

**Dual Credits: To what extent do they ease the transition to
Post-secondary for adult learners in Manitoba?**

The Research Report

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INTRODUCTION

This study examines dual credits and the extent to which they ease the transition to post-secondary for adult learners in Manitoba. The study focuses specifically on the dual credit enrollment of adult learners in a Manitoba adult learning centre. It examines how dual credits and their relationship to barriers affect the transition for adult learners who move to post-secondary, the policy and procedures used in administering the dual credit program and the benefits and challenges of dual credit enrollment. Two focus group interviews were conducted with participants who graduated, with dual credits and went on to post-secondary studies. Their feedback related to the impact of dual credits upon their transition to post-secondary. These were combined with a review of the literature. Implications related to the impact of the dual credits are summarized. The study concludes with recommendations for further research.

Increasingly adults are returning to school to obtain their high school diploma before enrolling in some form of post-secondary education. This is often accomplished by attending adult high schools and community-based adult literacy programs. However, while highly motivated, these adults often experience many obstacles and barriers that influence their access to and success in, higher education. Myers and De Broucker (2006) summarize research related to these barriers in a Canadian context:

Empirical evidence suggests that time and cost are the most significant barriers to learning. In most provinces, tuition (for adult high-school courses) is free and in some provinces, learners are eligible for subsidies for transportation and childcare. However, in all provinces, learners still need to cover their living expenses, (p.30).

Adults' completing high school in preparation for post-secondary education programs are often classified as 'non-traditional' students. As adult learners' they can be characterized as part-time students, full-time students, single parents, and sole providers for their families. These characteristics and their associated challenges make it difficult for them to enter into and succeed in the traditional postsecondary environment. Myers & de Broucker (2006) articulate that adult learners' in this context encounter enormous challenges related to juggling these various roles. They add that as a result of this juggling "it is not surprising that time is the second most common reason [cost being the first] for not participating in adult learning and not succeeding in learning, once enrolled,"(p.30). Single parent families experience the most significant challenges (Human Resources Skills Development Canada, 2007). Given these limitations of time and resources, having one's learning at the high school level formally recognized for credit at the post-secondary level "is an important step in educational planning" (p.11). It provides an opportunity for learners' to finish their studies as quickly and efficiently as possible. This study focuses on understanding the extent to which this dual credentialing also eases the transition to post-secondary education.

The prevalence of barriers to adult participation in learning is one of the most important issues confronting adult education in Canada. Adult learners encounter some of the same barriers as their younger counterparts but also many which are different. According to MacKeracher, Stewart & Potter (2006) these include situational, dispositional and institutional barriers. These barriers interfere with adult learners' access to and retention in post-secondary education. Clearly, finding ways to reduce or remove

the many obstacles and barriers that inhibit the success for the adult learners' should be a priority for policy makers in post-secondary institutions.

Barriers interfere with an adult learner's transition to post-secondary education. Dual credits address the barriers and can reduce or eliminate them; thereby easing the transition to post-secondary education. The implementation of a *dual credit* system is one program element that offers promise in minimizing the barriers encountered by adult learners; thereby increasing the potential for them to participate and succeed in post-secondary education, once enrolled. A dual credit system typically involves agreements between high schools, adult learning centres and postsecondary institutions to offer credited post-secondary level courses in a high school setting. The postsecondary institution determines the curriculum content and standards, while the high school teachers typically teach the courses.

Previous research on the implementation of a dual credit system has focused on youth in a post-secondary education setting. The lack of previous dual credit research at the adult post-secondary level moved me to want to investigate the relationship between dual credits and reducing barriers for the adult learners' transition to post-secondary education. What happens between the time they walk in the door and the second semester? What has changed in their self-perception, their goals, and their attitudes towards education? Will those changes follow them as they transition to post-secondary? Would having taken a dual credit course influence these changes? This study set out to examine the extent to which a dual credit system can ease the transition to post-secondary education for adult learners, by reducing the barriers to their participation.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Many learners in adult high schools struggle against a host of barriers that interfere with their ability to reach their educational goal: a lack of confidence and self-esteem, negative attitudes towards education, lack of educational goals, financial resources, time, and relevance of course material. When discussing their education plans with advisors they often state their only goal as “getting my grade 12”. When asked if they are planning to go on to post-secondary, many say that they “don’t dare to look that far ahead.” Some say that they “aren’t college material”. For some, “life gets in the way” and they struggle to reach even the modest goal of a grade 12 diploma.

It has been my experience as the Director of the Adult Collegiate that by the beginning of the second semester the adult learners’ attitudes about their potential for a post-secondary education begin to change. They appear to become more confident and begin to ask questions about qualifying for post-secondary programs. At the end of the academic year, a large percentage of the adult learners often go directly into college or university. In exploring the effectiveness of dual credits, we can better understand their impact on this transition.

Adult Education in Manitoba

Adult education in Manitoba has a long history extending as far back as the turn of the century initiatives of Frontier College (Beauchamp, 2007). Adult education programs at the turn of the century were essentially extensions of high school programs, and even the curricula were identical to that offered in the high schools. In the early

1990's a sequence of federal and provincial government policy decisions sparked the growth of new adult education programs and adult learning centres. The majority of these programs, which are housed under the local school division, offered high school curricula and credentials specific to adult learners (Beauchamp, 2007). On July 1, 2003 The *Adult Learning Centres Act and General Regulations* came into force thereby formally establishing adult learning centres (ALC's) as programs "that provide tuition-free high school credit and upgrading courses using recognized principles of adult education" (Government of Manitoba, 2006). ALC's are designed to deal with the core needs of the adult by providing flexibility related to time, place and programs. Their focus is on assisting the adult learner in upgrading their skills; enabling them to achieve their educational or career goals. The 2006-07 Manitoba Adult Learning and Literacy Annual Report showed that in that same program year there were 44-registered ALC's comprised of 75 different sites across Manitoba, providing educational services to approximately 9000 adult learners.

With the establishment of the *Adult Learning Centres Act*, (2003), adult learning centres in Manitoba are now able to award the standard provincial high school diploma as well as a Mature Student High School Diploma (MSHSD). The Manitoba Adult Learning Centres Act defines a mature student as someone who: has not yet obtained their high school diploma, is 19 years of age or older, has been out of school for six months or more, has been out of school long enough for the class of which they were last a member to have graduated.

Prior to the *Adult Learning Centres Act* high school credits and diplomas could only be awarded by school divisions. Currently, in Manitoba, the standard high school

diploma consists of 29 credits. In contrast, the MSHSD requires the completion of eight credits. In the MSHSD, as in the standard high school diploma, four of the eight credits must be at the grade 12 level, and of these four at least one must be mathematics and one must be English Language Arts. The Mature Student Diploma provides an opportunity for adults to acquire their high school diploma and to increase their skills for the workplace or entry to post-secondary. In some cases, an adult who does not have his/her high school diploma, but wants to prepare or upgrade their skills for the workforce or post-secondary education, has a number of different options. They may write the General Education Development (GED) test, which will earn them a high-school equivalency certificate, or they may take an upgrading program within a college setting. These program goals are very similar to those of the MSHSD, in that they focus on the individual's strengths and address both cognitive and social development. One significant difference is that individuals completing a GED or college remedial education program typically receive a credential that is not recognized or transferable to other post-secondary education programs. This lack of outside recognition leaves learners feeling frustrated, as their learning does not appear to be valued or relevant to institutions beyond the setting they were obtained in. In contrast, the MSHSD is a "bona fide" high school diploma. It provides a credential recognized and valued provincially and nationally by post-secondary institutions, whose dual credits transfer readily into post-secondary programs.

As mentioned earlier, adults wishing to upgrade their skills have a confusing array of options. They do not have the time to take a program that will not meet their needs or result in a credential that has little value. In their search for the right program an adult

will find that “provincial adult learning environments tend to be extremely complex” and “easy-to-understand information about adult learning opportunities is hard to come by” (Myers, de Broucker, 2006, p.91). In April 2007, the Canadian Research Policy Network conducted a roundtable, *Towards Effective Adult Learning Systems in Western Canada*. Its purpose was to identify specific steps “to improve access to high quality learning opportunities for adults in the Western provinces.” The roundtable participants identified five core gaps in Canada’s adult learning systems: coordination, information, financial aid, employer support and government investment. In addition to a variety of very specific recommendations regarding how gaps in these five areas might be bridged, the resulting report, *Too Many Left Behind: Canada’s Adult Education and Training System* by Myers & de Broucker (2006), suggest that Canada needs to develop “clearly articulated learner pathways that map out various learning options. These pathways should support learners in making transitions to further education, in getting or keeping a job, and in participating more fully in the life of their community” (p.75).

Manitoba’s adult learning centres and the dual credit option can provide a pathway for adult learners making a transition to education or to improved workplace opportunities. They provide significant benefits for adults who missed earlier opportunities to complete their high school. Adult learning centres allow those individuals an opportunity to strengthen or to develop the skills necessary to participate in the labour market; thereby helping Canada improve its economic productivity. It also provides them with the necessary entrance requirements for post-secondary education.

Assiniboine Community College Adult Collegiate

Assiniboine Community College (herein referred to as ACC), in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada first opened its doors to a few hundred learners in 1961. ACC offers over 30 certificate and diploma programs, 8 apprenticeship programs, distance education and continuing studies programming, an adult high school and a wide variety of contract training courses to an annual enrollment of nearly 11,000.

In 1995, ACC, in partnership with the Brandon School Division, opened its first adult learning centre, the Brandon Adult Learning Centre. On July 1, 2003, the new *Adult Learning Centres Act* was introduced in Manitoba, which opened the door for colleges as the *education partner*, together with an adult learning centre, to grant the high school diploma. Because of this change, the partnership between the college and the school division ended. Shortly after the Brandon Adult Learning Centre name was changed to the Assiniboine Community College Adult Collegiate (herein referred to as the Adult Collegiate). This name change was seen to better reflect the connection to the College as well as the level of learning offered. The Encarta Dictionary defines the term *collegiate* as “involving, belonging to, appropriate to, or being a college, including its students and their pursuits”.

The Adult Collegiate program provides high school and college credits for individuals who need their grade 12 diploma, or particular courses to meet entry requirements for post-secondary, or to enhance their competitiveness in the workplace. It assists adults in making positive changes in their lives, and uses a variety of methods to reach learners with different backgrounds and learning needs. Over the years, by virtue of

retaining and graduating learners, it became evident that this program model is successful in helping adult learners meet their educational goals.

Adult Collegiate Demographics

The Adult Collegiate is a high school for adults, and is situated in its own easily accessible site in downtown Brandon. It offers full-time and part-time programs, both days and evening. A large percentage of the learners attend full time, Monday to Friday. They range in age from 19 to over 65, with the majority currently being between 19 – 34 years of age. At present, it is home to approximately 300 adult learners. The majority of these learners share the characteristics of typical adult learners. These characteristics include; delayed enrollment into post-secondary, dependents other than spouse, single parent, financially independent and their primary role is that of parent, worker or spouse with their secondary role being that of learner.

Table 1(below) contains data regarding the demographics – the gender, age, educational, and cultural background of the adult learners registered at the Adult Collegiate during the 2007-08 school year.

Table 1: Adult Collegiate Demographics 2007-2008

Category	Description	Percent
Gender	Male	46
	Female	54
Age	19-24	49
	25-34	33
	35-44	15
	45-54	2
	55 and over	1
Education: Grade level achieved	Less than Grade 8	1
	Completed Grade 8 or 9	20
	Completed Grade 10 or 11	54
	Completed Grade 12	25
Education: Last attended school	Within the past 5 years	59
	Between 6 and 10 years ago	22
	Between 11 and 20 years ago	1
	More than 20 years ago	5
Aboriginal: First Nation, Métis, Other		46

Of particular interest is that of this population :

- 51% of learners are over 25 years of age
- 54% are female
- 28% of adult learners now attending had been out of school 6 -20 years before enrolling at the Adult Collegiate

Clearly, adult learners are prepared to return to school for further education regardless of how long they have been away from school

Dual Credits

Dual Credits Defined

Many jurisdictions use different terms to describe the concept of *dual credits*. In some jurisdictions the term, *concurrent enrollment* is used. This refers to a dual credit system existing at the college or university level. Here, the high school learner is enrolled in a college level course conducted at the college or university, with instruction provided by the college or university faculty. These programs initially were created to provide an incentive for high academic achievers and those intending on moving on to college, with more challenging curricula. They have since evolved to include a wider range of learners, including average, under-prepared and adult learners.

As mentioned earlier, the term dual credit is used in many provinces to describe agreements between high schools, adult learning centres and post-secondary institutions to offer credited post-secondary level courses in a high school setting. The postsecondary institution determines the curriculum content and standards, while the high school faculty

typically teaches the courses. This is the model used at ACC and explored within this research study.

Policy and Practice in Canada

The province of British Columbia was the first province in Canada to introduce dual credits into its high school program. Other provinces, including Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia also offer some dual credits options, but they are primarily for youth. Dual credit policies are similar across the country with slight variations from province to province. They include the following basic standards:

- Post-secondary institutions take appropriate steps to ensure that dual credit courses are of sufficient quality and rigor to qualify for college credit;
- All secondary learners taking dual credit courses meet the same academic prerequisites as apply to other learners taking the course at the post-secondary institution
- Course syllabi used for secondary dual credit courses are equivalent to the same course taught at the post-secondary institution
- Learning outcomes for secondary school learners are the same as those for a course taught at the post-secondary institution;
- The secondary school and the post-secondary institution work together to identify instructors of dual credit courses;
- The post-secondary institution generates transcripts for all learners who complete dual credit courses;

- The secondary dual credit courses transfer to the post-secondary in the same way as the post-secondary course taken on campus

Policy and Practice in Manitoba

Despite the fact that "the dual credit movement has been a significant educational innovation in the United States for many years, most Canadian provinces have yet to embrace it" (Dual Credit Initiative, 2003, p.1). However, in the spring of 2001, Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy engaged in a consultation process that proposed a number of new actions to its high school graduation requirements. These actions, which included dual credits, allow increased program flexibility and learner choice, as well as more meaningful and relevant course choices. Parallel to this, at the request of Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy, the Brandon Adult Learning Centre, (now the Adult Collegiate), and created a document entitled *Pathways to Education* (2000). This document outlined the process of establishing a "systematic approach to offering dual credit courses to adult learners" (Kerr & Bashford, 2000). Jeff Kerr, former director at the Adult Collegiate stated, "offering dual credits has allowed learners to achieve the empowering symbol of a high school diploma, while at the same time making a smooth transition into post-secondary education."

This process resulted in another document entitled *Increasing Choice and Flexibility: Changes to Senior Years Graduation Requirements* (Government of Manitoba, 2001). In the same year, selected post-secondary courses, primarily at the introductory level, could be registered with Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy as designated dual credit courses. Both adults and youth working toward a high school

diploma could now also study post-secondary courses and apply them for credit at both the secondary and post-secondary levels.

The 2007-2008 Directory of Adult Learning Centres in Manitoba, cites that 18 of 44 ALC's offer dual credit courses. An informal survey of these indicates that the majority offer between one to five dual credit courses. Most of the dual credit courses fall into three program areas: health care aid, business and construction trades." The two largest colleges in Manitoba, Red River Community College and the Assiniboine Community College are the most active in offering dual credits in partnership with the ALC's. The ALC directors, who were surveyed, associated dual credits with a number of advantages for the adult learner. These included; reduced costs associated with the shortened length of time it took the adult learner to achieve their learning goals; and exposure of the college/university life, which had the potential to entice them to continue with their education. One director added that it was "good for the local community because this kind of participation in post-secondary education benefits the economy by providing people trained in areas like health where there is a desperate need for more workers."

At a national scale, a group of prominent educators, policy makers, and government leaders gathered in Toronto in 2006 to attend the *Seamless Pathways Symposium* to learn about provincial initiatives that address the challenges associated with the transition to post-secondary. A summary of the symposium cited Manitoba's Dual Credit Option as a very successful initiative. Participants at this symposium were particularly impressed with its credit recognition system that enabled an easier transition between jurisdictions and institutions. The report reiterated that, "greater engagement in

post-secondary education is created by more flexibility” (p.19). The symposium report highlighted that “a silo approach to education and training was ineffective and did not serve students well”. Rather, the symposium participants highlighted the need for “a seamless system that provides life-long learning” (p.21).

Policy and Practice at the Adult Collegiate

The Adult Collegiate delivers dual credit courses in Brandon and within its MSHSD programs outside of Brandon. At the Adult Collegiate, dual credit courses are typically introductory level college courses with no prerequisites. For example, Financial Accounting 1, Aboriginal Studies 1, and Family Dynamics are all entry-level college dual credit courses with no pre-requisite. ([Appendix A](#): Assiniboine Community College Dual Credit Course List). The Director of the Adult Collegiate and the respective Academic Dean at ACC identify appropriate courses as dual credit, allowing their use as high school credit, as well as college credit. Upon identification and approval by the Academic Dean of ACC, staff at the Adult Collegiate submits a request to the Adult Learning and Literacy branch, of Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy to have the college course approved as an acceptable high school credit. Other adult learning centres in Manitoba follow the same procedure as referenced in the Guidelines for Implementing Postsecondary and Senior Years Dual Credits for Adult Learning Centres ([Appendix B](#)) and the Dual Credit Registration Form ([Appendix C](#)).

High school dual credit courses have the same course number and course title as the college course, except that a “D” (indicating dual credit) replaces the first numeral in the course number. For example, on the registration form ACC course COMP-0014

Desktop Publishing is delivered at the Adult Collegiate as COMP-D014 Desktop Publishing.

When learners successfully complete dual credit courses, they receive both their high school and college transcript. A grade 12 dual credit appears on the high school transcript as a 42C (4 indicates grade 12 level course, 2 indicates it is not Department developed, C indicates college course). The course appears on the MSHS transcript with a percentage grade and is converted to a letter grade on the ACC transcript. For example, a grade of 88% on the MSHS transcript will appear as an A on ACC transcript. This grade becomes part of ACC grade point calculation. If these learners choose to continue with a post-secondary program at ACC, they may use these courses for post-secondary credit.

ACC policy sets a minimum grade for dual credit courses. A learner must attain a minimum of 60% (C) or the passing grade of a particular course, if higher than a C, to obtain college credit for the course. With a grade of 50 to 59%, the learner will only receive high school credit for the course.

As noted in the Guidelines for Implementing Post-secondary and Senior Years Dual Credits for Adult Learning Centres, a Manitoba learner can initiate a dual credit course on his or her own if the adult learning centre chooses not to participate. The adult learning centre is still required to complete all the paperwork and report the dual credit on the learner's transcript.

Barriers

For many adult learners, returning to learning is a difficult choice as it means fitting the learning into work, family and community commitments. According to Cross (1981) adult learners must overcome three categories of barriers to be successful in their learning. She describes these categories as situational, dispositional, and institutional. All three barriers can operate both prior to and throughout the learning. The notion of barriers to participation and success in learning opportunities has been written about extensively in the adult education literature. The term *barrier* is often used to describe the problems or challenges encountered by adults that impede them from returning to formal education, or to describe the problems faced by adult learners in their transition to formal education or post-secondary. This study will focus on the latter. A model developed by Cross (1981) describes three categories of barriers that adult learners must overcome to be successful in their learning. She describes these as situational, dispositional, and institutional, and points out that all three barriers can operate both prior to and throughout the learning activity. This study will focus on the dispositional and institutional barriers.

Dispositional Barriers

The dispositional barrier as described by Cross (1981) relates to the learners' beliefs, values, attitudes, and perception of self. According to MacKeracher, Stuart & Potter (2006), dispositional barriers can also refer to the attitudes and values of not only of the learner but also "their significant others, the community and far too many educational providers" and that "most attitudinal barriers are viewed as the result of some inadequacy on the part of the learner" (p.19). Dispositional barriers, which are also

referred to as psychosocial barriers (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982), are described as low self-esteem and self-confidence; negative attitudes towards their situation as a learner, such as being too old, too sick, to busy, or not smart enough; or a previous negative school experience. Cross suggests that this category is far more influential in student participation and success than the data suggest.

Quigley (1998) supports Cross' theory, and feels that some learners have more dispositional barriers than others do and that this factor may put them at a higher risk of dropping out. He explains that although this barrier is the most "enigmatic," it is also the one that educators may have some control over and therefore may be able to reduce."

Institutional Barriers

Institutional barriers consist of policy and practices created, usually subconsciously, by the institution as well as those of federal and provincial governments, and are "frequently biased against or ignorant of the needs of the adult learner" (MacKeracher, Stuart & Potter, 2006, p.3). They are identified as a lack of attractive or practical courses, inconvenient class schedules, inaccessible locations, unclear registration processes and procedures, issues related to time, lack of transportation, the cost of getting to and from school, lack of adequate childcare and the financial support for childcare, and inadequate student support services.

Another institutional barrier is related to the entry-level criteria or acceptance requirements to enroll in post-secondary programs. Many post-secondary institutions require a high school diploma or at minimum a grade 12 math and/or grade 12 English credit, although some will give tacit recognition for prior learning for mature learners.

“Few programs have lower minimum requirements. “In fact, it is more common for a program to have *higher* requirements, such as specific prerequisite courses or a certain grade point average” (Myers & de Broucker, p.39).

In summary, adult learners confront a multitude of barriers when participating in learning activities. They may encounter the barriers within the educational institutions’ policies and practices, or in the dispositions or attitudes, they bring to the learning. The barriers to participation in adult learning are many, which make one wonder why adults would ever desire to pursue learning opportunities. Their decision to return to learn is a powerful indication of their need to seek out and learn new knowledge and skills, and to their perseverance.

THE PURPOSE OF THE INQUIRY

...The evidence is irrefutable that adult students have achieved normative status in higher education, at least as deserving of our attention as the stereotypical 18-23 year old student in residential, full-time study.(ALFICan, p.13).

Educational institutions are recognizing that adult learners have needs that are different from the younger, traditional learner (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982), and that there are multitudes of barriers that interfere with their transition to post-secondary education. Therefore, educators are looking at ways to adapt their programs and practices to ease that transition and to accurately meet the unique requirements and preferences of an adult population returning to school. Current studies suggest that most adults returning to school encounter many obstacles or barriers (Quigley, 1998). According to Cross (1981) these barriers can be situational, institutional, and dispositional or attitudinal.

One practice, aimed at reducing barriers to adult learning, is the inclusion of dual credit courses into the educational program. As described in the previous sections, in Manitoba, dual credit courses allow learners working toward a high school diploma to study post-secondary courses and to apply those hours for credit at both the secondary and post-secondary levels concurrently. The bulk of existing literature on dual credits reflects their history and evolution in the United States and Canada from the early 1970's through to 2005, including the various policies and practices, but it is almost entirely focused on youth (in secondary school education).

Dual credits intuitively address a variety of problems that educators have identified with secondary and post-secondary education in the U.S. and Canada, which includes the success students have when moving from high school to post-secondary. Much of this concern is driven by the low rates of persistence in and completion of post-secondary education. In a recent study, Bragg, Kim, & Rubin (2005) found that all 50 American states reported that dual credits courses were being offered in the high schools. While there are many initiatives and programs designed to facilitate the transition to college, such as dual credits, they are still primarily being used for high-achieving youth. The National Center for Education Statistics (1996) estimates "that only 5% of institutions with dual credit programs – or 2% of all institutions – had dual credit programs geared toward high school students at risk of academic failure." Within this area of practice, there is very little research which focuses on adult learner's outcomes or barriers to learning in this context and "we have very little understanding of the forms and types of learning that work best for less-educated adult learners" (Myers & de Broucker, p. 70).

The focus of this study is to explore the impact dual credits have on adult learners in the pursuit of post-secondary education. Specifically, the study examines the extent that dual credits reduce the institutional and dispositional barriers adult learners' experience, and therefore the extent to which they ease transition to post-secondary education. The study centers on the enrollment of adult learners in a dual credit option in a Manitoba adult learning centre setting, specifically the Adult Collegiate. Also examined in the study are the policies and processes used in administering the dual credit program, and benefits and challenges that are associated with a dual credit enrollment. The study concludes with a discussion of implications for policy and practice and recommendations for further research.

Assumptions

A basic assumption in this study is that barriers do impact a learners transition to post-secondary, and that there is a direct correlation between the extent to which the barriers are reduced and the extent to which the transition is improved. Policymakers have reason to believe that with improved transition, adult learners will have increased college access and success. The logical conclusion is that lessening the barriers will increase an adult learner's success in post-secondary education. With these givens, this study will deal with a strategy to lesson the barriers – dual credits.

Scope and Limitations

Although there are 70 adult learning centres and 5 colleges in Manitoba, this study will focus on the area of adult learning within one adult learning centre, the Adult

Collegiate, and one college, the Assiniboine Community College. The aspect of this study is the impact of dual credits on adult learners and their transition to post-secondary. The study explores dual credits obtained at the Adult Collegiate and examines the extent dual credits can ease the transition to college for adult learners.

This study highlights the substantial challenges and barriers adult learners experience in gaining access to post-secondary, in reaching their goal of graduation from a post-secondary education and the relationship of these barriers to dual credits. Darkenwld and Merriam (1982) highlight that “the adult’s ability to acquire new information may have more to do with lifestyle, social roles, and attitudes than with an innate ability to learn” (p. 76). Although, Cross (1981) recognizes three barriers to learning; dispositional, situational, and institutional, this study will only focus on the dispositional and institutional barriers. The dual credit option is one rapidly growing and promising initiative that addresses some of these barriers.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Research Design

In January 2006, St. Francis Xavier University Ethics Board approved this research study and the research was conducted between August and December 2007. The overall design was a single case study methodology. This methodology was appropriate on the basis that the study met the criteria outlined by Yin (2003) for a single case study. It would allow me to investigate a contemporary phenomenon and the context in which it exists – in this case the transitioning of adult learners through a dual credit option into post-secondary education. As well, the single case study was appropriate on

the basis that it would allow me to look at the experience of adult learners in this context in a more holistic way, and to explore and “explain the presumed causal links in real life intervention [of this phenomenon] that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies”(p.15).

This research study was undertaken as a qualitative inquiry, in which using an extensive review of the related literature I evaluated the findings from two focus groups conducted with 10 adult learners at the Adult Collegiate. Specifically, the focus groups explored the learners’ perceptions of their experience as students enrolled in dual credit courses at the Adult Collegiate.. The research participants were attending Assiniboine Community College at the time this research was undertaken.

The focus groups captured thick, rich detailed descriptions of the adult learner’s experience with the dual credit option and the impact they felt dual credits had on their transition to post-secondary. In addition to this, quantitative data from a variety of other internal and external [to ACC] data sources informed this study. These include dual credit enrollment statistics and other data from Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy branch, a Dual Credit Survey conducted in 2003 by Heather McDevitt, and the Dual Credit Initiative, which resulted from the previous Dual Credit Survey. This collection of multiple sources of information corroborates the same phenomenon. The analysis and triangulation of data from the above sources provides the basis for the findings and recommendations in this study.

As an initial step in recruiting research participants for this study, I sent a *Letter of Invitation to Participate* to former Adult Collegiate learners who had completed dual credit courses and who were currently enrolled at ACC. ([Appendix D](#): Letter of Invitation

to Participate). This letter explained the purpose of the research, identified the focus group procedure, and invited them to participate. They were provided with my contact information; phone, email, and mailing address. Upon contacting the researcher and consenting to participate, the researcher arranged a convenient time and place for interested persons to meet. Two focus groups were formed from those that had replied and expressed an interest to participate in the research study. At the outset of both focus groups, the researcher explained the project and the conditions of participation. After making sure that the participants fully understood the nature and conditions of the research, including that the focus group would be audiotaped those who agreed to participate in the research signed an informed consent form. ([Appendix E: Informed Consent Form](#)) A number code assigned to each participant, ensured anonymity and confidentiality for the participants in the research project and processes

The focus of this phase of data collection was to capture the participants experience and their perceptions of the effects of dual credits on their experience. Specifically they articulated the extent to which participation in the dual credit option helped to minimize the barriers they encountered when transitioning to post-secondary education.

The literature review undertaken for this study explored dual credits, adult education, adult learning theory, and barriers to learning. The literature review, conducted before the focus group interviews, helped me to plan the inquiry and position the research. It helped me to facilitate the sessions and to probe for further insights during the focus group in order to understand the barriers people experienced. In examining this

data, I was able to make comparisons, between the literature review and the adult learner experiences and responses, and to understand the meaning of the resulting data.

Profile of the Participants

The participants' makeup was;

3 males and 7 females.

Aged 19 to 45

Various ethnic backgrounds

All received dual credits from the Adult Collegiate

All were enrolled at ACC at the time of the study

Adult learners in the study stated various reasons for returning to high school. The majority of the learners stated that the reason they returned to school was “to get my grade 12 so I can get a good job.” Other reasons include:

- to upgrade courses in order to be eligible for entry into postsecondary education or workplace training
- to upgrade their education to help their children with their homework
- to be a role model for their family
- to obtain a Grade 12 credential as a sign of personal achievement
- to obtain a document that verified their skills to provide to their potential employers

Conducting the Interviews

In the process of arranging the focus group interviews, it quickly became apparent that the barriers that learners encountered when entering ACC were prevalent throughout their educational experience. Even though many former Adult Collegiate learners wanted to participate in the focus group, they were unable to because of situational barriers such as a lack of time, conflicts with day care schedules or transportation issues. The first attempt to schedule a focus group had too few participants to proceed therefore the session was postponed to a later date. In the process of rescheduling this focus group session, the researcher discovered that potential participants found it difficult to attend sessions scheduled after 6:00 p.m. because they would not have access to childcare, or would have difficulty arranging transportation to the session due to bus schedules. Dispositional barriers became apparent as some participants expressed fear about the focus group process itself and were afraid that it might be “too formal and intimidating.” Considering this information, I scheduled the second focus group session at a time and place that was as convenient as possible for the participants. This focus group was scheduled at the end of the school day and did not conflict with classes. It was on campus and limited to one hour in length allowing participants time to catch the next bus and arrive at the daycare in good time. It was important to acknowledge participants contribution of time by providing snacks and beverages and a small honorarium.

I created a welcoming environment that encouraged participants to share their perceptions and points of view without feeling intimidated, pressured or uneasy. I explained the purpose and format of the focus group, and after answering all their questions about the focus group, requested that participants sign an informed consent

form. The signed informed consent form outlined the conditions of their participation in the research, and provided them with my contact information. The informed consent form also clearly stated that participants could withdraw from the focus group at any time without penalty.

During the focus groups I, asked the adult learners a series of questions and probes designed to obtain their perception of the benefits of dual credit courses in relation to dispositional and institutional barriers encountered while they were enrolled at the Adult Collegiate, and in their transition to ACC ([Appendix F: Focus Group Questions](#)). Questions moved from general to more detailed probes and challenges with contrasting ideas. I focused on gaining insights into the ideas and perceptions of the learners themselves. It is important to see the data “through the hearts and eyes of the target audience” (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p.15).

To ensure reliability of the data, I conducted all of the focus groups and transcribed the audiotapes. The names of individuals in the focus groups were changed to a number in the transcribed documents to protect the identity of all the participants. The data collected from the focus groups is stored in a locked file cabinet in my home, and only nobody else had access to the data collected (audio tapes, transcripts of focus groups, and signed informed consent forms).

Data Analysis

The goal of the focus groups was to explore the experience of the participants and to collect qualitative data on dual credits and their impact on the transition to post-secondary for adult learners. Prior to and following the focus groups, I conducted an

analysis of the various data sources, which began by comparing data collected from the focus groups with other data. This included a one year pilot of dual credits at the Adult Collegiate, together with a Dual Credit Survey conducted by H. McDevitt (2003). This survey included the responses from 94 of a possible 147 adult learners about their experience in a dual credit system and addressed issues related to learners' current status, the benefits of completing dual credit courses, the issue of having spare class time at college or university, and the timing of the learners decision to move on to post-secondary. Another data source was the 2003 Dual credit Initiative, and data from government reports. The themes and patterns, which emerged from these various data sources informed an overall understanding of the effects of dual credits on the adult learner and their transition to post-secondary in this case.

The data from the focus group were compared to those of the above noted studies indicated dual credits do in fact have a large impact in terms of easing the adult learners' transition to post-secondary. The extent of the impact was demonstrated in the reduction of dispositional and institutional barriers.

Presentation and Discussion of Data

In this section the extent to which, and the way in which the dual credit option minimized both dispositional and institutional barriers in this case, is discussed.

The Impact of Dual Credits on Dispositional Barriers

All of the adult learners in this study graduated from the Adult Collegiate with their high school diploma before moving on to ACC. They reported experiencing

dispositional barriers related to attitudes, beliefs, and perception of self in their earlier learning careers. The focus group participants commented that these dispositional barriers were reduced due to their enrollment in dual credits. These included that perceptions of self and attitudes towards education had changed.

In the focus group adult learners reported that while at the Adult Collegiate, their perception of self changed over time. They became more confident in their skills because they were able to successfully complete the dual credit courses. Eight of the ten participants stated that taking a dual credit course raised their self-esteem and their self-confidence. One person commented that when friends and family became aware that she was taking colleges course their attitude towards her also changed, and “they were surprised that I could do that” and that “it makes you feel proud to tell your friends that you are taking a college course.” The fact they had enrolled in dual credits and were performing successfully raised their profile and credibility within their family and circle of friends. This in turn boosted their confidence to succeed and continue to post-secondary education. The extent to which this change of impact was significant, is highlighted by one female participant who remarked that, “Dual credits helped me gain my confidence, and now I can hold my chin up high.” Clearly also, the impact extended beyond the learner themselves to their families, as shown in this statement, “your relatives, your nieces and nephews, see you as a role model,” and “I thought I couldn’t do it but now that I have, my friends are asking me about dual credits.” The benefits were also seen to extend to the community, as one learner explains, “I have more confidence in myself. Dual credits helped me realize my own potential, and now I can re-use my knowledge to help others.”

Participants' attitudes toward education also changed and this was manifest primarily in a motivation to continue in their studies. Eight out of ten participants commented that by taking dual credits their perception of education became more positive. Clearly, as the following comments suggest, the experience of taking the dual credits reduced the barriers related to negative attitudes and lack of motivation. For example, one student reported, "going to the Adult Collegiate and taking dual credits showed me I could get good grades and that made me motivated to keep up the good work." Another said that dual credits gave her the confidence to know that she could "handle college." Dual credits were also seen by some to serve as a bridge to the post secondary level. For example, one of the participants interviewed was already a high school graduate when she enrolled at Adult Collegiate, but she did not feel ready to attempt college without some preparation. She remarked, "I thought college was full of smart people, and I didn't think I was one of them, it was too intimidating." Then she proudly stated, "I'm one of them now."

Adult learners in the focus groups also reported that their educational goals changed because of taking the dual credit option. Individual's goals can also be related to their perception of self and can influence their educational success. Brookfield points out that "the advantage of goal setting is that it brings the future into the present and allows the learner to become aware of what he needs to do to have a successful learning experience" (1995, p.161). Eight of the ten participants reported that their educational goal had changed after taking dual credit courses. The majority of the participants in the study first enrolled at the Adult Collegiate because they "just wanted the grade 12 to get a better job." One participant commented that previously she "had no education plan

beyond my grade 12”, but once she graduated with her grade 12, she discovered that she “liked education and wanted more” and subsequently enrolled at ACC. Highlighting the primary reason for this change, nine out of ten participants felt more prepared for post-secondary because they took dual credit courses. One participant stated, “dual credits allowed me to learn the material downtown” (the Adult Collegiate). This was an easier pace with smaller classes and more attention from the teachers.”

In summary, the participants in this study reported that as a result of dual credits, obtained at the Adult Collegiate, they experienced increased self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and they developed clearer and longer term educational goals. They also reported that they now have a more positive attitude towards education and that they were more motivated to continue to post-secondary. Participation in dual credit courses at the Adult Collegiate reduced barriers to learning and increased opportunities for success; thereby easing the transition to post-secondary..

The Impact of Dual Credits on Institutional Barriers

As mentioned earlier, institutional barriers can generally be grouped into five areas: scheduling, problems with location or transportation; lack of interesting or relevant courses; procedural problems and time commitments; and a lack of financial resources. The focus group participants revealed several institutional barriers, which they believed, were reduced because of their enrollment in dual credits. These included financial issues, time issues and relevance of courses.

All of the participants (10) commented that the dual credit option enabled them to save money and to minimize barriers related to costs. High school courses are tuition free. The

dual credits fall under this category thus saving participants tuition and textbook costs while allowing them credits in college courses. Several participants who had completed computer related dual credits stated they saved more than \$700 in textbook costs. The ability to take some of their ACC courses without tuition and textbook cost reduced their financial burden and thus reduced that barrier. In turn, this assisted greatly in their transition to post-secondary. Moreover, three female participants in the focus groups had young children. All three reported their childcare costs reduced by virtue of the shorter time line for completing credits. The dual credits they had completed at the Adult Collegiate gave them more time while at ACC. to spend with their children rather than keeping them in childcare. A focus group participant who was a single mother stated that having more in the morning “provided much needed extra time to get my children to school.” This saved early morning child care costs.

Related to this, is the extent to which the dual credit option enabled participants to overcome barriers related to time. All (10) participants remarked that dual credit courses saved them precious time while at ACC. They did not have to re-take the dual credit courses after successfully completing them at the Adult Collegiate. This allowed them more flexibility in scheduling their courses at ACC. 6 out of 10 used the extra time to study or do more homework, thus producing better grades. A learner stated that he used the spare time to study, or complete assignments, “which helped me raise my GPA.” Three out of ten used the time to take additional courses, thus improving their educational experience at ACC. Four out of ten used the time to dedicate to their children or families. The barrier of time was reduced because these learners had taken dual credits before they had enrolled at ACC. One adult learner stated “ knowing I would have all this extra time

made it easier for me to make the decision to move one to ACC” This had a positive impact upon their transition to ACC.

At the same time, some participants in the focus group reported taking advantage of the available time to complete their studies in a shorter period, thus allowing them to get back into the workforce sooner. Graduates from the Integrated Comprehensive Health Care Aid program can graduate after 10 months with both their high school diploma and their college certificate in Health Care Aid. Normally, completion of both of these credentials would take an individual a total of 19 months. This has a positive impact upon their financial situation thus reducing that barrier.

Finally, the third institutional barrier, which the dual credit option helped to minimize, related to the relevance of the courses taken by the focus group participants. Courses that are irrelevant and do not fit into the learners’ educational goals are institutional barriers. Eight of ten participants believed the dual credit courses they took were more relevant than standard high school courses. By having relevant courses, the focus group was able to reduce that barrier thus having a positive effect upon their transition to post-secondary.

Findings from Additional Dual Credit Studies

The responses from the adult learners in this study revealed that dual credits had a significant impact on dispositional and institutional barriers and a positive, significant impact on the transition to post-secondary. These finding are consistent with the findings from two other studies, the Dual Credit Survey (introduced earlier in this report), which resulted in a second study, and the Dual Credit Initiative.

The Dual Credit survey contacted 94 out of a possible 147 adult learners. The results of the survey indicated that 78% of the learners felt they had “benefitted from taking dual credit courses”. Sixty-seven percent of respondents in that study felt that their self-confidence was positively enhanced by the completion of a dual credit course.” In addition, 81% of the total learners indicated that they had the opportunity to continue at the college level. Forty-two percent saved money once they reached college, and 38% felt that taking the dual credit course had improved their employability.” Further to this, 78% of the learners indicated a strong association between taking dual credits and the benefits gained at college. When asked about their decision to advance to post-secondary 47% stated that dual credits influenced their decision to enroll in post-secondary education (p.11).

Other findings related to the experiences of dual credits obtained within other Manitoba adult learning centres and high schools, were outlined in the Dual Credit Initiative (2003) by Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy. This study took the results of the Dual Credit Survey and built on it by including data on high school students enrolled in dual credits. The findings of this study were consistent with and reinforced by my findings related to the benefits of taking dual credits. These included that the experience:

- created a continuum of learning from high school to college;
- shortened the time required for high school learners to complete a college program;
- eliminated the duplication of courses taken in high school and college;

- sharpened learners' abilities and general academic preparedness for college;
- expanded the academic options for college-bound learners; and enhance college-credit options (p.5)

The Dual Credit Initiative (2003) also included the results of a province-wide survey of high schools and adult learning centres, which also produced some interesting results on dual credits. For example, 70% of adult learners felt that the content of dual credit courses was “very relevant”. Adult learners expressed a higher satisfaction with dual credits than high school learners, stating that dual credits gave them the freedom “to better plan their studies” (p.12). These results are similar to those cited earlier in the findings on my study.

Additional Findings Related to Planning Adult Education Programs.

In addition to comments related to the dual credit courses, focus group participants identified factors related to the planning of the dual credit courses that were related to adult education principles and practice. These factors created an environment in the Adult Collegiate that was conducive to their participation as adult learners and which assisted them in their transition to post-secondary education. These included:

1. *.Academic assistance:* Participants were provided with academic assistance and tutoring to navigate the ACC courses that were more challenging than the high school courses. This support was seen as necessary to ensure learner success. These comments from the focus groups corroborated previous studies that suggested prospective learners, families and school counselors or advisors, should be provided with

current and credible information about dual credit courses and their benefits. One often cited institutional barrier is the “lack of information about programs or procedures” (Cross, 1981, p.104). As described by one learner many learners first discovered dual credits when they enrolled at the Adult Collegiate, “the advisor customized my schedule at the Collegiate after I told him that I wanted to go on to ACC to take Business Admin. He gave me all the dual credits I could take.” Once learners enrolled in the Adult Collegiate, they became aware of dual credit courses, but did not understand their significance until they became a college learner. As Cross (1981) points out that even if an individual does not recognize the value or significance of the dual credit course then the lack of understanding “acts as a barrier, whether it actually exists or not” (p.104).

2. *College and Career Success courses:* In her book *Adults as Learners*, Cross (1981) stresses that in adult education it is not just about who is doing the learning or the teaching, but also about what is being learned. College and Career Success courses were available to help learners build the necessary skills to navigate the Adult Collegiate and post-secondary environment. The focus of the course was on helping them to understand the expectations and tasks associated with managing college courses, such as critical reading, note taking, time management and study skills.
3. *A comfortable, safe environment:* Many Adult Collegiate learners commented on the importance of the learning environment as a key

ingredient to success. As adult learners first enrolled in the Adult Collegiate, they often felt uncomfortable, shy and unsure of themselves. Many of these adult learner had prior negative school experiences, and therefore it was important that the learning environment and activities created a “welcoming atmosphere” (Merriam and Caferella, 1999, p. 224). The majority of the focus group participants found the learning environment at the Adult Collegiate to be less intimidating than ACC. They cited a smaller campus size as contributing to the more positive environment for learning. In the view of nine of ten focus group participants, the Adult Collegiate setting provided them with a supportive environment. One learner shared that she found the staff at the Adult Collegiate “supportive and very accommodating” and that she “felt good about being there.” Wlodkowski (1999) stresses the importance of lessening the sense of fear and anxiety that some learners may experience as these feelings can act as barriers and inhibit learning.

4. Creating a setting within which both learners and staff set high expectations and where there were opportunities to engage in critical discussions with classmates was seen as important. Knowles considers these characteristics as falling under the heading “An Atmosphere of Adulthood” (2005, p.120). Learner participants also commented on the importance of a culture of positive peer support. Knowles (2005) believes that adult learners “need to be seen by others and treated by others as being capable of self-direction” (p.65). Therefore, creating a setting within

which they were able to challenge themselves and others, without feeling judged or put down, was seen as important condition for facilitating adult learning generally, both within and beyond the dual credit system.

5. *Caring and knowledgeable advisors:* Learners stressed the importance of access to caring, professional staff that could provide a safe place to discuss problems and to assist with post-secondary program options and information.

This study reinforces the importance of incorporating adult education principles into all forms of educational practice, involving adults, including the planning for dual credits. While dual credits minimize will not influence the four factors mentioned above, these factors do have a significant impact on the adult learner's ability to successfully complete dual credits.

The barriers to participation in adult learning are many. However, once educators have a better understanding of the barriers experienced by adult learners, they can more actively minimize these barriers and maximize the effectiveness of the institution. This will allow for a more successful transition for adult learners from one level of education to the next. We must understand that there are interactions between the various types of barriers and therefore it is not enough to look at the barriers separately. Although the five factors mentioned above are not comments made directly about dual credits, they do play an important role in enhancing the impact of dual credits.

CONCLUSIONS

The experiences of the focus group participants together with other data collected in this case study demonstrates that dual credits do reduce the dispositional and institutional barriers.

While enrolled in dual credit courses at the Adult Collegiate, dispositional barriers associated with a lack of self-esteem and self-confidence were minimized. In fact, learner's self-esteem and self-confidence increased, and as a result, they were motivated to complete their courses. When they first enrolled at the school, they only saw themselves as possible high school graduates, but while participating in dual credit courses their perception changed, and they were able to see themselves as "college material." Dual credits offered these learners the exposure to college material and therefore the opportunity to gain an understanding of the expectations of college. The high expectations also served to increase their internal motivation. Learners were able to look ahead, as the dispositional barriers were reduced, and consider the possibility of post-secondary education, a dream, which they had not dared to dream when they first started. This enhances their chances of successfully moving on to post-secondary education.

Once at ACC, their positive self-esteem as learners and their self-confidence was sustained. At this point, the learners considered themselves as "one of those smart people" at the college. Dual credits were also able to reduce the institutional barriers of cost, time, and relevance of course content. Dual credit courses reduced the costs of tuition, textbooks and supplies. The dual credits completed at the Adult Collegiate as part

of the high school program are tuition free, and books/supplies are covered as part of the program. Adult learners are able to realize significant savings.

Kidd (1978) stresses that for an adult learner “time is of very great consequence” and “for an adult, more than for a child, the investment of time in an activity may be as important a decision as the investment of money or effort” (p.48). Because of accumulated college credits at the high school level, learners were able to complete their program in a shorter time, as well as giving them additional time to deal with family, work or school responsibilities.

Adult learners find it important to understand the relevance of their courses to their life and career goals. This study reinforces that access to the dual credit college courses enabled adult learners to see these courses as relevant to their life and related to their career goals and aspirations.

In the focus groups, the learners spoke with enthusiasm when talking about the impact of dual credit courses on their college experience. This clearly demonstrated the positive effect of dual credits on the attitude or disposition of the learners. This was articulated by one of the participants who, when asked if dual credits benefitted her in any way once she started college, she responded, “it was the key to another door, and then another door...and another door.” This was a commonly shared view among all the learners in the focus groups.

In summary, at the beginning of this paper, I asked four questions. Below are the original questions together with the answers to those questions.

1. *What happens between the time they walked in the door and second semester?*

This study shows that with well-planned programs focused on providing

appropriate academic supports adult learners are successfully able to completing dual credits. Completing dual credits in turn, reduces the barriers and adds to a successful and easier transition towards further studies.

2. *What has changed in their self-perception, their goals, and their attitudes towards school?* This study found all three were positively influenced by dual credits to the extent that adult learners were more confident, had clearer goals, and had a more positive attitude towards education.
3. *Will those changes follow them as they transition to post-secondary?* The experience of the focus group participants in this study provides evidence that the above changes related to the reduction of dispositional and institutional barriers enabled these adult learners to progress towards their stated educational goals.
4. *Would having taken dual credit courses influence these changes?* Dual credits did greatly influence the adult learners' transition to post-secondary by reducing the barriers and were the major factor in affecting the changes related to self-perception, goals and attitudes.

The appeal of dual credit courses was clearly conveyed in the accounts of the adult learners in this study. Learners were very positive in their appraisal of dual credits and in recommending them to other adult learners.

At a time when educators and policy makers are convinced that some post-secondary education is a necessity for everyone, they are also concerned with the shrinking adolescent population and the increasing adult population. The need for a better-trained workforce requires more adults enrolled in post-secondary. Many see the dual credit concept as a way to provide adult learners an opportunity to "try on" college

life before they enroll full time and in doing so, reduce many barriers they may encounter.

The next century will be full of potential and promise, but we must face the critical issue of an under prepared population. The prevalence of barriers to adult participation in learning is one of the most important issues confronting adult education in Canada and needs addressing. As it becomes increasingly important to provide post-secondary training to more adults, finding ways to ease this transition to post-secondary education, in order to meet future demands for a skilled work force, is paramount. Dual credit enrollment may be one way to reduce the barriers for adults as they transition into post-secondary education.

It is difficult to separate dual credits from basic adult education principles. In order to be successful with dual credit courses the adult learner needs an adult education program, including its faculty and its environment to follow adult learning principals. These principals positively affect the transition to post-secondary, but adding the dual credit option enhances that impact by:

- giving learners first hand experience with college level courses,
- helping them gain a sense of accomplishment,
- developing confidence based upon the experience of being enrolled in and successfully completing college courses,
- providing courses that are more relevant to their educational and career goals,
- saving money, and
- saving time.

Adult learners are complex. They not only have educational needs but their personal, family and community lives have complexities and challenges. To be successful at the educational goals the other issues also need to be taken into account. Adult learning principles partially address this concern. Without a setting which follows adult learning principles, learners may have a more challenging time successfully completing the dual credit course.

This study was undertaken to increase an understanding among adult educators, college administrators and policy makers about the potential benefits of dual credits. They increase access to post-secondary education by adult learners and they contribute to retention in post-secondary education. More broadly, the study is intended to enable an understanding among these groups about the importance of developing education programs that are focused on the needs of the adult learner, and which take into consideration the barriers adults experience in transitioning to post-secondary education. Adult educators, college administrators and policy makers need to make high quality learning opportunities a priority for adult learners. Education policies should include clear learning paths for various learning options such as dual credits. This path should be seamless and provide lifelong learning opportunities.

This study clearly shows that in order to ease the transition to post-secondary, the barriers need to be reduced or eliminated. Successfully completing dual credits has been shown to play a large role in reducing or eliminating these barriers. However, the educational facility must provide support to adult learners through academic assistance, preparation courses, a comfortable and safe environment, and caring/knowledgeable advisors, in order to ensure adult learners success at completing dual credits.

IMPLICATIONS /RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has sought to add to existing knowledge about the impact of dual credits on the transition of adult learners to post-secondary. There is much more to learn about the overall impact of dual credits on adult learners. There needs to be more research into adult education settings, specifically the relationship between the adult education principles and the success of dual credits.

This research reveals that within a Manitoba context, there is a need for further dual credit research to determine the impact of dual credits on:

- (a) adult learners' grade point average (GPA), including as it relates to under-represented groups (racial/ethnic), from first to second semester and from first to second year,
- (b) adult learner retention from first to second semester and from first to second year, particularly as it relates to under-represented groups (racial/ethnic),
- (c) shortening the time to complete college studies for learners with dual credits compared to those learners without dual credits,
- (d) the extent to which dual credits influence job market outcomes particularly those that took technical training, or health care, will be important to explore.

Educators and policy makers need to provide more support to dual credits. The process they put in place must be flexible, dynamic and accessible in order to meet the many needs of adult learners. Dual credits are one of the most meaningful programs that policy makers and educational institutions can implement to reduce or minimize barriers

that get in the way of success for the adult learner; thereby greatly improving their transition to post-secondary education.

I believe this study can have a broader impact than just to the Adult Collegiate in Brandon, Manitoba. If adult learning centres can combine the basic adult education principles with dual credits the results of this study can be duplicated in other jurisdictions. This will require adult learning centres to develop networking relationships with numerous supportive community agencies to act as resources for learners facing the many challenges they encounter in their lives. This will result in a more holistic approach to dealing with adult learners. The concept of dual credits will also need more public promotion. Adult educators and policy makers have a vested interest in easing the transition for adult learners to post-secondary. This study shows that dual credits do ease that transition. Increasing public knowledge will increase the demand for dual credits therefore helping achieve the goal of a more skilled workforce.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Assiniboine Community College Dual Credit Course List

Appendix B: Guidelines for Implementing Post-Secondary and Senior
Years Dual Credits

Appendix C: Dual Credit Registration Form

Appendix D: Letter of Invitation to Participate

Appendix E: Consent Form

Appendix F: Sample Focus Group Questions

Appendix G: Ethics Board Certificate of Approval

Table 1: Adult Collegiate Demographics 2007-2008



APPENDIX A

DUAL CREDITS

Course Number for College Transcript	Course Number for High School Transcript	Course Title	High School Level	High School Credits	College Credits
ABOR-	ABOR-	Aboriginal Studies 1	42C	0.5	3
ABOR-0004	ABOR-D004	Aboriginal Studies 2 Prerequisite: ABOR-D003 <i>Aboriginal Studies 1 42C</i>	42C	0.5	3
ACCT-	ACCT-	Accounting Principles	42C	1.0	6.0
COMP-0128	COMP-D128	Accounting Software 1 Deactivated	42C	0.5	3.0
HLTH-0001	HLTH-D001	Activities of Daily Living Deactivated	42C	1.0	6.0
SCIE-0005	SCIE-D005	Anatomy & Physiology 1	42C	1.0	6.0
COMP-	COMP-	Application Support	42C	0.5	3.0
DRFT-	DRFT-	Blueprint Reading	42C	0.5	3.0
CPWW-	CPWW-	Building Materials	42C	0.5	1.5
MATH-0061	MATH-D061	Calculus 1 Prerequisite: MATH-D063 Technical Math 42C	42C	0.5	3.0
PEDV-	PEDV-	Career Planning & Dev.	42C	0.5	3.0
PEDV-	PEDV-	College and Career Success	42C	0.5	3.0
COMP-	COMP-	Computer Systems	32C	0.5	3.0
COMP-0164	COMP-D164	Computer Systems Trades Deactivated	32C	0.5	3.0

COMP-0160	COMP-D160	Computerized Accounting 1 <i>Prerequisite: ACCT-D003</i> <i>Financial Accounting 12</i> <i>42C</i>	42C	0.5	3.0
CPWW-	CPWW-	Concrete Forming Tech	42C	0.5	3.0
PSSY-	PSSY-D047	Contemporary Issues	42C	0.5	3.0
BUSN-	BUSN-	Customer Service	42C	0.5	3.0
HLTH-0176	HLTH-D176	Daily Living Laboratory <i>Corequisite: HLTH-D175</i> <i>Daily Living Theory 42C</i>	42C	0.5	3.0
HLTH-0175	HLTH-D175	Daily Living Theory <i>Corequisite: HLTH-D176</i> <i>Daily Living Laboratory 42C</i>	42C	0.5	3.0
COMP-0014	COMP-D014	Desktop Publishing <i>Prerequisite: COMP-D058</i> <i>Word Processing</i>	42C	0.5	3.0
MECH-	MECH-	Diesel Engines 1 Deactivated	42C	1.0	15.0
MECH-	MECH-	Diesel Engines 2 Deactivated	42C	1.0	
PEDV-	PEDV-	Employability Skills	42C	0.5	3.0
PSSY-	PSSY-D019	Family Dynamics	42C	0.5	3.0
ACCT-	ACCT-	Financial Accounting 1	42C	1.0	6.0
MECH-0064	MECH-D064	General Maintenance Deactivated	42C	1.0	9.0
SCIE-0018	SCIE-D018	General Science	32C	1.0	6.0
HLTH-	HLTH-	Gerontology	42C	0.5	3.0
HLTH-	HLTH-	Growth and Development	42C	0.5	3.0
CPWW-	CPWW-	Hand Tools	42C	1.0	6.0
WRKP-	WRKP-	Health/Environment/Safety	42C	0.5	3.0

HLTH-	HLTH-	Health Issues/Comm. Health	42C	0.5	3.0
ECED-	ECED-	Health/Nutrition/Safety 1	42C	0.5	3.0
HLTH-	HLTH-	Human Growth/Development	42C	0.5	3.0
COMM-	COMM-	Human Relations/Comm.	42C	0.5	3.0
COMM-	COMM-	Interpersonal Comm.	42C	0.5	3.0
COMM-	COMM-	Interpersonal Comm. 1	42C	0.5	3.0
HRMG-	HRMG-	Managing the HR Function	42C	0.5	3.0
HLTH-	HLTH-	Mental Health	42C	0.5	3.0
HLTH-	HLTH-	Nutrition	42C	0.5	3.0
WRKP-0009	WRKP-D009	Orientation & Shop Skills Deactivated	42C	1.0	12.0
CPWW-	N/A	Power Tools Deactivated	42C	1.0	6.0
PRAC-0068	N/A	Practicum 1 – MOTV Deactivated	42C	0.5	3.0
COMP-0013	COMP-D013	Presentation Graphics Deactivated	42C	0.5	3.0
COMM-0110	COMM-D110	Presentation Skill/Graphic Prerequisite: <i>COMP-D058 Word Processing 42C</i>	42C	0.5	3.0
COMM-0007	COMM-D007	Presentation Skills 1 Deactivated	42C	0.5	3.0
PEDV-	PEDV-	Promoting Yourself	42C	0.5	3.0
PSSY-	PSSY-D026	Psychology	42C	0.5	3.0
CPWW-	CPWW-	Shop Layout Deactivated	42C	0.5	3.0
COMP-0007	COMP-D007	Spreadsheets 1 Prerequisite: <i>COMP-D006 Computer Systems 32C or COMP-0022 Computer Applications 31G</i>	42C	0.5	3.0

MATH-0063	MATH-D063	Technical Math	42C	0.5	3.0
PSSY-0021	PSSY-D021	Understanding Child Abuse	42C	0.5	3.0
WELD-	WELD-	Welding 1 Deactivated	42C	0.5	3.0
CPWW-0005	CPWW-D005	Wood Frame Construction <i>Prerequisite: CPWW-D004 Building Materials</i>	42C	1.0	6.0
CPWW-0002	CPWW-D002	Woodworking Machines 1 <i>Prerequisite: CPWW-D001 Hand Tools 42C</i>	42C	0.5	3.0
COMP-0058	COMP-D058	Word Processing <i>Prerequisite: COMP-D006 Computer Systems 32C or COMP-0022 Computer Applications 31G</i>	42C	0.5	3.0

APPENDIX B

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING POST-SECONDARY AND SENIOR YEARS (DUAL CREDITS)

SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Decide whether to participate in the dual credit initiative. Funding is a local matter.
2. Discuss with Advisory Council for School Leadership/Parent Councils the dual credit opportunity available to Senior Years students.
3. Initiate discussions with the post-secondary institutions to explore possibilities of dual credits. If substituting a post-secondary credit for a compulsory senior years course, the college or university credit must meet or exceed the requirements of the compulsory course.
4. Inform Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth of dual credit offerings so that the EIS database can accommodate the registration of these credits.
5. Register courses with the Department using the Dual Credit Registration form signed off by the principal and superintendent for each course before the Department registration deadlines.

MANITOBA EDUCATION, CITIZENSHIP AND YOUTH POLICY EXPECTATIONS:

1. Senior Years students may take a maximum of 5 post-secondary credits.
2. The content of a post-secondary course must be at least 50% different from other courses the student has taken.
3. Post-secondary courses would not be upgrading courses but should lead to a diploma/certificate.
4. Post-secondary courses may be taken as optional or compulsory credits.
5. Students are not required to write the subject area standards test for compulsory credits.
6. Post-secondary courses may be taken at any time, (e.g. first semester, second semester, full year, intersession, or summer) as long as they are registered with the Department.

7. The Department's dual credit registration deadlines are June 30th for the first semester and December 1st for the second semester.
8. The Department requires a Dual Credit Registration form for each of the post-secondary course offerings. Upon receipt of the registration form, the Department will inform the school of the course code to use for reporting marks.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

1. To make appropriate choices, students and their parents need to be made aware of the differing requirements of post-secondary institutions
2. Parents and/or students should check to be sure that courses taken from institutions outside of Manitoba will be accepted at post-secondary institutions within Manitoba, or that credits earned from one Manitoba institution will be accepted by another provincial institution.
3. If a school chooses not to participate, a student could initiate a dual credit course on his/her own. The school is required to complete the necessary paperwork required and report the credit on the student's transcript.
4. While the dual credit opportunity allows for taking post-secondary courses instead of compulsory courses at Senior 4, students may be required by the university or college to complete the Manitoba compulsory requirements first before taking the post-secondary credit.
5. Should students complete the Senior Years compulsory requirements first, courses taken at the post-secondary level would be considered optional courses.
6. Within the Technology Education Program, the cluster of eight (8) courses may include both Senior Years and post-secondary courses. All courses would be eligible for unit credit funding; however, categorical grants would require some discretion on the part of the Department based on the course offerings and the teaching location.

Dual Credits - University and College
 Please return completed form by mail or fax to:
 Adult Learning and Literacy Branch
 310 – 800 Portage Avenue Winnipeg MB R3G 0N4
 Fax: (204) 948-1008 Phone: (204) 945-8247

DUE: ONE MONTH PRIOR TO START OF COURSE
For New Registrations and Renewals of Dual Credits - Adult Learning Centres

Adult Learning Centre Information: PLEASE PRINT

Contact Name: _____ Position: _____

ALC: _____ ALC Code: _____

Address: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____ Fax: _____

Course Information: This application is for: a new registration OR a renewal of registration

Post-Secondary Institution (PSI): _____

PSI Course Title: _____ PSI Course Number: _____

Assessed high school credit value:
 0.5 or 1.0
(Circle one only)

Course Level:
 32C 42C 42U
(Circle one only)

Start Date: _____

End Date: _____

Dual Credit Approval - Signatures below indicate:

- The college/university credit meets or exceeds the hour and level requirements of a high school course
- Successful completion of the course registered as a dual credit can entitle the learner to formal recognition of the credit by both the ALC and the post-secondary institution
- Quality control arrangements are in place to ensure the dual credit course is consistent with the post-secondary institution's standards
- The learner is registered/recognized as a learner of both the ALC and post-secondary institution
- The course forms part of a post-secondary diploma, degree, or certificate
- Registration is valid for relevant program year only and must be renewed annually

SIGNATURE of Education Director: _____ Date: _____

(please print name) _____ E-mail/phone: _____

SIGNATURE of Authorized Representative of School Division, Educational Partner, or (for "stand-alone" ALCs) not-for profit organization/band council/educational authority, etc.: _____

Date: _____

(please print name AND title) _____ E-mail/phone: _____

SIGNATURE of Authorized Representative of Post-Secondary Institution: _____

Date: _____

(please print name AND title) _____ E-mail/phone: _____

Course Description:
 For new registrations only

Method of Delivery: (please indicate) In ALC

Post-Secondary Institution

Distance Education/On-line

TO BE COMPLETED BY MANITOBA ADVANCED EDUCATION AND LITERACY:

Date Stamp: _____

Registered: (signature) _____

Database Entry: _____ Date Registered: _____

REGISTRATION NUMBER:

Valid for relevant program year only and must be renewed annually

April 2007

APPENDIX C



(Date)

Appendix D **Invitation to Participate**

Title of Research: Dual Credits: Do they ease the transition to post-secondary for adult learners in Manitoba? More specifically, do dual credits reduce the institutional and dispositional barriers?

Name of Researcher: Sylvia Provenski
Graduate Student, Adult Education Department
St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada

Dear [Prospective Participant]:

Invitation to Participate

I am inviting you to participate in a study that I am doing as part of my graduate studies in the Department of Adult Education at St. Francis Xavier University. Once you have read and understood this invitation, should you choose to participate, you can indicate your agreement by signing the enclosed Consent Forms and returning one copy to me.

Description of the Study

The purpose of the study is to learn more about your experiences as a former adult high school student who has enrolled at Assiniboine Community College. I would like to know what your experience was like moving from the adult high school to the college, and also what, if any, challenges you may have encountered. I also want to know whether or not having taken dual credit courses helped to ease your transition or move to college.

What is Required of Participants

I will do a group interview that will include you and 5 -7 other former ACCA adult Collegiate or Brandon Adult Learning Centre students. I'll ask questions about your experiences as a student at Assiniboine Community College, and about your experience with dual credit courses. The interview will be audio recorded. You are welcome to decide not to answer any of the questions if you choose. The interview will take approximately three hours of your time and will be conducted at a time and place that is convenient to you. The interview will not result in any missed time from school or work.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during the study by contacting me either in person, by telephone, by email, or in writing. You will have a choice as to whether I can use the data you have provided up to that point. There are no negative consequences to your decision to withdraw.

Potential Benefits and Harms

There are no known harms associated with your participation in this research. However, there may be harms that we don't yet know about.

Your participation is likely to benefit other adult students. By better understanding your experiences, I hope to improve the experience for future adult high school and college students.

Once the study is completed, those participants who are interested in the results will receive a written report outlining my findings.

Confidentiality

There are limits to confidentiality for discussions held in group settings, but I expect our group discussions will not address sensitive issues. The person transcribing the tapes will be bound by the principle of confidentiality. I will also request that the group not share the content of our discussions with anyone else. The information I gather will be kept confidential and recordings and transcripts will be kept in a secure place. Two years after the completion of the study, I will destroy all the data.

I will not use your real name in any of my documentation or when I write my reports.

Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at any time with the contact information listed below. You can also contact my faculty advisor via email or phone (toll free) during business hours.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Provenski

<u>Researcher</u>	<u>Faculty Advisor</u>
<p>Sylvia Provenski 9 Parkside Place Brandon, MB R7B 3A1 Tel: (204)761-5248 or Toll free 1-866-498-8672 sylviap@westman.wave.ca</p>	<p>Professor, Dr. Allan Quigley St. Francis Xavier University PO Box 5000, St. FX Antigonish, NS, B2G 2W5 Tel:(902) 867-3244 Toll free: 1-866-203-1086 aquigley@stfx.ca</p>

Appendix E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Principal Researcher: Sylvia Provenski
Graduate Student, Adult Education Department
St. Francis Xavier University,
Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada

Research Project: Dual Credits: Do they ease the transition to post-secondary for adult learners in Manitoba? More specifically, do dual credits reduce the institutional and dispositional barriers?

I am inviting you to participate in a research project involving your experience in moving from either the Brandon Adult Learning Centre or the Assiniboine Community College Adult Collegiate to the Assiniboine Community College, and of your experience with dual credit courses. I am planning to use the information that you share with me in my graduate studies at St. Francis Xavier University. The information you share will be **completely confidential** and your name as well as any other identification will *NOT* be used.

Before we begin, you need to know how this project is being planned and you need to consent to the plans.

- During the project, you and other former Assiniboine Community College Adult Collegiate and Brandon Adult Learning Centre students will participate in a small group discussion regarding your experience in moving from either the Brandon Adult Learning Centre or the Assiniboine Community College Adult Collegiate to the Assiniboine Community College, and of your experience with dual credit courses.
- A tape recorder will be used to record the discussion
- No identifying information will be included in any documentation resulting from this study.
- All documentation will be kept in a secure and locked cabinet.

If you agree to participate in this study, you agree to and understand the following:

I understand that I can refuse to answer any questions during the group discussion without having to terminate my involvement in this research project.

I understand that the taped interview will be transcribed and the information will be kept confidential.

I understand that the transcript of the interview will not be identified with my name, but that it will be coded with an identification number. My identity and number will be kept confidential by the researcher.

If at any time I wish to withdraw from the project, I may do so and will not suffer any consequences for having discontinued my participation.

I understand that if I choose to withdraw from the study the data that I have provided to that point will be kept unless I specifically request that it not be.

I understand that there are limits to confidentiality for discussions that are held in group settings.

I agree to call Sylvia if I have any problems with anything that is happening with this specific project.

I have read this form and have had all questions about the study answered.

I agree to be interviewed for this project.

Participants printed name

Participants signature

Date

Researcher's signature

Date

Researcher Sylvia Provenski 9 Parkside Place Brandon, MB R7B 3A1 Tel: (204)761-5248 or Toll free 1-866-498-8672 sylviap@westman.wave.ca	Faculty Advisor Professor, Dr. Allan Quigley St. Francis Xavier University PO Box 5000, St. FX Antigonish, NS, B2G 2W5 Tel:(902) 867-3244 Toll free: 1-866-203-1086 aquigley@stfx.ca
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Appendix F

Focus Group Interview Questions

Title of Research: Dual Credits: Do they ease the transition to post-secondary for adult learners in Manitoba? More specifically, do dual credits reduce the institutional and dispositional barriers?

Name of Researcher: Sylvia Provenski
Graduate Student, Adult Education Department
St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada

Opening Question

Go around circle and ask each person to respond to this question:

Please tell us:

- who you are;
- what program you are enrolled in
- what you enjoy doing most when you are not studying or at school

Introductory Question:

Go around the circle and ask each person to make a short statement in response to this question:

1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the term DUAL CREDITS?

Transition Question:

2. Were you aware of what a dual credit course was before you enrolled at the Brandon Adult Learning Centre (BALC) or the ACC Adult Collegiate (ACCAC)?
3. For those of you that answered “yes,” did it influence your decision to enroll at BALC/ACCAC?

Key Questions:

4. Did you find the dual credit courses more relevant to you as an adult than the high school courses?
5. How did it feel to be taking college courses while you were completing your high school diploma?
Prompt: level of confidence or self esteem
6. Think back to when you first started at the Adult Collegiate. Did you have a goal in mind? What was that goal?
7. As you got closer to graduation, did your goal change?
8. What influenced you to change your mind?

9. What barriers or obstacles did you encounter when you started at the college?
10. When you think of these factors (listed on flip chart), do any other barriers come to mind?
11. In what way might dual credits have helped to reduce some of these barriers?
12. What do you like about dual credits?
13. What don't you like about dual credits?
14. Is there anything that you would like to say that you did not get the chance to say?

We want to know how to improve the programs and practice of education institutions like ours, and what difference policies like offering dual credits, makes for adult learners. We appreciate your feedback. Thank you.

APPENDIX G



Certificate of Ethics Approval

The Research Ethics Board

of

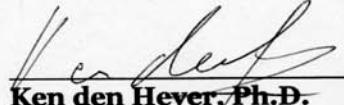
**St. Francis Xavier University,
Antigonish, Nova Scotia**

hereby acknowledges that

Sylvia Provenski

**has been granted ethics approval
to carry out a research project entitled**

**Dual Credits: To what extent do they ease the
transition to post secondary for adult learners
in Manitoba?**


Ken den Heyer, Ph.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Board

January 21, 2006
Date