

# Using Practitioner Reflective Critical Inquiry to Manage Change in Adult Basic Education



Adult Literacy Research Institute



*Using Practitioner Reflective Critical Inquiry to Manage Change in Adult Basic Education*

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Centre for Excellence in  
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## ABSTRACT

This project engaged adult basic education instructors within the Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning department of Bow Valley College in a collaborative process that used reflective critical inquiry as a way to manage programmatic changes. Informed by adult learning principles and framed as participatory action research (PAR), this project created a safe space for practitioners (instructors)<sup>1</sup> to reflect on philosophical perspectives and tensions that emerge during large-scale program change. As a result of engaging in the PAR process, participants identified several key factors that impact the management of, and often resistance to, institutional change: practitioner engagement, teaching philosophies and ethics, training and technology, learners, perceptions of change, resistance, and environment. The project resulted in deeper understanding of the interconnections between structural changes, internal and external challenges surrounding institutional changes, philosophical perspectives on adult basic education, and instructional practices. The recommendations resulting from this research can be drawn upon by educational institutions navigating similar changes or utilized to facilitate further discussion around navigating change.

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<sup>1</sup> Within this report, the terms “practitioner” and “instructor” are used interchangeably to be reflective of both the language used by participants and the language used in research literature. The researchers’ intention when using either term is to refer to people who work as ABE educators.

## INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning (CEFL) at Bow Valley College houses several important programs to serve adult basic education learners. Adult learners wishing to build or upgrade their basic education skills for life, work, or academic purposes often come to Bow Valley College. Like any other field of education, the types of programs and teaching modalities in adult basic education must adapt over time to best serve the learners in a way that is reflective of their needs. Although the reasons for change can at times appear simple, the ways in which change is managed can be extremely complex. Change is influenced by the needs of learners, practitioners, administration, employment sector, economy, and so on. Change is not linear or static, and is highly contextual. As the CEFL underwent significant changes at both the micro and macro levels, coupled with the intent to review and revise program curriculum, it became apparent that engagement and reflection amongst the department as a whole was required to ensure that the changes to come were not only well-received, but were relevant.

The original project was intended to create revised department curriculum for the CEFL. However, as this work progressed, a number of significant institutional changes were underway. Programs were reorganized to be more effective, and leadership over the department and the program areas changed. It became apparent that before changes could be made to the curriculum, CEFL faculty had to have an opportunity to speak to other changes that were happening around them. As is often the case within large institutional settings, faculty were accustomed to adapting to changes as received from the administrative levels. This is no surprise given that “teachers often internalize the status quo of the institution, accepting that things simply are the way they should be” (Finley & Hartman, 2004, p. 325). The project team decided that adaptation to institutional changes might be better if there was an engagement of a multiplicity of players. The curriculum revision project was put on hold and the CEFL’s Adult Literacy Research Institute (ALRI) created and undertook the *Using Practitioner Reflective Critical Inquiry to Manage Program Change in Adult Basic Education* research project (herein referred to as “Managing Change”).

The “Managing Change” project intentionally engaged adult basic education instructors within the CEFL who would be directly impacted by programmatic changes in a collaborative research process exploring the ways in which change is received and managed. Using reflective critical inquiry, informed by adult learning principles (Mace, 1992) and framed as participatory action research (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009), this research project aimed to create a safe space for instructors to reflect on philosophical perspectives and tensions that emerge during large- and small-scale program change. The purpose was to introduce reflective critical inquiry into adult basic education professional practices to build knowledge-sharing and participatory decision-making as effective ways to manage program change. The intended outcomes included a deeper understanding of the interconnections between structural changes, internal and external challenges surrounding institutional changes, philosophical perspectives on adult basic education, and instructional practices.

To ensure the learning environment within the CEFL remained a positive place for learners to work towards their goals during departmental changes, it was necessary to not just receive the changes to come, but to engage with them. The research informing this report supports that the ways in which institutional change is managed is directly impacted by a number of contextual factors and is more easily navigated by having the opportunity to engage in reflective, critical inquiry, both independently and collectively. Providing this opportunity to engage in participatory action research empowered instructors to identify places of tension in their own practice and within the larger institutional arena, and also to reflect on how to ameliorate these tensions in order to manage change effectively (both personally and professionally).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Participatory action research (PAR) is a qualitative method of research that allows for engagement of all members of a project or working group. It encourages involvement of researchers and participants from the early stages of defining and identifying topics, to the later stages of reporting final results (Chevalier & Buckles, 2011; Khan & Chovanec, 2010; McTaggart, 1991; Watters & Comeau, 2010; Yorks, 2005). The method is “unique because participants are regarded as experts due to their lived experiences related to the research topic, ensuring that relevant issues are being studied” (Watters & Comeau, 2010, p. 5). The intent of engaging in PAR is to create an environment where researchers and participants collaboratively identify topics of concern and then engage in a cyclic process of exploring, planning, reflecting, problem solving, and re-evaluating to generate new understandings and knowledge around those topics (Khan & Chovanec, 2010). PAR draws from “phenomenology, ethnography and case-study method and it focuses on the subjective experience of oppressed/marginalized members of society” (Khan & Chovanec, 2010, p. 36). Personal empowerment and institutional engagement can evolve from this process as participants begin to explore topics of meaning and relevance to their own lives. Coming together around common issues encourages a united platform from which participants feel confident to advocate for collective concerns and issues, and encourages the ultimate goal of taking action to make improvements (Watters & Comeau, 2010).

Through PAR, the sharing of narratives becomes an integral piece for unpacking individual experiences as they relate to larger contexts. Personal narratives are important for discovering where professional practice and personal identity meet within social, cultural, political, and historical contexts (Mason, 2001; Watson, 2006). These contexts exert influential forces that both define and constrain how individuals act (Mason, 2001), while providing the foundation for individual and collective critical reflection. An element of the PAR process is that it:

aims to build communities of people committed to enlightening themselves about the relationship between circumstance, action, and consequence in their own situation and emancipating themselves from institutional and personal constraints which limit their power to live their own legitimate educational and social values. (McTaggart, 1991, p. 176)

Engaging in discourse around such constraints allows participants to critically analyze personal and collective responses to experiences, allowing for a “powerful source of insight into the resolution of problems” (Brookfield, 1995, p. 20).

Reflective critical inquiry, or reflective inquiry as it is often termed, embodies much of the shift in qualitative research to more critical methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In contrast with the largely positivistic methodologies that dominated early approaches to qualitative research, a “reflexive approach to the research process is now widely accepted in much qualitative research ... the aim is to consciously acknowledge” (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 695). Within the field of education, reflective inquiry is encompassed by reflective teaching approaches that amount to the resulting practical application of this ideology:

From the perspective of the individual teacher, this means that the process of understanding and improving one’s own teaching must start from reflection upon one’s own experience, and that the sort of wisdom derived entirely from the experience of others is insufficient. (Zeichner & Liu, 2010, p. 69)

While reflective inquiry has become a popular approach to research in education, reflection is not always critical. Critically exploring one’s own experience requires a relational view of one’s professional identity as it influences one’s professional action/practice (Watson, 2006). In order to engage in critical reflection one needs to examine:

how considerations of power undergird, frame, and distort educational processes and interactions ... [while also questioning] assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching lives easier but actually work against our own best long-term interests. (Brookfield, 1995, p. 8)

Engaging in critical reflection results in becoming consciously aware of assumptions that underlie thoughts and actions, analyzing the validity of these assumptions as they are related to professional experiences, and reforming or reframing these assumptions to facilitate personal and professional change (Gee, 2000-2001). Some theoretical perspectives in education, such as social constructivism, recognize that teaching is “an emotional practice, that education systems are complex and dynamic and that implementing change involves social interactions bound by time and place” (Saunders, 2012, p. 306). Successful analysis of assumptions requires *noticing* within the context of personal psychological, historical, and structural elements of a moment; of processes of teaching-learning; of immediate institutional forces; and/or of larger social, cultural, political, and historical structures in which education is embedded (Mason, 2001, p. 15). Each noticing moves one closer to engaging in discoveries about why individual and collective choices of action or inaction are made, and how one can begin to rethink these patterns of choice as one manages change.

Managing change in large institutions has been shown throughout the literature to be complex and have a variety of influencing factors. Factors noted to influence teacher change, which are reflected in this research project’s findings, include things such as “years of experience in adult education,” “access to prep time,” and “how much voice teachers ... [have] in decision making in their program” (Smith et al., 2003, p. 22). It is also known that “instructional change is complex

and dynamic; teachers don't implement [change] in isolation" (Saunders, 2012, p. 305). External demands also influence the perceived intensity and urgency of change, given that the climate of change is shifting:

The growing size of this student population and the urgent reality of workforce accountability and other demands that did not exist forty years ago are pushing colleges to find more effective ways to support success for each student. (Schuetz & Barr, 2008, p. 113)

Institutional change is perceived throughout the literature as enigmatic and multifaceted, and influenced, but not limited, by contextual factors, levels of resistance, institutional climate, and social and economical pressures (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008; Heracleous, 2002; Lok & Crawford, 2004; Smith et al., 2003).

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Objective

The research objective for the "Managing Change" project was developed collaboratively with several members of the CEFL faculty and staff, and intended to capture the purpose of the research project:

The objective of this research is to determine if a practitioner-based, reflective inquiry PAR process helps instructors/practitioners manage large-scale programmatic changes, and if so, how.

### Research Questions

The research questions were similarly developed in collaboration with the CEFL faculty and staff. Then the questions were shared with the focus group participants in the introductory session to ensure that the group felt the research questions were reflective of their interpretation of the project, were sufficiently representative of issues around change, and were feasible within the focus group's capacity. The research questions were:

1. What challenges and/or benefits do adult basic education instructors face when adapting to large-scale program changes?
2. Does a collaborative process of reflective critical inquiry help adult basic education instructors positively adapt to large-scale program change within the defined process? If so, how?

### Ethics

Bow Valley College adheres to the Tri-Council Policy Statement regarding the ethical conduct for research involving human participants (Government of Canada, 2009). The researchers of the "Managing Change" project obtained approval to conduct this study from Bow Valley College's Research Ethics Board. A recruitment notice was distributed throughout the department to invite instructors to participate in the project on a first-come, first-serve basis. Funding allowed for a

total of six participants. An introductory session for participating instructors was held by the researchers to explain the intentions of the research project and to obtain consent to participation. Participants were advised of their right to withdraw from the project at any time. Participants were informed that they would receive a \$600 honorarium for their participation in the project; they were made aware that if they chose to withdraw, their entitlement to an honorarium would be evaluated based on the duration of their participation. All participated for the full duration of the project.

The researchers worked with the participants to establish guidelines ensuring confidentiality was maintained at all times, and the group vocalized the benefit of having a safe space within which to discuss change and its influencing factors. The ALRI research assistant who transcribed the audio recordings of focus group sessions signed a confidentiality form. The researchers ensured that the transcribed data was made anonymous; they used assigned codes to hide the identities of participants. Participants were provided with copies of the transcripts to review and were asked to indicate if any identifying information remained in the data. Later, participants were also asked to review the summarized themes to ensure that the researchers had accurately represented the participants' voices in the analysis of the data.

## Research Design

The "Managing Change" project utilized a participatory action research (PAR) approach while engaging in an intentional process of reflective critical inquiry. PAR empowers participants (adult basic education practitioners in this research project) to be recognized as experts in their fields and share power among all participants (including the researchers). Reflective critical inquiry is a cyclical learning experience that is driven by a problem or question (inquiry) that participants independently and collectively research and discuss in order to develop personal and collective understandings and opinions (critical). These understandings are then reflected upon in the construction of knowledge or meaning-making (reflective) and new questions may arise (cyclical). In this research project, all decisions were arrived at through collaboration and consensus, and all learning was arrived at through the contribution of ideas and information from all participants (Watters & Comeau, 2010). The choice to utilize practitioner involvement to intentionally respond to the project's research questions worked to ensure that practitioners would engage in critical reflective inquiry while examining and managing large- and small-scale changes.

Although PAR was selected as an appropriate approach for this research project, cautions around the use of PAR were explored and the researchers remained cognizant of these when working with the focus group. It has been noted, for example, that inherent power relations within a group and within the larger social/institutional context of that group can result in intimidation and silencing, and hence, artificial results (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). In the introductory session for the focus group, there was collaborative agreement to work collectively to maintain a safe and confidential space, and the group engaged in a discussion to define what that would look like. All members of the group (including participants and researchers) were of equal status in the department (instructors), which helped reinforce a sense of equity. By utilizing reflective critical inquiry approaches such as journaling, the focus group made "the messiness of the research process visible ... thus avoid[ing] producing, reproducing, and

circulating the discourse of research as a neat and linear process” (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 704). All research topics that were discussed in focus group sessions evolved from themes that were collaboratively agreed upon and went through a confidential approval process.

PAR has also been critiqued on the basis that the focus on micro-level issues can sometimes mask more macro-level injustices (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Hickey and Mohan (2004) note, however, that the process of PAR can be successful on micro levels. It is the “locus of change” that PAR processes seek to engage with that determines the focus (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). When approached from the micro-level of participants in an institutional context, PAR processes can benefit individuals as they engage in research, group discussions, team processes, networking, and advocacy (Watters & Comeau, 2010). Being aware that the scope of influence in this research project, in the immediate sense, was limited to the micro-level, the focus was on managing change as individuals and as a localized group. Identification of larger themes and topics that emerged through the PAR process increased the potential for the research results to move out and influence more macro-level contexts.

## Data Collection

Participants were asked to engage in two main types of data collection: 1) journaling, and 2) focus group sessions. Details of methods, description, and access are provided in Table 1.

Focus group sessions were audio recorded by the researchers and later transcribed by the ALRI research assistant. Notes taken by the researchers during the sessions were used to supplement gaps in information and to act as a guide to transcription. Transcribed audio recordings and session notes were cleaned, ensuring no identifying information remained.

## Data Analysis

In adherence to PAR principles, the researchers worked to involve the participants in formative analysis of the themes that were collectively pulled from the focus group discussions (Watters & Comeau, 2010). By engaging the participants in an ongoing process of reflective analysis, the group also utilized principles of reflective critical inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Involving the participants in this process also served to build a sense of trust within the group:

Through judicious use of self-disclosure, interviews become conversations, and richer data are possible. By asking participants to examine field notes and early analyses, researchers can give back something to their participants and engage in member checks as a means of ensuring trustworthiness. (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001, p. 323)

Following each focus group session, a summary of themes and ideas from the discussion was emailed to participants for their review and reflection. Each session also began with a summarization of previous discussions that informed the direction the group was taking. This process ensured consensus and transparency, while also allowing for time to critically reflect on the process and evolution of the project’s direction. A final assessment of themes and selected anonymous quotes was sent to each participant for review, feedback, and permission to use in the final report.

Table 1: Overview of Data Collection

JOURNALING		
Method	Description	Access
a. Peer Observation	Participants were asked to schedule time to visit at least two (2) different classes to observe instructional practices. Participants were asked to attend co-participants' classes, and were asked to allow a co-participant to observe their class. Participants were asked to record observations and reflections about their experiences observing their peers' classes in a journal provided by the researchers.	The participants were invited to share their journal entries relating to peer observation with the researchers at the end of the focus group sessions. The researchers collated the entries to be reviewed for presenting themes. This information was provided individually to each participant to be reviewed for accuracy. Participants were asked to confirm if the quotes and themes linked to their journal entries could be used in the final report, which was later also circulated amongst participants for their review and response.
b. Literature Review	Participants were asked to review literature on given and emergent themes and write an entry in their journal connecting interpretations of the literature to their practice. Literature had to be peer reviewed and less than ten (10) years old. Participants were provided with several links for free, peer-reviewed publication access. After discussion amongst the group and in consideration of significant time constraints, participants were invited to seek an informative lecture (i.e., Ted Talk) in place of literature. The majority of participants engaged both with literature and lectures relating to managing change. In one of the early focus group sessions, the researchers summarized the themes that arose in the previous session. Participants engaged in a collective discussion about these themes, edited or added new themes, and reflected on those themes. The themes decided upon by the group came to act as the group's collective search terms for literature and lectures.	In the focus group sessions, participants were asked to verbally share their reflections on the literature and lectures reviewed in connection to their practice. Participants were advised that although they were welcome to share their journal entries in this regard, they were in no way obligated to do so. Some participants chose to share their journal reflections at different points throughout the focus group sessions.
c. Self-Reflection	Participants were asked to reflect in their journals on the themes that emerged from focus group discussions, literature review, peer observations, and overall participation. In the final focus group session, participants were asked to engage in a discussion about a time in their lives when they successfully managed a large life change. Answers gathered were discussed and themed as a group.	Participants were informed that sharing their personal reflections from their journals was optional and not a required part of the data collected. They were advised that they could elect to provide none, specific selections, or all of their self-reflection entries to the researchers.
FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS		
Method	Description	Access
a. Peer Discussion	Participants were asked to engage in group discussions about the themes that emerged from observing their peer's instructional practices, literature review/lectures, and guiding questions. Focus group sessions were audio recorded, transcribed, and cleaned. Supplementary notes were also taken by the researchers. Participants were asked to honour the rules and guidelines for confidentiality set forth on the consent form.	Information presented by participants within the focus group sessions was privy only to the participants in attendance and the researchers. Data from the focus group sessions (transcripts of audio-recordings) was anonymized and collated for use in the final report. Participants were given the opportunity to review the final report prior to publication.

The researchers utilized basket theming or thematic analysis, whereby a coding framework was created utilizing the research questions, research objectives, and relative topics. Three phases of analysis were undertaken to identify basic (preliminary) themes, organizing (relational) themes, and finally, global (umbrella) themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 391). Basic themes, for the purpose of this research project, included themes of interest noted early in the first review of the data that related to the project in some way or recurred multiple times in the data. The next phase involved identifying the ways in which the basic themes related to each other and developing overarching themes or commonalities, which defined the organizing themes. The third phase involved analyzing the organizing themes for global themes that described an overall relationship between all the identified themes.

The researchers individually engaged in identifying themes at each stage, and after intentionally removing themselves from the data for a number of days, returned to give the data a second review. The researchers then met to compare and discuss the themes each had identified. This was done to ensure that the data had not been themed too hastily, and to allow opportunity to identify new themes or additional relationships between themes. A final read through of the data was conducted in tandem to ensure no important themes had been overlooked.

The participants were asked to engage in reflective journaling relating to topics identified as meaningful by the group to encourage ongoing, reflective practices, which have been shown to foster adaptability and awareness of self in process and practice (Hubbs & Brand, 2005). At the outset, participants were informed that at the end of the final focus group session they would be invited to share their journals or selections from their journals as they saw fit with the researchers. Participants were advised that they were not obligated to share with their peers, however, if they elected to give any journal material to the researchers, it would be anonymized and considered data. The researchers engaged in the same coding and theming process described above for analysis of the journal data as provided by the participants.

Relevant literature was connected to emerging themes throughout the entire research process and is embedded throughout this report.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Summary

The objective of the “Managing Change” project was to explore if engaging in a practitioner-based, reflective inquiry PAR process helps instructors when adapting to large-scale program changes, and if so, how it helps.

Through engaging in PAR with the focus group, it was discovered that while participants viewed change as a whole to be beneficial and accepted it as an integral part of the nature of teaching, they found the ways in which change was being managed within the CEFL created challenges for them, both professionally and personally. Participants demonstrated a high level of awareness of the ways in which they struggled with change and factors that made change

difficult to navigate within the department. These factors included: lack of support and training in new technologies, lack of time to integrate change into personal ethics and professional practice, unsupportive work environment, and lack of consideration for learner needs. Through critical reflection, the group was thoughtful and open about identifying many factors that increased their ability to navigate change and things that influenced the ways in which changes were perceived.

When the researchers presented the focus group an opportunity to give feedback on their participation in the PAR process, one of the major themes that emerged as most beneficial was having the space to process and deconstruct the ways in which they navigated change. Many of the participants realized that the process of engaging in reflective, critical inquiry acted not only as a platform to process thoughts and events, but as a moment in their everyday practice when they were able to indulge in something they frequently could not: taking the time to reflect on their practice, independently and with their peers.

### Practitioner Engagement

In order to ensure that participants could authentically engage in the process of understanding how departmental changes were impacting their professional practice, the “Managing Change” project’s focus group was designed to guarantee an atmosphere of safety and confidentiality. Within this space, participants identified topics that were of importance to them in the context of managing and coping with changes occurring in the CEFL. The group negotiated how to approach looking critically at these topics. Processes for each focus group session evolved to inform the next steps of action. What emerged from this process not only reflected a shift in how participants began to think about challenges presented by external events, but also in how participants showed up to the sessions. Discussions revealed a willingness to critically reflect on topics and collectively identify actions that would make change more manageable. Participants also discussed how the PAR process left them feeling more validated and empowered as individuals and as members of a team.

Responses from the focus group participants revealed how the PAR process helped open new layers of group communication as well as helped participants re-vision approaches to managing change collectively rather than in isolation.

“After the first (or second?) discussion we had about the extremely negative environment, we were sent a list of themes that had come out of our comments. I found this to be very positive, partly because they were stated in a positive way. Also they were themes that we were probably unable to perceive ourselves. They became topics for research, an important part of our project.”

“I think we all benefitted from the opportunity to discuss our feelings and reactions to the poorly managed “technology revolution” in our department. We were able to refocus on what really matters to us – the students.”

“When I do my job on a regular day, there isn’t much time to think because there is so much to do. The thoughts come through my head and float through and

disappear for the most part. It was great to find that other people have the same thoughts and concerns as me and to discuss these things together. It made me feel more connected to my colleagues and I think it made me think about doing more team projects or assignments in the future.”

“Creating a supportive work environment ... the focus group was a safe place to discuss some shared issues – it was also more than that. It encouraged us to reflect, but to also be proactive personally/professionally. To act as opposed to react or just feel powerless.... To be solution oriented as opposed to getting stuck in a negative blaming cycle.”

“I think the reflection – the journaling – it makes me sit down and think about what I’m doing and why I’m doing it – it’s something I haven’t done for a long time.”

“I think it’s good – it’s not just to come in here and dump and complain, I mean we can air some issues but we’re in here to figure out how to make things function.”

Participants’ responses to the PAR process reflected that the researchers achieved their goals of establishing a safe environment where participants could collaborate, reflect upon their own practice, and critically discuss topics they identified as meaningful. These responses also supported the value of providing instructors with the opportunity to engage in PAR as a means to managing and supporting ongoing changes in adult basic education.

Research into the outcomes of PAR processes supports the “Managing Change” project’s findings that by creating a safe space for people to gather and discuss topics that are meaningful to them, transformative learning and critical thinking are engaged in more authentically (Yorks, 2005; Mezirow, 1991). Transformative learning occurs as individuals collectively explore places of tension within their own thinking and their professional practice. In defining the intentional outcomes of PAR, McTaggart (1991) notes that it:

aims to build communities of people committed to enlightening themselves about the relationship between circumstance, action, and consequence in their own situation.... But participatory research is not just learning; it has knowledge production and action aspects to it, as well as constituting new ways of relating to each other to make the work reform possible. (p. 176)

How the PAR process led to participant engagement in relevant research action is broken down thematically in the following sections.

## Teaching Philosophies and Ethics

Teaching philosophies and ethics largely influence how instructors find value in changes that impact their practice. At the centre of teaching philosophy is the learner, so how change affects learners is integral to how instructors view change. This section explores how teaching philosophies and ethics impacted how participants managed change in the CEFL.

It was felt by the researchers that having some context for individual beliefs and philosophies might encourage a metacognitive process around managing change. A foundational area to begin exploring teaching philosophies and ethics was the beliefs and theories of participants around adult learning, and how these beliefs and theories might shape their practice and influence the experience of learners at the college. Part of this exploration involved looking at personal teaching styles through completing “teaching inventories” (Pratt & Collins, 2001-2014; Zinn, 2004) and exploring participants’ perceptions of adult learning theories (andragogy) (Knowles, 1984).

PAR processes relating to the topic of teaching philosophies and ethics brought to the surface some philosophical discussions around what participants were experiencing as a result of larger socio-economic and political pressures. Discussion revealed that fundamental shifts in the mandate of adult basic education programs have created tensions for faculty as program changes reflect a more fiscal approach to learning that conflicts with participants’ philosophies about the role of adult basic education and participants’ roles as adult basic education practitioners. Many of the focus group participants believed that teaching adult basic education should focus on improving learners’ lives in all contexts, not just prepare learners to enter the workforce or further education. This tension between professional ethics and institutional mandate was captured in one participant’s reflection on changes to adult basic education programming:

“There isn’t any room for people who are not able to get to a BVC [Bow Valley College] goal – that means some people are not able to come to school with funding to study. It seems to me that we would have a much better society if everyone could be educated for as long or as far as they could go even if they can’t reach a career goal. They would have a better quality of life and they would be able to get a better job, or even just a job rather than staying at home. Also, I think that some students are forced into goals they don’t want and that is a waste of everyone’s time.”

The above sentiment reflected the type of conflict participants were experiencing within their professional lives as educational mandates shift to become more economically accountable. Group discussion in response to the question, “Are our changes better reflecting the needs of learners?”, reflected this tension:

“No, we don’t see them as a sound financial investment. These are people who aren’t going to get there anyway. Programs are shut down because none of these people are getting jobs.”

“Decisions are being made beyond educators and learners.”

“We are here for the students and that should be our primary motivation, and yet it unfolds the motivation is money. And you get polar opposites.”

As the group engaged in reflecting on their changing roles in response to change in the department’s mandate, the PAR process allowed participants to critically look at their practice and personal philosophies while also being aware of external forces influencing their practice. What emerged from this process was a growing awareness that some areas of personal and

collective resistance to change were in response to conflict between teaching philosophies and ethics around participants' roles as instructors and the underlying perceived drivers of change within their department. Focus group discussions resulted in a collective recognition that participants felt they were not given a voice in negotiating what types of changes would benefit learner success and how those changes could be implemented.

Research within education on program changes negotiated with faculty indicates that responses from faculty to program change commonly range from engagement to resistance (Conway et al., 1994; Enyedy, Goldberg, & Welsh, 2006; Hamilton & Hillier, 2007). These responses are influenced by how proposed changes validate or challenge professional and personal teaching styles and philosophies (Brown, 2003; Enyedy, Goldberg, & Welsh, 2006; Heimlich & Norland, 2002). These findings support the findings of the "Managing Change" project, where participants acknowledged that feeling their teaching philosophies around adult basic education were not being supported by proposed changes led to areas of resistance in professional practice.

Another result that emerged from the teaching philosophies reflection and doing the "teaching inventories" was the recurring idea that teaching itself is a dynamic, ever-changing vocation, where faculty responds to at-the-moment challenges daily. Most participants found doing the "teaching inventories" to be difficult and somewhat artificial:

"It was hard to find a philosophy – it is fluid and changes every day – you have different students, and do different things; I found it hard to pin myself down. I looked at all the questions and the answer – it depends what the day holds."

"You come out of university and have specific things, depending on what university you go to, certain styles are better, and then you run into the real world and you realize all these theories are fine and dandy but you know there is so much more to it. You don't realize until you're in that situation and you're surrounded by colleagues doing different things, so it's about finding your feet, but probably your whole career is about evolving."

"Your teaching style is such a fluid entity, always changing, depending on the situation."

"These are things to think about when you look at developing curriculum. There is that freedom to ask 'is this how I want to do it or do we want to teach in a different way that brings the learner in instead of just putting the content on them' ... I don't know, and sometimes it depends."

Through dialogue, the focus group became consciously aware of their flexibility as instructors. Recognizing their adaptability was empowering as it revealed how very open to change and spontaneity faculty were, given the nature of teaching diverse groups in ever-changing circumstances. This discovery resulted in participants becoming more curious about why some changes in the department were more difficult to manage than others. Participants decided to engage in their own research around specific topics relating to change. Some of the topics and accompanying research materials are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Focus group's areas of interest or concern in adult basic education

TOPIC	SOURCED RESOURCES
Managing change in curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lachiver, G. &amp; Tardif, J. (2002). <i>Fostering and managing curriculum change and innovation</i>. Paper presented at the 32nd ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference; Boston MA, November 6-9.</li> <li>• Robinson, K. (2010). <i>Bring on the learning revolution</i>. Ted Talks. <a href="http://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_bring_on_the_revolution">http://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_bring_on_the_revolution</a></li> <li>• Robinson, Ken. (2006). <i>How schools kill creativity</i>. Ted Talks. <a href="http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity">http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity</a></li> </ul>
How to create and sustain positive department morale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bull, J. (1999). Creating a staff-friendly environment. <i>Library Mosaics</i>, 10(4), 14-15.</li> </ul>
Nature of managing change and human responses to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Who Moved My Cheese? The Movie</i>. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16hxCB1Dvd4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16hxCB1Dvd4</a></li> <li>• Anchor, S. (2012). <i>The happy secret to better work</i>. Ted Talks. <a href="http://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work">http://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work</a></li> </ul>
Changing needs of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MacGregor, C. &amp; Ryan, T. (2011). Secondary level re-entry of young Canadian adult learners. <i>Australian Journal of Adult Learning</i>, 51(1), 143-160.</li> </ul>
Adult basic education and technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Khan, S. (2011). <i>Let's use video to reinvent education</i>. Ted Talk. <a href="http://www.ted.com/talks/salman_khan_let_s_use_video_to_reinvent_education">http://www.ted.com/talks/salman_khan_let_s_use_video_to_reinvent_education</a></li> </ul>

From this research, reflective engagement by the group focused on discussing the following topics of research:

- the nature of resistance to change,
- how to pace change to ensure positive evolution,
- how to “manage change” so that “change can be managed”,
- what our capabilities are regarding external expectations of us and our expectations of ourselves,
- what we really know about the changing nature of our learners (increased mental health issues, greater needs for accommodations, etc.),
- how the institution as a whole understands and adapts to learners’ needs,
- where the use of technology effectively fits in adult basic education programs, and
- how we can develop curriculum progressively and effectively within our programs.

The conversations were provocative and challenging. Each topic was large enough to consume a whole PAR process, but the group blended the ideas and tried to focus on resolving some concerns that fell within their power to affect. These topics are discussed under the following themes of training and technology, learners, change, resistance, and work environment.

### Training and Technology

One of the fastest changing tools in education today is technology. The use of technology impacts instructors’ everyday practice and affects their relationships in the classroom. This section discusses participants’ views on how the way technology is introduced, used, and supported in an educational environment influences how users of that technology adapt to it. An overall theme that emerged from the group research and discussion focused on the impact technology, and the requisite changes technology brings, have on instructor performance and

learner experience in adult basic education programs. While learning technologies need not be electronic, within the context of this report “technology” refers to electronic resources (including the introduction of D2L, Adobe Connect, iPads, and Smart Boards, and increased institutional requirements that learners experience more digital literacy in programming).

Historically, new technologies have “spurred new social relations, along with new values and practices surrounding ‘what counts’ as literacy, and the goals of learning” (Smythe, 2012). Without having practical time to learn and integrate these new relationships, values, and practices around the use of technology, focus group participants expressed feelings of resistance to technology. After digging into the topic through discussion and action research, it was discovered by the group that it was the pace at which technological changes were happening and the lack of training that they were resisting, not the idea of technology itself.

When discussing the impact of technology on education, the level of frustration and powerlessness participants felt was palpable. Participants recognized that their frustration stemmed from external demands to adapt to ever changing technologies but feeling they were not being given the time to integrate these changes into their philosophies and practice. Participants also noted how the malfunction of technology or lack of instructor familiarity with technologies led them to feel that their professionalism was at stake:

“Is fear of technological ineptness taking away from pride in our work? Are we feeling a lack of ownership because change and curriculum is sometimes seen as being imposed from above? Are our struggles with technology and current struggles to make it work for us effectively hindering our abilities to be creative? ... Do we find new meaning in our work as we learn to adapt new technology to the needs of our students?”

“You know, we’re already scrambling as fast as we can to be everything we can to everybody and now it’s got to be on any device as well, and it hit me at a bad time because, you know, we’re struggling with all these different technologies anyways and my Adobe won’t talk to my D2L, which won’t talk to my ... you know ... and I just looked at this tonight and thought ‘oh my god, Word Perfect is not compatible with Adobe’ – so you can’t take any word document and post it to Adobe, for example, you have to convert all these things. And then she’s saying ‘on any device’, I thought ‘oh god....’”

“Technology training for staff is too much, too fast.”

“I have just been thinking about what we’re hearing.... We need to insist on appropriate training time.”

“They need to provide training that’s going to make a difference to us in our classrooms. We need it now, not after we’ve had to deal with it.”

“Technology in itself and the pressure to use more of it – the frustrations when technology in the classroom doesn’t work the same way as it did in the demonstration/training.”

Research supports the need for faculty and staff to receive adequate and ongoing training in the use of digital technologies in order to be effective in adult learning contexts (Smythe, 2012). Basic education programs have unique needs and contexts that influence how digital literacy can be effectively used. Learners in adult basic education programs experience barriers around reading and writing levels, and often are part of the demographic in Canada who do not have personal access to computers or the internet (Smythe, 2012). These realities influence how instructors respond to external pressures to adapt to tools they have not yet had time to explore the effectiveness of for their learners.

Lack of training time also impacts the level of vulnerability instructors feel. Instructors need ongoing training to orient themselves to new tools, and also to change their values around teaching where they can “be alright with making mistakes and learning alongside their students. What is needed is a tolerance for experimentation” (Smythe, 2012, p. 35). But this type of tolerance can only come from a working environment that supports ongoing, collaborative, and experiential learning methods for both instructors and learners (Smythe, 2012).

## Learners

The impact of institutional changes on learners is an area of central concern to educators. Within the focus group discussions, participants were very aware of the ways in which learners struggled to manage, or were impacted by, the very same changes that the instructors were negotiating. Participants identified the need to balance learners’ needs within the context of learners’ complex lives when implementing institutional change. They also identified a need to honour learners’ voices as a key consideration in the development of courses and program offerings. As part of the exploration into the impact of change on learners, the participants also discussed their perceptions of adult learners, and tried to navigate larger issues around changing learner demographics, which include more learners with mental health issues and disabilities.

### *Learner Needs and Learner Voice*

The work instructors do is largely influenced by the needs of their learners. Balancing learners’ needs and honouring learners’ voices (i.e., a learner’s right to autonomy within his/her own learning) while navigating institutional changes presented an ongoing challenge for participants.

Participants exhibited a high level of awareness of the different and often complex lives lived by their learners. Not only are many learners faced with difficult social and economic barriers, many adults coming to adult basic education programs have not identified as a ‘learner’ for many years, if ever. Many learners are renegotiating what their identity is as a learner.

The focus group discussed at length the ways in which learners receive institutional change amidst struggling with identity, poverty, ableism, racism, immigration issues, and the like. At the same time, participants felt conversations with learners about changes were required to have the college be more reflective of the learners they serve:

“We’re supposed to be learner-centred but nobody stopped and asked the learners if it was working.”

“As my student says, ‘As soon as I go home, it’s mommy, mommy, mommy; so I can’t read at home.’ You know, so yeah, for adults it’s a bit different because of that.”

“If they have computers, they have to share with their kids [but] ... the chances of them having ... a computer for every student in their household isn’t good.”

“[We] need to create a supportive climate that creates inquiry and student engagement.”

“If they’re couch-surfing, you know, that kind of thing, which some of ours are.... If you’re homeless and you don’t know where you’re staying that night....”

“Adult learners don’t have parents to make them work at home and often have other things to do at home.”

The ability of participants to manage changes in their professional practice was directly influenced by how they were or were not influenced by learners’ needs and challenges. As one participant noted:

“But it does bleed out to impact the learners – they are the focal point of our jobs.”

Research notes that the institutions most successful in assisting learners in re-defining their identities as learners were able to provide “holistic or ‘wrap around’ support for learners that included, but was broader than, literacy learning” (Crowther, Maclachlan, & Tett, 2010, p. 660). Awareness of the needs and struggles of learners is often cited as influential as to whether changes implemented were manageable or not, given that “when teachers listen to and learn from students, they begin to see the world from those students’ perspectives” (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 3). Research shows that educators often resist change due to an awareness of the adverse impacts it would have on their students. In the case of technology, many educators argue that mandatory adaptations to utilizing technology in the classroom will leave low-income students proportionally disadvantaged in their learning (Finley & Hartman, 2004, p. 322).

Research also supports the idea that learning environments that foster the exploration and building of learner identity capital are more conducive to positive learning experiences, and at the same time, might also be “an *outcome* of engagement in learning” (Morgan-Klein & Osborne, 2007, p. 16; Schuller et al., 2004). Educational institutions need to make learner identity a factor in considering institutional changes. The focus group participants demonstrated an increased sense of acceptance of change when the change was linked to the needs of their learners. However, the administrative level needs to ensure that learner identity and voice are thoughtfully considered and pursued, not assumed or interpreted. As noted by Alison Cook-Sather (2002), it is shameful that adult learners have been continuously excluded from influencing the system they are accessing:

There is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire system without consulting at any point those it is ostensibly designed to serve.... It is time that we count students among those with the authority to participate both in the critique and in the reform of education. (p. 3)

### *Perceptions of Adult Learners*

Throughout the history of educational theory, the distinction between andragogy and pedagogy has largely influenced perceived expectations instructors have of learners, aims for the curriculum, and what is required of instructors to meet learners' needs (Conway et al., 1994; Taylor, 2008). How learners are perceived influences the perception of what learners need or how they might be impacted by institutional change.

Perceptions of adult learners varied in the focus group. Some participants viewed adult learners as dramatically different from their younger counterparts within the traditional secondary school system. Other participants felt the adult learners at Bow Valley College were similar to many of the youth they had taught in high school settings. The opportunity to discuss how the group perceived adult learners amounted to engaging in a reflective practice many participants cited as not often having had the opportunity to do in a shared space. This reflection helped participants to link their own assumptions and teaching philosophies with how change was being viewed and navigated from an adult basic education learner's perspective.

Research shows that teaching in adult basic education is more challenging in that many instructors are not required to have specific experience in teaching adult learners at the foundational learning level, opportunities for professional development are more limited than in the K-12 system, and educators in adult basic education are often required to teach across a variety of content and navigate multiple disciplines (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). The field of adult basic education has also remained largely influenced by deficit or functional perspectives of literacy learning where educational success is prioritized “and individuals with limited literacy skills may encounter stigmatization—that is they may feel inferior, the stigmatized individuals are often stereotyped or prejudged, a process that may be reinforced by adult literacy teachers” (Ozanne, Adkins, & Sandlin, 2005, p. 253). This is not to say that the participants were judgemental of their learners, but to recognize the dominant belief system within which adult basic education functions; a system in which perceiving the whole life of the learner and the different complexities that influence capacity to learn has not traditionally been a valued perspective. In a system dominated by outcome-driven measures of success, it comes as no surprise that instructors have varied perceptions of learners (Jackson & Schaetti, 2013).

Although focus group participants expressed varied perceptions about similarities and differences between adult learners and adolescents, they all expressed a deep awareness of the challenges and barriers many learners in the CEFL experience and how that impacts their success. Through discussion, participants became consciously aware that their professional ethic to advocate for best practices for learners had a strong influence on their level of receptivity or resistance to policy and program changes.

### *Changing Learner Demographics*

The increasing population of adult learners with disabilities and mental health issues in the CEFL adult basic education programs was observed as central to the conversation surrounding managing change. Several focus group participants had experiences working directly with adult basic education learners with disabilities, and almost all encountered adult learners with mental health issues in their daily work. The participants spoke a great deal about the various

challenges experienced in supporting these learners, the lack of suitable training around supporting individuals with mental health issues, and the need for further conversations:

“[I’m] concerned about the changing nature of students [such as] increased mental health issues.”

“Yes it’s true we can look at it as a waste of money investing in low literacy learners but there’s a demand. And they are changing in the sense that we are getting more and more people who have disabilities because they are coming out. For years they were locked in the closet and no one paid any attention to them. Now they are demanding more service so that’s why we have Speech Assisted Reading and Writing [SARAW] and ABLE [the Adult Basic Literacy Education Program] and Lifeline2Literacy [L2L].”

“[There is] information about the increasing number of students who are coming to school with mental health issues ... [It] affects some of the things you do in the classroom because when you know something about some of the students, then you know there are some things you shouldn’t do – [ex.] triggers.”

“[We have] a lot of PD [Professional Development] opportunities [but] where’s that topic? I don’t really see any mental health topics.”

Many seasoned educators have witnessed the transition from ableist, segregated classrooms or institutionalization to more inclusive, anti-oppressive approaches to teaching adult learners with disabilities or mental health issues (Davis, 2002). Having been spectators to changing ideologies surrounding adult learners with disabilities influenced many of the focus group participants to question the ways in which more supportive and effective approaches are needed. There was also an awareness of the changes adult learners experience when transitioning from schooling as a child (which may have included specialized support and testing, or may have been extremely traumatic and exclusionary) to an adult learning environment that emphasizes autonomy in learning and self-management of personal learning needs. This transition is often overwhelming for adult learners with specialized support needs. Although many diagnosed learners had institutional support through the Bow Valley College’s Learner Success Services, participants felt they themselves were not well equipped in the classroom to support these learners and to adapt to their changing needs. Many participants expressed a desire to receive more direct training (Professional Development) in modifying lesson plans and activities to create more inclusivity and address multiple learning styles.

## Change

The concept of “change” infused almost all focus group discussions and themes. How to manage change was key to this research and the focus group exploration. In order to understand the ways in which change was managed, the focus group engaged in an ongoing discussion about how change was defined and perceived. Participants dissected what factors influenced how change was managed both individually and collectively:

“It’s not just managing change, ... there was a desire for change and it was nice to see change actually happen, and you know it’s hard to say if it’s a positive or a negative at this point, who knows ... that’s the future. But at least the change happened and it’s like letting out a breath.”

“When do we stop to evaluate what we have and whether it’s working or are we just doing things for advertisement purposes? Are we ever stopping to analyze the value of it?”

“With all these changes we just didn’t have time to process and properly learn things.”

Having the time to collaboratively learn about new technologies, policies, or other changes seemed to be an integral theme throughout the discussions on change. The participants also noted repeatedly that to have the time to critically reflect and give feedback on changes was integral:

“You have to establish a type of community to support any kind of change ... you have to have that foundation.”

“I think there would need to be an opportunity to evaluate – and that’s in the sense of giving people time to think about things.”

“It consumes an ever-increasing investment in money, new technology, and staff man-hours – but does anyone stop to carefully consider whether the advantages make it a worthwhile investment? Are we overloading staff and students with constant change for change’s sake? Are we using technology in place of thoughtful teaching and learning?”

(On Bow Valley College’s motto) “‘Any time, any place, any path, any pace, any device’.... It is a compliment to staff and students in many, many ways and is a useful marketing device. However, it does not reflect the challenges it presents to staff and students alike, in the incredible pressure to constantly change in order to keep up. It doesn’t allow for reflective practices. How does one stop to fully analyze the value of what one is doing, if one is constantly forced to devote energies to the next big thing?”

The participants were mindful of different factors that influenced their ability to adapt to change and expressed the importance of engaging in a reflective process as integral to critically examine the changes they were experiencing. The focus group identified key factors such as program structure, opportunities for professional development, needs of learners, institutional support, work environment, and personal backgrounds as influencing how individuals manage change:

“I just think you need to fix or solidify one thing before you move onto something else.”

“We were talking about managing change for ourselves; we can help the student manage it once we feel centred.”

“As educators we aspire to students’ learning. But being aware of that, what are best practices for the learners ... but also for the instructors. How do you support your faculty to get these outcomes?”

“I think a lot of time we’re looking at change, for me I always want to know the motivation behind it – just be upfront and tell us [the faculty]. Even from government you hear, ‘we want transparency.’ It’s difficult to do sometimes, but be clear. Are we looking for changes that are benefitting only one area? Have all angles been thought of? And are we asking the question or is it already a done deal? Because don’t ask me to come and not be authentic because [you think] we’re too dumb to figure it out.”

“We are not opposed to change – we are craving change.” “There is no resistance to change here – how change is managed is the key – any perception of resistance you engage in is an effort to put the learners first. So external perceptions of resistance are missing the point.”

“Being given the opportunity to explore leads to new things – you may find things rather than just having it given to you.”

Although research shows that the field of education requires more research and reflection to understand the “relationship among student achievement, professional development, and factors such as adult education program structure, teachers’ backgrounds, and working conditions” (Smith & Gillespie, 2007, p. 239), general research into the nature of change and how change is managed supports the “Managing Change” project’s findings around factors influencing the manageability of change. Creating a collaborative environment where individuals have time to process the nature of changes and how those changes impact working conditions and learner success has a huge influence on how change is managed in educational settings. Opportunities for collaboration, reflection, and support drastically influence the ability to navigate institutional changes:

First, a lack of opportunities to collaborate impacts the desire and ability to learn about and experiment with innovations. Second, a lack of support, either administratively or collegially, constrains change. (Finley & Hartman, 2004, p. 325)

Change, adaptation to change, and resistance to change are presented throughout the literature as influential in how successful (or not) change is implemented, particularly in the institutional context (Finley & Hartman, 2004; Ford, Ford, & D’Amelio, 2008; Heracleous, 2002; Smith et al., 2003).

## Resistance

With change, often comes resistance; or at the very least, what is often characterized in the literature as resistance. Change is sometimes uncomfortable, undesired, or challenging. Change requires a sense of motivation, something of value that matters to the individual being asked to adapt to change. For the purposes of the “Managing Change” project, the researchers have used the word ‘resistance’ to characterize these challenging, uncomfortable, or undesired

elements surrounding change because the term 'resistance' was most used by the focus group participants. This section focuses on participants' thoughts about the causes for resisting change, some of the manifestations of this resistance in professional practice, and some solutions for creating an attitude of willingness to consider change rather than reject it.<sup>2</sup>

Participants frequently identified that if they saw no logic or had no influence over the change they were being asked to navigate, they had little motivation and often resisted. As participants have noted, a number of factors negatively influence the ability to navigate change. Some of these identified factors include: ageism, lack of respect from administration or peers, and lack of support. Participants cited different considerations that influenced how they felt or expressed resistance:

"I would like to say that I think one of the reasons I felt so frustrated with all of the changes is that nobody knows what I do and they hand me something and say, 'Here this will be better.'"

"Some people treat me as if I don't make any changes and as though I'm old and don't change. I deeply resent that – that there's a perception that if I'm not 30 anymore then I'm not willing to try anything new and if someone comes at you with that perspective from the beginning and regardless of what they observe, continue to hold that perspective, then I think to myself, why should I bother if you're not going to notice? Where's the reward? You're not going to say 'good job' and you're not going to say it if I continue to do what I'm doing." "These labels or perceptions damage."

(On resisting change) "I don't think it impacts my performance in the classroom because that's a very different world, but it really impacts the contribution I'm willing to make – very seriously."

Participants often noted that if they felt disrespected or unvalued, they felt more resistant to change. In such instances, they also noted themselves as acting in ways that were uncharacteristic. Participants noted different factors influencing resistance, or an awareness of some of the unfavourable ways in which resistance materialized within their own behaviours:

"One Professional Development day I went and hid and worked in isolation, just getting caught up. Sometimes you just have to slink away."

"We feel like we're such whiners and complainers." "We're not just complaining!"

"They are withdrawing and not contributing. It's a negative thing."

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that several theorists have come to reject the use of the term 'resistance to change' as it emphasizes the change recipients' behaviour and holds no account of the change agent's actions whatsoever (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008). Some critics have argued that in the past few decades, resistance is "portrayed as an unwarranted and detrimental response residing completely in 'over there, in them' (the change recipients) and arising spontaneously as a reaction to change, independent of the interactions and relationships between the change agents and recipients" (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio 2008, p. 362).

“I am so tired of looking stupid and inept in front of my students.”

“When they try to get what I do know from me I’m not going to help you because you treat me like I don’t know anything.”

“If someone is going to treat me in a belittling way, why on earth would I pay any attention to what they have to say.”

“I think you have to be careful that as you get older that you’re still thinking about it and you’re still changing and that you don’t say I’ve done it like this for 25 years and I’m going to keep doing this; you have to make sure you stay open.”

“So my path of resistance was like the old self pity – why bother, why try. And then I have to do this paradigm shift, and be grateful and try again, because where I get my satisfaction is when I’m in the classroom. So it’s all worthwhile at the end of the day when you see your students progressing and you feel like they’re learning.”

“See how cynical we’ve become when we know we’re not being told the truth?”

While participants expressed an understanding of the ways in which they resisted change, they also demonstrated a high level of awareness of factors that diminished their feelings of resistance. This was largely to do with their focus on the learners’ needs and in prioritizing their learners’ needs over their own needs to engage in resistance:

“As we discussed these situations over a period of weeks, we finally asked ourselves and each other about our priorities in our jobs. The answer for each of us was the needs of our students. We are, first of all, teachers. I think this was empowering for us.”

“Being in the classroom energizes me. Being organized and feeling in control of my teaching environment makes me feel competent.”

“What do I have control over? What can I affect?”

“I found it really good to turn it from looking at it so negatively to looking at it more positively or [asking] what can we do to see it differently.”

Attempting to navigate large- and small-scale institutional changes can be challenging; values held by instructors can be tested, sense of powerlessness can rage rampant, and the urge to resist can sometimes come in conflict with what instructors know to be best practices for their learners. Research into change management supports the “Managing Change” project’s findings that contextual factors surrounding change, such as capacity or organizational climate, have an influence on how easily change can be managed (Gumport, 2000; Sebrant, 2008; Simoes & Esposito, 2014). Historical theorists argue that perceptions of resistance impact how change is negotiated and managed, given that “resistance to change has sometimes been misinterpreted as simple inertia in human nature” (Watson, 1971, p. 745). Watson also notes that it is in human nature to want to maintain a sense of equilibrium, and much interpretation of change is influenced by how the different stages of negotiating change are perceived:

All forces which contribute to stability in personality or in social systems can be perceived as resisting change. From the standpoint of an ambitious and energetic change agent, these energies are seen as obstructions. From a broader and more inclusive perspective, the tendencies to achieve, to preserve, and to return to equilibrium are most salutary.... If people and organizations do not change, it must be because the natural drives toward innovation are being stifled or held in check by countervailing forces. (pp. 745-746)

From this, it can be understood that much of the ways in which change is negotiated, both by the giver and by the receiver, has a great deal to do with perception of resistance and strategies for implementing change. Watson goes on to state that:

the more usual strategies of increasing pressures by persuasion and dissuasion raise tensions within the system. If the opposite strategy—that of neutralizing or transforming resistance—be adopted, the forces for change already present in the system-in-situation will suffice to produce movement. (p. 746)

The focus group participants demonstrated a high level of willingness to adapt to change, but couched this willingness in an awareness that “how” change was presented deeply affected their personal levels of tension and resistance to embracing proposed changes.

## Environment

How change is presented, and thus negotiated, in a work environment plays a key role in influencing the manageability of change. Institutional culture or environment was a frequent topic within the focus group. Participants noted that the environment within which changes were being implemented had a direct influence on their capacity to successfully manage the changes. Through focus group discussion, three integral factors within the workplace environment, or institutional culture, which impact change were identified: time, capacity, and climate. These factors will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

### *Time*

Time was cited repeatedly in the focus group as one of the major contributing factors that impacted the participants’ ability to successfully navigate change. This included both the amount of time required to explore and adapt to a change, as well as the limitations to time they were already experiencing:

“We seldom have time to interact and share ideas and different versions create a more interesting landscape.”

“I was really conscious of my time and decided I am only going to give it this much time and that’s it.”

“I told you I needed to learn it and I haven’t had time to learn it.”

“I don’t have time to look at the site in detail.” “That’s time conserving really.”

“Everybody’s becoming a whiner and complainer because it’s overwhelming, and nobody has the time to provide emotional support.”

“Training is available but you have to find the time to go to it.” “And it has to be on your time.”

Furthermore, time was identified repeatedly as a factor that influenced institutional culture, which in turn adversely impacted the participants’ ability to navigate change in the workplace. Time was directly linked to stress levels, which is not unnoted in supporting research (Plessow et al., 2011; Griffin, 2014). The shortage of time experienced by participants was cited as having a direct, negative impact on the classroom. Navigating changes within the classroom while trying to maintain continuity, achieve learning outcomes, and support learners, in addition to all of the other demands within the classroom, proved increasingly difficult as a result of limited time:

“My philosophy is that, as a teacher, I need to take care of everyone in the class as well as I can. This includes taking care of the person (self-esteem, confidence, feeling comfortable in class) as well as their academic needs. I’m a little worried about the way Bow Valley College is going regarding the health and wellness of teachers. I think that as a teacher you need to take care of yourself before you can take care of students.... The lack of prep time because of too many structured activities such as meetings and training may also result in stress. Teachers need time when they can structure their own work time to do their job properly.”

“How many people are they [administration] going to drop? There are people on stress or sick leave from the pressure of doing more with less and be everything to everybody. And that’s where we’re cutting back.”

“It comes back to where does the authentic learning happen – is this more valuable teaching tool than what we are doing – and having time to process whether it is or not, to realize that yes this piece of technology helps them get it better or not. But without that evidence of a link, it’s hard to go, ‘hey learn these five new things before next semester, integrate them into your classroom,’ [while] not being convinced of their value.”

To take the time necessary to attend to the everyday duties of teaching *and* to critically reflect on these duties was identified as extremely challenging. On several occasions, the focus group participants identified that reflecting on what is working, what isn’t, and why, was an expected practice in education; however, there was simply not enough time.

### *Assumed Capacity vs Actual Capacity*

Capacity within the CEFL was identified as a key factor in influencing institutional climate. In this section, capacity refers to both the administration’s assumption of the capacity of faculty and the actual capacity faculty has to manage day-to-day workload and incumbent changes. Managing changes within the department was viewed as much more feasible when the actual overall and individual capacity of faculty and staff was high. Focus group participants identified that the way in which administration viewed capacity was impactful to managing change, in

that, if the administration assumed a greater level of capacity than the actual capacity available, the demands put onto instructors were often unmanageable. Participants repeatedly emphasized the need for a better balance between external expectations and actual capacity to fulfill expectations:

“Expectations exceed capabilities.”

“We cannot control what is going on around us.” “We need a better balance.”

“I guess if there’s no conflict and stresses we’re not growing and learning, but there has to be a better balance.”

“Everything somehow is all my fault. IT told me it was my fault, help line told me it was my fault, my students are yelling at me. And I’m thinking, ‘I’m just doing my job.’”

“It’s always a wonderful thing if we can open things up for more people, but at some point doesn’t it get to be – the expectation is too much.”

“I think it’s one of those things that it seems like a wonderful idea but in reality like how are we on a day-to-day basis going to facilitate it? I don’t know.”

“It’s just stretching things too thin and at what point do we choose quality over quantity and vice versa.”

Voicing tensions around administrative expectations helped participants to view the amount and pace of change from a more objective perspective. Putting personal and collective reactions to change into the context of sometimes unrealistic external expectations helped participants to distance themselves from the related pressure that comes from feeling one is always behind. The participants unanimously agreed that the issue of expected or assumed capacity versus actual capacity was having a huge impact on professional performance as well as personal willingness and ability to embrace change.

### *Climate*

Climate was by far one of the most discussed factors influencing the management of change. Climate was identified by the focus group as being different than institutional culture, however in combination with time, financial standing, capacity, and other factors, it became clear that climate greatly influenced institutional culture. The group defined climate to include the attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and relationships existing within the institution. The climate of the institution was perceived as having an extremely significant impact on the participants’ ability to navigate change, and in influencing other factors that impact navigating change, such as time. In some instances, it was identified as the most important factor:

“I think if we had a better climate and more control over change, then we’d have the time to help each other out. You can say, ‘What can I do to help?’ We are so stressed out and maxed out and we don’t care.”

“There’s something interesting there. There’s this silent thing happening. Everyone knows money’s a motivator. People are not willing to be put in a position where they’re not the expert, where they have to share expertise; it’s very hierarchical. And that’s feeding into and, at the same time, hitting into the demand to take this on and do that. And you want to say that it’s inherent to have the climate to take on these new things – you need the time to be reflective and have the space to turn to a supervisor or another department and have conversations, [say] yes this is working, this isn’t. I’m talking about feelings you can’t say because it will hurt someone. And it’s not safe to say I don’t know something or I want to take the time ... it’s hard to say I don’t know something.”

“Part of our climate issues is feeling undervalued in what we do in a lot of ways and when we do speak up about things, we talk about class size or technology, ... no one listens.”

“One key ingredient of organizational culture is staff friendliness ... how friendly we are with each other.”

“I’m so sick of fighting, backstabbing, critically talking about each other on all levels; and it’s top down. We’re killing ourselves and our departments. We’re killing what was our best and brightest strength. And I think – hope – to some degree we’ve kept it out of the classroom, but for how much longer? We cannot be nasty to each other in the way we are in this department now and not have that affect the students. I’ve had students say to me comments about certain people in this department and certain people in supervision criticizing staff in front of students and it’s getting worse.”

“Sometimes you need someone from outside to come in and say, ‘We’re going to stop talking to each other like that. This is how we’re going to do things now.’ And actually maintain that process. Sometimes it takes someone in a leadership role to say we are not communicating like this anymore.”

“It’s a deliberate undermining of each other. It’s pinning area against area [within the department] because of the supervisory situation and the animosity there. They pit staff members against each other – like pawns in a game.”

“So many new things were pushed on us without the benefit of training or preparation. The attitude towards us seemed to be, ‘Here. We’ve made this decision, you have to make it work.’”

“Let’s have this basic premise: that people in the positions are competent and they know what they’re doing, and then we feel confident when we don’t know what we’re doing we can ask.”

“They made that bad decision by not listening to the people on the front line. We know ... ask us what we think, we’ve seen most of this before.”

“If someone is in a management or leadership role and they come with these assumptions, whether they’re aware of them or not, it’s undermining.”

“That overwhelming fear is when you have no support and no one to turn to and ask questions and get direction from – that’s when it gets scary.”

“What bothers me [is] people who are making the decisions around change, do they even know how to do it? If they don’t know, it doesn’t make sense to be expecting us to be experts in a day.”

“It would be interesting to take the ‘temperature’ of the staff. Morale is down, class sizes are up, and D2L isn’t working.”

Participants identified the sense of feeling silenced as a result of a negative institutional climate as being directly related to how they managed and adapted to new changes. The level of trust within the institution’s climate was lacking, but the group easily identified what they felt was needed to alter the climate for the better:

“You have to voice and vent to get to things. We can’t be censored to only say nice things, ... you need to be able to point out things [that] aren’t working, and you need to be able to say, ‘this isn’t working, let’s try this....’ It’s not about a support group, but we do want the space to express freely.”

“We also need some emotional support, acknowledging that ‘I know this is a lot we’re asking of you and I’m here to listen to your concerns.’ I feel that’s important to me, that there’s some compassion there.”

“The need for emotional support, just the feeling of community any time you want to change something, when you’re having a bad day or trying something new, to have someone say, ‘Are you having a bad day? Do you need some help?’”

Supporting faculty and staff in an atmosphere that encourages collaboration, support, and sharing of ideas emerged as a key concept in the focus group discussions around institutional climate and managing change. Participants emphasized the importance of having the opportunity for personal and collective reflective critical inquiry, as well as authentic input into the implementation of change. The quality and value of such reflection and input is contingent upon the type of climate the department and college as a whole encourage.

A study on instructor identity and practice (Enyedy, Goldberg, & Welsh, 2006) found that instructor practice, while influenced by personal history and cultural context, is also strongly influenced by institutional culture and the types of communities of practice that are nurtured within this culture. The report noted:

Identity is directly linked to both one’s history and one’s membership in multiple communities of practice. One’s identity is always both in progress and dependent on the particulars of the context ... institutional relationships open the door to multiple areas of control or power that shape a person’s identity and practice. (p. 72)

Etienne Wenger's (1998) work identifies how the existence of different communities of practice within organizations support and/or silence personal and professional identities, which then affect the overall efficiency of the organization. By encouraging communities of practice for faculty and staff that support exploration, inquiry, communication, and experimentation, the institution, faculty, staff, and learners will benefit as an ethic of "knowledge making" and "negotiating meaning" become shared domains. (Wenger, 1998)

In order to support an environment where "meaning" is negotiated from various perspectives, the institution as a whole must engage in critical reflection to better reflect the needs of faculty, staff, and learners. An institution's own ability to reflect critically has implications for the management and implementation of change:

If the institution itself is not prepared as a whole to look at its curricula, teaching methods and innovations in the allocation of resources, you are putting the 'innovators' in an absolutely impossible position vis a vis the rest of the institution. (Silver, 1998, p. 1)

While research notes that the theme of "institutional culture is [often] overlooked because it is messy, imprecise, and difficult to measure and change" (Finley & Hartman, 2004, p. 324), the "Managing Change" project's participants readily identified climate (institutional culture) as an influential force on their ability to navigate and adapt to change. Focus group discussions revealed that institutional barriers, such as time constraints, poor communication, conflicting ideologies, and lack of support and training, created areas of tension in their work, which led to resistance. The most commonly identified areas of resistance were in reaction to contextual changes (new delivery modalities, new technologies, etc.) that were implemented without faculty having time and support to adapt these changes into their practice in a way that honoured both their professional and personal identities.

## Final Gathering

The final focus group session was designed to debrief the overall research process, and to reflect on what was learned and how that learning could influence daily professional practice around navigating change in the workplace. To end on a constructive note, the group engaged in an appreciative inquiry process wherein the group was asked, "When were you most open and accepting of a significant change in your life? What characteristics were present that contributed to your positive approach to change?"

Working through the participants' stories, the following dominant characteristics emerged as being influential to their management of change in their reported experiences:

- There was strong support and mentorship.
- There was a belief that the change would be beneficial in the long run.
- There was a safety net if things went wrong.
- It was seen as an opportunity for exploration.
- Challenges were kept in perspective.
- Motivation came from personal belief in the change and surrounding support.

These characteristics for positive transitions in changing circumstances, along with the key themes that emerged through the PAR process, helped to inform the recommendations from the “Managing Change” project.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The PAR process utilized in the “Managing Change” project provided an arena for participants to explore their reactions and resistances to change objectively and in a supportive context. This discursive process allowed for the evolution of constructive discoveries of solutions to collective concerns, while the individual research component provided an opportunity for participants to enrich their understandings of social, cultural, political, and philosophical influences on personal practice and how those influences affected receptivity to change. The participants clearly identified some of their primary challenges with navigating change and worked to create solution-focused suggestions that would improve factors that influence the manageability of change, such as capacity or climate.

The following recommendations will support faculty to positively adapt to changes that are implemented in an institutional context:

- Provide space and time for instructors to strengthen their communities of practice so that there is an exchange of ideas, adaptations, and skills that support faculty as they adapt to institutional changes.
- Create and maintain an open and respectful dialogue between faculty and administration as changes are implemented.
- Use participatory principles in professional development authentically.
- Establish best practices for inner- and inter-departmental communication.
- Create a microclimate of care and awareness to help faculty cope with work overload, changing learner demographics, and increasing mental health issues amongst learners.
- Follow adult learning principles with faculty and staff when implementing change at an institutional level.
- Provide ample time for faculty to learn and personally familiarize themselves with new technologies before using them in a professional context.
- Support ongoing consultation with learners and faculty about the impact of changes on learner success.
- Create and support ongoing, collaborative, and experiential learning methods for faculty, staff, and learners.
- Encourage reflective practices among faculty that include questioning the relationships between content knowledge, teaching/learning theories in adult learning contexts, beliefs around the use and usefulness of technologies, personal identity, and areas of professional resistance. (Ongoing reflection will not resolve all areas of tension in professional practice, but the “Managing Change” project supports the value of bringing the multiple factors that influence daily practice to a conscious level for personal and professional growth.)

## CONCLUSION

The “Managing Change” project was a unique venture within an educational institution whose priorities are traditionally centered on educational outcomes and financial accountability. Engaging in participatory action research within a community college at the adult basic education level is not commonly seen as worthwhile. However, with the support of Bow Valley College’s Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning and the Adult Literacy Research Institute, the researchers were able to invite members of the CEFL faculty to participate in critical reflection of the ways in which they engaged with and managed change. From this effort, the participants identified important factors that influence change management, developed their skills as researchers, integrated critical reflective inquiry into their everyday professional practices, and contributed to building recommendations for future change endeavors.

The “Managing Change” project highlighted the need for traditional learning environments to engage in practitioner-led, reflective research processes, and surfaced the need for practitioners in adult basic education settings to feel not only respected in the work they do, but to also have a voice in the changes and processes that impact their work. Through the research process, various factors that influenced navigating change within Bow Valley College’s Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning were highlighted: personal and professional ethics and teaching philosophies, training and technology, learner needs and perceptions of learners, the management of change (time, capacity, and climate), and work environment/institutional culture. The project also engaged CEFL faculty in a meaningful way to reflect on the ways in which they engage with and, at times, resist change. At the very center of this research remained the creation of a safe, collaborative, reflective space for faculty to “slow things down a bit” and simply reflect with their colleagues, something that is all too often a luxury for adult basic education practitioners.

The PAR process enabled participants to explore attitudes and values that inform their practice. This exploration helped participants, both individually and collectively, to understand where points of resistance to institutionally informed change were occurring. It created a space to critically reflect on how individual positionality around adult learning theory, technology, and change influenced participants’ unique challenges with learners, while also providing a collective space where participants discovered shared strategies and points of resistance in their practice. By providing a safe, open environment in which to explore ideas, assumptions, and values, participants freely examined their practice with the aim of ensuring that the best interests of learners remained a central piece informing how they responded and adapted to change.

Navigating change within an institution can be extremely challenging. The “Managing Change” project demonstrated that a number of factors act as barriers to change, such as time constraints or the climate within which change is being implemented. Other factors, such as the mode of delivery for change, can sometimes feel as though they are beyond the control of the individuals on the receiving end of change. Personal practices, perceptions of change, and the complexities of resistance influence the management of change in ways that are not static. The ways in which learners are perceived, and engaged with, by an institution influences what factors are prioritized in relation to implementing change. Taking part in a collaborative,

reflection-based research approach to building an understanding of the complexities of change within the Bow Valley College setting was an invaluable experience for all participants.

It is hoped that the recommendations found in this report will help guide the Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning at Bow Valley College, and potentially other educational institutions, to implement and manage change in ways that optimize the strengths of its faculty. Through the many stages of facilitating this PAR process, it became very evident that as institutions move towards more learner-centred approaches to education, instructors, with their direct link to learners, are some of the most knowledgeable and valuable resources when considering the types of changes that will best serve a learning community.

## ADDITIONAL QUOTES

### Practitioner Engagement

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“I appreciate being able to say whatever is on your mind because we don’t often have permission to speak freely, so it’s nice to have a place to do that.”

“I think this is good – this is one area where we have some direction. We have good leadership going on. You guys are communicating effectively.”

“I feel more confident in my own practice after hearing that other instructors have similar challenges.”

“This project has been good for me in many ways. It has been informative, intellectually refreshing, and interesting. When I struggle daily to find balance in my life, it has been good to have some time and space for intellectual and professional growth.”

“This project has forced me to create time and space in my life to actually think about my job – not the day-to-day tasks which are all-consuming, but the bigger picture. What a pleasure it has been to have the luxury of conversation about adult education with such a thoughtful and intelligent group. I value my colleagues even more as a result.”

“To hear everyone say the things that are in my head – you walk around and think things – but you carry on because you have to keep going. So this was like a time out when you can talk.”

“The project has supported my beliefs and understanding of adult learners. It also created some questions.”

### Teaching Philosophies and Ethics

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“Curriculum has been used as a tool, a weapon, a power junket.”

“Sometimes my style is influenced by who my boss is – what the institutional goals are.”

### Training and Technology

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“We have not had training for D2L.”

“Training and implementation timelines is unrealistic.”

“We should have had training for D2L way before we had to use it.”

“I have to learn how to do them first before I can show anybody else how to do them.”

“It devours huge amounts of dollars constantly investing in new technologies without pausing to be certain that required elements are in place and working effectively before launching the technologies in the classrooms.”

“Paradox in that technology training, although it may in the long run enhance learner experiences, takes time away from students, so training becomes secondary – but the belief hanging over the group is that technology enhances student learning.”

“Technology issues!! Multitasking. I’m resistant because I lack the trouble shooting skills for technology ... baptism by fire!!”

## Learners

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### *Learner Needs and Learner Voice*

(Regarding online learning) “It was really interesting to be in the student’s shoes and experience the frustration from their side.” “I was so frustrated. The online student must have been frustrated as well.”

“Are we really serving our students’ needs by condensing the term?”

“If a learner can direct the pace of his learning (within reason) will foundational learners have more or better success?”

“This department, particularly, always worked together, we supported each other, we took care of each other. And that followed us into the classrooms and our students had faith in us, that we were out for their best interests. We always put the students first.”

“There are a lot of learners who are resistant.”

“You say we’re learner-centred or student-centred and it’s all for the good of the student and then you’re actually adding things in that are a problem for the student.”

“Some of them have almost no support at home.”

“We need to support them.”

### *Perceptions of Adult Learners*

“Do I think that teaching adults is different than teaching kids? ... Well you know I taught in high school and I don’t see any difference.”

“There are less management issues – it’s different management.”

“A lot of them [learners], their problem is they never really learned how to take notes or take ... effective notes or effective learning strategies so you throw a video at them, it’s not necessarily going to stick.” “They’re just going to be passive.”

“I just came from high school and had no problems transferring over – it was seamless.”

“Lots of high school students are holding jobs or have kids. Lots of times in high school it’s hush hush. Here it’s more open.”

“Don’t call them [adult learners] kids because they don’t like that.”

“I don’t think at the Academic Preparations level [that] it’s too much – they need to assimilate [on longer vs. shorter course times].”

“It is so important to deliver what you have promised to the student.”

(On independent learning approaches) “I don’t know how good they’d [learners] be because they’re not good at working independently.” “They’re not independent enough.”

“It’s such a fine line there because you’re teaching low level stuff but you don’t treat them like children. You deal with simple content in a way that respects them as adults.”

“They put a lot of responsibility on the learner ... if the learner is not intrinsically motivated, then it’s not necessarily going to work.”

## Change

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“The writing is on the wall. As I see it, right now is not conducive to change or change being effective.... So it’s like, what is our motivation for doing what we do?”

“There are a lot of changes going on around here.” “Way too many, way too fast.”

“In the classroom you never get time to ‘know,’ it all comes so fast.”

“When you’ve been doing it for a long time, you see the pendulum going back and forth, like learning theories – in the 80s we were doing these things and then we stopped doing it and now it’s the best thing again, so you get kind of jaded. If I wait long enough, it will come back to what I like.”

“Are technology changes implemented with too much pressure, haste and chaos a major contributor to the lack of cohesiveness?”

“You just do it and you don’t think about it [adapting to change].”

“I think if we had more time to evaluate whether or not changes are working then we could respond to if something is beneficial.”

“I think if you like it [the change], you adapt better.” “It’s subjective.”

“Don’t waste time trying to make things the way they used to be or figure out why they had to change. Don’t focus on what you are losing.”

“Change is inevitable so resisting it is a waste of energy. It is far more useful to try to direct it in a beneficial way.”

## Resistance

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(Regarding recording online classes) “There’s a huge FOIP issue. They don’t have written consent to release their voices ... and you call them by name. If they told us we had to do this I would refuse. There are students that have restraining orders [against people] and we can’t compromise their safety.”

“Because we’re teachers, we’ll kill ourselves trying to do the job before we admit it can’t be done.” “A lot of our motivation is intrinsic.”

“We are all in survival mode.”

(On having a meltdown) “Will they find me in the stairwell?”

“You think, ‘Can I manage?’” “It’s too much for anybody.”

“I’m trying to be the good person that tries to do it, but I have a fear because it’s just too much. It’s so much work. Will I be able to do it? Will I melt down?”

“I felt stupid.”

“I had my meltdown before the semester started.”

“Some change should be resisted. The difficulty lies in knowing the difference [between what should be resisted or not].”

“The video made me think about how I need to be positive even if I don’t like or agree with some of the changes.”

“I’ll do what I can, I’ll do my best.”

## Environment

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### *Time*

“Time is money.”

“I don’t have more time for them.”

“When you have taught for awhile, you don’t think about what you do, you just do it. There isn’t much time for reflection.”

“Time is a ridiculously rare commodity in my life.”

“How do we teach ‘social, cultural, economic, etc.’ in a limited time frame?” (referring to supporting students whole life learning needs)

(On class sizes) “You also don’t have time to help them outside a classroom, and that’s probably the worst.”

“You bonded as a group. So it’s not only how do you teach, but how you know each other. But you don’t have that time anymore.”

“It’s very difficult to have a large class. Right now I have a huge class and there are some I can’t interact with one-on-one.”

### *Assumed Capacity vs. Actual Capacity*

“We’re so snarky with each other and it’s because everyone’s overloaded.”

“It needs to be structured. Instead of here are a million dates, pick whatever, there needs to be a little more structure.”

“I thought the part about change needing professors to give up some of their academic freedom to work more in a group of colleagues was an important point. Lots of us are used to working alone and sometimes it’s difficult to work with others as everyone has a different style.”

### *Climate*

“I don’t have a successful way to cope with that, but I do take pokes at people who treat me that way. I mean how is it there’s a magic number or something? I mean somebody said to me a year or so ago, ‘I’ve got 20 years experience. I’m a very experienced teacher.’ And I said, ‘Good for you. What’s your point?’”

“It came back to the leadership. No one said, ‘We need to be consistent. We need to do what’s best for the student.’ But there was no leadership and so now it’s a mess again.”

“Our coordinators use us against each other to a huge degree.”

(When asked to promote new policies) “There are times when you are asked to say something in class that you know is not right.”

“I think everyone in the department wants the same thing ... but if you don’t have someone directing it in a cohesive manner, how does it really change? We need that direction.”

“Maybe we finally hit bottom and we’re coming back up. Because I think we’ve been so dysfunctional for so long and I thought it was just me until the first few meetings and I listened to everybody and I thought, ‘Oh, you’re feeling the same thing.’ Maybe we finally did hit rock bottom [and] we’re starting to bounce back.”

(Regarding getting a new coordinator) “It allows for a feeling of ... just more openness, more coordination, more transparency, and I think the way it’s structured will allow for that to happen easier.”

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