They'll be more*
>
> *engaged in learning inside and outside of the classroom.*

Time. Six of the participants, or 55% of the participants reported considering time factors

before using blended learning with their students. The time factor, as reported by the

participants, included time preparing blended learning lessons and pre-teaching content.

Participants reported time as a benefit, only if the blended learning lesson was designed properly

and improved the efficiency of the class. The participants reported time as a negative factor if

preparing the blended learning lesson took more preparation than a traditional lesson. One

participant stated, "*I try to use blended learning as an offshoot of what is being taught in class. If*

I can marry the digital literacy and the content together then it's all reinforced."

Technology and classroom environment. Five of the participants, or 45% of the participants reported considering technology resources and the classroom environment before using blended learning with their students. In general, the participants reported that their Adult Basic Education ESL programs offer morning classes and evening classes between one hour and over three hours. According to participant responses, some of the programs offer afternoon classes as well. For example, one participant taught Adult Basic Education ESL in an early childhood family literacy program in the afternoon after teaching a three-hour ESL class in the morning.

Participant schedules varied. One participant reported teaching three different classes per day at three different English language levels. At this program, the morning and evening classes were regular Adult Basic Education ESL classes and the afternoon classes are career preparation classes that were considered part of Adult Basic Education ESL. This participant considered the English level of the students of each class before choosing a blended learning activity.

Two of the participants reported teaching beginning literacy and pre-literacy which was considered the lowest level of English language ability. One participant reported having the lowest level English language students work one-on-one with a volunteer using an iPad.

Another participant mentioned the ease and compatibility of programs with different technology as a factor for deciding whether or which technology to use for a particular blended learning lesson.

Teacher factors. Four of the participants, or 36% of the participants reported considering teacher factors before using blended learning with their students. Before implementing a blended learning lesson, the participants considered their own digital literacy skills and training.

Participants reported gauging their confidence with the device, program, or activity that they would be using with the students. Unfamiliarity with the smartboard was one participant's justification for why the technology had not been used with the class. Another participant stated, "*We had the hardware, but we didn't have the training*" and yet another participant said, "*I don't know how to show my students how to use the distance learning platforms because we are isolated out here.*" This participant further clarified what was meant by *"isolated*" by explaining that some of the classes are not at the main educational site and the teachers who teach their classes in other buildings received less training than at the main site.

Leadership. Four of the participants, or 36% of the participants reported considering leadership factors before using blended learning with their students. Participants reported that requirements by school administration and leadership at the state level were factors that influenced them to use blended learning. Two of the participants reported that the reason they had decided to use blended learning in their class was because their administrator had told them that it was a requirement of their job and that there were state requirements that necessitated the teaching of digital literacy skills in Adult Basic Education ESL programs.

Support staff. Two of the participants, or 18% of the participants reported considering support staff factors before using blended learning with their students. Participants considered having support staff available as a beneficial factor for implementing blended learning. One of the participants stated that the rotation model was possible because the program has a designated technology specialist who facilitated the computer lab. This participant further stated that having a literacy assistant in the classroom was very helpful when implementing a blended learning lesson. Other participants reported the availability of volunteers as a deciding factor for whether

they would attempt to implement a blended lesson or not. When the participants discussed

implementation factors, the support staff factor overlapped with the technology and classroom

environment factor. This was especially the case, according to the participants, when the

maintenance of digital devices was supported by technology support staff.

Interview Item 8

Are there any blended learning techniques that you would like to use but have not? If so, what

are they and what keeps you from using them?

Teachers reported on blended learning techniques that they had seen other teachers try,

had talked about with other teachers, or had seen in educational publications. Quotes about

blended learning techniques that participants would have liked to try but had not, are listed in

Table 9.

Table 9: *Techniques to Try*

Participants	Quotes
A	*I would like my students to use my website as homework and keep a log of what they read because when I conference with the students, they complain that their reading scores are too low. I just haven't gotten to it. I plan to do it this year.*
B	*I would like to create more blended learning content, but it is limited by my time prepping. I would like to use more videos as extended learning and find more things that relate to class content. I don't have any time to explore or create because I already use more than my prep time.*
C	*I would like to do more of the flex model and I would like them to do more distance learning, but they do not because of their limited English.*

D	*I haven't done [an English language learning website], but I would like to. I haven't gotten to it yet. I would also like to use the rotation model if my class were smaller.*
E	*I think what would be kind of neat would be the flipped classroom. The biggest part of that is the availability of time and access to a computer for students at home.*
F	*I would like to do the cellphone texting activity again, but use tablets for reading. It was hard to get them to do the homework the first time around.*
G	*I'm kind of interested in the flipped model. It's more difficult.*
H	*There are so many very good resources to be used that I need to pick and choose. I need more time. If I'm not given more time, a change in the restrictive state requirements.*
I	*I am looking forward to my new Chromebooks cart this year. I did not have individual laptops for students in the past.*
J	*I would love to have iPads so they can record themselves. It's easier to do than on a sound recorder on a desktop. The manager said no because we have a lot of budget issues.*
K	*I would like to use the smartboard as a whole class in conjunction with the units.* *I would like to do more modeling what they should be doing and look at their progress online.* *I could. In a perfect world I would, but mostly I don't have time.*

Interview Item 9

Do you experience any barriers or challenges to using blended learning with your students? If so, what are they?

The participants reported a variety of barriers to the implementation of blended learning with their classes. The participants were to consider the barriers to blended learning implementation. A summary of barriers to the use of blended learning, as reported by participants, can be seen in Table 10.

Table 10: *Barriers*

Barriers	Number of participants reporting barriers	Percentage of participants reporting barriers
Student barriers	10	91%
Lack of appropriate training	10	91%
Time constraints	7	64%
Lack of functional technology	5	45%
Lack of student buy-in	3	27%

Student barriers. Ten of the participants, or 91% of the participants reported student barriers. The participants reported a variety of barriers related to students including: low digital literacy skills, low literacy in both first language and in English, not remembering usernames and passwords, and low comfort level in regards to the use of technology.

To illustrate the low digital literacy skills of students in beginning or pre-lit Adult Basic Education ESL classes, one participant stated:

You can't send low level ESL students home to do distance learning, if one thing goes wrong they will get lost. We get them all set up with [an online platform] for distance learning, but then they can't use it at home because it asks for backslashes or something. Even in the computer lab they can get lost on the computer and somehow lose the program we were working on several times. It is a lot of work just getting them to use the mouse.

To further expound on the topic of students' digital literacy skills as a barrier to the blended learning for those students who also have low English language skills, one participant stated:

Beginning level needs me to be with them the whole time. They get lost in the advertising or just lost on technology in general. They need someone there. They don't have enough English for me to explain what's happening if there's a problem with their computer. This can be a distraction from the learning.

Even in the intermediate level ESL courses, participants reported student barriers from low digital literacy skills. One participant provided an example, *"Once they are in a program interface it's very simple, but it's the little things like what happens when an error message comes up, that will stop them."* The participant further explained that the students would see an error message and immediately stop working and wait for the teacher without trying to solve the problem on their own.

Another participant expanded on the issue by stating,

The way language is presented [on the internet] is a barrier. It is visually very cluttered and requires higher reading skills than they [the students] have yet, but they are required to use it every day to be part of this world.

Furthermore, one participant presented the idea that, "*older students really struggle because they didn't grow up with it, for the younger students it's not an issue as much.*" This participant was explaining that the elder students didn't grow up with technology as an integral part of their lives which can make learning digital literacy skills more difficult for them than people who grew up using digital devices and online technologies their whole lives.

Lack of appropriate training. Ten of the participants, or 91% of the participants reported lack of appropriate training as a barrier. While the participants reported that there were training options available to them, they did not consider those options viable or appropriate. From one participant's perspective the technology support staff person that was supposed to be available for training staff at that Adult Basic Education ESL program was not helpful.

Time constraints. Seven of the participants, or 54% of the participants reported time constraints as a barrier. The participants expressed the sentiment that the use of technology can be a time constraint because of the time it takes for students to access the content through the digital devices. One participant mentioned that students forgetting their usernames and passwords takes up a lot of class time. Additionally, according to participants, the logistics of the use of technology in a classroom can take away from learning time, as stated by another participant, *"I spend most of the time passing them [digital devices] out, trying to get them [the students] logged in and putting them away, plugged in, charged, and everything cleaned up. When the technology doesn't work, it's much worse."*

In some cases, the participants reported a desire to implement more effective blended learning classes, but some unavoidable time constraints were reported as a barrier. One participant stated that students coming in late and leaving early can cut into class time. If there was more time, another participant explained, "*I would like to check their progress online, but I don't. I don't have time.*"

Lack of functional technology. Five of the participants, or 45% of the participants reported a lack of functional technology. Participants reported different ways that the technology itself can be a barrier. Lack of functional technology, according to participants, can come in the form of the number of devices available at a certain time for use by their students during class, student ability to access technology at home, and functionality of technology in the classroom environment.

One participant reported that computers "*breaking down constantly*" and another participant reported tablets not easily connecting to the WiFi. Additionally, one participant said that sometimes the smartboard was not working which was the class's main mode of online technology for whole class blended learning. Another participant explained that if the technology is not functioning it can throw off the class and time is wasted.

One participant reported that technology can be expensive for an Adult Basic Education ESL program's budget and so in some cases there are not enough devices for the whole class. Another participant stated that in addition to not having enough computers, at their program the computers were not easily accessible, "*We only have so many computers for so many students.*" According to that participant, the students go back and forth between the classroom and the computers that are in the hallway. Another participant described a similar situation, "*Technology*

devices are on a cart in a classroom really far away from me, plus I can never remember the code to unlock it."

According to the participants, lack of technology can also be a barrier for students at home. It can make it difficult for students to participate in blended learning if a portion of the learning is happening outside of the classroom on the internet. One participant stated, "*Access is an issue. Sometimes they go to the library, but it's difficult. Some of them use their phones.*"

Lack of technology is not the only issue that was brought up by the participants that relates to access for students. One participant provided an example, "*A person can have a smartphone, but if they don't have WiFi they are not able to access it*" and another participant stated, "*Even if we gave every student a computer to take home, some of them don't have WiFi to access the internet.*"

Lack of student buy-in. Three of the participants, or 27% of the participants reported a lack of student buy-in. According to the participants, student but-in was an issue for them with the implementation of blended learning. One participant argued that, "*We need student buy-in, intrinsic motivation.*" Another participant suggested that teachers need more training on how to get student buy-in specifically for Adult Basic Education ESL students rather than K-12 children.

Interview Item 10

Do you think there are any barriers to other teachers adopting blended learning or in the field of adult ESL in general? If so, what are they?

Though the participants reported a number of barriers to using blended learning, the majority of the participants mentioned an appreciation for the autonomy provided to teachers in their programs and the field of Adult Basic Education. In general, the participants felt that they

have the freedom to teach as they see fit. One participant stated, "*Each teacher has autonomy as far as how they run and what they do in the class.*"

Leadership. Although only seven of the participants cited leadership as a barrier in and of itself, all 11 of the participants had suggestions for leadership in the field of Adult Basic Education ESL to more effectively influence teachers with their use of blended learning. For example, one participant suggested:

Leadership should come into the classroom more, not to evaluate, but to listen. Ask the teacher what they need to get this going and then provide them time, not hardware thrown at them with no prep time. Find other programs where [blended learning] is working, find things that are working at every ESL level, ask for feedback from teachers, listen, support, provide funding for teachers who are willing to go the extra mile. Also, leadership should be trained in technology and encourage innovation instead of dismissing things that are not understood [by leadership] right away.

From the perspective of the participants, leadership who do not have experience in the field of Adult Basic Education or who do not have experience with low level adult ESL students can become a barrier for teachers who want to use blended learning in their classrooms. One participant explained that iPads would have been useful for the students, but leadership did not understand the need for the iPads because, according to this participant, the school leader lacked experience with Adult Basic Education ESL students who have low digital literacy skills. One participant provided an example in which the supervisor had implied that using the computer-assisted language learning tools with students should be easy because all the teacher had to do was let the students go to the computer lab and use the program. This participant explained that

this would not work with the low English level students because they do not have high enough digital literacy skills to access the information meant to be learned by using the program.

Additionally, this participant stated that there was also a mismanagement of funds. The participant surmised that this was because of a misunderstanding of how Adult Basic Education ESL students learn, by certain people in management positions.

Other participants had suggestions for leadership of how to promote blended learning in general. One participant suggested that blended learning initiatives should come from the "*bottom up. Let teachers try things. Let it get messy. This is much different from planning.*" Another participant would agree with that participant and this was illustrated in the following quote:

> *Leadership should be open. I really appreciate being able to bring new ideas to leadership at my program. It needs to be bottom-up. The top needs to facilitate and make things available, but strategy needs to come from the classroom.*

Training. One participant argued that some of the other teachers who didn't know how to use certain technology tools last year, still didn't know how to use them this year. Participants agreed that some of the training that was reported as available for teachers is not appropriate because it does not relate to the specific field of Adult Basic Education ESL. "*We are starving! We need training and resources appropriate for adults, not K-12*" stated one of the participants. Also, referring to district level training, one participant's perspective was that, "*the training is crappy because it's coming from K-12 and doesn't apply to adult learners*."

Referring to training at the state level, one participant stated, "*There is a lot of training available, but I don't think it translates to the classroom.*"

Also referring to ineffective training, one participant said, "*A barrier is the feeling that we could spend a whole bunch of time on a certain type of technology and then it's just going to go away in another year or two*." According to another participant, this can affect teacher buy-in. One participant stated, "*Adding anything new means something else has to go*."

Teacher buy-in. All of the participants mentioned a blended learning model that they would like to try if barriers were removed. It must be taken into consideration that these participants do not represent all or even most of the teachers in the field of Adult Basic Education ESL. While on participant observed that, "*there are a lot of people who know a lot about technology in our field,*" others noted that some other teachers in the field do not have buy-in to the use of blended learning among Adult Basic Education ESL programs. One participant stated, "*Teachers who are uncomfortable will fight tooth and nail. You need to get them comfortable with a tool*." Another participant explained that in general, "*ABE [Adult Basic Education] is behind the curve. There is still a tendency to stick with the traditional style of teaching. There will be resistance to something new*."

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, Discussion, Limitations, and Recommendations

There are a variety of blended learning models that are being used in Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. This study explores the types of blended learning, the factors to consider before implementation, and the barriers and challenges involved in using blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. This chapter includes a summary of the study, conclusions drawn, a discussion, limitations, and recommendations for both practice and future research.

Summary

The rationale for the study stems from the need to explore blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs as it develops as a new practice (Rosen & Stewart, 2015). "Students today are electronically connected, and they expect their learning to be connected as well" (Dunn, 2011, p. 60).

"Research related to BL [Blended Learning] is relatively undeveloped compared to research in distance and traditional learning environments" (Graham, 2013, p. 338). Due to the lack of research on the topic of blended learning, specifically in the area of Adult Basic Education ESL, and the responses from the participants, it is clear that there needs to be more information gathered from the field and research on blended learning in this area. The unit of analysis is teacher perceptions, but the aim is to inform leadership.

Introduction. There are programs specifically for adults learning English as a Second Language within Adult Basic Education programs. The students who are studying Adult Basic Education ESL may or may not be simultaneously enrolled in other programs provided in Adult Basic Education. According to Burnett (2015), "In every society, education plays an important

role in social and economic transformation; it equips learners with the necessary social and intellectual skills that enable them to be self-reliant and effective members of society" (p.5). There are different pathways within Adult Basic Education which include: (1) variations of diploma or basic skills courses, (2) English language learning, (3) parent education, (4) career preparation, (5) citizenship education, and (6) digital literacy or distance learning education (Overview of Adult Basic Education (ABE) in Minnesota, 2018).

Adult Basic Education programs assisting in these aims are available nationwide at no cost to students (Overview of Adult Basic Education (ABE) in Minnesota, 2018). According to the participants of this study, these programs are beginning to adopt blended learning programs for their schools to enhance student learning of life skills and facilitate the English language learning process. Blended learning can be used in education as a strategy to differentiate learning, access a variety of resources online, and offer flexibility in terms of time and place for learners (Brooke, 2017). This study focuses on this specific type of program within Community Education, here referred to as Adult Basic Education ESL.

The literature review. Chapter 2 outlined research surrounding technology in education, blended learning, adult learners, and teacher perceptions. According to Burnett (2015) "As a consequence of globalization, the world today functions as a homogenous entity because of the communicative capabilities provided by technology" (p.8). Technology has been transforming classrooms in different ways that influence how Adult Basic Education ESL programs function. Burnett (2015) explained that "in this time of web and computer technology, adult learners are increasingly becoming involved in vocational learning and lifelong education" (p.12). The statement by Burnett (2015) applies to the mission of Adult Basic Education in Minnesota which

was stated in the Overview of Adult Basic Education (ABE) in Minnesota (2018), "The mission of Adult Basic Education in Minnesota is to provide adults with educational opportunities to acquire and improve their literacy skills necessary to become self-sufficient and to participate effectively as productive workers, family members, and citizens" (para. 1).

Burnett (2015) pointed out that "in every society, education plays an important role in social and economic transformation; it equips learners with the necessary social and intellectual skills that enable them to be self-reliant and effective members of society." Blended learning is showing up in classrooms, as evidenced by participant responses, as teachers and programs are adapting to changes in education. This study is based on the assumption that blended learning is beneficial to adult student learning because of the flexibility and infinite possibilities that it offers to adapt content to student needs and interests. More specifically blended learning can be used in multiple different ways to personalize and streamline course content for more optimal learning (Staker & Horn, 2012). It is crucial to find ways to personalize content in an Adult Basic Education ESL setting because of the unique and varying needs of the students. From the study by Knowles (1973) emerged andragogy, a field of study that focuses on the instruction of adults. Allen (2016) states, "adult learning proponents generally largely agree adult learners can be afforded an authentic learning experience through a mix of learner autonomy, interactivity, and a real-world focus" (p.26). Considering that the world has been permeated by online technologies, these requirements could be addressed through the use of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs.

Methodology. Qualitative methodology was employed in this study to gain a better understanding of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. Qualitative research

design is uniquely suited to the complex context of Adult Basic Education ESL programs.

Hoepfl (1997) explained that "qualitative inquiry accepts the complex and dynamic quality of the

social world" (p.48). The participants of this study, Adult Basic Education ESL teachers, stated

that they educate a uniquely varied student population in terms of ages, languages, and cultures.

According to Erying (2014), the classroom setting is complex because of the variety of cultures,

ages, languages, and logistical challenges that come with teaching Adult Basic Education ESL.

The students come from all over the world and speak a variety of languages depending on the

location and size of the site (Erying, 2014; Minnesota Adult Basic Education, 2019).

Data was gathered from 11 Adult Basic Education ESL teachers in a state in the Midwest

of the United States of America, using in-depth interviews during the summer of 2018. The

interview protocol includes 10 guiding questions (referred to as interview items in this study),

the responses of which were recorded electronically and transcribed. The qualitative data was

organized and analyzed by coding and then categorized according to themes that emerged. There

are multiple interview items for each research question to better ensure that the participants

explored each topic thoroughly. The interview protocol and analysis of the results are designed

with informing leadership in mind.

Results. According to the results of this study, some teachers have been experimenting

and innovating with different types of blended learning in their programs for years. But, as

reported by the participants, school-wide and system-wide blended learning initiatives are just

starting to appear in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. Leadership could benefit from more

information on blended learning and having research available on the topic of blended learning

in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. Well informed leadership could influence the use and effectiveness of blended learning in their schools.

According to the Legal Information Institute (2017), the purpose of Adult Basic education is to educate adults to provide them with the "basic and specific skills most needed to help him or her to function adequately in society" (para.1). As part of the leadership role, there are considerations of funding and student learning time. According to Rosen & Stewart (2015),

> While it might be desirable to increase students' learning time by extending the number of class hours per week, often this is not possible: programs or schools need funding to do this. Also, it may not be possible for students to come to class for more hours per week. Another way to increase time on task, however, is by using a blended learning model in which a learner can devote more time learning outside of class through online instruction and practice. (p.6)

Leadership would benefit from remembering that "blended learning is not one thing" and "it comes in many shapes, flavors, and colors" when supporting blended learning practices that are already taking place in Adult Basic Education ESL programs (Graham, 2013, p. 96). It is pertinent to gather the perspectives of the people who have been learning about blended learning through experience.

The results of this study showed that the most commonly used technology tool among the participants was the laptop computer. Additionally, the definition of blended learning was unclear among the participants, but they agreed that it should include an interweaving of content between face-to-face and online content. The most commonly used model of blended learning as reported by the participants was the distance learning model and the rotation model. The

participants reported that the students were the primary factor that they considered when deciding to use blended learning. The largest number of participants reported student factors and lack of training as barriers to the use of blended learning.

Conclusions

The overarching understanding that emerged from this study is that the Adult Basic Education ESL educational setting is unique in ways that influence how blended learning should be used in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. This new theoretical proposal is based on the awareness gained through a specific focus on Adult Basic Education ESL programs in this study. When considering the results of this study, remember the nature of qualitative research as stated by Hoepfl (1997), "Conventional wisdom says that research which relies on quantitative measures to define a situation is relatively value-free, and therefore objective. Qualitative research, which relies on interpretations and is admittedly value-bound, is considered to be subjective" (p.60). Additionally, Hoepfl (1997) stated, "In the naturalistic paradigm, the transferability of a working hypothesis to other situations depends on the degree of similarity between the original situation and the situation to which it is transferred" (p.59). According to Polit and Beck (2010),

> The researcher's job is to provide detailed descriptions that allow readers to make inferences about extrapolating the findings to other settings. The main work of transferability, however, is done by readers and consumers of research. Their job is to evaluate the extent to which the findings apply to new situations. It is the readers and users of research who ''transfer'' the results. (p.1453)

It is also important to consider the nature of teacher cognition when considering the results and conclusions of this study. Borg (2003) uses the term "teacher cognition" to refer to how teachers think, what they know, and what they believe. According to Borg (2003), "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (p.81). According to Hoepfl (1997), "A researcher who is neutral tries to be non-judgmental, and strives to report what is found in a balanced way" (p.60).

A multitude of research studies have focused on blended learning in education (Brooke, 2017; Coryell & Chlup, 2007; Erying, 2014; Graham, 2013; Moore, 2009; Pape, 2006; Rose, 2014; Toyama et al., 2010). Studies generally support the conclusion that blended learning is an effective tool for enhancing learning (Rose, 2014; Toyama, Murphy, & Baki, 2010). The assumption that blended learning can be an effective tool for enhancing learning was also an assumption made by participants of this study. To further this exploration of blended learning, this study looked into Adult Basic Education ESL programs to see the unique qualities of this educational setting in relation to blended learning.

Research Question 1

What do Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning report as the most common types of blended learning used with their students?

This study shows that teachers are using blended learning in a variety of ways to accommodate the plethora of learning styles and educational backgrounds that Adult Basic Education ESL students bring to the classroom. When working with adult students, leaders of

Adult Basic Education ESL programs and their staff need to think practically in order to offer programming that can encompass the diversity.

Interview item 1. What is your adult ESL class like? Participants of this study reported that Adult Basic Education ESL students have jobs (sometimes more than one), families, and more responsibilities than children in K-12. As stated in the literature review in Chapter II, Allen (2016) posited that the traditional pedagogy of the past, designed for children, was not sufficient enough to engage adult learners. In other words, Adult Basic Education ESL leadership cannot simply promote blended learning initiatives that were successful with children or college students and expect them to be successful in their programs.

Interview item 2. What kind of technology tools do you use in your classroom for student learning? The technology tools that the participants reported using were based more on the availability of resources than any other factor. It is important for leadership to take into account teacher factors as well as the advantages and disadvantages for students when considering which devices to purchase for a program.

Laptops. Ten of the participants, or 91% of the participants reported using laptop computers for blended learning with their students. Thus, most of the participants reported using laptops with their classes. This is assumedly because laptops were purchased by their programs and chosen by leadership for use in the classroom. Participants reported different preferences for different types of laptops, but did not have a negative inclination towards laptops in general. Therefore, if possible, it could be valuable to gather information about teacher preferences and reasonings for using different types of laptops and consider those factors before purchasing this type of device.

Smartphones. A reality of education today is that students have cellphones and they will bring them to school. More than half of the participants in this study, or six out of 11 teachers, mentioned the use of smartphones in their classes for blended learning of some sort. Research by the Pew Research Center shows that although there is a digital divide worldwide between higher and lower income countries, "adoption rates [of smartphones] have risen rapidly among older and lower-income Americans in recent years" (Raine & Perrin, 2017, p.2). This is not surprising when one looks at an Adult Basic Education ESL program. Whether teachers successfully integrate student smartphones into class content can depend on many different factors including program leadership and support through professional development.

Smartboards. Smartboards were reported as the least used technology tool by participants of this study. Only two out of the 11 the participants, or 18% of the participants reported using smartboards for blended learning with their students. It seems that smart boards are becoming a thing of the past (Danielson, 2018).

When a participant reported using a smartboard, they also reported that there was not much student interaction with the smartboard. One of the main purposes of the smartboard is for student use of the tool, not for primarily teacher use. Even though this was the case, participants reported using the smartboard mostly as a projector from the teacher computer. According to participants, the issue stemmed from the lack of initial and follow-up training on how to effectively use the smartboard.

Interview item 3. What is your understanding of the meaning of blended learning? Participants declared that technology should not be a separate entity from a class, but interwoven throughout a lesson in order to be effective. Leadership when selecting technology tools and

blended learning models for any Adult Basic Education ESL program, should take this into consideration.

Referring to related research on the topic of technology in education, Jonassen (2013) believed that online technology had failed to provide students with a well-rounded education. Additionally, Moore (2009) explained that teachers may use online technology as a substitute to instruction rather than a tool to enhance the curriculum. For example, there are courses prepackaged in the form of distance learning programs with no significant need for a human teacher. Online technology is meant to support not replace face-to-face teaching, as Jonassen (2013), stated:

> Educators who seek to transform education, to recognize its fundamental goals and values, can emancipate learners from the obligation to regurgitate that which has no relevance to them, to empower them to reflect on and represent what is important to them. Technology can support that goal. (p.109)

This aligns with what the study participants reported about the meaning of blended learning and the types of blended learning chosen for their students based on the integration of content, online and face-to-face, and not just the addition of technology for the sake of technology. See quotes from participants about this topic in Table 3: The Meaning of Blended Learning.

Interview item 4. How do you use blended learning with your students? In addition to the types of technology tools used, there were comments made by participants about how these tools had been used for blended learning. The how to of blended learning is categorized into

types of blended learning models. The responses from this interview item overlapped with interview item five below.

   Interview item 5. What types of blended learning do you use most often and why? This study focused on six types of blended learning: the flipped classroom model, the rotation model, the flex model, the self-blend model, the whole group model, and the distance learning mode. There are different terms to describe these different ways to use technology to enhance learning and many variations within each model of blended learning because that is one of the great advantages of blended learning; it's flexibility and adaptability. This interview item provoked responses that overlapped with the intent of interview question two which explored the factors that teachers consider when choosing blended learning.

   Distance learning. The most common types of blended learning used in Adult Basic Education ESL programs, as reported by participants of this study, were the distance learning model and the rotation model. According to the perspective of the participants, the distance learning model was not so much chosen as it was assigned to teachers for a variety of reasons. The decision to use distance learning was most likely based on the potential of additional funding. Programs receive distance learning funding based on seat time, as it is referred to in Adult Basic Education ESL, for students using specified online programs outside of the designated class time. These distance learning programs are generally prepackaged as described by Jonassen (2013) and are not as effective as other learning methods, as reported by the participants of this study. There is value to the use of distance learning as a supplement to Adult Basic Education ESL programming, but only if integrated into in-class content and not as a replacement for face-to-face instruction. According to participant responses and the literature

reviewed in Chapter II, blended learning is optimal for student learning as compared to purely distance learning or purely face-to-face learning.

   The rotation model. The rotation model was the preferred method of blended learning as reported by the participants. This makes sense because the rotation model provides the opportunity to accommodate different English language levels, different digital literacy levels, and different student needs and interests. In some cases, as reported by participants, the rotation model was used out of necessity due to lack of funding and technology tools. According Fisher et al. (2017), the station rotation model is commonly used in situations where there are not enough resources for each student to have a device. For example, the most common technology tool used by participants was laptops, not because that is what they necessarily wanted to use, but because that is what was available to them to use at the time. The teachers reported that they recognized the need to integrate technology tools into their teaching and found ways to do so with the few resources that they had. This shows creativity and innovation on the part of teachers which should be encouraged and celebrated by leadership in order to foster the growth of effective blended learning in schools.

Research Question 2

What do Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning report as the factors that influence their decision to use blended learning?

   Participants could answer this question in two different ways. The researcher asked for the participants to consider the factors that predated their use of blended learning for the first time as well as the factors that influenced them on a daily basis to integrate blended learning into a lesson plan.

Interview item 6. Why do you choose to use blended learning with your class? The responses to this question showed that at least some of the participants choose to use blended learning based on what teachers experienced and observed outside of the classroom. It seems clear that participants viewed technology as something necessary and important for their students to be able to navigate in the world.

Another benefit of using blended learning, as reported by the participants, was the ability to differentiate. For example, participants appreciated the ability to modify and add online content according to student interests, needs, and goals. According to Brooke (2017), the purpose of blended learning is to "provide a more personalized approach to learning, giving students control over time, place, path and pace of their learning" (p.1). One participant explained, "I use it [the Self-Blend Model] with my class. They can move at their own pace." While another participant described how students self-regulate their pace during a blended activity,

> After the main activity I told them to work on whatever they need to learn. For example, if I need to learn the pronunciation of those words, I click on pronunciation. I let them choose whatever they need to work on at their own pace. If they finish early, I have more to give them.

Interview item 7. What factors do you consider before implementing blended learning with your students? All of the participants reported considering student factors before using blended learning with their students. This shows that, according to the 11 participants of this study, students were the most important factor to consider when implementing blended learning. This perspective by teachers makes sense when considering the role of a teacher as an educator of students. The primary purpose of teaching is student learning, so students should come first.

Student factors. The conceptual framework of this study is based on unique ways adults learn, which matches the responses from the participants about student factors. The participants' responses about how and why to choose different blended learning models are connected to the ideas outlined in the conceptual framework of this study which can be found in Chapter I: Introduction.

Knowles (1973) was part of the conceptual framework of this study because it was the first work to solidify the concept of andragogy in educational research. Knowles (1973) argued that adult learners become more self-directed with age; they are more cognitively advanced and have distinct life experiences; this fact was neglected in the creation of adult curricula. This is no longer the case. However lacking in quantity, the quality of educational content for adults has improved since 1973. The participants showed this in their detailed responses about why they chose blended learning for their classes and their thoughtful creation of content to fit their students' needs. For example, one participant stated:

> You have to get the students on board and explain what you are doing, to have them see value in it. My hope is that if I can get the students to buy-in, I blend it well enough, and I find activities that they find value in, that they'll put more time in. They'll be more engaged in learning inside and outside of the classroom.

In terms of student factors, from the perspective of the participants, the context of the Adult Basic Education ESL program is much different than K-12. For example, Adult Basic Education ESL students choose to be in class or not, and they choose which school district to attend. Therefore, the how as well as the why, need to be effectively communicated to the students (Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010; Wiebe & Kabata, 2010). Additionally, as reported by the

participants, the students have many other responsibilities in their lives. For example, one participant mentioned that students work more than one job, sometimes overnight, and have multiple children to take care of on a very low income. These are the modern-day equivalents of the distinct life experiences presented in Knowles (1973). In these cases, where students can rarely attend class, distance learning could be a beneficial option for blended learning. One participant reported that their program was offering remote learning options for those students who were too far from a school site to feasibly attend class on a regular basis.

Time. The other factor reported most often by the participants was time. The time factor, as reported by the participants, included time preparing blended learning lessons before class and pre-teaching content in class. Participants reported that blended learning could save time and could be a benefit to them and their students, only if the blended lesson was designed properly, improved the efficiency of the class, and improved student learning.

The participants considered how much time it would take to become familiar and comfortable with a new technology tool and how to create lesson plans and integrate technology tools into class content in a meaningful way. According to Coryell and Chlup (2007), a factor to consider with the use of blended learning is the time needed for instructors to become familiar and comfortable with the use of blended learning teaching styles. Coryell and Chlup (2007) explained that there is a "philosophical tension about how best to acquire English without complicating the process with difficult computer-oriented tasks" (p.264). Some students may need to spend time on digital literacy skills before the benefits of the addition of that computer or internet technology can facilitate English language acquisition (Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010). One

participant stated, "I try to use blended learning as an offshoot of what is being taught in class. If I can marry the digital literacy and the content together then it's all reinforced."

Research Question 3

What do Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning report as barriers or challenges to using blended learning?

The participants reported a variety of techniques, strategies, tools, and online programs that they would like to try in the future. In some cases, the participants were sharing goals they had for the next year that had been difficult to implement previously because of lack of time to learn the new techniques and time to plan. Other barriers included factors that leadership may or may not be able to significantly influence such as class size and funding.

Interview item 8. Are there any blended learning techniques that you would like to use but have not? All of the participants mentioned a blended learning model that they would like to try if barriers were removed. Therefore, the teachers in this study had buy-in for blended learning in general, as an andragogical approach to teaching. But though the participants reported a desire to try different blended learning methods, but some unavoidable time constraints were reported as a barrier. One participant explained, "I spend most of the time passing them [digital devices] out, trying to get them [the students] logged in and putting them away, plugged in, charged, and everything cleaned up. When the technology doesn't work, it's much worse." Another participant explained that if the technology is not functioning it can throw off the class and time is wasted.

Flipped classroom. One example of a blended technique that participants mentioned a desire to try was the flipped classroom model, assumedly because this is a common term

mentioned in reference to blended learning. The flipped classroom model would negate the issue of in-class technology malfunctions and time spent passing out devices in-class. The Flipped Classroom and Blended Learning Models (2019) article explains that "flipping the classroom means providing learning content to students outside the scheduled classroom time instead of using classroom time for lecturing" (para. 1). Additionally, according to Erying (2014) flipped classrooms, a version of blended learning, had become an option for adult learners because of the budget requirements. This seems like a great idea when proposed for K-12 children or college level students. As reported by Pavanelli (2018) in reference to the flipped classroom model, "By watching these instructional videos prior to the class meeting, students come prepared and are able to participate in class activities that deepen their conceptual knowledge of the newly acquired content" (p.16). Note that the setting of the Pavanelli (2018) study was a college writing course. In contrast, multiple participants of this study commented on the differences between Adult Basic Education ESL students and a typical K-12 student or a college student. For example, Garcia and Abrego (2014) reported that principals feel that schools may be the only place that some disadvantaged students have access to digital and internet technology. Additionally, some of the participants of this study reported not assigning homework to students because of the numerous responsibilities that their students have outside of the classroom such as multiple jobs, children to raise, and families to support. If students in Adult Basic Education ESL programs do not have access to technology, have low digital literacy skills, or have numerous responsibilities outside of the classroom, as reported by the participants, the flipped model of blended learning might not be easily implemented.

Interview item 9. Do you experience any barriers or challenges to using blended learning with your students? In the literature review, Vanek (2017) reminded the reader of the issues that can arise with professional development surrounding technology. The problems reported by Vanek (2017), were, "inadequate time and resources to support the [professional development], a lack of trust in the online space, and a lack of shared priorities for [professional development]" (para.32). According to Tucker (2018), "many teachers are not explicitly trained on blended learning models and are unsure how to weave the online elements into their practice" (para.2). This aligns with what the participants of this study reported as barriers to using blended learning with their students.

Lack of appropriate training. One of the most common responses about challenges with using blended learning was lack of appropriate training. Ten of the participants, or 91% of the participants reported lack of appropriate training as a barrier. The participants explained that their experience with technology training was that it was either not designed for the teaching of adults and the training that did not relate to teaching English language learners. Either way, what it seems by the perspectives of the participants of this study, is that there was not enough effective training and follow-up training to maintain technology initiatives as tangible and viable options. A study by Stonehocker (2017) showed that there was the need for teachers to be trained in any and all new technology tools that were intended to be used with students. The study reported that, "All four interviewees admitted that they were extremely hesitant, and even avoided the use of technology, software, or programs they were not comfortable with or didn't fully understand" (Stonehocker, 2017, p. 73). There must be adequate curriculum, training,

planning, and evaluation of online resources to maintain the ever-evolving skills needed to maintain technological knowledge in our schools (Garcia & Abrego, 2014).

Digital literacy skills. In addition to their own digital literacy skills, the participants reported that they thought about the fact that some students also have low digital literacy skills and thus, cannot access the learning that is presented via the internet or digital devices. In contrast, the participants also reported that a number of students were more advanced in some areas of technology and can get bored while attention was paid to teaching digital literacy skills. In this case, different blended learning techniques were chosen based on differing student skills and needs.

Coryell and Chlup (2007) explained that there is a "philosophical tension about how best to acquire English without complicating the process with difficult computer-oriented tasks" (p.264). Some students may need to spend time on digital literacy skills before the benefits of the addition of that computer or internet technology can facilitate English language acquisition (Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010). Some students may be familiar with using the internet, but may need direct instruction on how to use online resources for learning (Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010).

One participant presented the idea that, "older students really struggle because they didn't grow up with [the need for digital literacy skills]; for the younger students it's not an issue as much." This participant was explaining that the elder students didn't grow up with technology as an integral part of their lives which can make learning digital literacy skills more difficult than people who grew up using digital devices and online technologies their whole lives.

Access to technology. According to the participants, lack of technology can also be a barrier for students at home. It could make it difficult for students to participate in blended

learning if a portion of the learning is happening online outside of the classroom. One participant

stated, "Access is an issue. Sometimes they go to the library, but it's difficult. Some of them use

their phones." In this case, leadership must consider the barrier of access for some students.

Access to technology at home is a unique struggle in the field of Adult Basic Education ESL

because students come and go from the program. According to the participants, students to not

attend class as consistently throughout a school year as K-12. A student is not required to be in

school and may come for only one term which is typically only a couple of months.

Lack of access to digital devices was not the only issue that was brought up by the

participants that relates to access for students. One participant provided an example, "A person

can have a smartphone, but if they don't have WiFi they are not able to access it" and another

participant stated, "Even if we gave every student a computer to take home, some of them don't

have WiFi to access the internet."

English language skills. One participant pointed out that "the way language is presented

[on the internet] is a barrier. It is visually very cluttered and requires higher reading skills than

they [the students] have yet, but they are required to use it every day to be part of this world."

This may not be as much of an issue in the future if more resources are made available for people

with lower English language skills on the internet, but for now, it is a barrier to consider when

determining which direction to take blended learning initiatives in an Adult Basic Education ESL

program.

Interview item 10. Do you think there are any barriers to other teachers adopting

blended learning or in the field of adult ESL in general? One participant pointed out that some of

the other teachers who didn't know how to use certain technology tools last year, still didn't

know how to use them this year. In other words, some teachers were not being trained on their own digital literacy skills. Without sufficient discussion about the reasons for using something new and training on how it is used, it seems an impossible task to gain program-wide buy-in.

Buy-in. The participants of this study observed that some other teachers in the field do not seem to have buy-in to the use of blended learning among Adult Basic Education ESL programs. Participants thought that other teachers were not adopting blended learning because the training was not appropriately tailored to the students of that program. Additionally, one participant said, "A barrier is the feeling that we could spend a whole bunch of time on a certain type of technology and then it's just going to go away in another year or two." This was in reference to training surrounding a certain technology tool and then pulling that tool to replace it with something different. According to one of the participants, this lack of long-term planning can affect teacher buy-in which makes sense if teachers feel like it was a waste of time to learn the new tool because there was not enough time adequately allocated to use such tool.

The appropriateness of the training in how it relates to the context of Adult Basic Education ESL is as important as the teachers' ability and comfort level with the technology tools. Teacher buy-in, skill level, and comfort level can be overlapping challenges for program-wide blended learning initiatives. In one participant's perspective, "Teachers who are uncomfortable will fight tooth and nail. You need to get them comfortable with a tool." Another participant explained that in general, "ABE [Adult Basic Education] is behind the curve. There is still a tendency to stick with the traditional style of teaching. There will be resistance to something new." The participants mentioned training as a challenge not only within their programs, but across the state as well.

Professional development. According to the participants, the training from state professional development initiatives was appropriate to program needs, but it wasn't being used effectively by teachers of other programs. One participant stated, "There is a lot of training available, but I don't think it translates to the classroom." This participant was talking about state professional development opportunities. So, strategies for leadership to get state professional development opportunities to translate to the classroom include: a focus on ensuring that these training opportunities are easily accessible to their teachers, encouraging teachers to take advantage of the trainings, and supporting teachers in applying the new techniques in the classroom.

Discussion

With the proliferation of the internet, students now live in a world with a wealth of easily accessible information (Burnett, 2015). No longer do teachers have a monopoly on the knowledge available to students in school and "the boundary between the school and the outside is becoming more permeable" (Fullan, 2014, p. 97). Garcia and Abrego (2014) argued that online technology enabled staff to work more efficiently and effectively as perceived by leadership in that study. It seems that positive changes are coming in education. In other words, "we are at the early phase of a spectacular revolution" (Fullan, 2014, p. 147). Vanek (2017) explained:

> Because our days are filled with encounters with digital technologies, this work [teaching Adult Basic Education ESL] includes figuring out how to make good use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the classroom. This shift has pushed teachers to rethink long-held preferences and routines and has created tension in the work day of some who are figuring out how to embrace ICTs. (para. 2)

Embracing blended learning. Will Adult Basic Education ESL programs embrace blended learning fully? According to Stallard and Cocker (2001), "The future may well look back on the last quarter of the twentieth century in amazement at the ability of education to persevere in its traditional form and processes while the rest of the world moved on" (p.vii). That book was written in 2001, almost 20 years before this study, and the same question could be asked now. Blended learning could be seen as one way for Adult Basic Education ESL programs to not fall behind and to address the technological changes in our world. But, Burnett (2015) reminded us that the most effective use of blended learning is still being determined.

The intent of this study was to provide more information and insight for leadership who wish to support integrating blended learning into Adult Basic Education ESL programs. The data was gathered from the perspective of teachers who teach using blended learning techniques with students in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. Though the participants reported a number of barriers to using blended learning, the majority of the participants mentioned an appreciation for the autonomy provided to teachers in their programs and the field of Adult Basic Education. In general, the participants felt that they have the freedom to teach as they see fit. One participant stated, "Each teacher has autonomy as far as how they run and what they do in the class." This type of leadership enables innovation and creativity. It encourages teachers to try different blended learning techniques which could be an essential part of finding the most effective andragogical approaches for different groups of adult students. This freedom that Adult Basic Education ESL programs provide teachers, I think, is similar to the freedom that blended learning inherently provides students. It might give us a clue as to the answer to the question that I posed earlier: Will Adult Basic Education ESL programs embrace blended learning fully?

Potential. Based on participant response and my own experience as an Adult Basic Education ESL teacher, blended learning can be especially beneficial for adult students with busy schedules because of the flexibility that it provides. Students have more control over how they use their time, there are a variety of learning options, and there are a variety of learning interventions for differentiation of material (Al-Awidi and Ismail, 2012). The teachers who use blended learning can differentiate by choosing a learning method most suitable to the student, such as a student who is struggling on a particular topic or a student who is advancing more quickly than the rest of the class.

As described in the introduction of this dissertation, Adult Basic Education ESL students learn basic skills like reading, writing, listening, speaking, and digital literacy skills. Blended learning includes so much more than digital literacy skills. Digital literacy is the first step to accessing the content of blended learning lessons. One participant showed the potential of blended learning by stating, "If I can marry the digital literacy and the content together then it's all reinforced." One of the ultimate goals of blended learning is for technology to reinforce and enhance what is being taught. Potential benefits for adult learners are limitless.

Adult learners. Blended learning can be used to improve andragogy and accommodate adult students' responsibilities outside of school. The participants reported an awareness that adult students have different needs than children. When considering the results of this study, one must remember that according to Knowles (1973) adult students are more self-directed, cognitively advanced, and have distinct life experiences. In 1973, Knowles reported that this fact was neglected in adult curricula and the traditional classroom was incongruent with the learning styles of adult learners because pedagogy was mainly based on childhood knowledge acquisition

(Knowles, 1973). But according to the participants of this study, Adult Basic Education ESL programs are becoming more and more adapted to adult students and their needs, leadership is advocating for their programs and students, and teachers are speaking up about the need for appropriate content for adult learners and creating content to fit their students' needs. Participants reported similar thoughts to my own, in that modifications must be made for students who have external pressures such as multiple jobs, large families that they are supporting, and other pressing commitments in addition to school. One of the participants stated,

> Adults need some freedom determining what they learn based on their learning style, interest, and energy level for that day. There are so many layers for them to figure out while learning the content. You can't just bring up the program and give it to the learner.

> In other words, blended learning can be used as a tool to enhance the learning of content already present in the traditional face-to-face curriculum if the students have at least a basic grasp of digital literacy skills. Research has shown that Adult Basic Education ESL students in blended learning classes achieve the best scores on tests (Rosen & Stewart, 2015). Therefore, the face-to-face aspect of learning is important and cannot be lost or undervalued as part of blended learning. Participants in this study agree with this sentiment which can be seen in their responses to interview item 1 in Chapter IV: Results. In other words, the use of blended learning has great potential to benefit Adult Basic Education ESL programs and their adult students. Allen (2016) stated, "the principles of adult learning emphasize the agency of the learner, collaborative and interactive learning experiences, and the application of curricular content to real-world problems" (p.25). One means of achieving this is through designing a program based on the use of blended learning models, of which there are a variety of options (Rosen & Stewart, 2015).

Blended learning models. The participants of this study emphasized the need for a focus on differentiation for students and the importance of relating online content with face-to-face content. There are a variety of blended learning models which can be selected to accommodate student need, enhance student engagement based on interest areas, and alter content to fit learning styles. When asked to define blended learning, one of the participants stated that blended learning "is an integration of using technology and classroom instruction in a way that helps the learner rather than just separate pieces that don't really interconnect."

The purpose. The purpose of blended learning, according to Brooke (2017), is to "provide a more personalized approach to learning, giving students control over time, place, path and pace of their learning" (p.1). When discussing options for blended learning with teachers and staff, I would recommend considering the suggestion posed by Tucker (2018):

> Instead of dividing the class into two distinct parts – offline with the teacher and online work alone – I'd love to see teachers weaving together the online and offline moments more seamlessly so that students can appreciate the connections between the online and offline work. (para. 2)

This type of whole group model might be successful in Adult Basic Education ESL programs, based on the participants' reported need for connecting online and offline class content. From the perspective of the participants of this study, the form that blended learning takes in a K-12 school, in a university, and in an Adult Basic Education ESL program might each look very different. Conole (2008) stated:

> The environment students are working in is complex and multifaceted; technology is at the heart of all aspects of their lives – a key question for institutions is whether

institutional infrastructures match students' own rich technology-enhanced environment, and perhaps for importantly, whether courses are designed and delivered with these external influences in mind. (p.136)

Smartphone. One free tool that the majority of the participants did not report taking full advantage of was the smartphone. There are a variety of blended learning techniques that can be used with a mobile device and "in fact, there are many ways to teach and learn (both formally and informally) depending on the context and situation" (Wankel & Blessinger, 2013, p. 7). "[Mobile learning] provides another opportunity to increase teaching and learning effectiveness" (Wankel & Blessinger, 2013, p. 7).

According to Wankel and Blessinger (2013),

Thus, if designed properly and integrated into the course in a purposeful manner, mobile technologies can provide today's learners with a more sustainable and practical means to augment their learning experience, especially since today's learners are increasingly accustomed to using mobile technologies as a normal part of their lives. (p.7)

As reported by the Pew Research Center, Raine and Perrin (2017), 77 percent of U.S. adults own a smartphone. For programs that are lacking in resources, using smartphones as a tool for blended learning is a practical remedy because research by the Pew Research Center shows that although there is a digital divide worldwide between higher and lower income countries, "adoption rates [of smartphones] have risen rapidly among older and lower-income Americans in recent years" (Raine & Perrin, 2017, p. 2).

As reported by the participants, the students could use and did use their cellphones throughout the class for more in-depth exploration of a topic. This relates to the self-blend model

in that a student can gather more information or clarification about a topic. In the case of using cellphones throughout a class, students differentiate for themselves. The participants did not report creating lesson plans or receive training on how to integrate smartphones into their lessons in their Adult Basic Education ESL programs. It can be assumed that the students who were doing this, came to class with these skills or classmates taught each other. This type of self-differentiation is beneficial because students can look up a word in a dictionary or translate a word on their own without effecting the flow of the class. If a student has a question, they can multitask and search for an answer on the internet while the face-to-face class continues. The teacher could prompt the students to share their response with the class and the teacher could give further explanation of the search results. This is an example of interweaving face-to-face class content with online information simultaneously and overlapping in time.

Distance learning. Among the participants of this study, distance learning and the rotation model were reported as being more often used. Note that sample size of this study was only 11 teachers, so generalizations about all or even most Adult Basic Education ESL programs cannot be made. Leadership needs to assess their own program needs before making any program decisions.

Leadership might consider a distance learning model for the more advanced Adult Basic Education ESL courses offered at their program for similar reasons. One participant warned:

> You can't send low level ESL students home to do distance learning, if one thing goes wrong they will get lost. We get them all set up with [an online platform] for distance learning, but then they can't use it at home because it asks for backslashes or something. Even in the computer lab they can get lost on the computer and somehow lose the

program we were working on several times. It is a lot of work just getting them to use the

mouse.

Remember that the difference between the flipped learning model and the distance

learning model is that in distance learning students rarely go to the brick-and-mortar school for

support from teachers because most, if not all of the course content is online, whereas flipped

lessons are used along with typical in class sessions (Blended Learning Universe, 2019). Another

participant stated:

Beginning level needs me to be with them the whole time. They get lost in the advertising

or just lost on technology in general. They need someone there. They don't have enough

English for me to explain what's happening if there's a problem with their computer.

This can be a distraction from the learning.

Even in higher level courses, digital literacy can become a problem. One participant who

taught a high intermediate level Adult Basic Education ESL class reported, *"Once they are in a*

program interface it's very simple, but it's the little things like what happens when an error

message comes up, that will stop them." Note that even though the students may have a higher

level of English does not mean that their digital literacy skills are at that same level.

Therefore, when looking at research encouraging different models of blended learning, it

is important for leadership to take it with a grain of salt. In most cases, research studies are either

looking at blended learning used with children or blended learning used with college level

students. Adult Basic Education does not fit well into either of those boxes. None of the

participants of this study reported using flipped classroom and there might be a reason for that.

Some of the participants went as far as to mention that flipped classroom would never work with

Adult Basic Education ESL students because one of the major goals of the course is to teach

basic English language communication skills and basic life skills. One of those basic life skills is

digital literacy and according to the participants, this student factor (low digital literacy skills) is

considered as a barrier to blended learning.

Student support. As reported by the participants, the students need continuous support

while using technology in the classroom and would be lost if they were told to participate in a

flipped model of class. For example, a student may be very adept at using a smartphone to access

the internet, but may have very little experience with a computer or other digital device (Dunn,

2011). Dunn (2011) revealed that even if adult learners do have access to the internet at home,

they may not have the computer skills to access all of the learning potential online. The internet

has become more accessible to a larger number of students in general across the world, but if a

student does not have access to a computer or internet technology, the educational inequity, or

digital divide grows (Garland, 2009).

This may not be the case in the future when most people have lifetime exposure to online

learning tools, but the current skill level of adult learners is important to asses (Dunn, 2011).

Therefore, leadership investing time and money into training staff on certain blended learning

models could be a lost cause in some cases before addressing the issue of student digital literacy

skills. During program assessment, considering topics that have been presented in this study such

as types of technology tools, blended learning models, training options, teacher and student

digital literacy skills, and buy-in from all stakeholders could be useful.

Leadership. The implementation of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL

programs requires a certain amount of experimentation, in-depth follow up assessments, and

flexibility on the part of leadership and teachers because of the lack of research and guiding principles related directly to the specific context.

This study includes an investigation of the exciting new frontier of blended learning for adults in these programs from the perspectives of teachers who have already been experimenting with a variety of blended learning techniques with their students. The results are intended to be useful for leadership in schools who are planning on or who are already transforming their programs with blended learning.

Empowering educators. Leadership is one of the most important influencing factors when considering how to effectively address program needs and ultimately student needs through blended learning. According to INACOL Staff (2016), "blended learning is about empowering educators with the appropriate tools to support personalized pathways for learning" (para.2). Valentine and Richards (2016) stated,

> Leaders using a blended approach are willing to meet people where they are in order to move their work forward, to move the organization forward, regardless of their feelings about where their colleagues should be on any given spectrum, technological or otherwise. (p.6)

One participant stated that, "leadership should come into the classroom more, not to evaluate, but to listen." Another participant of this study provided a suggestion:

> Leadership should be open. I really appreciate being able to bring new ideas to leadership at my program. It needs to be bottom-up. The top needs to facilitate and make things available, but strategy needs to come from the classroom.

Consider related research. The results, conceptual framework, and literature review of this study indicate that adult students vary from students in their youth in important ways, such as the types of technology tools that should be purchased by leadership and the training and support needed for teachers to effectively address the needs of Adult Basic Education ESL students through blended learning. Conole (2008) stated:

> The environment students are working in is complex and multifaceted; technology is at the heart of all aspects of their lives – a key question for institutions is whether institutional infrastructures match students' own rich technology-enhanced environment, and perhaps for importantly, whether courses are designed and delivered with these external influences in mind. (p.136)

Blended learning is on the verge of exploding in Adult Basic Education ESL, but as it appears from the lack of research on Adult Basic Education ESL blended learning, some of the only options for leadership are to take direction from K-12 research on kids in blended learning environments or from higher education research on blended learning with college students. This is not sufficient because adults in Adult Basic Education ESL programs learn differently than children and are unlike college students in many ways.

Informed leadership. Leadership needs to stay informed about current technology in education in order to be effective as technology and school leaders (Coryell & Chlupp, 2007; Garcia & Abrego, 2014). "Anyone who works in schools knows that, increasingly, educational activity is shaped and sifted and moderated and facilitated as much online as it is offline" (Valentine & Richards, 2016, p.1). Leaders have opportunities to educate and motivate staff and inspire buy-in for blended learning initiatives, but there is a risk that principals and other

leadership, if not experienced with the creation and use of online technology resources, will make uninformed program decisions (Garcia & Abrego, 2014). Therefore, it is essential that leadership be informed about online educational tools. The significance of this is related to a quote by Hathorn and Hathorn (2010), "Good ideas that are badly implemented lead to a chaotic learning environment" (p.213). According to Fullan (2014), "A crisis without a strategy is a recipe for random action and growing frustration" (p.23). Therefore, leadership needs to create a strategy and educate themselves about the coming changes in education.

One participant suggested that "leadership should be trained in technology and encourage innovation instead of dismissing things that are not understood right away." Fullan (2014) expressed this well by stating, "Principals who visibly struggle with new digital devices in their own learning, who seek to learn from students and teachers about new technologies, who, in short, put themselves on the learning line, are very much appreciated in the school" (p.59). Furthermore, Valentine and Richards (2016) stated, "By choosing deliberately the ways in which we engage, or disengage, online tools, we will become effective, even graceful, blended leaders" (p.7). Leadership needs to embrace lifelong technology learning as well as take into account unique program needs.

Different program needs. The complexity of internet technology necessitates flexibility on the part of leadership and consideration of external influences when designing courses (Conole, 2008, p.136). The fluidity and flexibility provided by blended learning should be kept in mind as a benefit to programs when considering how to implement blended learning.

Each program is different and within each program, sites and classrooms are different. Leadership should consider their program's unique needs in terms of location, funding, student

population, and resources. For the purposes of this study, 11 teachers were chosen from urban,

suburban, and rural settings. Those 11 teachers are using blended learning in their classrooms

and may not represent the majority of Adult Basic Education ESL teachers. This study was

meant as a starting point for leadership to think about what factors could influence the decision

to use blended learning in their program and not a prescription of what all programs need in

order to be effective.

These factors that leadership needs to consider include the opinions and experiences of

others throughout the program. According to Brooke (2017), "The foundation of blended

learning remains firmly rooted in the concept of empowering teachers to provide personalized

and mastery-based instruction" (p.1). Because educational systems are democratic and Adult

Basic Education leadership's role is to take into account the needs of all stakeholders and

empower peers, there may be increased pressure to be influenced more by one stakeholder over

another. The decisions made on the part of leadership can address the digital divide in positive or

negative ways for Adult Basic Education ESL students within their programs. One of the

participants stated, *"Technology is part of the lives of people of privilege in this country. Why

would I keep it from my students? Why would I keep it from them?"* According to Garland

(2009), the contributing factors to the digital divide are: language, race and socioeconomic status

and "The principal has a duty to become an informed activist in promoting access to technology

by all students and teachers" (p.40).

Therefore, in order for leadership to understand the needs of all of the relevant

stakeholders they need to do gather data about what is going on within their programs.

According to this study, teachers are important stakeholders to consider when gathering data.

Leadership can discuss blended learning with teachers, students, and staff. Then, consider the barriers to implementing blended learning and create strategies to remove or deal with potential barriers.

Tap into talent. In this research study, all of the participants had something that they would want to do using blended learning if barriers were removed. Therefore, teachers already have buy-in for blended learning and are ready to implement change. Leadership needs to tap into this drive and talent that is already available within their programs.

On the contrary Vanek (2017) suggested that, "A facilitator should not push teachers into change that they are not ready to make" (p.10). This is true, but a distinction should be made between pushing and encouraging. A challenge can make or break staff and student buy-in. When administration forces an initiative as a mandate, it can turn off teachers and the leader can lose teacher buy-in and vicariously student buy-in. One of the participants suggested that blended learning initiatives should come from the "bottom up. Let teachers try things. Let it get messy. This is much different from planning." The same sentiment was illustrated by one of the participants in the following quote:

> Leadership should be open. I really appreciate being able to bring new ideas to leadership at my program. It needs to be bottom-up. The top needs to facilitate and make things available, but strategy needs to come from the classroom.

When administration encourages innovation and new ideas, this can feed collaboration and buy-in from the teachers and students because excitement feeds excitement.

Fullan (2014) recommends "removing obstacles, providing resources, and supporting autonomy and group development, and then calling attention to the progress through celebration"

(p.152). Fullan (2014) explains that "this works because it is in keeping with the natural desires of the human spirit, namely, to do something intrinsically worthwhile with others in a collective effort" (p. 152-153).

      Collaboration. In addition to learning alongside teachers and students, it is important that leadership empowers others to share what they are doing and supports innovation. "At first, I thought it was my job to advocate good ideas and get them around, but now I see that I need to enable people to share what they are doing, and give them a platform to do this- to share works in progress" (Fullan, 2014, p. 151). "Authentic leadership is about empowering others on their journeys" (George, 2007, p. 44). According to Fullan (2014), "Humans are motivated by two factors: doing things that are intrinsically meaningful to themselves, and working with others – peers, for example – in accomplishing worthwhile goals never before reached" (p.7).

      Buy-in. It is essential that all parties have buy-in and see the value in blended learning. As one participant put it:

> You have to get the students on board and explain what you are doing, to have them see value in it. My hope is that if I can get the students to buy-in, I blend it well enough, and I find activities that they find value in, that they'll put more time in. They'll be more engaged in learning inside and outside of the classroom.

"The reasons for engaging in blended learning play a major role in determining its success which is why it is vitally important that teachers, administrators, and students understand why blended learning is implemented" (Brooke, 2017, p.4). Valentine and Richards (2016) posed the questions:

As a leader, if you are responsible for maintaining the quality of a program while

ensuring that it advances into the future, you have to ask yourself: Can you afford to lead

by "talking at" your faculty, or would you gain more ground by giving your faculty a

voice? Can your professional development coordinator teach your faculty everything they

need to know, as quickly as they need to know it, or would it better if your faculty

learned through robust peer-to-peer connections? (p.7)

Collaboration with other programs. Fostering collaboration as a leadership strategy is

not only applicable within the school but outside of the school as well. Participants from this

study mentioned a desire to observe other teachers of other programs to see what they are doing

with blended learning. This is also valuable for leadership to do along with consulting with other

programs to compare notes on strategies for motivating teachers to learn new blended learning

techniques. With access to the internet, leadership has the opportunity to collaborate with other

schools not only in the same school district, but from across the world. Fullan (2014) reiterates

the point, "These days, with access to the world made easier by technology, schools should also

look to schools outside their boundaries." Additionally, change under these circumstances is

more natural and organic, this "is in keeping with the desire of the human spirit, namely, to do

something intrinsically worthwhile with others in a collective effort" (Fullan, 2014, p. 153).

One of the participants of this study suggests that leadership should "find other programs

where [blended learning] is working, find things [with blended learning] that are working at

every ESL level, and ask for feedback from teachers." Brooke (2017) advocated for consensus

building and building infrastructure as essential for leadership aiming at the implementation of

blended learning in schools. "The reasons for engaging in blended learning play a major role in

determining its success which is why it is vitally important that teachers, administrators, and students understand why blended learning is implemented" (Brooke, 2017, p.4). Once this consensus is built, it is important to build infrastructure based on that consensus.

Efficiency. Results of a study by Hathorn and Hathorn (2010) foster the argument that quality online teaching is as important and efficient as face-to-face instruction. But according to a study by Jokinen and Mikkonen (2013), even though teachers perceived collaboration with other teachers as beneficial and necessary to planning a blended course, "the teachers experienced collaborative planning as time consuming and arduous; moreover, they felt that it was not easy to move from solo-planning and working to collaborative planning and working - working alone is so deeply rooted" (p.526). Principals can assist in dispelling the misconception that online instruction results in an increased workload (Hathorn & Hathorn, 2010). According to Valentine and Richards (2016), "We will streamline systems using technologies so as to make life easier for each other, to save more for our learning, and to process more quickly those things that can be processed quickly" (p.7).

Professional development. Professional development can be the key or the killer for technology initiatives. In relation to introducing blended learning to staff, leadership would be well advised to pay attention to comfort levels of teachers, create long-term plans for infrastructure, technological support, curricular support, and trainings that are well-tailored to Adult Basic Education ESL programs.

Comfort levels. Referring back to the literature review, Stonehocker (2017) did a study of teachers of adult language learners and reported, "All four interviewees admitted that they were extremely hesitant, and even avoided the use of technology, software, or programs they were not

comfortable with or didn't fully understand" (p.73). Therefore, when staff do not fully understand or they are not comfortable with new technology, it is safe to say that technology initiatives will fall flat. According to Coryell and Chlup (2007), a factor to consider with the use of blended learning is the time needed for instructors to become familiar and comfortable with the use of blended learning teaching styles. If leadership wants fruitful use of new technologies in programs, it is important to pay attention to the effectiveness of professional development in relation to the effect it has on staff understanding and comfort levels. One participant reiterated this sentiment, "Teachers who are uncomfortable will fight tooth and nail. You need to get them comfortable with a tool."

During the study by Vanek (2017) on professional development for teachers new to online technologies, some problems arose when implementing the professional development with teachers, which included, "inadequate time and resources to support the PD [professional development], a lack of trust in the online space, and a lack of shared priorities for PD" (para. 32). Suggestions for how to overcome this struggle were proposed,

> Firstly, teachers need more opportunities to try out new technology in thoughtful ways, but this is hard work. Secondly, real shifts in instructional practice and use of ICTs [information and communication technologies] cannot happen without adequate infrastructure and affective support for the teachers engaged in the work. Finally, the PD [professional development] itself must meet teachers where they are, not push beyond their current skill or comfort level, especially when it involves technology use. (Vanek, 2017, para.4)

Infrastructure and support. The quote above from Vanek (2017) affirms the statements above about the comfort level of teachers and also brings up to issue of infrastructure and support. Brooke (2017) also advocated building infrastructure as essential for leadership aiming at the implementation of blended learning in schools. Pape (2006) explained that:

Blended learning requires the right mix of professional development, technical support and curriculum support to be effective for both the teacher and the student. It requires professional development of teachers, both preservice and in-service. Teachers need to understand the instructional benefits blended learning brings to students, how those benefits can increase content mastery and 21st century learning skills, and how to go about developing and delivering blended learning instruction. (p.1)

There must be adequate curriculum, training, planning, and evaluation of online resources to maintain the ever-evolving skills needed to maintain technological knowledge in our schools (Garcia & Abrego, 2014). There is an important distinction to be made between maintaining technological knowledge and keeping up with all of the new advances in educational technologies. It is not necessary for leadership to educate all staff on all new technological devices and all new technology resources available. Just because there is a new device or resource available does not mean that it is better than what was being used before. One participant stated, "Adding anything new means something else has to go." If a school is attempting to follow every educational trend while dropping previous training, it can be confusing and frustrating for staff. As one participant put it, this can create an undesirable "feeling that we could spend a whole bunch of time on a certain type of technology and then it's just going to go away in another year or two." When teachers are trained on a new technology or

other type of initiative and then it is dropped a year later for example, the early adopters may

lose their motivation to put time and effort into an initiative the next time around. According to

one of the participants, there are teachers who are eager to learn new technologies. This

participant stated, "There are a lot of people who know a lot about technology in our field." But,

if technology initiatives are repeatedly dropped, it can send a message to staff that leadership

does not care enough to create a long-term plan which can frustrate staff. Leadership must build

consensus and collaboration around a new technology tool or learning model and then provide

continual technological and curricular support.

> **Well-tailored training.** Once leadership has assessed its specific program needs and

addressed the barriers to effective blended learning initiatives, there are well-tailored

professional development resources available. One participant suggested that teachers need more

training designed specifically for Adult Basic Education ESL students rather than K-12 children.

Some of these resources are offered through the ABE teaching & learning advancement system

(2019),

> While everyone knows that teaching adults is different from teaching children, many
>
> Adult Basic Education professionals do not have access to training and resources that are
>
> applicable specifically to adult education. Funded by the Minnesota Department of
>
> Education, ATLAS brings Hamline University faculty and staff expertise in adult and
>
> ESL teacher education to provide best practice resources and professional development
>
> for ABE teachers, staff, and administrators across the state. (para. 1)

Limitations

According to Informedia Services (IMS) digital literacy for St. Cloud State University (2017), "Limitations are influences that the researcher cannot control. They are shortcomings, conditions or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher that place restrictions on your methodology and conclusions." (para. 1) This study was confined by the following limitations:

1. **Pilot testing with doctoral candidates.** A pilot test was conducted with doctoral candidates in the Educational Administration and Leadership program. Though the doctoral candidates had a wealth of experience and knowledge to share, a pilot test with Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning would have been preferable. This option was not chosen by the researcher because of the small number of Adult Basic Education ESL teachers available who were using blended learning at the time of the study. If those teachers would have been pilot tested, they would not have been viable candidates as participants in this study.

2. **Only interviewing teachers.** As stated by Borg (2003), "Teachers' cognitions, emerge consistently as a powerful influence on their practices, though, as I discuss later, these do not ultimately always reflect teachers' stated beliefs, personal theories, and pedagogical principles" (p.91). Solely interviewing teachers was limiting in that the context of Adult Basic Education ESL programs was not fully explored. For any study focused on another area of Adult Basic Education programs such as improving andragogy or student achievement, this limitation should be closely considered. There are many other people and things to observe when exploring this new occurrence of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. At the beginning stages of

blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs and for the purpose of informing leadership, interviewing teachers was an appropriate first step.

3. **Not a representative sample.** Inherent to qualitative research is its exploratory and inductive nature. Therefore, generalizable conclusions cannot be drawn with confidence. For illustration, this study only included eleven participants, so the researcher was unable to generalize about the whole of Adult Basic Education ESL programs.

4. **Not considering demographics.** This study did not consider demographic markers. Demographic information would have provided more data to analyze which might have been useful when considering different teacher perceptions of blended learning in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. For example, according to Borg (2003), "studies comparing experienced and less experienced language teachers also shed light on transformations in teacher cognition which may occur over time" (p.95).

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations for further research are suggested:

1. **Pilot testing.** Pilot test the interview protocol with people that have the same role at an educational institution as the potential participants. For instance, if the participants of the study will be administrators of Adult Basic Education ESL programs, it is recommended that the pilot test be conducted from that same group of people.

2. **Expand the participant pool.** Conduct an ethnographic case study of an Adult Basic Education ESL program including interviews and direct observations of teachers, administrators and students with a focus on blended learning. A qualitative analysis

of blended learning including Adult Basic Education ESL student perspectives would provide a new perspective on the topic. Conduct in-depth interviews of students about their experiences with blended learning and their feedback based on learning preferences. A qualitative analysis of blended learning including perspectives from administrators who have experience facilitating blended learning initiatives in their Adult Basic Education ESL programs would also provide a new perspective on the topic. Conduct in-depth interviews of leadership about their reflections, observations, and decisions surrounding blended learning initiatives in Adult Basic Education ESL programs.

3. **Include quantitative research methods.** Design a survey to be administered to a larger sample size of teachers. Include students who are using blended learning in their classes. This type of study would have to take place after more Adult Basic Education ESL programs have adopted blended learning as a program wide design. Once the data has been gathered, utilize quantitative analysis to determine the effectiveness of specific blended learning models on student learning from the perspectives of teachers and students. Also administer pre-tests and post-tests along with formative assessments of the students throughout the blended learning course to better gauge the impact of blended learning on student learning.

4. **Consider demographics.** A replication study using comparative methodology would allow for researchers to compare changes in teacher perspectives of blended learning from this study to future programming in Adult Basic Education ESL programs. Modify the study by taking into account the limitations above. Collect demographic

information about the teachers before the interview or add demographic questions to the interview protocol. Demographic information could add dimension and depth to the study. When explaining models of generalizability, Polit and Beck (2010), state, "In reality, the kind of description that supports transferability is often not as 'thick' as readers need for making informed judgments about proximal similarity" and "In qualitative research in particular, thick description requires rich description of the study context and of the phenomenon itself" (p.1454). Therefore, adding demographic information to this study would be beneficial for transferability to different Adult Basic Education ESL program contexts.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations for practice are suggested:

1. Administrators and leaders should regularly consult with teachers within their organizations who are already using blended learning with their students to gather information about blended learning before moving forward with new technology initiatives.

2. Program directors should periodically consult other program leaders in other Adult Basic Education ESL settings to better understand and compare blended learning initiatives and practices.

3. Provide relevant professional development and follow-up training opportunities for instructional staff on the use of digital devices and blended learning models.

4. Program directors and leaders need to be sensitive and cognizant of bringing in new initiatives and new technological programming before prior or recently adopted

innovations have had time to serve their purpose. In other words, routine and frequent

formative program evaluation must be conducted prior to major change decisions.

References

ABE teaching & learning advancement system. (2019). Retrieved from: atlasabe.org.

Adult Basic Education (ABE). (2019). *Minnesota Community Education Association.*

     Retrieved from: http://mn-mcea.org/adult-basic-education-abe.

Al-Awidi, H. & Ismail, S. (2012). Teachers' perceptions of the use of computer assisted

     language learning to develop children's reading skills in English as a second

     language in the United Arab Emirates. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 42,* 29-37.

     doi:10.1007/s10643-012-0552-7.

Allen, S. (2016). Applying adult learning principles to online course design. *Distance*

     Learning, 3, 25.

Allen, E., Seaman, J., & Garrett, R. (2007). *Blending in: The extent and promise*

     of blended education in the United States. USA: Sloan-C.

Apex Learning. (2014). *Blended learning models.* Retrieved from:

     https://www.apexlearning.com/blog/blended-learning-models.\ly, D. G. (2005). It's about

time: Using electronic literature discussion groups with

     adult learners. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 1*, 12.

     doi:10.1598/JAAL.49.1.2.

Blended Learning Universe. (2019). *Clayton Christensen Institute*. Retrieved from:

     https://www.blendedlearning.org.

Blondy, L. C. (2007). Evaluation and application of andragogical assumptions to the

     adult online learning environment. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning, 6*(2), 116-130.

     Retrieved from: http://www.ncolr.org/jiol/issues/pdf/6.2.3.pdf.

Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. (2008). *The craft of research* (3rd ed).

    Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what

    language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching, 36*(2), 81-

    109.

Bowman, L. (2010). *Online learning: A user-friendly approach for high school and*

    college students. Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Bradley, A. (2008). Learn about pros, cons of Internet, principals' group urges

    educators. *Education Week*, *27*(20), 4. Retrieved from:

    http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/01/23/20brief1.h27.html?qs=Learn+about+pros,

    +cons+of+Internet,+principals'+group+urges+educators.

Brooke, E. (2017). Four keys to success using blended learning implementation models.

    Lexia Learning. Retrieved from: https://www.lexialearning.com/resources/white-

    papers/blended-learning-four-keys.

Burnett, D. (2015). *Assessing blended learning in adult, English as a foreign language*

    learning. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from: PsycINFO. (Accession No.

    2016-37857-018).

Cain, D. L., & Pitre, P. E. (2008). The effect of computer mediated conferencing and

    computer assisted instruction on student learning outcomes. *Journal of Asynchronous*

    Learning Networks, 12(3-4), 31-52.

Computer Literacy Policy. (2004). *Minnesota Department of Education,*

    Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE). Retrieved from: http://mnabe.org/abe-

law-policy/mn-abe-policies.

Community Education Teachers: Licensure Requirements. Minnesota Statute 122A.26
§ 3 (2018).

Conole, G. (2008). Listening to the learner voice: The ever-changing landscape of
technology use for language students. *ReCALL*, *20*(2), 124-140.

Coryell, J., & Chlup, D. (2007). Implementing e-learning components with adult English
language learners: Vital factors and lessons learned. *Computer Assisted
Language Learning, 203*, 263-278.

Danielson, D. (2018). Where are the smartboards going? BHS Blueprint: Official voice
of the Blaine Bengal. Retrieved from:
https://bhsblueprint.org/showcase/2018/10/31/where-are-the-smart-boards-going.

Distance Learning Policy. (2013). *Minnesota Department of Education:
Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE).* Retrieved from: http://mnabe.org/distance-
learning.

Dunn, L. S. (2011). Making the most of your class website. *Educational Leadership,
68*(5), 60-62.

Ellis, P. (2018). The language of research (part 19): Understanding the quality of a
qualitative paper. *Wounds UK*, *14*(5), 134–135.

Eyring, J. (2014). Adult ESL education in the US. *CATESOL, 26*, 120-149. Retrieved
from: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1111885.

Farrell, T., & Ives, J. (2015). Exploring teacher beliefs and classroom practices through
reflective practice: A case study. *Language Teaching Research, (19)*5, 594-601.

Farrell, T., & Lim, P. (2005). Conceptions of grammar teaching: A Case Study of

teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. *TESL-EJ*, *9*(2), 13. Retrieved from:

http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume9/ej34/ej34a9.

Fisher, J., Bushko, K., & White, J. (2017). Blended beyond borders: A scan of

blended learning obstacles and opportunities in Brazil, Malaysia, and South

Africa*. Clayton Christensen Institute.* Retrieved from:

https://www.christenseninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/BlendedBeyond

Borders.pdf.

Flipped Classroom and Blended Learning Models. (2019). *The College of St. Scholastica.*

Retrieved from: http://www.css.edu/administration/information-technologies/academic-

technology-and-online-learning/teaching-guide/flipped-classroom-and-blended-learning-

models.html.

Fraenkel, J., Wallen, N., & Hyun, H. (2015). *How to design and evaluate research in*

education. (9th Ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Fullan, M. (2014). *The Principal: Three keys to maximizing impact.* San Francisco,

CA: Jossey-Bass.

Gall, M., Gall, J., & Borg, W., (2007). *Educational research: An introduction (*8th Ed.).

Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Garcia, A., & Abrego, C. (2014). Vital skills of the elementary principal as a technology

leader. *E Journal of Organizational Learning & Leadership, 12*(1), 12-25.

Garland, V. (2009). Emerging technology trends and ethical practices for the

school principal. *SAGE Journals, 38*(1), 39-50.

doi: https://doi.org/10.2190/ET.38.1.e.

Gee, J. (2013). *The anti-education era: Creating smarter students through digital
learning.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

George, B. (2007). *True north*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Graham, C. (2013). Emerging practice and research in blended learning. In M.G.
Moore (Ed.), *Handbook of distance learning* (pp. 333-350) (3rd ed.). New York,
NY: Routledge.

Hagens, V., Dobrow, M., & Chafe, R. (2009). Interviewee transcript review: Assessing
the impact on qualitative research. *BMC Medical Research Methodology, 9*(47). doi:
10:1186/147-2288-9-47.

Hanna, D. (2000). *Higher education in an era of digital competition: Choices and
challenges.* Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing.

Hathorn, L., & Hathorn, J. (2010). Evaluation of online course websites: Is teaching
online a tug-of-war? *Journal of Educational Computing Research, 42*(2),
197-217. doi:10.2190/EC.42.2.d.

Hlas, A. C., Schuh, K. L., & Alessi, S. M. (2008). Native and non-native speakers in
online and face-to-face discussions: Leveling the playing field. *Journal of
Educational Technology Systems, 36*(4), 337-373.

Hoepfl, M. (1997). Choosing qualitative research: A primer for technology education
researchers. *Journal of Technology Education, 9*(1), 47-63.

Holcomb, L., Castek, J., & Johnson, P. (2007). Unlocking the potential of K-12
classroom websites to enhance learning. *New England Reading Association*

Journal, 43(1), 36-43.

Huang, H. (2002). Toward constructivism for adult learners in online learning

environments. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 33*(1), 27.

INACOL Staff. (2016). *What is blended learning?* Retrieved from:

https://www.inacol.org/news/what-is-blended-learning.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Education. (2018). In

Learning portal: Planning education for improved learning outcomes. *UNESCO*

International Institute for Education Planning. Retrieved from:

https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/issue-briefs/improve-learning/curriculum-and-

materials/information-and-communication-technology-ict.

Informedia Services (IMS) Digital Literacy for St. Cloud State University. (2017).

Limitations and Delimitations in Research. Retrieved from:

http://blog.stcloudstate.edu/ims/2017/03/28/limitations-and-delimitations-in-

research.

Jokinen, P., & Mikkonen, I. (2013). Teachers' experiences of teaching in a blended

learning environment. *Nurse Education in Practice*, *13*(6), 524-528.

Jonassen, D. (2013). Transforming learning with technology. In M. Clough, J. Olson &

D. Niederhauser (Eds.), *The nature of technology* (pp. 101-110). Iowa: Sense Publishers.

Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self: Problem and process in human development*.

Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Khan, S. (2012). *The one world schoolhouse: Education reimagined.* New York:

Hachette Book Group.

Knowles, M. S. (1973). *The adult learner: A neglected species.* Madison, WI: American

Society for Training and Development.

Layton, S. (2017). What's the difference between online learning and distance

learning? *Applied Educational Systems.* Retrieved from:

https://www.aeseducation.com/blog/2013/09/difference-between-online-learning-and-

distance-learning.

Legal Information Institute. (2017). *Cornell University. 38 CFR 21.142.* Retrieved from:

https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/38/21.142.

Leung, Y. (2003). How useful are course websites? A study of students'

perceptions. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education.*

Maxwell, C. (2016). A deeper look at the flex model. *Blended Learning Universe.*

Retrieved from: https://www.blendedlearning.org/a-deeper-look-at-the-flex-model.

McFarland, J., Hussar, B., Wang, X., Xhang, J., Wang, K., Rathbun, A., Barmer, A.,

Cataldi, E. F., & Mann, F. B. (2018). *The Condition of Education 2018.* U.S.

Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Retrieved from: https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018144.pdf.

Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., & Baki, M. (2013). The effectiveness of online and

blended learning: A meta-analysis of the empirical literature. *Teachers College

Record, 115*.

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San

Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Minnesota ABE professional development system. (2009). *Atlas Hamline*

University. Retrieved from: http://atlasabe.org/pd-system/mnabe-professional-

development-standards.

Minnesota Adult Basic Education. (2019). *Minnesota Literacy Council.* Retrieved

from: http://mnabe.org/about-abe-in-mn.

Minnesota Adult Basic Education report. (2019). *Literacy Action Network.* Retrieved

from: http://mnabe.org/sites/default/files/abe-impact-report.pdf.

MNABE Distance Learning. (2019). Retrieved from: http://mnabe-distancelearning.org.

Moore, S. C., (2009). Uses of technology in the instruction of adult English language

learners. *NETWORK Brief.* Center for Applied Linguistics.

Murray, J. (2019). Blended learning via technology in the classroom. *Teach Hub.*

Retrieved from: http://www.teachhub.com/blended-learning-technology-classroom.

National Reporting System for Adult Education. (2018). Retrieved from:

https://www.nrsweb.org.

Overview of Adult Basic Education (ABE) in Minnesota. (2018). *Minnesota Department*

of Education. Retrieved from:

http://mnabe.org/sites/default/files/overview_of_abe_2017.pdf.

Pagel, J. W., Lambacher, S., & Reedy, D. W. (2015). *Instructors' Attitudes Towards*

CALL and MALL in L2 Classrooms. In F. Helm, L. Bradley, M. Guarda, & S.

Thouësny (Eds), Critical CALL – Proceedings of the 2015 EUROCALL

Conference. Retrieved from: http://dx.doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2015.000375.

Pape, L. (2006). From bricks to clicks: Blurring classroom/cyber lines: Blended learning

combines the elements of online and face-to-face teaching approaches. *School*

Administrator. Retrieved from:

http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=7930.

Pavanelli, R. (2018). The flipped classroom: A mixed methods study of academic

performance and student perception in EAP writing context. *International Journal*

of Language and Linguistics, 5(2), *16-26.*

Picciano, A. G., (2006). *Blended Learning Implications for Growth and Access.* Doctoral

programs in urban education, and interactive pedagogy and technology. New York:

University of New York Graduate Center. Retrieved from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255620924_Blended_learning_Implications_for

_growth_and_access/download.

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2010). Generalization in quantitative and qualitative

research: Myths and strategies. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 47,*

1451-1458. Retrieved from: https://repository.edulll.gr/edulll/bitstream/

10795/2220/2/2220_1%20%20QUANTITY%20QUALITY.pdf.

Popp, N. (2017). A different kind of diversity among adult English language

learners. *MinneTESOL Journal*. Retrieved from:

http://minnetesoljournal.org/fall-2017-issue/different-kind-diversity-among-adult-

english-language-learners.

Punch, K. (2009). *Introduction to research methods in education.* Thousand Oaks, CA:

SAGE Publications Ltd.

Raine, L., & Perrin, A. (2017). 10 facts about smartphones as the iPhone turns 10. *Pew*

Research Center. Retrieved from:

http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/28/10-facts-about-smartphones.

Rose, G. (2014). *Blended learning in Texas.* Retrieved from:

https://community.lincs.ed.gov/comment/9097#comment-9097.

Rosen, D., & Stewart, C. (2015). Blended learning for the adult education classroom.

Essential Education. Retrieved from:

http://app.essentialed.com/resources/blended-learning-teachers-guide-web.pdf.

Rudolph, N. (2016). The merge of social network sites and professional

development: A case study of Twitter usage among Minnesota K-12 principals.

Culminating Projects in Education Administration and Leadership. Retrieved from:

http://repository.stcloudstate.edu/edad_ets/16.

Stallard, C., & Cocker, J. (2001). *The promise of technology in schools: The*

next 20 years. Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Staker, H., & Horn, M. (2012). Classifying K-12 blended learning. *Innosight Institute.*

Retrieved from: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED535180.pdf.

Stonehocker, B. (2017). Implications for CALL: Teachers' perceptions and use of CALL

in the classroom. *Culminating Projects in English.* Retrieved from:

http://repository.stcloudstate.edu/engl_etds/101.

Tucker, C. (2018). *Blended learning: Designing a whole group rotation with StudySync.*

Retrieved from: https://catlintucker.com/2018/08/whole-group-rotation-studysync.

Tuckett, R. (2012). Into the ether: The benefits of creating and utilizing a classroom

website. *Masters in teaching program 2010-2012 teaching toward a better*

world: Embracing the challenges.

Wankel, L., & Blessinger, P. (2013). Increasing student engagement and

retention using mobile applications: Smartphones, Skype and texting

technologies. In Wankel & Blessinger (Eds.), *Cutting-edge Technologies in Higher*

Education. UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Watson, J. (2008). Blending learning: The evolution of online and face-to-face education

from 2008-2015. *North American Council for Online Learning*. Retrieved from:

https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509636.pdf.

What is Community Education? (2019). Westonka Public Schools. Retrieved from:

https://www.westonka.k12.mn.us/Page/319.

What is Educational Leadership? (2019). Retrieved from:

https://learn.org/articles/What_is_Educational_Leadership.html.

Wiebe, G., & Kabata, K. (2010). Students' and instructors' attitudes toward the use of

CALL in foreign language teaching and learning. *Computer Assisted Language*

Learning, 23(3), 221-234.

Vanek, J. (2017). Working with teachers new to online technologies: A report of

action research. *MinneTESOL Journal*, *33*(2). Retrieved from:

http://minnetesoljournal.org/journal-acrhive/mtj-2017-2/working-teachers-new-

online-technologies-report-action-research.

Valentine, S., & Richards, R. (2016). *Blending leadership: Six simple beliefs for leading*

online and off. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Appendix A: Informed Consent

Interview: Informed Consent Form

Title: Blended Learning among Adult English as a Second Language Programs

Primary Investigator: Brigid Erickson
Contact: 612-516-2727 or email: baerickson@stcloudstate.edu

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Frances Kayona
Contact: 320-308-3170; or fakayona@stcloudstate.edu

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study of blended learning in adult ESL programs. You were selected as a possible participant because you are assumed to be an adult ESL teacher. This research project is being conducted to satisfy the requirements of a doctoral degree in Educational Administration and Leadership at St. Cloud State University.

The purpose of the study is to provide research that informs leadership about blended learning within the context of Adult Basic Education English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. The research questions are as follows:

1. What do Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning report as the most common types of blended learning used with their students?
2. What do Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning report as the factors that influence their decision to use blended learning?
3. What do Adult Basic Education ESL teachers who use blended learning report as barriers or challenges to using blended learning?

This study hopes to shed light on how blended learning is being used in adult ESL classrooms, the influencing factors for teachers to choose to employ blended learning teaching models, and the barriers to the using blended learning.

Data will be gathered in the form of an interview protocol of ten open-ended questions. The estimated time for the interview is 45 minutes. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study. A recording devise will be used to collect and verify interview data; all recordings will be destroyed upon conclusion of this study. Direct quotes may be used in the reporting of research results; therefore, participants may be asked to review their transcribed interview to potentially remove any comment they feel uncomfortable submitting.

There is no compensation for interview participants.

The confidentiality of the information gathered during your participation in this study will be maintained. Your personal identity will remain confidential. You will not be identified by your

name in any published material. All data will be kept in a locked cabinet in a secured office and/or on a password-protected computer.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time, for any reason, without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University, the Educational Administration program, or the researchers.

This researcher may stop your participation at any time without your consent for the following reasons: if it appears to be harmful to you in any way, if the study is canceled, or for reasons deemed appropriate by the research coordinator to maintain subject safety and the integrity of the study.

If you are interested in learning the results of this study, feel free to contact the researcher at 612-516-2727 or baerickson@stcloudstate.edu. You may also contact the Educational Administration Doctoral Center staff at 320-308-4220 or go to the SCSU Educational Administration Doctoral Center, 720 4th Avenue South, Education Building B121, St. Cloud, MN 56301.

Acceptance to Participate in the Blended Learning Study
Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, and you have consent to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty after signing this form.
Subject Name (Printed)_____

Subject Signature_____
Date_____

Appendix B: Interview Protocol
Interview Protocol

Name of Interviewer: _____   Date of Interview: _____

Name of Interviewee: _____

Setting and location of Interview: _____

Other topics discussed: _____

Other documents, etc., obtained during interview: _____

_____

_____

       Introductions: Greetings
         a. Warm up
         b. Establish relationship and build trust

       Explain the nature of the research, purpose, and provide consent form for signing. Provide a copy of the research questions to the interviewee. Use the probing questions if needed. Probing questions are listed under each interview question.

<u>Begin interview:</u>

1. What is your adult ESL class like?
    a. About how many students do you usually have?
        a) Where are the students from?
        b) What ages?
    b. What level(s) do you teach?
    c. What is your schedule?
        a) Could you describe a typical class period?
    d. What is it like teaching adult ESL?
        a) How is your classroom environment different than a K-12 classroom?
2. What kind of technology tools do you use in your classroom for student learning?
    a. Do you use a computer projector, smartboard, tablets, laptops, cellphones, or other types of technology in the classroom?
    b. Which technology tools do other teachers have available to them?
    c. Which tools are available that you don't use?
3. What is your understanding of the meaning of blended learning?
    a. If I said blended learning combines some aspect of online learning with traditional face-to-face instruction, would you agree?
        a) If not, why and which part?
    b. Could you describe some types of blended learning that you have seen or heard of?
        a) Where did you hear of these?
        b) Have you seen other teachers using these?
    c. What do you think about blended learning in general?
4. How do you use blended learning with your students?

     a. In what ways do your students use online content for you learning in your class?

     b. Do you use computer programs, online learning platforms, or other online services with students?

     c. Do you create content online?

          a) How do your students use this content?

     d. Can you describe a lesson using blended learning?

5. What types of blended learning do you use most often and why?

     a. (Describe rotation model, flex model, self-blend model, and distance learning model) Do you use any of those types of blended learning?

     b. Have you seen or heard of other teachers using blended learning in these ways?

          a) Have you seen or heard of teachers using blended learning in other ways?

6. Why do you choose to use blended learning in your class?

     a. How did you decide that blended learning was a good choice for your class?

     b. Why do you continue to use blended learning with your class?

     c. Do you think blended learning is beneficial to your class and students?

          a) How is it beneficial?

7. What factors do you consider before implementing blended learning with your students?

     a. For example, is access to technology a factor that you consider?

     b. For example, is knowledge of technology tools a factor that you consider?

8. Are there any blended learning techniques that you would like to use but have not? If so, what are they and what keeps you from using them?

     a. What other techniques have you heard of?

     b. Do other teachers use online technology for teaching in ways that you would like to try someday?

     c. What would you need to be able to try those technologies with your class?

9. Do you experience any barriers or challenges to using blended learning with your students? If so, what are they?

     a. Why is that a barrier or challenge?

     b. Who influences that barrier or challenge?

     c. How could those barriers be overcome?

     d. What could leadership at your program do to assist you in using technology tools?

10. Do you think there are any barriers to adopting blended learning in the field of adult ESL in general? If so, what are they?

     a. What do you think about blended learning in the field of adult ESL?

     b. What could leadership in the field of adult ESL do to facilitate teachers and programs wishing to implement blended learning?

Do you have any additional comments?

Appendix C: IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-
4498

Name: Brigid Erickson

IRB PROTOCOL

Email:baerickson@stcloudstate.edu

DETERMINATION:

Expedited Review-1

Project Title: Blended Learning among Adult English as a Second Language Programs

Advisor Frances Kayona

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

-Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Chair: **IRB Institutional Official:**

Dr. Benjamin Witts   Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan
Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis   Interim Associate Provost for Research
Department of Community Psychology,Counseling, and Family Therapy   Dean of Graduate Studies