

## **ABSTRACT**

Angela M. Kearney. AN EXAMINATION OF THE TRAINING NEEDS OF FIRST-YEAR BASIC SKILLS INSTRUCTORS IN THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM (Under the direction of Dr. Crystal Chambers). Department of Educational Leadership, November 2010.

In North Carolina Basic Skills Programs are administered by the community college system and provide adults educational opportunities in not only the traditional four areas of adult education, ABE, GED, AHS, and ESL, but a fifth component, Compensatory Education which serves adults with developmental disabilities. Currently, North Carolina Community College System Basic Skills Programs lack degree, subject area, or licensure requirements to teach in adult education programs. Without mandated education and experience, instructors' first-year professional development increases in significance.

This study sought to understand the professional development of first-year Basic Skills Program instructors in a community college setting. This study had two specific purposes: (a) to examine the training needs of first-year instructors as perceived by program personnel and (b) to investigate the differences in those perceived training needs among program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty. Utilizing Zinn's (1997) conceptual framework of supports and barriers to professional development, this study examines whether or not differences in perceptions among program personnel constitute an institutional barrier to training for a first-year instructor.

This quantitative research employed an Internet-based survey of full-time personnel employed in 56 North Carolina community colleges. The survey consisted of training topics in five categories: (a) planning and delivering instruction, (b) integrating technology into the classroom, (c) managing the educational environment, (d) providing instruction to special-needs

students, and (e) conducting student evaluation. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each training topic for a first-year instructor along a 7-point bipolar scale.

The study posed both research questions and hypotheses. Research questions concerning the perceptions of program personnel were answered by computing descriptive statistics for each training category. Null hypotheses regarding the perceptions among program personnel were tested with one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted on training categories.

Results indicated consensus in the perceptions of program personnel as personnel ranked conducting student evaluation as the most important training need for a first-year instructor. Of the five training categories a statistically significant difference existed in only one training area: planning and delivering instruction. Results indicated conflicting training perceptions are not an institutional barrier to professional development of new faculty.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE TRAINING NEEDS OF FIRST-YEAR BASIC SKILLS  
INSTRUCTORS IN THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

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INSTRUCTORS IN THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation and completed degree to my parents, Russell and Linda Kearney, who provided continuous feedback, daily encouragement, and substantial financial resources for this six year odyssey.

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Writing this dissertation and completing my degree has been a long, challenging, but rewarding journey. I initially resisted writing an acknowledgement page because with the host of individuals involved in this process I feared forgetting someone. I now recognize that failing to write acknowledgements would be egocentric on my part and misleading regarding others' contribution; therefore, it is my honor to express appreciation to the following individuals.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **Introduction**

Community colleges comprise nearly 40% of all post-secondary institutions, and educate about one third of college students (McIntosh & Rouse, 2009). The more than 270,000 community college faculty in the United States account for one third of all higher education faculty (Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006). With its open door admission policy, responsiveness to local needs, and increased accountability, the mission of the community college has become increasingly complex and multifaceted (Dougherty & Townsend, 2006; Levin, 2000). As community college administrators are pressed to produce educational deliverables, community college faculty members are charged with the task of educating a set of students that are increasingly diverse by their backgrounds, educational preparations, and aspirations (McIntosh & Rouse, 2009). Community colleges offer a full range of traditional academic and noncredit programs to meet internal and external demands. Within the traditional academic curriculum students can complete associate's degrees and, at many institutions, bachelor's degrees, as well as obtain transfer credits to the university system or colleges. Noncredit programs offer occupational, professional, and technical training as well as personal enrichment courses and adult education. Noncredit programs comprise a significant share of community college enrollments; however, an accurate comparison of academic and noncredit enrollments is problematic because of inconsistencies in data collection systems and reporting and program definitions (Jacobs & Dougherty, 2006; Milam, 2005).

Basic skills programs, a subdivision of noncredit programs, were created by federal legislation and funded by both federal and state funds (Eyre, 1998; Sticht, 2002). Basic skills programs are defined by the current governing legislation, the Workforce Investment Act of

1998, as providing educational opportunities for individuals age 16 or older who are no longer enrolled in the local public school system and who have educational deficiencies including, but not limited to, the absence of a secondary education credential or limited English skills. These classes are a significant sector of noncredit programs and have contributed to the rise in noncredit and overall enrollment in community colleges across the United States. In Morest's (2004) analysis of 2001-2002 nationwide community college unduplicated headcount basic skills students comprised approximately 15% of noncredit enrollments. In her study of community colleges in 39 states Morest found that at least 45% of community colleges offer basic skills programs, and basic skills students represented approximately 5% of all community college enrollments. While Morest's data did not include 11 states, she estimated that data from the remaining states would increase the percentage of community colleges offering basic skills programs to over 50% and the percentage of basic skills program enrollments to approximately 7% of all community college enrollments. In 2008 approximately 2.3 million individuals enrolled in classes sponsored by more than 4,100 federally funded basic skills education providers across the country, of which community colleges represent 16% (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2009). As such, adult basic skills education is a sizable segment of community college education.

In 2004-2005 nearly 145,000 basic skills program personnel served nationwide in federally funded programs in either a full-time, part-time, or volunteer capacity. Part-time personnel, the largest segment of the adult basic skills workforce, accounted for 49% of total personnel. Likewise, volunteers constituted a large portion of personnel at 35%. Full-time personnel comprised the remaining 15% of adult basic skills personnel in 2004-2005 (National Commission on Adult Literacy [NCAL], 2006). In 2004-2005 North Carolina employed 5,942

basic skills programs personnel with full-time personnel accounting for 13% of personnel and volunteers comprising 7% of the personnel. Eighty percent of North Carolina's basic skills program personnel were classified as part-time personnel, tying North Carolina with Texas as the state with the fifth largest percentage of part-time basic skills program personnel (NCAL, 2006).

The aforementioned data from the National Commission on Adult Literacy (2006) concerning personnel employed in basic skills programs throughout the United States has two limitations. First, it should be noted that the information reflected the number of personnel, not the number of instructors. It is assumed that the data on full-time and part-time personnel reflected instructors, program directors and other administrators as well as support personnel. The exact number of instructors is thus unable to be determined. Second, the data reflected the number of personnel serving in basic skills programs but did not indicate the type of service provider in which personnel were employed; therefore, the exact number of basic skills education personnel employed by community colleges is unknown.

The student demand for adult basic skills classes, comparatively low student retention rates, the large number of part-time and volunteer faculty, and the demand for new faculty to deliver adult basic skills content raise questions regarding the ability of adult basic skills educators to meet the education needs of this student body. As adult basic skills educators come from a wide array of academic backgrounds and professional experiences, the need for professional development aimed at early career instructors increases exponentially; therefore, first-year adult basic skills faculty professional development is the focus of this study. Specifically this research identifies what adult basic skills faculty need to know in order to successfully educate adult basic skills students. To explore this question North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-

time faculty were surveyed to allow them to articulate their perceptions of the professional development needs of a first-year basic skills program instructor. Furthermore, perceptions of program personnel are compared to assess whether or not a statistically significant difference exists among the three departmental positions. Finally, perceptions of program personnel are compared to determine whether or not the degree of difference constitutes an institutional barrier to first-year faculty professional development.

### **Study Context**

During the literature review conducted for this study it became apparent that adult basic skills programs are drastically varied across the United States. The most notable dissimilarities rest in the levels of instruction and nature of administration. There is such a lack of consensus defining these programs that it is imperative to place this study in context by providing an overview of basic skills programs as operated in North Carolina, the setting for this study.

First, basic skills education in North Carolina encompasses five academic divisions: (a) Adult Basic Education (ABE), (b) Adult High School (AHS), (c) General Education Diploma (GED), (d) English as a Second Language (ESL), and (e) Compensatory Education Department (CED) (NCCCS, 2008b). This study adheres to the NCCCS definitions for each of the five basic skills units which define instruction in ABE classes as designed to serve individuals with reading and math skills less than an eighth grade equivalent. In addition, individuals with ninth to twelfth grade level reading and math skills can choose either GED or AHS classes. GED classes provide instruction to prepare individuals to complete the five tests required to obtain a GED.

Alternatively, AHS classes are offered in conjunction with local public schools and allow individuals to complete the class credits necessary to receive an adult high school diploma. Of the 58 NCCCS Basic Skills Programs, only 41 offer the adult high school diploma program

(NCCCS, 2008b). Additionally, ESL classes are offered to non-native English speakers, and instruction is given in all levels ranging from literacy to advanced skills. Only the four aforementioned academic programs are recognized in adult basic education federal legislation and funding; however, in North Carolina Compensatory Education Departments, which are designed to provide instruction to individuals with developmental disabilities, are housed as a component of basic skills programs (NCCCS, 2008b).

Second, in North Carolina individuals with educational deficiencies who are age 16 or older and are no longer enrolled in the K-12 system can register in basic skills classes organized by either 26 community-based organizations or the state's 58 community colleges (North Carolina Community College System [NCCCS], n.d., *Community-based organization directors: 2008-2009*; NCCCS, 2008c). The NCCCS governs all federal and state funded basic skills programs in the state whether operating in a community-based or community college setting. Governance by a community college system is a unique feature in North Carolina as only 12 other states administer basic skills programs through the community college system (Morest, 2004). In the context of North Carolina adult education programs include both community-based and community college-based programs; however, this study focuses exclusively on adult basic skills programs in the state's community colleges. As such all numerical data contained herein solely reflect adult basic skills programs in North Carolina's community colleges.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The overarching purpose of this study is to understand the training needs of first-year adult basic skills program instructors in a community college setting. Moreover, there are two specific purposes: (a) to examine the training needs of adult basic education instructors as perceived by program personnel and (b) to investigate the differences in those perceived training

needs among program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty. An appreciation of early career faculty needs can be gained by exploring the training needs of a first-year basic skills program instructor.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The framework for this study is two-fold. Human resource development theory serves as the overarching theoretical framework. Additionally, Zinn's (1997) conceptual framework of four domains that act as either barriers or supports to faculty professional development provide the supplementary structure on which to build this study.

Swanson and Holt (2001) defined human resource development as "a process for developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance" (p. 4). According to Swanson and Holt (2001), human resource development has two core threads: (a) individual and organizational learning and (b) individual and organizational performance. Additionally, human resource theory has three core beliefs: (a) organizations are human-made entities that rely on human expertise to establish and achieve their goals, (b) human expertise is developed and maximized through HRD processes and should be done for the mutual long- and/or short-term benefits of the sponsoring organizations and the individuals involved, and (c) HRD professionals are advocates of individual/group, work processes, and organizational integrity (Swanson & Holt, 2001, p. 10). Human resource development's emphasis on individual learning through training provides the foundation for this study.

Zinn's (1997) conceptual framework of barriers and supports to faculty professional development provides a secondary framework for this study. Zinn's (1997) study of teacher professional development identified four domains that support or impede faculty's continuous

learning. The four domains are: (a) people and interpersonal relationships, (b) institutional structures, (c) personal considerations and commitments, and (d) intellectual and personal characteristics.

The perceptions of NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel in regards to a first-year instructor's professional development were examined. Furthermore, perceptions among program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty were compared. The comparison of perceptions determined whether conflicting judgments among groups involved in the planning, conducting, and evaluating of professional development constituted a potential institutional barrier to a new faculty member's training.

### **Need for the Study**

The professional development of first-year instructors in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs is examined in this study. Specifically, the perceptions of program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty are compared as program personnel articulate what they believe training should be for first-year faculty. The need for this study derives from two distinct yet related issues: (a) the decreasing enrollment in adult education programs in the United States, and specifically in North Carolina, while the need for program services increases and (b) the paucity in professional development research as it relates to basic skills program faculty.

### **Need for Adult Education Services**

Despite the more than two million adult basic skills students enrolled in classes across the nation in 2007-2008, basic skills programs in the United States, and in North Carolina specifically, are ineffective in recruiting and retaining their targeted populations as these students represent only a small percentage of adults eligible for basic education services (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy [CAAL], 2005; McIntosh & Rouse, 2009; Strawn, 2007; Young,

Fleischman, Fitzgerald, & Morgan, 1995). According to Young, Fleischman, and Morgan (1994) community colleges, in particular, are under serving adult learners. In a national evaluation of basic skills programs Young et al. (1995) found that 15% of enrollees did not participate in the program beyond registration. The overall median number of instructional hours received by a student in one year was 58. Furthermore, when reported as a median, ABE students received 35 hours of instruction during one year, and AHS/GED students received 28 hours of instruction during one year. ESL students received the most instruction with a median of 113 instructional hours during one year. There are no data available on the median number of hours of instruction NCCCS Basic Skills Programs; however, these programs have seen a steady decline based on enrollment figures after experiencing steady growth since the late 1990s. In 2001-2002 approximately 159,000 adult and compensatory education students enrolled in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs, but by 2006-2007 the number of enrollees decreased to slightly more than 135,000 (NCCCS, 2008b). In 2007-2008 enrollment reached a ten year low. The inability of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs to effectively recruit and retain adults can be seen within all targeted populations.

**Adult remediation.** Each year in the United States approximately 1.2 million teenagers, one in three, do not obtain a high school diploma (National Commission on Adult Literacy [NCAL], 2008). In North Carolina approximately 15,000 GED and high school diplomas were awarded through community colleges' basic skills programs in 2006-2007. The degrees awarded in 2006-2007 represented a 1.5% increase from the previous year; yet, the number of new students, more than 23,000, added to the state's high school dropout pool has increased by 24% from 2002-2003 to 2006-2007 (NCCCS, 2008a).

Unfortunately, even for adults who complete high school, their future opportunities are often limited due to inadequate educational preparation evidenced by a failure to gain proficiency in basic educational content areas. The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy indicated that an estimated 93 million Americans do not possess the literacy skills to enter post secondary education or complete advanced job training while another 123 million lack quantitative skills to complete these endeavors (NCAL, 2006). Although the mission of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs is to serve individuals without a secondary credential, adults who are not enrolled in curriculum classes and whose assessment indicates academic skills of less than 12<sup>th</sup> grade are eligible to register and gain remedial instruction. In 2001-2002 approximately 5,000 high school graduates enrolled in basic skills programs for remedial instruction, but the number of enrollees decreased 72% by 2006-2007 (NCCCS, 2008b).

**Immigrants.** The fastest growing segment of adult basic skills programs' targeted population is immigrants needing ESL classes. Between 1990 and 2000 the United States' population of foreign born individuals age 16 or older increased 61% to stand at 28 million individuals (Kochlar, 2006). Eight states had above average growth in their foreign born population, but the fastest growth of immigrant population was in North Carolina (Kochlar, 2006). Between 1990 and 2000 the immigrant population age 16 or older in North Carolina increased 278%, more than three times the average across all states (Kochlar, 2006). While not all immigrants are in need of ESL classes, in studies of self-reported English proficiency 40-60% of immigrants classified themselves as having a limited English proficiency (McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007; NCAL, 2008; Passel, 2007). Despite the colossal increase in North Carolina's immigrant population, between 2001 and 2007 ESL registrations in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs decreased nearly 11% (NCCCS, 2008b).

**Developmentally disabled individuals.** Adults with developmental disabilities are another growing population underserved in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs. In 2006 there were approximately 4.7 million adults in the United States with developmental disabilities. Similar to other populations targeted by NCCCS Basic Skills Programs, the demand for compensatory education classes exceeds current services rendered (Braddock, Hemp, & Rizzolo, 2008; see also Larson, Lakin, Anderson, Kwak, Lee & Anderson, 2001). In North Carolina the need for educational services to individuals with developmental disabilities has become more acute since 2001 when the General Assembly passed legislation aimed to reduce the number of institutionalized individuals in favor of community-based alternatives (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, 2002, 2006, 2007). Currently, NCCCS Basic Skills Programs serve approximately 6,000 students each year; however, the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities estimates 150,000 North Carolinians have a developmental disability and are in need of compensatory education classes (NCCCS, 2008c; North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities, 2006).

In summary, the need for adult basic skills services in the United States, and in North Carolina particularly, dwarfs the scale and abilities of current basic skills programs. If adult basic skills personnel recruit and retain even a small percentage of their target populations, a tremendous need for first-year instructors and professional development focused on the first-year faculty experience will exist.

### **Need for Professional Development Research**

Despite the long history of basic skills education, research in the field of basic skills program policy and practice as well as professional development are insufficient (Belzer & St.

Clair, 2005; Comings & Soricone, 2007; Fingeret, 1985; Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Specifically, there exists a dearth of research regarding first-year faculty.

According to Comings and Soricone (2007), the small foundation of scientific studies forces practitioners to base decisions concerning programs, services, and professional development on the experience of colleagues or on personal experience gained through trial and error. Comings and Soricone (2007) argued that research in the field of adult basic skills is deficient for several reasons, including (a) the lack of theory-based models for instruction and services, (b) incomplete and inconsistent data, (c) a lack of program resources, and (d) a lack of research resources. Other factors hindering adult basic skills program research include: (a) the highly diverse nature of the field, (b) multiple populations served, (c) institutional context, and (d) political orientation of the program (Belzer & St. Clair, 2005).

Finally, research on the policy, practice, and professional development in the field of adult basic skills is insufficient because of the poor quality of existing research (Beder, 1999). Beder (1999) reviewed 68 studies conducted on the outcomes and impacts of basic skills programs over the past 30 years. Citing significant methodological flaws, Beder concluded less than one third of the existing studies were credible.

**Lack of professional standards.** Without a national standard or state legislated minimum educational and licensure requirement, adult basic skills instructors often enter the classroom with little to no pedagogical skills and limited to nonexistent knowledge of adult learning theory (Smith, 2006). Smith (2006) asserts the learning needs of adults are fundamentally different than children and youth and providing instruction to individuals who have a history of failure in the educational system requires unique skills and knowledge gained through formal education and professional development. Belzer and St. Clair (2005) concur with

Smith (2006) and argue the “thin knowledge base (of adult basic education) is made more complicated by the nature of the workforce... [and lack of a] universal experience of training or apprenticeship” (p. 1400, 1405). The unique challenges of providing instruction in a basic skills program (e.g. the program, preparation, population, and policies) are described in Chapter Two: Challenges for Educators in Basic Skills Programs.

**Emphasis on first-year faculty.** Without formal education to teach in the field of adult basic skills education instructors must rely on pre-service and continuous professional development to gain knowledge and increase effectiveness in a challenging field (Belzer, 2005). Nevertheless, a review of the literature reveals that either the specific competencies, instructor population, or program setting are not clearly defined in the existing studies of adult basic skills instructor training needs, or the study of training needs is outdated and does not address the opportunities and challenges that today’s basic skills faculty face (Leahy, 1992; Marlowe, 1991; Mocker, 1974a; Mocker, 1974b; Peebles, 1975; Sherman, Tibbetts, Woodruff, & Weidler, 1999; Smith, 1976; Stafford, 1981; Zinn, 1974; Zinn, 1975). With a nationwide pool of potential students numbering millions and any effort to recruit and retain these students requiring an army of new faculty, an explicit focus is needed on the training needs of first-year basic skills program instructors (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Assuming a needs assessment is a vital element of professional development, Smith and Gillespie (2007) call for research examining the training needs of adult basic skills education instructors in order to more effectively plan professional development activities.

This study of training needs for a first-year instructor in the NCCCS Basic Skills Programs responds to the need for research in basic skills faculty professional development. Additionally, this study lays the groundwork for other research concerning the connection

between teacher preparation and teacher quality and the connection between teacher quality and student outcomes, two other areas where research needs emerged (Smith, 2006; Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

In order to gain knowledge of the organizational entry training critical to first-year faculty in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs the overarching research question is as follows: What are the perceived primary training needs of first-year instructors in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs? This overarching question of perceived training needs will be evaluated from the perspectives of NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty. As such the supporting research questions are as follows:

1. What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty when measured collectively?
2. What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program directors?
3. What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program coordinators?
4. What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program full-time faculty?

Guiding this inquiry are the following hypotheses:

H<sub>0</sub>1 – There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors' knowledge of planning and delivering instruction.

H<sub>0</sub>2 – There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors’ knowledge of integrating technology into the classroom.

H<sub>0</sub>3 - There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors’ knowledge of managing the educational environment through laws, policies, and procedures.

H<sub>0</sub>4 - There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors’ knowledge of providing assistance and instruction to special-needs students.

H<sub>0</sub>5 - There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors’ knowledge of conducting formal student evaluation.

### **Significance of the Study**

By exploring and comparing the perceptions of NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty, this study provides knowledge about the training needs of first-year faculty employed by a basic skills program in a community college setting. This research is unique and adds to knowledge in the field on three levels: the population, the purpose, and the setting.

### **Population**

First, this study extends existing knowledge about an understudied population, basic skills program personnel in community colleges (Belzer & St. Clair, 2005; Comings & Soricone, 2007). A detailed search of the research literature in the fields of higher and adult education did not yield any study of the training needs of first-year adult basic skills faculty in a community

college setting. Additionally, this current study is the first research of compensatory education faculty in a community college setting. Moreover, this study is the most recent research of basic skills program faculty competencies that includes the perceptions of local program directors. The last study of basic skills instructor competencies to include program directors is more than 10 years old (Sherman, Tibbetts, Woodruff, & Weidler, 1999). Finally, this study is the first to examine the role of a program coordinator, an intermediate supervisory role, in the planning and implementation of professional development for basic skills program faculty.

### **Purpose**

Also, this study is unique and adds to knowledge in the field by comparing perceptions of first-year instructor training needs among departmental directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty. A search of the literature did not yield a study with a similar purpose and population. Comparing the viewpoints of departmental leadership and faculty allows one to assess whether faculty's stated professional development needs are in alignment with the perceptions of program directors and coordinators, the two groups responsible for the budgeting, planning, implementing, and evaluating faculty's professional development.

### **Setting**

To study adult basic skills education in a community college setting, North Carolina provides an exceptional and distinctive state from which to determine current adult basic skills practices. With its 58 community colleges North Carolina ranks as the third largest community college system in the United States, and by annually serving more than 800,000 students, the NCCCS ranks as the fourth largest community college student body (M. Beach, personal communication, February 20, 2008; "NC System Mulls Illegal Immigrant Issue," 2008). Given its size, North Carolina is a leader in community college trends.

In addition, the administration of basic skills education under the auspices of the North Carolina Community College System is notable. Only thirteen states manage basic skills programs through their community college systems. Governing structures in other states place adult education under K-12, college and university control, or the state's Department of Labor (Morest, 2004).

Demonstrating its commitment to adult basic skills education by providing approximately \$40 million per year, North Carolina is the seventh largest contributor of state funds toward adult basic skills programs (Chrisman, 2002). Since Chrisman's 2002 report, North Carolina has increased its contributions to basic skills programs. In 2006-2007 the North Carolina General Assembly budgeted \$46 million for ABE/ESL, \$13.5 million for AHS/GED, and \$9.5 million for Compensatory Education, totaling \$69 million in adult basic skills education appropriations (NCCCS, 2008b). It is not known whether these increased contributions have changed North Carolina's ranking in terms of state contributions toward adult education.

North Carolina's setting is also distinguishable because Compensatory Education Departments, which serves individuals with intellectual disabilities, are not one of the federally recognized and funded units of adult basic education; however, in North Carolina compensatory education is included as one of the five basic skills program subunits. The incorporation of compensatory education in the NCCCS Basic Skills Programs began in 1983 and was the result of a 1978 lawsuit by the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) alleging that individuals with developmental disabilities had not been provided appropriate educational opportunities in North Carolina's public schools. The state, thus, agreed to develop a specific program tailored to meet these individuals' needs. The Compensatory Education Department became the state's educational program for individuals with developmental disabilities, and the program became a

component of the state's pre-existing NCCCS Basic Skills Programs (Smith, 2008).

Compensatory education as offered in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs is offered in conjunction with adult education in only two other states, California and Arkansas (NCCCS, n.d.

*Compensatory Education: Did you know*; S. Smith, personal communication, May 18, 2009).

Furthermore, this study of NCCCS Basic Skills Program first-year instructor training provides insight into the organizational entry needs of instructors in a state without mandatory educational criteria. Currently, the state lacks degree, subject, or licensure requirements to teach in adult basic skills programs operated in the community colleges. In accordance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) North Carolina requires that instructors be competent but allows local programs to define competency. A NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructor credential program is currently being developed; however, each local program will decide whether to require the credential once developed (NCCCS, 2008c). Thus while, federal funding legislation for adult basic skills education reads that instructors must be well trained, in North Carolina there exists neither a statewide uniform orientation program nor a minimum number of professional development hours to be completed annually (NCCCS, 2008c). In sum, the state of North Carolina allows adult education providers in local programs autonomy unmatched in most other states.

Finally, North Carolina had the sixth largest basic skills program enrollment among the 50 states in 2004-2005. Moreover, these six states with largest enrollment constituted 56% of total adult basic skills program enrollment in the United States (NCAL, 2006). Additionally, North Carolina is one of only three states where all community colleges within the state offer adult basic skills education services and is only one of twelve states where community colleges provide instruction to 50% or more of the state's adult basic skills education students. (Morest,

2004). North Carolina ranks third in the percentage of adult basic skills students, 98.7%, who are educated in the community college setting (Morest, 2004). The remaining 1.3% of North Carolina's students is served by the state's 26 community-based organizations.

An examination of the training needs of first-year instructors as perceived by NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel and comparison of those perceptions among three groups involved in professional development planning, implementation, and evaluation - the program directors, coordinators, and faculty - are the primary purposes of this study. The significance of this research is based upon its population, purpose, and setting. By examining the training needs of first-year adult basic skills educators in the NCCCS, this study will fill a gap about basic skills instructors in a community college setting as well as extend current knowledge about the professional development of community college faculty.

### **Overview of Methodology**

In this study I sought to understand the training needs of first-year adult basic skills program instructors in a community college setting. Additionally, the perceptions of program personnel, particularly directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors were compared for significant differences. I employed quantitative methods to capture the perceptions of program personnel regarding the professional development of first-year faculty. More specifically, I utilized Dillman, Smyth, and Christian's (2009) 5 step survey methodology for Internet-based surveys. The five-step methodology included a pre-notice, a survey invitation, two reminders, and a thank-you message.

The population for this study consisted of all full-time NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel. Question 1 of the survey asked participants to identify their role within their NCCCS Basic Skills Program. Participants self-reported as a program director, coordinator, full-time

instructor, part-time instructor, or other program personnel. As this study focused on directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty, participants who self-reported as being an adjunct instructor or other program staff were exited from the survey.

A review of the literature, as well as catalogs of tests and measurements, did not yield a suitable survey to capture the perceptions of basic skills program personnel regarding the professional development of first-year faculty. An author-created survey was utilized for this study. The survey consisted of a demographic section and a list of training topics. Using a 7-point bipolar continuum, respondents rated each training topic for importance for a first-year basic skills program faculty.

Data analysis occurred in multi-stages. First, frequencies were computed to create a profile of the respondents. Second, a factor analysis was conducted to determine the survey constructs and to identify survey items to be eliminated from analysis. Third, in order to answer the research questions concerning the perceptions of NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel posed by this study each survey item and construct were computed for its mean and standard deviation. Fourth, separate one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted on each professional development construct to assess the null hypotheses. The statistical testing for this study utilized a significance level of 0.05. Post-hoc testing occurred when necessary.

### **Definition of Terms**

Three groups of NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel are the population for this study: program directors, coordinators, and faculty. Definitions for these positions were not provided in the literature; however, these operational definitions were created based on knowledge of general practices within NCCCS Basic Skills Programs. The follows terms and definitions provide greater understanding and clarity for this study:

*Basic Skills Program Director* – the most senior administrator within a NCCCS Basic Skills Program and individual responsible for the day to day program operations of all five academic subunits. Responsibilities of a program director include, but are not limited to, hiring, training, and supervising departmental personnel, allocating program funds, ensuring program compliance with federal and state guidelines, and overseeing curriculum development.

*Basic Skills Program Coordinator* – the manager of one of more academic subunits within a NCCCS Basic Skills Program or the manager of a learning center where instruction is provided at multiple levels. Coordinators report to a program director and exercise a supervisory role serving as an intermediary between program directors and faculty. Responsibilities of a coordinator often mirror those of a director but on a smaller scale; however, unlike directors, coordinators often provide classroom instruction as either an assigned or substitute instructor. The scope of a coordinator’s duties and authority vary as determined by his or her job description and often at the discretion of a program director.

*Basic Skills Program Full-time Faculty* – the individual employed by a community college on a full-time contract and assigned to provide instruction to basic skills students in a classroom or learning lab.

### **Scope of the Study**

During the time frame for this study, 2009-2010, NCCCS Basic Skills Programs operated in 58 community colleges and 26 community-based organizations, employed hundreds of faculty and staff, and served thousands of students in both campus and off-campus programs. Due to the vast nature of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs, three delimitations exist for this study. First, this study is focused on the training provided to first-year adult basic skills instructors at the departmental level rather than any college wide efforts that institutions might provide. Second,

this study reflects the perspective of NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty only and does not include data collected from part-time instructors. While adjunct instructors constitute a large segment of program personnel, they were not included in this study due to general high instructor turnover in addition to a current reduction in force in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs that primarily affects adjunct faculty. No studies about adult basic skills faculty turnover exist; however, this supposition is based on anecdotal evidence common to the field, significant study withdrawal by adjunct faculty, and faculty demographic data collected during various studies (Sabatini, Daniels, Ginsburg, Limeul, Russell, & Stites, 2000; Smith & Gillespie, 2007; Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Solomon & Rowe, 2003; Young et al., 1995). At this time the instability of the part-time instructor base would jeopardize the validity of statistical data and conclusions. Third, in order to reach a large population many basic skills programs offer instruction at sites away from the main campus, in collaboration with other agencies or institutions, and/or via online formats. Some of these classes, such as those offered in collaboration with the Department of Correction, require instructors, both full-time and part-time, to participate in pre-service training or orientation relevant to that facility. This study of instructor training needs does not include specialized orientations or continuous training that occurs at those particular facilities. It also does not include the specialized training or information related to distance learning.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are inherent weaknesses in the research design that are beyond the researcher's control and might influence the results or their interpretation as well as pose a threat to internal validity. Three limitations exist for this study. First, this study is limited to the perceptions of NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel and might not be generalizable to other

states or settings for basic skills instruction. Second, the internal organization and program funding regulations cause some NCCCS Basic Skills Program faculty and staff to serve in multiple roles. Their simultaneous service might affect their perception of the training needs of first-year basic skills faculty. Furthermore, this lack of clear lines among directors, coordinators, and faculty might influence the results comparing the three groups. Third, I might hold bias due to my twelve years of experience in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs at two community colleges. During those twelve years I held the position of an adjunct instructor, full-time instructor, departmental lead instructor, and program director. The responsibilities in these positions included recruiting, interviewing, and mentoring both full-time and part-time faculty as well as organizing professional development activities and evaluating individual professional development plans for faculty and staff.

### **Assumptions**

In order to conduct this research the following assumptions were made. First, adult basic skills instructors often enter the field through diverse paths; therefore, many lack pedagogical skills and knowledge of adult learning theory. Furthermore, as new employees to the community college and basic skills program, instructors lack knowledge of both institutional and departmental policy and procedures. In light of these deficiencies instructors are in need of professional development. Second, the training needs of first-year instructors differ in both content and degree from training needs of more experienced instructors, thus a study of first-year instructor training needs is warranted. Third, a training needs assessment constitutes the first step in planning effective professional development activities. Fourth, the job responsibilities and duties of full-time and adjunct instructors in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs are virtually indistinguishable save the departmental and community college service required of full-time

faculty, thus eliminating the need to differentiate between the two populations for purposes of this study.

### **Organization of the Study**

In Chapter One the study's problem is identified as well as the study's purpose, research questions and hypotheses, and significance. The study's scope, limitations, assumptions, and definitions are also included in the opening chapter. In Chapter Two a review of the literature focusing on the history of adult basic skills education, challenges faced by basic skills faculty, the competencies and training needs of basic skills faculty, and barriers and strategies to providing instructor training is provided. In Chapter Three the research participants and processes for collecting and analyzing the data are described. In Chapter Four the results of data collection and analysis are provided. In Chapter Five the study's significant findings, implications, and recommendations are provided.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This review of the literature begins with an overview of adult basic skills programs in the United States. Next, the challenges faced by adult basic skills instructors are examined. The literature review continues with an evaluation of studies describing the training needs of adult basic skills instructors as well as a summary of deficiencies in the research concerning professional development of basic skills faculty. The literature review concludes with an examination of barriers and strategies for instructor professional development as well as a description of the study's conceptual framework.

### **Adult Basic Skills Programs in the United States**

This overview of adult basic skills education programs as operated in the United States has four primary objectives. First, this review provides a demographic profile of recent basic skills students. Second, a brief legislative history of basic skills programs is given. Third, federal and state support of basic skills programs is described. Fourth, this review provides an understanding of how professional development for basic skills faculty is funded.

### **Students in Adult Basic Skills Programs**

As the professional development of first-year basic skills instructors is this study's focus on a profile of the student population is warranted. The profile includes basic skills students in both the United States and in North Carolina, the setting for this study.

**United States.** In 2008 approximately 2.3 million students enrolled in classes sponsored by more than 4,100 federally funded adult basic skills education providers across the country (USDE, 2009). In that same year local education agencies represented 51% of nationwide providers while postsecondary institutions such as community colleges represented 16% of all adult education providers. Adult basic skills education services in 2008 were also provided by

community based organizations (21%), correctional institutions (4%), faith based organizations (3%), and libraries (2%). The remaining 3% of service providers were not identified (USDE, 2009).

Of the 2.3 million adult basic skills education students in 2008, 45% enrolled in English as a Second Language classes. Forty-one percent of enrollees obtained instruction in Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes that serve individuals with reading and math skills under eighth grade level while 14% of enrollees qualified for Adult Secondary Education (ASE) classes which are offered to students with skills between ninth and twelfth grade (USDE, 2009).

Nationwide, adult basic skills education services in 2008 were provided to a young and ethnically diverse student body. More than one third of the adult basic skills students were between the ages of 16 and 24. Hispanics enrolled most often and accounted for 44% of adult basic skills education enrollees while Caucasians (26%), African Americans (20%) and Asians (8%) also participated in adult basic skills education classes (USDE, 2009). The 2008 national data did not indicate the percentage of enrollees based on gender.

**North Carolina.** In 2006-2007 the NCCCS Basic Skills Programs served 133,908 students within four academic subunits. ABE students accounted for 54.7% of registrations, while ESL students were the second largest population representing 27.8% of the registrations. GED (12.3%) and AHS (5%) were the third and fourth smallest academic subunits based on the number of student registrations (NCCCS, 2008b). A review of statistical data from NCCCS Basic Skills Programs registrations since 2002 indicated the 2006 enrollment data by academic level to be representative of previous years (NCCCS, 2008b). There is no specific data on registrations for Compensatory Education Department, the fifth academic subunit. According to

the *Basic Skills Policy and Procedures Manual* approximately 6,000 students are served annually in that department (NCCCS, 2008c).

In 2007-2008 the NCCCS Basic Skills Programs served 134,928 students. In contrast to the 2008 nationwide numbers, students ages 16-24 represented 42% of basic skills students while students ages 25-34 accounted for an additional 27.5% of total registrations. As such, a larger share of the NCCCS Basic Skills Programs is comprised of a young adult population as compared to the nationwide data (NCCCS, 2008e). Unlike the aforementioned 2008 national data Caucasians (35.7%) and African Americans (31.7%) were the predominant ethnic groups in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs with Hispanics (24.6%), Asians (4.0%), and American Indians (1.8%) also obtaining adult basic skills educational services (NCCCS, 2008g). The remaining 2% identified themselves as a fifth category, Other/Unknown/ Multiple. While nationwide statistics omitted gender data, in North Carolina males registered more often than females and represented 52% of the student body (NCCCS, 2008g). Additionally, a review of statistical data from basic skills programs registrations since 2005 indicated the 2008 gender, race, and age data to be representative of previous years (NCCCS, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2007a, 2007b, 2008e, 2008g).

In summary, adult basic skills education as administered through NCCCS Basic Skills Programs provides adults educational opportunities in not only the traditional four areas of study, ABE, GED, AHS, and ESL, but also a fifth component, Compensatory Education. Furthermore, a review of demographic statistics data revealed that adult basic skills education students in North Carolina are a more ethnically diverse and younger student body with greater academic needs than their national counterparts.

## **Adult Basic Skills Program Legislation**

While the history of adult basic skills education in the United States can be traced nearly four hundred years beginning with apprenticeships, public libraries, and lyceums, the modern era of federally funded adult basic skills education, providing educational opportunities to individuals without a secondary credential, began with the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Basic skills education was one of 11 educational and vocational programs created by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (Eyre, 1998; Kett, 1994; Moreland & Goldstein, 1985; Sticht, 2002). Linking poverty and adult literacy, President Lyndon B. Johnson's *Great Society* program aimed to reduce poverty by providing adults age 18 or older who lacked a secondary credential the opportunity to improve their academic skills in order to both graduate and obtain or retain employment. Demonstrating an early interest and commitment to adult basic skills education, North Carolina was the first state to submit a state plan for funding under the original adult basic skills education legislation (Fingeret, 1985). With federal funding from the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act the NCCCS began offering Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs and collaborated with local boards of education to create an Adult High School Diploma program (Wiggs, 1989). Two years later community colleges in North Carolina began offering the GED as well as the Adult High School Diploma program (Wiggs, 1989). This first federal legislation that provided funding to basic skill programs laid the groundwork.

Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, the scope of adult basic skills programming was expanded at the federal level. In 1966 Congress transferred the administration of adult basic skills programs from the Office of Economic Opportunity to the Office of Education and provided funding of adult basic skills programs through the Adult Education Act of 1966, the first federal legislation distinctively funding and administering adult basic skills education

programs in the United States. In 1970 the age for participation in basic skills programs changed from 18 to 16 years of age and both citizenship and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes were included under federally funded adult basic skills education legislation (Eyre, 1998; Sticht, 2002). Between 1978 and 1988 federal funding legislation revised eligible providers of basic skills education to include public and private organizations as well as workplace literacy programs (Sticht, 2002). The Adult Education Act of 1966 and its amendments remained the cornerstone of adult basic skills education legislation and administration for nearly 30 years.

The National Literacy Act of 1991 replaced the Adult Education Act of 1966. With the National Literacy Act (1991) Congress established the National Institute for Literacy, created program quality indicators, and increased professional development funding (Belzer, Drennon, & Smith, 2001; Eyre, 1998; Sticht, 2002). The National Literacy Act (1991) was short lived, and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the current legislation governing basic skills education in the United States, superseded the 1991 legislation (Sticht, 2002).

The late 1970s and early 1980s marked the advent of an approach referred to as *new federalism* with transference of program administration from federal to state and local supervision. The concept of new federalism found its way to adult basic skills program education in the mid-1990s. This new approach was evidenced by a larger number of block grants to states and reduction in federal allotments (Hayes, 1999). While the Workforce Investment Act, Title II, the Adult and Education and Family Literacy Act (1998), continued to serve as basic skills education policy, its change from educational legislation to employment and training legislation reflected an era giving emphasis to short term assistance and job training in preparation for employment. The emphasis on employment can be seen in the act's stated purpose as well as its title. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Title II purpose reads as follows: "(a) to assist

adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skill necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; (b) to assist adults who are parents to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children; and (c) to assist adults in completion of a secondary school education.” (NCAL, 2006, p. 1-3)

Eligible participants and providers remained consistent with previous legislation; however, the most significant alteration with this new legislation consisted of increased accountability, novel competition for portions of state block grants, and reduction in professional development funding. Under the Workforce Investment Act (1998) Congress established five performance indicators of program quality which forms a substantial basis of state competition for funding. The five indicators are as follows: (a) improvement in literacy skills in reading, writing, and speaking the English language, numeracy, problem solving, English language acquisition, and other literacy skills; (b) placement in postsecondary or other training programs; (c) receipt of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; (d) entry into employment; and (e) retention in employment (Bingham, Ebert, & Bell, 2000; NCAL, 2006, p. 1-4).

These five indicators notwithstanding, it is suggested by Bingham et al. (2000) that the Workforce Investment Act (1998) defines adult basic skills education measurement and outcomes in very limited terms. In their review of two longitudinal studies of adult learners in Tennessee, they found adults entered adult basic skills programs with broader and more complex goals. While many adult learners reported an increase in employment, they also reported outcomes related to their increased sense of self and employment of new literacy skills in everyday life. Bingham et al. argued that the perspective and goals of adult learners are excluded

in both national adult basic skills education legislation and in local programs and classrooms where instructors are bound by specific outcome measures.

By the new millennium, calls for greater accountability in elementary and secondary education beginning with *A Nation at Risk* (USDE, 1983) trickled up to the post-secondary environment. To emphasize accountability in adult basic skills programming, Congress established the National Reporting System as the nation's adult basic skills education data collection system by which the five core indicators of program quality are measured for funding (NCCCS, 2008c). While each state was required to collect data, in the continued spirit of new federalist deregulation, each state was allowed to create its own data collection system in order to submit aggregate state data to the National Reporting System (Bingham et al., 2000; Hayes, 1999). North Carolina created the *Literacy Education Information System* (LEIS) for the purpose of student assessment and goal collection (NCCCS, 2008c). Each adult basic skills program in North Carolina is required to complete LEIS goal, outcome, and assessment reports for each student registered during the reporting year which is May 16 to May 15 of the following year (NCCCS, 2008c). According to the Workforce Investment Act (1998), only students who complete a minimum of 12 contact hours are considered for provider funding. A student with fewer than twelve contact hours is eliminated from federal program funding statistics regardless of whether he or she achieved a core indicator such as obtaining a secondary credential; therefore, student retention as well as student achievement are of paramount concern to program administrators and instructors. While students with fewer than 12 contact hours are not considered for federal funding, those students are included in North Carolina's funding model for state monies (NCCCS, 2008c).

In summary, congressional legislation has shaped the current design of adult basic skills programs (Beder & Medina, 2001). Specifically, federal mandates stipulate student eligibility as well as define student achievements that qualify for funding. As both federal and state governments provide millions of dollars to basic skills programs based in part on student achievement a review of basic skills programs' federal and state funding models is warranted.

### **Funding of Adult Basic Skills Programs**

According to Beder and Medina (2001), an understanding of adult basic skills education program funding is paramount because of its significant influence as a shaper of program services on two levels. First, funding sources and their regulations often determine eligibility requirements for participants and sometimes actual instruction to be provided. Second, the amount of funding determines the availability of instruction and its related issue, class size.

**Federal funding.** Currently, the federal government spends approximately \$575 million per year on basic skills education. Funding for adult basic skills education in the United States, described in the Workforce Investment Act (1998), provides block grants distributed to states based on both the aforementioned performance indicators measured by the National Reporting Service and a formula. The formula portion of the funding model is based on the number of adults over age 16 without a secondary credential and the number of immigrants in each state. Currently, North Carolina receives approximately \$16 million in federal adult education funding each year (NCCCS, 2008c).

One provision of the Workforce Investment Act stipulates that states match 25% of federal funds with state resources. Total state resources for adult basic skills education should be \$140 million per year, but because seven states, including North Carolina, match the federal allotment at nearly 80%, total spending by states for adult basic skills education has exceeded

\$1.2 billion in recent years (CAAL, 2005; Chrisman, 2002; NCAL, 2006). States, such as North Carolina where adult basic skills education is administered in the community college setting, are more likely to match and overmatch federal funding. Some states, however, do not match federal funds with state funds (CAAL, 2005; Chrisman, 2002; NCAL, 2006). Rather, states that do not match federal funding typically count local government spending for basic skills education toward the states' required nonfederal 25% match (Chrisman, 2002). Between 2003 and 2005 states such as Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Colorado minimally matched federal funding at 25-26% (NCAL, 2006). Total federal funding translates into an average of \$200 per student while federal and state combined expenditures increases the per student average expenditure to \$600 per year (CAAL, 2005).

**State funding.** North Carolina, one of the seven states providing the largest federal fund overmatch, has both a performance and formula based funding model (NCCCS, 2008c). Community colleges and community-based organizations compete for federal and state funds based on the National Reporting Service's five student outcome measures (NCCCS, 2008c). Additionally, basic skills programs are reimbursed by the North Carolina General Assembly for student contact hours. The Full-time Equivalent (FTE) formula in North Carolina for community colleges equates 688 contact hours for one FTE, and FTE reimbursement rates are set each year by the North Carolina General Assembly. In 2008-2009 the North Carolina General Assembly reimbursed community college curriculum programs \$4872.90 per FTE and Continuing Education programs \$4249.465 per FTE. Basic skills programs received the largest FTE reimbursement at \$5521.32 per FTE (NCCCS, 2008f). Moreover, only basic skills programs earn FTE during the summer semester (NCCCS, 2008f). Other performance indicators for funding

include \$50 for each GED awarded and \$150 for each adult high school diploma graduate (NCCCS, 2008c).

The formula portion of the funding model for basic skills programs in North Carolina includes three factors: (a) base allocation - \$20,000; (b) 25 cents for each adult 16-54 without a secondary credential within a community college's service area; and (c) \$10,000 per percentage point in excess of each county's population without a secondary credential versus the statewide percentage of high school dropouts (NCCCS, 2008c).

Finally, because compensatory education, which serves adults with developmental disabilities and comprises the fifth subunit of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs, is not eligible for adult basic skills education funding under the Workforce Investment Act (1998), the North Carolina General Assembly provides a yearly allotment for this division of basic skills programs. Each institution receives a base \$10,000 allotment, and the remaining funds are allocated based on the previous year's compensatory education program headcount for that particular institution. In 2008-2009 the North Carolina General Assembly allotted \$1.2 million to compensatory education programs in the 58 community colleges. Based on approximately 6,500 total student registrations in North Carolina, each compensatory education program received \$100.29 per student (NCCCS, 2008d). Beyond this base, compensatory education earns FTE funding like other basic skills subunits.

Despite millions of dollars funded to adult basic skills programs through the federal and state sources, adult basic skills education researchers and practitioners describe adult basic skills education in the United States as grossly underfunded (Chrisman, 2002; CAAL, 2005; NCAL, 2006). While adult basic skills education researchers and practitioners request increased funding, they fail to address how additional dollars would be spent and the expected outcome of

additional monies. According to the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (2005), there are no studies about adult basic skills education funding regarding average student expenditures and related outcomes.

### **Funding of Adult Basic Skills Program Professional Development**

In the more than 40 years since the federal government first began allocating funds for basic skills program the federal funding for professional development has been consistent although to varying degrees. The original federal basic skills education legislation, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, funded adult basic skills education at 90% but failed to provide funds for teacher training; however, with the 1966 Adult Education Act Congress provided that 10-20% of each state's allotment be reserved for special projects and teacher training (Eyre, 1998; Sticht, 2002). In 1974 the funding for teacher training changed from a discretionary 10-20% of the federal allotment to a constant 15% (Sticht, 2002).

With the National Literacy Act (1991), the first major adult basic skills education legislation in more than 30 years, Congress demonstrated a commitment to adult basic skills educator training and required a minimum of 15% of the federal allotment be spent on professional development of adult basic skills educators. The victory for professional development proved short lived because the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 substantially reduced the allocation for training and development in the field of adult basic skills education (Belzer et al., 2001). Despite the growing number of adults in demanding adult basic skills programs, the Workforce Investment Act (1998) reads that a maximum of 12.5% of the federal allotment may be spent on state leadership, which can take the form of professional development, technical assistance, program monitoring, and resource development (NCAL, 2006).

In North Carolina funding for basic skills programs professional development is determined by the NCCCS Office. As such 10% of each community college's federal basic skills program allotment is allocated for professional development (NCAL, 2006; NCCCS, 2008c; NCCCS, 2008d). There is no spending requirement for professional development corresponding to state funding, the larger of the two funding sources and accounting for 75-80% of total program funds (NCCCS, 2008c; NCCCS, 2008d). Instead, professional development beyond federal appropriations is determined by local community colleges and local program directors. Furthermore, compensatory education, fully funded by state allocations, does not receive federal professional development support, but shares the entire basic skills programs professional development allotment at a portion determined by each local program director (NCCCS, 2008d).

In summary, basic skills programs provide a myriad of educational services to a diverse student population. Federal legislation since 1964 has served to define the structure, accountability measures, and funding of adult basic skills programs. Additionally, federal legislation stipulates that states provide funding to adult basic skills programs. North Carolina, the setting for this study, is a leader in basic skills program funding (CAAL, 2005; Chrisman, 2002; NCAL, 2006). Additionally, federal funds are allocated to provide professional development to train faculty who face multiple challenges as they provide educational services.

### **Challenges for Educators in Basic Skills Programs**

A review of the literature conducted for this study yielded three major studies of the instructional setting and student behavior in adult basic skills education classrooms (Beder & Medina, 2001; Beder, Tomkins, Medina, Riccioni, & Deng, 2006; Mezirow, Darkenwald, & Knox, 1975), one major study of adult basic skills education faculty (Smith & Hofer, 2003), and one major study of adult basic skills education instructor professional development (Smith et al.,

2003). Additionally, the literature included an evaluation (Fingeret, 1985) of the NCCCS Basic Skills Programs. Fingeret's study (1985) is only the second evaluation of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs, the first occurring in 1971. Fingeret described her study as an assessment of "internal processes and dynamics of the program" rather than outcomes and concluded that two themes represented NCCCS Basic Skills Programs: isolation and autonomy (p. 13). By reviewing these seminal studies in classroom dynamics, faculty concerns, and professional development along with supporting research, four themes relating to the challenges adult basic skills faculty face began to emerge. These themes are preparation, population, programs, and the policies.

### **Preparation**

Basic skills program faculty face the challenge of being underprepared for the basic skills classroom. The lack of preparation rests with the limited availability and applicability of graduate school degrees (Evans & Sherman, 1999; Sabatini, Ginsburg, & Russell, 2002; Smith, 2006; Smith & Hofer, 2003). Additionally, faculty often enter the classroom unprepared because of a lack professional standards, specifically relating to faculty degree, subject, and credentials (Fingeret, 1985; Smith, 2006).

First, adult basic skills faculty are often unprepared for the classroom due to the limitations of graduate school preparation (Sabatini, Ginsburg, & Russell, 2002; Smith, 2006; Smith & Hofer, 2003). Evans and Sherman's (1999) review of graduate programs in adult education offered in 1999-2000 indicated that fewer than 90 institutions in the United States offer graduate degrees in adult education, continuing and community college education. Moreover, the number of institutions offering graduate degrees in adult education decreased by 29% in the decade from 1992 to 2002 (Glowacki-Dudka & Helvie-Mason; 2004). It is unclear from the Evans and Sherman (1999) review the number of graduate level adult education

programs that were specifically aimed toward adult basic skills instruction. Critics of graduate degrees in adult education argue these programs do not focus on adult basic skills teacher preparation but rather target administrators, researchers, and higher education faculty (Sabatini et al., 2002; Smith, 2006). Future demand for graduate programs focusing on teacher preparation of adult basic skills does not seem likely as full-time employment opportunities in basic skills programs are uncommon (Sabatini et al., 2002).

Second, basic skills program faculty are often unprepared to face the challenges of a basic skills classroom due to a lack of national and state standards. As such programs hire individuals who have little to no experience teaching adults and with degrees in areas other than education. Smith and Hofer (2003) found 53% of 106 instructors had not completed any formal coursework in adult education at either the graduate or undergraduate levels, and 20% of 106 instructors completed at least three courses in education at either the graduate or undergraduate level. Furthermore, Leahy (1992) found that 32% of 231 instructors had completed at least five courses in adult education at either the graduate or undergraduate level. Additionally, nearly one third of full-time instructors and more than one fifth of adjunct instructors reported completing no courses in adult education at either the graduate or undergraduate level.

In her evaluation of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs Fingeret (1985) found a diverse faculty with degrees in elementary, secondary and special education, history, music, early childhood development, Italian, horticulture, social work, recreation, English, psychology, and home economics. Faculty experience prior to entering the field of adult basic skills instruction varied from employment as K-12 faculty, a driver's education instructor, a day care center janitor, to a homemaker interviewed and hired over the telephone for class beginning that evening. Fingeret concluded that adult basic skills education as a profession is usually entered

through the “back door” (p. 83). Smith and Hofer (2003) concurred that few faculty deliberately enter adult basic skills instruction, but rather they “fall” into the field (p. 20). Participants’ descriptions of their initial involvement in adult basic skills education indicated that little has changed since Fingeret’s evaluation of basic skills programs nearly 20 years earlier (Smith & Hofer, 2003).

Currently, there exists no national standard, credential, certification, or minimum educational and licensure requirement for adult basic skills educators (Belzer, 2005; Smith, 2006). Rather standards, if any, are stipulated at the state or local program level. The lack of national and state standards for faculty is traceable to the lack of research in basic skills education professional development and the lack of consensus concerning programmatic goals and methods (Belzer et al., 2001; Smith, 2006). In the absence of agreement on program goals and instructional methods there can be no consensus on best practices regarding any area of adult basic skills education and specifically educational criteria and professional development for faculty (Belzer et al., 2001).

In an effort to increase professionalization, some states have established credentials and competencies or require certificates and licensures for adult basic skills instructors; however, not all states that have either a credential or certificate require its attainment for employment (Crandall, Ingersoll & Lopez, 2008). Certification, available in elementary, secondary, adult or ESL levels, is typically defined as a set of skills and knowledge gained through coursework and awarded by colleges and universities. Conversely, credentialing, a creation of the state’s adult education leadership, is a recognition and validation of what faculty are able to do based on their experiences (Crandall et al., 2008). Without research comparing instructor effectiveness and student achievement based on instructors’ formal preparation and state requirements, state and

local standards continue to vary (Smith, 2006). Even with research, standards might vary; however, professional harmonization can begin with research.

In a review of adult basic skills faculty educational, licensure, certification, and credentialing criteria, four recent syntheses exist (Crandall et al., 2008; Parke, 2000; Smith, 2006; Tolbert, 2001). Despite the relatively close time frame of these four publications, much disagreement exists in their findings regarding the required degree, subject, and licensure as well as which states require certification and credentialing. It is impossible to synthesize the formal educational requirements of adult basic skills faculty. Data synthesis across these four studies is problematic because of incomplete data, unclear and atypical definitions, contradictory information, and errors of fact (Tolbert, 2001). Of particular interest to this study is the fact that North Carolina's educational and formal criterion for instructors is incorrectly identified in two of the four syntheses. Parke (2000) incorrectly identified North Carolina as requiring a certificate, and Crandall et al. (2008) incorrectly identify North Carolina as requiring a bachelor's degree. On the contrary, the *North Carolina Community College Basic Skills Policy and Procedures Manual* (NCCCS, 2008c), as well as personal communication with the state director of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs, indicate that North Carolina does not have any minimum educational requirements as hiring criteria is a local program decision.

Most recently, Crandall et al. (2008) attempted to ascertain the formal education, licensure, credential and certification requirements in all 50 states. Unlike other syntheses (Parke, 2000; Smith, 2006; Tolbert, 2001), Crandall et al. clearly differentiated requirements for ESL instructors. Despite their ten-paged table, Crandall et al. do not create a clear picture of standards in not only the United States as a whole, but also in some individual states because of missing data. The researchers themselves were unable to draw specific conclusions, but rather

summarized that requirements are widely varied and that some differences in state requirements are the result of the type of institution where instruction is offered. As a demonstration of the widely varied standards, the majority of states require a minimum of a bachelor's degree; however, Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska require an associate's degree or high school diploma. Conversely, Oregon mandates full-time instructors to hold a master's degree. Only Arkansas mandates that basic skills faculty have passed the Praxis II Principles of Teaching and Learning. Moreover, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, and Missouri have varying levels of required K-12 and adult education certification. Finally, states such as Alaska, Hawaii, Iowa, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and North Carolina fail to mandate degrees, subject matter, certification, and professional development (Crandall et al., 2008).

To summarize, there exists no national standard for adult basic skills instructors, and the criterion for faculty varies not only from state to state but often among programs within the same state. This wide variation is because the field of adult basic skills education currently lacks research in both teacher preparation and the relationship between teacher preparation and student achievement (Smith, 2006). The lack of research has created a void in the field so that hiring criteria for adult basic skills instructors is based on factors other than empirical evidence (Belzer et al., 2001; Smith, 2006). With few graduate programs in adult basic skills education focusing on teacher preparation, little demand for such programs, and widely diverse standards, basic skills teachers often enter the classroom unprepared to face many challenges posed by a complex field.

### **Population**

Instructors in basic skills classrooms not only face difficulties due to their limited professional preparation, but the population served in basic skills programs creates a challenge

for faculty. Difficulties in serving the population include: (a) implementing adult learning theory, (b) retaining students, (c) managing the classroom, and (d) accommodating individuals with learning disabilities.

**Adult learning theory.** Adult basic skills educators face the dilemma of whether or not to implement adult learning theory, and if so, how. Malcolm Knowles, known as the “father of andragogy,” defined andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults learn” and contrasted it with pedagogy, which he defined as “the art and science of helping children learn” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 272). The andragogy-pedagogy debate coincides with the debate over preparation of adult education instructors and the preponderance, and sometimes requirements, in several states or programs to employ K-12 teachers with elementary or secondary licensure (Crandall et al., 2008; Smith, 2006). According to Knowles, andragogy is based on five assumptions about the adult learner (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

1. As adults age and mature, they become autonomous and self directed learners meaning that adult learners can participate in the planning and evaluation of learning activities.
2. Adults possess a wealth of life experiences and knowledge that serve as a rich resource for learning.
3. Adult learners are motivated by internal rather than external factors.
4. Adults are focused on immediate relevancy and problem solving rather than future application and subject-centered learning.
5. The readiness of an adult learner is closely related to the tasks of his or her social role (p. 272).

Knowles' theory of adult learning and its application in basic skills classrooms is not without its critics (Kerka, 2002; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Critics argue that emphasizing self-direction is ignoring context as basic skills students are often marginalized and without a voice, and self-direction of adult learners overlooks the potential learning and psychological disabilities of adult learners that inhibit self-direction and autonomy (Kerka, 2002). Critics also contend that an adult's longer life when compared to a child does not necessitate quality of experience that lends itself to the learning environment. Often an adult's past experiences function as a barrier to one's current learning experience (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Critics also contest Knowles' assumption that adults are internally motivated and distinguish his assumption from mandated educational programs such as those offered in workplaces, government and social programs, and prisons (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). To his defense, Knowles revised his view of andragogy and pedagogy as discrete theories and stated that the techniques of both fields are often used in combination, particularly in adult basic skills classrooms (Beder & Medina, 2001).

The practice of adult learning theory and its impact have not been well documented in the literature (Beder & Medina, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Based on current research, Beder and Medina (2001) concluded that adult learning theory research in a basic skills setting is both inconclusive and contradictory. Where researchers have studied specific aspects of adult learning in practice, they discovered a disconnection between theory and practice. Studies by Beder and Medina, Beder et al. (2006) and Smith and Hofer (2003) indicated that learner-centered instruction was less a teaching theory and practice, but rather a descriptor of the fond relationship between instructors and students. Furthermore, studies by Beder and Medina, Beder et al., and Mezirow et al. (1975) indicated that basic skills instructors typically follow the

traditional model of teacher prepared lessons, elementary style elicitations, and minimal student input in goal creation, lesson content, or program evaluation.

Both Kerka (2002) and Merriam and Caffarella (1999) concluded that no single theory, including andragogy, is appropriate for all adult education classrooms and all adult learners. Kerka contended that current adult learning theory is deficient because of its emphasis on broad child and adult characteristics. Kerka argued that adult learning theory would better serve practitioners if based on other factors such as the context, the learner's abilities and characteristics, and instructor's values and beliefs. Concurring with Kerka, Merriam and Caffarella concluded that adult learning theory can constructively serve as a piece of the puzzle for better understanding adult learners. Its value in conjunction with other factors will serve as an enduring model of adult learning.

**Student retention.** Adult basic skills educators regularly struggle with the retention of students, and studies of student persistence indicate that adult learners are not retained long enough to make significant progress or earn a credential (Strawn, 2007). While researchers suggest that a minimum of 100 hours of instruction is required to advance a grade level and 110 hours of instruction are required to advance one level in English ability as measured by the National Reporting System, Young et al. (1994) found that most students attended class fewer than 50 contact hours during a one year period (Strawn, 2007). Young et al. (1995) found the first month of enrollment to be the most critical time to retain students. They discovered that students who were retained for a second month were likely to increase their total enrollment and active attendance by 45%. Furthermore, persistence rates continued to rise with each month of attendance. Adult learners attending during their fifth month were likely to complete nearly a year of studies. A national study of persistence in 2002 found students averaged 80-100 hours of

instruction in one year with the most common length of stay being 30-50 hours of study (Strawn, 2007). The U.S. Department of Education reported in 2003 that basic skills program students average 113 hours of instruction. North Carolina, with an average of 102 hours per student, was only one of four states to average over 100 contact hours during a one year period per student (Comings et al., 2006). The accuracy of this data is limited because this figure does not include enrollees who participated in fewer than 12 instructional hours as those individuals are eliminated from federal statistics (Comings et al., 2006).

With such meager and sporadic student attendance, it is not surprising that practitioner focus groups in nine states cited student retention as their number one concern (Bingham et al., 1998). Propelled by the numbers game, funding formulas and performance evaluations, instructors are plagued with recording and reporting attendance and often contact absent students or query attending students about their absent classmates (Mezirow et al., 1975).

Students withdraw from traditional schools as well as basic skills programs for a myriad of reasons, some of which can be remedied by the programs and others not so easily. Student persistence studies commonly incorporate Patricia Cross' barriers to learning conceptual framework (e.g., Magro, 2008; Martinez, 2005; Tucho, 2000). This model of dispositional (internal), situational (external), and institutional barriers to student attendance suggests that a host of factors impede student persistence (Comings et al., 2006; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Comings et al. (2006) recommend that programs emphasize building self-efficacy and providing counseling and support services to increase student attendance; however, studies of student retention (Bolden, 2006; Comings et al., 2006; Martinez, 2005; Tucho, 2000) found persistence to be multidimensional, contradictory, and difficult to measure.

**Classroom management.** Managing the classroom and implementing discipline constitute a challenge unique to the basic skills classroom. The first adult basic skills education legislation required students to be age 18 to enroll, but subsequent legislation lowered the age to 16. The challenge of classroom management has become heightened in recent years as more and more youth participate in adult basic skills classes. In 2008 over half a million students aged 16-19 participated in GED testing in the United States (ACE, 2009). These youth represented 45% of GED recipients and 41% of GED testing candidates, described as an individual completing fewer than all five official test sections (ACE, 2009). The number of GED graduates and testing candidates provide an incomplete picture of the youth in basic skills programs as ABE, AHS, ESL and CED also allow enrollment at age 16.

Rachal and Bingham (2004) described the GED as a landmark in adult basic skills education and adult learning theory and primary justification for the distinction of adult education from other teaching fields. From their perspective the increasing youth population undermines this feature and alters the educational atmosphere of the adult basic skills classroom. Rachal and Bingham lamented the “adolescentizing of the GED” and cited GED Testing Service figures that demonstrate 40% of GED recipients in the United States in 2001 were ages 16-19 (p. 1). Rachal and Bingham advocated amending state and federal policies to read that students cannot enter basic skills programs until their high school class graduates, but they conceded that political and social forces in place make this approach unlikely. In addition they supported the removal of minors from adult basic skills programs; however, they failed to suggest alternative activities for the hundreds of thousands of these individuals while they waited to reach age of 18 (Rachal & Bingham, 2004). Despite the objections of Rachal and Bingham the number of youth

participating in GED testing has remained constant since 2001 (American Council on Education [ACE], 2009).

The increase in younger students seeking the GED is directly correlated to the failure to complete high school by large numbers of adolescents. Clear comparisons, however, are problematic because individuals aged 16-24 who completed an adult high school diploma or GED program are not reported as dropouts but as graduates of their last high school attended (USDE, 2008). In their study of four urban youth programs Perin, Flugman, and Spiegel (2006) discovered some of the many reasons students withdrew from public school. Students often cited higher state graduation requirements, a more demanding graduation exam, poor interaction with students and classmates, expulsion and irregular attendance, substance abuse, pregnancy, referral by high school personnel, and personal safety concerns.

Students, in turn, registered in basic skills programs for a multitude of reasons other than a desire for a secondary credential. Included in these rationales are students who were mandated by the court system, or as in some states such as North Carolina, high school dropouts are required to attend basic skills classes or lose their driver's license (NCCCS, 2008c). Additionally, parents of students who received governmental assistance often forced youth to attend basic skills classes to continue receiving financial assistance on behalf of the minor (Perin et al., 2006).

Mezirow et al. (1975) described as a distinguishing characteristic of the basic skills classroom "the conspicuous relaxation of customary rules, rituals, and conventions governing the classroom conduct and management" (p. 31). However, the laissez-faire structural approach may not fit the socialization needs of younger students, as the addition of youth to the classroom introduces conduct matters generally not seen in a classroom of adults. Disciplining or

sanctioning, when invoked, most frequently referred to the disruptive behavior of younger students (Beder & Medina, 2001; Mezirow et al., 1975). Studies of classroom dynamics (Beder & Medina, 2001; Mezirow et al., 1975; Perin et al., 2006) were replete with examples of disruptive youth behavior such as talking, sleeping, arriving late, walking around and leaving the classroom, disrespecting instructors and classmates, damaging institutional property, and engaging in gang activities. One instructor described her job as being “like a probation officer as well as a teacher” (Rachal & Bingham, 2004, p. 39). In an investigation of behavioral management at the classroom level, Beder and Medina (2001) found that instructors’ positive engagement dominated the class period; however, instructors unsuccessfully dealt with negative behavior with inappropriate responses varying from verbal sarcasm to ignoring the behavior. Instructors fail to effectively manage the classroom because of the program’s emphasis on student retention and the instructor’s fear that sanctioning will result in student withdrawal from the program (Beder & Medina, 2001; Mezirow et al., 1975).

Programs have attempted to manage the negative behavior with both classroom and program adjustments. Classroom modifications include separating classes for youth, conducting more assessments, incorporating computer-assisted instruction, reducing use of lectures, and employing individual assignments. Program adaptations include writing student codes of conduct, creating dress codes, banning electronic devices, establishing probationary and expulsion systems, in addition to hiring security guards, youth counselors, and instructors with special education and correctional education experience (Perin et al., 2006).

Unfortunately, research in retention indicated that 16-20 year olds were likely to “double dropout” – both from high school and adult education programs (Perin et al., 2006). Perin et al. (2006) concluded that double drop propensity of youth indicated that high schools and adult

education programs were simply not equipped to accommodate the multifaceted needs of this growing population.

Not only do some youth enrolled in adult basic skills classes present disruptive behaviors, but adults with developmental disabilities constitute a population with potentially unsettling behavior. A review of the literature did not result in behavioral studies of exceptional adult students in an educational setting. One plausible explanation for the lack of research on exceptional adults in an educational setting is the fact that only three states, North Carolina, Arkansas, and California, provide compensatory education in the community college system. The assertion of potentially disruptive behavior by students with developmental disabilities is based on personal and professional communication with compensatory education instructors and the literature concerning exceptional adults in residential settings (Basquill, Nezu, Nezu, & Klein, 2004; Didden, Korzillius, van Oorsouw, & Sturmey, 2006; Hastings, 2002; Mitchell & Hastings, 2001). The literature on adults with mental retardation, one type of developmental disability, demonstrated that these individuals present a number of troubling behaviors such as self-injury, verbal and physical aggression, property destruction, socially unacceptable behavior such as sexual acting out, repetitive behaviors, hyperactivity, and noncompliance (Basquill et al., 2004; Didden et al., 2006; Hastings, 2002; Mitchell & Hastings, 2001).

Studies of staff in residential facilities for individuals with developmental disabilities revealed that personnel cope with significant stress and burnout. Residents' distressing behaviors accounted for a large proportion of the variance in overall stress (Hastings, 2002). According to the literature, staff exhibited both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. Existing data on personnel employed in residential centers for individuals with developmental disabilities also

revealed that employees with the highest levels of stress either quit their job or experienced excessive absenteeism (Hastings, 2002; Mitchell & Hastings, 2001).

Compensatory education classes in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs screen students for the most maladaptive behaviors; yet, the nature and unpredictability of developmental disabilities, and mental retardation in particular, sometimes limit the effectiveness of screening.

Compensatory education instructors as well as instructors with younger students face the challenge of maintaining classroom order while providing instruction.

**Learning disabilities.** Providing instruction to adult learners with both diagnosed and undiagnosed learning disabilities constitutes a population-related challenge for basic skills program instructors. Bingham et al. (1998) identified providing instruction to special students including those with learning disabilities as a significant area of concern for instructors. In researching instructors' perceived preparation for instructional related tasks Sabatini et al. (2000) discovered that adult basic skills education faculty believed themselves to be least prepared to recognize characteristics of learning disabilities and provide accommodations for learning-disabled students. Furthermore, over half of the respondents classified themselves as less than prepared to make instructional accommodations to students with learning disabilities.

The prevalence of learning disabilities in the adult population is difficult to estimate, and approximations range from 10-80% (Skinner, Gillespie & Balkam, 2000). No one study has determined a generally accepted prevalence rate among adults in part because there exists no standard definition of learning disability that applies specifically to adults (Corley & Taymans, 2002; Ross & Smith, 1988; Ryan & Price, 1993; Skinner Gillespie & Balkam, 2000). Ryan and Price (1993) found that state directors estimated the pervasiveness of learning disabilities in their state from 1-90% with state directors in only four states, including North Carolina, estimating

that 5% or fewer of adult education students in that state had a learning disability. Ryan and Price did not indicate on what basis state directors estimated the prevalence of learning disabilities in their respective states. A review of the literature indicated a more general consensus in the range of 50-80% occurrence within adult basic skills programs, which is still a relatively wide range (Corley & Taymans, 2002; Ross & Smith, 1988; Ryan & Price, 1993; Skinner et al., 2000).

Despite the perceived large number of learning-disabled adults in basic skills programs, a review of the literature indicated that instructors lack knowledge in six primary areas relating to learning disabilities: (a) the characteristics of learning disabilities, (b) informal screening tools, (c) formal diagnosis, (d) instructional strategies, (e) the use of accommodations, and (f) direct services and referrals available (Corley & Taymans, 2002; Covington, 2004; Polson & White, 2000; Ryan & Price, 1993; Westberry, 1994). In addition to a lack of instructor training related to learning disabilities, other barriers to providing service to these individuals include a lack of instructional resources targeted to learning-disabled adults in basic skills classrooms and scarce research in instructional strategies for learning-disabled adults (Corley & Taymans, 2002; Polson & White, 2000).

In order to address the needs of learning-disabled students and respond to training requests from faculty there exists a need for more professional development in all areas relating to students with learning disabilities (Corley & Taymans, 2002; Polson & White, 2000; Ross-Gordon, Plotts, Joesel, & Wells, 2003; Ross & Smith, 1988). Additionally, programs must establish a multilevel system approach within the program and a coordinated system of referrals and follow-up among service providers. Program related barriers, however, often impede effective service to adults with learning disabilities. Program related barriers to service include

the inability to create and sustain a coordinated system among service providers, decentralized campuses that impede communication and cooperation, a large contingent of part-time faculty, and high faculty turnover (Corley & Taymans, 2002; Polson & White, 2000; Ross-Gordon, Plotts, Joesel, & Wells, 2003; Ross & Smith, 1988).

To summarize, faculty in basic skills programs experience challenges providing instructional services to the population served by basic skills programs. The specific population related difficulties include implementing adult learning theory, retaining students, managing the classroom, and providing instruction to learning-disabled students.

### **Program**

Instructors in basic skills programs also face challenges endemic to the field. Two specific program-related challenges for faculty are multisite programs and few collegial relationships (Mezirow et al., 1975; Smith & Hofer, 2003; Smith, Hofer & Gillespie, 2001). While some basic skills program faculty receive adequate materials and inviting environments, other faculty are often confronted with the difficulty of conducting class in poor facilities with meager resources. This is particularly true in multisite programs (Mezirow et al., 1975; Smith et al., 2001). Moreover, multisite programs, as well as a large contingent of part-time faculty, create an atmosphere where few collegial relationships flourish and feedback proves meager (Smith & Hofer, 2003; Smith et al., 2001). Both multisite programs and few relationships produce program-related challenges for basic skills faculty.

**Multisite programs.** With a desire to reach broadly and because of limited space in centralized locations, basic skills programs heavily emphasize feeder and outreach classes in the community (Fingeret, 1985). Programs often borrow facilities or co-sponsor classes with government employment and welfare agencies, detention centers, housing developments,

businesses, and community organizations such as schools, churches, and recreation centers (Mezirow et al., 1975; Smith et al., 2001). These partnerships offer distinct advantages of providing educational opportunities to the hardest to reach populations, enhancing the learning environment through social cohesion of the community, and providing greater program visibility within the community (Mezirow et al., 1975). On the other hand, decentralized classes face substantial disadvantages such as higher per student cost, problems of logistics and coordination, poor facilities, lack of instructional equipment and teaching materials, inability to group students by academic level, and difficulty providing referral, counseling, and other services deemed necessary to retain students (Mezirow et al., 1975). Nearly 30 years after the study by Mezirow et al. (1975), Smith et al. (2001) discovered instruction taking place in often unsatisfactory decentralized locations such as hallways, lunchrooms, offices, and K-12 classrooms. The willingness of organizational administrators in the community to lend space for basic skills instruction did not always match the attitude of the rank-and-file employees. One basic skills instructor expressed her frustration sharing borrowed space.

I'm going to write a book someday about the complaints that (K-12) teachers make: 'the [adult education] teacher did not clean the chalkboard, did not erase the board, used my chalk, stole my pen, ate my candy, ripped the pencil sharpener off the wall, broke all the chairs in the room' when there were only 3 students in the room that night. I spend a lot of time dealing with this. They hate it that we're in their space. They drape their desks with blankets and things so no one can touch their stuff and it's just uncomfortable.

(Smith & Hofer, 2003, pp.66-67)

Another instructor expressed how she believed shared space negatively impacted the student perception of the program and themselves.

We didn't even have a space of our own until this year. You carried your stuff in crates and took whatever room was available for the evening...I think it just contributes to their [students'] feeling of being kind of second-class losers. (Smith & Hofer, 2003, p. 66)

Smith, Hofer, and Gillespie (2001) concluded that the inability to leave materials, move chairs and tables, display student work, or use a chalkboard, computer or overhead projector constituted an environmental factor that negatively influenced how well faculty could do their job.

**Few collegial relationships.** A second program-related challenge for basic skills faculty is the limited opportunity to establish collegial relationships. Smith et al. (2001) argued that limited access to colleagues and program directors constituted an environmental factor that influenced how well faculty performed their duties. They found evidence that the large body of adjunct instructors common to basic skills programs reduces the opportunity to become part of a learning community. While a collaborative atmosphere exists, adjunct instructors' scheduling constraints and decentralized locations reduced the occasion to share information either formally or informally. Smith et al. also discovered that instructors desire more access and feedback from their local program directors. The desire for more supervisory contact was particularly true of first-year instructors who desired more teaching related supervision and structured feedback. They found that 41% of instructors rated the opportunity to learn and communicate about the program as one of their top three concerns, and 33% of instructors surveyed cited access, feedback, and support from program administrators as one of their top three concerns.

Earlier findings by Mezirow et al. (1975) indicated isolation from directors and colleagues to be a long standing concern for basic skills program faculty. Mezirow et al. found that communication, specifically job performance feedback between directors and instructors, was an area of concern for instructors, notably first-year instructors. While instructors often

enjoyed the low-pressure and autonomous atmosphere of the classroom and overall attitudes toward superiors and the program were positive, one third of instructors agreed that they received little feedback from program administrators. According to Mezirow et al., instructors in large programs that employed over 100 instructors reported the greatest amount of autonomy and believed they received the least amount of substantial feedback. Mezirow et al. hypothesized that class offerings in scattered locations at various time throughout the day and evening reduced the likelihood of class visits, thus contributing to the isolation from colleagues and directors. Additionally, a significant number of teachers in the study by Mezirow et al. felt that directors solely evaluated their job performance on enrollment and attendance numbers. Fingeret's (1985) findings of faculty and program success measured by student enrollment data substantiated the assertion by faculty in the study of Mezirow et al. According to a state auditor in Fingeret's study, "The whole system is based on numbers – the more numbers, the more money. It's a quantity-based system." (p. 167). Mezirow et al. concluded the lack of communication in basic skills programs may be a factor in reportedly reduced job satisfaction for some instructors.

Despite the nearly 30 year gap between the research of Smith et al. (2001) and an earlier study by Mezirow et al. (1975) remarkable similarities exist concerning isolation from colleagues and program administrators. Common practices of basic skills programs such as multisite programs, large numbers of adjunct faculty, and isolated locations with meager resources pose serious concerns for instructors, particularly first-year instructors who desire more access to colleagues and feedback from program directors.

## **Policies**

Instructors in basic skills programs face policy-related challenges unique to basic skills programs. In a study of focus groups from nine states Bingham, Smith, and Stewart (1998) found

that general program policies such as assessment, curriculum development, and enrollment procedures ranked as significant areas of concern by instructors. In an era of increased accountability and funding attached to student contact hours and achievement, difficulties posed by these tasks affect not only the individual instructors, but impact the program as a whole.

**Assessment.** One policy that creates difficulty for instructors is the required formal assessment of students' academic skills on federally-approved instruments and within federally-mandated timeframes. These assessments, generally occurring during student registration, initially place students in an academic unit, provide data on student skill level, and serve as a beginning measurement of academic progress (NCCCS, 2008c). To measure academic achievement federal guidelines stipulate that students are tested at least twice during each reporting year (NCCCS, 2008c).

Several difficulties surround the assessment process in adult basic skills education. To begin, instructors often lack understanding of how to conduct, evaluate, and record the tests. A meta-analysis of classroom assessments found that instructors' lack of knowledge about assessments caused a significant error in under-reporting student achievement (Comings, Soricone, & Santos, 2006). Further difficulty lies in the decentralized nature of basic skills programs, with intake testing at one location and instruction occurring at another. Instructors sometimes either do not receive the test results or obtain incomplete data (Smith & Hofer, 2003). On the other hand, some faculty obtain test results; yet, they find the results to be less than indicative, and often misleading, about a student's abilities (Smith & Hofer, 2003). Other difficulties in assessment include informing students of low scores or lack of progress while building self-esteem and maintaining attendance. Other challenges to student assessment are overcoming learner plateaus on tests and observing the frustration and unwillingness of students

to complete testing (Mezirow et al., 1975; Smith & Hofer, 2003). The plague of sporadic attendance also inhibits the assessment process, as students either do not arrive on assessment dates or show little evidence of progress due to few instructional hours received (Smith & Hofer, 2003). Another difficulty lies in both the disconnection between classroom instruction and test content on federally-mandated assessments. Finally, instructors struggle to document instructional gain in a rather rigid accountability system (Bingham et al., 2000). Instructors' description of assessment as a significant concern warrants professional development in this area, particularly since conducting assessment and recording achievement serves as a basis for federal funding (Bingham et al., 1998).

**Curriculum development.** Policies related to developing curriculum pose a complex dilemma for adult basic skills faculty. In regards to seven curriculum development tasks Sabatini et al. (2000) found that approximately one third of instructors perceived themselves to be less than prepared, while half believed themselves to be deficient specifically in using a variety of instructional strategies. According to Smith and Hofer (2003), approximately half of the programs analyzed in three New England states did not have a standard program of study, while the others imposed a curriculum. New teachers without prescribed curriculum and guidelines struggled with lesson planning and found that the autonomy led to their feeling overwhelmed and discouraged. Those programs imposing a specific curriculum more often prescribed goals, competencies, and content rather than fixed texts and the accompanying teaching materials. Smith and Hofer found that faculty in curriculum-prescribed programs responded with either frustration at a lack of autonomy or expressed comfort in having guidelines.

Sabatini et al. (2000) found that the greatest challenge in developing curriculum centered on technology integration, with more than half of faculty self-reporting as less than prepared for the task. Ginsburg (2004) noted that the advent of technology brings a host of opportunities as well as challenges to basic skills programs and cited three specific issues that need addressing: (a) funding, locating, and securing hardware; (b) finding high quality effective software; and (c) developing appropriate professional development. Instructors who currently use technology tend to use it to perform simple tasks outside of the classroom such as preparing lesson plans and finding class activities or for straightforward drill and practice during class (Carter & Tizel, 2003). Ginsburg found instructors generally favorable and even enthusiastic about technology despite their lack of familiarity with specific types of software or their uncertainty integrating the software products. In terms of training needs Carter and Tizel (2003) discovered that faculty who rated themselves as proficient and of average skills expressed differences in technology training interests, making the difference in desired training a viable topic of future research. Dillon-Marable (2004) concluded that instructor compatibility, a concept she defined as “the alignment of use and preferences with one’s beliefs about practice,” accounted for 61% of the variance in determining whether instructors incorporated technology into their classrooms (p. 93). Highlighting the need for professional development as it related to technology integration, Dillon-Marable reported only one of eleven background variables – training - served as a predictor for compatibility; however, the only survey question related to instructor training, “Have you had training in using computers to teach at any level?” (p. 116), leaves many unanswered questions about faculty computer training.

Despite an interest in technology integration instructors in basic skills programs sometimes face barriers to technology inclusion. Barriers such as limited to nonexistent

computer access as well as a lack of up-to-date equipment are often due to insufficient funding and decentralized classes (Carter & Tizel, 2003; Ginsburg, 2004). Despite faculty interest in technology integration training, Carter and Tizel (2003) found the most significant barriers to incorporating technology into curriculum, which were instructor scheduling and time to learn about technology, were related to the faculty member rather than the program and its supports. While professional development regarding curriculum development can benefit faculty, external factors exist that hinder instructors' ability to gain from the available training, particularly as it relates to technology training.

**Enrollment.** The enrollment guidelines of basic skills programs often pose a policy-related challenge for faculty organizing classroom instruction. Currently two types of enrollment strategies exist in basic skills programs: continuous open enrollment and managed, or closed, enrollment (Comings et al., 2006; Smith & Hofer, 2003). Managed enrollment, the newer and less common strategy, allows enrollment at specific times and is a result in shifting federal guidelines concerning the intensity and duration of instruction (Comings et al., 2006). Conversely, continuous open enrollment allows registration throughout the semester and is touted by some adult basic education administrators and faculty as demonstrating program flexibility and commitment to the targeted population. A more practical reason for open enrollment, however, centers on high student attrition and the lack of funds to support small classes (Bass, 2002; Beder & Medina, 2001; Beder et al., 2006; Mezirow et al., 1975; Smith & Hofer, 2003).

The policy of open enrollment to fill vacant seats creates a secondary problem, multilevel classes. According to Beder and Medina (2001), continuous enrollment and mixed level classes are the two most significant problems plaguing today's adult basic education programs. Today's

multilevel adult basic skills classes enroll students with academic skills ranging from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, students with varying levels of English language proficiency, and GED and high school students who need advanced instruction in the core subjects. In response to multilevel classes instructors generally organize instruction in whole group, small group, or individualized instruction (Bass, 2002; Beder & Medina, 2001; Fingeret, 1985; Mezirow et al., 1975).

The difficulty in planning for a multilevel class is compounded by sporadic student attendance; therefore, individualized instruction, by default, is the most common method of organizing instruction (Smith & Hofer, 2003). In addition, in a small scale study by Robinson-Geller and Lipnevich (2006) of self-reported instructional methods found that the method of organizational instruction in a class was significantly different based on the students' academic levels, the sponsoring agency, and enrollment policy. Researchers found that faculty-related factors such as full-time or part-time employment status, paid preparation time, and professional development were not significantly related to how instruction was organized.

The pervasiveness of individualized instruction, simply defined as students progressing at their own pace with a preselected set of assignments in their work folder, is not without its critics (Comings et al., 2006). Beder et al. (2006) asserted multilevel classes to be a distinctive feature in adult basic skills education, and faculty, regardless of their prior preparation, generally have little experience in organizing this type of instruction. Beder and Medina (2001) hypothesized the frustration with organizing instruction in a multilevel class as a factor in instructor burnout and turnover. Additionally, Bass (2002) found that individualized instruction, consisting of commercially prepared sequenced workbooks, provided de-contextualized and discrete instruction. This is the antithesis of professional wisdom in adult education curriculum

development and adult learning theory which favors contextualized experiential learning. According to Bass, other negative impacts of individualized instruction included: limited engagement with the instructor and peers, a lack of student involvement in lesson planning, and the students' inability to obtain assistance when needed. During class observations Bass witnessed students waiting up to 45 minutes for instructor assistance. The delays were compounded when new students, requiring a lengthy intake process of registering, testing, scoring, and lesson planning, arrived throughout the semester and even throughout the class period. Finally, researchers hypothesize that boredom, along with instructor's inattention, created an atmosphere that bred student misbehavior, particularly among younger students. This negative behavior by the youth, in turn, created significant distraction and dissatisfaction among more mature and focused students (Mezirow et al., 1975; Rachal & Bingham, 2004).

Currently, little research exists concerning best practices to organizing multilevel classes or the effectiveness of individualized instruction (Comings et al., 2006). Unfortunately, the cycle of high student attrition and scarce funding coupled with the lack of research suggests that open continuous enrollment and its resulting multilevel classes will continue to pose a challenge for instructors in basic skills classes.

In summary, adult basic skills faculty face numerous challenges that are well summarized in Mezirow et al. *Last Gamble on Education: Dynamics of Adult Basic Education* (1975). Although written more than 30 years ago, a review of the literature validates the conclusions of Mezirow et al. and finds their observations to be representative of contemporary adult basic education programs. Their findings continue to best summarize the difficulties contemporary adult basic skills education faculty face. Their conclusion reads in part:

A range of diversity of student participants probably unprecedented in American education is the most significant distinguishing characteristic of ABE classes. The policy of free open enrollment to all over the age of sixteen has brought together an astonishing potpourri of ethnic backgrounds, educational achievement (from total illiterates in any language to Ph.D.'s with limited English mastery), ages (adolescence to old age), generation of citizenship (first, second, third, and so on), middle to lower-lower socioeconomic classes, native ability (from clearly retarded to exceptionally bright), and a psychiatric range from quite disturbed to normal...Teacher control of ABE students presents unique challenges. The students are adults. They may not be treated as children with impunity. They are diverse to a degree beyond the wildest experience of an elementary or secondary teacher. As most come with limited experience as learners in a formal setting, a limited attention span for study, a high degree of self-doubt bred of past failure, and a tendency to take easy offense, the problem is obvious. When this is compounded with voluntary enrollment and a first priority for the teacher is to maintain attendance, the potentialities for difficulty assume formidable proportions (pp.11& 33).

### **Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Adult Basic Skills Program Educators**

This review of literature on professional development for basic skills faculty begins with Knowles' description of competencies that an adult education instructor should possess. Next, Mocker's (1974) influential professional development study and the subsequent research conducted based on his findings are described. Five additional studies were selected for review based on their uniqueness. Finally, deficiencies in the research concerning professional development for basic skills faculty are summarized.

## **Knowles**

Malcolm Knowles, the “father of adult education,” created one of the first lists of knowledge, skills, and attitudes for adult educators. Though not specific to basic skills education Knowles’ competencies of an adult educator are reflected in subsequent research describing the knowledge, skills, and abilities desired of adult basic skills faculty. Knowles’ list reads that an adult educator should:

- Understand the role of adult education has played in American society in the past and is playing in the future; and [the educator] has aspirations regarding its role in the future;
  - Have broad knowledge of the present scope and trends of adult education as a field of social practice in terms of its aims, agencies, content, personnel, programs, methods and materials, and operational problems;
  - Understand and is interested in the concerns and issues affecting the adult education field;
  - Have a deep insight into the relationship between the education of youth and the education of adults;
  - Understand the basic process of adult education;
  - Have a broad overview of knowledge of the research that has been done in the field;
  - Understand the existing theories about the psychology of adult learning; and
  - Have a basic understanding of the adult education movements in other countries
- (Reiff, 1995, p. 8).

Reflecting an era of competency-based professional development, other studies relating to the competencies of adult educators exist (e.g., Bunning, 1976; Burrichter & Gardner, 1978;

Chamberlain, 1961; McClellan, 1975). For the purpose of this study, the literature review of competencies and training needs will focus on professional development of adult educators teaching in basic skills programs.

### **Mocker and Mocker-based Studies**

In 1971 the U.S. Department of Education commissioned the *Feasibility Study of Multiple Alternatives for the Training of Adult Education Teachers and Administrators*, a mixed method national 18-month study of 22 sites in 38 states with nearly 1,500 administrators, teachers, and students (Spears, 1972a, 1972b, 1973). In their final report researchers expressed a need for “development of and attention to the content and structure of ABE teacher-training programs” and “accurate and consistent record-keeping and reporting of teacher training activities so that future planning can be based on valid data and conclusions” (Spears, 1973, p. 1). The conclusion of the researchers reads in part as follows:

The most singular discovery emerging from the nearly eighteen months of study devoted to this project is how little is known about Adult Basic Education teacher training by those most closely associated with it – its supporters, administrators, practitioners, and participants. This problem attends all of adult education, but comes more quickly and sharply into focus with ABE staff development when systematic inquiry is made into existing circumstances and conditions. Its literature is scattered; its records imprecise or missing altogether; its costs uncalculated; its students and teachers uncounted and unknown; its objectives obscure; and its organization adrift (Spears, 1973, p. 1).

The following year Donald Mocker, chief investigator for the federally-commissioned feasibility study, produced a seminal study on instructor training, *A Report on the Identification, Classification, and Ranking of Competencies Appropriate for Adult Basic Education Teachers*

(1974). Although more than 30 years have passed since Mocker's 1974 study of competencies for adult basic skills faculty, his study remains the most influential and most comprehensive study of knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes necessary for adult basic education faculty (Leahy, 1992; Reiff, 1995). Not only is Mocker's study the first and only national research on adult basic skills faculty competencies until its replication by Leahy (1992), but Mocker's study is the only set of competencies to be validated by two panels of experts in the field.

Driven by what he called "no central direction or national thrust for the selection of curriculum in the development of pre-service or in-service training programs for ABE teachers," Mocker set out to develop a set of competencies that would lay the foundation for a professional development curriculum (Mocker, 1974a, p. v). In reviewing adult basic skills education literature and reports from national and regional training institutes Mocker developed a list of 291 competencies which he divided into four core areas: (a) scope and goal of adult education, (b) curriculum, (c) ABE learner, and (d) the instructional process. Mocker then identified specific knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes within each of the four core areas. In total, 234 adult basic skills education teachers and administrators representing 33 states completed Mocker's survey ranking the importance of each competence along a 5-point scale from requiring no competency to requiring complete competency. Mocker then analyzed the data and ranked each competency of either high or low priority within in core area; however, he did not specify his method for dividing high and low priorities of competencies. Furthermore, a review of the ranking order indicates that the number of high and low priorities in each core area is not consistent.

Mocker's (1974a, 1974b) list of competencies served as the foundation for six other studies (Klinedinst, 1983; Leahy, 1992; Peebles, 1975; Smith, 1976; Zinn, 1974; Zinn, 1975).

Studies in Utah (Peebles, 1975), Idaho (Zinn, 1975), and Iowa (Smith, 1976; Zinn, 1974) followed either Mocker's original list of 291 competencies or his modified version of 170 competencies. Study participants were faculty, local program administrators, or both groups.

As one of the first researchers to utilize Mocker's list of competencies Zinn (1974) examined the desired competencies of an ideal adult basic skills instructor as perceived by 37 faculty and 19 administrators in Iowa. Finding remarkable similarities between faculty and administrators, she chose to rank the competencies as a whole rather than differentiate between the groups.

Peebles' (1975) study of 69 ABE and 186 AHS instructors in Utah can be described as a discrepancy model study. The study can be distinguished from other Mocker-based studies in that Peebles differentiated between the perception of competencies desired of model ABE and AHS faculty and the respondents' perceptions of their own ability in those same areas. Peebles created a top 20 listing of both desired competencies and personal competencies for both ABE and AHS instructors; however, the researcher did not present adequate statistical data or analysis to indicate the difference in each group or between the groups. One is left with four indecipherable tables.

Following her 1974 study of basic skills faculty and administrators in Iowa, Zinn (1975) conducted a discrepancy model study with 70 adult basic skills program faculty in Idaho. The study employed Mocker's (1974) ranked competencies to investigate the gap between faculty's perceived degree of needed proficiency and the perception of their own level of proficiency on the stated competencies. Zinn found that faculty reported a statistically significant difference at the .05, .01, and .001 levels in their perceived degree of necessary competence and their own ability on nearly two thirds of the survey items. It should be noted, however, that 56% of the

respondents had fewer than two years experience in adult basic skills education, which might account for their perceived lack of proficiency.

In Reiff's (1995) synthesis of the Zinn (1974, 1975) and Peebles (1975) research, she found 12 of the top 20 desired competencies for adult basic skills educators were consistent across all three studies. The 12 desired competencies indicate that adult basic skills instructors should:

- Differentiate between teaching children and teaching adults;
- Uses humor in the classroom;
- Reinforce positive attitudes toward learning;
- Maintain a clean, orderly classroom;
- Use classrooms and other settings which provide for a comfortable learning environment;
- Develop a climate that will encourage learners to participate;
- Develop effective working relationships with learners;
- Maintain discipline in the classroom
- Communicate effectively with learners;
- Establishes a basis for mutual respect with learners;
- Adjust teaching to accommodate individual and group characteristics; and
- Plan independent study with learners (Reiff, 1995, pp. 11-12).

Using Mocker's list of competencies and to a lesser degree other adult basic skills education literature, Smith (1976) conducted a study using the Delphi method to assess the perceived competencies of basic skills education administrators and adult basic skills faculty. Of the Mocker-based studies, only Smith divided the competencies into the needs of

entry/beginning career and intermediate/advanced career competencies for instructors. The panel of 23 administrators and faculty in Idaho produced 167 desired competencies for administrators and 136 desired competencies for faculty reflecting the needs of two groups of basic skills education personnel at all career stages.

Employing Mocker's (1974) competencies in a novel approach, Klinedinst (1983) reduced Mocker's original 291 competencies to his 153 high-priority competencies and expanded the population surveyed. Klinedinst compared the perceptions of state basic skills directors, adult education college and university professors, and adult basic skills practitioners. Klinedinst compiled the 51 competencies highest rated by overall means and determined that the majority of highest rated competencies involved the instructional process. She compared the ranking among groups and found much similarity in the ranking of competencies as only nine of 51 competencies differed in ranking by more than one standard deviation.

The study that most closely replicated Mocker's (1974) research was completed nearly 20 years after the original study. Leahy (1992) replicated Mocker's 1974 study with slightly more than 500 local program directors and teachers representing all 50 states. Respondents were asked to rate the stated competencies on a 5-point Likert scale indicating the degree of proficiency needed by adult basic educators. Leahy compared the results in 4 pairs: (a) 1991 administrators and teachers (b) 1974 and 1991 administrators (c) 1974 and 1991 teachers and (d) combined data of 1974 and 1991. Overall, Leahy found that the data among the pairs had notable similarity despite the difference in the four groups and nearly two decades lapse in data collection. Leahy found that, like earlier Mocker-based studies, attitude competencies were more highly valued than knowledge or behavior competencies. The majority of differences with the 1991 sample clearly reflect the era. For example, respondents in 1991 placed a higher value

on maintaining classroom discipline, providing accommodations to individuals with handicaps, and conducting student assessments. Leahy concluded that the similarity among the four groups demonstrates the continued relevancy of Mocker's study; however, Leahy also suggested that Mocker's study should be revisited and updated to include perceived needs of present-day faculty. Potential additions to Mocker's inventory include competencies relating to students with learning disabilities, workplace and family literacy, and technology.

The emphasis on instructors' attitudes rather than abilities in the Mocker-based studies was also reflected in Fingeret's (1985) evaluation of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs. According to Fingeret, basic skills faculty accept the lack of professional standards and training and even debated among themselves the relevancy of a college education or teaching experience. One North Carolina instructor summarized the feeling of faculty who emphasize the importance of their attitude by stating, "The academic material we teach is so reasonable, anybody that has good communication skills with other people can teach it. There's just a matter of do you have the interest and that sort of thing" (Fingeret, 1985, p. 84).

### **Additional Studies**

A search of the literature concerning the competencies and training needs of basic skills program faculty yielded five relevant studies that were not solely based on Mocker's inventory of competencies. The relevancy of these studies was determined by the purpose, respondents, location, overall concept, or date.

First, Stafford (1981) examined the in-service training needs of adjunct basic skills program faculty in Washington. Stafford's study is the only study found in this literature search that differentiated the needs of adjunct and full-time faculty. Respondents included full-time and adjunct faculty, local program directors, and state basic skills education leaders. The inclusion of

state level leadership and exclusion of ESL faculty represented two other novelties in competency and training needs studies. Upon analyzing the data, Stafford concluded that faculty and local program directors perceived the greatest training need to be in the materials and teaching aids category. In contrast, state leaders perceived the greatest training need to be in the testing and evaluation category. This emphasis on assessment by state leaders is striking and unusual for its period. An additional unusual finding is that all three categories of respondents ranked classroom management as the area least important for adjunct instructor training. Among the groups surveyed, state leaders and faculty demonstrated the greatest difference in perceived need within each training category. Finally, Stafford divided the faculty responses between individuals with less than two years experience and those with more experience; however, he did not describe the rationale of two years of employment as the demarcation of a less experienced instructor. He concluded that little difference existed among the top ten training needs; however, faculty with less than two years experience reported a higher degree of need in the top ten areas.

Second, Nunes and Halloran (1987) conducted a study of instructor competencies; however, their competencies had the specific requirement of being teachable, not an innate personal quality. Nunes and Halloran focused their study in Dade County, Florida, and impaneled 15 faculty members classified as effective instructors by their local program directors. The competencies were next subjected to scrutiny by 12 nationally recognized leaders in the adult basic education field. Each of the eight competencies has a varying number of unranked associated competencies. The eight competencies indicated were: (1) the adult learner, (2) personal qualities, (3) knowledge of the field, (4) knowledge of teaching techniques, (5) creativity, (6) interpersonal skills, (7) professionalism, and (8) organization. Although stated as a

study emphasizing teachable skills, faculty competency categories such as personal qualities and creativity indicate a focus on other than trainable skills.

Third, Marlowe's study (1991) was chosen as it represents the only study of basic skills faculty training needs based in North Carolina. NCCCS Basic Skills Program faculty, representing 56 of 58 community colleges and using Kolb's experiential learning theory, developed a list of 71 competencies for faculty. The selection and ranking of competencies signified phase one of a three-year statewide professional development effort. Of the studies reviewed, only Marlowe's research had a specific purpose of statewide professional development. Unlike respondents in previous studies, participants in Marlowe's study arranged their categories of competencies as academic subjects with other categories including assessment, evaluation, communication, and methods and materials. It is plausible that the emphasis on academic subject areas is because the project was conducted by the Appalachian State University's Department of Language, Reading, and Exceptionalities. Information on other phases of this specific statewide professional development plan was not found during the literature search; therefore the results of this plan are unknown.

Fourth, Royce's (1999) study was selected for review because the researcher sought to identify instructor standards in Pennsylvania with the responses of both a 15 member panel of experienced practitioners and seven focus groups in the state. Royce created five standards and divided the skills knowledge, skills, and abilities in each standard into either entrant, experienced, or expert classifications. Additionally, Royce's standards relating to the community and program operations are unique from other studies.

Fifth, the study by Sherman, Tibbetts, Woodruff, and Weilder (1999) was selected for review because of its unusual components. The researchers contended that three overarching

themes define effective adult basic skills instruction: (a) keeping current in the content area and in instructional strategies, (b) communicating and collaborating with colleagues and learners to facilitate learning, and (c) working positively and nonjudgmentally with diverse populations (p. 16). Sherman et al. developed their 31 competencies in five categories based on a review of the literature and feedback from over 300 faculty and administrators across the United States. The five categories, like those in the Royce (1999) study, demonstrate a new emphasis on community, the program, and self. Unlike other studies, Sherman et al. (1999) developed general indicators of proficiency for all 31 competencies and provided specific examples of how proficiency can be demonstrated. Additionally, Sherman et al. guided the design of the survey employed for this study.

### **Deficiencies in Faculty Training Research**

A detailed search of the literature demonstrated four specific gaps concerning the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of basic skills program faculty as it relates to this current study. First, the most recent list of competencies is from Sherman et al., (1999) is more than 10 years old. Second, a specific study of first-year basic skills program faculty competencies could not be found, and only Smith (1976) and Royce (1999) differentiated between the competencies or training needs of novice and experienced instructors. Third, a list of adult ESL instructor competencies does not exist (Reiff, 1995). Similarly, Crandall et al. (2008) found that no study of ESL instructor competencies exists; however, they reviewed TESOL's 2002 *Standards for Teachers of Adult Learners* and found striking similarities between TESOL's *Standards* and the competencies developed by Sherman et al. Fourth, a search of the literature revealed that no studies of training needs or competencies exist for faculty who provide instruction to adults with developmental disabilities, the fifth subunit of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs. Presumably, a

study of faculty competencies is nonexistent because educational services for adults with developmental disabilities is administered through community colleges in only three states: North Carolina, California, and Arkansas (NCCCS, n.d., *Compensatory Education: Did you know*; Smith, May 18, 2009). Although no studies exist examining basic skills instruction for adults with developmental disabilities, the Council for Exceptional Children has published its sixth edition of *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines* (2009) which defines ten standards with accompanying knowledge and skills for new special education teachers. The competency list is specifically designed for the instruction of individuals with developmental disabilities and autism. The applicability of competencies designed for K-12 special educators to be employed for instructors who teach adults with developmental disabilities has yet to be studied.

In conducting a literature search for training needs or competencies for first-year basic skills instructors a scarcity of research exists, and the majority of studies were significantly dated. According to Reiff (1995), the fact that the majority of studies dates to the 1970s and early 1980s rests with the fact that competency-based education, highlighted by the 1975 Adult Performance Level study, ushered in a period emphasizing competency-based adult education instruction and faculty training. According to Reiff, six factors must be taken into account when reviewing the literature surrounding adult basic skills competency-based systems or studies of training needs: (a) historical changes in training content based on perceived training needs, public policy, and philosophies; (b) philosophic position of competency based education which centers on the debate between behaviorism and humanism; (c) lack of certification and credentialing standards in states and local programs; (d) high percentage of adjunct instructors and volunteers; (e) lack of a knowledge base, and (f) the absence of research concerning the

association between instructor preparation and professional development with student achievement (pp. 36-37).

Despite the dearth of research and the time lapse among studies there were remarkable similarities among the studies found. Similarities included the use of the Delphi method, categories of training needs, and purpose. Most often the purpose was to establish a competency-based professional development system or a set of criteria for teaching certification; however, according to Reiff (1995), subsequent literature and follow-up indicated that few, if any, of the stated purposes were fulfilled.

Weaknesses in the studies centered on two elements that were consistently unclear: the population and the provider. The researchers generally used the term adult basic education and did not differentiate among the federally recognized and funded subunits of adult basic skills programs. Only Zinn's studies (1974, 1975) of Idaho and Iowa faculty clearly differentiated ESL and AHS faculty, and only Stafford's (1981) study of Washington faculty specifically excluded ESL instructors. Likewise, the type of service provider remained unclear in the research. In 2007-2008 adult basic skills programs were offered by postsecondary institutions, community-based organizations, correctional institutions, faith-based organizations, and libraries (USDE, 2009). None of the studies indicated the type of program where participants taught and if the study's conclusions or competencies were service-provider specific.

In conclusion, a review of the literature indicates that some studies demonstrate consensus among participants' regarding specific competencies; however, the wide range of categories and diverse list of competencies among various studies indicates there does not exist consensus about the desired competencies of basic skills faculty. Furthermore, a review of the literature concerning the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of basic skills faculty indicates a debate

between two camps. One camp emphasizes instructors' attitudes with less emphasis on faculty credentials. The opposing camp counters what it calls the "anybody can do it" approach to instructor hiring and emphasizes instructors' abilities demonstrated through education, certification, and, where applicable, credentialing (Smith, 2006). Reiff (1995) and Sherman et al. (1999) referred to instructor competencies created by individual states such as Kentucky, California, Tennessee, and Minnesota. A search of the literature did not yield these aforementioned lists, and communication with state personnel indicated that those lists no longer exist. Personal communication with state leaders in Texas revealed that earlier efforts to create an inventory of competencies had been replaced with the implementation of voluntary credentials. It is likely that the difficulty locating other state competency lists is reflective of the credentialing efforts in states and the shift of emphasizing instructor attitudes in the 1970s and 1980s to evidence-based proficiency and accountability of the 1990s and beyond.

### **Barriers and Strategies to Faculty Training**

Inadequate preparation of faculty is considered one of the primary weaknesses in the field of adult basic skills education (Kutner, M., Sherman, R., Webb, L., Herman, R., Tibbetts, J., Hempbill, D., Terdy, D., & Jones, E., 1992). One of the most critical problems facing basic skills programs is how to successfully train the instructors (Kutner et al., 1992). Local programs have developed strategies to overcome barriers to training, but the outcomes of these strategies lack evaluation. Rather, the literature on strategies aimed at reducing the barriers to professional development relies on anecdotal evidence.

#### **Barriers to Faculty Training**

Providing quality and relevant professional development activities can be a daunting task at both the state and local program level for a multitude of reasons. The literature indicated

barriers to professional development exist within the adult basic skills education field, at the state level, the local program level, and with individual instructors. (Belzer et al., 2001; Burt & Keenan, 1998; Kutner et al., 1992; Wilson & Corbett, 2001).

**Barriers in the adult education field.** Two significant barriers to professional development exist within the adult basic skills field. First, the field of basic skills education lacks a unified research base. This is the result of a shift during the mid-1970s from a broad national plan of professional development, including intensive training institutes in various regions across the country, to direct state funding for professional development (Belzer et al., 2001; Belzer & St. Clair, 2005; Burt & Keenan, 1998; Comings & Soricone, 2007; Kutner et al., 1992; Leahy, 1992). The shift toward state funding, and in turn, funding to local programs resulted in a piecemeal approach to training and consequently difficulty disseminating information on a broad scale. Currently, efforts are in place in many states, such as Idaho, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, for greater centralization of professional development efforts (Belzer et al.; Burt & Keenan, 1998; Leahy, 1992). More recently, in 1996 the U.S. Department of Education created the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy for the purpose of improving practice through research and dissemination; however, funding for the center ended in 2007. A second barrier to professional development within the field is the language of the Workforce Investment Act (1998) that recommends, not requires, professional development spending by the local programs (Belzer et al., 2001). Local program autonomy regarding this area of professional development diminishes its importance and replaces its position of priority with director preference.

**Barriers at the state level.** Three barriers to professional development for adult basic skills education faculty exist at the state level. First, the field has few statewide professional

development models and a small number of clearinghouses to disseminate information on professional development models and adult basic skills education research (Belzer et al., 2001; Belzer & St. Clair, 2005; Burt & Keenan, 1998). Second, the lack of professional development requirements for faculty represents an additional state level barrier to professional development for adult basic skills faculty. Presently, the requirements for professional development are as varied as those for initial entry into the field (Crandall et al., 2008 Kutner et al., 1992). For example, Kansas requires 50 hours of professional development every two years while Nebraska requires 24 hours of professional development every three years. Only Arkansas and Louisiana differentiate the minimum number of training hours for full-time and adjunct faculty. Arkansas mandates full-time faculty to complete 60 hours of training each year and adjunct faculty 30 hours, and Louisiana requires 15 hours for full-time faculty and 10 hours of training each year for adjunct basic skills faculty. Finally, Tennessee, Illinois, and Arizona require ten or fewer hours of professional development each year, and states such Florida, Georgia, Montana, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina have no minimum number of professional development hours for basic skills faculty (Crandall et al., 2008). Third, providing professional development at the state level represents a complex challenge of building a shared vision of a professional development system among varying service providers with diverse goals and populations while implementing rigid federal guidelines for programs and personnel (Belzer et al., 2001).

**Barriers at the local level.** Despite the large degree of autonomy granted local programs in many states concerning faculty hiring and training, several barriers to professional development exist at the local program level. Based on a review of the literature, the single most important barrier to training at the local level is the large percentage of adjunct instructors and their high rate of turnover (Belzer et al., 2001; Burt & Kennon, 1998; Kutner et al., 1992).

Additionally, local programs experience the difficulty of building a shared vision of professional development among instructors from diverse backgrounds who possess different levels of experience and an assortment of needs and interests (Belzer et al., 2001; Kutner et al., 1992). Another significant local program barrier to professional development is limited funding for training and its related expenses. Furthermore, there exists difficulty providing instructional services to students when faculty attends professional development activities (Burt & Keenan, 1998; Kutner et al., 1992). This is particularly acute where programs employ large numbers of adjunct faculty with full-time jobs outside of teaching basic skills classes. Additional local program barriers to faculty training include non-existent policies about release time for faculty, limited space for training in the program's setting, and information gaps about professional development opportunities by the nature of the program's isolation and at other times by a gatekeepers' choice (Wilson & Corbett, 2001).

**Barriers among faculty.** Along with difficulties implementing faculty development at the national and state levels, barriers to faculty training in basic skills programs lie with the individual instructors. Time constraints serve as an obstacle to training, and this is particularly applicable for adjunct instructors who are employed in full-time positions elsewhere (Stafford, 1981; Wilson & Corbett, 2001). Also some faculty develop apathy toward training due to a history of poor professional development activities (Belzer et al., 2001; Stafford, 1981). Other individual barriers to participating in professional development opportunities include distance from the activity and its related barriers of family obligations and the need for child care (Stafford, 1981). Finally, some faculty possess a narrow view of the purpose and content of training. They focus solely on practitioner content and fail to recognize the importance of

training when it relates to program administration and federal and state guidelines (Belzer et al., 2001; Wilson & Corbett, 2001).

### **Strategies for Providing Faculty Training**

With barriers to professional development existing within the field, at the state and local level, and among instructors, strategies are needed to reduce training impediments. Belzer et al. (2001) examined the professional development efforts in five states - Idaho, Massachusetts, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia - to determine how these states with a statewide professional development system attempted to eliminate or reduce typical barriers to instructor training. Based on their review of strategies in these states the following tactics are recommended as a means to reduce barriers to faculty training. First, local programs should provide activities throughout the year and throughout the week, including evenings and Saturdays. Second, these activities should be of varied duration from a few hours to 3-4 day institutes and include varied formats including peer observation, focus groups, college courses, action research, and publications. The training sessions should also require the completion of assignments and reports before, during, or after the training to encourage active learning. Third, in light of faculty time constraints, limited travel funds, and varied learning styles training facilitators should incorporate technology as professional development tool. Fourth, programs should provide incentives for faculty to participate in professional development. Finally, states should create a clearinghouse for research dissemination and establish centralized management information systems for the flow of information concerning professional development opportunities.

While a number of strategies exist, the difficulty of training faculty rests on factors endemic to the field of adult basic skills education such as large numbers of adjunct faculty. One

director of state professional development best summarized the challenge to providing professional development in adult basic skills education. She asked (Belzer et al., 2001):

Is there hope for real capacity building given the essential nature of part-time staff? Would you ever try to educate kids with people who work six hours a week without benefits? Is it folly to try to build a strong system of professional development on a delivery system with such an essential flaw? (Common issues, challenges, and lessons learned section, para. 1).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The overarching framework for this study is human resource development theory which Swanson and Holt (2001) defined as “a process for developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance” (p. 4). As inadequate preparation of faculty is considered one of the primary weaknesses in the field of adult basic skills education, it is essential to identify barriers to faculty professional development. (Kutner, M., Sherman, R., Webb, L., Herman, R., Tibbetts, J., Hempbill, D., Terdy, D., & Jones, E., 1992). In the literature four types of barriers are identified: (a) barriers within the field, (b) barriers at the state level, (c) barriers at the local level, and (d) barriers among faculty.

The focus of this study is barriers at the local level. To analyze local barriers to faculty professional development, Zinn’s (1997) conceptual framework of four barriers and supports to faculty professional development is utilized. The four domains of barriers and supports are: (a) people and interpersonal relationships, (b) institutional structures, (c) personal considerations and commitments, and (d) intellectual and personal characteristics. Specifically, this study’s focus is Zinn’s domain of institutional barriers.

In this study the perceptions of NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel in regards to a first-year instructor's professional development are examined. Furthermore, comparisons of perceptions among program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty are made. Finally, the perceptions are analyzed to determine whether conflicting judgments among groups involved in the planning, conducting, and evaluating of professional development constitutes a potential institutional barrier to a new faculty member's training.

### **Summary**

This chapter has presented an overview of adult basic skills programs and faculty in the United States. This chapter divided the literature into four primary sections. The first section is a summary of adult basic skills education programs as operated in the United States. The second section is a description the challenges of adult basic skills faculty as it related to their preparation, population, programs, and policies. The third section is an exploration the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of adult basic skills instructors in both competency inventories and discrepancy model studies and summarized the deficiencies in the research concerning professional development for basic skills faculty. The final section is an examination of barriers and strategies to providing instructor training.

In light of the numerous challenges faced by adult basic skills faculty and their prior lack of preparation, the content of professional development during faculty members' first-year should be of paramount concern to program directors, coordinators, and faculty. The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge of the organizational entry training critical to faculty in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and to compare the perceptions of departmental personnel concerning the professional development content of first-year basic skills program faculty.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter is a description the methodology used to examine the perceptions of NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel regarding the professional development of first-year instructors. Elements of this study's methodology described herein include: (a) research questions and null hypotheses, (b) the research design, (c) study feasibility, (d) the population, (e) instrumentation, and (f) data analysis.

### **Research Questions and Null Hypotheses**

In order to gain knowledge of the organizational entry training critical to faculty in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs the overarching research question is as follows: What are the perceived primary training needs of first-year instructors in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs? This overarching question of perceived training needs was evaluated from the perspectives of basic skills program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty. As such, the supporting research questions are as follows:

1. What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program directors, coordinators and full-time faculty when measured collectively?

2. What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program directors?

3. What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program coordinators?

4. What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program full-time faculty?

Guiding this inquiry are the following hypotheses:

H<sub>0</sub>1 – There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors’ knowledge of planning and delivering instruction.

H<sub>0</sub>2 – There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors’ knowledge of integrating technology into the classroom.

H<sub>0</sub>3 - There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors’ knowledge of managing the educational environment through laws, policies, and procedures.

H<sub>0</sub>4 - There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors’ knowledge of providing assistance and instruction to special-needs students.

H<sub>0</sub>5 - There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors’ knowledge of conducting formal student evaluation.

### **Research Design**

This study’s purpose of measuring human perception and of comparing relationships among groups, as well as its large sample, lends itself to quantitative research methods. Specifically, I utilized an author-created, cross-sectional survey of personnel employed in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs. Dillman et al. (2009), Fowler (2009), and Nardi (2003) guided the use of survey methodology. The Internet-based survey was built and maintained by Qualtrics Survey Software. Qualtrics Survey Software is licensed by East Carolina University and available to university faculty and student researchers.

## **Study Feasibility**

To ensure study feasibility, presidents at each of the 58 community colleges which comprise the NCCCS were contacted November 2009 through January 2010 (see Appendices D and E). Each received a request for permission to send an on-line survey to their basic skills program faculty and staff using the community college's email accounts. Fifty-six presidents granted permission for their institution to participate in this research. The remaining two institutions accounted for approximately 50 potential study participants.

## **Population**

The population for this study consisted of all full-time basic skills program employees in the 56 of the 58 community colleges that comprise the NCCCS; therefore, a description of a sampling strategy is unnecessary. Justification for including the entire population rather than a sample is described in the following section, Instrumentation: Demographics.

## **Instrumentation**

Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) described instrumentation as “the whole process of preparing to collect data” (p. 118). Instrumentation for this study consisted of four phases: (a) instrument design, (b) validity assessment, (c) reliability assessment, and (d) data collection. The East Carolina University Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted study approval prior to the commencement of data collection (see Appendix A).

## **Instrument Design**

Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) defined an instrument as “any device for systematically collecting data” (p. G-4). Instruments in quantitative research can include, but are not limited to, tests, surveys, tally sheets, data logs, or interview schedules (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). In this study I employed an Internet-based survey to collect and compare the perceptions of NCCCS

Basic Skills Program personnel. The survey for this study included three sections: (a) a consent document, (b) demographic questions, and (c) survey items.

**Consent.** The on-line survey employed for this study began with a four-page informed consent template that East Carolina University mandated in November 2009. Before proceeding to the survey, participants were required to provide on-line consent, and individuals not providing consent were exited from the survey.

**Demographics.** A demographic section followed the consent document. The first question asked participants to self-report as a program director, coordinator, or full-time faculty within NCCCS Basic Skills Programs. Their self-reporting of a personnel category is a result of feasibility concerns discovered in the early stages of research planning.

This study's original intent was to compare the perceptions of program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty. After reviewing a list of NCCCS Basic Skill Program personnel employed by the 56 participating community colleges it became apparent that these distinct personnel categories were not universal. Four specific difficulties arose with these classifications. One difference lay in organizational structures. For example, some institutions lacked an administrator within the basic skills program. At those community colleges, program administration lay with a dean or other administrator who oversaw many programs, and the daily monitoring of program activities rested with a coordinator. Furthermore, one basic skills program had two directors, one in each county served by the community college, rather than a sole administrator. Finally, seven programs operating without full-time faculty constituted a difference in organizational structures. A second challenge relating to the classification of employees was the inability to place potential participants into specific personnel categories. Ambiguous job titles or the listing of names without specific job titles deterred these efforts.

Employees serving in multiple roles created a third obstacle to categorizing individuals into specific personnel categories. Lastly, some directories listed both full-time and part-time employees without differentiating the two, thereby producing a fourth impediment to organizing personnel within one of three personnel categories.

To remedy the inability to place participants in personnel categories, operational definitions of a program director, coordinator, and full-time faculty member were created (see Chapter One for a definition of each personnel category.) Furthermore, the first demographic question asked participants to identify themselves as belonging to one of three defined personnel categories. Two additional personnel categories, *Other Full-Time Employee* and *Part-time Employee*, were also available. Participants who did not self-report as a program director, coordinator, or full-time faculty were exited from the survey. Individuals who self-reported as eligible study participants were directed to other demographic questions and the survey items.

The remaining demographic questions inquired about participants' gender, race, age, education, and teaching experience. The demographic questions served to create a profile of respondents. Additionally, the profile of respondents allowed comparison of this study's participants with participants in other studies of basic skill program personnel. Designed for utmost inclusiveness, the demographic questions and answer choices were derived from a review of surveys employed in germane research.

**Original survey items.** A review of the literature and catalogs of tests and measures did not yield an appropriate instrument for collecting and analyzing the perceptions of NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel regarding the professional development of first-year faculty. This study, therefore, utilized an author-created and validated survey.

The literature on basic skills programs informed the creation of the survey; however, four specific studies influenced the selection of the survey items. First, Sherman et al. (1999) created a list of 31 instructor competencies and performance indicators based on feedback from focus groups consisting of more than 300 basic skills instructors and administrators across the United States. Although not expressly designed for first-year faculty professional development, their compilation of instructor competencies is the most current list of competencies specifically for faculty employed in basic skills programs. Second, Sandford's (2002) national assessment of professional development for occupational education faculty in community colleges influenced the creation of this survey because of its similar premise - faculty, possessing content knowledge but lacking pedagogical skills, are in need of particular first-year professional development activities. The general nature of the survey items made them germane to a basic skills faculty population. Third, Purcel's (1978) study of professional development for vocational instructors influenced the survey items for this study as Purcel included specific questions relating to special-needs students, a population in basic skills program. Fourth, Roehrich's (2003) study of perceived training needs of full-time community college faculty was selected to guide this survey's creation because of its generalizability and applicable character to faculty professional development. Also, the study's emphasis on providing instruction to adults as learners is germane to the basic skills program population.

The proposed survey for this study consisted of 37 survey items with five to eight questions in six categories. Topics were: (a) personal knowledge base, (b) course planning, (c) instructional skills, (d) student evaluation, (e) interpersonal skills, and (f) special-needs students. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each training item using a four-point Likert scale. Response categories arranged on a continuum: 1=Unimportant in an instructor's first year;

2=Of little importance in an instructor's first year; 3=Important in an instructor's first year; and 4=Very important in an instructor's first year. Although all of the professional development items had merit during the course of one's career as a basic skills program instructor, respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of each topic as it related to training for a first-year instructor. It was estimated based on the number of questions and answer format that the survey completion required less than 10 minutes to complete.

### **Validity**

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2005) defined validity as "the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of specific inferences made from test scores" (p. 558). Three types of validity exist: (a) content validity, (b) criterion-related validity, and (c) construct validity (Creswell, 2008). According to Creswell (2008), content validity measures how well the survey items represent the extent of questions available. To measure content validity, experts in the field are asked to review the survey for its comprehensiveness. Content validity participants may also be asked to provide feedback on question clarity and scale adequacy. Creswell defined criterion-related validity as a method of measuring how scores on an instrument predicate or relate to an outcome. Lastly, Creswell described construct validity as a technique of assessing the meaning or significance of an instrument's scores. Of the three types of validity, content validity and construct validity were the most germane test of validity for this research.

**Content validity.** To achieve content validity, 15 professionals with extensive experience in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs were asked to examine the survey created for this study. These individuals have experience as program coordinators, instructors, and teaching assistants. The inability to identify and locate former program directors resulted in their exclusion from the content review. Females comprised more than two thirds of the group while males comprised less than one third because of their limited numbers in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs. The group

of experts represented only Caucasians and African Americans. Other ethnic groups were unrepresented because of their limited availability. Content reviewers represented an educated population with 85% earning at least a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, content reviewers represented an older population with nearly half of the reviewers age 55 or over (see Table 1). The demographic profile of current and previous NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel is unavailable; therefore, the panel's demographic composition as compared to program personnel is unknown. The group of professionals represented both current and former basic skills program personnel and individuals employed on a full-time and part-time basis. Finally, all five subunits of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs were represented.

Participation in the content validity assessment by experts consisted of a two-step process. First, individuals received a telephone call in May 2010 soliciting their participation. Potential reviewers were given an overview of the study as well as an explanation of their role as content reviewers. The advantages of a telephone call were the researcher's opportunity to establish rapport and the reviewer's opportunity to ask questions. Second, individuals who agreed to participate in this phase of instrumentation received by mail in May 2010 a copy of the proposed survey, survey evaluation form, and study consent document (see Appendices B, C, and F for participant correspondence). Participants were asked to submit their feedback within two weeks and were provided a stamped and addressed envelope. The mailings of the instrument and two-week review were intended to give reviewers sufficient time for reflection and thoughtful comments. Additionally, mailing of the instrument allowed the inclusion of individuals who did not have access to a computer or who had limited computer skills.

Thirteen of 15 reviewers returned the survey evaluation by the two-week deadline for a response rate of 86.7%. Additionally, six reviewers participated in either a telephone or face-to-

face debrief lasting approximately 10 minutes. Reviewers described the survey as satisfactory, but suggested some changes. Suggested revisions were not incorporated into the survey as they either broadened the scope of the study or altered survey items' general nature with program-specific questions.

**Construct validity, part one.** A pilot test was conducted to assess construct validity. One hundred eighteen individuals were asked to participate in the pilot test. The pilot test population consisted of 50 state adult education directors and 68 individuals with state-level professional development responsibilities from 50 states and the District of Columbia. Potential participants were identified through the National Adult Education Professional Consortium website. Additionally, each state adult education office received a telephone call to confirm the information provided on the website.

The implementation of the pilot test followed Dillman, Smythe, and Christian (2009) Tailed Design Method (TDM) of survey administration. Specifically, the pilot test was an example of a three e-mail contact strategy: (a) the initial invitation and (b) two reminders (see Appendices G-I for participant correspondence). All participants received a survey invitation that provided a web address link to the survey. Participants who had yet to complete the survey received a maximum of two reminders asking for their participation in this study. Participants received a maximum of three messages during a three-week period in May-June 2010.

With a study population of state adult education directors and state professional development coordinators identified, the survey invitation was sent to 118 individuals. Sixty-six individuals began the survey. One individual disagreed with the consent document and exited the survey. One individual asked to be unsubscribed to the study. Data collection ended with 61 usable surveys for a response rate of 51.6%. Twenty-six state adult education directors and 39

professional development coordinators from 42 states began the survey. One individual did not indicate his/her job title and state. The job title and state of the four individuals who began, but did not complete, the survey are unknown; therefore, the exact number of directors and professional development coordinators and the state represented is unknown.

Following the study's consent document, respondents completed the demographic portion of the survey. Demographic questions asked about respondents' gender, age, race, and education. The pilot test participants ( $N=61$ ) were a fairly homogenous population of middle-aged, Caucasian females with at least a master's degree (see Table 1).

Following the close of pilot testing, data analysis began. Efforts were made to conduct a factor analysis to establish construct validity; however, the limited variance in respondent answers and small number of respondents yielded poor reliability. In consultation with an East Carolina University statistician and the study methodologist, the 37 original survey items remained intact, but the four-point Likert scale was modified to a seven-point bi-polar continuum of 1=Not important in the first year to 7=Very important in the first year. Furthermore, the statistician and methodologist recommended postponing factor analysis until survey completion with a larger sample.

**Construct validity, part two.** To achieve construct validity, a factor analysis of survey items was conducted after survey completion by full-time employees of NCCCS Basic Skills Program (see Chapter Four: Survey Deployment). Kaiser's Measure of Sampling Adequacy, measuring .934, indicated the distribution of values to be adequate for conducting a factor analysis. Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, measuring .000, indicated the data differed significantly as to not produce an identity matrix and were acceptable for factor analysis.

Table 1

*Characteristics of the Content Reviewers and Pilot Test Participants*

Characteristic	Content Reviewers (N=13)	Pilot Test Participants (N=61)
Gender		
Male	23%	23%
Female	77%	77%
Transgender/Other	0%	0%
Missing	0%	0%
Age		
24 and under	0%	0%
25-34	0%	2%
35-44	23%	11%
45-54	31%	13%
55-64	23%	69%
65 and over	23%	5%
Missing	0%	0%
Race		
White or Caucasian	54%	87%
Black or African American	46%	7%
Hispanic or Latino	0%	2%
Asian	0%	2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%
Native American or Alaska Native	0%	0%
Multiple/Other	0%	3%
Missing	0%	0%
Highest degree completed		
High school/GED	0%	0%
Technical or vocational certificate/diploma	8%	0%
Associates degree	8%	0%
Bachelors degree	54%	13%
Masters degree	31%	75%
Doctoral degree	0%	10%
Professional degree	0%	2%
Missing	0%	0%

*Note.* Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number; therefore, some percentages do not total 100.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted because of the unwillingness to make the assumptions required of confirmatory factor analysis and the lack of previous research on the survey subject matter. Although the original 37 items were divided into six categories, the use of categories was for organizational purposes only, and survey respondents did not see category titles during survey completion.

Initial exploratory factor analysis indicated six components with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. However, after viewing the scree test and interpreting the factor solution, a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation forcing five components emerged as the best representation of the original 37 survey items. The five factors accounted for 62.96% of the total variance with the first factor accounting for 42.67% of the total variance. The five labels that seemed to accurately describe the five constructs were: (1) Planning and Delivering Instruction; (2) Integrating Technology into the Classroom; (3) Managing the Educational Environment Through Laws, Policies, and Procedures; (4) Providing Assistance and Instruction to Special-needs Students; and (5) Conducting Formal Student Evaluation. Only two survey items loaded on two factors (see Table 2).

Additionally, 11 survey items that either overlapped into multiple components or skewed the component loading of other survey items were eliminated from further data analysis (see Table 3). Notably, four of the five survey items in the original category titled Interpersonal Skills were eliminated during exploratory factor analysis thereby eliminating one original category.

### **Reliability**

Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) defined reliability as “the degree to which scores obtained with an instrument are consistent measures of whatever the instrument measures” (p. G-7).

Creswell (2008) described reliability as consistent and stable scores from an instrument.

Table 2

*Factor Loading for Varimax Five-Factor Solution*

Item	Factor Loading				
	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding the characteristics of adult learners and adult development	.757				
Modifying teaching techniques to accommodate diverse learning styles	.743				
Selecting resources that are age appropriate for adult learners	.732				
Identifying instructional content and materials based upon learner needs, interests, goals, and experiences	.685				
Using questioning strategies at various cognitive levels	.550				
Identifying and incorporating individual student motivation and retention techniques	.501				
Monitoring learning using a variety of informal assessment strategies	.462	.447			
Presenting course content using multimedia software	.780				
Designing instruction that incorporates appropriate multimedia and technology	.700				
Using technology and multi-media for individualized instruction	.659				
Integrating technology and materials that reflect the contexts of home, work, and a multicultural community	.494	.588			
Illustrating proficiency using technology for administrative functions	.536				
Demonstrating familiarity with the student code of conduct					.735
Maintaining order and discipline in the classroom					.729
Knowing federal and state laws pertaining to the educational setting and learners					.703
Dealing with immediate crisis situations					.610
Understanding the legal uses of written materials, technology, software, and media					.443
Making referrals to appropriate resources when guidance and counseling are beyond an instructor's own expertise					.421
Modifying instruction for students who have learning disabilities and other special needs					.728

Table 2 (continued)

Item	Factor Loading				
	1	2	3	4	5
Identifying special-needs students				.695	
Identifying resources both in and outside of the school setting to aid in the development of special-needs students				.547	
Identifying students whose performance is impaired by chemical dependency					.542
Identifying students whose performance is impaired by social problems					.454
Determining the scheduling and appropriate uses of formal assessment					.790
Collecting and recording formal assessment data for program improvement and accountability					.735
Using the results of formal assessments to plan lessons					.683

*Note.* Factors loading  $<.40$  were suppressed; Factor 1: Planning and Delivering Instruction; Factor 2: Integrating Technology into the Classroom; Factor 3: Managing the Educational Environment through Laws, Policies and Procedures; Factor 4: Providing Assistance and Instruction to Special-needs Students; Factor 5: Conducting Formal Student Evaluation

Table 3

*Original Survey Items Deleted After Factor Analysis*

Original Survey Item	Original Construct
Developing a knowledge base in other academic areas	Personal Knowledge Base
Understanding the community college services	Personal Knowledge Base
Selecting resources that are appropriate based on the individual learner's level of ability	Course Planning
Incorporating community resources to extend the classroom into the community (e.g. speakers, field trips)	Course Planning
Sequencing and pacing the lessons based on learner cues regarding the learning pacing and depth of understanding	Instructional Skills
Employing individual, group and team learning in a multi-level classroom	Instructional Skills
Establishing and maintaining filing and record keeping systems (e.g. attendance, assessment scores, grades)	Student Evaluation
Developing students' self esteem/self image as learners	Interpersonal Skills
Recognizing students' verbal and non-verbal reaction to instruction	Interpersonal Skills
Establishing rapport through humor, enthusiasm, confidence, and respect	Interpersonal Skills
Modeling sensitivity related to differences in culture, gender, race, and socioeconomic status	Interpersonal Skills

According to Creswell, five forms of reliability exist: (a) test-retest reliability, (b) alternate forms reliability, (c) alternate forms and test-retest reliability, (d) inter-rater reliability, and (e) internal consistency reliability. The instrument created for this study was examined for internal consistency. When testing for internal consistency, one version of the test is administered to one group of participants. The use of a continuous variable for survey item scoring makes Cronbach's coefficient alpha the appropriate test for internal consistency. Alpha ranged from .779 to .861 with a mean of .83 on the NCCCS Basic Skills First-Year Instructor Professional Development Survey.

**Reliability of construct one.** Item analyses were conducted on the seven items hypothesized to assess Construct One: Planning and Delivering Instruction. An inter-item correlation matrix indicated the seven items to be correlated at greater than .38. Additionally, a corrected item-total correlation matrix indicated the seven items to be correlated at greater than .51. The coefficient alpha for Planning and Delivering Instruction was .861 (see Table 4).

**Reliability of construct two.** Item analyses were conducted on the five items hypothesized to assess Construct Two: Integrating Technology into the Classroom. An inter-item correlation matrix indicated the five items to be correlated at greater than .40. Additionally, a corrected item-total correlation matrix indicated the five items to be correlated at greater than .52. The coefficient alpha for Integrating Technology into the Classroom was .847 (see Table 5).

**Reliability of construct three.** Item analyses were conducted on the five items hypothesized to assess Construct Three: Managing the Educational Environment Through Laws, Policies, and Procedures. An inter-item correlation matrix indicated the five items to be correlated at greater than .38. Additionally, a corrected item-total correlation matrix indicated the

Table 4

*Reliability of Construct One: Planning and Delivering Instruction with an Overall Alpha of .861*

Item	M	SD	CITC	AIID
Understanding the characteristics of adult learners and adult development	6.27	1.03	.69	.83
Selecting resources that are age appropriate for adult learners	6.24	.98	.65	.84
Identifying instructional content and materials based upon learner needs, interests, goals, and experiences	6.23	.95	.71	.83
Identifying and incorporating individual student motivation and retention techniques	6.10	.94	.57	.85
Modifying teaching techniques to accommodate diverse learning styles	6.10	1.05	.72	.83
Using questioning strategies at various cognitive levels	5.72	1.12	.60	.85
Monitoring learning using a variety of informal assessment strategies	5.58	1.25	.51	.86

*Note.* CTTC represents the corrected item-total correlation. AIID denotes the alpha if item was deleted.

Table 5

*Reliability of Construct Two: Integrating Technology into the Classroom with an Overall Alpha of .847*

Item	M	SD	CITC	AIID
Designing instruction that incorporates appropriate multi-media and technology	5.38	1.29	.71	.80
Integrating technology and materials that reflect the contexts of home, work, and a multicultural community	5.60	1.17	.64	.82
Presenting course content using multimedia software	4.77	1.56	.74	.79
Using technology and multimedia for individualized instruction	5.41	1.32	.69	.81
Illustrating proficiency using technology for administrative functions	5.43	1.36	.52	.85

*Note.* CTTC represents the corrected item-total correlation. AIID denotes the alpha if item was deleted.

five items to be correlated at greater than .56. The coefficient alpha for Integrating Technology into the Educational Environment was .809 (see Table 6).

**Reliability of construct four.** Item analyses were conducted on the six items hypothesized to assess Construct Four: Providing Assistance and Instruction to Special-needs Students. An inter-item correlation matrix indicated the six items to be correlated at greater than .42. Additionally, a corrected item-total correlation matrix indicated the six items to be correlated at greater than .60. The coefficient alpha for Providing Assistance and Instruction to Special-needs Students was .861 (see Table 7).

**Reliability of construct five.** Item analyses were conducted on the three items hypothesized to assess Construct Five: Conducting Formal Student Evaluation. An inter-item correlation matrix indicated the three items to be correlated at greater than .44. Additionally, a corrected item-total correlation matrix indicated the six items to be correlated at greater than .57. The coefficient alpha for Conducting Formal Student Evaluation was .779 (see Table 8).

### **Analysis of Data**

Data analysis for this study was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 17.0. The following is a description of the process for creating a profile of survey respondents, answering the research questions, and evaluating the null hypotheses for this study.

### **Demographic Profile and Statistical Procedures**

Frequency distributions were used to create a demographic profile of respondents. The demographic profile included respondent's age, gender, race, education, and teaching experience.

Table 6

*Reliability of Construct Three: Managing the Educational Environment Through Laws, Policies, and Procedures with an Overall Alpha of .809*

Item	M	SD	CITC	AIID
Demonstrating familiarity with the student code of conduct	6.01	1.11	.63	.76
Maintaining order and discipline in the classroom	6.42	.85	.56	.79
Dealing with immediate crisis situations	5.83	1.29	.56	.79
Knowing federal and state laws pertaining to the educational setting and learners	5.90	1.23	.70	.74
Understanding the legal uses of written materials, technology, software, and media	5.46	1.40	.59	.78

*Note.* CTTC represents the corrected item-total correlation. AIID denotes the alpha if item was deleted.

Table 7

*Reliability of Construct Four: Providing Assistance and Instruction to Students with Special Needs with an Overall Alpha of .861*

Item	M	SD	CITC	AIID
Identifying special-needs students	5.86	1.18	.69	.83
Identifying students whose performance is impaired by chemical dependency	5.21	1.43	.66	.84
Identifying students whose performance is impaired by social problems	5.57	1.21	.68	.83
Modifying instruction for students who have learning disabilities and other special-needs	5.89	1.15	.66	.84
Identifying resources both in and outside of the school setting to aid in the development of special-needs students	5.57	1.20	.64	.84
Making referrals to appropriate resources when guidance and counseling are beyond an instructor's own expertise	5.76	1.24	.60	.85

*Note.* CTTC represents the corrected item-total correlation. AIID denotes the alpha if item was deleted.

Table 8

*Reliability of Construct Five: Conducting Formal Student Evaluation with an Overall Alpha of .779*

Item	M	SD	CITC	AIID
Determining the scheduling and appropriate uses of formal assessment	6.06	1.19	.71	.60
Collecting and recording formal assessment data for program improvement and accountability	6.16	1.29	.59	.74
Using the results of formal assessments to plan lessons	6.20	1.02	.57	.76

*Note.* CTTC represents the corrected item-total correlation. AIID denotes the alpha if item was deleted.

## **Research Questions and Statistical Procedures**

**RQ1.** What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program directors, coordinators and full-time faculty when measured collectively?

**RQ1 statistical procedure.** To find the collective perception of primary training needs for a first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructor, responses to survey items were calculated in the aggregate rather than divided by personnel category. This research question was answered by next calculating the mean for each of the survey's five constructs. The mean for each construct was then ranked and ordered by descending means.

**RQ2.** What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program directors?

**RQ2 statistical procedure.** To find program directors' perception of primary training needs for first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors, responses to survey items were calculated using only the responses of individuals who identified themselves as program directors. This research question was answered by next calculating the mean for each of the survey's five constructs. The mean for each construct was then ranked and ordered by descending means.

**RQ3.** What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program coordinators?

**RQ3 statistical procedure.** To find coordinators' perception of primary training needs for first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors, responses to survey items were calculated using only the responses of individuals who identified themselves as coordinators.

This research question was answered by next calculating the mean for each of the survey's five constructs. The mean for each construct was then ranked and ordered by descending means.

**RQ4.** What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program full-time faculty?

**RQ4 statistical procedure.** To find full-time faculty's perception of primary training needs for first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors, responses to survey items were calculated using only the responses of individuals who identified themselves as full-time instructors. This research question was answered by next calculating the mean for each of the survey's five constructs. The mean for each construct was then ranked and ordered by descending means.

### **Null Hypotheses and Statistical Procedures**

**Overview.** A one-way ANOVA is the appropriate statistical procedure to utilize when examining whether the means of a dependent variable are significantly different among groups or levels in a factor variable. When conducting a one-way ANOVA, the *F* test evaluates whether the group means on the dependent variable are statistically significant from each other. Where statistically significant difference exists, post-hoc multiple comparisons are conducted to determine among which pairings the difference exists. The choice of post-hoc tests is determined by whether or not one assumes equal variances based on Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances. Additionally, the effect size,  $n^2$  (eta square), which ranges from 0 to 1, indicates the proportion of variance contributed to the dependent variable by the factor (George & Mallery, 2010; Green & Salkind, 2005). Each of the five null hypotheses in this study was tested using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

**H<sub>0</sub>1.** There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors' knowledge of planning and delivering instruction.

**H<sub>0</sub>1 statistical procedure.** This hypothesis was tested by conducting a one-way ANOVA using personal category as the factor variable and the construct titled *Knowledge of Planning and Delivering Instruction* as the dependent variable. Significant difference was set at the .05 alpha level with post-hoc tests conducted where statistically significant difference existed.

**H<sub>0</sub>2.** There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors' knowledge of integrating technology into the classroom.

**H<sub>0</sub>2 statistical procedure.** This hypothesis was tested by conducting a one-way ANOVA using personal category as the factor variable and the construct titled *Knowledge of Integrating Technology into the Classroom* as the dependent variable. Significant difference was set at the .05 alpha level with post-hoc tests conducted where statistically significant difference existed.

**H<sub>0</sub>3.** There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors' knowledge of managing the educational environment through laws, policies, and procedures.

**H<sub>0</sub>3 statistical procedure.** This hypothesis was tested by conducting a one-way ANOVA using personal category as the factor variable and the construct titled *Knowledge of Managing the Educational Environment Through Laws, Policies, and Procedures* as the dependent variable. Significant difference was set at the .05 alpha level with post-hoc tests conducted where statistically significant difference existed.

**H<sub>04</sub>.** There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors' knowledge of providing assistance and instruction to special-needs students.

**H<sub>04</sub> statistical procedure.** This hypothesis was tested by conducting a one-way ANOVA using personal category as the factor variable and the construct titled *Knowledge of Providing Assistance and Instruction to Special-needs Students* as the dependent variable. Significant difference was set at the .05 alpha level with post-hoc tests conducted where statistically significant difference existed.

**H<sub>05</sub>** - There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors' knowledge of conducting formal student evaluation.

**H<sub>05</sub> statistical procedure.** This hypothesis was tested by conducting a one-way ANOVA using personal category as the factor variable and the construct titled *Knowledge of Conducting Formal Student Evaluation* as the dependent variable. Significant difference was set at the .05 alpha level with post-hoc tests conducted where statistically significant difference existed.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The framework for this study is two-fold. First, human resource development theory serves as the overarching theoretical framework. Swanson and Holt (2001) defined human resource development as “a process for developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance” (p. 4). Human resource development's emphasis on individual learning through training provides the foundation for this study. Second, Zinn's (1997) conceptual framework of four domains that act as either barriers or supports to faculty professional development provide

the supplementary structure on which to build this study. Zinn's (1997) study of teacher professional development identified four domains that support or impede faculty's continuous learning. The four domains are: (a) people and interpersonal relationships; (b) institutional structures; (c) personal considerations and commitments; and (d) intellectual and personal characteristics. In this study I examine the perceptions of NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel in regards to a first-year instructor's professional development are examined. Furthermore, perceptions among program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty are analyzed to determine whether conflicting judgments among groups involved in the planning, conducting, and evaluating of professional development constitutes a potential institutional barrier to a new faculty member's training.

### **Threats to Internal and External Validity**

Threats to research validity are aspects of study design that might serve to modify the study's results and conclusions. Two threats to validity exist: internal and external (Creswell, 2008; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

Threats to internal validity are factors that affect the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) described 10 threats to internal validity: (a) subject characteristics, (b) mortality, (c) location, (d) instrumentation, (e) testing, (f) history, (g) maturation, (h) subject attitude, (i) regression, and (j) implementation. In this study three threats to internal validity exist.

First, the characteristics of participants in both the content review and pilot test pose a threat to internal validity. The panel of experts who participated in the content review did not include program directors or ethnic groups other than Caucasians and African Americans, and the panel of experts included a limited number of males. Additionally, participants in the pilot

test posed a threat to internal validity based on subject characteristics. Participants in the pilot study represented state adult education directors and state professional development coordinators, a population closely related, yet not identical to the population of this study.

Second, instrumentation posed a potential threat to internal validity for this study. The self-reporting of personnel categories did not allow for independent verification. Also, the utilization of a self-administered survey electronically delivered allowed for completion of the survey in varied settings and the potential of collaboration and outside communication to alter participants' attitudes and responses. Additionally, the use of an electronically delivered survey posed several technological challenges. Although a population with computer access, participants might have limited computer ability that alters survey results. Also, web-based surveys have the possibility of being blocked by the organization's spam blocker or perceived by the user as a computer virus and deleted. Additionally, frequent disruptions and periodic shutdowns might hinder survey completion. Finally, having community college email addresses and requiring survey completion from an employer's computer might influence respondents' willingness to participate or the answers of individuals who do.

Third, mortality poses an internal threat to this study. Survey implementation in the summer reduces the number of potential participants who will be unavailable to complete the survey due to vacations and the proliferation of statewide professional development activities generally available in the summer.

Threats to external validity are factors that affect the generalizability of the study. Gall et al. (2005) identified three threats to external validity: (a) population validity, (b) personological variables, and (c) ecological validity. One external threat exists with this study: ecological validity. While this study examines the perceptions of full-time faculty in basic skills program

employed by community colleges, reviews of personnel directories for each community college revealed that a some full-time faculty do not provide instruction in a community college setting but at off-campus locations. According to the literature, instructors in off-campus setting often struggle with limited resources, poor facilities, and few relationships. Their experiences at off-campus sites might alter their perceptions of professional development needs for a first-year instructor. Moreover, a review of personnel directories for each community college indicated that a sizeable percentage of off-campus instructors provide instruction in a Department of Correction facility. It is plausible that instructors' perceptions of first-year professional development would be shaped by their experiences as a correctional education instructor rather than a community college-based instructor. The large percentage of faculty who provide instruction away from the community college campus might limit the generalizability of their perceptions to community college basic skills program faculty.

### **Summary**

In this study I explored the views of NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel regarding the training needs of first-year faculty. Specifically, I utilized an author-created and validated survey to compare the perceptions of program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty. Cross-sectional, Internet-based survey methodology was utilized to collect participants' perceptions of professional development for first-year faculty. The research questions posed by this study were answered by calculating and comparing survey item and construct means. The null hypotheses posed by this study were tested with separate one-way ANOVA. Post-hoc testing occurred when necessary. Results of the study are described in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS**

The purpose of this study is to examine the primary training needs of first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors from the perception of program directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors. Additionally, in this study I examine whether the perception of primary training needs among program directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors constitutes a statistically significant difference and poses a potential institutional barrier to professional development of first-year faculty. Four research questions and five hypotheses were created to answer the overarching question: What are the primary training needs of first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors? The independent variable, personnel category, is composed of three groups: program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty. The dependent variables are the five areas of professional development: (a) planning and delivering instruction; (b) integrating technology into the classroom; (c) managing the educational environment through laws, policies, and procedures; (d) providing assistance and instruction to special-needs students; and (e) conducting formal student evaluation. This chapter consists of the following: (a) a description of the survey's deployment, (b) a description of the participants, (c) an analysis of the research questions, (d) an analysis of the null hypotheses, and (e) a description of instrumentation challenges.

### **Survey Deployment**

This study employed an Internet-based cross-sectional survey for data collection. Study participants included all full-time employees in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs. Names and email addresses were compiled using each community college's on-line personnel directory and a list of personnel provided by the NCCCS. Additionally, each NCCCS Basic Skills Program director

or administrative assistant received a telephone call in the days prior to survey implementation to confirm the names and email addresses of full-time program personnel.

In this study I utilized Dillman et al. (2009) Tailored Design Method (TDM). The five-step survey methodology included a pre-notice, survey invitation, two reminder messages, and a thank-you message (see Appendices J-N for participant correspondence.) All participants received a pre-notice. Both the survey invitation and two reminders provided a web address link to the survey. Participants who completed the survey received a thank-you message the day after data collection ended. Participants who had yet to complete the survey received a maximum of two reminders asking for their participation in this study. Participants received a maximum of five messages during a three-week period in June-July 2010.

With a study population of all full-time employees in 56 NCCCS Basic Skills Programs the pre-notice was sent to 568 individuals. Three hundred thirty-seven study participants responded in some format during the data collection period for an overall response rate of 59.3%. During the three weeks of data collection eight individuals sent an email asking to be unsubscribed to the survey. Twenty-three individuals did not agree to the consent form and were exited from the survey. An additional 52 respondents self-reported as *Other Full-time Employee* and *Part-time Employee* and were exited from the survey. Data collection ended with 254 usable surveys for a modified response rate of 44.7%. Fifty-four of the 56 participating North Carolina community colleges were represented by 254 survey respondents.

### **Description of Participants**

Following the study's consent document, respondents completed the demographic portion of the survey. The demographic questions served to create a profile of respondents as well as a partial profile of current NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel. Demographic questions were

about respondents' gender, age, race, education, and teaching experience. The survey respondents ( $N=254$ ) were a fairly homogenous population of middle-aged, Caucasian females with at least a bachelor's degree and extensive teaching experience (see Table 9 for a complete demographic profile of survey respondents).

### **Results Regarding Gender**

Representing 74% of the total responses, females outnumbered males nearly three to one. Additionally, females outnumbered males in every personnel category by nearly the same margin except *Instructor*. In the Instructor category females accounted for nearly two thirds of the responses.

### **Results Regarding Age**

The survey respondents were predominately a middle-aged population with the age categories of 45-54 and 55-64 having the highest number of respondents in every personnel category. None of the respondents were first-career professionals under age 24, and fewer than 10% of the respondents were considered early-career professional ages 25-34.

### **Results Regarding Race**

The survey respondents were predominately Caucasian as represented by 69% of total respondents. African-Americans represented 22% of the total number of respondents and self-reported most often instructors. Other racial groups accounted for 7% of the respondents. Of the respondents who identified themselves other than Caucasian or African American, only Hispanics were represented in supervisory positions of program directors and coordinators. Asians and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders were not represented in any personnel category.

## **Results Regarding Education**

The survey respondents were a highly educated population with over half of the participants earning at least a master's degree. Individuals who earned at least a master's degree were most often a program director or coordinator. Only in the Instructor category did the majority of respondents report their highest degree as a bachelor's degree. Two percent of total respondents identified an associate's degree as their highest degree, and individuals with an associate's degree were most often a coordinator. One percent of respondents earned less than an associate's degree. Finally, one person who self-reported as a program director also reported an associate's degree as his/her highest degree. When viewing the educational level of survey respondents as a whole and by personnel category, this was likely a response error.

## **Results Regarding Teaching Experience**

The majority of survey respondents possessed prior teaching experience. One quarter of the respondents had K-12 teaching experience, and slightly more than one third reported basic skills program teaching experience. Additionally, 29% of the survey respondents described their teaching experience at the post-secondary level. Finally, 8% of the survey respondents reported their teaching experience as other than the provided choices, but with the list of choices previously examined by 13 content reviewers, the nature of their additional teaching experience is unknown. Notably only 74% of directors and 81% of coordinators reported basic skills teaching experience. Furthermore, 7% of directors and 4% of coordinators reported having no teaching experience. Similarly, 16% of instructors reported having no prior teaching experience.

Table 9

*Characteristics of NCCCS Basic Skills Program Survey Participants*

Characteristic	Total (N=254)	Director (n=42)	Coordinator (n=117)	Instructor (n=95)
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	24%	21%	16%	36%
Female	74%	76%	82%	64%
Transgender/Other	0%	0%	0%	0%
Missing	1%	2%	2%	0%
<b>Age</b>				
24 and under	0%	0%	0%	0%
25-34	7%	2%	9%	8%
35-44	19%	21%	16%	21%
45-54	33%	31%	38%	29%
55-64	35%	40%	33%	35%
65 and over	3%	2%	0%	5%
Missing	2%	2%	3%	1%
<b>Race</b>				
White or Caucasian	69%	71%	74%	60%
Black or African American	22%	21%	17%	28%
Hispanic or Latino	3%	2%	4%	1%
Asian	0%	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%	0%
Native American or Alaska Native	1%	0%	0%	3%
Multiple/Other	3%	2%	0%	5%
Missing	3%	2%	3%	2%
<b>Highest degree completed</b>				
High school/GED	0%	0%	0%	0%
Technical or vocational certificate/diploma	0%	0%	0%	1%
Associate degree	2%	2%	3%	1%
Bachelor degree	43%	19%	44%	52%
Masters degree	52%	74%	50%	43%
Doctoral degree	2%	2%	0%	2%
Professional degree	0%	0%	0%	0%
Missing	2%	2%	3%	1%

Table 9 (continued)

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Areas of prior teaching experience <sup>a</sup>				
K-12	25%	50%	48%	47%
Basic Skills Program	34%	74%	81%	40%
Community college – curriculum program	9%	36%	15%	11%
Community college – continuing education	15%	43%	31%	22%
College/university	5%	10%	7%	15%
Other	8%	12%	16%	14%
None	5%	7%	4%	16%
Missing	---	2%	3%	2%

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*Note.* Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number; therefore, some percentages do not total 100.

<sup>a</sup> Participants were asked to indicate all areas of prior teaching experience; therefore, the percentages total more than 100%.

## **Additional Faculty Demographics**

As first-year faculty professional development is the subject matter of this study, respondents who identified themselves as full-time faculty were asked additional demographic questions. The additional questions were an inquiry regarding instructors' degree subject and teaching experience (see Table 10 for a more complete profile of instructor respondents).

**Results regarding faculty subject area.** Faculty was asked to identify the subject area of their bachelor's degree. The list of subject areas was derived from a website which listed all college majors that are available in the United States by category. Twenty-one percent of instructors reported education to be the subject area of their bachelor's degree. Fourteen percent of instructors reported English and literature to be the subject area of their bachelor's degree, and 11% of instructors reported sciences to be the subject area of their bachelor degree. All other subject areas, except agriculture, engineering, and ethnic studies, were represented by at fewer than 8% of the instructor respondents. Nineteen percent of the survey respondents reported the subject area of their bachelor's degree as other than the provided choices, but with the list of choices previously examined by 13 content reviewers, the subject area of their bachelor's degree is unknown.

**Results regarding faculty teaching experience.** Instructors were asked their years of full-time NCCCS Basic Skills Program teaching experience. More than one third of faculty respondents have fewer than five years of experience teaching basic skills to adults. Furthermore, 12% of instructor respondents have taught one year or less. Despite being an older population, 74% of instructor respondents have taught full-time in basic skills programs fewer than 10 years.

**Results regarding faculty academic subunit.** Instructors were asked to identify the one academic subunit of adult basic skills in which they have the most teaching experience. An error

Table 10

*Additional Characteristics of Faculty Participants*

Characteristic	Percentage (n=95)
Bachelor's degree subject area	
Agriculture	0%
Ethnic Studies	0%
Sciences	11%
Computer Sciences	2%
Mathematics	5%
Education	21%
Visual and Performing Arts	1%
Engineering and Engineering-Related Technology	0%
English and Literature	14%
General and Interdisciplinary Studies	1%
Social Studies	7%
Parks and Recreation Services	3%
Foreign Language	5%
Medical and Allied Healthcare	2%
Philosophy, Religion, and Theology	1%
Public Affairs and Law	1%
Military Science and Criminal Justice	2%
Other	19%
Missing	4%
Years of full-time Basic Skills teaching experience	
1 or less	12%
2-5	25%
6-10	37%
11-15	9%
16-20	6%
Over 20	9%
Missing	1%
Area of Basic Skills with most teaching experience <sup>a</sup>	
Adult Basic Education	40%
GED	48%
Adult High School	28%
Compensatory Education	13%
English as a Second Language	13%
Missing	1%

Table 10 (continued)

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Current teaching site	
Main campus and satellite campuses	64%
Off campus	37%
Missing	1%

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*Note.* Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number; therefore, some percentages do not total 100.

<sup>a</sup> Participants were inadvertently allowed to respond with multiple answers; therefore, the percentage does not total 100.

in survey creation allowed multiple answers to this question. Based on the number of responses for each academic subunit, it is assumed respondents misread the question to ask all the subunits in which they have teaching experience. Nearly half of the instructors reported GED teaching experience, and 40% of instructors reported having ABE teaching experience. Thirteen percent of instructors reported Compensatory Education teaching experience, and another 13% of instructors reported English as a Second Language teaching experience. Twenty-eight percent of instructors reported having AHS teaching experience. With only 46 of 58 NCCCS Basic Skills Programs offering an adult high school diploma, the smaller number of instructors with teaching experience in this area was predictable.

**Results regarding faculty teaching location.** Instructors were asked about their current teaching location. Nearly two thirds of instructors reported currently conducting classes at a main campus or satellite campus. The remaining instructors currently conduct class off-campus. The exact location of the off-campus class or type of site is unknown (see Table 10).

In summary, the survey respondents ( $N=254$ ) were a fairly homogenous population of middle-aged, Caucasian females with at least a bachelor's degree. Respondents generally had teaching experience although not always in adult basic skills programs. While NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors have teaching experience, they are mostly new to the adult basic skills field and have degrees in areas other than education.

## **Analysis of Research Questions**

### **Research Question One**

*What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program directors, coordinators and full-time faculty when measured collectively?*

Across program personnel, knowledge of conducting formal evaluation ( $M= 6.14$ ,  $SD=.97$ ) was perceived as the most important professional development training need of first-year NCCCS Basic Skills instructors. Across program personnel, knowledge of integrating technology into the classroom ( $M=5.32$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ) was perceived as the least important professional development training need of first-year NCCCS Basic Skills instructors (see Table 11).

Across program personnel, maintaining order and discipline in the classroom ( $M=6.43$ ,  $SD=.84$ ) was perceived as the most important specific training need for first-year NCCCS Basic Skills instructors. Maintaining order and discipline in the classroom was followed by establishing rapport with students ( $M=6.40$ ,  $SD=.90$ ) as the second most important specific training need for first-year NCCCS Basic Skills instructors. An examination of the means by survey item across program personnel indicated that four of the ten highest rated training topics were not included in the factor analysis on which constructs and data analysis were based. Moreover, 30 of 37 survey items had a standard deviation of greater than 1.0 indicating a large variation in participant responses (see Table 12).

## **Research Question Two**

*What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program directors?*

Program directors perceived knowledge of conducting formal evaluation ( $M= 6.28$ ,  $SD=.70$ ) as the most important professional development training need of first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors. Program directors perceived knowledge of integrating technology into the classroom ( $M=5.47$ ,  $SD=.97$ ) as the least important professional development training needs of first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors (see Table 13).

Table 11

*Means of Professional Development Constructs in Descending Order Measured by Program*

*Personnel Collectively*

Construct	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Conducting Formal Student Evaluation	6.14	.97
Planning and Delivering Instruction	6.03	.78
Managing the Educational Environment Through Laws, Policies, and Procedures	5.92	.90
Providing Assistance and Instruction to Students with Special Needs	5.64	.95
Integrating Technology into the Classroom	5.32	1.06

Table 12

*Means of Survey Items in Descending Order Measured by Program Personnel Collectively*

Survey item	Mean	SD
Maintaining order and discipline in the classroom	6.43	.84
Establishing rapport with students through humor, enthusiasm, confidence and respect*	6.40	.90
Selecting resources that are appropriate based on the individual learners' level of ability*	6.36	.81
Establishing and maintaining a filing and record-keeping system*	6.31	1.04
Understanding the characteristics of adult learners and adult development	6.29	1.02
Selecting resources that are age appropriate for adult learners	6.24	.97
Identifying instructional content and materials based on learner needs, interests, goals, and experiences	6.24	.95
Developing students' self-esteem and self-image as learners*	6.22	.96
Using results of formal assessments to plan lessons	6.20	1.02
Collecting and recording formal assessment data for program accountability	6.16	1.28
Modifying teaching techniques to accommodate diverse learning styles	6.12	1.05
Identifying and incorporating individual student motivation and retention techniques	6.11	.94
Determining the scheduling and appropriate uses of formal assessments	6.06	1.19
Sequencing and pacing the lessons based on learner cues regarding the pace and depth of understanding*	6.04	1.02
Demonstrating familiarity with the student code of conduct	6.03	1.12
Employing individual, small group, and whole group learning in a multi-level classroom*	6.00	1.15
Modeling sensitivity related to differences in culture, gender, race, and socioeconomic status*	6.00	1.14
Recognizing students' verbal and non-verbal reaction to instruction*	5.99	1.03
Knowing federal and state laws pertaining to the educational setting and learners	5.91	1.23
Modifying instruction for students who have learning disabilities or other special needs	5.90	1.15
Identifying special-needs students	5.88	1.17
Dealing with immediate crisis situations	5.85	1.28
Making referrals to appropriate resources when guidance and counseling are beyond an instructor's own expertise	5.76	1.25
Using questioning strategies at various cognitive levels	5.74	1.12

Table 12 (continued)

Integrating technology and materials that reflect the contexts of home, work, and a multi-cultural community	5.61	1.18
Monitoring learning using a variety of informal assessment strategies	5.59	1.24
Identifying resources both in and outside of the school setting to aid in the development of students with special needs	5.58	1.19
Identifying students whose performance is impaired by social problems	5.56	1.23
Understanding legal uses of written materials, technology, software and media	5.47	1.40
Illustrating proficiency using technology for administrative functions	5.43	1.36
Using technology and other multimedia for individualized instruction	5.42	1.31
Designing instruction that incorporates appropriate multimedia and technology	5.39	1.28
Understanding the community college services and transition processes*	5.33	1.33
Identifying students whose performance is impaired by chemical dependency	5.21	1.44
Developing a knowledge base in other academic areas from one's degree field*	5.02	1.51
Incorporating community resources to extend the classroom into the community*	4.91	1.55
Presenting course content using multimedia software	4.78	1.56

*Note.* Asterisks indicate original survey items that were excluded from data analysis after the factor analysis.

Table 13

*Means of Professional Development Constructs in Descending Order Measured by Program*

*Directors*

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Conducting Formal Student Evaluation	6.28	.70
Planning and Delivering Instruction	6.18	.57
Managing the Educational Environment Through Laws, Policies, and Procedures	5.98	.73
Providing Assistance and Instruction to Students with Special Needs	5.75	.75
Integrating Technology into the Classroom	5.47	.97

Program directors perceived understanding the characteristics of adult learners and adult development ( $M=6.61$ ,  $SD=.63$ ) as the most important specific training need for first-year NCCCS Basic Skills instructors followed by using the results of formal assessments to plan lessons ( $M=6.51$ ,  $SD=.64$ ). An examination of the means by survey item for program directors indicated that four of the ten highest rated training topics were not included in the factor analysis on which constructs and data analysis were based. Moreover, 20 of 37 survey items had a standard deviation of greater than 1.0 indicating a large variation in program directors' responses (see Table 14).

### **Research Question Three**

*What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program coordinators?*

Coordinators perceived knowledge of conducting formal evaluation ( $M= 6.22$ ,  $SD= .95$ ) as the most important professional development training need of first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors. Coordinators perceived knowledge of integrating technology into the classroom ( $M=5.36$ ,  $SD=.97$ ) as the least important professional development training needs of first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors (see Table 15).

Coordinators perceived maintaining order and discipline in the classroom ( $M=6.49$ ,  $SD=.75$ ) as the most important specific training need for first-year NCCCS Basic Skills instructors followed by establishing rapport with students ( $M=6.46$ ,  $SD=.81$ ). An examination of the means by survey item for coordinators indicated that three of the ten highest rated training topics were not included in the factor analysis on which constructs and data analysis were based. Moreover, 26 of 37 survey items had a standard deviation of greater than 1.0 indicating a large variation in coordinators' responses (see Table 16).

Table 14

*Means of Survey Items in Descending Order Measured by Program Directors*

Survey Item	Mean	SD
Understanding the characteristics of adult learners and adult development	6.61	.63
Using results of formal assessments to plan lessons	6.51	.64
Selecting resources that are age appropriate for adult learners	6.44	.81
Selecting resources that are appropriate based on the individual learners' level of ability*	6.43	.80
Establishing rapport with students through humor, enthusiasm, confidence, and respect*	6.38	.86
Maintaining order and discipline in the classroom	6.36	.79
Establishing and maintaining a filing and record-keeping system*	6.32	1.00
Developing students' self-esteem and self-image as learners*	6.24	.80
Determining the scheduling and appropriate uses of formal assessment	6.24	.83
Identifying instructional content and materials based upon learner needs, interests, goals, and experiences	6.23	.80
Modifying teaching techniques to accommodate diverse learning styles	6.22	.85
Employing individual, small group, and whole group learning in a multi-level classroom*	6.20	.93
Recognizing students' verbal and non-verbal reaction to instruction*	6.12	.93
Identifying and incorporating individual student motivation and retention techniques	6.10	.97
Collecting and recording formal assessment data for program accountability	6.07	1.35
Modifying instruction for students who have learning disabilities or other special needs	6.07	.84
Sequencing and pacing lessons based on learner cues regarding the pace and depth of understanding*	6.05	.89
Identifying special-needs students	6.02	.99
Modeling sensitivity related to differences in culture, gender, race, and socioeconomic status*	6.00	1.10
Demonstrating familiarity with the student code of conduct	6.00	1.05
Dealing with immediate crisis situations	5.95	1.05
Using questioning strategies at various cognitive levels	5.95	.90
Knowing federal and state laws pertaining to the educational setting and learners	5.90	1.11

Table 14 (continued)

Making referrals to appropriate resources when guidance and counseling are beyond an instructor's own expertise	5.83	1.26
Monitoring learning using a variety of informal assessment strategies	5.75	1.13
Understanding legal uses of written materials, technology, software, and media	5.68	1.13
Integrating technology and materials that reflect the contexts of home, work, and a multi-cultural community	5.66	1.09
Using technology and multi-media for individualized instruction	5.64	1.10
Identifying students whose performance is impaired by social problems	5.61	1.00
Identifying resources both in and outside of the school setting to aid in the development of students	5.59	1.02
Designing instruction that incorporates appropriate multimedia and technology	5.51	1.25
Illustrating proficiency using technology for administrative functions	5.51	1.23
Identifying students whose performance is impaired by chemical dependency	5.39	1.26
Developing a knowledge base in other academic areas from one's own degree field*	5.32	1.29
Understanding the community college services and transition processes*	5.27	1.23
Incorporating community resources to extend the classroom into the community*	5.14	1.34
Presenting course content using multimedia software	5.02	1.37

*Note.* Asterisks indicate original survey items that were excluded from data analysis after the factor analysis.

Table 15

*Means of Professional Development Constructs in Descending Order Measured by Coordinators*

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Conducting Formal Student Evaluation	6.22	.95
Planning and Delivering Instruction	6.11	.68
Managing the Educational Environment Through Laws, Policies, and Procedures	5.93	.86
Providing Assistance and Instruction to Students with Special Needs	5.59	.93
Integrating Technology into the Classroom	5.36	.97

Table 16

*Means of Survey Items in Descending Order Measured by Coordinators*

Survey Item	Mean	SD
Maintaining order and discipline in the classroom	6.49	.75
Establishing rapport with students through humor, enthusiasm, confidence, and respect*	6.46	.81
Establishing and maintaining filing and record-keeping systems*	6.43	.81
Understanding the characteristics of adult learners and adult development	6.41	.89
Selecting resources that are appropriate based on the individual learner's level of ability*	6.40	.78
Identifying instructional content and materials based upon learner needs, interests, goals, and experiences	6.37	.86
Selecting resources that are age appropriate for adult learners	6.30	.88
Collecting and recording formal assessment data for program accountability	6.29	1.22
Modifying teaching techniques to accommodate diverse learning styles	6.26	.92
Using results of formal assessments to plan lessons	6.23	1.08
Developing students' self-esteem and self-image as learners*	6.22	.95
Identifying and incorporating individuals student motivation and retention techniques	6.17	.91
Determining the scheduling and appropriate uses of formal assessment	6.15	1.18
Sequencing and pacing the lessons based on learner cues regarding the pace and depth of understanding*	6.11	.95
Modeling sensitivity related to differences in culture, gender, race, and socioeconomic status*	6.10	1.05
Employing individual, small group, and whole group learning in a multi-level classroom*	6.10	1.16
Demonstrating familiarity with the student code of conduct	6.03	1.09
Recognizing students' verbal and non-verbal reaction to instruction*	6.01	1.02
Modifying instruction for students who have learning disabilities or other special needs	5.92	1.11
Knowing federal and state laws pertaining to the educational setting and learners	5.90	1.21
Dealing with immediate crisis situations	5.89	1.24
Making referrals to the appropriate resources when guidance and counseling are beyond an instructor's own expertise	5.77	1.17
Identifying special-needs students	5.74	1.26
Using questioning strategies at various cognitive levels	5.72	1.12

Table 16 (continued)

Integrating technology and materials that reflect the contexts of home, work, and a multicultural community	5.72	1.08
Monitoring the learning using a variety of informal assessment strategies	5.71	1.08
Identifying students whose performance is impaired by social problems	5.54	1.21
Identifying resources both in and outside the school setting to aid in the development of students with special needs	5.52	1.18
Illustrating proficiency using technology for administrative functions	5.49	1.35
Using technology and multi-technology for individualized instruction	5.48	1.24
Designing instruction that incorporates appropriate multimedia and technology	5.40	1.20
Understanding the community college services and transition processes*	5.37	1.34
Understanding the legal uses of written materials, technology, software, and media	5.37	1.44
Identifying students whose performance is impaired by chemical dependency	5.07	1.44
Incorporating community resources to extend the classroom into the community*	5.00	1.38
Developing a knowledge base in other academic areas from one's degree field*	4.83	1.49
Presenting course content using multimedia software	4.71	1.50

*Note.* Asterisks indicate original survey items that were excluded from data analysis after the factor analysis.

## **Research Question Four**

*What are the primary training needs of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs as perceived by program full-time faculty?*

Full-time faculty perceived knowledge of conducting formal evaluation ( $M= 5.99$ ,  $SD= 1.09$ ) as the most important professional development training need of first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors. Full-time faculty perceived knowledge of integrating technology into the classroom ( $M=5.21$ ,  $SD=1.19$ ) as the least important professional development training needs of first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors (see Table 17).

Full-time instructors perceived maintaining order and discipline in the classroom ( $M=6.40$ ,  $SD=.95$ ) as the most important specific training need for first-year NCCCS Basic Skills instructors followed by establishing rapport with students ( $M=6.33$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ). An examination of the means by survey item for full-time instructors indicated that four of the ten highest rated training topics were not included in the factor analysis on which constructs and data analysis were based. Moreover, 34 of 37 survey items had a standard deviation of greater than 1.0 indicating a large variation in full-time instructors' responses (see Table 18).

### **Analysis of Null Hypotheses**

#### **Null Hypothesis One**

*There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors' knowledge of planning and delivering instruction.*

Table 17

*Means of Professional Development Constructs in Descending Order Measured by Full-time*

*Faculty*

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<i>Construct</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Conducting Formal Student Evaluation	5.99	1.09
Managing the Educational Environment Through Laws, Policies, and Procedures	5.89	1.01
Planning and Delivering Instruction	5.88	.93
Providing Assistance and Instruction to Students with Special Needs	5.66	1.05
Integrating Technology into the Classroom	5.21	1.19

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Table 18

*Means of Survey Items in Descending Order Measured by Full-time Faculty*

Survey Item	Mean	SD
Maintaining order and discipline in the classroom	6.40	.95
Establishing rapport with students through humor, enthusiasm, confidence, and respect*	6.33	1.03
Selecting resources that are appropriate based on the individual learner's level of ability*	6.29	.85
Developing students' self-esteem and self-image as learners*	6.20	1.03
Establishing and maintaining filing and record-keeping systems*	6.16	1.27
Selecting resources that are age appropriate for adult learners	6.09	1.12
Identifying instructional content and materials based upon learner needs, interests, goals, and experiences	6.09	1.09
Collecting and recording formal assessment data for program accountability	6.05	1.32
Identifying and incorporating individuals student motivation and retention techniques	6.04	.97
Demonstrating familiarity with the student code of conduct	6.04	1.17
Using results of formal assessments to plan lessons	6.03	1.05
Understanding the characteristics of adult learners and adult development	6.01	1.23
Identifying special-needs students	5.99	1.12
Sequencing and pacing the lessons based on learner cues regarding the pace and depth of understanding*	5.95	1.14
Knowing federal and state laws pertaining to the educational setting and learners	5.92	1.30
Recognizing students' verbal and non-verbal reaction to instruction*	5.91	1.08
Modifying teaching techniques to accommodate diverse learning styles	5.90	1.23
Determining the scheduling and appropriate uses of formal assessment	5.88	1.31
Modeling sensitivity related to differences in culture, gender, race, and socioeconomic status*	5.88	1.26
Employing individual, small group, and whole group learning in a multi-level classroom*	5.81	1.21
Modifying instruction for students who have learning disabilities or other special needs	5.78	1.30
Dealing with immediate crisis situations	5.74	1.43
Making referrals to the appropriate resources when guidance and counseling are beyond an instructor's own expertise	5.71	1.36
Using questioning strategies at various cognitive levels	5.67	1.20

Table 18 (continued)

Identifying resources both in and outside the school setting to aid in the development of students with special needs	5.66	1.28
Identifying students whose performance is impaired by social problems	5.58	1.35
Understanding the legal uses of written materials, technology, software, and media	5.52	1.47
Integrating technology and materials that reflect the contexts of home, work, and a multicultural community	5.46	1.31
Monitoring the learning using a variety of informal assessment strategies	5.38	1.45
Designing instruction that incorporates appropriate multimedia and technology	5.32	1.40
Illustrating proficiency using technology for administrative functions	5.32	1.42
Understanding the community college services and transition processes*	5.31	1.36
Identifying students whose performance is impaired by chemical dependency	5.30	1.50
Using technology and multi-technology for individualized instruction	5.24	1.47
Developing a knowledge base in other academic areas from one's degree field*	5.13	1.60
Presenting course content using multimedia software	4.76	1.70
Incorporating community resources to extend the classroom into the community*	4.70	1.80

*Note.* Asterisks indicate original survey items that were excluded from data analysis after the factor analysis.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between personnel category and the perceived need of first-year instructors possessing knowledge of planning and delivering instruction. The independent variable, personnel category, included three groups: program directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors. The ANOVA was significant,  $F(2, 241)=3.20$ ,  $MSE=5.90$ ,  $p=.04$ ,  $n^2=.026$ . The strength of the relationship between personnel category and the perceived of need for first-year instructors possessing knowledge of planning and delivering instruction, as assessed by  $n^2$ , was weak with personnel category accounting for 2.6% of the variance in the dependent variable.

Follow-up tests were conducted to evaluate pairwise difference among the means. The test of homogeneity of variance was significant,  $p=.005$ . Based on the test of homogeneity, equal variances were not assumed, and Dunnett's C test was the chosen post-hoc test; however, the Dunnett's C test did not indicate the pairwise difference among the means. Ignoring the test of homogeneity, Tukey's test was conducted. Neither Dunnett's C nor Tukey's follow-up testing revealed the pairwise difference among the means. Only Fischer's Least Significant Difference (LSD) post-hoc test indicated the pairwise difference among the means. Fischer's LSD post-hoc comparisons of the three groups indicated that the full-time instructors ( $M=5.88$ , 95% CI [5.69, 6.07]) gave a significantly lower perceived need for instructors' planning and delivering instruction than both directors ( $M=6.18$ , 95% CI [5.99, 6.36]) and coordinators ( $M=6.11$ , 95% CI [5.99, 6.24]). The null hypothesis of no significant difference among NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty concerning the perceived need for first-year instructors possessing knowledge of planning and delivering instruction is rejected.

## **Null Hypothesis Two**

*There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors' knowledge of integrating technology into the classroom.*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between personnel category and the perceived need of first-year instructors possessing knowledge of integrating technology into the classroom. The independent variable, personnel category, included three groups: program directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors. The ANOVA was not significant,  $F(2, 244)=9.75$ ,  $MSE=1.12$ ,  $p=.38$ ,  $\eta^2=.008$ . Follow-up tests were not conducted to evaluate pairwise difference among directors ( $M=5.47$ , 95% CI [5.16, 5.77]), coordinators ( $M=5.36$ , 95% CI [5.18, 5.54]), and full-time faculty ( $M=5.21$ , 95% CI [5.00, 5.46]). The null hypothesis of no significant difference among NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty concerning the perceived need for first-year instructors possessing knowledge of integrating technology into the classroom is not rejected.

## **Null Hypothesis Three**

*There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors' knowledge of managing the educational environment through laws, policies, and procedures.*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between personnel category and the perceived need of first-year instructors possessing knowledge of managing the educational environment through laws, policies, and procedures. The independent variable, personnel category, included three groups: program directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors. The ANOVA was not significant,  $F(2, 240)=1.29$ ,

$MSE=.81$ ,  $p=.88$ ,  $n^2=.001$ . Follow-up tests were not conducted to evaluate pairwise difference among directors ( $M=5.98$ , 95% CI [5.75, 6.21]), coordinators ( $M=5.93$ , 95% CI [5.77, 6.09]), and full-time faculty ( $M=5.89$ , 95% CI [5.68, 6.11]). The null hypothesis of no significant difference among NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty concerning the perceived need for first-year instructors possessing knowledge of managing the educational environment through laws, policies, and procedures is not rejected.

#### **Null Hypothesis Four**

*There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors' knowledge of providing assistance and instruction to special-needs students.*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between personnel category and the perceived need of first-year instructors possessing knowledge of providing assistance and instruction to special-needs students. The independent variable, personnel category, included three groups: program directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors. The ANOVA was not significant,  $F(2, 239)=.45$ ,  $MSE=.91$ ,  $p=.64$ ,  $n^2=.004$ . Follow-up tests were not conducted to evaluate pairwise difference among directors ( $M=5.76$ , 95% CI [5.52, 5.99]), coordinators ( $M=5.59$ , 95% CI [5.42, 5.77]), and full-time faculty ( $M=5.66$ , 95% [5.44, 5.89]). The null hypothesis of no significant difference among NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty concerning the perceived need for first-year instructors possessing knowledge of providing assistance and instruction to special-needs students is not rejected.

## **Null Hypothesis Five**

*There is no statistically significant difference among the professional roles in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and the perceived need for first-year instructors' knowledge of conducting formal student evaluation.*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between personnel category and the perceived need of first-year instructors possessing knowledge of conducting formal student evaluation. The independent variable, personnel category, included three groups: program directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors. The ANOVA was not significant,  $F(2, 245)=.188$ ,  $MSE=.94$ ,  $p=.16$ ,  $\eta^2=.015$ . Follow-up tests were not conducted to evaluate pairwise difference among directors ( $M=6.28$ , 95% CI [6.06, 6.50]), coordinators ( $M=6.22$ , 95% CI [6.04, 6.39]), and full-time faculty ( $M=6.00$ , 95% CI [5.76, 6.21]). The null hypothesis of no significant difference among NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty concerning the perceived need for first-year instructors possessing knowledge of conducting formal student evaluation is not rejected.

## **Challenges with Instrumentation**

In this study instrumentation is considered the whole process of preparing for data collection and collecting the data. Four major challenges with instrumentation were discovered during instrumentation that conceivably affected the results of this study.

First, incomplete and incorrect information provided by national and local program personnel hindered data collection. Incorrect contact information for state adult education directors and state-level professional development coordinators was provided on websites and during phone calls. Contact information was provided for individuals who had retired and for individuals who were no longer in personnel categories examined by the study. Similarly,

contact information for NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel included adjunct faculty although phone call and email inquiries specifically requested contact information for full-time employees only. Adjunct faculty who received a survey invitation, yet were unable to complete the survey, experienced negative feelings as evidenced by the email messages received from adjunct faculty.

Second, a lack of understanding by state and local program personnel hindered data collection. Several state adult education directors and professional development coordinators replied to the survey invitation and questioned their participation in a study focusing on North Carolina. Also, one state adult education director completed the survey and forwarded the survey to program directors in her state for completion. Furthermore, in both the pilot test and NCCCS Basic Skills Program survey, some individuals declined to complete the survey because another member of their state or program had completed the survey. Those individuals misinterpreted the study's purpose as one of program practice rather than individual perception. Finally, in North Carolina some individuals who received the survey invitation misinterpreted the study's population and declined to participate as they were either not an instructor or a first-year instructor. In all cases where email correspondence indicated a participant's misunderstanding a clarification message that included either an active survey link or notification of a pending active survey link was sent within 24 hours.

Third, technological difficulties hindered data collection. The technological difficulties were either receiving the email correspondence or completing the survey. Spam filters blocked survey correspondence to some study participants. According to email correspondence during and after data collection, recipients found their invitation and reminders in their spam folder. Individuals who did not find their email correspondence during the data collection period were

not allowed to participate after the deadline. Furthermore, responses were not received from employees at two participating North Carolina community colleges. It is conceivable that spam filters prohibited the personnel at those institutions from receiving the survey-related correspondence. Spam filters also blocked correspondence outside of North Carolina. The use of private email addresses for professional development coordinators in one state caused all email correspondence to be returned. Additionally, during data collection it became known that Qualtrics software was incompatible with the internal settings on some shared computers. Rather than ask community college employees to alter the internal settings of an institution's computer, survey respondents were asked to access the survey through a computer that allowed shared access such as one in a student computer lab. Finally, at least three respondents completed the survey multiple times, but their responses were not recorded as evidenced by their receiving survey reminders. The Qualtrics individual respondent history corroborated their status as a non-respondent despite their email correspondence to the contrary.

Fourth, the mandatory language of East Carolina University's consent document template hindered data collection. Despite the varying levels of study review based on risk, the required language and template do not differentiate among the levels of risk. According to one NCCCS Basic Skills Program director, the consent document read "heavy" and many faculty and staff approached the director for clarification on their participation. Additionally, 62 potential study participants began the survey process but did not proceed beyond the four-page consent document.

In summary, four challenges were encountered during instrumentation. The four challenges were incorrect information, participant misunderstanding, technological difficulties,

and a required template. The extent that the instrumentation challenges altered the response rate or survey responses is unknown.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter consists of four sections: (a) a description of the survey's deployment, (b) a description of the participants, (c) an analysis of the research questions, (d) an analysis of the null hypotheses, and (e) a description of instrumentation challenges. A discussion of the study results, along with implications and recommendations, follows in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY CONCLUSIONS**

This concluding chapter provides a summary of the study as well as an examination of the study's nine major findings within the context of research literature on basic skills programs and within the conceptual frameworks of human resource development and Zinn's (1997) framework of barriers and supports to faculty professional development. Discussion and implications for the profession, programs, and students are provided. Recommendations for state adult education personnel and local program directors, as well as researchers, are presented.

### **Study Summary**

This study is an examination and comparison of the perceptions of NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty regarding their perception of primary training needs for a first-year instructor. The need for this study arose from the large population of adults in North Carolina in need of NCCCS Basic Skills Program services. Specifically, if adult basic skills programs are to recruit and retain even a fraction of their targeted populations, hiring more first-year faculty will be necessary. In light of the ambiguous, and often contradictory, requirements for faculty to enter this field, an understanding of the professional development needed during one's first year becomes paramount to faculty and student success. To garner a better sense of the professional development needs of first-year faculty, I executed a survey of NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors to collect the perceptions of program personnel regarding the professional development needs for first-year instructor. Data were collected through an author-created, cross-sectional, web-based survey. Participants were full-time employees in 54 NCCCS Basic Skills Programs. By analyzing the data through a factor analysis, five areas of professional development were formed: (a) planning and delivering instruction; (b) integrating technology into the classroom; (c)

managing the educational environment through laws, policies, and procedures; (d) providing assistance and instruction to special-needs students; and (e) conducting formal student evaluation. By calculating survey item means and conducting separate one-way ANOVAs on each of the five professional development constructs, the perceptions of program personnel regarding the training of first-year instructors were discovered and compared. I analyzed findings through Zinn's (1997) framework of barriers and supports to faculty professional development. After examining whether or not the perceptions of program personnel differ appreciably to be considered an institutional barrier to the training of first-year instructors, I find overall that consensus exists among program personnel and differing perceptions regarding first-year professional development do not constitute an institutional barrier to the professional development of first-year faculty. A more detailed discussion and analysis of my findings are provided in this chapter.

### **Significant Findings**

#### **Finding One: Homogenous Personnel Demographics**

By examining the responses to this study's demographic questions regarding age, race, and gender, I found NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel to be demographically homogenous. In all three rounds of data collection males were much less represented than females. Despite purposeful sampling during the content review, females continued to overwhelmingly outnumber males by as many as three to one. Additionally, in all three rounds of data collection an older population, aged 45 or older, emerged as the face of adult basic skills program. Finally, results from both the pilot test and NCCCS Basic Skills Program survey indicated that Caucasians overwhelmingly outnumber other racial groups. Moreover, non-Caucasians who were employed

in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs were more likely to be instructors rather than in the supervisory role of either a coordinator or program director.

The finding of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs having a homogenous population of older Caucasian females is consistent with the demographic data in the limited amount of previous research. Similar to the current study, Smith and Hofer (2003), Taylor (2009), and, to a lesser degree, Leahy (1992) found that almost three fourths of the program personnel were female, and most program personnel were at least 45 years old. Additionally, Smith and Hofer found the second leading reason instructors named for leaving the field in the near future was retirement.

The finding that non-Caucasians who were employed in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs were more likely to be employed as instructors rather than supervisors is not supported in the literature. Previous research either (1) did not include complete demographic data on multiple categories of personnel or (2) included only one category of personnel which did not allow for demographic comparison among categories of personnel. Generalizations about non-Caucasians in supervisory roles based on studies other than the current one is not feasible.

The limited amount of supporting research stems from the differences in the study population, survey question, and demographic data collection deficiencies. A review of the literature indicated a general lack of thoroughness in the demographic profile of study participants. The lack of demographic profile thoroughness is an indictment on the study methodology and demonstrates a consistent lack of valid and reliable research conducted by and with the basic skills program personnel (Beder, 1999). Beder (1999) reviewed research on basic skills programs since the 1960s and cited significant methodological errors. In reviewing 68 studies regarding student outcomes, Beder concluded that only one third were credible due to

significant flaws in the study methodologies and/or reporting. The lack of thorough demographic questions appears to be symptomatic of Beder's criticism.

### **Finding Two: Limited Instructor Experience**

By examining the responses to the study's demographic questions regarding prior teaching experience, I found NCCCS Basic Skills Program full-time faculty members have limited experience serving as full-time adult education instructors. Study results indicated over one third of instructors had fewer than five years experience as a full-time instructor. Additionally, nearly three quarters of NCCCS Basic Skills instructors are new and early career adult education faculty with fewer than 10 years experience as a full-time adult education instructor. In 2004-2005, 80% of NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel were classified as part-time personnel, tying North Carolina with Texas as the state with the fifth largest percentage of part-time basic skills program personnel (NCAL, 2006). It is plausible that the large percentage of adjunct instructors reduced the number of full-time faculty positions.

The finding of NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors having limited experience serving as a full-time program instructor is consistent with the demographic data in the limited amount of previous research. The limited amount of complementary research stems from the differences in the study population, survey question, and demographic data collection deficiencies. This study included only full-time faculty while other research included both full-time and part-time instructors. Additionally, the question utilized in this study read the number of years serving as a full-time instructor rather than total number of years as a basic skills program instructor.

The few recent studies that reported instructors' years of service were Leahy (1992), Young et al. (1995), Sabatini et al. (2000), Smith and Hofer (2003), and Taylor (2009). Leahy

found that 61% of the instructor sample had five years or more experience as a basic skills program instructor. Leahy noted that the population's experience was an anomaly when compared to literature she reviewed. She surmised her population's greater teaching experience was due to instructors being selected by program directors to participate in the study. Young et al. found that only three quarters of full-time instructors and one third of part-time instructors had taught in basic skills programs more than three years. Similarly, years of basic skills program teaching experience among Sabatini's et al. sample of 423 instructors nationwide closely paralleled the current study. Sabatini et al. found that 39% of instructors had five or fewer years of experience, and 33% of instructors had 6-10 years of experience as a basic skills program instructor. Furthermore, Smith and Hofer found that 49% of their sample of 106 instructors in three states had four or fewer years of experience, and 77% of instructors had 10 or fewer years of experience as a basic skills program instructor. Additionally, Smith and Hofer lamented the instructor attrition rate as a significant challenge to their 18-month longitudinal study. Finally, Taylor found that 43% of his sample of 108 faculty in the Alabama Community College System had five or fewer years of experience, and 65% of instructors had 10 or fewer years of experience as a basic skills program instructor.

Research should be conducted to determine the cause to determine the reason for full-time instructor inexperience. Two plausible explanations are (a) newly-created full-time vacancies in local programs and (b) high instructor turnover. Young, Fitzgerald, & Morgan's (1994) survey of nationwide adult education programs found that 41% of basic skills programs did not employ full-time faculty. Twelve years later Smith (2006) contended that few programs hired full-time faculty due to funding levels. During data collection for this study, it was discovered that seven NCCCS Basic Skills Programs do not employ full-time faculty. It is

clearly plausible that basic skills programs are paralleling community college efforts to hire full-time faculty rather than adjunct faculty. As such, new full-time positions created within the last 10 years among NCCCS Basic Skills Programs account for the large percentage of faculty with fewer than 10 years experience as a full-time instructor. According to NCCCS faculty demographic data from 1998-2008, adjunct faculty accounted for approximately half of all faculty positions. In 2008 approximately 65% of NCCCS curriculum faculty had fewer than 10 years experience as a full-time instructor (2008b). On the other hand, according to Smith and Hofer (2003), data concerning instructor turnover is unavailable from a large scale study; however, they report turnover as a problem in most large scale studies and program evaluations.

### **Finding Three: Diverse Instructor Education**

By examining the responses to this study's demographic questions regarding participant's educational background, I found NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors possess diverse subject area expertise, and 21% of instructors hold a degree in education. Other fields represented included but were not limited to the following: English and literature, social studies, sciences, mathematics, computer sciences, parks and recreation services, foreign language, and medical and allied healthcare. While subject matter knowledge is valuable as unknown content cannot be conveyed to students, pedagogical skills are an important component, especially when teaching academically challenged students.

The finding of a diverse instructor pool with a limited number of instructors possessing a degree in education has a limited amount of supporting research. While the finding is predictable based on both anecdotal evidence and secondary sources, the empirical data are lacking. Only three studies yielded in the literature search included similar, yet not identical, demographic

questions. Furthermore, the literature search did not yield a study that aimed to create as complete an instructor profile as did this study.

One qualitative study identified in the literature search that reported instructors' degree fields was Fingeret's (1985) evaluation of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs. Fingeret reported that a majority of instructors earned degrees in early childhood, elementary, middle, or secondary education, but Fingeret did not provide specific data regarding instructors' degree fields. Fingeret found that much controversy existed among faculty as to the need for either a college education or teaching experience to provide instruction to adults. Finally, Fingeret discovered what she described as a notable absence in specific preparation to teach adults basic skills.

Two quantitative studies identified in the literature search that reported instructors' undergraduate or graduate coursework regarding adult education were Smith and Hofer (2003) and Leahy (1992). Smith and Hofer found 53% of 106 instructors had not completed any formal coursework in adult education and 20% of 106 instructors completed at least three courses in education at either the graduate or undergraduate level. Furthermore, Leahy found that 32% of 231 instructors had completed at least five courses in adult education at either the graduate or undergraduate level. Additionally, nearly one third of full-time instructors and more than one fifth of adjunct instructors reported completing no courses in adult education at either the graduate or undergraduate level. The application of Smith and Hofer, as well as Leahy, to this study is limited by their examined of adult education courses completed and this present study examined the number of participants who possessed a degree in education.

A review of the literature indicated that studies in the basic skills field either failed to provide any demographic data on the participants or did not inquire about an instructor's degree field. Education-related questions generally inquired into one's highest degree only. The fact that

other adult basic skills studies inquire into highest degree but do not include subject area has three plausible explanations: (1) Personnel, specifically faculty, are anecdotally understood and accepted to have degrees in diverse subject areas; (2) It was not the intent of prior studies to create a complete demographic profile of basic skills program faculty; or (3) The lack of demographic profile thoroughness is an indictment on the study methodology and demonstrates a consistent lack of valid and reliable research conducted by and with the basic skills program personnel (Beder, 1999).

#### **Finding Four: Program Personnel Consensus**

An examination of the results in this study indicated overwhelming consensus among NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors regarding the perceived professional development needs of a first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructor. In particular, consensus was found with each of the four research questions and four of five hypotheses. There were no differences between position/rank and list factors. In fact, the only area in which differences among personnel were found was the first hypothesis. According to the first hypothesis, the perceived importance of training regarding planning and delivering instruction would not be different based on personnel category. Significant difference existed among program personnel as faculty ranked planning and delivering instruction as the third most important training need while both directors and coordinators ranked planning and delivering instruction as the second most important training need. This finding is explored further below as Finding 5. As such, within the context of Zinn's (1997) framework of barriers and supports to professional development, differing perceptions among program personnel do not appear to be an institutional barrier to the professional development of a first-year instructor in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs.

Based on a review of literature, this study is the first to examine and compare perceptions of program directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors regarding first-year faculty professional development. The results are somewhat confirmatory to the only study yielded in the literature search that compared perceptions of adult education personnel. Stafford (1981) compared part-time instructors, program directors, and state directors of adult education in terms of their perceptions of adjunct instructor in-service training needs. Stafford's study indicated consensus between adjunct instructors and program directors; however, disagreement existed between local program personnel and state level administrators. State directors of adult education placed the highest priority on conducting student evaluation while program directors and adjunct instructors placed the highest priority on selecting materials and teaching aids. One limitation to Stafford's results was the purely descriptive nature of the study by its use of survey item and construct means only. There were no analyses to determine whether statistically significant differences existed in the groups.

The finding in this present study is somewhat confirmatory to Stafford (1981) for two specific reasons. First, Stafford found consensus between local program directors and adjunct instructors and disagreement between the local program personnel and state level staff. Similarly, this study found overwhelming consensus among local program personnel. Second, this study somewhat confirmed Stafford's ranked order of professional development constructs as perceived by his study population. Both NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel in this study and Stafford's state directors of adult education perceived student evaluation as the highest prioritized training need; however, the local program directors and adjunct instructors in Stafford's study perceived selection of course materials and aids as the highest prioritized training needs.

Although Stafford's (1981) was the only study that compared perceptions of program personnel, Stafford's study has limited application to this study. First, Stafford's population of adjunct instructors, program directors, and state adult education staff is dissimilar to this study's population of program directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty. Second, Stafford's research question focused on the in-service of adjunct instructors. While this study assumed the training of full-time and adjunct instructors to be similar and focused on an instructor's first year, Stafford focused on the professional development of adjunct instructors for an undefined period of in-service.

### **Finding Five: Personnel Attitude Toward Instruction**

By examining the study's five hypotheses, I found one area of significance difference among program personnel. Significant difference existed among program personnel as faculty ranked planning and delivering instruction as the third most important training need while both directors and coordinators ranked planning and delivering instruction as the second most important training need. While this difference among personnel proved to be statistical significant, it is unlikely that the difference in ranking by one construct of five, as a practical matter, constitutes an institutional barrier to the professional development of first-year instructors. This finding is somewhat supported in the literature. Existing profiles of instructor competencies include various instructional skills; however, existing and current profiles do not provide a ranking order of desired instructor competencies. A comparison of this finding with other lists of competencies is, therefore, not feasible. The finding that faculty ranked instructional skills the third most important professional development need for a first-year instructor is one of the more surprising and ironic conclusions of this study.

### **Finding Six: Personnel Attitude Toward Technology**

Despite the proliferation of multimedia and software available to aid instruction, training on integrating technology into the classroom was the least important professional development topic for a first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructor when measured by respondents collectively and when measured by personnel category. This finding is based on responses to survey questions related to research questions one through four and the second hypothesis.

The finding that NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel perceived integrating technology into the classroom as the least important professional development construct for a first-year instructor is somewhat supported in the literature. Existing profiles of instructor competencies did not provide a ranked order from which to gauge this current study; however, recent lists of instructor competencies, such as Sherman et al. (1999), included elements of technology integration as necessary competencies for adult education faculty.

Two plausible reasons exist for the ranking of integrating technology as the least important professional development construct for a first-year instructor: (1) program-related barriers to technology integration and (2) instructor-related barriers to technology integration. Barriers to technology integration are documented in the literature. Dillion-Marable (2004) found that instructors' lack of training was a program-related barrier to technology integration into the classroom. Carter and Tizel (2003) found program-related barriers to technology integration such as lack of up-to-date equipment, inadequate access, and inadequate technical support. Ginsburg (2004) similarly found inadequate access to be a barrier to technology integration. Ginsburg found that 18% of instructors did not have classroom access to the Internet. Additionally, Carter and Tizel found that a little more than half of the programs surveyed had developed a technology plan. Only one third of the plans had been developed with the assistance of a technology

specialist. In light of these findings, program-related barriers to technology integration are not surprising. Despite faculty interest in technology integration training, Carter and Tizel (2003) found the most significant barriers to incorporating technology into curriculum were instructor scheduling and time to learn about technology. They also found that 60.3% of instructors cited other, more pressing issues as a serious or moderate barrier to technology training and utilization. It is unclear if the more pressing issues are personal or program related.

### **Finding Seven: Classroom Order Emphasis**

An examination of the results of this study indicated that NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel perceived managing the educational environment through laws, policies, and procedures as an important professional development construct for a first-year instructor. This finding is based on responses to survey questions related to research questions one through four and the third hypothesis. Collectively, program personnel perceived managing the educational environment the third highest prioritized professional development construct. Specifically, program directors and coordinators ranked managing the educational environment as the second most important training need. Conversely, full-time instructors ranked managing the educational environment through laws, policies, and procedures as the second most important professional development construct. Furthermore, both coordinators and full-time instructors ranked maintaining order and discipline in the classroom as the most important survey item and specific training need for first-year instructors.

The finding of an emphasis on classroom order and management by NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel is consistent with the results of previous research. While one might expect the emphasis on order to be a reaction to incidents of campus violence in recent years, the literature on basic skills programs since the 1970s reflected the importance of classroom

management. Peebles (1975) found that both ABE and AHS instructors in Utah ranked maintaining classroom order as the fourth highest training need for instructors from a list of 170 items. Mezirow et al. (1975) described troubled youth in basic skills programs as “socially deviant – either mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, or angry high school ‘pushouts’.” (p. 60). Leahy (1992) found that program directors in 1991 were more concerned about classroom discipline and order than those in 1974. Leahy hypothesized that the increasing concern over discipline between her 1974 and 1991 data reflected an increasing number of troublesome youth enrolling in basic skills programs. Beder and Medina (2001) reported classroom disturbances and property damage by students.

### **Finding Eight: Special-Needs Student Relegation**

An examination of the results in this study regarding the fourth hypothesis indicated training on providing assistance and instruction to special-needs students was the second least important professional development construct for a first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructor when measured by respondents collectively and when measured by personnel category. This finding is based on responses to survey questions related to research questions one through four and the fourth hypothesis.

This finding of special-needs students’ relegated position of importance is somewhat supported in the literature. Existing profiles of instructor competencies did not provide a ranked order from which to gauge this current study; however, recent lists of instructor competencies, such as Sherman et al. (1999), included elements of instructor assistance to special-needs students as necessary competencies for an adult education instructor. Despite the perceived importance of developing interpersonal skills and understanding laws pertaining to the educational environment, program personnel perception of providing assistance and instruction

to special-needs students ranking as one of the least important areas of professional development is one of the most ironic and surprising of this study. One plausible explanation for the low ranking by program personnel is the all-encompassing construct of special-needs students. This construct included survey items relating to learning disabilities and substance abuse as well as behavioral, social, and emotional challenges for students. It is, therefore, plausible that some academic subunits of basic skills programs and population-specific instructional sites do not have as many challenges in these areas. For example, it is very likely that compensatory education instructors would encounter students with physical disabilities more often than instructors in other academic subunits. Similarly, it is more likely that adults in ABE programs, which often serve adults with elementary reading and math skills, would have learning disabilities at a higher rate than adults in a GED program, which serves adults with high school level skills. A second plausible explanation for the low ranking by program personnel is the perception of pervasiveness special-needs students in basic skills programs, and respondents did not differentiate students identified in this construct from students at large. Further research could disaggregate special needs by category to decipher the perceptions of program personnel regarding assistance and instruction to special-needs students.

### **Finding Nine: Program Accountability Emphasis**

By examining the results of this study, I concluded student evaluation was the most important professional development construct for a first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructor when measured by respondents collectively and when measured by personnel category. This finding is based on responses to survey questions related to research questions one through four and the fifth hypothesis.

The finding that NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel perceived conducting student evaluation as the most important professional development topic for a first-year instructor is somewhat supported by previous research. This finding is somewhat supported in the literature because previous research generally listed instructor competencies and often did not provide a ranked order of competencies. While profiles of instructor competencies did not provide a ranked order from which to gauge this current study, lists of instructor competencies such as Sherman et al. (1999), consistently included elements of student evaluation.

A review of some secondary literature suggested that the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and its accountability measures were the beginning of an accountability emphasis. A closer review, however, of Stafford (1981), Leahy (1992), and earlier instructor competency profiles indicates that the emphasis on student evaluation predates the Workforce Investment Act. Also, a comparison of Fingeret's (1985) evaluation of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs and this current study indicates that little has changed in more than 20 years. Fingeret found that programs defined success more on enrollment and attendance data than on student progress. She also found personnel frustration with required documentation. Fingeret also found that program directors viewed record-keeping simply as fulfilling requirements, and they lacked understanding of how to utilize required documentation and numerical data for systematic program review and improvement. It appears that the frustration with the current accountability system and heightened awareness of accountability measures is due to the rigidity of the system and the tying of program funds to specific measures – not the existence of accountability measures.

## **Implications**

Study implications can be described as effects or repercussions of the results. Based on the results of this study, implications are suggested for the profession, programs, and students. A more detailed description of the implications follows.

### **Implications for the Profession**

**Perception of limited instructor effectiveness.** One implication of a large percentage of faculty members not possessing a degree in education or basic pedagogical training is a perception of limited instructor effectiveness by individuals both inside and outside of basic skills programs. Basic skills program instructors, who lack pedagogical training yet provide instruction to some of the neediest and challenging students, in terms of learning disabilities and behavior, create a perception of limited instructor effectiveness. Additionally, the challenge of a basic skills instructor with content knowledge in one field to provide instruction in a multilevel class comprised on various academic subunits (e.g. ABE, GED, AHS, ESL, and CED) reinforces the perception of limited instructional effectiveness. This is particularly true in light of educational and licensure requirements for K-12 instructors and terminal degrees among college and university faculty when compared to the lack of requirements to become a basic skills program instructor. Future research testing the pedagogical skills of faculty without formal pedagogical training can assess to what degree these perceptions is grounded in objectivity.

**Misalignment of program mission.** Three findings demonstrate that NCCCS Basic Skills Programs are misaligned with the program's stated mission of teaching and learning. First, NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel perceived conducting student evaluation as the most important professional development construct for a first-year instructor. This finding demonstrates the shift of the program's mission from teaching and learning to an emphasis on

the policies and procedures that attach program funding to student achievement. Second, the shift of the program's mission is evidenced by full-time instructors ranking planning and delivering instruction as the third most important professional development construct for a first-year instructor. Third, NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel perceived providing assistance and instruction to special-needs students as the second least important professional development construct for a first-year instructor. As special-needs students are the hallmark of basic skills programs, the relegation of assisting these students behind conducting evaluation and managing the educational environment through laws, policies, and procedures indicates a misalignment between program mission and program practice.

### **Implications for Programs**

**Loss of experienced faculty.** Based on the findings that a large percentage of NCCCS Basic Skills Program faculty are over age 45, I suggest that NCCCS Basic Skills Programs, similar to community colleges at large, will experience a graying of the faculty and staff in approaching years. It is likely that mass departure of experienced program personnel will leave a gaping hole of knowledge and skills that could negatively affect the program at large and individual students.

**Lack of student retention.** One implication of NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel perceiving instruction to special-needs students as the second least important professional development need is the lack of comprehensive assistance to special-needs students. As special-needs students are a large percentage of enrollees, the lack of comprehensive assistance and systemic supports is likely a factor in poor retention of students and decreased enrollment across the state in all targeted areas in recent years.

**Loss of program dollars.** One plausible explanation for few faculty with more than 10 years experience is high faculty turnover. If future research determines that turnover is indeed the cause, one implication suggested is the loss of valuable dollars to the continual recruiting and training of replacement faculty.

### **Implications for Students**

**Decrease in classroom continuity.** One plausible explanation for the large percentage of faculty with few full-time years experience in the field is high instructor turnover. One result of faculty turnover is a negative effect in the classroom (Beder & Medina, 2001; Fingeret, 1985; Mezirow et al., 1975). Faculty turnover reduces opportunities to rapport with individual students as well as disrupts the sense of classroom community necessary in a diverse class with continuous open enrollment during the semester (Beder & Medina, 2001). Additionally, teacher turnover causes student frustration, and likely drop-out, with repeated assignments and the students' perceived lack of individual progress (Fingeret, 1985).

**Lack of role models.** Based on the findings of a homogenous population of older Caucasian females in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs, I conclude that students of other genders, ages, and races have limited role models and program personnel who can identify with their experiences, needs, and sensitivities. Only two basic skills program qualitative studies yielded in the literature search described the impact of students lacking role models (Beder & Medina, 2001; Mezirow et al., 1975). Mezirow et al. (1975) found that native-born instructors and foreign-born instructors viewed students regarding academic ability and personal motivation differently. Furthermore, Mezirow et al. concluded that students who learned from an instructor of the same race were more likely to be retained in their classes than students who were being taught by faculty of a different race. Mezirow's conclusion regarding student retention, however,

lacked either statistical or historical data. The basis for his conclusion is unclear. More recently, Goldhaber and Hansen (2009) found that K-12 student achievement is positively impacted by a race/ethnicity match between teachers and students. NCCCS Basic Skills Program homogenous personnel, therefore, limit students' opportunity for role models and the potential positive impact role models have on student achievement.

**Modification of classroom content.** Another implication of a homogenous faculty is modification of classroom content that does not meet the needs of a diverse student body. Mezirow et al. (1975) found that non-Caucasian instructors modified classroom content to better reflect the needs and experiences of non-Caucasian students. More recently, Beder and Medina (2001) found that instructors were not likely to explore student opinion and values during class discussion. The hesitancy was more acute when students of other races and ethnicities attempted to share experiences of their culture and background. Beder and Medina offered three plausible explanations for the lack of class discussion regarding culture, attitudes, and values: (1) Instructors, fearing student conflict, aimed to limit discussion of potentially divisive topics; (2) Instructors, unfamiliar with student-centered learning, focused exclusively on a prepared lesson and did not recognize teachable moments; and (3) Instructors were more concerned with transmitting their own Caucasian, middle-class values than providing an opportunity for student learning through discussion. Beder and Medina admitted the third explanation was least plausible based on data gathered during their site visits and interviews. Conversely, King (1991) described what she called "dysconscious racism" in which Caucasian individuals have "a limited and distorted understanding" of inequality and cultural diversity (p. 134-135). According to King, the uncritical and tacit acceptance of Caucasian, middle-class norms creates a kind of thinking that

justifies and accepts the social order. King cited the “miseducation” of teachers as a perpetuation of dyconscious racism (p. 143).

**Limited technology experience.** With NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel ranking integrating technology into the classroom as the least important professional development construct for a first-year instructor it is probable that personnel either do not have or do not use technology for instructional purposes. As such, two primary implications are suggested.

First, instructors who are unsuccessful integrating technology into instruction are not providing the most current information to students. This is most apparent and consequential when limited program budgets cause faculty to use out-dated hardcopy materials. This lack of contemporary information is most critical in academic subunits, such as GED and AHS, where students encounter higher thinking skills in content areas where knowledge is continually advancing. Contemporary information is particularly critical when continually updated GED tests require students to recognize and apply an understanding of current events to test questions.

Second, when instructors are unsuccessful integrating technology into instruction, students lose not only the opportunity to gain most current knowledge, but they lose an opportunity for exposure to computers in an educational environment. In a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Commerce (2010) researchers found that 68.4% of Americans reported having Internet access at home or another location. Forty-five percent of individuals who reported not having Internet access anywhere cited expense, lack of skill, and lack of a computer or an adequate computer as hindrances to their access. Individuals with low incomes, seniors, minorities, and the less-educated were less likely to have access to high-speed Internet at their homes. Specifically, 28% of individuals with less than a high school diploma had high-speed Internet access at home. In a 2010 study by the Pew Research Center, researchers found similar

results. Researchers also found that 61% of non-Internet users would need assistance getting online. Additionally, 43% of non-Internet users believed they had a major disadvantage finding a job, and 34% believed they had a major disadvantage obtaining health information. Finally, 29% of non-Internet users believed they had a major disadvantage using government services. In today's world, where computers are increasingly incorporated into every phase of our existence, students who lack basic computer skills are at a clear disadvantage in the job market as even the most menial of employment opportunities increasingly require basic computer skills. Individuals who lack Internet access and computer skills believe they are disadvantaged in other areas. As such, basic skills programs and classroom instructors who do not provide computer-assisted instruction are missing an opportunity to fill a need for students.

**Abundance of student misbehavior.** With both full-time instructors and coordinators perceiving maintaining classroom order and discipline as the most important training need for a first-year instructor, two implications are suggested. First, it is likely that student misbehavior in basic skills classes creates a less than ideal learning environment which negatively affects student retention and achievement. A lack of student retention and achievement, in turn, negatively affect the program as both the federal and state funding models are based on student retention and achievement. Second, it is plausible that negative student behavior is a factor in the decision for instructors to leave the adult education field or at a minimum leave their current program.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results of this study, recommendations are suggested for NCCCS Basic Skills Program state staff and NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors. Additionally, recommendations for areas of future research are provided.

## **Recommendations for NCCCS Basic Skills Program State Staff**

**Re-emphasize the program mission.** In light of this study's findings that NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel perceived conducting student evaluation as the most important professional development training need and faculty perceived planning and delivering instruction as the third most important professional development topic, a statewide effort to emphasize the educational mission of basic skills programs is appropriate. The recommendation to emphasize the mission of basic skills programs is in alignment with Smith and Hofer's (2003) finding that 41% of instructors ranked concerns about their programs' structure and mission as one of their three most significant concerns working in the adult education field.

**Re-examine credentialing efforts.** Survey items regarding interpersonal skills which were not included in the factor analysis and subsequent data analysis were perceived to be highly important by program personnel for a first-year instructor. The primary recommendation based on this finding is the need for state level adult education staff to develop better methods of promoting and encouraging the current credentialing effort in NCCCS Basic Skills Programs. A voluntary, four-level credential has been developed, and the first-level is being implemented in selected programs at this time. Previous personal communication with NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel revealed a lack of enthusiasm for the credentialing efforts. Results of this study indicate that program personnel continue to rely on instructor attitudes rather than ability as measured through credentialing and certification; therefore, state level adult education staff should develop relationships with staff in other states where credentialing and certification exist to learn methods of building consensus and a shared vision.

## **Recommendations for NCCCS Basic Skills Program Directors**

**Begin to recruit diverse faculty.** With retirements for a large number of faculty and staff in the near future, replacements should be recruited and trained now. Paralleling the graying of the faculty is the threat of program survival as so few young and middle-aged adults are enticed to enter the field of adult basic skills education. Data from this study indicated that fewer than one in five program personnel in NCCCS Basic Skill Programs were under age 45. Local programs should actively recruit a younger faculty and staff. Additionally, programs should actively recruit males and non-Caucasian personnel to provide role models to a diverse student body.

**Re-examine the resources and relationships required to promote and sustain technology integration.** With the proliferation of educational software, need for student technological skills, and environment of multilevel classes, programs should provide computers and educational software for student use. One significant challenge for program directors is the inflexibility of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 regarding funding for basic skills programs. One example of the rigidity that affects local program decisions is the inability to spend more than 5% of the federal allotment on technology and other equipment (NCCCS 2008c; NCCCS 2008d). Additionally, instructors should receive training in how to integrate the technology. With planning whole group activities in a multilevel classroom a challenge for instructors, over-reliance on technology can potentially create a situation of student isolation. Furthermore, programs should develop long range plans that continue to allocate funds for technology updates and continual instructor training. Finally, basic skills programs should proactively build relationships with campus IT departments to ensure service for faculty, staff, and students and to obtain assistance with long range technology planning.

**Gain a better understanding of the student misbehavior as perceived by program coordinators and faculty and respond to those concerns.** The results of this study indicated that both full-time instructors and coordinators perceived maintaining classroom order and discipline as the most important survey item and specific training need for a first-year instructor. Directors, on the other hand, perceived maintaining classroom order and discipline as the sixth most important survey item and managing the educational environment through laws, policies, and procedures as the third highest prioritized professional development construct. Demographic data from this study indicated that only 74% of program directors had experience teaching in basic skills programs, and 7% of program directors lacked any teaching experience. It is plausible that full-time instructors and coordinators, who often provide instruction on a regular basis or as a substitute instructor, are more aware of the discipline issues in basic skills classes.

Four specific recommendations for directors exist. First, it is recommended that NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors become more active in classroom and learning lab instruction. Second, directors, who have delegated state-mandated classroom monitoring visits to coordinators, should resume at least partial responsibility for classroom monitoring visits to become more aware of classroom management challenges for instructors and coordinators. Third, directors should conduct a systematic review of their student codes of conduct and disciplinary procedures to ensure that codes of conduct and disciplinary procedures are adequate to aid instructors manage the classroom. Fourth, directors should re-examine the scheduling of classes at off-campus sites where instructors work alone with limited access to telephones.

### **Recommendations for Researchers**

**Replicate this study using other independent variables.** This study's null hypotheses indicates that personnel category do not account for a statistically significant difference in the

perceptions of professional development needs for a first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructor. Future research should examine whether overwhelming consensus continues to exist when other factors replace personnel category as the independent variable. As such, one overarching research question is suggested: Do differences in perceptions among program personnel regarding the professional development of a first-year instructor exist, and what factors account for the difference? Based on the study's scope of full-time employees and large adjunct instructor pool nationwide, a second research question for future research is suggested: What are the perceptions of part-time instructors regarding the professional development of a first-year instructor, and do those perceptions differ significantly from other program personnel? Also, during this study's content review some participants suggested training topics too specific to a basic skills academic subunit (e.g. ABE, GED, AHS, ESL, and CED). The suggested topics were excluded from this study's instrument. As such, a third question for future research is suggested: What are the perceptions of instructors regarding the professional development of a first-year instructor, and do those perceptions differ significantly based on one's academic subunit? Moreover, using data from this study, a preliminary exploration of other factors indicated that region of the state produced a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of program personnel. Future research should, therefore, examine how a state's regional divisions affect the perceptions of professionals in that area. As such, a fourth question for future research is suggested: What are the perceptions of program personnel regarding the professional development of a first-year instructor, and do those perceptions differ significantly based on one's region within the state? Finally, demographic variables are appropriate factors to explore.

**Examine instructor effectiveness.** Based on this study's finding that the vast majority of NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructors do not possess a degree in education, two research

questions are suggested: (1) Are there implications of hiring instructors with degrees in areas other than education, and if so, what are the program and student-related implications? and (2) How effective are faculty without degrees in education when compared to faculty with degrees in education?

**Explore instructor job satisfaction.** Research should be conducted to determine the cause to determine the reason for full-time instructor inexperience. As job satisfaction studies are applicable to both newly-created full-time positions and high turnover positions, future research should examine instructor job satisfaction. Three specific research questions relating to job satisfaction are: (1) What are the factors that contribute to basic skills program full-time instructor turnover? (2) How can basic skills programs more effectively retain full-time faculty? and (3) Do job satisfaction factors differ among full-time and adjunct faculty in basic skills programs? In light of the finding of an accountability emphasis rather than instruction, particularly among instructors, and Smith and Hofer's (2003) finding of program mission as a significant concern for faculty, two related research questions are suggested: (1) How do basic skills program faculty define the mission and success of basic skills programs? and (2) How does a shift in program mission affect faculty morale and job satisfaction?

**Investigate recruiting, hiring, and promoting practices.** In light of this study's finding of homogeneous program personnel, three research questions are suggested: (1) What are the effects of demographically homogenous personnel on student learning? (2) What steps are necessary to recruit and retain diverse faculty in basic skills programs? and (3) What steps are necessary to promote more diverse program personnel into supervisory roles?

**Explore the implementation, effectiveness, and sustainability of computer-based instruction in basic skills programs.** Based on this study's finding that NCCCS Basic Skills

Program faculty perceive integrating technology into the classroom as the least important training construct for a first-year instructor, two questions for future research are suggested: (1) What policies and procedures are necessary to promote and sustain technology integration into a basic skills program classroom? and (2) How do basic skills program instructors use technology in the classroom, and is there a difference in use based upon one's academic subunit (e.g. ABE, GED, AHS, ESL, and CED). Additionally, Berger (2001) reviewed 23 studies of computer-assisted instruction outcomes and found that many studies were plagued by methodological flaws. According to Berger, these methodological flaws made the results less than credible. As such, quality research in all areas of computer-based instruction is needed

**Examine the services provided to special-needs students.** In this study I found that NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel perceived providing assistance and instruction to special-needs students as a low priority professional development construct. Students with learning disabilities are one type of special-needs students in basic skills programs. A review of the literature indicated that instructors lack knowledge in six primary areas relating to learning disabilities: (a) the characteristics of learning disabilities, (b) informal screening tools, (c) formal diagnosis, (d) instructional strategies, (e) the use of accommodations, and (f) direct services and referrals available. As such, future research should examine the professional development of faculty, who lack pedagogical skills, regarding the characteristics, diagnosis, and instructional strategies and accommodations for students with learning disabilities.

In addition to a lack of instructor training related to learning disabilities, other barriers to providing service to these special-needs students include a lack of instructional resources targeted to learning-disabled adults in basic skills classrooms and scarce research in instructional

strategies for learning-disabled adults. Future research should examine instructional strategies for learning-disabled adults.

Finally, as special-needs students are the hallmark of basic skills programs, future research should examine efforts to assist this special population. Three research questions are suggested: (1) What is the definition of a special-needs student, and does that definition change among programs? (2) How pervasive are special-needs students in basic skills programs? (3) To what degree are current recommendations for special-needs students followed, and what are the barriers to full implementation? As special-needs students are more likely to enroll in some academic subunits of basic skills programs than others, future research should also examine the enrollment pattern of special-needs students and the preparation of instructors in those academic subunits to effectively provide instruction to those students.

**Investigate the classroom and campus conduct of basic skills program students.** By examining participant responses, I found that NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel, and in particular full-time instructors and coordinators, perceive maintaining classroom discipline and order as the most important professional development training topic for a first-year instructor. As such, four research questions emerged: (1) What types of behavior infractions are exhibited by basic skills program students in a community college setting? (2) Do the behavior infractions exhibited by basic skills program students differ significantly from other college campus students, and if so, how? (3) What are the implications of behavior infractions on the classroom student body, instructor, and program at large? and (4) What are successful policies and procedures for remedying behavior infractions in a basic skills program classroom?

**Study the continued emphasis by program personnel on interpersonal skills over research-based practices.** The fact that survey items relating to interpersonal skills did not load

by construct during the factor analysis and were excluded during subsequent data analysis does not diminish the importance of those survey items. In light of this study's exclusion of interpersonal skills despite the high ranking by survey item means, future researchers should replicate this study. With the emphasis on interpersonal skills strongly supported in the literature, it is likely that either a new population or new factor analysis would allow inclusion of these survey items. Also, future research should examine the barriers to statewide credentialing efforts.

### **Conclusion**

In this study I examine the perception of NCCCS Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors regarding the professional development of first-year instructors. After analyzing participants' responses, I find overwhelming consensus among program personnel. I conclude that program personnel perceived training to conduct student evaluation as the most important area of professional development for a first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructor. In analyzing results within Zinn's (1997) framework of barriers and supports to faculty professional development, I conclude that differing perceptions among program personnel do not pose an institutional barrier to a first-year instructor's professional development.

Furthermore, I examined survey items regarding interpersonal skills which were not included in the factor analysis and subsequent data analysis. Interpersonal skills were consistently perceived to be highly important by program personnel for a first-year instructor. The finding in this study that interpersonal skills were perceived as highly important for a first-year instructor is strongly supported in the literature. Every profile of instructor competencies includes elements of instructors' interpersonal skills as a desired quality for a basic skills program instructor. In fact, Reiff's (1994) review of Mocker (1974) and Mocker-based studies

(Peebles, 1975; Zinn, 1974; Zinn, 1975) found 12 of 20 highest ranked competencies to be similar. Of those 12 similar competencies, more than half related to an instructor's interpersonal skills.

Fingeret's (1985) evaluation of NCCCS Basic Skills Programs found that instructors and programs relied more on interpersonal skills to retain students than research-based practices aimed at student achievement. According to Fingeret, the skills and knowledge of instructors were of secondary importance to "the ABE family" atmosphere of nurturing and caring (p. 182).

More recently, Smith (2006) lamented the continued focus on interpersonal skills to the exclusion of research-based practices. A review of the literature concerning the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of basic skills program faculty indicates a debate between two camps. One camp emphasizes instructors' interpersonal skills with less emphasis on faculty credentials. The opposing camp counters what it calls the "anybody can do it" approach to instructor hiring and emphasizes instructors' abilities demonstrated through education, certification, and, where applicable, credentialing.

Although I found overwhelming consensus among program personnel concerning the professional development needs for a first-year NCCCS Basic Skills Program instructor, I also found a continued strong emphasis on interpersonal skills dating to the 1970s literature. In Fingeret's (1985) evaluation of NCCCS Basic Skills Program, she concluded two themes described NCCCS Basic Skills Program: isolation and autonomy. Based on this study, I conclude that Fingeret's descriptors remain applicable. NCCCS Basic Skills Program personnel continue to be isolated from research-based best practices and favor Smith's (2006) "anybody can it do it" approach. Additionally, the lack of statewide regulations regarding hiring standards and the voluntary nature of the state's credentialing efforts reinforce the state's autonomous nature.

Given these findings it is important to develop a comprehensive research-based professional development plan for first-year basic skills program instructors. Any professional development plan that is developed should mirror the constructs and specific survey items perceived by experienced program personnel to be most important for first-year faculty. A research-based professional development plan for first-year faculty is vital, especially in light of programs' aim of reaching and retaining target populations and reducing instructor turnover. Comprehensive faculty training is not only one of the best methods to serve faculty but to achieve student learning, the mission of basic skills programs.

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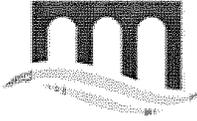
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## APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



### EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office  
1L-09 Brody Medical Sciences Building • 600 Moyer Boulevard • Greenville, NC 27834  
Office 252-744-2914 • Fax 252-744-2284 • [www.ecu.edu/irb](http://www.ecu.edu/irb)

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**Date:** April 30, 2010

**Principal Investigator:** Angela Kearney, Doctoral Student  
111 Horseshoe Drive  
Goldsboro, NC 27534

**RE:** Exempt Certification *WCK*  
**UMCIRB#** 10-0225  
**Funding Source:** Unfunded

**Title:** An Examination of the Training Needs of First Year Basic Skills Instructors in the NC Community College System.

Dear Angela:

On 4.28.10, the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) determined that your research meets ECU requirements and federal exemption criterion #2 which includes research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your Internal Processing Form and Protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

The UMCIRB Office will hold your exemption application for a period of five years from the date of this letter. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit an Exemption Certification Request at least 30 days before the end of the five year period.

Sincerely,

Chairperson, University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board

Cc: Dr. Crystal Chambers

## **APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT**

### **Informed Consent to Participate in Research**

Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study:	An Examination of the Training Needs of First-Year Basic Skills Instructors in the North Carolina Community College System
Principal Investigator:	Angela Marie Kearney
Institution/Department/Division :	East Carolina University, College of Education, Educational Leadership Department
Address:	xxxxxxxxxx, Goldsboro, NC 27534
Telephone #:	919.xxx.xxxx or 919.xxx.xxxx

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You may have questions that this form does not answer. If you do, feel free to contact the Principal Investigator through the information provided above. You may have questions later, and you should ask those questions as you think of them. There is no time limit for asking questions about this research. Furthermore, a PRINT option is available so that you can print and retain a copy of this consent for your records.

#### **Why is this research being done?**

The purpose of this research is to understand the training needs of first-year basic skills program instructors employed by community colleges. This study had two specific purposes: a) to examine the training needs of first-year basic skills program instructors as perceived by program personnel and b) to investigate the differences in those perceived training needs among basic skills program faculty and staff. By doing this research, I hope to learn what professional development opportunities should be offered to first-year basic skills program faculty.

#### **Why am I being invited to take part in this research?**

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are employed in a North Carolina Community College System Basic Skills Program. If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about 800 people in North Carolina to do so.

#### **Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?**

The research will be conducted through a web-based survey accessible through a computer with Internet access. The total amount of time you will be asked to give for this study is approximately 15 minutes.

#### **What will I be asked to do?**

You are being asked to complete a web-based questionnaire about your perception of training needs for first-year basic skills program instructors. The survey begins with demographic questions and concludes with your assessing the relevancy of various training topics for first-year faculty using a 7-point scale.

### **What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?**

You have the choice of not taking part in this research study. That decision is yours and it is okay to decide not to volunteer. The decision to take part in this research is yours to make.

### **What are the possible benefits I may experience from taking part in this research?**

The primary benefit is knowledge gained regarding the professional development needs of first-year basic skills program faculty. Information about first -faculty training needs will aid program directors and coordinators in designing future professional development opportunities. Additionally, faculty, serving as formal and informal mentors, will more fully understand the challenges faced by new faculty and how to best guide their colleagues. Finally, respondents will benefit from the opportunity to reflect upon their personal experience as a new basic skills program employee and their professional growth through professional development opportunities.

### **What possible harms or discomforts might I experience if I take part in the research?**

There are always risks (the chance of harm) when taking part in research. It has been determined that the risks associated with this research are no more than what you would experience in a normal life. You might find it uncomfortable sharing your perceptions of professional development at your work environment. Additionally, you might be concerned that your responses will become public as this survey employs an Internet-based survey. Precautions, described below, will be taken to reduce this risk will be taken.

### **How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?**

Research participant names and email addresses as well as questionnaire responses will be stored in an encrypted database during data collection. At the conclusion of data collection, all personally identifiable information will be separated from survey responses. Questionnaire results will be stored on a password protected computer file on the principal researcher's computer. After three years all materials pertaining to this research will be destroyed by the principal investigator.

### **Are there any reasons you might take me out of the research?**

During the study, information about this research may become available that would be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about wanting to be in the study. I will tell you as soon as I can. There may be reasons I will need to take you out of the study, even if you want to stay in. For example, I may find that you are not are no longer a member of a North Carolina Community College Basic Skills Program. If this is found to be true, I will need to take you out of the study.

### **Will I be paid for taking part in this research?**

I will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study; however, an executive summary will be made available to presidents and basic skills program directors at participating institutions. Additionally, respondents may request a copy of the executive summary by contacting the researcher directly.

**What will it cost me to take part in this research?**

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

**Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?**

To do this research, ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.
- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff, who have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research, and other ECU staff who oversee this research.

**What if I decide I do not want to continue in this research?**

If you decide you no longer want to be in this research after it has already started, you may stop at any time. You will not be penalized or criticized for stopping. You will not lose any benefits that you should normally receive at any time until the submission of your responses.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

The people conducting this study will be available to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator, Angela M. Kearney, at 919.xxx.xxxx or 919.xxx.xxxx, Monday thru Friday from 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.)

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the UMCIRB Office at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director of UMCIRB Office, at 252-744-1971

**Does this research constitute a conflict of interest?**

No. This is unfunded research, and neither the principal investigator nor immediate family is employed by participating institutions.

**For participants employed at Central Piedmont Community College:**

CPCC is eager to ensure that all research participants are treated in a fair and respectful manner. If you have any concerns or questions about your treatment as a subject in this project, contact Dr. Terri Manning, Planning and Research, P.O. Box 35009, Charlotte, NC 28235 (704) 33-6597.

**I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?**

Please read the following.

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I understand that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

If you agree, you should proceed to the first survey question and select AGREE. By selecting AGREE, you will proceed to the survey. If you do not provide consent and DISAGREE, you will be exited from the survey.

## APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT SURVEY

NOTE: This is a copy of an on-line survey. This copy does not reflect the built-in display and skip logic. Additionally, participants did not see the section divides as presented here. Finally, training topics were randomized; therefore, participants did not see the training topics in the order presented here.

### Consent block

Do you agree to participate in this study? If you agree, you will proceed to the survey questions. If you disagree, you will be exited from the survey.

Agree

Disagree

### Category of personnel

Which category best describes your current job description? If you serve in more than one capacity, in which category on average do you spend the most hours per week?

the most senior administrator within a Basic Skills Program and individual responsible for the day-to-day program operations

the supervisor of one or more academic subunits within a Basic Skills Program (e.g. ABE, AHS, GED, CED, ESL), the supervisor of a learning center where instruction is provided at multiple levels, or the supervisor of a major program component (e.g. assessment, special populations, off-campus programs)

the individual employed by a community college on a full-time contract and assigned to provide instruction to Basic Skills Program students in a classroom, learning lab, or other learning environment

Other full-time Basic Skills Program employee

Part-time Basic Skills Program employee

### Instructor demographic questions

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Transgender/Other

What is your age?

24 and under

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65 and over

With which race do you most identify? (Check one.)

White or Caucasian

Black or African American

Hispanic or Latino

Asian

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

Native American or Alaska Native

Multiple/Other

Which is your highest degree completed?

High school/GED

Technical or vocational certificate/diploma

Associate degree

Bachelor degree

Masters degree

Doctoral degree

Professional degree (e.g. MD, JD)

Which subject area is most closely related to your bachelor degree? (Check one.)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture                        | <input type="checkbox"/> General and Interdisciplinary Studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Studies                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sciences                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks and Recreation Services         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Sciences                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Language                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical and Allied Healthcare         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy, Religion, and Theology    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visual and Performing Arts         | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Affairs and Law                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering and Related Technology | <input type="checkbox"/> Military Science, Criminal Justice    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English and Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                                 |

Please indicate the areas in which you have prior teaching experience. (Check all that apply.)

- K-12
- Basic Skills Program – other than current employment
- Community college – curriculum program
- Community college – continuing education program
- College/university
- Other
- I do not have prior teaching experience.

How many years have you taught in Basic Skills Programs as a full-time instructor?

- 1 or less
- 2-5
- 6-10
- 11-15

16-20

Over 20

Within which Basic Skills Program subunit do you have the most teaching experience?

Adult Basic Education – students with less than 8<sup>th</sup> grade skills

GED – students with 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade skills and who are studying to complete GED testing

Adult High School – students with 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade skills and who are studying to complete their high school diploma

Compensatory Education – students with developmental disabilities

English as a Second Language – non-native students learning the English language in non-credit classes

Where do you currently provide instruction for the majority of your work week?

Main campus and satellite campuses

Off-campus (e.g. correctional setting, local employers, churches, schools, state and local agencies)

### **Coordinator demographic questions**

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Transgender/Other

What is your age?

24 and under

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65 and over

With which race do you most identify? (Check one.)

White or Caucasian

Black or African American

Hispanic or Latino

Asian

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

Native American or Alaska Native

Multiple/Other

Which is your highest degree completed?

High school/GED

Technical or vocational certificate/diploma

Associate degree

Bachelor degree

Masters degree

Doctoral degree

Professional degree (e.g. MD, JD)

Please indicate the areas in which you have prior teaching experience. (Check all that apply.)

K-12

Basic Skills Program – other than current employment

Community college – curriculum program

Community college – continuing education program

College/university

Other

I do not have prior teaching experience.

**Director demographic questions**

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Transgender/Other

What is your age?

24 and under

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65 and over

With which race do you most identify? (Check one.)

White or Caucasian

Black or African American

Hispanic or Latino

Asian

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

Native American or Alaska Native

Multiple/Other

Which is your highest degree completed?

- High school/GED
- Technical or vocational certificate/diploma
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Masters degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (e.g. MD, JD)

Please indicate the areas in which you have prior teaching experience. (Check all that apply.)

- K-12
- Basic Skills Program – other than current employment
- Community college – curriculum program
- Community college – continuing education program
- College/university
- Other
- I do not have prior teaching experience.

**Training topics**

In planning professional development for a FIRST-YEAR Basic Skills Program instructor, how do you rate each of the following training topics?

Please rate each professional development training topic for a FIRST-YEAR INSTRUCTOR by describing the subject’s importance along the 7-point continuum from unimportant to very important.

Understanding the characteristics of adult learners and adult development

Unimportant in first year					Very important in first year	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Developing a knowledge base in other academic area from one's degree field

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Illustrating proficiency using technology for administrative functions (e.g. monitoring learning, tracking attendance, communicating to learners, colleagues, and other stakeholders)

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Demonstrating familiarity with the student code of conduct

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Understanding the legal uses of written materials, technology, software, and media

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Understanding the community college services and transition processes

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Knowing federal and state laws pertaining to the educational setting and learners (e.g. student privacy, sexual harassment)

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Identifying instructional content and materials based upon learner needs, interests, goals, and experiences

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Using results of formal assessment (e.g. CASAS, TABE, BEST, WorkKeys) to plan lessons

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Designing instruction that incorporates appropriate multi-media and technology

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Integrating materials and technology that reflects the contexts of home, work, and a multi-cultural community

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Selecting resources that are age appropriate for adult learners

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Selecting resources that are appropriate based on the individuals learner's level of ability

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Incorporating community resources to extend the classroom into the community (e.g. speakers, field trips)

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Sequencing and pacing lessons based on learner cues regarding the learning pace and depth of understanding

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Presenting course content using multi-media software (e.g. PowerPoint, SmartBoards)

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Using technology and multi-media for individualized instruction (e.g. PLATO, Skills Tutor, TV 411, Crossroads Café, Madison Heights, NovaNet)

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Modifying instruction for students who have learning disabilities or other special needs

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Employing individual, small group, and whole group learning in a multi-level classroom

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Modifying teaching techniques to accommodate diverse learning styles

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Maintaining order and discipline in the classroom

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Dealing with immediate crisis situations (e.g. medical, violence, severe weather, terrorism)

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Monitoring learning using a variety of informal assessment strategies (e.g. journals, portfolios, presentations, unsolicited comments)

Unimportant in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Very important in first year

Using questioning strategies at various cognitive levels (e.g. recall, inference, generalization, synthesis, and application)

Unimportant in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Very important in first year

Establishing and maintaining filing and record keeping systems (e.g. attendance, assessment, scores, grades)

Unimportant in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Very important in first year

Determining the scheduling and appropriate uses of formal assessment (e.g. CASAS, TABE, BEST, WorkKeys)

Unimportant in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Very important in first year

Collecting and recording formal assessment data (e.g. CASAS, TABE, BEST, WorkKeys) for program improvement and accountability

Unimportant in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Very important in first year

Developing students' self-esteem and self-image as learners

Unimportant in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Very important in first year

Recognizing students' verbal and non-verbal reaction to instruction

Unimportant in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Very important in first year

Identifying and incorporating individual student motivation and retention techniques

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Establishing rapport with students through humor, enthusiasm, confidence, and respect

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Modeling sensitivity related to differences in culture, gender, race, and socioeconomic status

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Identifying special needs students (e.g. physical handicaps, learning disabilities, and behavior/emotional problems)

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Identifying students whose performance is impaired by chemical dependency (e.g. drugs and/or alcohol)

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Identifying students whose performance is impaired by social problems (e.g. inability to relate, lack of transportation, family problems)

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Identifying resources both in and outside the school setting to aid in the development of students with special needs

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Making referrals to appropriate resources when guidance and counseling are beyond an instructor's own expertise

Unimportant in first year

Very important in first year

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Thank you for completing the survey. Please SUBMIT your responses.

**APPENDIX D: INITIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS**

November 22, 2009

Presidents,

Hello, my name is Angela M. Kearney, and I am a doctoral student at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC. Having nearly 13 years experience in adult education as both a Basic Skills instructor at Wayne Community College in Goldsboro and the Basic Skills Director at Nash Community College in Rocky Mount, I have begun a dissertation examining the training needs of first year Basic Skills faculty in North Carolina's 58 community colleges from the perspectives of Basic Skills directors, coordinators, and full time faculty.

I am writing to request permission to send on-line surveys to all full time Basic Skills Program personnel at your institution. The System Office provided me a directory of Basic Skills personnel for each community college, and I will begin data collection in early Spring 2010. The surveys will require less than 15 minutes to complete, and responses will be reported in the aggregate with no identifying information. In light of the upcoming holidays and institutional closings, please respond with your permission to my surveying your institution's Basic Skills personnel by Wednesday, December 9, 2009.

If you have questions concerning my study, my contact information as well as that of my dissertation methodologist is listed below. Thank you for your assistance during this stage of data collection.

Angela Kearney, AMK0817@ecu.edu, 919.xxx.xxxx  
Dr. Steven Schmidt, schmidtst@ecu.edu, 252.xxx.xxxx

**APPENDIX E: FOLLOW-UP CORRESPONDENCE TO  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS**

December 4, 2009

Presidents,

Recently you received an invitation for the Basic Skills Program director, coordinators, and full time faculty at your institution to voluntarily participate in my quantitative study examining first year instructors' professional development needs. Responses from BSP faculty and staff at your institution are important and will assist in developing training for future Basic Skills faculty.

Thirty-two North Carolina community colleges are participating, but I have yet to receive permission to send my survey to personnel in your college's Basic Skills Program. To this end, I am writing to remind you that the deadline for granting me permission to send BSP faculty and staff an on-line survey at their institutional email address is Wednesday, December 9, 2009.

If you have questions concerning my study, my contact information as well as that of my dissertation methodologist is listed below. Thank you for your assistance during this data collection process.

Angela Kearney, AMK0817@ecu.edu, 919.xxx.xxxx  
Dr. Steven Schmidt, schmidtst@ecu.edu, 252.xxx.xxxx

**APPENDIX F: LETTER AND SURVEY EVALUATION TO  
CONTENT REVIEW PARTICIPANTS**

May 2, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As you know, I am pursuing my doctorate of education at East Carolina University. My dissertation is *An Examination of the Training Needs of First-Year Basic Skills Program Instructors in the North Carolina Community College System*. The population for this study will be all Basic Skills Program directors, coordinators, and full-time instructors. The purpose of the study is to examine the perceptions of first-year faculty's professional development needs and compare the perceptions of directors, coordinators, and full-time faculty. With the many challenges faced by first-year instructors it is imperative they receive appropriate training. In light of limited time and resources, understanding what it is that first-year faculty need to learn is crucial.

Based on your knowledge and experience in Basic Skills Programs, I am asking you to assist in this study. I am asking you to review a survey created specifically for this study. I have enclosed a copy of the survey, a survey evaluation form, and a consent form. As a reviewer, you are asked to read and sign the consent form and complete the survey evaluation. The consent form has been created for an Internet-based survey and does not have a signature line. Please insert your signature on the last page of the consent form. Please return both the consent form and survey evaluation to me by Monday, May 17, 2010. For your convenience, I have also included a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Your feedback will strengthen the validity of the survey and the study as a whole. Your support of this survey may help in focusing the attention of state and college leadership to the value of our professional efforts and our programs. Finally, your contribution can make a difference that will have a positive effect on new professionals, programs, and students for years to come. I offer my sincere thanks for your participation in this phase of data collection. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 919.xxx.xxxx or 919.xxx.xxxx. I can also be reached at AMK0817@ecu.edu or xxxxxxxx, Goldsboro, NC 27534.

Respectfully,

Angela M. Kearney

Enclosures:  
Survey draft  
Survey evaluation form  
Study consent form  
Institutional Review Board Study Approval  
Self-addressed stamped envelope

An Examination of the Training Needs of First-Year Basic Skills Instructors in the  
North Carolina Community College System  
By Angela M. Kearney  
Survey Evaluation Form

Did the personnel category adequately describe the role of director, coordinator, and full time instructor?    YES                  NO

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Were the demographic questions comprehensive for the purpose of this study?    YES    NO  
Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Were the demographic questions biased in any way?                  YES                  NO

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The intent is to write questions that are clear and require only one reading. Were the questions understandable? If not, please indicate which question(s) need revision.    YES                  NO

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is the scale adequate to measure the survey questions? If not, what suggestions do you have for the scale?    YES                  NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Were the questions written in such a way that you could have responded in more than one way? Were there multiple possible answers for a single question? If so, please indicate which question(s) need revision.    YES                  NO

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Were the questions *loaded*? Were the questions written in such a way to indicate one obvious answer? If so, please indicate which question(s) need revision.    YES                  NO

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Were the questions *double barreled*? Did the question(s) address too many ideas in a single question? If so, please indicate which question(s) need revision. YES NO  
Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Were the training topics biased regarding a specific academic sub-unit (e.g. ABE, ESL, CED, AHS, GED)? If so, please indicate which question(s) need revision. YES NO  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Were the training topics biased regarding a population within Basic Skills Programs? If so, please indicate which question(s) need revision. YES NO  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Were the questions confusing or have unfamiliar terms or acronyms? If so, which questions need revision? YES NO  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are there other questions or training topics that should be included in the following areas:

**Instructors' personal knowledge base:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Course planning**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Instructional Skills**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Classroom management**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Student evaluation**

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**Interpersonal skills**

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**Special needs students**

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**Other content areas to be included:**

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**Closing comments:**

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**APPENDIX G: INITIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO  
PILOT TEST PARTICIPANTS**

May 24, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Having spent nearly 13 years in basic skills programs at two North Carolina community colleges as both an instructor and program director, I recognize the importance of faculty training, especially during one's first year. With this in mind I have begun a dissertation at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, to examine the training needs of first-year basic skills faculty in North Carolina's community colleges.

You are being asked participate in this study based on your role as either a state adult education director or staff member with professional development responsibilities. Your responses will serve to create and inform the development of an appropriate survey for use in this study. It is my hope that a sizeable response on your part will translate into opportunities for more effective training for basic skills employees in the near future.

The brief survey should take less than 15 minutes to complete. To participate, simply click on the link below or copy and paste the entire web address in the address field on your browser. On page one you'll find a consent form which explains the study in more detail and provides information on your rights as a study participant.

**SURVEY LINK**

As you complete the survey please keep in mind that your responses should focus on training opportunities that should be offered to a first-year instructor. I hope you enjoy this opportunity to share your thoughts and opinions on basic skills professional development. It is with the generous sharing of your time that greater resources can be dedicated to the support of new adult education faculty.

Thank you for your time completing the survey. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me through my contact information below. I will be happy to hear from you.

Angela M. Kearney  
Doctoral Candidate  
East Carolina University  
Greenville, NC  
919.xxx.xxxx  
AMK0817@ecu.edu

**APPENDIX H: FIRST FOLLOW-UP CORRESPONDENCE TO  
PILOT TEST PARTICIPANTS**

May 27, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

You should have received an emailed notice from me on May 24 about a 15 minute survey I am asking you to complete on-line to improve basic skills professional training. Through this survey your experience as adult education professional will be used to design a survey which may determine professional development opportunities provided to future first-year basic skills instructors.

You can access the survey by clicking on the link below or by copying and pasting the URL into the address field on your web browser. If you began the survey but did not finish, you have the opportunity to return to your survey and respond to the remaining items.

As a former basic skills instructor and director, I know how precious your time is every day. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to join you in supporting new basic skills professionals.

**SURVEY LINK**

Survey results will be tabulated after June 7. Please participate in this brief survey and let your opinion count towards a stronger future for basic skills professionals.

Angela M. Kearney  
Doctoral Candidate  
East Carolina University  
AMK0817@ecu.edu  
919.xxx.xxxx

**APPENDIX I: SECOND FOLLOW-UP CORRESPONDENCE TO  
PILOT TEST PARTICIPANTS**

June 2, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

This is just a quick reminder that I have not received your response to the basic skills orientation/training survey emailed to you on May 24. Please allow me to encourage you once again to participate in this opportunity to improve professional development opportunities for new basic skills employees. You are an experienced resource for determining professional development needs of adult education professionals. Please remember that your participation is voluntary, and your responses are confidential.

Whether you are beginning the survey or finishing the remaining questions, your feedback is vital to this research. Please access the questionnaire by clicking on the link below or by copying and pasting the URL into the address field on your web browser.

Survey results will be tabulated after June 7. Your contribution can make a difference that will have a positive effect on new professionals, programs, and students for years to come.

**SURVEY LINK**

Angela M. Kearney  
Doctoral Candidate  
East Carolina University  
KEARNEYA96@students.ecu.edu  
919.xxx.xxxx

**APPENDIX J: INITIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO  
NCCCS BASIC SKILLS PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

June 23, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Having spent nearly 13 years in Basic Skills at Wayne Community College and Nash Community College as both an instructor and program director, I recognize the importance of training, especially during one's first year. With this in mind I have begun a dissertation at East Carolina University examining the training needs of first year Basic Skills faculty in North Carolina's community colleges. With the permission of your college president, I am asking you to participate in this on-line survey.

Participants in the survey will receive a summary of the survey results. It is my hope that a sizeable response on your part will translate into opportunities for more effective training for Basic Skills employees in the near future. The brief survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. You will receive the survey link by email contact in a few days, but in the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me through my contact information below. I will be happy to hear from you.

As Basic Skills instructors and staff members, you know how vital our work is to the economy of our state and to the successful lives of our students. Your support of this survey may help in focusing the attention of state and college leadership to the value of our professional efforts and our programs.

Angela M. Kearney  
Doctoral Candidate  
East Carolina University  
KEARNEYA96@students.ecu.edu  
919.xxx.xxxx

**APPENDIX K: SURVEY INVITATION TO  
NCCCS BASIC SKILLS PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

June 28, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

It's here! A few days ago you should have received a message about my research examining the training needed for a Basic Skills instructor during his or her first year. The short survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. It is with the permission of your college president, I am asking you to participate in this on-line survey.

To participate, simply click on the link below or copy and paste the entire web address in the address field on your browser. On page one you'll find a consent form which explains the survey in more detail and provides information on your rights as a study participant.

As you complete the survey please keep in mind that your responses should focus on training opportunities that should be offered to a first-year Basic Skills instructor. I hope you enjoy this opportunity to share your thoughts and opinions on Basic Skills professional development. It is with the generous sharing of your time that greater resources can be dedicated to the support of new BSP employees.

Angela M. Kearney  
Doctoral Candidate  
East Carolina University  
KEARNEYA96@students.ecu.edu  
919.xxx.xxxx

**APPENDIX L: FIRST FOLLOW-UP CORRESPONDENCE TO  
NCCCS BASIC SKILLS PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

July 7, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

You should have received an emailed notice from me on June 28 about a 10 minute survey I am asking you to complete on-line to improve Basic Skills professional training. Through this survey your experience as a Basic Skills professional may be used to design the professional development opportunities provided to future first year Basic Skills instructors. With the permission of your college president, I am asking you to participate in this on-line survey. You can access the survey by clicking on the link below or by copying and pasting the URL into the address field on your web browser. If you began the survey but did not finish, you have the opportunity to return to your survey and respond to the remaining items.

As a former Basic Skills instructor and director, I know how precious your time is every day. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to join you in supporting new BSP professionals.

**SURVEY LINK**

Survey results will be tabulated after July 17. Please participate in this brief survey and let your opinion count towards a stronger future for Basic Skills professionals.

Angela M. Kearney  
Doctoral Candidate  
East Carolina University  
KEARNEYA96@students.ecu.edu  
919.xxx.xxxx

**APPENDIX M: SECOND FOLLOW-UP CORRESPONDENCE TO  
NCCCS BASIC SKILLS PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

July 13, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

This is just a quick reminder that I have not received your response to the BSP Orientation/Training survey emailed to you on June 28. Please allow me to encourage you once again to participate in this opportunity to improve professional development opportunities for new Basic Skills employees. Basic Skills faculty and staff are the best resource for determining professional development needs of adult education professionals in North Carolina. Please remember that your participation is voluntary, and your responses are confidential.

Whether you are beginning the survey or finishing the remaining questions, your feedback is vital to this research. Please access the questionnaire by clicking on the link below or by copying and pasting the URL into the address field on your web browser.

Survey results will be tabulated after July 17. Your contribution can make a difference that will have a positive effect on new professionals, programs, and students for years to come.

**SURVEY LINK**

Angela M. Kearney  
Doctoral Candidate  
East Carolina University  
KEARNEYA96@students.ecu.edu  
919.xxx.xxxx

**APPENDIX N: THANK YOU MESSAGE TO  
NCCCS BASIC SKILLS PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

July 19, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Let me extend a sincere thank you for participating in the BSP Orientation/Training survey. Your involvement in this study has increased the knowledge we have concerning professional development needs for an understudied population, new Basic Skills faculty. Upon the completion of this research a summary of the survey results will be forwarded to your community college president and your Basic Skills Program director. You may obtain a copy of the survey results from your community college and departmental leadership or by contacting me directly.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, I can be reached at KEARNEYA96@students.ecu.edu or 919.xxx.xxxx. Thank you again for your contribution in support of Basic Skills professionals.

Angela M. Kearney