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2021

Student Retention at the Community College Level

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College of Education

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Davia Ramgeet

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

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by

Davia Ramgeet

MS, Central Connecticut State University 2012

BS, Western Carolina University, 2009

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

Student retention has been a serious issue for many community colleges globally for several decades. In a community college in Jamaica, persistence rates have been steadily declining within the last several years. The purpose of this study was to investigate students' experiences with the pre-college program that was designed to prepare students to enter and successfully complete college undergraduate programs. Astin's conceptual framework on involvement was used for this qualitative project study. Key questions for this study included what in-class experiences and what student support services students participating in the pre-college program perceived to be most useful to their college preparation. Seven students enrolled in the pre-college program completed the open-ended section of the survey, which was transcribed, and a secondary analysis of de-identified students survey responses conducted. The data were coded and analyzed using the NVivo. The findings revealed three major themes: 1) student intention, 2) social integration, and 3) institution policies (support). The results and recommendations were used to create a 3-day professional development for the educators and staff of the site. The project included the forming of an online professional learning community centered around bridging the gap between pre-college and college readiness for transitioning into the baccalaureate college level using structured advisement. Once implemented, this project will positively impact pre-college students and their success in transitioning to a college academic program. It should also significantly influence the involvement of faculty and staff in activities that favor social integration and institutional policies and promote positive social change so that student retention may be improved.

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Dedication

To my children, Deannah and Deandre.

Acknowledgments

To the family members, friends and colleagues who assisted me on this doctoral journey, thank you. At this point in my academic career, the opportunity to engage in a study that envelopes positive social change is quite rewarding. Your support is greatly appreciated. Thanks also to the participants, chair, and committee and faculty members who facilitated my growth during the process.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Erisman and Steele (2015) observed that, in America, many students have enrolled in college without completing a degree. This intimated that there is a retention issue at the higher education level. To address this, studies suggested that the whole campus should be engaged in supporting student retention and persistence (Oliveira, 2018). Of the many variables noted in studies on students' persistence in higher education, the quality of the provision of student support services remains a dominant factor (Aljohani, 2016). In the American context, the significance of students' persistence in higher education is reflected in the goals of the institution's strategic plans (Oliveira, 2018). I will be placing emphasis on identifying strategies to promote students' success in a systematic way. The community college I studied has multiple campuses, all carrying pre-college programs, and most of these programs are demonstrating success; however, Middle Campus continues to show persistence rates that are of concern to the administration.

Registry data for 2014-15 to 2018-19 for Middle Campus, one of seven community college campuses in Jamaica, showed a steady decline in student persistence rates for its pre-college programs. For the academic year 2018-19, 73% of pre-college students on Middle Campus did not persist to the end of their program, which means that these students would not be eligible for enrollment in tertiary level programs. The 5-year goal for the pre-college unit is to reduce the attrition rate incrementally down to 5% (Strategic document, 2019-2024). Among the community colleges located in Jamaica,

Middle Campus continues to show signs of decline for students enrolled in courses that are postsecondary but not at the undergraduate level. The data suggested that the impact is negligible right now. It also suggested that there are unexplained variations in the persistence rates, and there is a belief by those at the local site that student perceptions of the pre-college program may provide important insights (PST, Campus Director, personal communication, October 23, 2019). The problem that provided the basis for this study was the low persistence rates of students who participated in the pre-college program that is designed to prepare students to enter college degree programs.

Figure 1

Middle Campus Student Retention Rate, 2015 – 2018
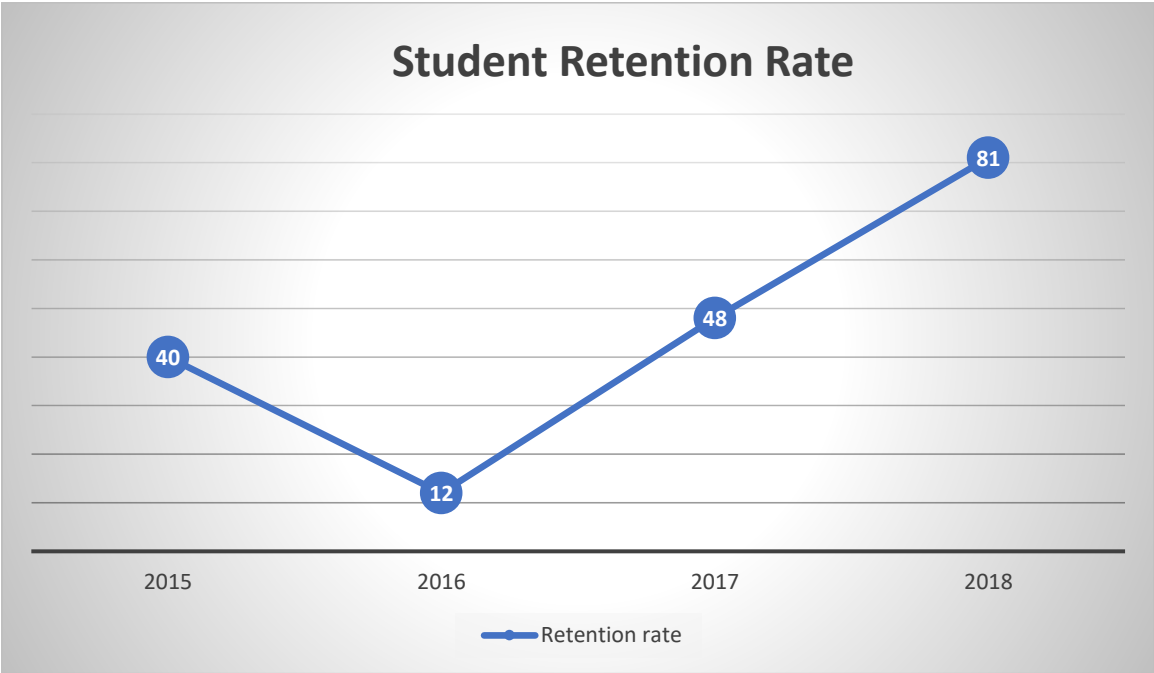
Note: From Middle Campus registry, 2019.

Following a review of data that indicated a need to improve support for students entering the college with remediation needs, the college administration designed a pre-college unit in 2018 to give meaningful attention to students entering the college without all the required competencies to enter tertiary-level programs. The college's quality assurance officer also expressed the need for this unit, noting that "while there is a student support services department to deal with the many array of issues, there was still a need for student support services to target the approximately 40% of the college's population who are potentially the best way of increasing our tertiary population" (SFM, personal communication, October 23, 2019). This assertion by the quality assurance officer, in collaboration with the college's administration, propelled the naming of a dean and creating of a framework for the pre-college program. According to the acting vice principle of student support services (2019), the dean is responsible for engaging pre-college students in order to facilitate their transition from unqualified to successful graduate.

This pre-college program was designed to facilitate the purposeful attention that was never previously given to students who are a part of the postsecondary system but not enrolled in an undergraduate program. Creating this pathway for pre-college students was intended to help them succeed. To supplement the pre-college program, institutional (student) support services were integrally involved in enriching their experience, as noted in the college's strategic document. The dean of pre-college also conversed with the students about their perception of the design of the pre-college program and whether they

thought that the student support services department supported their journey specifically, which has been documented in her reports to the administration.

Rationale

The Freudian concept of cathexis denotes that people invest into objects and people outside of themselves. Alexander Astin built on this concept to create the student involvement theory. Astin (1984) posited that if a student invests his or her time in studying, spends time interacting on campus, is engaged in campus-led activities, and interacts frequently with faculty and staff, he or she will be more likely to succeed or persist from enrolment to graduation. Bean (1982, 1985); Bean and Metzner (1985); Pascarella (1980); Spady (1970, 1971); and Tinto (1975, 1993) since then have theorized similarly on the issue of student retention or persistence for at least the past four decades.

Middle campus has been experiencing poor student retention in their pre-college program for the last 5 years; a qualitative project study proposal was useful to diagnose and help to solve the problem. The purpose of this qualitative project study was to investigate students' experiences with the pre-college program that was designed to prepare students to enter and successfully complete college undergraduate programs. Investigating the experiences of students who are enrolled in the pre-college program provided insights that will improve the program and ultimately help Middle Campus meet their retention goals.

Definition of Terms

Student Retention: The ability of an institution to retain a student from admission through graduation (Seidman, 2012).

Retention (often used interchangeably with 'persistence'): Students remaining enrolled in an institution to complete their educational goals successfully (Tinto, 1993).

Student persistence: The desire and action of a student to enroll and remain in an institution from admission through to degree completion (Seidman, 2012).

Student Involvement: "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1984, p. 300).

Student support (also known as institutional support): The range of services both for individuals and for students in groups which complement the course material or learning resources that are organized for all learners (Tight, 2019).

Significance of the Study

The qualitative project study addresses a local real-world problem by investigating students' experiences with the pre-college program that was designed to prepare students to enter and successfully complete undergraduate programs at the community college. The pre-college program was established by the community college administration to help students who did not readily matriculate into a 2- or 4-year degree program. Tight (2019) suggested that student retention should not be about helping students to better adapt to the higher education institutions they are studying at or with, but about the institution adapting to the students it admit. For more than 4 decades, there has been a great deal of work on retention and students' persistence (Aljohani, 2016). Notwithstanding, the pre-college program at Middle Campus has been struggling to increase the persistence rate of these students who do not have the requisite qualifying certifications to successfully register and enroll in the college's undergraduate programs.

The experiences of students enrolled in a pre-college program and how those experiences may impact their persistence in a community college undergraduate program successfully is an under-researched area, which makes it unique. The results of this study may encourage positive social change for students in the pre-college program, faculty and staff catering to pre-college, and the college in a sustainable way. The goal of the pre-college program is to assist students to persist to successfully completing an undergraduate degree. The recommendations from the study may inform the college's administration on how to best design its program inclusive of institutional support (student support services) to meet the needs of its students and the college's goal of improving student retention.

Research Questions

Student involvement is identified by five basic postulates: investment of physical and psychological energy; this investment being on a continuum; has both qualitative and quantitative features; quality and quantity of involvement determined by the amount of student learning and development offered through the educational program; and the policy and practices of the institution (Astin, 1984). The last two postulates represent how an institution may design effective educational programs to facilitate student persistence (Astin, 1984). Therefore, for Middle Campus to determine whether the pre-college program satisfies students' perception of useful in-class and institutional support currently being offered, the following broad questions were used to frame the investigation to find out the best solutions to the problem:

RQ1– What in-class experiences do students participating in the pre-college program perceive to be most useful to their college preparation?

RQ2– What student support services do students participating in the pre-college program perceive to be most useful to their college preparation?

Review of the Literature

The problem that provided the basis for this qualitative study was the low persistence rates of students who participated in the pre-college program that was designed to prepare students to enter college undergraduate degree programs. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate students' experiences with this pre-college program. For this section, the theory of involvement (Astin, 1984) described the conceptual framework for the study of student retention and showed that institutional support and student persistence were worthwhile scholarly pursuits in aiding with the retention issue at Middle Campus. The critical review of literature demonstrated the broader problem of student retention at the community college level from the perspective of the students' institutional support and their in-class experiences. The literature identified student retention issues as well as substantial evidence of factors that may explain why students' perspectives of the usefulness of the in-class experiences and institutional support may help improve students' success in completing

their pre-college program and transition into and graduating from a

college undergraduate degree program.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the theory of involvement based on

the seminal work of Astin (1984). Astin suggested that college students who are involved

in campus-wide activities are more likely to persist to graduation (Mayhew et al., 2016).

The involvement theory is applicable to the features of the pre-college program as the

focus of this program is to create an environment that promotes success. Astin's and

Tight's (2019) work have been used to discuss, model, and predict students' persistence.

They suggested that the more effective a learning environment is designed, the more

likely a student is to persist through their higher education experience.

A great deal of work, particularly in the USA, has been devoted to modelling and

predicting student persistence on a program, institutional, and national level. Researchers

who concurred with Astin's (1984) involvement theory included Tinto (1975, 1993,

2007); Bean (1980); Bean and Metzner (1987); White, Alexander, Prince & Verdell

(2018); Miller (2018); and Xu (2016). These works have been used throughout the last

few decades to discuss, shape, and influence the outcomes of student retention in higher

education institutions. Seminal works on student persistence and retention continue to

dominate higher education research globally.

In more recent studies, Astin's (1984) theory of involvement was used to argue

how educators and administrators can influence students' persistence through the student

support services of an institution (Allen & Nichols, 2017; Arifin, 2018; Ayuk & Jacobs,

2018; DuVivier, Oswald, Steller, & Bumhoffer, 2018; Martirosyan, Bustamante, & Saxon, 2019). Using the involvement theory posited by Astin can give guidance to institutions in better adapting to the students they enroll by meeting their expectations and assisting them to persist to graduation. Beer and Lawson (2018) provided different views of strategies to support students' whole campus experience during enrollment. They suggested that the problem-solving approach strategies should include collaboration and be based on agile complex adaptive systems. At Middle Campus, students enrolled in the pre-college program are designated as non-traditional students. They are assigned a pathway that supports them moving along a continuum from being unqualified to being able to matriculate into an undergraduate or tertiary level program. Essentially, they may be seen as nontraditional students based on their unpreparedness for higher education.

Bohl, Haak, and Shrestha (2017) opined that those nontraditional students' experiences while being enrolled in a higher education institution are integral to their success. They suggested that there should be a commitment to retention, which should include student support services as part of the institution's strategic plan to improve student persistence rates. Bowles and Brindle (2017) described factors influencing student retention as situational, dispositional, and with an institutional student support mechanism. It is under those assertions that I began examining the factors influencing Middle Campus' student retention, primarily at the institutional and situational levels.

Three prominent models involving students' success were proposed by Astin (1984), Bean (1987), and Tinto (1993). The student involvement model purported that the amount of psychological and physical energy a student devoted to their academic and

campus activities would determine their success (Astin, 1984). Student retention using a psychological model suggested that a student's background or psychological characteristics would determine how immersed he or she would be in the college atmosphere, which would influence the student's success (Bean, 1987). Tinto postulated that student engagement prepared them for success through persistence and performance due to certain characteristics. These characteristics are modelled through stages: separation, transition, and incorporation. Tinto also suggested that students separated from their known support groups – family, friends, and community. They transitioned into a college, a new environment, but did not necessarily form any commitments. Finally, they associated themselves with the college setting through academic and social systems. All three models as purported by each theorist used different expressions; however, all were directed at students' success.

Students' behaviors, their institutional conditions, and their decision to persist increased their likelihood of being successful (Astin, 1984; Bean 1987; Tinto, 1993). What student involvement, student engagement, and student persistence all have in common is that they all model how students' behavior and institutional support influenced students' success. These in-class and campus-wide interactions involve instructors, peers, and social activities. The more frequent these interactions take place, the greater the confidence and self-control developed by the students. Middle Campus had an ad hoc pre-college program with a student retention rate that needed addressing. The models presented by Astin (1984), Bean (1987), and Tinto (1993) postulated that in-class activities and institutional support are both conditions that can assist students to persist.

Institutional Support

The college's administration, while ensuring there is no deflection from carrying out the institution's mission, created multiple pathways applicable to the diverse needs of enrolled students. Farhan (2018) and Gill (2016) suggested the voluntary framework of accountability denoted how community colleges' student support services should be evaluated to ensure they maintain their mission and remain relevant to the communities they serve. Hughes and Gibbons (2018) also suggested that there is a growing population of students with specific and unique career needs that should be attended to through students support services. Notwithstanding, there was also a gap between the programs and what the student support services provided by some higher education institutions. These factors impacted student retention in higher education, which affected college retention rates. The challenge, however, remained in how responsive Middle Campus will be in the promotion of its activities to facilitate positive student experiences during their enrollment in the pre-college program.

Promotion of institutional activities that create positive student experiences should be a whole-campus mission. These activities make up the institutional culture which is fundamental to decisions students make about withdrawing or remaining in a higher education institution. Astin (1984), Martinez, Borjas, Herrera, and Valencia (2015), and Oliveira (2018) described the institutional student support practices and efforts to promote student retention as being both in-class and campus-related activities. While in-class and external activities develop students, retention rates are a function of how and what kind of students an institution attracts, the institution's environmental

conditions, and whether the environment provided by the institution is a good fit for the students admitted. Ravulo (2019) agreed, stating that the lack of student support in terms of outreach activities and innovative community projects are among several reasons why students leave their studies. This then means that, though emphasis is placed on a single department (student support services) being responsible for implementing or sustaining these experiences through coordinated activities, the entire Middle Campus should invest in creating institutional experiences.

In higher education, the system of institutional support is diversified for several reasons. Students are mobile, multidirectional, and oftentimes require more and better information and guidance to persist. Retention, progression, and completion in higher education requires a sustained, deeply embedded commitment from all parts of the institution, placing students support services at the forefront of all activities related to a student's life cycle (Roberts, 2018; Tight, 2019; White, Alexander, Prince & Verdell 2018; Xu, 2016). DuVivier, Oswald, Steller and Bumhoffer (2018) argued that higher education institutions play a significant role in responding to students' needs in a nurturing and engaging manner through academic and student support mechanisms, while they (the students) make a conscious decision to remain or drop out. Middle Campus, like other community colleges around the globe, is changing to address students' expectations which require stronger and better institutional governance and management to meet these expectations.

In-Class Experience

The educational provisions made through in-class activities may often create

dissonance in nontraditional students' experience. These are the culturally rooted

expectations of instructors and the interactions between students and their instructors and

or advisors. Martirosyan, Bustamante, and Saxon (2019) posited that these relationships

and expectations may strain the academic adjustments and impact students' success

negatively. Middle Campus has a secondary-level structured timetable for pre-college

students covering almost 40 hours excluding campus-wide activities with the exception

of 1-hour worship per week. Secondary level students generally do fewer hours, mainly

due to the intermittent non-academic or non-credit activities that are structurally added to

an academic timetable. While these pre-college students were immersed in a college

setting, there was a cultural expectation for them to adjust to the system of longer contact

hours with a pre-determined timetable with little or no input from them.

Students enrolled in pre-college programs are essentially first year nontraditional

college students with expectations and secondary experiences that may not be aligned

with the realities of college life. Tinto (1993) opined that it is imperative that institutions

set expectations, improve the quality of their academic and social support systems, and

provide adequate opportunities for inclusion of their students' experiences. These

fundamentally different experiences range from classroom norms, student-student

interaction, faculty-student interactions, communication means, teaching and learning

styles, and policies and procedures (Alverez, 2016; Mah, 2018; Morley & Ablett, 2017;

Tinto, 1993). This may be contradictory to pre-college students, as they do not

necessarily have that traditional teacher-student interaction, yet they have extensive hours without getting the option of selecting courses at Middle Campus.

While this research was focused on the involvement theory, other seminal works used different expressions or ideas to add to the body of research on student retention. Tinto (1993; 2007), in his theory of engagement, theorized that the more students felt connected to the institution, peers, and faculty, the less likely it would be for them to drop out. This interaction with peers and faculty can enhance positive relationships that will promote success. Bean (1980), while similar in context to the aforementioned theory, opined that students' intentions and environmental factors are both good indicators of retention. Essentially, attrition has no single cause and solution.

Co-curricular Activities

The theory of involvement was the core concept for this exploration into the problem of student retention and how institutions' responsiveness may improve students' persistence or success. Astin's (1993) seminal work on involvement and consequent improvements on his own theory recognized students' involvement in cocurricular activities as being reputably strong in dealing with the student retention issue in higher education. Essentially, an institution in pursuit of positive outcomes for its students must view students' persistence in terms of how students change and develop as a result of cocurricular activities. The environment provided by the institution is responsible for the students' experiences while being in college. These may come in the form of clubs, societies and student organizations, and activities at students' residences.

Tinto (1993) also supported the view that student involvement is critical to their success in college and has positive outcomes for their educational experiences. This support was subjected to students' involvement both inside and outside of the classroom space. An investment of energy into curricular activities and or continued involvement in cocurricular activities will influence students' perception of their institutions (Milem & Berger, 1997). What is arguable is the amount of energy a student is willing to invest in cocurricular activities which is an integration of both Astin's (1984) and Tinto's (1993) models on student retention.

Student Retention Models

The aim of this project study was to use the recommendations from the data analysis to determine which student retention model or an integration of student retention models best solves the student retention issue at Middle Campus. Models developed over the years served to inform institutions how they may develop an understanding of the kinds of students they enroll and the mechanisms that may create conditions for them to continue through to graduation successfully. Initiatives for the effective retention and successful completion of programs in higher education require continuous assessment of students' needs. Scanning the educational landscape, both the internal and external environments, and evaluating students' persistence will also allow practitioners to determine which business model best suits their offerings.

For many years, theorists have done exhaustive research on student retention models, primarily with the main conceptual models: theory of involvement student attrition model and student integration model; and the input, environment, and output

model (Astin, 1968, 1985, 1993; Bean, 1982, 1985; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Pascarella, 1980; Spady, 1970, 1971; Tinto, 1975, 1993). The common factor in all the retention models is that a proactive approach ought to be taken by educators or institutions through retention policies and strategies. Variables such as student-student interaction, student-campus interaction, academic and non-academic factors including pre-college variables, students' involvement where they are enrolled, and the institutional policies are key indicators of students' experience. This feedback is best captured by the students' evaluation to solve institutional gaps in practice or policy (Astin, 1968, 1985, 1993; Bean, 1982, 1985; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Pascarella, 1980; Spady, 1970, 1971; Tinto, 1975; 1993). Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2006) discussed the integration of several models and building on theories in retention to also include the significance of faculty giving quality advisement, personal and social support services, and the removal of any potential diversity or cultural barriers to students being socially integrated into the college community. Understanding the needs of the pre-college students can be achieved by gaining their perspectives through feedback.

Between 1990 and 2000, the models were developed and modified to include diversity, on-line education, 2-year programs, and 4-year programs based on the foundations of Astin (1968, 1985) and Tinto (1975, 1993). The model that appeared to be a best fit for the pre-college problem was Astin's Theory of Involvement (1985, 1993). Astin created five tenets of student involvement and development:

- Psychological and physical investment – the amount of energy a student gives, both psychologically and physically, to a highly-generalized "object" which can also be referred to as their experience.

- Continuous investment –different students manifest different interests in their experiences at different times on a continuum irrespective of what those experiences are.

- Quantitative and qualitative investment – students' experiences have both quantitative and qualitative features. That is, for example, the number of hours spent on a studying a subject matter is measuring (quantitative) and to what extent did learning take place during the study period is understanding (qualitative).

- Learning outcomes tied to quality and quantity of involvement – learning and personal development is directly proportionate to the quality and quantity of time students are involved in a program.

- Educational policy effectiveness in motivating students – the effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement.

An understanding of this model and its basic tenets can have widespread applications in institutions of higher education, including pre-college programs and also complement the other classical theories in retention and development.

Implications

This project study will have implications for college administrators leading institutions that are trying to combat student retention. The volume of research on student retention mentioned multiple theories and recommendations in solving the problem is extant (Bean, 1980; Bean & Metzner, 1987; Miller, 2018; Tinto, 1975, 1993, 2007; White, Alexander, Prince & Verdell (2018); and Xu, 2016). The arguments for student involvement being able to solve the student retention or persistence issue for this project study is based on Astin's (1984) quality and quantity of involvement. This is determined by the amount of student learning and development offered through the educational program, and the policy and practices of the institution.

Involvement in in-class and campus-wide activities will be dependent on the students' self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and the potential benefits to be gained by participating. Further, of significance is the students' perceived value of the curriculum, its quality and relevance of content and interaction with instructor (Astin, 1993). Clubs and societies membership, volunteering, and community service that is repurposed to show the value of networking and gain academic credits may also contribute to students' success. While students often place value on peer interaction, the energy and time invested with other students will also be dependent on the type of facilities and environment put in place to foster building of relationships. Using a qualitative project study to investigate the students' perspective on the in-class and campus-wide activities, including the institutional support services' usefulness in their persistence in the pre-college program to successfully transitioning into a college undergraduate degree

program to graduation, is a worthwhile undertaking as its findings will be used to develop

the project over a semester. `The project study consideration may include`

`professional development in an online environment during the Covid-19`

`pandemic and in the post-coronavirus era through online webinars,`

`tutorials, and documents available for downloading.`

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative project study was to investigate students'

experiences with the pre-college program that was designed to prepare students to enter

and successfully complete college undergraduate programs. Using the theory of

involvement as the fundamental approach to exploring the experiences of students

enrolled in the pre-college program provided insights to improve the program and help

Middle Campus meet its retention goals. The provision of insights from students might

also give formative feedback on the effectiveness of teaching and learning, peer

interaction, academic and social integration, and possibly the institution's image (Ayuk &

Jacobs, 2018). These perspectives from students on their in-class, cocurricular, and or

overall institutional experiences, if responded to by the institution, may contribute to

solving the retention problem and promote positive social change.

Student retention, student persistence, and student attrition are all common terms

used in higher education to denote the problem of students' failure to graduate. Since the

70s, the evolution and growth of the responses to the student retention issue have seen

many theorists and researchers in their contribution to the body of research posit that

institutional support as well as student involvement are paramount to students' success

(Alvarez, 2016; Arifin, 2018; Astin, 1984; 1993; Ayuk & Jacobs, 2018; Bowles & Brindle, 2017; Farhan, 2018; Martirosyan, Bustamante, & Saxon, 2019; Miller, 2018; Pascarella, 1980; 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Roberts, 2018; & Xu, 2016). This project determined, through the students' perspectives, the effectiveness of both the institution's support services and in-class experiences in contributing to their success in the pre-college program offered at Middle Campus.

In the next section, the methodology, I describe the research design and its alignment to the problem and the research questions. While acknowledging the ethical considerations to be practiced throughout the secondary data analysis process, I explain the specific details of accessing the secondary data. The next section also discusses the role of the researcher, particularly my current professional role at the setting and the role I have in relation to the participants. Finally, I describe the coding procedures, software applications used, and maintaining credibility and trustworthiness while conducting the procedures, including discrepant cases.

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this qualitative project study was to investigate students'

experiences with the pre-college program that was designed to prepare students to enter

and successfully complete college undergraduate programs. Two research questions

guided the study:

RQ1– What in-class experiences do students participating in the pre-college program

perceive to be most useful to their college preparation?

RQ2– What student support services do students participating in the pre-college program

perceive to be most useful to their college preparation?

The student satisfaction survey had an open-ended section with a list of semi-

structured broad questions surrounding persistence. These broad questions involved self-

efficacy, sense of belonging, and perceived value of the curriculum. Astin (1984, 1993)

and Tinto (2016) posited that students' involvement in in-class activities as well as

institution-wide activities is critical to their persistence and success. A secondary data set

was used based on the permission given to me by Walden's IRB. This secondary data set

is from the local site's Research Office and Quality Assurance Office. Each semester,

both offices collect data from stakeholders for accreditation and to examine the efficiency

and effectiveness of policies and systems at the local site. The findings are generally used

to inform practice and changes (SFM, Quality Assurance Officer, personal

communication, February 4, 2021). In addition to the usual satisfaction survey, the

Research Office, through the committee responsible for review research requests, added

research questions found in my draft proposal specific to the pre-college students on the specific local site. "We at XXXXX are thrilled to sanction any research that will lead to positive social change and improvement in retention, as we have been struggling with that issue for some time. When we learned that Walden would not allow for interviews to be done by the researcher based on a number of factors, we thought it prudent to use the opportunity to engage the students directly for that section of the survey, especially since Covid-19, we were not able to see or interface with students as we were used to" (SWS, Research Officer, personal communication, February 4, 2021). During the process, participants revealed details regarding their observations and conceptualizations, which were recorded and transcribed by the Quality Assurance Office at the local site using the Evernote app.

Of the 61 students enrolled, 26 responded to the survey, and seven responded to the entire survey including the open-ended section. The survey participants were between ages of 18 and 29 and from various communities across two parishes. Two of the participants were adult learners seeking certification for entry level positions they previously held, while the other five were transitioning from high school (grade 11). The quality assurance office in collaboration with the research office provided full access to the data, both survey responses as well as the transcribed notes for the secondary analysis done for this study. The names have been removed and replaced with pseudonyms which will be used for all intent and purposes relating to this study.

In the social sciences, qualitative inquiry is research used by the researcher to explore and describe a problem regarding people in their everyday existence. It is

valuable in public education particularly, as it is aimed at describing peoples'

experiences, relationships, and interactions in their working environment (Erickson,

2011). I chose the topic of student retention to study because I recognized that it was a

problem at the community college I serve. I became interested in the pre-college program

specifically because these students were a marginalized group. An investigation into their

perspectives of the usefulness of both in-class experiences and institutional support

experiences could help to solve the persistence problem at the local site. The outcomes of

the study will benefit the pre-college students, the faculty and staff assigned to the pre-

college students, and the institution. It may affect positive social change, in that

successful students from the pre-college program will be able to access an undergraduate

degree program.

A qualitative research design was chosen for this study. The study was designed

to explore the phenomena of student retention from the students' perspective. The

primary characteristics of qualitative research are understanding social life and the

method of generating words to be used as data for analysis (Butin, 2010). Qualitative

methods are used to understand experiences and answer the how, what, or why of a

phenomenon, rather than the how many or how much, which are generally for

quantitative methods (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). Further, student retention

models are often designed based on longitudinal studies that contain a number of

variables that do not explain why the characteristics or factors act the way they do.

The questions that need to be answered to address the student retention problem at

Middle Campus are qualitative in nature. That is, I attempted to find out what in-class

experiences and student support services students participating in the pre-college program perceived to be most useful to their college preparation. These questions were answered through coding of open-ended survey questions to find out in some detailed way how students perceived both in-class experiences and institutional support services as useful to their college preparation.

Setting

Middle Campus began in 1992 with eight accounting students. This number increased as new programs were introduced. These programs, however, were for adult learners who were upgrading their qualifications. Around a decade later, pre-college programs were introduced when a need for bridging the matriculation gap became evident by the college's administration. That is, students were applying for postsecondary courses but lacked the requisite qualifications to enroll into 2- and 4-year programs that were being offered at the time. The physical location of this campus has moved twice and has settled on its current land mass without [any] changes to meet its growing demands. Currently, there is a campus director who leads the site administratively but also lectures minimally. Most registry and other institutional transactions are done on the main campus through a paper-based process. Since 2019, the college started their electronic system by introducing the use of the first student management system. As of May 2020, it was not yet fully implemented (JMS, Acting Vice Principal of Student Support Services, personal communication, May 4, 2020).

Middle Campus is a public co-educational institution in Jamaica. Like other community colleges and or higher education institutions globally, it is struggling with the

issue of student retention. The data presented in Section 1 of the study showed a trend suggesting that Middle Campus had a student retention problem. To make sense of the quantitative data, an investigation that is both descriptive and analytic was used. Students enrolled in the pre-college program at Middle Campus participating in the study were able to bring context to the student retention phenomenon and explore possible trends and thoughts which are oftentimes strengthened by social identity or location (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Without being encumbered about what the literature has said about student retention, or what I expect, I wanted to understand the pre-college students' accounts of their experience in the pre-college program.

Though it was my intention to gather information in a natural setting, there is a global pandemic that had struck the world since December 2019 called Coronavirus or Covid-19 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2019). This had created a "new normal" where most teaching and learning takes place remotely. Further, there is the on-going promotion of social distancing. Ideally, qualitative research should take place in its natural setting; however, the site used the telephone system to contact participants and record their responses based on this new normal.

Sampling Strategy

Twice per year, the site generally collects data from its students through a student satisfaction survey. This survey was done via telephone through the quality assurance office, which incorporated the interviews using the open-ended questions once students agreed. The qualitative method used for identifying participants was purposive and selective sampling. Butin (2010) defined purposeful sampling as a sampling technique

that is subjective and used in qualitative research to recruit participants in the hope of them providing in-depth and detailed information with regards to the phenomenon being investigated. The qualifying criterion of each participant was simply to have been enrolled in the pre-college program at least one semester to be considered for the research study. Shenton (2004) posited that sampling strategies should always be determined by the purpose of the research. This qualitative project study was aimed at finding out what in-class experiences and student support services students participating in the pre-college program perceived to be most useful to their college preparation; therefore, this strategy for selecting participants was deemed most appropriate.

Access

No data was collected until Walden's IRB and the local site granted permission for me to conduct this study. Owing to the nature of this study, the participants would have no direct contact with me in the role of researcher, which consequently meant I had to wait until the site provided me with the recordings of the telephone conversations with the participants. Notwithstanding, my request to the site for accessing de-identified data was specific to students enrolled in the pre-college program on Middle Campus. My intention was to gain access to a small number of participants' responses. Saldana (2016) suggested that the fewer the number of participants, the richer the inquiry for each individual. For this reason, I assumed anywhere between six and eight participants would be appropriate for this study.

Under the 2004 Access to Information Act, I have a right to access the records of a government "public authority." In this case, Middle Campus is a public tertiary

institution that has a section that deals with the research. I followed the requisite

guidelines for requesting information from the research department, which were also

described in the Internal Research Committee (IRC) form. The IRC form is the formal

document used by the Middle Campus for research using its name, population, and

documents. The organization allowed the secondary analysis of participants' responses

through its research office (see appendix C).

As the principal of the community college (local site) chosen in this project study,

I do not have or maintain direct contact with students. Middle Campus is led by a campus

director who reports directly to a vice principal. Notwithstanding, I am sensitive to the

affect my role might have on students in terms of being coerced or compelled to

participate in my study. With this sensitivity, I conducted a secondary analysis of data set

not primarily created for this research. Further, my current position should affirm my

integrity and establish a participant-researcher relationship; however, Walden's IRB does

not allow employees of partner organizations to have any direct contact with participants.

Participants' Protection

It is not always easy or possible to determine the dangers or harm participating in

a study may cause, whether to the individual or the group. As a researcher, I protected the

documentation and recordings that were collected, along with the identity of the site and

participants. Participants' names were replaced with numerical labels. In addition, the

study's related documents and recordings were handled with discretion and stored safely

on an encrypted hard drive at my home. Beauchamp and Childress (1983) described four

principles researchers should bear in mind:

- Autonomy; respect the rights of the individual.

- Beneficence; doing good.

- Non-maleficence; not doing harm.

- Justice; particularly equity.

For additional protection of the participants, the site used cloud storage of the recordings and data set in an encrypted format, which I had permission to access and will discard after 5 years from approval by Walden University's IRB. During the research, all files were stored under password protection on the designated computer I used as well as on a terabyte (external hard drive) I keep at home in a safe.

Participant 1 recently graduated from high school, has always been fond of hands-on or skills-based activities, and is desirous of becoming an engineer. He enrolled in the pre-college program to qualify for university entry into a degree program for his engineering pursuits. He believes that attending a community college will give him the right "balance" for what university will be like.

Participant 2 dropped out of high school midway into grade 11. Her situation caused her to not be engaged in academia for over 3 years. Accessing a community college is a "dream turned reality." She is encouraged to further her studies at the site based on the pace of the environment and the proximity to her home. Her passion is in education, and she is now aspiring to matriculate into the college's bachelor's in education program next academic year.

Participant 3 has recently completed grade 13 at a local high school in close proximity to the site. She is focused on her goal of becoming a registered nurse; however,

she lamented that the tuition, though lower than the university's cost, is still the highest among all the programs offered by the site. This reality appears "bleak, but with the help of God, I will achieve my goal."

Participant 4 is from a huge family and the first to attend college. "To be quite honest, I really do not know which career will suit me," she admitted. She has expressed that enrolling in the pre-college was an idea presented to her at her high school career day. She has been changing her mind about her career path since kindergarten and still has not settled even at age 19. She remains hopeful that by the next semester when she sees her grades, she will be able to choose something worthwhile.

Participant 5 is interested in farming, particularly livestock. He is from a farming community and has spent all his life tending to animals. He is also aiming to teach "agriculture or any subject relating to farming, the environment, and climate change." He is quite passionate about global climate change and how young people can be proactive toward a better future.

Participant 6 is an athlete who has every intention of migrating to the United States to become a star athlete in the NBA. His enrollment in the program is to ensure that he has the entry level requirements for a university abroad. Further, he chose this site to play intercollegiate sports and hopefully to get a scholarship for his dream.

Participant 7 is passionate about business and entrepreneurship. She believes in the creative space and its impact globally. "Not enough is being done to encourage young people to have multiple careers or avenues to excel." She is also quite interested in advancing her qualifications while doing entrepreneurial activities to fund her ambitions.

Data Collection

Data collection in qualitative research means collecting words rather than numbers. In other words, generating data using qualitative methods involves gathering individuals' or group information that will help the researcher understand the context (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The qualitative method used for this study was telephone survey with interviews for the open-ended section. This section used semi-structured questions to explore in detail the participants' own perceptions and accounts of their experiences with the pre-college program that was designed to prepare students to enter and successfully complete college undergraduate programs. Rubin and Rubin (2012) indicated that it is desirable to begin with broad questions then develop into more focused questions. They also suggested that the researcher probes but not lead, and gives the participant enough opportunity to share, acknowledges social rules in a consistent manner. One social rule during an interview would be, taking turns to speak without interrupting. The researcher should also review and use an interview guide. While I did not get the opportunity to observe or participate in the actual interview process, I was integral in the documentation process.

The Family Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) gives guidance on the procedures for the use of students' records for identifying, contacting, and recruiting participants; however, in Jamaica it is permissible through the Board of Management of the respective institution and or their parent organization, the Ministry of Education Youth and Information. While this is so, in assessing the risk to participants, I only analyzed the data sets provided by the site from their students' satisfaction survey with

emphasis on their interview section which was a strategy recognized by IRB as "exempt" (OHRP, 2020).

Table 1 shows the relationship between the broad research questions and the open-ended questions used from the survey to gather data that represents the in-class experiences students participating in the pre-college program perceive to be most useful to their college preparation and the student support services do students participating in the pre-college program perceive to be most useful to their college preparation. Only survey questions relevant to pre-college students are represented in this table.

Table 1

Research Questions and Open-ended Survey Questions Alignment

Research questions	Open-ended survey questions
1. What in-class experiences do students participating in the pre-college program perceive to be most useful to their college preparation?	SQ23.What do you think of the material or content you have been given by your instructors to be learned? SQ24.Was the content sufficient in terms of quality and relevance? SQ25. Do you think the content warranted your time and effort? SQ26. Do instructors satisfactorily interact with you, for example, to explain concepts or give feedback on assessments? Explain. SQ27. In looking back on that experience, how did it make you feel? SQ.28 How did you make sense of it? SQ29. What did it mean to you? SQ15. Are you likely to continue attending this college next year (b) Why or why not?
2. What student support services do students participating in the pre-college program perceive to be most useful to their college preparation?	SQ20. Do you feel a part of the college? SQ21. Are you a member of a club or society or a known group? SQ22. Have you ever engaged in college activities? How frequent? SQ30. How were you supported at/by the College? SQ16. Would you recommend the College to someone else? (b) Why or why not?

Role of the Researcher

At the onset of my doctoral journey, I learned that to begin a process of inquiry, I should do a self-awareness check of my interests, background, and experiences. This

personal history has situated me in the process as a multicultural subject with a disposition based on my beliefs, values, ethics, and political stance -shaping my orientation to research. Denzil and Lincoln (2011) opined that the researcher's culture, political views, and personal perspectives is the starting point of inquiry. In the human and social sciences, there are issues of culture, race, marginalization, and gender that are sometimes topics chosen in qualitative studies. Wolcott (2010) suggested that the readers of research are interested in knowing about the researcher. Particularly, what motivated the researcher to inquire about the topic, the intended target audience, and who stood to benefit from the outcomes of the research?

I have been serving as an educator for over 17 years. I have led school inspections on behalf of the Ministry of Education and sat and continue to sit on committees that deal with education policies and implementation. I have been serving as a principal (president) in higher education for the past two years and throughout my tenure, identified strengths and weaknesses in the operations of the institution. Middle Campus is managed by a campus director and I do not engage in facilitation of program delivery and or have any direct contact with students on that or any other campus.

Discrepancies

A transcript review directly with the participants did not occur due to the fact that I had no direct contact with participants; however, after completing the transcription process, a copy was submitted to the site to conduct their own transcript review with participants. Qualitative studies generally use transcript reviews to establish trustworthiness between the researcher and the participant (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The

site did not respond to me with any mention of discrepancies from the participants.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) opined that in order to understand the meaning behind

discrepant cases in qualitative research, the researcher should consult with the respective

participants. Though this step was not necessary, in the event discrepancies had been

found, consulting with the participants is best to determine possible reasons for the

discrepancies.

Data Analysis

A manual analysis was then done to organize the transcription received into

codes, categories, and for the anticipated and or emergent themes. Vaughn and Turner

(2016) suggested that to organize and highlight meaning from a dataset, the researcher

should use a systematic process. I decided to use the traditional journaling as well as a

table to analyze the original data. Schutt (2018) opined that a matrix, especially one that

is well-designed can be used to describe the coding and categorization process. A table

format or a coding form that was designed as a checklist matrix may be used (Saldana,

2016). For my own personal benefit as a researcher, I conducted a basic manual review as

well as used NVivo, a computer-assisted program, to aid with the analysis process.

Coding Procedures

To analyze the qualitative data after collection, I began the data analysis process

with coding the transcripts. The transcript from the phone recordings were instrumental

in allowing me to gather what I could refer to as field notes, without actual direct

interactions with participants. Patton (2014) posited that there is no formula or recipe for

transforming data into findings, as the final destination remains unique to the researcher,

however, there is guidance and direction to arrive at the findings. I listened and reviewed the transcripts numerous times and then used an app to convert the recording into a text document. Listening and having the words of the participants transformed into text via a phone feature (app-Evernote) was a good way for me to understand the thoughts or feelings they had for the given situation or experience being asked about. While listening for the first time, I tried to have a hermeneutic perspective and made notes based on an emic focus, particularly because I am a Jamaican educator and could relate to the terms and viewpoints used by the participants.

Schutt (2018) suggested that a researcher should read through the data and interpret them continuously for the entire project. While listening to the recordings, I read the texts and maintained a journal. I was able to explore and decipher from participants' open-ended notes using word-based techniques such as repetition and key-words-in-context to determine the frequency of expressions used by the participants and how these related to specific meanings in their experiences and then write as manual codes which yielded little meaningful results. I then compared and contrasted texts using a journalist mindset comparing the data across time, people, and space.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) denoted that a journalistic mindset is important when comparing data. Therefore, I asked myself while reading:

- 'what is the text saying?",
- "how is this similar or different from what I read before in another transcript?",
- "would this statement be different if the gender was different?",

- "how is the narrative similar to or different from my own experiences?"

  "is there any social conflict?"

- "was the perspective shared based on the setting and context?"

I also searched for missing information. With an interest on the notion that people's perceptions are often times based on their deep underlying assumptions that shape their values, albeit real or espoused (Argyris, 2010). During the analysis of data derived from participants' transcribed notes, it was critical for to delve into their perspectives. The participants' responses in narrative form provided insight into portraits of today's students in postsecondary studies. Each response provided rich context as it pertained to in-class experiences perceived to be most useful to their college preparation as well as the student support services, they perceive to be most useful to their college preparation.

NVivo, a computer-assisted program, was also used to aid with the analysis process. The text from the Word document was imported into the program's rich text editor which produced a rich text file. I then dragged through the characters used by NVivo to group the text segments into codes. I used both auto codes to ensure the common or final codes were in context. Though the software has the capabilities to manage and discover patterns, it is important that the qualitative researcher uses an analytic lens throughout the process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As I used NVivo to explore the data, I recognized that the process was not straightforward or step by process but rather iterative. Therefore, in a reflexive manner, I used the memo feature to assign

multiple codes and refined as I went along, examining relationships to create categories and themes. Figure 2 shows the iterative process during coding.

Figure 2

Coding as an Iterative Process
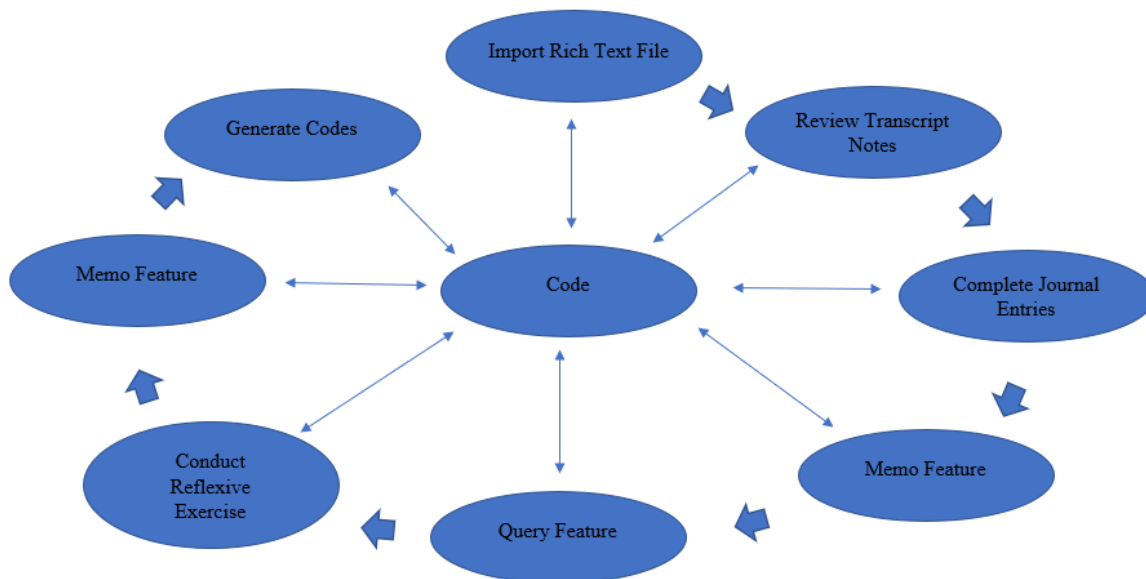
Categorizing

Before categorizing, I referred to my notes for reflexivity purposes. Reflexivity in qualitative research is an awareness of the researcher's influence on the research process and how this awareness affects the researcher (Engward & Davis, 2015). The transcripts were read several times to get a total sense of the narratives. I attempted to capture the meaning of the data by making connections with potential hidden concerns. From the codes generated by NVivo and using a word frequency query of meaningful expressions from my working copy of the transcripts. For example, I first attempted to manually group concepts, relationships, perspectives, background, setting, and characteristics. Using a deductive technique, avoiding biases was done by using pre-defined codes noted

in the literature as well as codes picked up directly from the qualitative data. For example, Participant 1 stated, "I have known about [the site] all my life but never been on the campus or knew which programs they actually offered, but I knew I wanted to attend." This statement was categorized as a concept- *lack of knowledge of pre-college programs*. I then continued with the analysis process in NVivo.

The categories which denoted the in-class experience and student support services experience of the participants and influenced their perception as to their usefulness for college preparation included: 1) program offerings, 2) in-class experience, 3) self-efficacy, and 4) campus involvement. All segments that referred to curriculum belonged to one group labelled program offerings. Segments with regards to curriculum delivery and other faculty-student engagement were placed in a group labelled in-class experience. The codes derived from expressions about co-curricular involvement were placed into the category labelled as campus involvement and the others having to do with motivations, goals, approach to tasks, and challenges were placed into the self-efficacy category. Table 2 shows the relationship between codes and categories derived from NVivo using a word query and comparison search.

Table 2

Codes and Categories

Codes-Key words	Categories
Lack of knowledge	Program
Relationship	Offerings
Background	In-class
Expectation	experience
Reality	Self-efficacy
Setting	Campus
Time	Involvement
Work	
Assistance	

Themes

Later in the analysis completed using NVivo (software), I identified the emergent themes as anticipated from the literature review: (a) student intention, (b) social integration-campus activities, and (c) institution policies and practices (support). This process was lengthy and rigorous as I went back to the data set that had the codes and categories and arranged them according to similarities and differences. I also cross referenced them with the original transcript notes for use of my reflective and reflexive lens. Having gone through this process which yielded no more additional codes or categories, I confirmed the themes. The rectification phase allowed me to link the

emergent themes to established knowledge. It is sometimes argued that having priori

theoretical knowledge may hinder the researcher from critically and innovatively

developing themes (Saldana, 2016). Notwithstanding, I was able to make inferences

beyond what the literature review revealed based on the inductive development of the

themes. The method of theme development based on the participants' experiences is

hoped to shape the necessary intervention that will be described in chapter three: The

project. See table 3 below showing the codes, categories, and themes.

Table 3

Codes, Categories, and Themes

Codes-Key words	Categories	Themes
Lack of knowledge	Program	Student
Relationship	Offerings	Intention
Background	In-class	Social
Expectation	experience	Integration
Reality	Self-efficacy	Institutional
Setting	Campus	Policies and
Time	Involvement	Practices
Work		
Assistance		

The literature revealed that a student's self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and

benefits to be gained by participating in in-class and extra-curricular activities are

paramount in solving the persistence problem (Astin, 1993). The first set of questions asked by the open-ended survey were quintessential to exploring participants' intention as it relates to enrollment into the pre-college program. First, "what was your reason for enrolling in college?" followed by "what is your career goal, and do you think this program will help you to achieve it?"

Theme One: Student Intention

From questions 15, 20, 27-29, participants were prompted to discuss how they felt about attending the site. The range of responses suggested that there we mixed feelings as it related to self-efficacy and purpose. This caused me to think about whether or not an individual's personality had more to do with their decision to attend and complete studies at a particular institution. While this retention study is centered around Astin's theory of involvement, Spady's undergraduate dropout model concluded that the integration of a student's characteristics and the campus environment would serve as indicators for potential risk of dropping out of college (Berger & Lyons, 2005). It is imperative to examine a student's family background and values or self-efficacy which is oftentimes linked to academic achievement.

While reviewing the transcripts, I highlighted the expression "to see how it feels" several times. This was in response to the questions surrounding enrollment. After eyeballing the transcripts for some time, I created a manual category called "self-efficacy." That is, I recognized from the texts, that some participants did not have a graduation agenda.

Participant 1's aspiration was to attend a university-

> Pre-college for me is a steppingstone. I do not have the necessary qualifications to get into a bachelor's degree program at UWI. Every high school has a sixth form program that I could attend to get the same qualifications to attend UWI, but I wanted to leave high school. So, I would rather go to a community college where I do not have to be under strict rules and regulations and be associated with other college-level students and just see how it feels."

Participant 4 also stated that the image of a community college is better for her and her image-

> Going to a tertiary institution is a big deal. I am the first to enroll into a college from my family. Never mind that I am not enrolled into a 'real' college-level program, people will not know the difference. Community members and family members are in love with the idea of college. To be honest, I am also in love with the idea, so I am feeling it out!

Participant 5 was most verbose about enrolling into pre-college and his experience so far:

> I am from a farming community where my father was known to plant ganja which gave him much popularity with the ladies and rum. My mother struggled to raise my brother and I as pre-trained schoolteacher in a dysfunctional home. At primary level, I could hardly read, and I struggled to make it into a decent high school. My mother attended college while I was in primary school and I had to fend for myself and my younger brother. I am determined that I will not let my future family struggle. I am still unsure if this precollege program is a best fit or whether

it will open the doors to a brighter future, but I wanted to know what college felt like, so I enrolled.

The seminal work of Alexander Astin continues to prove relevant in this study as the participants' views denote that institutions should be in a position to adapt to the students they enroll by meeting their expectations and assisting them to persist to using strategies to support their whole campus experience during enrollment.

Theme Two: Student Integration

The theme, social integration emerged from questions 20-22 and 23-26 based on the data analysis. Argyris and Schön (1996) suggested that demographic groups are socially constructed. For this singular reason, students, particularly first-time college students, may need a deliberate structure to get involved in college-life, both in-class and campus-wide. This qualitative study is based on Astin's (1984) student involvement theory being able to solve the problem of student retention. He based his assertions on the quality and quantity of involvement. That is, the volume of student learning and the varying levels of development afforded by the educational program, and also the policy and practices of the institution in terms of support services. For example, Participant 6 was quite disturbed about the lack of sporting facilities at the Middle Campus:

I did not expect this at all. The secondary school I am coming from is known for sports. We have huge playing field and equipment including a gym. There was rich sporting programme held after school. Now I am here and all I hear about is join a club. This is not the place for me to progress into my dream.

Participant 1 also lamented about the lack of exposure and activities to suit males:

> I am 6ft 4in and have been playing basketball since I was in grade 5. I just assumed that a place like this would have basketball and other courts, a pool hall, or games room. Maybe I watch too much TV, because when I see movies about college, there are all these facilities to do all sorts of things to keep active and less bored.

Participants 2 expressed observations about the in-class experience.

> I thought I would have gotten a lot more work to do. Also there are no clubs and societies linked with academic areas, for example, Math club, like what I was used to in high school – participant two.

Participant 3 expressed similar sentiments:

> The workload is fine, but I find that some lecturers leave me on my own.

Dating back to the 19th century, Durkheim in his conceptualization of social integration posited that minorities or newcomers' experience into a new environment or social structure is necessary so as to prevent social distancing and granting of access to all areas of community life (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005). Tinto's (1975, 1993) model built upon this concept to support the consensus that both the academic systems and social systems of a college, whether formally or informally, would determine whether students persist or not.

Theme Three: Institutional Policies and Practices

Astin's (1984) seminal work on involvement seems to be aligned with the responses of the participants with regards to institutional design. He also posited that an institution ought to also adopt to the student it enrolls. This simply means that based on the design of the physical space, curriculum pathways, and the policies and practices,

students will consider getting involved and persisting. Almost all the participants

commented on similar tenets. All the participants felt that the Middle Campus was

incomplete physically and lacked the resources that a college should have. One

participant was quite detailed in her comments: participant 4 said:

It took me some time to navigate the small campus because the areas were not labeled.

There is no proper area to have lunch and there was a time, almost an entire semester

when there was no food available on campus. Most of what I did or participated in was

because of what I saw or was instructed to do during orientation. I did not receive a

handbook or even a book of rules so I could be guided. Anything I wanted to know, I had

to ask someone. Funny enough, sometimes the staff would tell me they do not know so I

should ask someone else. For a church school, there was not anything symbolic around

except, devotion being held once per week. Otherwise, it was almost like high school but

with smaller rooms and less people.

The narrative here outlined how affected pre-college students were due to the lack

of an important resource such as the students' handbook. Handbooks or publications

which assist students to navigate the physical and academic environment are critical to

students' guidance in a new environment. One particular noteworthy theory is Tinto's

Theory of Engagement which suggested that students require support for their success

both inside and outside of the classroom (Tinto, 1993). They also serve the needs of the

students enrolled in the pre-college program so as to be able to identify rules and or

policies and practices that govern how they should behave, their advantages and

limitations during enrollment. Other resources were also noted and compared with other

educational institutions previously enrolled in. The literature review in section 1 highlighted the need for pre-college students who may be considered as first year nontraditional college students to have an alignment between their secondary and postsecondary experiences. Notwithstanding, the literature revealed that both environmental experiences may be quite different in terms of institutional policies, procedures, and practices (Tinto, 1993; Alverez, 2016; Mah, 2018; & Morley & Ablett, 2017). Lack of resources that should support pre-college students success was dominant in the findings and will be addressed in Section 3 for the project.

Evidence of Quality

Interviews (of various kinds) are the most common source of data for qualitative projects (Saldana, 2016). Qualitative interviews and or open-ended surveys can either be in the form of everyday conversation channeled towards gathering information or specific data to satisfy the purpose of the study or rigorous conversations that ensures trustworthiness (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This is mainly done as a means of ensuring that the findings are reliable and valid for both the researcher as well as the users of the findings. According to Shelton (2004), qualitative research is often questioned with trustworthiness by positivists. To ensure the data was accurate and truthful, the trustworthiness of this study was evaluated by four criteria: creditability, dependability, transferability, and conformability. Each criterion was explained according to its relationship in this study as evidence of quality.

Credibility

Guba (1981) identified the first of the four components as credibility. During the analysis process, NVivo was used to explore, manage, and create patterns. There are options in the software's capabilities that may be used by other researchers to determine if similar results may occur if they too used NVivo. For example, another researcher may run a query to observe whether my findings compare to other researchers' views or the views of authors on the same phenomenon. Credibility defines the study findings to the reality in truth in the research (Shenton, 2004). Credibility is the essential paradigms that links to the other aspects of trustworthiness in the paradigm. An audit trail was also maintained equipped with notes from interviews and an audio recording of the discussion with additional notes at the end of each interview for review. I ensured objectivity and impartiality throughout the study by keeping a reflective journal. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended member checking as the best way to determine validity, however, that was done by the quality assurance office and research office at the site as indicated by their IRC. This was a continuous process during data analysis, and I also did verification of the overall results with the quality assurance officer.

Transferability and Dependability

Transferability is the application of study results and procedures in another or broader context (Shenton, 2004; Merriam, 1998). To enhance transferability, I provided the detailed processes of the research procedures so it can be replicated elsewhere. I also provided detailed attributes of the research setting so readers of the research can judge if the study can be applied in another setting. The transparency of the analysis process was

also demonstrated in Figure 2 which showed the iterative process involved in coding. This dependability is the stability of how the data collected by the researcher overtime and under different conditions were treated to get the emergent findings. Again, an audit trail was maintained using journal entries on procedural and contextual details so that I could reflect on them during the analysis process and with my research advisor.

Confirmability

Conformability of findings is the degree to which a researcher can prove that the data collected denotes participants' information and the interpretations of those data are accurate (Creswell, 2011). Other researchers conducting the same research, using the same process should be able to generate similar findings (Guba, 1981). I acknowledged my bias about the topic and maintained a researcher's journal to reflect on and record any bias that could affect interpretation of results during the data analysis process. Shelton (2004) suggested that anything that may have affected the research based on my biases should be report. I also reported any decisions that may be affected by my bias in the reporting of my results.

<div align="center">

Summary

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The overall approach for this project study was a qualitative research design that sought to explore the phenomena of student retention from the students' perspective. In this section, I discussed the methodology, data collection done by the site, and the secondary data analysis I conducted with the aid of the NVivo software. The secondary analysis of the open-ended section of the survey that involved the phone interviews aimed to find out what in-class experiences and student support services students

participating in the pre-college program perceive to be most useful to their college

preparation. I used procedures and practices from the known ethical guidelines practiced

by the chosen education institution (site), along with Walden's IRB standards, and those

of the research community in general. I also discussed the ways in which I protected the

privacy and maintained strict confidentiality with regards to data sets received from the

site and used in the data analysis. Consistently following the meticulous methods of data

analysis both manually and with the NVivo software, I examined how validity was

ensured and how I helped to reduce the risk of interpretation bias during theme creation.

The broad research questions were used as a guide in analyzing the transcribed

notes from each of the seven participants. I aligned the findings using the research

questions, Astin's conceptual framework as well as the extant literature review. I also

reviewed the notes for negative or discrepant data. No discrepant data was found. Bekker

and Clark (2018) denoted that the narrative from human behavior and experiences are

like the qualitative researcher's stock trade. For that reason, I made every attempt to

present the data in a way that both professionals and the general public alike would find

appealing. The experiences shared by the participants were captured as storylines for the

creation of themes.

The findings highlighted three themes that appropriately described the students'

perception of the usefulness of their in-class experience and student support services to

their preparation for college. The three themes were student intention, social integration,

and institutional policies and practices. These themes discovered through the findings of

the study indicated a need to create a project aimed at improving students' experience at

the pre-college level (see appendix A) using professional development of faculty and

staff. Section 3 will introduce and explain the project deliverable as an outcome of the

results of this qualitative study which is aimed at creating an online learning community

for pre-college faculty.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative project was to investigate students' experiences with the pre-college program that was designed to prepare students to enter and successfully complete college undergraduate programs. For the academic year 2018-19, 73% of pre-college students on Middle Campus did not persist to the end of their program, which meant that students would not be eligible for enrollment into tertiary level programs. I used the theory of involvement (Astin, 1985) as the fundamental approach to explore the experiences of students enrolled in the pre-college program which provided insights that may improve the program and facilitate Middle Campus in meeting their retention goals. The provision of insights from students may give formative feedback on the effectiveness of teaching and learning, peer interaction, academic and social integration, and possibly the institution's image (Ayuk & Jacobs, 2018). These perspectives from students on their in-class, cocurricular, and overall institutional experiences, if responded to by the institution, may contribute to solving the retention problem and engender positive social change.

To improve student retention at Middle Campus, a proactive approach should be taken by educators or institutions through the creation of retention policies and strategies (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). Variables such as student-student interaction, student-campus interaction, academic and non-academic factors including pre-college variables; students' involvement where they are enrolled, and the institutional policies are key indicators of students' experience. This feedback is best captured by the

students' perspectives to solve institutional gaps in practice or policy (Astin, 1968, 1985, 1993; Bean, 1982, 1985; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Pascarella, 1980; Spady, 1970, 1971; Tinto, 1975; 1993). The findings from this study yielded several gaps in the local site' practice. The recommended intervention based on some of the gaps identified the creation of an online professional learning community for helping advisors to become more effective in providing support to guide pre-college students.

Rationale

The purpose of this study was to investigate students' experiences with the pre-college program that was designed to prepare students to enter and successfully complete college undergraduate programs. The data analysis revealed two dominant features among all participants. There are insufficient resources to facilitate pre-college students' whole development, including a lack of sufficient formal information (handbook) and quality advisement to guide students. Furthermore, the physical facilities were woefully inadequate to support over-all students' development based on the participants' perception of what college should be like. For the purpose of this project, the project to be implemented will focus on only one area. Using the creation of an online professional learning community for helping advisors to become more effective in providing support to guide pre-college students as an intervention strategy, this project focuses on advisement protocols for pre-college students' success.

Middle Campus has orientation and advisement sessions as a way of guiding new students. This orientation exercise usually takes place once per year. In addition, each faculty member is assigned an hour of advisement on their timetables to supplement the

orientation process. This advisement is not formalized through any written policy but has been a practice for the institution for many years (SFM, Quality Assurance Officer, personal communication, December 21, 2020). Consequently, students, particularly new students, adapt to the culture through observation and few formal engagements outside of scheduled classes. This study's results showed that all participants expressed a desire for structured written policies and formal advisement to be shared on a consistent basis for advice, reference, and acculturation purposes. Further, they also expressed the need for resources to support a sports culture and wide array of clubs and societies for more campus-wide activities.

To improve students' success and retention rates, institutions need a student retention strategy. Through this study, I sought to get an understanding of students' persistence and some of the reasons that may be affecting retention at the pre-college level. Based on the findings, an effective student retention strategy should be holistic, which would indicate a need for buy-in, and the participation of staff and faculty relevant to pre-college. Introducing an intervention to boost pre-college student retention by coaching and developing faculty and staff to create a support mechanism designed for students' success is an example of positive social change. The creation of an online professional learning community for helping advisors (faculty and staff) to become more effective in providing support to guide pre-college students is expected to increase students' satisfaction and their campus-wide experience.

Literature Review

The Spady Model (1971), Astin's Student Involvement Model (1985), and Tinto's Model on Academic and Social Integration (1977, 1993) are seminal foundational works on student retention. The literature is extant and the characteristics and variables that may influence a student's decision to drop out or depart from formal education have been discussed over several decades with a gap in the research for attrition of "newcomers" who are between secondary and undergraduate levels in the education system (Astin, 1985; Spady, 1971; Tinto, 1977; 1993). These students are in the postsecondary system but have not yet fully matriculated to be enrolled in an undergraduate program. I have identified these students as pre-college students.

The research on student retention has highlighted that institutions of higher education should prepare to adopt to the students they enroll rather than force or hope the students who enroll adapt to their environment and persist (Tight, 2019). The findings of the study suggested that Middle Campus is perceived by its pre-college students as lacking in policies, infrastructure, and campus-wide activities. The literature has shown that solving the student retention problem needs to be a whole-campus effort. Administrators can also influence students' persistence through the student support services of the institution (Arifin, 2018). This whole-campus effort, based on the specificities of the study, should include faculty who teach in the pre-college program and staff who are employed to all areas of student support services. This would develop their capabilities to offer support in the range of services both for individuals and for students in groups and to complement the course material or learning resources that are

organized for all learners (Tight, 2019). To address what the literature shows, I am proposing the creation of an online professional learning community for helping advisors (faculty and staff) to become more effective in providing support to guide pre-college students.

The seminal works on organizational learning led by Argyris (1967), Duncan and Weiss (1979), and Levitt and March (1988) were used to lay the foundation for the considerations in leading and managing the project being proposed. Argyris (1967) denoted that organizations oftentimes correct surface problems or issues using a single loop method; however, he believed that using a double loop (check in) to treat root causes such as mindset, culture, beliefs, values (espoused versus real) will change employees' behavior. He further purported that the effectiveness of any organization's operations lies in its ability to adapt and grow through accountability and empowerment. Similarly, in management literature, Duncan and Weiss suggested that matching an organization's characteristics with the environmental characteristics will promote "best fit" for its success. Both authors postulated that when external environmental factors or characteristics change, the internal characteristics should also adapt or change to align its design, practices, policies, procedures, and work structures (job tasks). The premise is that employees are the dominant coalition in the organization. That is, they have the power to influence the strategies, the goals, and the changes in the organization (Duncan & Weiss, 1979). Levitt and March, in line with the other management theorists, suggested that organizations should view organizational learning as an alternative or outcome resulting from intervention rather than a way to combat internal tendencies.

Furthermore, resisting change, missed opportunities, and the strategies for overcoming

tendencies like competency traps (a belief by employees that their traditional practices

are better than a proposed alternative) are counter to being adaptive or learning.

In a more modern contemporary context, building on these seminal works by

experts in leadership and management, emotional intelligence, and learning

organizations, Northouse (2019), Bradberry and Greaves (2012), and Robbins and Judge

(2019) also contributed to how I designed this project. As a scholar-practitioner in the

higher education leadership and management doctoral program and a leader at the

community college level, I am aware that the leadership style(s), leadership disposition,

and competencies of the leader influence the operations and success of the organization.

Northouse purported that several theories have evolved over the years regarding

leadership and aspirants, or practitioners should have the knowledge and skills to develop

their personal leadership traits or characteristics. Following that platform, Bradberry and

Greaves posited that leaders with strong emotional intelligence skills, particularly in

adaptive leadership, are more effective in building relationships and leading successful

organizations and teams. Robbins and Judge denoted that positive organizational

behavior improves teams, groups, and organizations overall. That is, their research

suggested practical methods and techniques for improving employees' mindset and job

performance, promoting creativity and innovation, increasing job satisfaction, and

fostering leadership and development. In order for this project to be successful, the

knowledge, ability, and skills of using effective management strategies, leadership

theories and practice, double-loop organizational learning, emotional intelligence skills

and adaptive leadership, organizational behavior, and project management functions and guidelines are instrumental.

Literature Search Strategy

I began my search using the Walden Library. ProQuest was my choice of database used for searching for appropriate literature on the topic. I used a variety and combination of key search terms, indicating that the literature should be articles that were peer-reviewed within the last 3 years. The terms that yielded positive usable results for student retention and institution policies and practices were *student retention models*, *higher education practices for retention, professionalism, professional development,* and *policies*. I then searched for *professional learning communities, adult learners mentorship and coaching, training and coaching, adult professional development, coaching and employee development,* and *learning organization* to yield results on the project. I tried to locate recent articles on *student handbooks*, *institution policies as guides in higher education or colleges,* and *universities or postsecondary*, but all efforts were futile. While attending doctoral courses at Walden University, I created a VitalSource library from books I purchased. I also downloaded articles pertinent to higher education leadership and management. I continued adding literature of interest and relevance to my andragogy so as to keep current. From my list, I have used several of the texts and downloaded books and articles for this literature review, though not exhaustive:

1. Bradberry and Greaves (2012), *Leadership 2.0 and Emotional Intelligence 2.0*

2. Buller (2015), *Change Leadership in Higher Education*

3. Friesenborg (2015), *The Culture of Learning Organizations: Understanding Argyris' Theory Through a Socio-cognitive System Learning Model*

4. Northhouse (2019), *Leadership Theory and Practice*

5. Robbins and Judge (2019), *Organizational Behavior*

Lifelong Learning and Learning Organizations

Employees of the education field are said to be recognized as lifelong learners as discovered during the literature review. Knowles (1984) posited that lifelong learners are generally ready to learn when required. This project is suggesting that the faculty and staff be placed in an online professional learning community for helping advisors (faculty and staff) to become more effective in providing support to guide pre-college students' success. In reviewing the literature, the fundamental concept on how organizations function, known as learning organizations or as the earlier works referred to the concept, organizational learning, laid the foundation for the ideal situation where the staff and faculty would be in an organizational culture that promotes lifelong learning. Organizational Learning (OL) theory suggested that the expected or proposed outcome may or may not match the actual outcome based on the conditions of the environment. Duncan and Weiss (1979) suggested that when they do not match, there is an indication of a performance gap to be addressed. OL theory also denoted that to remain relevant and competitive in a rapidly changing world, the organization and its resources must be in a state of agility to change its actions and strategic objectives in order to attain its goals.

Argyris and Schön (1996) defined learning organizations as the type of organizational cultures that have the ability to recognize things in new ways, flexible

enough to adapt and change or produce new patterns of behaviors based on a mechanism

that is continuously engaging its employees as a whole while they learn and change. The

literature also showed that the culture of lifelong learning is essential in learning

organizations as it influences how people think and behave (Friesenborg, 2015). The

cultural norms of Middle Campus will impact the outcome of this project and

consequently determine whether positive social change will take place when this study is

published, and the project is introduced, implemented, and evaluated. Culture has a way

of influencing or perpetuating the attitudes and behavior of employees in an organization

(Friesenborg, 2015). The literature suggested that there is a need for the leadership of the

organization or in this case, the researcher, to understand the complexities of people.

People's thinking or thought patterns, their mindsets, and their behaviors as well as the

culture (macro and micro) of the organization and the social systems that may hinder or

support the outcome of this project.

Robbins and Judge (2019) suggested that employees' attitudes, job satisfaction,

psychological empowerment, and perceived organizational support and engagement will

impact job performance and organizational success. Psychological empowerment has

been found to be a motivating factor which improves performance of agile teams. Team

diversity and iterative development incrementally of teams rely heavily on the

effectiveness of the communication and autonomy constructs of the team (Malik, Sarwar,

S. & Orr, 2020). The project's rationale, objectives, and overall goal must be properly

and timely articulated to the relevant stakeholders to get buy-in and maintain the

momentum, in order to be successful. The literature also depicted that employees'

commitment to achieving organizational goals is essential to a positive organizational culture that is akin to success. Satisfied employees will be motivated to ensure that the working environment is healthy and organizational goals are committed to while promoting the organization to both internal and external stakeholders (Robbins & Judge, 2019). This project is aimed at promoting the success of pre-college students by harnessing the commitment of faculty and staff whose roles are aligned to supporting the students enrolled in the pre-college program.

By introducing this short-term the online professional learning community for helping advisors (faculty and staff) to become more effective in providing support to guide pre-college students' success, I will need to understand project leadership and management and organizational culture to make it successful and affect positive social change among stakeholders, particularly, the pre-college students at Middle Campus. Using the 3 stages of lifelong learning: awareness, practice, and modelling, my role is to allow the faculty and staff to:

- Demonstrate their personal understanding of their identity and cultural practices.
- Display knowledge and understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion and cross-cultural awareness.
- Practice active listening, empathy, and openness to feedback.
- Practice reflection, self-management, and social awareness through behavior and response to feedback.

- Evaluate one's own biases and consciously acts on improving relationship management.

- Model positive behaviors during communication, conflict management, and through reports and presentation.

Change and the Professional Learning Community

The literature revealed that a leader and manager in a higher education context should view any change from multiple perspectives or lenses. Buller (2015) opined that the key to the change process in achieving academic transformation is learning. That is, as the driver of the change being proposed through this project, I must ask and respond to the right questions of the faculty and staff. For most stakeholders, especially those who are internal, the question often may be 'why is the change needed?' The study's findings should be used to inform the employees at the local site of the need for this intervention to take place. This needs case is necessary to prompt faculty and staff of the urgency in response to the research findings. Buller (2015) and Schein (2010) both purported that a learning culture is aligned to learning organizations that embrace change, which must be campus wide. Further, based on the fact that this intervention will take place with adult learners, for transformative learning and change to occur during the intervention, there ought to be a learning and growth mindset that is embedded into the organization's culture (Buller, 2015). Creating teams to lead change initiatives will be instructive for the process to be successful.

Highly effective teams need, in many instances, self-directed people, however, acknowledging employees' readiness is critical for leading the teams (Northouse, 2019).

Leading and managing change in higher education requires that the stakeholders have a

say in the change, which is generally constant. Implementing change, through a project,

may fail when internal dichotomies exist, such as old power versus new power or the

administration versus the faculty or staff, and similarly, when change is mandated from

outside versus emerging organically (Buller, 2015). For this reason, the tasks and

relationships of the employees will determine the leadership style that is applicable for

implementing the project using groups or teams (Hershey & Blanchard, 1969). There

may be employees who are unable but willing to engage in teams or groups to achieve the

goals of this project. For employees in this category, I would show high task-orientation

and high relationship-orientation. For those employees who are unable and unwilling to

participate in the project, I would endeavor to use or give unambiguous or clear

directions so as to achieve the goals of the project. The employees who are able and

willing, I would not need to do much monitoring or instruction. Finally, the employees

who are able and unwilling, I would use motivating, supportive leadership style to

achieve the desirable outcomes for this project (Hershey & Blanchard, 1969; Northouse,

2019; Robbins & Judge, 2019). Having knowledge, skills, and ability for leading highly

effective teams for project planning, implementation, and evaluation, the online

professional learning community (team) may be successfully created.

Professional learning communities are meant to build capacity of employees in

higher education as revealed through the literature review. They encourage more

involvement in the decision-making process and are sometimes used for short-term

projects (Zhou & Tu, 2019). Rizwan and Masrur (2018) also suggested that in-service

professional development should be done on a continuous basis through capacity development programs to provide in-service educators and employees with current trends and research in the field of education. The paradigm has shifted from the traditional teacher development to a professional development outcome where employees are actively engaged in their growth and learning, and professional development opportunities are embedded in their daily activities (Zhou & Tu, 2019). Both faculty and staff may form small groups for collaborative learning to emphasize group learning for critical discussions, planning, and practice. For example, faculty may collaborate with the student support staff for action research. That is, they form small group for designing, implementing, and evaluating policies and practices or systems to support students' in-class and campus-wide experiences for pre-college students to successfully transition to an undergraduate program as an action research.

Since the advent of the global pandemic, Covid-19, the dominant modality for teaching and learning or training and collaborating is online-based. Wynants and Dennis (2018) have suggested that engaging adult learners in professional development is best done online using the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model. This model was designed to ensure that during the online access, learners would have a high level of engagement, learning, and reflection through teaching, cognitive, and a social presence (Garrison, 2011). The online professional learning community using the CoI model will have short multimodal presentations, self-assessments and quizzes, content that gives examples and demonstrations, control of pace for all types of learners, and discussion and activities for fostering collaboration, feedback, and team support. Having an online professional

learning community is more practical, flexible, and convenient for reaching more

employees on campus (Wynants & Dennis, 2018). Further, the goal of the project is

likely to be achieved since the online space is an environment where self-directed adult

learners can process information for their growth and development at their own pace.

Coaching and Employee Development

In putting this project into action, my role will be task-oriented while building

relationships among team members of the online professional learning community.

Northouse (2019) suggested that the behavioral approach to leadership requires agility.

That is, some situations may warrant the leader to be directive and task-aware; however,

other situations may require the leader to function as a coach. For this project to be

sustainable and promote positive social change, it is imperative that an environment be

provided to encourage innovation, teamwork, and one that embraces diversity and

inclusion. Through coaching techniques, using appropriate styles, roles will be defined,

and expectations clarified to reduce confusion.

Progress will be tracked using a monitoring system, however, the most significant

goal for the project to be successful will be to get each team member to be committed to

participating in each activity to achieve the desired outcomes. Teams and the wider

organizational structures will have conflicts from time to time, as in an6y group context.

Richards (2018) discussed that in conflict management, the leader should use practical

solutions to reduce the negative aspects of disputes and for settling disagreements or

diversity of opinions and views. Um and Oh (2020) purported that there are two kinds of

conflicts that may arise from proposing a new project: cognitive conflict and affective

conflict. A recent study confirmed that earlier findings which suggested that cognitive conflict worked positively, and affective conflict worked negatively toward new project/product development. To deal with the negative aspects of affective conflicts, emotional intelligence skills will be applied. Bradberry and Greaves (2012) opined that using the adaptive leadership characteristics and strong emotional intelligence skills, it is likely that leading a team effort will be successful. Consciously using self-awareness, self-management and or empathy as coaching tools in carrying out my role as project leader, I will attempt to use conflict-management styles based on the situation, to get the desired climate for the team/organization.

Goleman (1995) opined that coaching leaders develop people for the future. It is important for stakeholders involved in this project to see the positive social change that will occur from getting desired outcomes or meeting the project objectives or goals. Without coercion, the engagement with faculty and staff members aligned to pre-college students, should be one that is welcomed based on the use of emotional intelligence skills (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) as purported by Bradberry & Greaves (2012). The online professional learning community should be a space where employees are respected, their experiences and knowledge, skills, and abilities are valued, and their views shared for good.

Throughout the literature review process, while my interest was mainly in the intervention strategy best suited for supporting pre-college students' success, I recognized that the 'what' was straightforward but the 'how' was essential to achieving success. Further, an institution's performance is equated with the performance of its

employees (Shah, Shaikh, & Pirzada, 2018). With that in mind, I also thought of how often the results of research become recommendations that may or may not be activated. As a scholar-practitioner in higher education, I am aware that creating and implementing a project that is expected to produce real change that is positive and beneficial to many, is a task that that requires leadership that is multifaceted and includes strong emotional intelligence. The literature has shown that teambuilding and coaching require tools and techniques critical to creating a highly effective professional learning community, especially in the online space that may not necessarily facilitate the usual social awareness or social presence. The details of the planning and implementation phase will be discussed in the project description section in greater details.

Andragogical training and development with a particular interest in coaching faculty and staff is main idea behind the design of this project. The activities to be used in the PLC project will focus more on the significance or value of what the research findings suggest and the willingness of the employees to commit to a positive change mindset and their ability to bring about the desired outcomes of the project. It is essential to note that the desired outcome includes awareness, practice, and modelling. Using Seemiller and Rosch's (2019) six-domain model of training and development, the base of the pyramid is identified as significance, motivation, and efficacy. This means that while engaging faculty and staff in the online learning community, the tone will be set for encouraging individuals to share in discussions regarding identity, culture, and biases, among other self and social awareness activities. Further, professional learning communities engender collective efficacy which is said to be linked to students' success

(Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017a). The cognition and proficiency of the six-domain model of training and development is the core of the online professional learning community. Faculty and staff will get a chance to work together in an online professional learning community to synchronize their knowledge and skills to better support and advise pre-college students for their success.

Finally, at the peak of the six-domain model of training and development, there is performance. At the end of the 3 days of coaching sessions to create the online professional learning community, the sustained project should be measured to determine how the faculty and staff are performing and whether their performance is impacting the student retention issue positively. The aim of this project also includes a change in mindset and behavior. Combining all the elements of the six-domain model of training and development, the faculty and staff performance should change with a high level of engagement, learning, and reflection through teaching, cognitive, and a social presence (Garrison, 2011; Seemiller & Rosch, 2019). The desired outcome is a better understanding and response to pre-college students by supporting their journey through individual and collective roles. Collegial collaboration led by leaders who create an environment that include educators and staff forming a professional learning community that is supported and structured for students' success promote a healthy climate for growth and achievement (Gray, Mitchell, &Tarter, 2014). This is essentially what will be proposed to the local site as the social change agenda that the project will bring.

Description of the Project

The results of the study propelled me to create a three-day (18 hours) Coaching and Employee Development (CED) program also referred to as Professional Development (PD) to be held through the creation of an online professional learning community (online PLC).

Middle Campus is part of a tertiary educational institution that promotes lifelong learning among its staff. While one or few heads of department may be inept at using coaching style for training and development, the core leadership team has been practicing this style and it is our hope to make it a part of our organizational learning culture (SFM, Quality Assurance Officer, personal communication, December 21, 2020). The findings of the study showed that while students may have their own perceptions based on their self-efficacy, the institution should prepare to give them an experience that ranges from a complete physical plant and facilities that are postsecondary, resources that provide campus-wide activities, and standardized policies and practices for guidance and support. This project is an intervention for the retention strategy for faculty and staff in the pre-college program and focuses on advisement protocols for pre-college students' success. The objectives for the PLC 3-day sessions include:

1. To provide an opportunity for capacity building using an online professional learning community space.

2. To use the online PLC forum for collaboration on advisement for pre-college students' success.

3. To apply the Community of Inquiry model of learning during the PLC sessions to ensure high levels of engagement, learning, and reflection through coaching and other appropriate leadership styles.

4. To promote innovation, teamwork, diversity and inclusion using practical activities and solutions for settling disagreements and or diversity of opinion during PLC sessions.

5. To synthesize the outcomes of each PLC session for the benefit of the pre-college students, faculty, and staff using emotional intelligence skills, knowledge of the institutional policies, and other soft skills.

Implementation Plan

I will be using the Office of the Principal as the key source of communicating to faculty and staff regarding this project by May 2021. An email to the office of the Principal along with a sample agenda and schedule will be sent requesting that the information be shared with the relevant stakeholders. The intention of the agenda will be short so as to explore the three phases or components of the planning process by way of conversations and buy-in with both our internal (Board members, faculty members, heads of schools, student guild representative). Using Kotter's model for change (Buller, 2015), this team would be the catalyst that ensures there is a consistent focus on the process. They will also give oversight in the self-sustainability of the planning process (Hinton, 2012). In the exploratory stage of the meeting, the focus will be on the study findings and report. This will create a sense of urgency and the proposed direction through consultations with the internal stakeholders. We will decide at this meeting the primary

means of communicating with each other, which I believe will be via email and e-bulletins. This will be useful in providing updates during the implementation phase.

Next is the operational stage of the project which is essentially where the online access to zoom and any potential challenges to accessing and completing the program (online professional learning community) will be evaluated. A fulsome discussion will take place during the zoom meeting as stakeholders view the 3-day schedule, seek clarity, and perhaps even offer suggestions, if necessary. Finally, we will be discussing the outcomes and deliverables phase, which will determine what will be the measurements for success.

Table 4

Implementation Plan

Task description	Rationale for task	Stakeholders responsible for completing task	Timeframe for completing task
Task #1 Create a change management team that will act as a guiding coalition in implementing the project.	The catalyst (team) that ensures there is a consistent focus and oversight in the self-sustainability of the planning process.	Host, the vice principal for student support services and Dean of Pre-college, one student rep from the student guild.	Meeting twice per month May 2021
Task #2 Town Hall Meeting (Virtual)	Discuss the findings of the research and plan for the project	All participants	June 2021
Task #3	Implement the project	All participants	June 2021

Day 1-3 Online
PLC

Resources and Support

The local site's zoom account platform will be used to host faculty and staff in an

online professional learning community (Online PLC) for a 3-day period, with

approximately 6 hours devoted to the daily sessions, including coffee break and lunch.

Following the email to and virtual town hall meeting (see kick off agenda in appendix A),

a notification confirming date, time, and zoom link will be sent to members of the OPLC.

This would signal the completion of task 1 for the guiding coalition, as mentioned in

Table 5. During task 2, we will decide on a budget to the project and seek approval for a

date or period for the actual 3-day program to be implemented. Task 3 will be executed

once the resources are confirmed to be available by all participants or put in place by the

host. The resources needed would include laptop or any similar device, internet

connection, toolkit (Concentric Circle diagram; artifact (object), handout on career road

map, cardboard or cartridge paper, old magazines, or free printable objects online, stick

glue, scissors, ruler, pencil, markers, XXXX core values, action plan template, links for

completing surveys). The surveys will be automatically analyzed and accessible to the

host. The responses from each participant for each question may be represented using any

form of graph. This will be used as a real-time guide for the host to make practical

changes that may impact the delivery of the program, if the majority of the participants

share their concern after each day's activities. The flow of the program, though planned,

will also be based on the daily feedback given by the majority of participants. See the

table below showing the planned schedule of activities. See also appendix A (toolkit).

Table 5

3-Day Schedule of Activities

Day 1 9am-3pm	Day 2 9am-3pm	Day 3 9am-3pm
Icebreaker-Name Story (30mins)	Icebreaker-Core Values (30mins)	Icebreaker-25% Solution (30mins)
Creating Shared Guidelines for the Team (s)- 1hour	Career Roadmap (handout) for Advisement- 1hour	Alignment (handout) for Advisement- 1hour
Coffee Break-15mins	Coffee Break-15mins	Coffee Break-15mins
Activity-Identity Dimension – 2hrs 15 mins	Activity-Advisement Vision Board– 2hrs 15 mins	Activity-Putting-It-All-Together – 2hrs 15 mins
Lunch-1hour	Lunch-1hour	Lunch-1hour
Activity- Artifact Sharing (45 mins)	Activity- Artifact Sharing (45 mins)	Activity- Reflection and Way Forward (45 mins)
Evaluation (15mins)	Evaluation (15mins)	Evaluation (15mins)

Potential Barriers and Solutions

As was explained during the literature review, cultural change may not occur

suddenly as mindsets do not always relent quickly. TeKippe (2017) suggested that unless

there is a willingness to collaborate, implementing a professional learning community

may be unsuccessful. Prior to the global pandemic, extensive face-to-face meetings

would be my recommendation for getting buy-in. This is an effective avenue for

providing interpretation and meaning to stakeholders and for leaders to offer explanations and bring context for change so as to avoid unnecessary speculations (Fleuriet & Williams, 2015). In this new normal, rather than commit to or request a face-to-face kick-off meeting, I am proposing a virtual town hall meeting.

Another potential barrier would be the impractical face-to-face 3-days professional development that was originally proposed earlier in the study. I have now suggested that an online professional learning community be created that is designed to facilitate stakeholders in a safe environment. Notwithstanding this consideration, faculty and staff members may find that being confined in the online space for approximately 6 hours each day to be burdensome. They may prefer to collaborate on their own time and convenience as all faculty members do teach online and all staff members have access to online resources from the site to access the course in their Moodle platform. Although, to create program that can be facilitated in a learning management platform is beyond the expertise of the researcher at this time. Further, the non-academic staff may not be familiar with the learning management system; however, a training could be organized by the Head of ICT to get them sensitized.

The solution to the possible problems may be solved by double loop. Doing a double loop to check in for progress or challenges is a great way to maintain momentum (Friesenborg, 2015). The higher education change leader, in using coaching strategies, is allowing the stakeholders to feel valued. Their feedback during the program can be refined, clarified, and reciprocated which inevitably builds trust and sustained interest in making the goal achievable and successful (Fleuriet & Williams, 2015). I feel this

approach is best for the purpose intended as this level of conversation gives context and meaning to what is to be implemented, how, and why. Further, while not measurable, anecdotes and testimonials are signs of transition. This evaluation will take place on a daily basis with a full report at the end of the 3-day period.

      Project Evaluation Plan. I will be using an outcomes-based evaluation, primarily to determine if the objectives of the program were met. Lawton, Manning, and Lawler (2017) posited that outcomes-based evaluation is useful in measuring the impact of newly implemented programs to find out if could be replicated elsewhere. It also examines the outcomes of the program, the impact on the participants or learners, and the program's sustainability. Notwithstanding these variables, the outcomes-based evaluation does not assess the process of implementing the program but rather the results. For this project study, the outcome-based evaluation goals will include assessing the quality or value of the program; examining the effectiveness in achieving the objectives; the provision or opportunities for feedback, and the promotion of new knowledge or learning and practice.

      Project Implications. I am a scholar-practitioner in the field of higher education. When I enrolled at Walden University, I immersed myself into the mission of social change. I simply do not engage in projects or programs for ordinary outcomes. I invest my time, my energy, and my expertise to influence others into joining a community that extends itself across global borders for positive social change. Over the last 3 years, I have made it my duty to infuse my plans with an impact statement of what positive social change can take place on an individual, team, or organizational level as well as at the wider community level. This study is no different. The findings have resulted in a student

retention strategy that will see professional learning communities formed for collaboration in solving one issue highlighted by the participants - advisement. While the context of the intervention is narrowed to only one major goal, it is my hope that the report that is given to the local site with more details will be used in their overall strategic development plan for dealing with the problem of retention.

In the local context, the online professional learning community will boost positive social change in the activities described (see appendix A) by allowing individuals and groups to become more self and socially aware. They will also have the opportunity to build relationships through team building activities. Sharing their knowledge, skills, and abilities to aid in achieving the goal of faculty and staff collaborating to help support pre-college students through advisement will benefit the student retention cause. In a wider community context, initiating an online professional learning community can be the start of a program at the local site that can network into the entire Council of Community Colleges Jamaica for greater good. With the outcome-based evaluation, the data will prove whether the program can be replicated elsewhere. Diversity awareness, inclusion practices, and adaptive skills can be promoted through this avenue to enhance social justice and social change on a grand scale.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The project section of this qualitative study is the nucleus of promoting positive social change. The purpose of this qualitative project study was to investigate students' experiences with the pre-college program that was designed to prepare students to enter and successfully complete college undergraduate programs. The findings prompted an intervention strategy to aid in retention at the local site. An online professional learning community in a 3-day professional development setting will be hosted by the researcher and put in motion for sustainability. This professional learning community, as proposed in Section 3, was designed to help advisors (faculty and staff) to become more effective in providing support to guide pre-college students is expected to increase students' satisfaction and their campus-wide experience.

Strengths

There are many benefits to be derived from implementing the professional development project that would facilitate the creation of an online PLC. On a whole organizational level, with the understanding that the effectiveness of the organization's operations lies in its ability to adapt and grow through accountability and empowerment, the online professional learning community is poised to achieve this through its objectives. The online PLC project will also be an opportunity for the local site to adapt or change to align its design, practices, policies, procedures, and work structures (job tasks) to respond to the findings and help solve the retention problem. This PLC project

will also foster the characteristics of a learning organization by promoting lifelong learning, capacity building, and agility.

Another strength that will be promoted using the online PLC is a change in behavior, particularly, a growth mindset. Buller (2015) discussed that in higher education, when proposing a change, it is important that the leader aims for a growth mindset. Further, Duncan and Weiss (1979) suggested that that the employees collectively are the dominant coalition that can hinder or progress the goals of the organization in change management. The project will also develop the teambuilding skills of the faculty and staff in the online professional learning community. That is, using emotional intelligence skills like self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management during coach sessions embedded in the activities over the 3 days, staff and faculty will develop collective efficacy. Finally, staff and faculty will get an opportunity, through the PLC, to be aware, practice, and model best practices in student advisement using the community of inquiry model during the activities.

Limitations

For the online PLC to be successful, the participants need to be willing and able. During project implementation, there will be an expectation that participants are self-directed. Northouse (2019) posited that in leading highly effective teams, the leader needs to acknowledge the readiness of the followers so as to use the appropriate style to maximize output. Notwithstanding this expectation, the host will need to determine their readiness for the planned activities. This may be a potential limitation in meeting all the objectives satisfactorily. For a project of this nature which involves some amount of

change management, the host should seek buy-in from the organization as a whole and also the participants, through engagement sessions, like a virtual town hall meeting.

Buller (2015) opined that involving staff and faculty in the decision-making should yield positive responses to the change. While I have attempted to mitigate this potential barrier to a successful implementation by planning a sensitization meeting using a virtual town hall session, it is still possible to have insufficient attendees. Other potential limitations may involve internal dichotomies which create conflicts. This may be remedied through appropriate conflict management styles and techniques as outlined in Section 3. Applying the appropriate leadership style to the group and individuals may also remedy any potential limitation that could arise. The reliance on the internet and laptop device to be able to meet in an online forum over 3-days are also factors being taken into consideration. The service provision of internet is outside of my control; however, should there be loss of power and or loss of internet, I will postpone the date.

Recommendations for an Alternative Approaches

The problem that provided the basis for this study was the low persistence rates of students who participated in the pre-college program that was designed to prepare students to enter college degree programs. The following broad questions were used to frame the investigation to find out the best solutions to the problem:

RQ1– What in-class experiences do students participating in the pre-college program perceive to be most useful to their college preparation?

RQ2– What student support services do students participating in the pre-college program perceive to be most useful to their college preparation?

The alternative broad questions that could have been used to frame the investigation to find out the best solutions to the problem are:

RQ1– What in-class experiences do faculty participating in the pre-college program perceive to be most useful to their students' college preparation?

RQ2– What student support services do staff participating in the pre-college program perceive to be most useful to students' college preparation?

The theory of involvement was the core concept for this exploration into the problem of student retention and how institution's responsiveness may increase the likelihood of improving students' persistence or success. Astin's (1993) seminal work on involvement and consequent improvements on his own theory recognized students' involvement in cocurricular activities as being reputably strong in dealing with the student retention issue in higher education (Astin, 1993). The findings were in keeping with Astin's theory of involvement. One solution proposed in the project was structured and consistent advising (advisement) from both faculty and staff would improve students' experience (development) both in in-class and campus-wide. Taking the perspectives from students gave me an opportunity to see things through their lens. I believe the faculty and staff lens could either be similar or different. Perhaps another investigation could be carried out in this regard to make that determination. It is my hope that the report that is given to the local site with more details will be used in their overall strategic development plan for dealing with the problem of retention.

A professional development approach was chosen as the project; however, for the intervention strategy, a policy proposal may have sufficed. The policy making process in

public education is a complex network of socio-cultural constructs intertwined with the political and educational landscape of a country. The process influences social change through advocacy propelled by decision-making of key stakeholders at varying levels (Bell & Stevenson, 2015). To take on this approach, I would need to understand the existing reforms taking place in the local site's country, seek to clarify my understanding using the determining factors influencing the reforms, and explore multiple avenues that are transparent and effective, to get buy-in from the stakeholders, and do a broad-spectrum stakeholder engagement at the conceptual level as well as the implementation level, irrespective of what the findings of this research say. Essentially, a professional development intervention to create an online professional learning community is a localized plan that is more likely to advance to implementation in the short-term rather than creating and implementing a policy.

As a trained teacher in public education who has advanced in higher education leadership and management as a principal of a community college, I have seen where a lack of focus on the implementation process has caused projects and policies to fail. In creating a policy, its concept must be specific to the institution, its culture, the targeted demography, politics, and the economy (Garner & Kaplan, 2017). Kaplan and Garner (2017) posited that motivations, emotions, and knowledge of educators' identities influence the interdependency of the elements of the identity among the stakeholders in education decision-making. The policymakers in my country are members of Parliament and senators who are sometimes aligned with ministries such as the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information. Policymaking is a highly iterative process involving

agendas, priorities, and objectives (Bell & Stevenson, 2015). While this doctoral degree required a plan in the form of a project (Section 3), I believe with the rigor of the policy making process, it would be a missed opportunity for the local site if I chose policy rather than professional development at this time.

The policy directed by the findings of the research should be justified, offering logic and reason to key stakeholders, information regarding the change process, and an alignment between the institution's governance structure and the change process (Gunsel, Kaplan, Barnett, Etienne, & Ponnock, 2016). Using the smart policy design, emphasis should be placed on the stakeholder engagement (Burns, Köster, & Fuster, 2016). The strategy being employed in the policy concept and implementation should be cogent and coherent with what exists in the policy environment. Essentially, the position paper should shape and translate into the overall education sector of the local site, through concrete measures for the operational context. Owing to the existing bureaucracies oftentimes displayed in politics, while this approach seems fitting, it may take a long time before it gets recognized by policy makers.

Scholarship

From the onset of my doctoral journey, Walden University has provided checklists, templates, and rubrics to guide the processes and procedures for online discussions, assessments, and most importantly, the capstone writing. These checklists, templates, and rubrics allowed for self-assessment or evaluation of students' work and ensured the quality before submission and during the iterative process (Laureate Education, 2016). Their software, writing center, and competent staff have made the

journey less complicated and more meaningful. As a scholar-practitioner, I chose to assist in solving a real-world problem that existed in my local setting. I led a scholarly inquiry by collecting information to help address the student retention problem in a local site. Initially, I had set out to investigate the perspectives of the faculty and staff; however, after reviewing the literature relevant to my topic, this changed.

The research process is highly iterative (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). After identifying the topic and developing it into a problem worth solving, I consulted with my chair, and after several iterations, I was able to settle on a statement problem. This statement problem was very specific and justifiable. Consequently, I found that I was more interested in how people experienced the world, specifically, how students viewed their experiences at the local site. Therefore, I created two questions I believed would be useful in addressing the problem. Rubin and Rubin (2012) posited that a researcher should use broad questions to refine the interview questions during data collection. Next in the process was the review of literature. I laid the foundation of the problem that was grounded in research using mostly seminal works. The review of literature included reviewing articles from preliminary searches, using scholarly search techniques, and reviewing, cross referencing, and narrowing sources that were relevant to the topic (Thomas, 2017). I yielded between 25 and 40 articles, both seminal and modern, until I felt saturation had been reached. At this stage, I began to think about the research design and its implications for how the study will flow.

The research design and methodology emerged as the study unfolded. Creswell and Creswell (2018) postulated that the goal of a qualitative study is to provide credible

findings based on the framework used for data collection. This meant I had a plan for selecting the participants, the local site or setting, the procedures for data collection that answered the research questions. In retrospect, I reexamined my research philosophy, which is positivism. I also used an approach that was aimed at understanding (inductive) and analyzed secondary data from interviews guided by open-ended questions. As a member of the leadership and management team at the local site, I was unable to have direct contact with the participants which led to the secondary data analysis from the local site.

During the analysis stage, while listening to the interviews, I developed a journalistic mindset. Creswell and Creswell (2018) opined that when comparing data, it is good to ask questions that a journalist would. This led to the reporting section of the study. For the findings, words were used to describe the outcome of the study (Butin, 2010). I found that I had to acknowledge my biases and consult with participants, through the local site, to ensure credibility and confirmability of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that member checking would ensure validity as the researcher is usually immersed into the study in a subjective way.

Project Development

The project's development was based on the findings of the study. The findings of the study showed that while students may have their own perceptions based on their self-efficacy, the institution should prepare to give them an experience that ranges from a complete physical plant and facilities that are postsecondary, resources that could provide campus-wide activities for their involvement, and standardized policies and practices for

guidance and support. Consequently, I proposed a project aimed at advisement. That is, an intervention for the retention strategy for faculty and staff in the pre-college program would focus on advisement protocols for pre-college students' success suing an online professional learning community.

In developing the project, I was intentional in its structure as my main priority was to get buy-in from the stakeholders for a successful implementation and sustainability. For this to be achieved, I researched the theories surrounding organizational learning, leadership and management, emotional intelligence, coaching and employee development, change leadership in higher education, professional learning community, community of inquiry model, and model of training and development. I believe that these theories, when put into practice will bring about collective efficacy among the employees at the local site. This in turn will promote positive change.

Personal Growth

Conducting the research and creating a project based on its findings have taught me many things, both personally and professionally. Personally, I have been taught self-discipline, patience, releasing old beliefs or assumptions (unlearning), and how to welcome new and improved mindset for good, positive social change, and self and people development. On a professional level, I have learned to build relationships based on trust, experience, and goodwill. I have learned processes and procedures for scholarly work including APA. I have learned that throughout our interactions with others, we develop our reality and while using myself as an instrument, I was able to develop an empathetic understanding the social realities of others. My ontological and epistemological

perspectives were tested in my writing. I also practiced reflectivity and reflexivity during the process.

Leadership and Change

As a college principal in higher education, I have a distinct advantage in leadership and management and the change process. While I have done several courses and programs on this topic, the perspective I am most comfortable with is my experience in practice. From my vantage point, effective leaders effect changes from the inside out. That is, rather that project onto employees and other stakeholders implementation of goals, which is essentially change management, the effective leader leads change by examining the organization's structure (including the founder's legacy), its cultural web (including diversity issues), its employees' belief systems (including individual and group mindsets), and proactively respond with constant communication. As a leader, I am constantly practicing self-awareness and self-management techniques which I have found impacts positively on my social awareness and relationship management. Using these emotional intelligence tools coupled with the appropriate leadership style to fit the context, for example, adaptive leadership, I have empowered and motivated others into having a learning and growth mindset, synonymous to an agile environment that projects positive social change.

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Reflection on the Importance of the Work

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The basis of this qualitative study was to investigate pre-college students' in-class and campus-wide experiences to get a perspective of how their experiences prepared them for transition into the undergraduate programs being offered by the site. My interest

peaked on this topic based on the data from Middle Campus showing significant downward trends in student retention. I felt it was important to get the students' views rather than that of other stakeholders as it would be significant to use those views to create institutional policies, practices, facilities, and overall culture that were more adaptive to them. Student retention has been an issue in higher education institutions since the advent of formal education (Aljohani, 2016). From the extant literature available on student retention, I chose Astin's Theory of Involvement (1985, 1993) among several others as the precursor to the foundation of the study.

A framework that included variants that were environmental in nature was specifically avoided as most student retention studies over the past decades included economical, organizational, and sociological factors. Primarily, I used Astin's five tenets of student involvement and development to frame the study. That is:

- Psychological and physical investment – the amount of energy a student gives, both psychologically and physically to a highly generalized "object" which can also be referred to as their experience.

- Continuous investment – means that different student manifests different interests in their experiences at different times on a continuum irrespective of what those experiences are.

- Quantitative and qualitative investment – students' experiences have both quantitative and qualitative features. That is, for example, the number of hours spent on a studying a subject matter is measuring (quantitative) and to what extent did learning take place during the study period is understanding (qualitative).

- Learning outcomes tied to quality and quantity of involvement – learning and personal development is directly proportionate to the quality and quantity of time students are involved in a program.

- Educational policy effectiveness in motivating students – the effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement.

The work is important to the higher education sector as it contributes to the phenomena of student retention. Particularly, this study gives findings from the students' perspective which is uncommon. Sufficient evidence has been provided in detail for this research to be replicated elsewhere, in other contexts, using different population, and times. Transferability of a research suggests that it is easily generalized or transferrable based on the researcher's audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Work

The extant student retention literature mentioned multiple theories and recommendations in solving the problem (Bean, 1980; Bean & Metzner, 1987; Miller, 2018; Tinto, 1975; 1993; 2007; White, Alexander, Prince & Verdell, 2018; and Xu, 2016). The arguments for student involvement being able to solve the student retention or persistence issue for this project study was based on Astin's (1984) quality and quantity of involvement. This is determined by the amount of student learning and development offered through the educational program, and the policy and practices of the institution. The findings of this study may impact positive social change in the local context through the creation of an online professional learning community to bring about collective

efficacy among staff. Discretely, this PLC will also promote collegiality, positive social presence, awareness, practice and modelling advisement protocols for the success of the pre-college students. Again, this will directly be a positive social change for the students and the institution.

Future research could focus on the faculty and staff perspectives as well as a follow up to this specific study by planning interventions based on the other findings. Another option would be to use the data from the outcomes-based evaluation to determine the value of the project to the local site. I also believe that a mixed methodology study would impact the local site and other institutions with a similar student retention problem. Overall, any future research geared towards improving student retention rates would be beneficial to the higher education sector and the research community.

Conclusion

The problem of student retention at the community college level is the topic I chose to investigate the Middle Campus pre-college students' perspectives of the in-class and campus-wide activities they deemed most useful for their transition into a degree program at the local site. A qualitative research design for the collection and analysis of data generated the findings used to create a project that would seek to promote positive social change at the local site and possibly in the wider education context. Each section of this study had its own uniqueness in terms of criteria for satisfaction completion. Notwithstanding the rigor and the undeniable time constraints, I maintained momentum only when I reminded myself of where I was along the journey rather than where I

thought I should have been. This disposition exposed my ability to create meaningful change based on acceptance of the realities of the doctoral journey. I have used this study to empower myself, transform possibilities, release what I could not control, and learn how to trust the process.

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Appendix A: The Project

Planning Phase Kick-Off Meeting

May 2021

10am-12pm

- Call to Order

- Welcome and Prayer

- Overview

- Research Findings and Report

- Professional Development Program

    1. Exploratory Stage

    2. Operational Stage

    3. Measures and Deliverables

- Comments/Questions/Answers

Email correspondence to the Office of the Principal:

Administrative Assistant to the Principal

Good day XXXXXXXX

I would like a copy of the agenda and letter of invitation to be sent to faculty assigned to

pre-college and students support services staff as well as this event to be published in the

next XXXXXX issue.

Email correspondence to the Office of the Principal:

Administrative Assistant to the Principal

Good day XXXXXXXX

I would this attached toolkit to be sent to faculty assigned to pre-college and students

support services staff for their 3-day PLC program. See project toolkit attached and zoom

link below.

Schedule

Day 1 9am-3pm	Day 2 9am-3pm	Day 3 9am-3pm
Icebreaker-Name Story (30mins)	Icebreaker-Core Values (30mins)	Icebreaker-25% Solution (30mins)
Creating Shared Guidelines for the Team (s)- 1hour	Career Road Map (editable handout) for Advisement- 1hour	Alignment (handout) for Advisement- 1hour
Coffee Break-15mins	Coffee Break-15mins	Coffee Break-15mins
Activity-Identity Dimension – 2hrs 15 mins	Activity-Advisement Vision Board– 2hrs 15 mins	Long Activity-Putting-It-All-Together – 2hrs 15 mins
Lunch-1hour	Lunch-1hour	Lunch-1hour
Activity- Artifact Sharing (45 mins)	Activity- Vision Board Sharing (45 mins)	Short Activity- Reflection and Way Forward (45 mins)
Evaluation (15mins)	Evaluation (15mins)	Evaluation (15mins)

Goal: To create a professional learning community as an intervention to the student

retention issue at XXXXXXXX.

Purpose: For faculty and staff in the pre-college program to focus on advisement protocols for pre-college students' success.

Participants: The host (researcher), administrators, dean of pre-college, faculty assigned pre-college students, registry staff, and member of the Board (representative on the Academic Standards Committee, quality assurance officer or designate, research officer or designate.

Duration: 3 days (18 hours)

Resources Needed: Laptop, internet connection, toolkit (Concentric Circle diagram; artifact (object), handout on career road map, cardboard or cartridge paper, old magazines or free printable objects online, stick glue, scissors, ruler, pencil, markers, XXXX core values, action plan template, links for completing surveys).

Day 1

9:00 – 9: 30am

Participants will be asked to use their names in zoom to register and be identified by the host, each day. The host will declare the day "open" and introduce herself and remind each participant of the goal, purpose, and objectives of the project. This will be posted via the share screen option by the host. The icebreaker will be done next: Name Story. The host will use prompts to ask participants to share the history of their name (s). For this activity, each participant is expected to state the meaning of their first name and give a background on who they might have been named by or after, any cultural connections, or any special story that may be associated with their name.

9:30 – 10:30am

The second activity for day 1 of the project will be to "Create Shared Guidelines for the PLC". To ensure that mutual trust, respect, and open communication is established and maintained through the project and perhaps beyond the scope of the project, the host will invite all participants to create guidelines or agreements (negotiables and non-negotiables) as a team building exercise. A list of commitments will be shared during this collaborative session, via the share screen option, during the participants' engagement in the process. Some possible commitments may include but not limited to:

1. The "I" statement in communicating a perspective – to avoid generalizations.

2. Practicing "active listening" – to understand but not necessarily to respond.

3. Avoid group think – encourage innovation by not bringing another perspective to the table.

4. Use indicators to show favor, discomfort, or to share feedback – the raise hand, thumb up or thumb down features in zoom are practical examples.

10:30-10:45am

Participants will be encouraged to stretch and or take a coffee break.

10: 45am – 1:00pm

Using a blank diagram that reflects Marilyn Loden's concentric circles (diversity wheel) to show a framework for the varying dimensions of identity, each participant will be asked to complete their individual diagram by answering:

1. Who am I? – internal (primary) dimensions: gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, religion, physical/mental ability, and sexual orientation etc.

2. Who am I? – external (secondary) dimensions: marital status, employment status, religious beliefs, culture, job position, etc.

PLCs or teams, when formed, help to create social connections (Packer, Miners, & Ungson, 2018). Individuals' self-concept influences their experiences in group settings. Participants will be encouraged to share their completed self-assessment and discuss the implications for their view themselves, others, the world, and their deep underlying assumptions. The host will use this opportunity to encourage each of the participants to add, remove, or alter components of their internal (primary) and/or external (secondary) dimensions if desired. This activity is quite significant to the formation of the PLC to bring to the fore issues of tolerance, acceptance, discrimination, or showing of bias towards differences. The conversation should build relationships, or be used to solve conflicts, first within self, within the PLC, and in wider groups (organizations) and society.

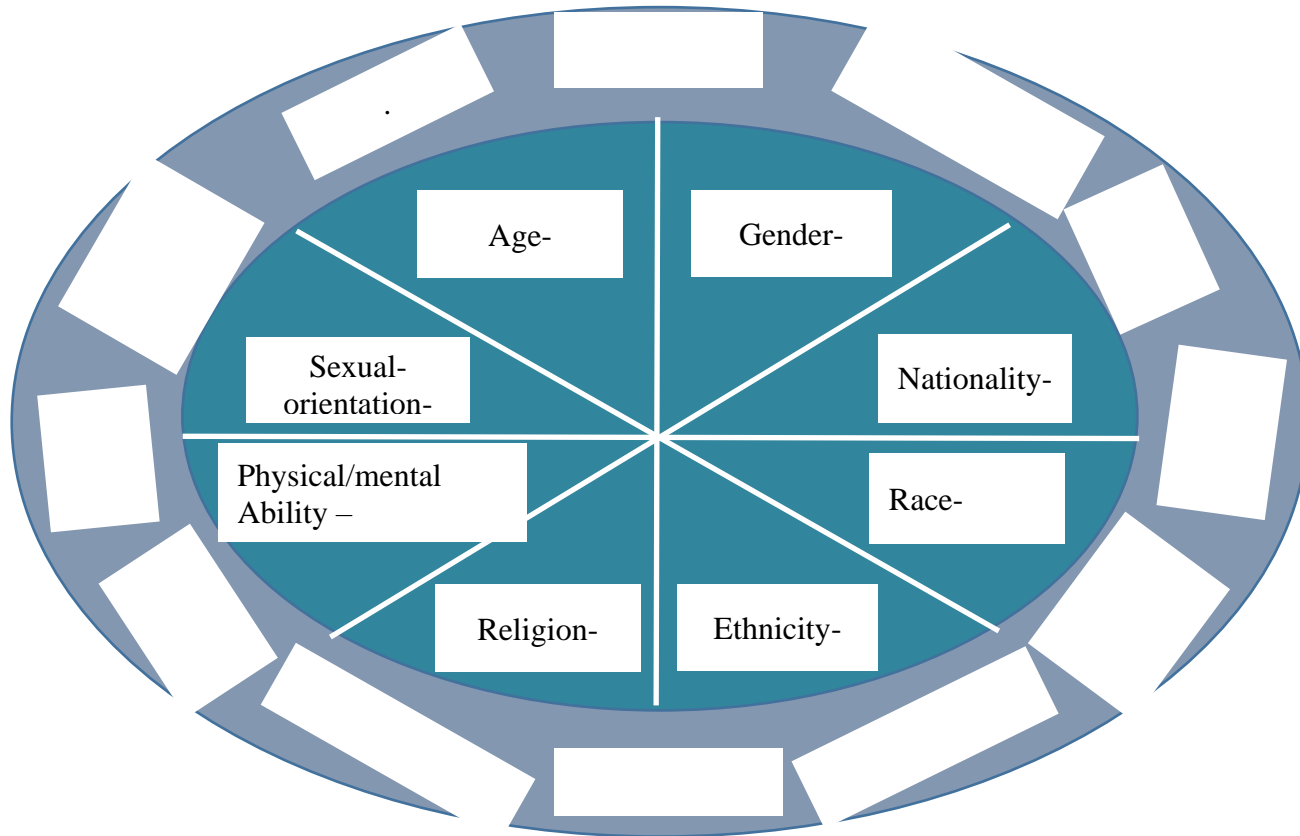**1:00 – 2:00pm** – Lunch Break (offline)

2:00- 3:00pm

Resumption and the final activity for day 1 will be "Artifact Sharing" then participants will be prompted to evaluate day 1 using an online survey monkey link, shared via email. Prior to the start of day 1, participants will be asked to prepare to share in an activity by selecting an object to be used. This object should reflect an aspect of the participant's identity, can be used to describe values held by the participant, and or be a representation of the role the participant expects to play within the PLC. The idea is that the activity will evoke the desire for participants to share their thoughts, emotions, and moods from the object used as a prompt.

The host will wrap up the day 1 session by giving closing remarks (summary of the day's activities) then prompt all participants to click on the link provided to complete the evaluation exercise.

ICEBREAKER- Day 1

WHAT STORY DOES YOUR NAME TELL?

ACTIVITY 1- Day 1

CREATE SHARED GUIDELINES FOR THE PLC

NEGOTIABLES	NON-NEGOTIABLES

ACTIVITY 2- Day 1

IDENTITY WHEEL

Source: Cañas & Sondak (2014)

Day 2

9:00 – 9: 30am

Participants will be asked to use their names in zoom to register and be identified by the host, each day. The host will declare day 2 "open" and remind each participant of the guidelines they all agreed on for the project. This will be posted via the share screen option by the host. The icebreaker will be done next: Core Values. The host will display on her screen a diagram with the headings: Always Valued, Valued, Least Valued. Participants will be asked to use their own blank diagram from their toolkit to insert their personal values under each category. They will be encouraged to have at least 3. The host will then add XXXXX core values and ask each participant to engage in reflection and evaluation to determine if their own values are in alignment with the values of the organization they are employed to. The host will also display on her screen, the organization's core values during the discussion.

9:30 – 10:30am

The second activity for day 1 of the project will be to "Career Road Map for Advisement". Using the handout provided via the toolkit, edit the handout to reflect your perspective of the information a Pre-college student would require navigating the XXXXXX experience. A sample of individuals will be asked to share their individual completed roadmap. The host will also encourage them to email them via google docs for the members of the PLC to view at their own leisure and give feedback.

10:30-10:45am

Participants will be encouraged to stretch and or take a coffee break.

10: 45am – 1:00pm

Participants will be asked to create their version of an "Advisement Vision Board".

Instructions: using the materials listed in your toolkit or blank page on your laptop, create

a vision board to depict Pre-college Student Advisement at XXXXXX. After designing

the vision board using electronic means, the document should be saved as a pdf file then

uploaded to google docs/drive for PLC members to view and comment at their own

leisure. The information from the day's first activity may be incorporated. For those PLC

members using crafts, if the appropriate pictures are unavailable, you may draw or label

in a design that will show innovation and information.

1:00 – 2:00pm – Lunch Break (offline)

2:00- 3:00pm

Resumption and the final activity for day 1 will be "Vision Board Sharing" then

participants will be prompted to evaluate day 2 using an online survey monkey link,

shared via email. Using a flipbook app, the participants will be encouraged to upload

their word file version into google drive where one collaborative file of all the work will

be saved as a pdf file for a conversion into a flipbook. This exercise will create a unified

version of what the PLC collectively thinks or envisions advisement should be at

XXXXXXXX.

The host will wrap up the day 1 session by giving closing remarks (summary of the day's

activities) then prompt all participants to click on the link provided to complete the

evaluation exercise.

ICEBREAKER- Day 2

CORE VALUES

Always Valued	Valued	Least Valued

Integrity

- Processes and procedures are implemented efficiently, effectively and ethically and in a consultative and transparent manner

Team Work

- That collaborative effort and interdependence of all stakeholders to work together so as to achieve a common goal of doing what's best for the institution
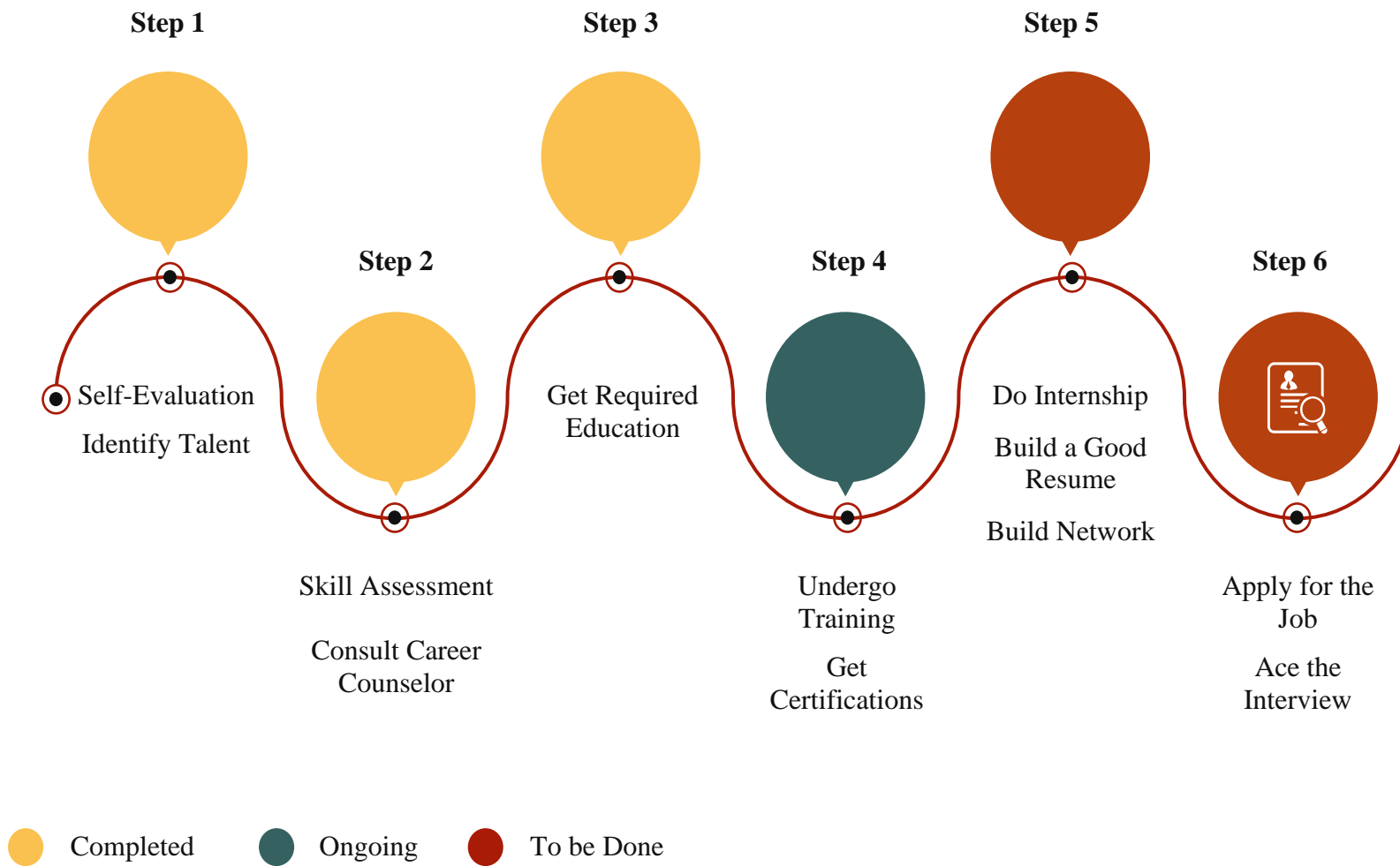
Respect

- Having due regard for the rights of all clients and stakeholders and providing them with a safe and nurturing environment which boosts their confidence, performance and loyalty to the College

Innovation

- Finding new approaches that initiate and or adapt to change, add value to the institution and strengthen its capacity to improve service delivery

ACTIVITY 1 – Day 2

CAREER ROADMAP

Step 1

Step 3

Step 5

Step 2

Step 4

Step 6

Self-Evaluation

Identify Talent

Get Required
Education

Do Internship

Build a Good
Resume

Build Network

Skill Assessment

Consult Career
Counselor

Undergo
Training

Get
Certifications

Apply for the
Job

Ace the
Interview

● Completed   ● Ongoing   ● To be Done

Day 3

9:00 – 9: 30am

Participants will be asked to use their names in zoom to register and be identified by the host, each day. The host will declare day 2 "open" and remind each participant of the guidelines they all agreed on for the project and to thank them for their active participation so far. The icebreaker will be done next: 25% Solution. The host will ask each PLC participant to take a few minutes to reflect and generate a list of their own 25% solutions to advisement solutions. They will be encouraged to share their ideas as well as ask clarifying questions, provide feedback, and offer advice to one another. Some prompts that will be used by the host to encourage sharing, will include:

• Did you learn anything from this activity?

• Were you surprised by the solutions your group members came up with?

• Which of your 25% solutions can you commit to carrying out once you leave here today?

9:30 – 10:30am

The host will ask each member of the PLC create an action plan for "Alignment". The participants will be asked to use the solutions mentioned in the icebreaker exercise to draft a simple action plan showing at least 3 objectives. This draft plan at a minimum should create momentum and help the PLC feel empowered to make a change.

10:30-10:45am

Participants will be encouraged to stretch and or take a coffee break.

10: 45am – 1:00pm

The host will ask each participant to upload their action sheets/plans to google drive or docs for the other participants to review, ask clarifying questions, respond to comments or give feedback. In the last hour of the session, a few participants will be asked to share their plans to the PLC for open discussion.

1:00 – 2:00pm – Lunch Break (offline)

2:00- 3:00pm

Resumption and the final activity for day 1 will be "Reflection" then participants will be prompted to evaluate day 2 using an online survey monkey link, shared via email. Participants will be asked to reflect on the following:

- The activities, including icebreakers (relevance, take-aways, game changers, emotions)

- The before and after effect (if any)

- Self-evaluation, self-management, social awareness, and relationship awareness

The host will also give feedback on the results of the survey and make her own reflection as the organizer and presenter, including what went well, what she would do differently, and the way forward in sustaining the PLC.

The host will wrap up the day 3session by giving closing remarks (summary of the 3-days) then prompt all participants to click on the link provided to complete the evaluation exercise.

ACTIVITY 1- Day 3

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	PERSON/S RESPONSIBLE	PERIOD	DESIRED OUTCOMES	BUDGET/SOURCE OF FUNDING (if applicable)	MEANS OF VERIFICATION

PLC Evaluation Survey (Day 1)

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=100QGsMsZE-VU7vzKNtkcfLok9hIkK9HkmSQ3PJjWVNUNFdINzZYN0ZBUUIxMjhLOEpTVjJTSzZONy4u

1. Please identify your employment area at XXX

   Faculty

   Staff

   Administrator

2. Icebreaker- Name Story

   Relevant to the goal/objectives of the PLC

   Not relevant to the goal/objectives of the PLC

   No opinion

3. The presenter/host was knowledgeable and effective.

   Strongly Agree

   Agree

   Disagree

   Strong Disagree

   Not Applicable

4. Activity- Creating guidelines was relevant and effective in achieving the goal/objectives of the PLC.

   Strongly Agree

   Agree

   Disagree

   Strong Disagree

   Not Applicable

5. Activity- Identity Dimensions was relevant and effective in achieving the goal/objectives of the PLC.

    Strongly Agree

    Agree

    Disagree

    Strong Disagree

6. Activity - Artifact Sharing was relevant and effective in achieving the goal/objectives of the PLC.

    Strongly Agree

    Agree

    Disagree

    Strong Disagree

    Not Applicable

7. The PLC Day 1 sessions were organized and effective.

    Strongly Agree

    Agree

    Disagree

    Strong Disagree

PLC Evaluation Survey (Day 2)

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=100QGsMsZE-VU7vzKNtkcfLok9hIkK9HkmSQ3PJjWVNUQlU1V1g0WVhINENJMURTM1VJUEZGM1M5Ty4u

1. Please identify your employment area at XXX

    Faculty

    Staff

    Administrator

2. Icebreaker- Core Values

    Relevant to the goal/objectives of the PLC

    Not relevant to the goal/objectives of the PLC

    No opinion

3. The presenter/host was knowledgeable and effective.

    Strongly Agree

    Agree

    Disagree

    Strong Disagree

    Not Applicable

4. Activity- Career Road Map for Advisement was relevant and effective in achieving the goal/objectives of the PLC.

    Strongly Agree

    Agree

    Disagree

    Strong Disagree

    Not Applicable

5. Activity- Vision Board for Advisement was relevant and effective in achieving the goal/objectives of the PLC.

> Strongly Agree
>
> Agree
>
> Disagree
>
> Strong Disagree

6. Activity – Vision Board Flipbook was relevant and effective in achieving the goal/objectives of the PLC.

> Strongly Agree
>
> Agree
>
> Disagree
>
> Strong Disagree
>
> Not Applicable

7. The PLC Day 2 sessions were organized and effective.

> Strongly Agree
>
> Agree
>
> Disagree
>
> Strong Disagree

PLC Evaluation Survey (Day 3)

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=100QGsMsZE-VU7vzKNtkcfLok9hIkK9HkmSQ3PJjWVNUQVQwME5XNk9TWVBDUDVGWTlGTUU0UEM1UC4u

1. Please identify your employment area at XXX

   Faculty

   Staff

   Administrator

2. Icebreaker- 25% solution

   Relevant to the goal/objectives of the PLC

   Not relevant to the goal/objectives of the PLC

   No opinion

3. The presenter/host was knowledgeable and effective.

   Strongly Agree

   Agree

   Disagree

   Strong Disagree

   Not Applicable

4. Activity- Advisement Alignment was relevant and effective in achieving the goal/objectives of the PLC.

   Strongly Agree

   Agree

   Disagree

   Strong Disagree

   Not Applicable

5. Activity- Putting-It-Altogether was relevant and effective in achieving the goal/objectives of the PLC.

    Strongly Agree

    Agree

    Disagree

    Strong Disagree

    Strong Disagree

    Not Applicable

6. Activity - Reflection was relevant and effective in achieving the goal/objectives of the PLC.

    Strongly Agree

    Agree

    Disagree

7. The PLC Day 3 sessions were organized and effective.

    Strongly Agree

    Agree

    Disagree

    Strong Disagree

Appendix B: Students Satisfaction Survey

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Indicate your response by placing a tick in the appropriate space.

1. Age

   ☐ 16 – 20

   ☐ 21 – 25

   ☐ 26 - 30

   ☐ Over 30

2. Sex

   ☐ Male

   ☐ Female

3. In which year group are you enrolled?

   ☐ First year

   ☐ Second year

   ☐ Third year

   ☐ Fourth year

4. On which campus are you studying?

   ☐ Cobbla

   ☐ Mandeville

   ☐ May Pen

   ☐ Spalding

5. Was Knox Community College your first College of choice?

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

6. What influenced your decision to attend Knox Community College?

   ☐ Affordable tuition.

   ☐ Location of College (close to home).

   ☐ Offers my desired programme of study.

   ☐ Recommendation from family/friends.

   ☐ College reputation/image.

   ☐ Social media adverts.

   ☐ TV and radio adverts.Marketing done at my high school.

Other, please specify.

_____

7. What is your programme of study?

☐ Associate Degree in Architectural & Construction Technology

☐ Associate Degree in Agricultural Technology

☐ Associate Degree in Agro-Processing & Business Management

☐ Associate Degree in Business Studies

☐ Associate Degree in Construction Site Management

☐ Associate Degree in Criminal Justice

☐ Associate Degree in Engineering

☐ Associate Degree in Environmental Studies

☐ Associate Degree in Hospitality & Tourism Management.

☐ Associate Degree in Information Technology.

☐ Associate Degree in Social Work.

☐ Bachelor Degree in Business Administration (CCCJ).

☐ Bachelor Degree in Business Administration (UTech).

☐ Bachelor of Education.

☐ Bachelor Degree in Environmental Studies.

☐ Bachelor Degree in Hospitality & Tourism Management (CCCJ).

☐ Bachelor Degree in Hospitality & Tourism Management (UTech)

☐ Bachelor Degree in Social Work

☐ Bachelor of Science in Nursing

☐ Career Advancement Programme (CAP)

☐ CAPE Business

☐ CAPE Arts

☐ CAPE Science

☐ Diploma in Enrolled Nursing

☐ Diploma in International

    Shipping & Logistics (CMU)

☐ Modular Computer Studies

    (UTech)

☐ Pre College (pursuing CSEC

    subjects)

☐ Preliminary Sciences (N1)

8. For the period September 2019 – March

2020, what have most of your grades

been?

☐ A, A-

☐ B+, B

☐ B-, C+

☐ C, C-, or lower

9. For the period September 2019 – March

2020, what have most of your grades

been?

☐ A, A-

☐ B+, B

☐ B-, C+

☐ C, C-, or lower

10. **For each item please rate your level of dissatisfaction-satisfaction by placing a tick in the appropriate space.**

5   Very Satisfied (VS), 4 Satisfied (S), 3   Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (N)

2   Dissatisfied (D), 1   Very Dissatisfied (VD)

ADMISSIONS/REGISTRATION

VS   S   N   D   VD   VS   S   N   D   VD

a) Accuracy of information received about programme of study. ☐☐☐☐☐

b) Accuracy of information received before registration. ☐☐☐☐☐

c) Procedure for class registration. ☐☐☐☐☐

d) Procedure for requesting transcripts/status letters. ☐☐☐☐☐

a) Billing and fee payment procedure. ☐☐☐☐☐

b) Payment plan offered. ☐☐☐☐☐

c) Orientation exercise. ☐☐☐☐☐

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

IT SERVICES

a) Availability of computers & technology. ☐☐☐☐☐

b) Wi-Fi connectivity. ☐☐☐☐☐

LIBRARY SERVICES

VS   S   N   D   VD

c) Library resources met my
   learning needs.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

d) Library staff was helpful.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

e) Opening hours are adequate.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

f) Adequate space is available for
   students.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

g) Quality of Academic
   Advisement.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

h) Availability of Academic/Course
   Advisor.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

i) Class size.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

COLLEGE ACTIVITIES

VS   S   N   D   VD

a) Variety of clubs and organizations

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

b) Social events provided students.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

c) Activities related to sports and
   wellness.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

11. **For each item please rate your level of dissatisfaction-satisfaction by placing a tick in the appropriate space.**

   5   Very Satisfied (VS), 4   Satisfied (S), 3   Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (N)

   2   Dissatisfied (D), 1   Very Dissatisfied (VD)

EXPERIENCES WITH FACULTY

        VS   S   N   D   VD

a) Professionalism of my Lecturers.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

b) Level of knowledge of my Lecturers.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

c) Interest that Lecturers take in my progress.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

d) Teaching ability of my Lecturers.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

e) Attendance of Lecturers at classes.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

        VS   S   N   D   VD

f) Availability of Lecturers out of class.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

NON ACADEMIC SUPPORT

a) Counselling services.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

b) Health services.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

c) Accounts services.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

d) Financial support.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

| | VS | S | N | D | VD |

e) On campus work and study opportunities.

☐☐☐☐☐

g) Campus safety and security

measures. ☐☐☐☐☐

h) Canteen Services.

☐☐☐☐☐

i) Cost of your programme.

☐☐☐☐☐

j) Disciplinary procedures.

☐☐☐☐☐

k) Channels for expressing student complaints.

☐☐☐☐☐

l) Timeliness/efficiency in handling student matters.

☐☐☐☐☐

12. **For each item please rate your level of dissatisfaction-satisfaction by placing a tick in the appropriate space.**

5 Very Satisfied (VS), 4 Satisfied (S), 3 Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (N)

2 Dissatisfied (D), 1 Very Dissatisfied (VD)

CAMPUS FACILITIES

VS S N D VD

a) General condition of grounds. ☐☐☐☐☐

b) Condition of classrooms. ☐☐☐☐☐

c) Classroom furniture. ☐☐☐☐☐

	VS	S	N	D	VD
d) Condition of bathrooms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) Number of bathrooms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) Food Laboratories.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g) Computer laboratories.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h) Science laboratories.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i) Study areas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j) Dormitories at the Cobbla campus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k) Maintenance of campus buildings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

STUDENT COUNCIL

	VS	S	N	D	VD
a) Effective as a voice for students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Communicates with students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Represents students' issues.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Engages students in discussions regarding student-life on campus.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

RELATIONSHIPS

Thinking of your own experience, please rate the quality of the following relationships by placing a tick in the appropriate space. The highest ratings (5-7) align to more positive experiences as indicated in boxes to the right. Negative experiences are rated lower (1-3) and are more aligned to information in boxes to the left. The rating of 4 is neutral.

13. Relationship with other students.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

| Friendly, sense of belonging, supportive | | | | | | Competitive, uninvolved, alienation |

14. Relationship with Administrative staff/offices.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

| Helpful, Considerate, Flexible | | | | | | Rigid, Impersonal, Inflexible |

15. Relationship with Faculty members.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

| Approachable, Helpful, Understanding, Encouraging | | Remote, Discouraging, Unsympathetic |

16. Relationship with General Support Staff.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

| Helpful, Considerate, Flexible | | Rigid, Impersonal, Inflexible |

To what extent do you feel that your experience at the College has increased your knowledge, skills and abilities in the following areas? Indicate your response by placing a tick in the appropriate space.

5   Very Satisfied (VS), 4 Satisfied (S), 3   Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (N)

2   Dissatisfied (D), 1   Very Dissatisfied (VD)

VS S N D VD

17. Knowledge in your major field of study.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

VS S N D VD

18. Knowledge relevant to your career.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

19. Ability to present ideas and information effectively. ☐☐☐☐☐

20. Developing your own values and ethical standards. ☐☐☐☐☐

21. Understanding yourself, your abilities and personality. ☐☐☐☐☐

22. Ability to get along with different kinds of people. ☐☐☐☐☐

23. Ability to work in a team or group. ☐☐☐☐☐

24. Ability to think analytically and logically. ☐☐☐☐☐

25. Learning on your own, pursuing ideas and finding

information you need. ☐☐☐☐☐

26. Learning to adapt to change. ☐☐☐☐☐

27. Leadership skills. ☐☐☐☐☐

28. Oral communication/public speaking skills. ☐☐☐☐☐

29. Time management skills. ☐☐☐☐☐

Questions 30-43 Pre-College Students Only

Introduction

XXXXXXXXXXX is currently engaged in a series of research and evaluative activities
in an effort to improve programme offerings and student-related services. This survey
forms an important aspect of this process, as it gives students the opportunity to share
their opinions on their experiences during their enrollment at XXXXXXXXXXXXXX.
The survey is confidential as no identification information will be collected. No
penalties or benefits are attached to your participation in the study. However, you are

encouraged to participate as your feedback will be important in shaping the way forward through a study on student retention.

Self-efficacy: one's belief in self to succeed at a task or specific situation.

30. What was your reason for enrolling in college? _____

31. What is your career goal? _____

32. Do you think this pre-college program will help you reach your goal? _____

Sense of Belonging: commitment to the college and involvement in campus activities.

33. Do you feel a part of the college? _____

34. Are you a member of a club or society or a known group?

_____

35. Have you ever engaged in college activities? How frequent? -

_____

Perceived Value of the Curriculum: quality and relevance of content and interaction with instructor.

36. What do you think of the material or content you have been given by your instructors to be learned? _____

37. Was the content sufficient in terms of quality and relevance?

_____

38. Do you think the content warranted your time and effort?

_____

39. Do instructors satisfactorily interact with you, for example, to explain concepts or give

feedback on assessments? Explain. _____

40. In looking back on that experience, how did it make you feel?

_____

_____

_____

41. How did you make sense of it?

_____

_____

_____

42. What did it mean to you?

_____

_____

_____

43. How were you supported?

_____

_____

Thank You

Appendix C: Site Approval

KNOX COMMUNITY COLLEGE
INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

TO: **Mrs. Davia Ramgeet-Robinson –** *Principal*

FROM: **Dr. Shakeisha Wilson-Scott –** *Research Officer*

DATE: **July 30, 2020**

SUBJECT: **Revisions to research application**

The Research and Development Committee acknowledges receipt of an update on revisions to your doctoral study which is to be conducted at the College. As indicated, your study no longer entails you conducting interviews with students. Instead you will be conducting secondary data analysis using a deidentified dataset to be provided by the Registry.

The Committee accepts the revisions that have been made as they pose no threat to the well-being or integrity of the College and its stakeholders.

We wish you all the best in conducting your study.

SWS