Understanding Learning Difficulty in Adult Education among immigrants in Oslo, Norway.

A Teacher’s Perspective

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UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Spring, 2014
Learning Difficulties in Adult Education

A Teachers Perspective
Abstract

Over the past decades, the need to understand the concept of learning difficulties in adult education has become a core aspect of educational research; this has led to dynamic changes and innovative practices in the field of Adult Literacy Education. Hence, this study explores qualitatively teachers understanding of learning difficulties in the mainstream Adult Literacy Education classes.

The focus groups are teachers of immigrants in Adult Literacy Education (ALE) classes residing in Oslo, Norway.

3 key area of focus throughout this study are;

1. How Adult Learning Education (ALE) teachers understand learning difficulty in mainstream Adult Literacy Education classes

2. How Adult Literacy Education (ALE) teachers identify learning difficulties among immigrant ALE students in Oslo

3. How ALE teachers address learning difficulties in their ALE classrooms.

Adult Literacy Education (ALE) in Oslo focuses on providing basic education for newly arrived immigrants with little or no previous education. In most cases this educational process entails teaching learners in a new language (other than their mother tongue), alphabets, numbers, pronunciation, and words formation. These learners are faced with the challenges of learning a new language and culture and at the same time having to learn the basic literacy skills. It could be said that this is a dilemma that the students and their teachers face. These challenges can be sometimes confused for a learning difficulty; however, the adult educational system in Oslo Norway has provided practical measures in maximizing the learning opportunities of learners at this level as will be discussed in detail in preceding chapters. At this point, it is essential that teachers in the literacy classes have the right understanding of learning difficulties. What factors must be in place before a learning difficulty can be said to exist? At what point in the teaching process can the teacher ask for professional assistance?

This study presents a practical, in-depth analysis of the concept of learning difficulty from the perspectives of adult literacy education teachers and various literatures reviewed related to this study. Using an in-depth individual semi-structured interview the voices of four adult
literacy education teachers were garnered as they described how they understand and address the learning needs of their students and how these experiences have helped shape their definition of learning difficulty.

Findings from the data sets showed that ALE teachers spoke on their understanding of learning difficulties based on their professional knowledge, personal experiences and years of working within ALE classes. The practical teaching methods they applied were made to promote effective teaching and learning in ALE programs. These methods were developed by continuous training and professional interactions (exchange of ideas) within the ALE teachers. Additional resources to support students with learning difficulties in ALE programs are already been done in Oslo, Norway.

There are 5 Chapters in this study.

Chapter 1 looks at the background of the study, the purpose and rationale of the study, the statement of problems, and a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 2 focuses on exploring existing knowledge relating to learning difficulty, it begins by defining key concepts and discussing adult education past and present in Norway. It discusses further the theoretical framework of the study which focuses on the theory of Andragogy and concludes with exploring how adults learn based on said theory.

In Chapter 3, the method used in the research is discussed in details with an explanation on sample group, data corpus, data set, technique for data collection, data set procedure (interview and informal discussion), ethical considerations and practical challenges and limitations of the study.

Chapters 4, focuses on a systematic presentation and discussion of data/findings based on the study. In Chapter 5, a conclusion is drawn based on the findings; and a summary of the study with suggesting for further research or study.
Acknowledgements

I am eternally grateful to God for guiding me through the entire period of this study.

For their commitment to supporting the learning of others, and for their willingness to share their experiences, I want to firstly thank the participants in this study.

I am grateful for the time and investment offered by my thesis supervisor: Ivar Morken and SNE2012/2014 program supervisors. Their consistent guidance, mentorship, and responsiveness pushed my thinking and kept me on track.

My colleagues in the SNE 2012/2014 program at the University of Oslo, made going through this program much easier and extended my learning in myriad ways, and I thank them for all the prompt face book responses, listening, coaching, and support of ‘our’ thesis work. I will miss seeing them in classes.

I am thankful beyond words for the support of my family over the past two years while I have been in school. My darling husband Kenneth patiently assumed management of the household and provided superior IT and editorial services without hesitation and my ever supportive Ifoma Emeodi.

My friend Chioma Ezenwa provided a sympathetic ear, and professional editing when each was most needed.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my husband Kenneth O. Emeodi and my parents Chukwuemeka & Ifeyinwe Nwobi, whose hard work and sacrifices launched my learning journey many years ago.
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1 INTRODUCTION

This study explores the understanding of learning difficulties as teachers experience them in mainstream adult literacy education classrooms. By mainstream, we mean regular ALE classes, not special needs classes. Specifically, it looks at learning difficulties in adult literacy education (ALE) among immigrants in Oslo, Norway. For the purpose of this study the term Adult Literacy Education (ALE) would refers to education targeted towards adult learners with little or no previous formal educational experience and the term teacher and instructor will be used interchangeably to mean the same. It also explores the educational preparedness of Adult Literacy Education teachers as they experience and manage the complex learning needs of adult learners in a mainstream classroom. The theoretical framework of this study draw from a theory of adult learning called Andragogy. Andragogy as a study of adult learning originated in Europe in 1950’s and was then pioneered as a theory and model of adult learning from the 1970’s by Malcolm Knowles an American practitioner and theorist of adult education who defined Andragogy as ‘‘the art and science of helping adults learn’’(Zmeyor 1998, Fidishen 2000).

Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured individual interviews to bring forward the teachers’ perceptions and experiences of learning difficulty in Oslo, Norway. Participants in the study were four Adult literacy Education teachers purposefully selected because of their involvement in Adult Literacy Education Programs (as classroom teachers). This chapter provides an overview of the context and background of the study; the problem statement and statement of purpose, research questions, and the research approach used.

1.1 Context and Background:

Adult learners attend adult literacy education programs to have basic educational skills, such as learning alphabets, writing and reading etc. for economic, social or personal reasons; whatever the case, these are learners who did not complete primary (basic) education to getting a high-school credential. Research on Adult Literacy Education (ALE) learners (Noyes, 2008) has identified numerous reasons for drop-outs in these educational programs and why they later decide to re-enter ALE programs; the presence of learning difficulties and/or learning disabilities is often a significant factor, regardless of whether the learner has been officially diagnosed (White & Polson, 1999). However, most teachers in ALE programs
are not trained and prepared to address the needs of adult learners with these complex learning challenges, nor do they have access to the additional educational support services that are available to support learners in the system. Services such as special education and occupational therapy provide specialized assessment and intervention to support learners with cognitive, socio-cultural, sensory, and environmental issues that interfere with their learning and subsequent course completion. However, in the mainstream classes these services may not necessarily be available. Not a lot of service currently exists in adult literacy education programs worldwide to support adult learners with learning difficulties, and ALE teachers frequently express frustration at this lack of resources (Polson & White, 2000). Since a large percentage of learners in ALE programs are thought to have learning difficulties or learning disabilities (Mellard & Patterson, 2008; White & Polson, 1999), teachers in ALE programs already are working with a population of learners who bring unique learning challenges—cognitive, academic, and emotional issues—to the regular classroom. Many ALE teachers intuitively adapt their teaching practice to accommodate the learning needs of their students, but lack both evidence and confidence that what they are doing results in successful outcomes for their students. During the interview session, one respondent explained a situation where she was enlisted to teach in an adult school without a previous adult education experience or training, right from being a kindergarten teacher to teaching adults. She explained that she had to use a lot of her personal experience as an adult to teach her new classroom. Although this was many years ago, it explains the common misconception that adults and children learn alike leaders of ALE programs. In addition to all being mentioned, this study will highlight on how adults learn. An in-depth awareness of the unique learning styles of the adult learner will bring a positive impact in the field of Adult Education.

**Adult Education Internationally;**

The United Nations has been at the center of a long-term effort by successive programs in various countries to promote equality, economic stability and alleviate poverty amongst other things, by providing adult education programs to eradicate illiteracy. The Education of an individual is important and has been said to be one of the most important accomplishments in an individual’s life. Oftentimes, it has been considered to be the means by which people and societies will be able to secure economic stability and independence, attain success in life and achieve a level of peace and respect for one another in countries and in the world (Adult Education Conference, CONFINTEA V, Unesco 2003). Education is a right, like the right to
have proper food or a roof over your head. Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right to education”. Adults are included in this, therefore many international bodies especially UNESCO has continuously held conferences tailored at providing the best possible educational guidelines and international adult education framework to achieve economic and individual development and societal stability among other things.

Irina Bokova, UNESCO’s Director-General, says: “When you fund education, you are securing progress towards all the Millennium Development Goals”. One of its main goals has been to empower adults with education as seen in the second, third and fourth goals of its project “Education for All” (“Education Counts” Educational For All Global Monitoring Report, 2010). They are;

- Goal 2: Provide free and compulsory primary education for all
- Goal 3: Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults
- Goal 4: Increase adult literacy

To effectively achieve these goals, the peculiarity of the adult learner is to be considered hence Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, (2005), explain that ‘adults and children learn differently’. This concept (that adults and children learn differently) was first introduced in the United States by Malcolm Knowles, at that time; the idea was groundbreaking and sparked much subsequent research and controversy.

Studies have been carried out ever since in the academic field to understand how adults learn and in what way they differ from the child learner. Different countries have mapped out programs for literacy education; have created special education ministries (Ministry of Adult and Continuing Education, Nigeria) to cater for the educational needs of adults on all levels, from informal and vocational education to formal education, and bachelor degrees offered by Universities targeted specifically to teachers of literacy education, for example, In Norway, Bergen University College offers a 30 point course for education teachers of young and adults immigrants with little or no educational background. Norway is one such country that has developed extensively a well-structured institution for adult education and literacy called ‘Voksenopplæring’ and alfabetisering in the Norwegian language.

**Adult Education in Norway;**
Norway also officially known as the Kingdom of Norway is located in Northern Europe on the western and northern part of the Scandinavian Peninsula, bordering the North Sea in southwest and the Skagerrak inlet to the south, the North Atlantic Ocean (Norwegian Sea) in the west and to the northeast. It has a long land border with Sweden to the east, a shorter one with Finland in the northeast and a still shorter border with Russia in the far northeast (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research). Norway has a total area of 385,252 square kilometers (148,747 sq. mi) and a population of about 5,109,059 people (01.01. 2014). The capital city Oslo is the largest in the nation, with a population of about 630,000. Norway has extensive reserves of petroleum, natural gas, minerals, lumber, seafood, fresh water and hydropower. As a developed country that has maximized its use of natural resources, it has been able to provide a system of free education for her citizens (Facts about Education in Norway, 2014). It practices a socialist system of government, where all her citizens are catered for educationally, medically, socially and economically. Norwegian language is her official language. Lifelong learning and opportunities for education for adults are important principles in Norwegian education policy. The aim is to make it possible for the adult segment of the population to strengthen their competence throughout their career pathways (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research).

Norway has a 100% literacy level. The system of education in Norway comprises of;

- Early Childhood Education and Care for children from ages 1-5

- Primary and Lower Secondary Education from ages 6-13 and comprises of class 1-8, on the other hand of this is the contemporary education for adult with little or no previous education (Adult Primary Education, Adult Literacy Education).

- Upper Secondary Education from ages 16-18 and comprises of class 11-13, on the other hand of this is the follow-up service for adults education as shown in Table 1.1

- Higher Education from ages 19 and continuous and comprises of class 14-Higher Diploma, Bachelors, Masters PhD.

In Oslo adult education is run by the municipality Voksenopplæring, Oslo VO (Translated to English; Oslo Adult Education). The Adult Education Centers in Oslo VO comprises 5 Adult Education schools and one admission/administrative unit; the Service Centre. There are also a
number of private institutions running adult education program, but the private and public institutions run the same curriculum and are governed by the same academic principles. More than 6,000 adults in Oslo attend one of the Education Agency’s five adult education centers. One of these centers offers teaching in prisons. The adult education service offers Norwegian for immigrants at one center, special needs teaching at two centers, primary and lower secondary education at one center and upper secondary education at Oslo Voksenopplæring Sinsen (Oslo VO). Oslo VO (Oslo Adult Education) offers both general studies and vocational training. Oslo VO also offers guidance and evaluation of adults’ real competence (work experience).

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for education, among other things, with the aim of ensuring that Norway has a sound and well-functioning educational system. Vox is a Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning which belongs to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. Its’ main goal is to contribute to supporting active citizenship, improving employability and increasing participation in education among adults. It promotes access and participation in formal, non-formal and informal adult education through research, basic skills, integration, career guidance and programs and subsidies. Among other functions, Vox is in charge of curricular and pedagogical issues relating to the teaching of Norwegian and socio-cultural orientation to adult immigrants. They monitor the implementation of the curricula and the national tests, initiate research and development and disseminate information to stakeholders in the field (Vox, 2014). An important part of this task is the provision of professional development for teachers and facilitators in this field from literacy education to on-the-job-training (Vox, 2014).

People who migrate from their home country into Norway have to learn to speak the official language to be able to communicate and integrate into the Norwegian society. To make this possible, there has been an educational act put in place to ensure free education for adults in primary and lower secondary sector as will be explained in further detail in Chapter 2. A statutory right for adults to complete primary education was introduced with effect from autumn 2012. This right comprehends immigrants. Public compulsory education is free of charge (even text books) for all learners independently of their age. In addition to regular public primary and secondary schools, different competence and learning centers offer education at this level on behalf of the municipality. There comprise of the public and private institutions. A decade ago in Norway, it has been said that when an adult was thought not to be able to learn, that adult was considered to be ‘dull’. It was straight cut thinking. One was
either clever or dull. This perception has changed as a result of researches that have lead to innovative practices in ALE.

A unitary school system for everyone has been an important goal in Norwegian educational policy since the late 1890’s (Stensen & Ure, 2010, p.13). Norway as a country can be said to be on the right part in meeting the international requirements for adult education on all levels, with the different institutions in place to ensure quality education for adult learners.

GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE NORWEGIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PhD (Doctoral Degree 3 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-tier Master’s degree 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Oriented degree/ qualification 5 to 6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree 3 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upper Secondary Education

Vocationally Oriented

Academically Oriented

Lower Secondary Education

Compulsory

Grade 8-10

Primary Education

Grade 1-7

Higher education degrees and qualifications not included in the chart:

- Master’s degree in Architecture from Oslo School of Architecture and Design: 5 ½ years
- Experienced-based master’s degree: 1 ½ or 2 years
- Bachelor’s degree of 4 years’ duration (music)
- Primary and lower secondary teacher education programs for years 1-7 and years 5-10: 4 years
- University college graduate degree: 2 years

In addition Norway has a system of tertiary vocational education, which is not considered higher education. It is based on upper secondary education and training or equivalent competence. Course duration is from six months to 2 years.

Table 1: Summary of the Norway Educational System (Facts of Education. Norway, 2014)
1.2 The Statement of problem

The field of Adult literacy Education in Oslo, Norway has recognized the need for trained adult educators' in the field of Adult Literacy Education programs. This is because adult learners with little or no educational background come into the classroom with learning challenges that the teachers need to be aware of or prepared to tackle. Mostly learning difficulties are not physically obvious to the naked eyes and have causes that are psychological and or cultural. Both primary and adult education has for many years received immigrant adolescents and adults with little or no schooling from home countries. This group of learners/participants is a big challenge to schools and teachers. Continuing education course ‘Reading and Writing’ are now been offered to adult teachers by Universities and High Schools to be able to meet the learning needs of young people and adults with little or no educational background aimed to strengthen teachers academic didactic and pedagogical expertise in this field (literacy) (Alver, 2014). However, prior to this, teachers who taught adults in literacy programs were usually trained and qualified teachers for children, such as kindergarten, primary or secondary school teachers. Many teachers lacked training in teaching adult learners with complex learning needs. This gap between the needs of the students and the skill sets of the teachers in ALE programs presents challenges to effective teaching and learning that ultimately affect student achievement and outcomes.

1.3 The purpose of this study

The purpose of the study is to explore the current understanding of learning difficulties among teachers, from the perspective of four ALE teachers. On daily basis ALE teachers confront this gap in the classroom; sharing their opinion and experiences adds rich data to the discourse about effective teaching and learning for adults with learning difficulties in ALE programs. As presented from the viewpoint of the teacher- stakeholders, an appreciation of the relationship between student needs and teacher understanding and skills can inform the ALE field about the professional development and resource needs of its workforce and improve learning outcomes of ALE students with learning difficulties. Another purpose of this study is to explore the theory of andragogy and its implication for teaching in addressing learning difficulties among adults.

Central question guiding this research:
• How do teachers’ understand and address learning difficulties among adult learners in Adult Literacy Education?

In addition, four sub-questions supported the central question:

• How do adult literacy education teachers describe their experience of learning difficulties?

• When is a problem considered as a learning difficulty (LD)?

• How is learning difficulty accessed and managed among mainstream ALE students?

• From the perspective of the instructors, what teaching practices or additional resources support teaching and learning process in adult literacy education programs?

1.4 Research Approach

To study these research questions, an interpretivist/constructivist approach was used because it sanctions the social construction of reality and subjective meaning—making of participants and because it implies a collaborative relationship between the researcher and the research participants (Angen, 2000; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Using this approach positioned the researcher to appreciate and present the teacher-participants’ lived experience of teaching adults with learning difficulties—from how they define learning problems to how reflection on their practice informs their teaching. The data collected from in-depth, individual interviews with 4 ALE teachers produced the findings for this study. All the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Thematic Analysis was used in analyzing and reporting data.

1.5 The rationale for this study

Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, 2005 noted that:

*Until fairly recently, there has been relatively little thinking, investigating, and writing about adult learning. This is a curious fact considering that the education of adults has been a concern of the human race for such a long time. Yet for many years, the adult learner was indeed a neglected species. (p. 35)*
This study brings the voices of ALE teachers into the discourse about what learning difficulties is in practice. It bases on their experiences from the adult education literacy classes, while also responding to the call from the Adult Education field for more research on Adult Education teachers as a way to “capture professional wisdom” (Bingman & Smith, 2007, p. 79) and to support better student outcomes (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992; Smith & Hofer, 2003). In the interest of adding to knowledge in the field of Adult Education, the Adult Literacy Education teacher workforce and raising professional stature of the field, researches that focuses on identifying the characteristics of current ALE learning, leaners and teachers as well as on the connection between teacher preparation and subsequent teaching quality is also recommended (Smith, 2006) and sponsored by Vox yearly in Oslo Norway (Norwegian Agency for lifelong learning). Research conducted in collaboration with ALE teachers that addresses the current state of “classroom life” (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992, p.40) in ALE programs and “…the relationship between well-trained and well-supported teachers and adult student achievement, persistence, and other outcomes” (Smith & Hofer, 2003, p. xiii) may produce results that better inform the decisions of ALE leaders, funders, and policy- makers, ultimately leading to improved teaching practice and student success in ALE programs irrespective of their learning difficulties.

1.6 Summary

In Summary, this thesis is based on a qualitative study of learning difficulties among immigrant adult literacy students.

Assumptions identified in this study shows that individuals seek understanding of the society in which they live and work (Creswell 2003).

Crotty (1998) identified several assumptions that have been adapted throughout this study as a framework and guide:

1. Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the society they are interpreting. Qualitative researchers tend to use open-ended questions so that participants can express their views. (For example, the use of interview technique as an instrument for data collection for example)
2. Humans engage with their environment and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspective. We are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture. Thus, qualitative researchers seek to understand the context of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally. They also make an interpretation of what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researchers' own experiences and backgrounds.

3. The basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community. The process of qualitative research is largely inductive, with the inquirer generating meaning from the data collected in the field (Creswell, 2003). This is important because it will throw more light on learning difficulties in adult education and the application of Andragogy as an adult learning theory that can be useful in addressing learning difficulties in the field. Adult teachers can be able to understand the peculiarity of the adult learners, structure teaching plans, curriculums and class room experiences and environment for enhancing an effective learning process.

Various academic theories have been developed within the century for better psychological, emotional and cultural understanding of how adults learn and are instructed. Given the above explanations, this thesis will go further into the theoretical aspects of Adult Learning and difficulties.
2 EXISTING KNOWLEDGE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the concept of learning difficulties in adult literacy education from the teacher’s perspectives in regards to their teaching practice with adults in literacy programs, and to contribute these teachers’ perspectives to the discourse on this topic. This chapter provides definitions on key terminology used in this study; it also reviews literatures as they relate to understanding learning difficulties in adult literacy education, the characteristics of the adult learner, and immigrant learners with little or no prior education. Findings on adult educational practices in Oslo, Norway will be further elaborated in chapter 3. This study looks at Adult education from the perspective of the theory on Andragogy. Five assumptions have been drawn from the review of the literatures on adult learners, learning difficulties and the theory of Andragogy. These assumptions shape the direction and focus of this research. They are;

1. Adults learners come into the classroom with a wealth of experiences

2. Most adult learners in the literacy classes may be experiencing formal education (reading and writing) for the first time and thus may not be aware of any learning difficulties on their part prior to this encounter

3. Adults learn best when they are self-motivated

4. Adults learn best if learning relates to reality or immediate needs

5. Adults learners are not in the biological or developmental stages of their life, they learn differently from children,

2.2 Defining Key Concepts

Definitions to terms are adopted based on its relevance to the purpose of this study.

Learning
Learning is the process of acquiring knowledge that becomes innate and useful in and for the said learner. Every human being is developing through a learning process. Learning can be said to have taken place if it results in a change in behavior, that is, a change in one's perception of an idea, way of doing things, knowledge and or attitudes. When learning is achieved, the individual is enabled and empowered by what he or she has learnt to make both personal and social changes and adjustments where necessary. That is, an individual can say he/she has learnt something when there has been a partial or full understanding of what is being taught and an ability to apply that understanding to use by the learner to solve another problem or answer a question. In addition, (Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, 2005, p.13) state that; ‘learning can occur from one's experiences and can take different forms’. Learning can be individualistic in nature.

Alan Rogers, 1992 also agrees that learning is individualistic:

*It is not a collective activity. Each individual is processing the experience uniquely for personal use. In learning, the individual is the agent, even though the agent may be subject to the social pressures of the group. Learning is affected, even controlled to some extent, by society or other collectives, but the learning activity itself-introducing learning changes- is personal. (p.9)*

**Learning disability**

Fletcher et al (2007, as cited in Spears, 2011) has defined Learning disability as ‘a neurologically based disorder related to an individual’s predisposition for one or more weaknesses associated with key learning processes that include reading (word recognition and spelling, comprehension, fluency, and automaticity), math (computation and problem solving), and written expression disabilities (handwriting, spelling, and/or composition).

**Learning difficulty**

A learning difficulty arises when a specific task or circumstance in the learning environment inhibits an individual’s ability to learn (Spear 2011). It is mostly psychological in nature (instead of neurological in the case of learning disabilities); they are intrinsic to the individual. Learning difficulties are triggered by external factors as well, such as the learning environment, cultural barriers, economy, poor teaching methods, frustration on self, etc.
Immigrants/Migrants

Migration is about moving from a place and settling down somewhere else in another country. The term Migration is therefore a generic term for immigration, emigration and immigrant (Morken, 2014, p.523-524). People migrate (move) from one settlement or geographical location to another for economic, political and cultural reasons. Migration leads to encounters between people and raises questions about citizenship, culture and identity, and not least the challenges that come with change and adaptation (Morken, 2014, p. 524).

What is Education

By Education I do not mean the formal system of ‘schooling’ but all forms of planned learning by which one person directly (face to face) or indirectly (by distance education methods) helps another person(s) to learn something (Rogers 1992, p.5). Education in itself is a continuous process, sometimes it is mistaking for learning, it is a process that can result in learning and that can continue till the grave. This statement agrees with the concept of adult education (which is sometimes called lifelong education or continuing education, topics for another thesis maybe) because it does not confine education to just a formal system, a particular age period or a set time frame.

Who is an Adult

Since societies have varying notions of adulthood, whether it be from the legal point of view or according to cultural norms phrases like “youth and adult education” has increasingly being used in adult education policy documents. In some societies, for example, many women who would be seen as adults in every other society are denied most of the expressions of adulthood and sometimes do not see themselves as adults (a perfect example of cultural perception). ‘The normative stand is to consider adults as individuals from the 15+ age group’. In Norway persons from 19 years and above can apply for primary, lower secondary and higher adult education. A person must be 19 years and above.

Alan Rogers (1992) points out that:

*An adult is someone, who has finished initial education, seen as preparation for living (provided, that is, that he or she ever attended school) and who has started the process of ‘living’. Adults may return to the educational system or engage in other forms of*
education and training full-time or part-time, but they will have had a break from their introductory education. (p.22)

If they had any at all?

**Adult Education**

Many academic bodies and individuals have tried to define adult education in ways that give more detailed description of what the term implies. For example, The 1997 Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning, an outcome document of the 5th International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), defined adult education as the “entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society”. Adult education takes different forms (formal, non-formal, informal). It is provided in different places and setups (community learning centers, folk high schools, on-the-job, evening classes, etc.), for different purposes (general, vocational) and at different levels from primary to postdoctoral (adult basic education, continuing education, higher education) etc. It encompasses everything, from basic literacy, to personal fulfillment as a lifelong learner and the attainment of advanced degrees (Deb Peterson, 2013). Adult Education has also been defined as reparative education (Meizrow, 1990).

2.3 **An overview of Learning Difficulties in Adult Education**

In the past, having a learning disability was not recognized as having a learning disorder. In fact, in the early part of the twentieth century, children with severe learning disabilities were often confused with children who were mentally retarded. However, in the mid-1800s, the understanding that some people were not efficient learners was considered. In the later years of that century, schools in England were established to teach children with disabilities. The field of learning disabilities was not clearly established until the 1970s. Initially, individuals with such conditions were classified as having minimal brain injury (MBI). This label was changed to learning disabilities. This was also a period when governments mandated that all children had the right to an education, even those with severe disabilities. Thus, the 1970s
became a turning point in terms of the legal rights of, attitudes toward, and understanding of children with learning disabilities. The knowledge in terms of learning disabilities and the use of accommodations has extended to college and work arenas, and to adult seeking to go back to get an education. The wide range of ages, learning needs, academic history and life experience in ALE learners presents a unique challenge for teachers in planning lessons and managing classrooms in ALE programs. Burgeoning evidence (Mellard & Patterson, 2008; NIFL, 2009; Smith & Gillespie, 2007; White & Polson, 1999) now suggests that a prominent teaching challenge presented by ALE learners is having a learning disability or learning difficulty.

In recent years the term learning disability has been usurped interchangeably with learning difficulty, while some scholars agree with this usage, others propose that learning difficulty be defined and addressed so that learners with learning difficulty can also benefit from programs that are created or can be created (Goodley, 2010). A teacher, who may not be aware of the difference in abilities, can easily condemn a learner to the background with conclusions of unwillingness to learn because such a learner lacks the characteristics of learning disabilities. This has created a lack of consensus on the definition of the term learning disability (Spear, 2011). The interchangeability of terms has not helped the adult learners in understanding his/her learning situation. In an article written by Dan Goodley (2001), he questions how ‘learning difficulties’ is epistemologically formed and expands upon four foundations that initiate the development of a fundamentally social vision of ‘learning difficulties’ as it relates to impairment. Citing Mike Oliver’s (1996, p. 42) advice, his paper attempted to reconsider the epistemological orientation of the social model of disability, wherein impairment is considered as equally social as disability and therefore includes people with ‘learning difficulties’.

(Simone Aspis of London People First, quoted in Campbell & Oliver, 1996, p. 97 as cited in Dan Goodley 2001) reflects on a point that gives basis for this study;

*People with ‘learning difficulties’ face discrimination in the disability movement. People without ‘learning difficulties’ use the medical model when dealing with us. We are always asked to talk about advocacy and our impairments as though our barriers aren’t disabling in the same way as disabled people without ‘learning difficulties’. We want concentration on our access needs in the mainstream disability movement. (p.5)*

Crucially, this stance made three things very clear for this study.
First, that people with learning difficulties face a dilemma because of the nature of learning difficulties, that is, they may recluse within themselves, become frustrated, shy, embarrassed and confused not knowing and understanding why they cannot achieve the average standard of learning expected at a given time.

Secondly, that learning difficulties are not necessarily ‘label’ nature. However a poor understanding of learning difficulties leads people to see it as labeling.

Thirdly, that learning difficulty is quite different from learning disability and must also be given adequate academic attention in the literacy classes.

With such a clear perspective on learning difficulties then, it has become increasingly disconcerting to note how, as Simone Aspis (as cited in Dan Goodley, 2001 p.5) points out, ‘…whereas people with physical impairment are rightfully afforded a socio-historical position in the social model, people with ‘learning difficulties’ are consistently underwritten.

Many definitions of learning disabilities therefore have arisen over the years portraying different aspects of Learning disability, not based on the wholeness of the concept. According to Birkemo (1993 p.107, as cited by Erling Kokkersvold), Learning disability is a psychological or neurological hindrance of the motor, perceptual, language and cognitive functions that keep children and young people from acquiring the knowledge and skills one would expect them to master at specific ages. For a consensus on the definition of the term learning disability, especially as it pertains to adult Learning disability, Erling Kokkersvold has categorized learning disability in such a way as to encompass the wholeness of the concept for the purpose of this study.

According to Erling Kokkersvold, learning disability has been grouped into categories such as

- General learning disability (connected to general cognitive impairment/failure capability)

- Complex learning difficulties (which is related to several factors, including neurological dysfunction, congenital/birth related or acquired brain injury)

- Specific learning disability (reading- and writing and mathematics difficulties that is not due to general cognitive impairment)
• Language-related learning difficulties

• Migration-related learning difficulties

Difficulty experienced in learning caused by more psychosocial factors, altering or inhibiting the learning process.


The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a) differentiate between general learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties under an umbrella of cognition and learning. Under this are children who demonstrate features of moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia (p.3)

It can be concluded therefore that learning difficulty is an aspect of learning disability, an aspect that deals with the psychosocial causes – effects of learning difficulties rather than centered on neurological or biologically caused learning disability. Understanding the concept of learning difficulties in adult literacy education can help reduce frustrations from both the learners and the students, and redirect positive energy into developing teaching and learning models and styles that can enhance the teaching-learning process as has been observed in practice at the Norwegian Adult Education centers.

Still on the concept of understanding learning difficulties, the socio-cultural perspectives suggest that external factors such as culture, history, society, parents, and peer pressure shape our learning style and influence our understanding of learning difficulties. In adult schools, the teacher should bear in mind the cultural background of each individual adult learner (which shapes their learning). People’s cultural background can influence their learning style. At any level, adults with learning difficulties have much greater difficulty or challenge than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills, in understanding concepts and in effective communication. They may also have associated speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration and under-developed social skills which could be triggered by internal or external factors.

Children and adults with general learning difficulties require specific programs to aid progress in cognition and learning, these requirements may apply to pupils with physical and sensory impairments and those on the autistic spectrum. In summary a working definition of Learning
Difficulty among adults are difficulties or difficult challenges experienced in reaching the average standard of intellectual and or cognitive skills and performance required amongst one’s peers or people of the same age triggered mostly by psychosocial factors. Attention must be paid to this group of persons and lesson plans and curriculum should be developed to meet their dynamic learning needs irrespective of diagnosis or a lack of diagnosis.

Learning difficulties that go unaddressed in literacy classes may go with persons throughout life hampering work progress, it can create problems that continue to manifest themselves into adulthood and affect adults in the job market, at home (for example helping ones children out with school homework/ assignments) and in other areas of their lives. With the right support, intervention, tools and training, adults with learning difficulties can succeed in school and go on to successful, often distinguished careers, in life.

Finally, the concept of learning difficulties and learning disability can be summarized in clearer terms as follows; first, the understanding of ‘learning difficulties’ as a fundamentally social, cultural, political, historical, discursive and relational phenomenon, rather than sensitively recognizing the existence of an individual’s ‘naturalized impairment’. Secondly, the experiences and expertise of people with ‘learning difficulties’, particularly those involved with the politicized new social movement of self-advocacy, constitute a body of knowledge that can be fruitfully drawn upon in reviewing notions of ‘learning difficulties’ (Dan Goodley, 2001). The diagram below (Table 2) describes some common learning difficulties found among adult learners.
Common Types of Learning Difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Difficulty with</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dyslexia</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Difficulty challenges with understanding words, reading, writing, spelling, speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysgraphia</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyscalculia</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Difficult challenges with numbers, math problems, understanding time, using money etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aphasia</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Difficult to understand spoken language, poor comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>Challenges with reading, hearing explanations, comprehending etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>Sight/Seeing</td>
<td>Difficult challenges with seeing things from afar which hampers learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Common learning difficulties in Adult Education

2.3.1 The prevalence of Learning Difficulty in Literacy Classes;

In the United State of America, recent and significant development in the field of Adult Basic Education (ABE) is the recognition of the prevalence of adults with learning difficulties who attend Adult Basic Education programs (Spears, 2011 p.32). (Adult basic education is education for adult who have been to school before, but dropped out for whatever reason, and have now come back to complete their education for a higher diploma). According to Ryan & Price (1993) there has become an increasing need for more research on how policy makers and teachers can best address the “multiple issues” (p. 32) presented by an increasing number of students with learning difficulties attending Adult Education programs. Typically underestimated by individual countries (Spears 2011, P.32), the percentage of adult students
with learning difficulties/disabilities in ABE programs worldwide ranged in the literature from 29% (UNESCO Word Conference Report, Harburg, 2008). Children and adults with learning disabilities are often easily identified in a classroom by observation, though not always the case, a learning difficulty may never be dictated in the person(s) and waiting for students to identify themselves could be futile because of the misconception attached to the concept of learning difficulty and learning disability. Learning difficulties among illiterate adults in some cases can go unnoticed until a case arises that may bring attention to it, for example identifying alphabets in literacy programs. Given that adult learners who return to ALE programs to acquire the alphabets and numeracy skills have never been to a traditional school program, it is reasonable to assume that the persistence of cognitive or learning barriers that prevented them from finishing would require the attention and intervention of the ALE teacher. There are different reasons for learning difficulty, some known others unknown, ranging from traumas such as war, emotional abuse, poverty, cultural barriers, language barriers such as may or may not be the case with adult immigrants. For example, person with numerical difficulty as a result of a trauma during war time in his/her country. Such persons may have come to associate numbers with war experiences. “A learning difficulty arises when a specific task or circumstance in the learning environment inhibits an individual’s ability to learn” (NIFL, 2009, p.21). In Norway, Adult Education Centers around the country constantly receive more and more adult literacy students with need to learn alphabets or literacy skills (IMDi 2013). This need has driven Vox and IMDi to sponsor educational projects that develop better teaching methods for literacy education students to help meet their very dynamic and complex learning needs (IMDi 2013). This founding has led to the development of the ‘mother tongue’ peer group (a support group where students help one another to learn. They are paired in the classroom and can discuss and ask each other question, usually a more advanced student is paired with a less advanced students, this strengthens the learning of the one explaining and gives the one being explained to an opportunity to understand in his/her own native tongue) and ‘reading tablet’ app that helps the students learn alphabets with little or no direct assistance of the teacher. This app was developed by a devoted literacy educator that has learned over years of dedicatedly working as a literacy teacher. According to IMDi, 2013, ‘Our skilled educator, Ingeborg Krogsgaard, has developed a special app that was originally designed for children to get them to understand how to break the reading code. Now it's also an updated version for minority, says Derdowska’. Perharps by updated here the author means modified to meet the adults
needs, to also emphasize the fact that adults learn differently from children?
This is a methodology that assumes that the reading-learning process is done by typing on the computer. Research has shown that early writing pave the way for a good read start.
Since there are special challenges in teaching ‘Norwegian’ as a language to the illiterate, the use of native mother tongue peer group is very important.
They are a support group both for participants who are illiterate, and for their teachers. The affected people themselves have said that they learn Norwegian faster by being supported by these new methods of learning tailored to meet the dynamic needs of the literacy class.

2.3.2 Past

The concept of adult education in Norway encompasses all types of education; formal or non-formal education, including vocational and occupational education targeted towards the adult learner to promote development, social knowledge, skills, etc. According to the Norwegian Agency for Life Long Learning (Vox, 2010); the concept of adult education came into use in the 1950s, for example in public documents and by the labor movement.

However, prior to this time, the tradition of Norwegian Adult Education had already taken roots and could be traced back to the Danish nineteenth century educational theorist N.F.S. Grundtvig, who advocated the Folk High School — what he called a “school for life,” a school that adults could use to develop every aspect of their social, cultural and cognitive skills (The Thematic Review on Adult Learning, 2000). This tradition is called “folkeopplysning” translated to English it means “popular enlightenment”, also referred to as folk education or liberal education, it was an education targeted toward adult population. This system of adult education then was controlled by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO’s) with focus on promoting societal development through educational activities and various movements. During this period, the first distance education was formed. Norway passed an Act regulating distance education (the Act on Correspondence Schools). The Workers’ Educational Association of Norway (AOF) was founded in 1931 by the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) in order to provide people with little or no formal education with educational possibilities.
The first Act on Folk High Schools was adopted in 1949 — 85 years after the first folk high school was founded. In 1984 the Act was replaced by a new Act carrying the same name.
It was pointed out that democratization and decentralization were to be guiding principles for the management of folk high schools.

Up until the 1950s adult education had almost entirely been in the hands of NGOs. Now the political parties started to get involved, and the Labor Party emphasized a need for continuing vocational training as a prerequisite to strengthen democracy. In 1958, as part of labor market policy, courses for unemployed adults were started. The intention of the courses was to provide qualified manpower, rehabilitation and training opportunities for unemployed people. The labor market training (LMT) was directed at readjustments of the primary and secondary industries. LMT centers were established in the 1960s due to the fact that the educational system did not have the capacity to handle the needs of industry.

The reforms of the 1990s all focused among other things on making the initial education and training system more adaptable to the needs of adults. In 1966 KUF established a Department of Adult Education. In 1967 the first State Council of Adult Education was appointed as an advisory body to the Ministry. In this period the activities of many NGOs were extended to include vocational courses in addition to the traditional study circles, and traditional target groups were therefore extended to also include the general public. The Norwegian Adult Education Act came into force as early as 1976. The act comprised all forms of adult education, formal as well as informal. (2010). The Act was seen as an instrument towards increased equality between individuals and groups, between men and women, between young and elderly and between handicapped and others, and in the regional distribution of resources. The Act was changed in 1992 and a new recognition and grant system for study associations was adopted. In August 1999 a new Education Act came into force, and the parts of the Adult Education Act of 1976 concerning primary and lower secondary education and upper secondary education for adults are now included in the new Education Act (Thematic Review of Adult Learning, 2010; Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning, 2010; Norwegian Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs 2000).

In the last half of the 1990s there has been a renewal of interest in adults’ right to learn. Norway has taken particular interest in participating in the work-related-education/lifelong learning which has been carried out at the international level, within the European Union, and UNESCO.

In recent years also, adult education has taken another turn and is targeting the minority groups, the immigrants and the adults with little or no prior education. Vox and Adult
Education Service Center (VO) are in place to promote quality education for immigrants both on the language level and on the academic level.

2.3.3 Current Practice in Adult Education, Oslo

Through the educational reforms enacted in the 1990s a new focus was placed on lifelong learning. Adult education moved from just being a means to promote societal and economic development to a more individualistic education for individual growth and development, which has turned into a key principle of Norwegian education policies. Acknowledgement of the fact that learning is obtained in various arenas and contexts throughout life, in a lifelong and life-wide perspective, has resulted in an expanded vision of learning, including a wider spectrum of options and opportunities for each individual to realize personal desires and needs (Vox, 2010)

Today, Adult Education system in Oslo practices a unitary, structured system of Education, whereby all providers of adult education are expected to follow a particular system and curriculum of education. The system of adult education includes adult education at literacy level (alfabertisering in Norwegian language), primary level, lower secondary, upper secondary level, folk high schools, adult education associations and independent distance learning institutions.

Primary and lower secondary education which comprises the first 10 years of the formal educational system is compulsory in Norway. Adults who have not completed sufficient primary and lower secondary education are entitled to education at these levels (§4A-1 of the Education Act). Adults from the age of 25 years who have completed primary and lower secondary school or the equivalent, but not upper secondary education, have the right to such education upon application. It is the responsibility of the municipalities and the states to provide this compulsory education besides training at upper secondary and higher education levels. Voluntary and private organization are particularly active in providing higher education in adult education practice in Norway, ranging from language courses to more vocational or professional courses.

A study association consists of two or more voluntary organizations and offers a selection of courses, ranging from basic education/training to work training and studies at university level. Study associations offer courses in most municipalities and may apply for government funding.
The folk high schools are free and general education schools which also have a clear integrative goal. Folk high schools do not have any curriculum and examination. Folk high schools offer both short courses lasting at least two days and a maximum of 94 days, and long courses with a duration of 4-10 months.

Adult education is also offered via the internet, called Web-based schools. They are characterized by a high degree of flexibility. They allow teachers and students to communicate with each other regardless of time and place. The teaching can be organized in several ways, either simply as web based tuition or combined web-based tuition and central or regional collections of students. Approved web-based schools can apply for state funding in Norway.

There is a strong emphasis on the individual’s ability to think for him or herself, taking education and development to the workplace for adults who have little or no education, learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyscalculia, targeted to all her citizens including immigrants.

As recent as April 2014, a new project targeted towards adult education and development is being introduced into system called ‘Læring I arbeidslivet 4/2014’ translated to English ‘Learning in the work live’. Other programs such as NAPkurs (Norwegian language practice and work course) are provided for foreigners who want to enter into the workforce to improve efficiency, proficiency and economic growth.

Various measures such as educational laws and Acts have been put in place to encourage adult education and equal opportunity for education in Norway. However,

The Norwegian Education Mirror 2013 states that;

*Adults who are above compulsory school age and who need primary and lower secondary education and training are entitled to it. This right usually applies to the subjects that are needed in order to get a diploma for completed primary and lower secondary education for adults. Adults who either do not have or are unable to get satisfactory outcomes from the mainstream educational provision for adults are entitled to SNE. Adults are also entitled to upper secondary education and training starting in the year when they turn 25 if they have not completed upper secondary education and training before. (p28)*

Adults also have a statutory right to upper secondary education. This applies to adults who have not already completed an upper secondary education.
It is interesting to note that Norway has put Educational Policies in place to also meet the diverse and dynamic (educational) needs of the immigrant adult learner even though the emphasis is usually on Norwegian language development, because, according to Act of 11 March 2005 No. 13 (in force from 1 September 2005 pursuant to the Decree of 11 March 2005 No. 228). Section1. **The purpose of the Act** ‘is to increase the possibility of newly arrived immigrants participating in working and social life and to increase their financial independence.

This can be a reflection of a system that intends to carry along all persons legally living in Norway promote economic independence.

The basic principles and priorities of Norwegian education policies today are the following:

- A high general level of education in the entire population.

- Equal opportunity in access to education as seen in the Education Act §4.1 (Section 4A-1). ‘The right to primary and lower secondary education for adults

Persons above compulsory school age who require primary and lower secondary education have the right to such education unless they have the right to upper secondary education and training pursuant to section 3-1. The right to education normally includes the subjects required for the certificate of completed primary and lower secondary education for adults. The education shall be adapted to individual needs (www.udir.no), facts about education 2014, Stensen & Uru 2010). One of the main challenges faced in the educational sector of adult education Oslo over the years has been the task of making good courses for adults with poor basic skills in reading, writing, arithmetic and the use of ICT (Information, Communication & Technology). The program for Basic Competence in Working Life funds enterprises and public institutions that initiate education in basic skills for their employees or potential employees. In year 2013/14, 9867 adults received and are receiving primary education. There has been an increase of 53 participants from the previous school year.

There are several adults in mainstream primary education, but fewer adults who receive special education. Is it possible then that this poor rate of enrollment is a result of a lack of awareness about learning difficulties in adulthood? Are learners frustrated about their challenges at learning that they simply give up, drop out of the system and decide they cannot learn? Or are they wondering if they fall into this category of learners since they have no clear
understanding of what learning difficulty is? For example Oslo Adult Education Center, Skullerd has put up a demarcation on their website on learning disability, learning difficulty and other learning challenges. Name;

• adults with learning disabilities, CP, AD/HD and more

• adults with learning difficulties

• adults with major reading/writing disabilities

• adults with mental health problems

• adults who need to relearn after serious illness or injury (cognitive or sensory)

3902 adults are in 2014 receiving special education. This is a fewer number of people compared to previous years. Since 2008/09 there were fewer adults who receive special education. The numbers of special education includes a group of 90 participants who both receive regular elementary education and special education. The majority of adults who receive special education in primary schools in Oslo are 707 participants.

This study does not find much literature on literacy programs in Oslo, but oral information has been gathered by literacy teachers during the process of interview and informal discussions. Practically, teachers feel that there is little awareness of what learning difficulty is? Opinions are that it is different from language difficulty? Even though the Norwegian definition embraces all learning environments formal and non-formal, there might be a tendency that adults perceive themselves as actual learners when the pedagogical approach to learning is project-based and when theory and practice application are integrated in the learning process. If the educational institution does not apply a problem-based, self-directed and team-based approach to learning, the adult learner might not perceive himself/herself as a learner, as the motivation to learn is not there.

Being an immigrant has been said to come with its own challenges on the process of learning for persons experiencing adult education in the literacy level. Morken, 2014 explains more on migration-related learning difficulty, that there are migration-related learning difficulties which are a combination of migration perspective with learning difficulties perspective. Though this is not the focus of this study, it is noted as one of the challenges related to identifying an actual meaning of learning difficulty in adult literacy education. It will be
common sense to agree that migrants anywhere in the world may encounter two major problems; firstly new language adaptation and cultural adaptation. This may not be the case for everyone, however, migrants who experience these challenges will need a very adult learning centered teaching style to be able to benefit adequately in the education process that leads to learning.

In a survey conducted by the Institute for Applied Social Science (FAFO, 1999) adult learners in state enterprises were interviewed. 80% of adult learners said they feel they do a better job after having participated in continuing education and training. 97% of adult learners stated that on-the-job training is very important or rather important to do a good job. Employees who have a level of attainment below higher education are more likely to validate continuing education and training as important as those who have completed higher education.

One can say in summary, that Adult Education is programmed in a way to meet the diverse educational needs of all adults living in Norway irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, ability or disability, psychological or sociological dysfunction.

There is not much literature on the concept of learning difficulties among adult literacy students. There is literature on learning disabilities, for adults, but mostly for children. Reasons for this vary. The result is however that there is still no uniformity as to what exactly learning difficulty is by definition in regards to adult education. The aim of this thesis therefore is to understand the concept of learning difficulties as it exists currently and practically in adult literacy education from the perspective of the instructors in this programs, this is because they are in contact with the learners and experience firsthand the education process of the learners, over time, they develop an understanding of concepts based on their years of experiences on the job.

The adult literacy students in Norway face diverse challenges, especially students with no previous education before coming into Norway, that is why, in recent years, the educational system in Norway has put in place teaching programs and courses that will help the teachers at this level effectively teach her/his students. How does a person learn words without learning alphabets? How does a person learn a new language of communication without learning words? How can the teachers effectively teach students at this literacy level? It will not be absurd to say that a lot of these students have probably received a poor level of education if they come from countries where a teaching class is probably made up of 45-98 students? Learning difficulties among this group of students will most likely have gone
unnoticed and unidentified before they come into Norway. Migration learning difficulties also
must be considered as a possible stumbling block in the learning process. All this and more
will challenge the teachers to look for the best possible way to teach these students. In the
process of understanding the concept of *Learning Difficulty in adult literacy education*,
therefore, this study explores how the application of the theory of Andragogy in the literacy
classroom can be a tool, a teaching model that can address adult learning difficulties in
literacy education.

If the educational institution does not apply a problem-based, self-directed and team-based
approach to learning, the adult literacy learner might not perceive himself/herself as a learner,
as the motivation to learn is not there.

Earlier research has shown that the presence of learning difficulties and/or learning disability
amongst adult learners is often a significant factor of high rate of dropout regardless of
whether the learner has been officially diagnosed. (Noyes Spear, 2011)
This leads to the theory of how adult learn.

### 2.4 The Theory of Andragogy:

Part of being an effective educator involves understanding how adults learn best (Lieb, 1991).
Andragogy (adult learning) is a theory that holds a set of assumptions about how adults learn.
Andragogy emphasizes the value of the process of learning in adult. It’s approaches to
learning are problem-based and collaborative rather than didactic, and emphasizes on equality
between the teacher and learner.

Andragogy as a study of adult learning originated in Europe in 1950's and was then pioneered
as a theory and model of adult learning from the 1970's by Malcolm Knowles an American
practitioner and theorist of adult education, who defined andragogy as "the art and science of
helping adults learn" (Zmeyov 1998; Fidishun 2000). This study considers the theory of
andragogy important in helping teachers handle the challenges of adult literacy education
among immigrants. This theory has worked in many countries and proves that if teachers
understand the concepts of andragogy and apply the andragogical model, they could help
immigrant learners overcome obstacles to the learning process to an extent.

There are different intellectual views on the origin of Andragogy as a study of adult learning.
Some say it originated in Europe in 1950’s and was then pioneered as a theory and model of
adult learning from the 1970's by Malcolm Knowles an American practitioner and theorist of adult education, who defined andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Zmeyov, 1998 & Fidishun 2000). Alexander Kapp a German gymnasium teacher (1800-1869) is the first known user of the term; he does not define the Andragogy concept, and did not develop a theory on Andragogy. He simply justifies the necessity of education for adults, and elaborates on what qualities it is important to develop-in general and for different occupation. This he calls andragogy. For him andragogy is a term for education in adulthood. But, Alexander Kapp and Malcolm S. Knowles both agree that child and youth education is covered by Pedagogy and that education in adult age is covered by Andragogy. Malcolm S. Knowles however develops more on the theory of andragogy which he bases on a set of assumptions about how adults learn. It adapts approaches to learning that are problem-based and collaborative rather than didactic, and also emphasizes more equality between the teacher and learner. The concept of an integrated framework of adult learning for which the label andragogy had been coined was to differentiate it from the theory of youth learning called pedagogy. It is interesting to add that as early as 1921 a German social scientist, Eugen Rosenstock (1921) had expressed his opinion that adult education required special teachers, special methods, and a special philosophy.

Malcolm Knowles has therefore proposed “andragogy” as an educational model formulated to address the needs and strengths of adult students. The theory of Andragogy is a humanistic approach that is less teachers centered and more learner-centered. The six basic assumptions (proposed by Malcolm Knowles) upon which Andragogy is founded are:

- the Learners needs to know; (why, what, how)
- Self-Concept of the Learner; autonomous, self-directing
- Prior Experience of the Learner; resource, mental models
- Readiness to Learn; life related, developmental task
- Orientation to Learning; problem centered, contextual, and lastly
- Motivation to learn; intrinsic value, personal payoff. (Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, 2005).
These assumptions can help us understand adult learning styles, effective instructional methods for adults, curriculum planning etc. It can be assumed that the adult learner an adult learners wealth of experience which he/she brings with him/her to the classroom and which may or may not have shaped his learning styles. Using these assumptions may help in the understanding of learning difficulties amongst adult learners.

There are distinctive learning characteristics of adults learner based on the theory of andragogy: (a) adults tend to be self-directed learners; (b) adults bring to the classroom a rich base of experience that should be tapped as part of their learning; (c) adults have a more “problem-centered” learning orientation in terms of learning specific tasks in contrast to the “subject matter-orientation” of children; (d) adult learning readiness is triggered by what they need to know to be responsible adults and citizens in their home society; and (e) adult learning motivation is internal or intrinsically based, whereas the motivation of children is due to external or extrinsic factors (Bell, 1989; Daly,1980; Fisher & Podeschi, 1989; Knowles, 1970; Rada, 1980) and therefore must be taught differently from children. Knowles (1980) further proposed seven process elements of his Andragogy model of learning which he believed would enhance the learning experience of the adult learning: (a) climate should be relaxed, trusting, mutually respectful, informal, collaborative, warm and supportive, (b) planning is done mutually by learner and facilitator, (c) diagnosis of needs is done by mutual assessment, (d) setting of objectives are created by mutual negotiation, (e) learning activities include experiential techniques, inquiry projects, independent study, (f) evaluation is accomplished by learner-collected evidence. (Sandra Johnson). Based on these assumptions and facts, the theory of Andragogy will be applied in looking at teaching adults with learning difficulties in adult education (on basic education).

The theory of Andragogy takes into consideration cultural diversity (Socio-Cultural perspective on learning/learning difficulty), the wealth of experience of each adult learner, which if not considered in the learning, planning and instructional process may constitute a learning difficulty for the adult learner. My assumption is based on the six ideologies in Andragogy stated by Malcolm. It is very interesting to notice how the Adult teaching strategies based on the theory of Andragogy already addresses the issues of Learning difficulties in the classroom settings if properly adapted.

Adults learn continually throughout their life; they do not stop when they leave school (if they have had any formal schooling, that is). This is an obvious truth; but it carries with it profound implications.
2.4.1 Andragogy in Practice;

Andragogy is an individual-transactional model of adult learning (Brokfield 1986 as cited by Knowles et al, 2005 p. 142).

Adult learners in ALE programs are represented in the theory of andragogy in several ways. The core principles of andragogy provides a sound foundation for planning adult learning experiences (Knowles et al. 2005, p.157)

In their book ‘The Adult Learner’ (Knowles et al 2005) presented a practical application of the theory of andragogy by using a case example from an adult education program to outline how an “andragogical learner analysis” (p. 157) could be used as part of a needs assessment for program development purposes. This analysis used a matrix that evaluated “the extent to which the andragogical assumptions fit the learners at that point in time” (p. 158) by rating the alignment of the learner population characteristics with the six andragogical principles as listed in previous section of this study, and thereby determining the most effective teaching approach. The results of this case analysis revealed that while the learners in this traditional AE program generally fit most of the andragogical assumptions, they tended not to fit andragogical assumptions about the self-directedness of adult learners because they had histories of being unsuccessful in past learning settings and they “lack confidence” (p. 158) as learners of reading and math a type of difficulty. By implication, learners with learning difficulty may feel insecure and frustrated to experience the classroom situation and therefore may dropout if left alone to tackle the challenges of learning alone. A knowledgeable teacher plays a vital role in motivating the learner at this stage, and as time goes on the learner develops the confidence to self motivate for learning. Andragogy in practice, the model of andragogy goes further to explain that the learners tended to also be very motivated students in their effort to improve their lives and were seen as pragmatic learners for whom it was critical to make real-life connections to their new learning. While the adult learning theory of andragogy as posited by Knowles (1970) suggests that there are fundamental differences to teaching adults and children based on their relative life experiences and cognitive development, the two highly experienced ALE teacher-participants in the pilot study emphasized this fact, that coming straight from kindergarten to teaching adults was a big change and they quickly applied self-reflection in teaching these adults with little or no education. Firstly, they had to show respect, treat the adults as adults with identity, and made the teaching process relevant to the learner’s immediate needs. These two participants clearly
indicated that using elementary teaching strategies for ALE learners reading at or below 6th-grade level was an idea that a lot used but did not work out. Always, these teachers ask themselves question like ‘How would I want to be addressed?’ How would I want to be taught? Students showed more enthusiasm when they knew they were taught with respect and that what was been taught was relevant to their immediate needs. One teacher particularly explains how one of her students wrote his first letter to his mother back at his home country. This progress was slow she noted but was steady when he knew the relevance of the teaching process to him. This story reflects the essence of andragogy as a theoretical framework of action in the field of adult education and as it relates to learning difficulties.

This session concludes with Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, (2005) agreement on Adult Education:

*a cooperative venture in non-authoritarian, informal learning, the chief purpose of which is to discover the meaning of experience; a quest of the mind which digs down to the roots of the preconceptions which formulate our conduct; a technique of learning for adults which makes education coterminous with life and hence elevates living itself to the level of adventurous experiment. (P.39)*

**2.4.2 Characteristics of an adult learner based on the theoretical framework above**

No two persons learn exactly the same was, so also there is a difference in the way adults learn from the way children learn. To be able to meet the needs of the very students who need them most—those with learning difficulties—and whose learning needs and pace do not align with the accountability requirements, teachers must be made aware of the peculiarity of their teaching audience.

Linderman (1926) has also identified several key assumptions about the adult learners. His assumptions have been supported by later research and constitute the foundation of adult learning theory (Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, 2005). For the purpose of this study, these are they are referred to as the characteristics of the adult learner. They are:

- Adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy; therefore, these are the appropriate starting points for organizing adult learning activities.
• Adults’ orientation to learning is life-centered; therefore, the appropriate units for organizing adult learning are life situations, not subjects.

• Experience is the richest resource for adults’ learning; therefore, the sore methodology of adult education is the analysis of experience.

• Adults have a deep need to be self-directing; therefore, the role of the teacher is to engage in a process of mutual inquiry with them rather than to transmit his or her knowledge to them and then evaluate their conformity to it.

• Individual differences among people increase with age; therefore, adult education must make optimal provision for differences in style, time, place, and pace of learning. (Knowles, Holton III & Swanson, 2005).

The theory of andragogy suggests adaptive education to and for every single adult. This is an important aspect of teaching adults with learning difficulty. Understanding adult learning theories as conceptualized by Malcolm Knowles can describe how the theory can provide a theoretical basis and guide for an effective instructional approach to adult learning, teaching styles, classroom structure and curriculum planning for adults with learning difficulties.
3 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to analytically describe the approach of research method used in this study. It looks at how the study was carried out, the process of selecting a sampling unit from the sample population, data collection and analysis, validation and ethical consideration and then concludes with limitations of the study.

3.1 Research Design and Method

The qualitative research methodology was used for this study with focus on answering research questions and exploring respondents’ views on Learning Difficulties in the field of adult education. Qualitative research is the approach usually associated with the social constructivist paradigm which emphasizes the socially constructed nature of reality. It is about recording, analyzing and attempting to uncover the deeper meaning and significance of human behaviors and emotions (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). This study is based on reality. Reality here is the actual understanding of learning difficulties among teachers as it relates to adult literacy learners in practice. The instrument used for the collection of data was the Interview which allowed for open ended questions to be asked to the participants. Interview consists of oral questions asked by the interviewer and oral responses by the research participants (Gall, Gall & Borg 2007, p228). The interview technique allowed participants to be flexible within the confines of the study to express their opinions and add suggestions as they deemed fit. This technique provided a rich and complex understanding of teachers’ experiences on the field. This research adopted a broadly interpretive approach in analyzing findings were the subjective meaning that people create within their environment is studied and analyzed (Walsham, 2006), with the aim of understanding learning difficulties in adult education. This study is exploratory in nature and aims to understand the teachers’ perspective on learning difficulties among immigrant adult literacy learners (Yin 2014).

In qualitative research, researchers do not base their study on pre-determined hypotheses. Problems or topics they want to explore are clearly identified as seen in the following main question and sub-questions.
3.1.1 Research Question:
How do teachers’ understand and address learning difficulties among adult learners in Adult Literacy Education?

In addition, four sub-questions supported the central question;

1. How do adult literacy education teachers describe their experience of learning difficulties?

2. What identifies a difficulty as a ‘learning difficulty’ (LD)?

3. How is learning difficulty accessed and managed among mainstream ALE students?

4. From the perspective of the instructors, what teaching practices or additional resources support teaching and learning process in adult literacy education programs?

To answer these questions a sample unit was selected from the sample population as explained below.

3.2 Population and Sampling:

The first step after the thesis proposal was approved was to send a Notification letter/form and an attached copy of the proposal to the governmental body in charge of social science researches carried out in Norway called the ‘Norwegian Social Science Data Service’ (NSD) in June 2013. The body ensures that the rights of participants/respondents are respected and data collected are properly disposed of after the period of study which was clearly stated in the form. When approval was received from the NSD, the sampling population was purposively selected as explained in the preceding sessions.

A purposive sampling procedure was used in the selection of research participants for this study. This procedure is suggestive rather than prescriptive and they do not necessarily exhaust the possible ways in which a qualitative research sample might be selected. (Gall, Gall & Borg 2007. p177).

For this study, the first port of call in regards to sample population was the service center for adult education in Oslo. They are responsible for student placement in the right academic
classes, the 5 municipality adult education centers in Oslo among other responsibilities. They helped in identifying adult education institutions that will be useful in answering research questions. School A, School B and School C.

The sampling technique used for selecting sample unit from this sample population was the *purposive sampling*. It is a form of non-probability sampling strategy used in qualitative studies in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issues, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research. Letters of application and consent were sent out by e-mail to the head teachers’ in-charge of literacy classes in the various schools. School A responded back after a couple of weeks saying their teachers could not participate in the study because they had other on-going projects at the time. School B had 2 volunteers and School C had 2 volunteers. In all, 4 teachers were recruited, each where from governmentally ran institutions (public schools for adults) in Oslo. The goal of purposeful sampling was to select sampling units that were likely to be ‘information-rich’ with respect to the purpose of this study. (Gall, Gall & Borg 2007. p178). The letter of information contained the purpose and aim of this study (Master’s thesis) and a request to participate as informants in the study process. Follow-up telephone calls and personal visits were made to school heads (who are the gatekeepers of their schools) not responding to the initial request. Afterwards two teachers from each school were purposefully selected as shown in Table 2.

Furthermore, an informal visit was made to ‘VOX’; an adult education institution responsible for adult education teachers in Norway and for immigrants’ education and integration into the work place. A lot of informative data on the different aspects of adult education was gathered from this visit. Useful websites on adult education in Norway was also gathered. The purpose of this visit was to get addition information on adult learning principles in Norway; though this visit was informal it gave an idea on possible loopholes in the already drafted interview questions. This helped in re-constructing the interview questions in a more structured and less complex way. One of the disadvantages of the purposive sampling strategy is that samples are not easily defensible as being representative of populations due to potential subjectivity of researcher (T.R. Black 1999. p.118).
3.3 **Procedures for Data Collection and Instrumentation**

This research started in the month of May 2013, with a combination of data collection techniques including interviews and informal discussions with participants and gatekeepers. In accordance with the first principle of conducting interpretive field research (Klein and Myers, 1999), the process of collecting data involved sending out initial letters of request to the rectors (school heads) of the three adult education institution/centers. Initially, there was no response, but after follow up face to face visits to the schools, two schools respondent positively saying they would forward the request to the ALE teachers and volunteers would contact me via telephone. The last school responded negatively, stating the fact that they had other on-going projects and cannot participate at this time. Teachers who were willing called by phone to give their consent and schedule different dates for face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted at most 45 minutes because every teacher is always busy with some school project or the other. Time was of the essence. Despite the time constraints, respondents gave very useful information, providing in-depth understanding and insight of the phenomenon under study. 3 out of four interviews took place within the natural surroundings of the phenomenon under study. Information on data sources and the population sample and respondents/participants for this study are summarized in Table 3 and Table 3.1 respectively.

**Summary of Sample population and Sample Unit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Total Number of Staff</th>
<th>Total Number of Teachers (Sample Population)</th>
<th>Teacher Participants (Sample Unit)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School B (Public School)</td>
<td>Xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C (Public School)</td>
<td>Xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Summary of Population and Sample by Public School.

A semi-structured interview was the main source of data collection; however informal discussions were used as they provided more detailed backgrounds, directions for the study and personal perceptions on the Norwegian system of Adult Education, the structure of
teacher training programs for adult literacy educators, courses available for teachers already on the job and the systematic procedures for addressing learning difficulties. Approximately four interviews were conducted and 2 informal discussions with respondents of the study. The respondents included teachers of adult literacy education, two professional advisers in the field of adult education who is responsible for drafting developmental programs for teachers, students in classrooms and work place, and lastly an adult education adviser.

In total, 4 adult literacy education teachers were available for interview. This number of respondents does not achieve population validity or accurately define the population of adult literacy education teachers in Oslo; however the aim of the purposeful sampling is to rather achieve an in-depth understanding of selected individuals’ perception of a phenomenon. (Gall, Gall & Borg 2007, p.178)

The personal interviews carried out were semi-structured in nature and were conducted with the full consent of participants. The participants were told the focus of the study. Not all approached were motivated to partake in the study; however, some participants were motivated to participate because they wanted to share their experiences and their achievements with this dynamic group of learners. Interview questions focused on understanding, through the eyes of the participants, the concept of learning difficulties and how they are identified in the classroom setting, challenges experienced, and the effectiveness of facilities available for educational instructions. For the sake of privacy, the anonymity of the institutions are not mentioned in this study neither are the names of the respondents mentioned. During the interview, the interviewer was largely in control of the response situation, scheduling with the participants a mutually agreeable time and place to carry out the interview (Gall, Gall & Borg 2007, p.228), the interview questions were not strictly followed so that the respondent felt free to use personal words to express self.

Before the actual main interview commenced, permission was sort from respondents to administer a tape recorder during the interview process for the sake of validation and reliability of the instrument for collecting data though notes were also taken during the interview. In the informal discussion, none of the participants allowed the administering of tape-recorder. They however allowed note taking

The first discussion carried out in this study was informal in nature and lasted from 4pm-6pm 2 hours. A professional adult education adviser from an adult education body/institution for immigrants in Norway was the first visit, which was not pre-arranged by an appointment
however, the second professional visited the other adult education institution was a by appointment (a pre-arranged visit). An email was sent out and a time was fixed by the respondent for the second informal discussion. Questions about the practices of adult literacy education were asked and a qualitative research data was collected in textual form on the basis of interaction with the participants for example through in-depth interviews. Data was transcribed and coded.

Adult Literacy Education facilitators answered questions in the following areas: the prevalence of students with learning difficulties in their ALE programs; what definitions of learning difficulties were currently in use in their institution if any; how learning difficulties are identified among their learners and what types of training Adult Literacy Education(ALE) instructors were currently receiving to enable them identify and manage the challenges of learning difficulties in the classroom among adult learners and finally if they were in agreement with the idea that learning difficulties prevailed in their classrooms or that they were addressed before the students came into the classroom situation. Data was audio-recorded and later transcribed orthographically; reproducing all spoken words and sounds including hesitations, false starts, cut-off in speech (indicated by a dash; e.g., thin-), the interviewer’s giggles (e.g., mm-hm, ah-ha), laughter, long pauses [indicated by (pause)], and strong emphasis (indicated by underscore). Commas signal a continuing intonation, broadly commensurate with a grammatical comma in written language; inverted commas were used to indicate reported speech; three full-stops in a row (…) signal editing of the transcript. These are broken down and explained in the session ‘Data Analysis’.
Data Sources Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Corpus (Sources)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Interview</td>
<td>A total of 4 semi-structured interviews were conducted, with each being between 30 to 45 minutes long. While notes were being taken in some of the interviews, majority of the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The participants at this level were all teachers of Adult Education. The interviews with the teachers were conducted in the various school premises in Oslo. With respect to choosing these schools, this process was limited to schools that the researcher could access easily considering that not all schools were willing to partake in the interview. The interview covered questions concerning the key encounters of the actors in relation to the learning process, nature of learning difficulties in Adult education as well as how the challenges are addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Discussions</td>
<td>Different informal conversations and updates via telephone with school heads and adult education advisers took place. Notes were taken down, but no tape recording was permitted by this group of participants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Summary of Data Sources

3.3.1 The formulation of the interview guide/interview questions:

Even though the interview was semi-structure and questions open-ended, a guideline on the questions was formulated before hand to direct the course of the interview process. The purpose of the open-ended question is to allow informants the freedom to tell as much as possible from their personal live experiences (Dalen, 2011 p.26) as relates to the topic of the study. The interview questions were formulated to help throw more light and answer the research question and sub questions. They are in two sections, namely; background information and opening statements (familiar questions such as name etc) and experience, issues and challenge related question (complex questions that focus more on answering the research question).

The formulated questions were also double checked by the thesis supervisor and colleagues. The main questions formulated are 10 in number. Each interview lasted maximum 45 minutes.
3.4 Method of Data Analysis:

Data analysis in qualitative research usually begins while the data are being collected and affect subsequent data collection efforts (Gall, Gall & Borg 2007 p.506).

The method used for data analysis in this study was the ‘Thematic Analysis’ method. A Thematic Analysis method is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. In simpler words, it is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon. (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006). Through focusing on meaning across a data set, thematic analysis allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012 p.57). Numerous patterns can easily be identified across any data set, but the purpose of a step by step analysis is to identify systematically those relevant to answering a particular research question. Thematic Analysis is a flexible method that allows the researcher to focus on the data in numerous different ways.

A thematic data analysis approach was used to build themes inductively (Braun & Clarke, 2006) beginning with open coding during the process of interview. Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006 explain that

*The coding process involves recognizing (seeing) an important moment and encoding it (seeing it as something) prior to a process of interpretation. A good code is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon. Encoding the information organizes the data to identify and develop themes from them. Boyatzis defines a theme as ‘a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon.*

Important themes were identified while the interview was going on, on the other hand, a tape recorder was administered this gave more data that was reviewed over and over again to be able to group themes. Braun & Clarke (2006) identified six phases of the thematic analysis which have been adapted and applied for the purpose of this study as follows:

**Phase 1: Familiarization with the Data**

The first step of the thematic analysis in this study involved going through the raw data from the data corpus line by line several times by reading and rereading textual data (e.g., notes taken during the interviews) and listening to audio recording that was made in the course of
the interview (Braun & Clarke 2012, p.60). Then comments in an electronic file was made while re-reading interview notes and listening to audio recording in the form of note taking, to highlight items potentially of interest to the study. Self-reflective questions arise in this phase as stated by (Braun & Clarke 2012 p.61); how does the participant make sense of their experience? What assumptions do respondents make in interpreting their experience? What kind of world is revealed through their accounts?

The aim of this phase is to become intimately familiar with data sets content and to begin to notice things and patterns that might help with the process of analysis, memory aids, triggers for coding and analysis, etc.

**Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes**

In this phase, important concepts found in the data were highlighted and descriptive codes were assigned to them. For easy coding a table was drawn up and themes were inserted into the table. These themes were based upon the research questions being asked. However, extra themes that came up in the course of the interview were added as noted in table 3 in the next chapter. Codes are the building blocks of analysis. Codes identify and provide a label for a feature of the data that is potentially relevant to the research question. Codes are succinct and work as shorthand for easy understanding during the interpretation of data; they do not have to be fully worked-up explanations—those comes later (Braun & Clarke 2012, p.62).

The process of coding involved both descriptive codes (words as expressed by the participant) and interpretive codes (codes identifying meanings that lie beneath participants expressions). According to Braun & Clarke (2012), after generating the first code, it is advised to keep reading the data until the next potentially relevant excerpt is identified; then decide whether the code can be used or applied whether a new code is needed to capture that piece of data.

This process is repeated throughout each data item and the entire data set. As coding progresses, it is normal to modify existing codes to incorporate new material as warranted in the study.

**Phase 3: Searching for Themes**

Once the coding process was completed, the codes were then analyzed to construct themes through finding similarities between codes developed. The focus of the theme was to “capture
important data in relation to the research question, and to represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). This phase involved reviewing the coded data to identify areas of similarity and overlap between codes, then identifying broad topics by way of deducting meaningful themes and issues around which codes clustered. The basic process of generating themes and subthemes, which are the subcomponents of a theme for this study involved removing or adding codes that seemed to share (or not share) some unifying feature together, so that they reflected and described a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data. During this process it was identified that codes either focused on experiences of teachers in literacy classes, experience relating to their students in the classroom, responses to and ways they managed learning difficulties in the classroom. Themes were then constructed using all the codes relating to the participants’ experiences of learning difficulty (e.g., “incident of defining learning difficulty” based on individual experience; “tensions in relating to labeling of immigrant students who was perceived as having learning difficulty”) and another using the codes relating to the participants’ management of (actual ) classroom situation (e.g.,)

A lot of codes also clustered around the issue of training programs available to teachers of literacy education etc. Different ways to combine these codes into themes were explored, and thematic maps were drawn.

**Phase 4: Reviewing Potential Themes**

This phase involves a recursive process whereby the developing themes are reviewed in relation to the coded data and entire data set (Braun & Clarke 2012, p.64). This phases focuses on quality control/checking. The first step as recommended by Braun & Clarke 2012 is to check already identified themes against the collated extracts of data and to explore whether the theme works in relation to the data. So themes already formulated were crossed with data collected to ensure that they meaningfully captured the relevant data and if they answered the research questions asked.

At this stage key questions were asked during quality check to help focus the ‘identified themes’ on data. They are as follows:

- Is this a theme (it could be just a code)?
- If it is a theme, what is the quality of this theme (does it tell something useful about the data set and research question)?
• What are the boundaries of this theme (what does it include and exclude)?
• Are there enough (meaningful) data to support this theme (is the theme thin or thick)?
• Are the data too diverse and wide ranging (does the theme lack coherence)?

These questions helped in sorting through relevant themes and themes that were not relevant to the study were eliminated.

**Example of ‘Coded Transcript’ based on opening remarks from each participant in the study.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant A: I imagine there is a difference between the learning experience of the adult Norwegian and that of the adult foreigner, because of the environment in which one grew up. (Because the environment in which one grows up affects ones learning process). Some have more difficult situations then others.</td>
<td>General Assumption based on past experience. Already pointing out why there may be learning difficulty in a mainstream adult class of immigrants.</td>
<td>Cultural Perspective to learning generally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Coded Transcript (from first words after pleasantries). This made it necessary to include cultural diversity in teachers’ perspective on teaching. A theme that arose from data collected during the interview.

**Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes**

The guiding principle in defining themes in this phase, was the ability to clearly state what is unique and specific about each theme (Braun & Clarke 2012 p.66)

In this phase similarities and differences between separate groups of data were emerging, indicating areas of consensus in response to the research question. Patterns within the categories were identified leading to a set of high level themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006) which formed the basis for the discussion. This phase involved selecting extracts to present.
and analyze and then setting out the details of each theme with and around these extracts. Ideally, each extract should provide a vivid, compelling example that clearly illustrates the analytic points been made. It is good to draw on extracts from across data items to show the coverage of the theme, rather than drawing on only one data item. The extracts selected to quote and analyze in chapter 5, provide the structure for the analysis—the data narrative informing the reader of the interpretation of the data and their meaning. (Braun & Clarke 2012 p.67)

**Phase 6: Producing the Report**

Finally, the last phase was to prepare to report the findings scholarly and systematically. To produce the final report, there was an arrangement of the order for the presentation of the themes, checking and rechecking to ensure that the themes were connected logically and meaningfully, and where relevant built on previous themes to form a coherent explanation of data. The emphasis was the correlations between what participants said to the research question. Because writing and analysis are thoroughly interwoven in qualitative research—from informal writing of notes and memos to the more formal processes of analysis and report writing, it was difficult to stay clear from using data collection questions as themes; a common error in thematic analysis—themes are better identified across the content of what participants say rather than via the questions they have been asked’ (Braun & Clarke 2012, p.69). This gives a coherent and unbiased report.

**3.5 Validation and Reliability**

**Triangulation/ verification (Trustworthiness):**

Questions most commonly posed to qualitative researchers reflect concerns with the validity and reliability of the research findings. Tests to establish the validity and reliability of qualitative data are important to determine the stability and quality of the data obtained. However the goal/aim of the qualitative research is not to generalize findings but to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomenon under study. Terms like ‘Trustworthiness, Credibility, Transferability, Dependability are rather used in place of validity and reliability in some qualitative research literature/articles. Glafshani, 2003 explains that;
While the terms Reliability and Validity are essential criterion for quality in quantitative paradigms, in qualitative paradigms the terms Credibility, Neutrality or Conformability, Consistency or Dependability and Applicability or Transferability are to be the essential criteria for quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To be more specific with the term of reliability in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 300) use “dependability”, in qualitative research which closely corresponds to the notion of “reliability” in quantitative research. They further emphasize “inquiry audit” (p. 317) as one measure which might enhance the dependability of qualitative research. This can be used to examine both the process and the product of the research for consistency (Hoepfl, 1997)

To ensure that the findings of this study are true and certain—“true” in the sense that research findings accurately reflect the situation, and “certain” in the sense that research findings are supported by the evidence Triangulation of data sources were applied to check and establish validity by analyzing a research question from multiple perspectives (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2011).

Data triangulation involves using different sources of information in order to increase the validity of a study (Guion, Diehl & McDonald 2011). It involves the process of corroborating and reconciling the findings from one data-collection method with another data-collection method (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007, p. 457).

The research process started with identifying the stakeholder or gate keepers of the adult education programs for immigrants in Oslo, Norway. Two institutions or offices were identified, first, Adult Education Service Center (Oslo VO) and The Norwegian Agency For life Long Learning (VOX). These offices had respective links to adult education programs in Norway. Oslo Vo is in-charge of placing immigrant students in the right class (at different academic levels) for language school a compulsory school for all adult who want to live in Norway and other duties, while Vox are in charge structuring the adult education programs, planning of curriculum including literacy education, adult education public school, teachers and school administrators. An informal in-depth discussion was conducted with an adviser at Vox as a way to gather data to gain insight into perspectives on educational program in adult education, outcomes. During the analysis stage, findings from the stakeholder groups were compared to determine areas of agreement as well as areas of divergence with the classroom teachers.
Additional source of ensuring that the data used was not altered and was exactly as the respondents had said it, was the use of note taking and audio recording (after consent of the respondents) during each interview sessions. The first interview had some recording challenges, the audio device used become full to capacity and would not record 14 minutes into the interview, and intense note taking compensated for this but also advised for more preparedness in the following interviews. Both materials were constantly compared and complemented each other to ensure that accurate and complete data was used in the process of analysis to produce an in-depth, useful and rich data.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Personal and intellectual value system came to play in ethical considerations for this study. David Flinders identifies four types of ethics that can provide a basis for viewing and resolving issues that arise in qualitative research (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007, p. 459), however for the purpose of this study only one of them is discussed and applied, deontological ethics.

In deontological ethics, researchers judge the morality of their decisions and actions by referring to absolute values, such as honesty, justice, fairness, and respect for others (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007, p. 459).

Steps taken in this study in regards to ethical considerations are as follows;

**Informed Consent:**

Informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way if they want to participate in a study. Informed consent is one of the most important tools for ensuring respect for persons during research. Consent was sort from the governmental body in-charge of research in Norway and the informants of the study.

This was done on three levels; firstly an application form was filled out and submitted to the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD). This body is responsible for research projects in Norway (cf. the personal Data Act, the Personal Health Data Filing System Act and associated Regulations). After the application was approved, a copy called notification or license form was sent back to me with guidelines on how the data collected will be disposed of after the study period.
The second part of the consent was from participants. The nature of the participants required that they could give consent of their own. These are adults above 25 years of age. Fully detailed letter of information was sent out by mail and personally to the head teachers of two schools and an adult education institution, with signature and telephone numbers of the thesis supervisor and the student involved in the thesis study (these letters are attached at this study). Before each participant signed an informed consent, participants were fully informed about the research purpose and had the right to withdraw from participating at any point in time they felt they no longer were comfortable to be a part of the study.

**Anonymity of Informant:** The researcher maintained confidentiality of participant information by locking thesis-related records and materials where only the researcher had access, and by using pseudonyms in reporting the data. The privacy of the informants is highly respected by avoiding noting down their names and using pseudo names in place of real names when reporting back on findings.

**Honesty and Justice:** An honest report of what was said between the interviewer and the interviewee was an essential point in this study. To ensure this, while notes were taken during the interview, with the permission of the informants, the interview was recorded and transcribed afterwards, word for word.

### 3.7 Limitations

Limitations occur for all studies.

The nature of this study on its own brings to the table limitations; firstly the quantitative nature of this study makes the findings impossible to generalize, even though that is not the goal of the study, however it is noteworthy. Secondly, this study depends a lot on the personal experiences of the informants which sometimes cannot be ascertained as true. Semi-structured interview alone in most cases cannot validate what participants say, so largely information gotten was based on trust.

On the topic of the study, concept of learning difficulty has not had a concise definition, especially in the field of adult education; this study struggled a lot and experienced frustration in getting clear cut literatures that addressed the issue of Learning Difficulties in adult education.
Qualitative study is also very time consuming, one interview lasted almost an hour and sometimes it was difficult to meet informant during office hours, time was a big factor towards the end of the study.

This process allowed for consistency but failed to provide multiple perspectives from a variety of people with differing expertise.

It was difficult to standardize the interview situation so that the interviewer does not influence respondents to answer questions in a certain way that may in turn influence the findings of the study.

There was also the issue of language barrier (respondents were polite and preferred to express themselves in English; this limited the way they expressed themselves of course. People express themselves most in the language they are comfortable with. This however did not apply to the entire population unit, most of them spoke very good English) and a lack of cultural understanding of expression. (E.g. body languages and sounds made. Each culture has different ways of expressions that mean differently to another culture and can help towards gathering information during the interview process. In conclusion of this session, it is worthy to note that there are so many more limitation to this study, but only these few are noted down.

This study also had strengths which encouraged the work to go on. The most important strength was the willingness of most teachers to talk about their perceptions on Learning Difficulty. They expressed concerns on the lack of awareness of what learning difficulty really is and their eagerness to spread the word.
4 Presentation of Data and Analysis

This section presents key findings on the experiences, views and attitudes of different participants in this study towards learning difficulties in ALE mainstream classes. By looking at the perspective of teachers, the interviews conducted identified two main points:

1. What teachers perceive as learning difficulty,

2. What they need to best serve the students with learning difficulties in ALE programs (To encourage inclusive practices in the mainstream classes).

The semi-structures interviews allowed room for richer discussion with teachers on their teaching and learning styles in ALE programs.

This research started off with the intention of conducting interviews with 4 participants, unfortunately, one of the participants withdrew at the last minute. At this point the sample unit reduced to 3 ALE teachers.

4.2 Presentation of Data

The 3 participants in the semi-structured interview had different cultural backgrounds which influenced to a large extent their teaching styles; therefore a demographic table is presented below describing participants’ cultural background, professional background and years of working experience in the field of ALE.

A Distribution Table of Cultural and Academic backgrounds of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Cultural Background</th>
<th>Professional (Educational) Background</th>
<th>Working Experience (years#)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Foreigner/Immigrant</td>
<td>Journalist (now teaching adults)</td>
<td>1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Native (Norwegian)</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>10-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Native (Norwegian)</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>20- above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the transcribed data, five main themes have been identified, namely;

1. How teachers **understand** learning difficulties

2. How teachers **identify** learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms

3. How teachers **address** learning difficulties among their students

4. **And how they perceive their role as mainstream teachers in ALE programs.**

5. Participants in this study emphasized the need for **professional development and awareness** towards equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to help mainstream students achieve their learning goals/potentials.

### 4.2.2 Theme 1: Participants described their understanding of learning difficulties based on their experiences over years of teaching ALE students

2 out of 3 participants commented on the prevalence of learning difficulties in the mainstream classes of ALE. They agree that learning difficulty is not an absence of intelligence. But rather, believe that learning is on different levels and vary from person to person. Their understanding of learning difficulty is influenced by their working and practical experience in ALE classes, previous knowledge and cultural background. These three factors also influenced their understanding of learning difficulties, how they identified it, addressed it and saw their roles as ALE teachers. All 3 participants had this to say;

**Participant B commented;** ‘Learning difficulty is an obstacle that is standing in the students’ way that makes them not to go as far as the other students, even if they really want to. It is not a matter of intelligence it is something else. I don’t know’.

My general experience shows that some students are having greater difficulties than the others, and it is not because they are less intelligent, very often it’s the opposite. And still they have problems in reading, I can hear it when they read loud, they skip lines, or hmmm, or they cannot pronounce the word correctly, not because they are an immigrant or not Norwegian, but they have greater problems than the others in the class so, then, I suspect that there might be a learning difficulty.

**Participant A commented;**
‘I mean, if you are talking about learning, I imagine that there is a difference between the learning experience of adult Norwegians and the learning experience of adult foreigners. Because of the environment where one grew up, many of the people who attend adult education (foreigners) are refugees from conflict countries so they have already been affected by war in one way or another (laughs) takes a pause( hmm, ah…) they are traumatized, many of them have been traumatized. I am African myself and know what it is, to have to run away, to live in fear they live in fear, some people have been raped, some people have developed mental problem’

In discussing their understanding of learning difficulties, participant Bs’ comment reflects the complex nature of learning difficulties, while participant As’ comment reflects the psychosocial and cultural background of learners. There comments are backed up by the theory of andragogy which explains the importance of ‘the role of the learners experiences’ (assumption 3) in teaching adult learner. The theory proposes that the adult learners’ experiences should be taken into consideration in teaching plans. In some cases these hindrances are psychosocial in some cases they are cultural barriers this tailored the interview to aspect of the need for awareness. Participants had this to say;

The majority of participants discussed the need for creating more awareness among learners of the prevalence of learning difficulties in the mainstream/regular literacy classes, oftentimes, students are not aware of their learning difficulties. This leads them to being frustrated, (comments from all 3 participants summarized). Participant A said ‘they say a problem known is a problem half solved. I believe teachers play an important role in helping students to understand their learning difficulties and their learning needs so they can find ways to manage the situation together.

In an informal discussion, one of the participants highlighted the fact that;

‘Adults are not as aware about their learning difficulty as expected; they have passed the developmental stages of their life and have other responsibilities now. Focus may be on their children etc, so their first encounter that they have a learning difficulty may be in this Adult Education programs’.

**Some key comments from Informal Discussion on this themes:** ‘Students coming from countries with bad educational system, may not have been discovered in the early stages, I imagine it may be very difficult if not impossible to identify all the students with learning difficulties in a large class of 46 or more pupil’.

Interviewer... (Nods and says, I imagine it will be impossible).
Comments continue, ‘then it may only be natural that there are learners with some form of previous education who have learning difficulties even in the mainstream classes.

4.2.3 The methods of teaching children and the methods of teaching adults are not the same.

When asked on her opinion based on her years of practice, Participants A commented that adults learn differently from children. In her words, ‘Adults are taught differently from children, they are not in the upbringing phase, and they are already complete individuals so it is a different teaching style for adult learner.

Participant B pointed this out on her own in the course of her explaining her educational background, she explains, ‘I am a teacher, I have been teaching for 20 years. I taught for the most part at junior high school and recently I teach adults. I adapt to the level of each class I am teaching at the time. In teaching adults, teachers don’t encounter disciple problems, and it is easier to talk to an adult, but learning difficulty pattern is the same in both adults and children.

The participant views show that it is possible that in practice, adults teaching methods differ from teaching methods applied for children.

4.2.4 Participants’ description of learning difficulty in few words.

Participant A describes;

1. Not being able to concentrate in class in adult education is a learning difficulty.

2. Not registering (interview adds ‘academic’ to note) progress over a long period of teaching time can be a learning difficulty.

3. Since I don’t know the psychology of teaching, I can’t explain this, there are people who want to learn but just can’t, I believe this has to do with some form of psychology. I don’t know since I am not a trained teacher.

Participant B,
Like I said, I am not an expert on this; I am just a regular teacher. Learning disability is more severe than learning difficulty.

**Participant C,**

It is difficult to define learning difficulty in literacy classes. First of all, these students come with a non-Nordic language. Most often, we teachers don’t understand their language, we have to use a lot of body language to communicate initially, we use pictures, and we build up words. All this must be put in place to even begin to have a platform to determine if a student has a learning difficulty or not. How can you tell that someone has dyslexia for example when the person has limited words in a language?

**4.2.5 The situation in the literacy classes**

In the literacy classes, most often we don’t have common language with the students, most of these students speak only their mother tongue (language), and hence it becomes difficult to communicate with them or even teach them. Sometimes, they may also have limited words in their mother tongue, these things make it difficult to learn, read and write. The Swedish system of education has arranged a method of teaching at this level, students mother tongue are used interchangeably with the Swedish language to teach the students. One can understand the limitation a teacher can face if she/he has a class of 16 students with different mother tongues? Teachers in the literacy classes are very flexible in their teaching styles. They have to be to be able to achieve results.

Again, students in the literacy classes are most often times refugees, war victims, people who may be running away from their home countries in search of safety. You hardly encounter work immigrants in these classes. The situation surrounding these students makes learning difficult. They come into the class with an entire baggage, one may also not want to discuss problems, and this may be the only opportunity students have to be free of problem and think of something else.

Twice the issue of gender related difficulty came up, some women come from backgrounds were women are taught to be seen and not heard. They assume the role of housewives, which is not bad in itself if one is allowed the freedom of choice, these women have to now be
taught how to learn, how to have self-worth and sometimes they have to be taught by their teachers that they can learn.

In an informal discussion, one of the participants highlighted the fact that Adults are not as aware about their learning difficulty as expected, they are pasted the developmental stages of their life and have other responsibilities now. Focus may be on their children etc, so their first encounter that they have a learning difficulty may be in this Adult Education programs.

She continued, ‘you cannot always see these learning difficulties’ there was a student who thought she should be in a higher academic level then she was in, every time she was spoken to she turned her ears to the one side to hear. Up till that point, she never taught she had a hearing problem which made her miss out in some words and information been shared in the classroom.

Participant C commented ‘Students should be tested for eye problems too’ you encounter learners who are over 40 years of age using reading glasses, but in these literacy classes sometimes, they are over 60 and still do not use reading glasses, not because they don’t have bad eyesight, but because they probably never knew. They always often have other focus.

These comments from participant C is a reflection on possible things that may make the learning process more difficult.

4.3 Theme 2; Identification of learning difficulties

2 out of 3 participants described their teaching practice with adults in the mainstream ALE classes with responses that reflected, how they identified their students’ learning difficulties;

All participants pointed out that they cannot categorically say a student has a learning difficulty. There are procedures for that; however they can make assumption, and begin to work towards helping the students achieve learning goals. If after a long period of time set goals are not achieved, the student is sent for further analysis. At this point, (the interviewer rephrased the question, and this reflected in the last two interviews conducted later own) the discussion did not go further on the analysis, but elaborated on the factors that sent signals to the teacher that a student may be having learning difficulties.

Participants had this to say afterwards;
I can’t know a student has a learning difficulty, I can only assume. (participant B)

…but still you have to explain not only the topic you are teaching them but also you have to explain the words how they are written, what it is that we are talking about, and then you can go on teaching…it’s complex (participant B)

My general experience because these students are having greater difficulties than the others and it’s not because they are less intelligent, very often it is the opposite, and still they have problems in reading. I can hear it when they read loud, they skip lines, or they cannot pronounce the words correctly. Not because they are an immigrant or not Norwegian, but they have greater problems than the others in the class. So then I suspect that there might be a learning difficulty (participant C).

…it’s caused by anxiety, performance anxiety, stress.

4.4 Theme 3; How Learning Difficulty is addressed by the teachers

Participant B commented that one of the first ways to address learning difficulty it to encourage learners to be self motivated to learn. In her words ‘Some learners have to be encouraged to reach self-motivation to learn. It is not easy for them; they have so many other things they are thinking about’.

4.4.1 Steps towards addressing learning difficulty in the classroom

Participant B

I am not able to do so much. I try to help the way I can with the little knowledge I have. They need time. Not all the students are sent to special schools, sometimes we try to manage the situation and sometimes, it goes away. I can see that some students are making improvements when they take their time. Our understanding is based on our experiences.

Their perceived role and identity as an ALE teacher

We teach them also how to learn

Interviewer asked: When you say how to learn what do you mean?

We teach the students how to be students, how to take out time to do home work, etc we never underestimate them.
I try to put myself in their place and apply myself in teaching them.

4.4.2 Need for simple information and seminars on learning difficulties for teacher prepared in class.
A common thread through the various narratives of the participants was their implicit and explicit references to a need to know more on learning difficulties so they can better help their students learning process. Their narratives demonstrate respondents’ beliefs that they don’t have the basic simple information they need in the mainstream classes, to help students with learning difficulties in a more confident way, to achieve maximal learning experiences. They explain frustration on their path and that of their students.

Participant A,

*I am not aware of any on the job programs, but I believe one can always take a subject from university to improve oneself professionally if you want.*

Participant B,

*I would like to see a system built around the teachers so it’s easier for me (us) to check if those students have a learning difficulty. It should be easier for me to take it further. To provide help for the students.*

4.4.3 The importance of professional development opportunities to support ALE teachers’ ability to work effectively with adults with learning difficulties in ALE programs.

A subset of the general concerns expressed by participants pertained to developing skills to teach adults with learning difficulties. Half of the participants specifically cited the need for more training in this area. Participants described the relationship of professional development to their practice by identifying opportunities for further training or coursework; they feel they need necessary skills to assist the adult learners with learning difficulties in their classroom. 3 of 3 participants cited a number of concerns regarding professional development.

Participant B, for instance, was aware of a lack of seminars/training programs in Learning Difficulty; no matter how basic, just to help them with simple ways to better teach and help students in the mainstream classes with learning difficulty…We attend seminars. There are general seminars arranged for all the teachers. And they are good, but as a teacher, I would like to have a bit more information on that topic (learning difficulties) because I think that in every class you would come across it, in one or two students, so I would very much like to have some more seminars, and hmm just a few guidelines, how do I recognize it, how to help the students because I think that if we can make the students believe in themselves, that they
can do it, then we have come a long way, but then I still don’t have the tools to get them to their goals.

4.5 Theme 4; Teachers’ role, Teaching Methods and the Andragogical Model

In explaining teachers’ role in enhancing the learners learning process, participants had the following to say when asked on their role as ALE teachers in the ALE program development.

Interviewers Question: What do you think about the teachers’ role in ALE classes?

Participants A: ‘A lot has to do with the teacher in learning and learning difficulty. Many students fail to pass an exam (Norwegian B2 for exam) for many years until they get the right teacher and then they pass their exams.’ I also was once a language student and I had the best teacher, we are still in contact today. In my opinion a lot has to do with the teacher in ALE programs, your teacher can break you or make you.

Participant A comments on this by saying:

Everyone in this world can learn given the right teacher.
In most cases it is the teacher who realizes that the student has a learning problem, depending on how it goes in class; the teacher can take the student to the right places for analysis and eventually placed to a special class. I am not your typical teacher, I don’t have teaching degree but you can see that some people just have a natural learning difficult. (Norway has a system which helps place these students in the right classes.

The Teacher is not always bad sometimes men from macho concept society can’t humble themselves to learn from a female teacher for example.

When you are a foreigner your teacher is a big door opener for u, she can make or break you.

Participant B

Specific Teaching Methods Participants Use with Learners

When asked to cite the teaching strategies or tools they used with ALE students who have learning difficulties, all participants readily listed methods they learned from their own educational experience, or career experience mostly based on adapting to individual students learning styles, it is important to note that all 3 participant had a dissatisfaction on not receiving trainings/workshops or courses that are targeted to helping these group of students found in the mainstream classes. These included using multiple ways to present material and assigning homework, as participants A and B described:
We adapt teaching styles to the individual learning needs, some learners need more time to do a work and are allowed extra amount of time, and some learners need more slow explanations to be able to concentrate so we provided more guided explanations to these students who need them. (Participant B)

...and if you really want to improve your reading, you need to be practicing at home. So one of the things we’re going to start giving you home works and providing you with feedbacks on your improvements. (Participant A)

Participant A explained that she has ‘zero tolerance for crap’ in her own words stating that she coming from a conflict zone (home country) understands the difficulty but also understands that it is not enough reason not to have inner self motivation to learn. She also learnt under difficulties. In her opinion, she uses her background to her advantage, to motivate the immigrant learners to learn

Participant C;

We use pictures, body language and numerous slow repetitions till students understand. One student may be much slower than another student, but we try to meet each students at their level of understanding by sometimes giving the student extra time, but we must be careful not to abuse the privilege we have as their teachers.

4.5.1 Teachers Approach reflecting Andragogical principles and philosophy.

Participants identified a wide variety of teaching methods they applied in teaching these students. Most of these methods can be traced to the Andragogical model and philosophies.

Even though 3 out of 3 participants had not heard of the theory of Andragogy, they already applied some of the philosophies of the theory in teaching adults, even though not cited by name; all four respondents applied Andragogical principles in addressing the adult learner especially those identified to have some struggles in their learning process. The other main categories mentioned include- adults’ needs to know why they need to learn something before they learn (3 out of 3) and a respect-centered approach to teaching (3 out of 3). There is a need for the learner to be self-motivated. In the initial process, learners may have to be positively pushed till they develop inner self motivation to learning. Knowles et al. (2005) presented a practical application of the theory of andragogy in a situation where learners lack self motivation, by using a case example from an adult basic education program to outline how an “andragogical learner analysis” (p. 157) could be used as part of a needs assessment for
program development purposes. This analysis used a matrix that evaluated “the extent to which the andragogical assumptions fit the learners at that point in time” (p. 158) by rating the alignment of the learner population characteristics with the six andragogical principles, and thereby determining the most effective teaching approach. The results of this case analysis revealed that while the learners in this traditional ABE program generally fit most of the andragogical assumptions, they tended not to fit andragogical assumptions about the self-directedness of adult learners because they had histories of being unsuccessful in past learning settings and they “lack confidence” (p. 158) as learners of reading and math. However, they tended to also be very motivated students in their effort to improve their lives and were seen as pragmatic learners for whom it was critical to make real-life connections to their new learning. Based on this analysis, the instructors in this case study chose to use experiential learning techniques rather than more traditional GED classroom methods.

4.5.2 The importance of professional development opportunities to support ALE teachers’ ability to work effectively with ALE students with disability.

Based on findings, 1 out of 3 participants had never been on any form of on-the-job- training and has never had any form of teacher training prior to her teaching an adult class, but all 3 participants when asked agreed that there was a need for professional development for ALE teachers’ to meet the educational needs of the immigrant adult learners in the mainstream classroom (usually with learning difficulties).

Participants described the relationship of professional development to their practice by identifying opportunities for further training or coursework they felt they needed to help them with necessary skills to help the adult learners with learning difficulties in their classroom. All 3 participants cited a number of concerns regarding professional development. Participant B, for instance, was aware of a lack of seminars/training programs targeted towards educating teachers on Learning Difficulty, no matter how basic, just to help them with simple ways to teach and help students in the mainstream classes with learning difficulty.

To fill the gaps they identified in their programs, participants suggested seminars and training on the prevalence of learning difficulty in mainstream classes and how to address it, in simple steps to better meet the needs of students with learning difficulties in ALE programs.
Every seminar is good, but how can we confidently help learners with learning difficulty which is not server enough to send the learner to a special school without a proper information?

4.6 Discussion of Findings

First of all, this study opened up a new area of thinking for me. I went into the study with an assumption of what learning difficulty could look like in the mainstream adult literacy classes. However, findings from teachers in ALE classes showed that ALE comes with a peculiar challenge. This challenge makes it difficult to point out, assume or even identify as could be done in other Adult Education programs, learning difficulties. It is not impossible, but it is more difficult than I assumed it was when I first began this study. Participant Cs’ comment on a definition of learning difficulty in ALE classes can throw more light to this; in her words, ‘We can probably say that learning difficulties assist in the mainstream ALE classes, but this is a big challenge because the students who come into this class, speak in a language we do not understand, we don’t speak their mother tongue either, we can eventually learn a little bit, but we still don’t have an understanding of the language, to understand learning difficulty, a teacher should be able to understand to an extent, the language of the student, their cultural background and the general background of each student. We don’t have all these things that help give us background information on the learners’ learning situation. I think it is often very difficult for us teachers to know what exactly is going on (to determine or insinuate what the difficulty). It is a specific learning difficulty? Is it just a general problem as a result of the fact that one is about to learn a new language? We really don’t have the opportunity to speak with them initially on these things because they don’t have a language.

often times think it is more difficult to define learning difficulty for this group of people, In this session, findings will be discussed in relation to the 4 research sub-questions, and a conclusion made with the research main question.

4.6.1 How do adult literacy education teachers describe their experience of learning difficulties?

Based on findings all participants showed that;
• Their professional background and years working with ALE students influenced their understanding of learning difficulties

• The cultural backgrounds of the participants also informed on their teaching methods and perception

In discussing the learners’ cultural background: The collected data about the cultural background of participants indicates that teachers are more adapt to respond to their learners with more consciousness of learners cultural background. In chapter 2, andragogy in practice and literatures discussed showed that adult learners benefit best from their teachers when their cultural backgrounds are taken into consideration.

The definition of learning difficulty in chapter two also reflects that learning difficulty can be triggered by psychosocial factors. The educational and social conditions in which an immigrant learner is migrating from (for example, from home countries where there are wars or conflict) can result in traumas that may affect the learning process creating a difficulty in learning. Cultural background determines to an extent how people learn; the cultural and educational background of the adult immigrant literacy learners influences their learning processes.

Personal disposition to learning determines how we learn (Self-Motivation).

Findings indicated that some method of teaching applied by teachers in the classroom reflected the theory of andragogy.

Findings showed that the background of teachers affected to a large extent their individual teaching styles. Participant A explained that she has ‘zero tolerance for crap’ in her own words. Stating that she coming from a conflict zone (home country) understands the difficulty but also understands that it is not enough reason not to have inner self motivation to learn. She also learnt under difficulties. In her opinion, she uses her background to her advantage, to motivate the immigrant learners to learn.

The finding from the participants agrees with the findings from the Norwegian adult education. For example, the Alfa Council (Alfa rådet), the Nordic Adult Literacy Network have described what is necessary to provide language training for immigrants with little or no schooling from home country (no previous education). The book is a methodological guide for
teaching adult immigrants who have little or no schooling. The authors take up some of the issues teachers will attend classes, and provides concrete suggestions for how it can be planned to be relevant and understandable to participants. There is special emphasis on the theme of teaching, verbal instruction and literacy.

4.6.2 What identifies a difficulty as a ‘learning difficulty’ (LD)?

The most robust finding in this study, both in terms of frequency and in the way it connected all three research questions, was that all 3 participants described how they identified their students’ unique learning strengths, challenges, and needs, and how this knowledge informed their teaching practice in Adult Education and ALE programs. This finding is significant for this study in that all participants acknowledged that they could identify specific markers or patterns in their students’ presentation and/or performance in the classroom that suggested a learning difficulty to them. These included the students’ pace of learning.

Participant A had this to say “…when we start a new lesson and we’re learning new material, one student learns it very quickly and the other student takes a little bit longer.”

Participants also cited students’ lack of foundational content skills as an indication of a learning difficulty; for instance

Participant B, “…if someone has an alphabetic issue, you can see it in their spelling.” They mix up words or omit some words and mix up sentences when reading out in class; this is an example of a situation that makes me suspect that my students have a learning difficulty.

Participant Cs’ comment on this was quite different;

…most often being a literacy teacher, most students come to us without a language we understand, so we often have a difficult start. We have to first build on words and then take it from there. It is difficult to identify situations as a learning difficulty in this stage. It may take a while. Remember, I am not a special need education teacher. However, in some cases, some learners tend to learn much more slowly than others. But it may be in relation to some difficulty in life. It is much difficult in a literacy class.

4.6.3 How is learning difficulty accessed and managed among mainstream ALE students?
• Participants identified a variety of approaches and philosophies used by them in their daily practice with adult students.

• Participants mentioned often the need to be respectful of the learners wealth of experiences.

1. Adults learners come into the classroom with a wealth of experiences

2. Most adult learners in the literacy classes may be experiencing formal education (reading and writing) for the first time and thus may not be aware of any learning difficulties on their part prior to this encounter

3. Adults learn best when they are self-motivated

4. Adults learn best if learning relates to reality or immediate needs

5. Adults learners are not in the biological or developmental stages of their life, they learn differently from children

Participants agreed unanimously that learning difficulties prevailed and were managed based on the individual experiences as frequently stated throughout the data analysis.

4.6.4 From the perspective of the instructors, what teaching practices or additional resources support teaching and learning process in adult literacy education programs?

In describing ALE teaching practice in the mainstream classes, participants in this study discussed the practical and interpersonal methods they used in their work, must often from personal opinion and influences from years of experience on the job. They placed heavy emphasis on relationships—not only the immeasurable value of developing solid relationships with their students but also how leveraging teachers’ relationships with each other and with the larger ALE system could better serve the learning-teaching process. These participants moved quickly and flexibly from describing their understanding of learning difficulties in ALE programs to identifying gaps in their programs and in their own skill sets to brainstorming possible solutions. This provides evidence that seeking ALE teachers’ input
about their daily practice in the classroom is a critical step to continually improving teaching and learning in ALE programs, in order to meet the needs of ALE students with learning difficulties.

The Nordic Alfa Council has described what is necessary to provide language training and education to immigrants with little or no schooling from home countries. They have mentioned six areas of expertise or competence for teachers working with adult literacy education for adults with a mother tongue other than the Nordic languages. Each competency area is divided into *knowledge, skills and practices*.

Teachers must have broad expertise in several fields such as start training in reading and writing, basic math and comprehension and literacy in a global, local and individual perspective.

Competence description is specialization in general and requires that teachers have a teaching basic education and basic knowledge of second language learning.

This requirement does not meet the immediate need of ALE teacher who desire to help their student reach their academic set goal. It can be said that this is a common goal for every teacher; to motivate learners to reach their full learning potentials.

The Alfa councils’ description of teacher expertise is the result of work in Alfa Council discussion with Nordic researchers, and through feedback from teachers in the Nordic literacy conference held in Sandefjord in 2012.

As a result of these findings and the need for professional improvement in the field of ALE and Continuing Education from the spring of 2014 Bergen University College continuing education will offer courses for teachers who teach subjects to students with little or no previous educational background. As good as this sounds, teachers need more flexible simple training/seminars from time to time specifically educating them on simple ways to identify and help students in the mainstream classes with learning difficulties who do not qualify to be in special schools or classes and who do not necessarily have to be. The andragogical model provides a basic teaching method that supports teachers in the mainstream classes with tools they can confidently rely on. This does not mean that androgogy as a tool is perfect and covers all loopholes, in fact it has been criticized on many fronts, but teachers can be confident to have something concrete to work with that can yield results in their learner and build their teaching confidence.

**Summary:** How do teachers’ understand and address learning difficulties among adult learners in Adult Literacy Education?
From the findings in this study showed that teachers’ perception on learning difficulty varied from teacher to teacher. Years of experience informed the teachers, those who had more years of experience and had teaching professions were more careful in their description of learning difficulty. They seemed to hesitate to give a definition. 2 out of 3 teachers however expressed concern of a lack of confidence in being able to help students they perceived may be having learning difficulty. The system in place for these teachers does not make it easy for them to identify and address learning difficulty in classes. This group of teachers believes that adequate and basic training of teacher in relation to adult learning difficulties, not disabilities can help students and teachers achieve set academic goals.
5 Conclusion

A conclusion can be drawn on this study from data collected from the participants with three statements, one from the teacher in the literacy class, another from the teacher in the secondary class and the general classes. The last two are in agreement so their words will be summed up and summarized.

In the past decades, professional attention had not been paid to Adult Literacy Education, it had been assumed that anyone could teach at this level since it was all about alphabets and numeracy, this group of learners suffered greatly for this. They experienced frustrations and many road blocks in the learning process, as a result, there was a high rate of drop outs. All four participants indicated that a decade ago, adults who are now identified as having learning difficulties were just considered as stupid. This was because there was a lack awareness of learning difficulty and a lack of professional development. In recent times however, there has been an increased attention to Adult Literacy Education in the last decades; today teachers are taking education training and additional courses to develop professionalism in the said field. Learning difficulties exist in mainstream literacy classes amongst immigrant adult, teachers understand this and also receive professional help in addressing the challenges in the classroom setting, and are encouraged by diverse programs to enhance professional development in Oslo.

A summary of the findings in this study was that teachers described their understanding of learning difficulty in ALE based on how work experience with these students over time. There is no professional knowledge. Even though the work experience informs knowledge in ALE program, a professional knowledge by way of seminars and training will boost the teacher’s confidence in helping the students experiencing learning difficulty.

A conclusion drawn from the finding is that teaching adults foreigners with little or no previous education in ALE programs is a complex practice, one that defies a singular descriptive factor, and causes varying levels of concern and uncertainty among the teachers who are doing it and the learners who are receiving this education (lack of proper information leading to frustrations from both the students who really want to learn but cannot, and the teacher who just does not know how to help her/his student). In describing how they taught this population of students, teachers addressed the overlap of multiple factors affecting the
learners learning processes and their teaching practice. They provided numerous examples of instances when their own cultural backgrounds, intuition and emotional intelligence and skills promoted the development of relationships that allowed their students to share information about their learning difficulties yet emphasized a need for more professional information on learning difficulties for mainstream teachers (in their words, ordinary teachers). Teachers could then choose an effective individualized teaching method that is targeted towards improving and enhancing the learning process.

Learners should be shown respect, but have been showed how to be self motivated to learn. And that if over a long period of time, learning is stagnant, learners are then referred for analysis and to the right classes (eg Special Classes).

**Teacher’s Role:** In conclusion, the role of the teacher in Adult Literacy education and Adult primary and secondary education indeed cannot be over emphasized. From data collected one can conclude that a lot is dependent on the teacher. If the teacher is friendly, patient and well informed on teaching, students learn better.

Findings on this study further showed that this sample of Adult Education teachers recognized the unique and often complex needs of the population of students they teach. From their years of experience, 2 out of 3 teachers has observed the continuous prevalence of learning difficulties in the main stream classes and adult learners at this stage need the strong support of well informed teachers to be able to gain confidence needed to succeed at this stage of the learning process.

Participants were able to describe ways that they assessed and responded to those needs in their teaching practice as well as their perceptions of what they need to effectively teach this population of students. They expressed high levels of commitment to their students and their craft, while simultaneously reporting significant frustration with problems or barriers presented by the ALE programs in regards to information on learning difficulty. In accordance with the andragogical model, learners at this stage (literacy education) may lack confidence, self-motivation as learners and self–directedness (assumption 2 in the six andrologogical assumptions) because learners at this stage have a history of not being successful in similar learning situations and lack the confidence needed to learn. It is therefore important that teachers in ALE programs especially understand their role as teachers in providing support and motivation for learners until they achieve self motivation to learn on
their own. This suggests that the concerns of ALE teachers have remained stable over time, since these same issues are reflected in the results of several past studies of ALE teachers and their practice (Bingman, Smith, Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992; Goodley Dan 2000). As in all qualitative research, analysis of the data gathered in this study was ongoing throughout the research process, as outlined extensively in chapter 3 and the Coding/Analysis Development Chart (Appendix).

5.1 Limitation of Study

This study in had a lot of limitation that prevented it from being as in-depth as it should be. Participants had a lot of information to give on their teaching practice but time constraints did not allow for a more detailed and thorough analysis of data. Time management was a big challenge in this study.

Some of the limitations have been discussed in chapter 3. In addition to the mentioned limitations are the following;

There was no rigor and credibility as there was only one method of data collection that was not validated by for example observation, therefore in the recommendation, this topic under study herein recommended for further studies.

The collection of data was delayed because feedback from participants was not gotten early enough. Only one school responded promptly, hence data sampling was limited to just 4 teachers initially and in the course of the study, one of the four volunteers withdrew herself from the study because of time constraints.

In comparison to the amount the of literatures available in the field of early childhood intervention, one can say there is not enough (adequate) literature on the topic of learning difficulties in adult education. This limited the scoop of the study.

Language Barriers: Some literatures are written in Norwegian language. One of the interviews was also conducted in Norwegian language. This proved to be a difficult challenge because translation had to me made to English by the student conducting this study

5.2 Recommendations for ALE Teachers
Findings and literature has informed recommendation for to teachers in the field of ALE in Oslo Norway. Participants in this study made suggestions and recommendations to the field of ALE for professional development and teaching practices for the mainstream ALE classes.

- Awareness of possible existence of learning difficulties in mainstream classes should be created to reduce frustrations felt by both students and teachers in the general Adult Education mainstream classes.

- Teachers should be encouraged to explore ways of intentionally bringing the expertise of experienced teachers to bear on the nascent practice of the newest Adult Education/ALE teachers.

- Create and facilitate professional groups or peer groups for teachers at all levels of experience. Organized geographically and held regularly to build on knowledge and skill, meetings that provide opportunities for teachers to share both concerns and strategies for their teaching, and problem-solve with support.

- Effective teaching model can be developed from the androgogical model so as to reach a wider range of adult learners (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005. p. 158).

5.3 Suggestions for further study

Listening to the voices of Adult Literacy Education teachers as they describe their teaching practice among immigrant students provoked questions that should move the field to deeper inquiry about how best to support teachers in their work so that they, in turn, can promote their students’ success in learning. This study presents a little of the experience of a small group of ALE teachers who teach adults with learning difficulties; however, it speaks clearly to the issues they face in their practice on a daily basis. While larger inferences from this study are limited recommendations can nonetheless be offered to improve day-to-day practice in the ALE classroom, and many of the recommendations following were generated by the teacher/participants themselves.

- A study similar to this one that highlights the voices of ALE teachers but with a larger sample that is more representative of the ALE teacher population, including more
teachers who are men, who work in other parts of Norway, and who have had no training in learning difficulties.

- A concluding statement for Adult Literacy classes specifically:

Based on the findings from the literacy classes, one can say that learning difficulty is not the primary focus of ALE classes.

*The fact that ALE learners don’t have a previous education or academic background in itself is enough learning problem for them and at this point, it’s too early for the teacher to say a learning difficulty exists since the learning process is somewhat new to learner. One can say this expect of their brain or thinking process has been inactive for a very long time, sometimes, 50 years at a stretch, activating this can take a lot of getting used to. However students who are way behind in their learning in comparison to their peers are helped in the best possible ways by their teachers. There are no clear cut methods, just methods we’ve built upon years of experience working with these groups of students.*

This study therefore recommends a research to build ALE teaching model;

- How the andragogical model can be developed into a teaching model for ALE teachers.

And finally for the general Adult Education teachers in the mainstream classes,

- Promoting inclusive practices in Adult Literacy Education
References

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Facts on Education…


Hanne Størset. (2013). Basic Skills are important, but How Good are we? Vox. Retrieved from http://www.vox.no/English/statistics-publications/Basic-skills-are-important---but-how-good-are-we/


Sir/Ma,

Consent Letter of Application

I am a student at the University of Oslo, currently; I am conducting interviews for my Master’s Thesis in Special Needs Education (research project). The research project which ends on the 16th of May, 2014 is being supervised by Ivar Morken, my professor and lecturer at the Department of Special Needs Education. The title of my research project is: Understanding Learning Difficulties in Adult Literacy Education among immigrants in Oslo; a teacher’s perspective.

I hereby apply for permission to interview some of the adult instructors/teachers in the above named institution to enable me compile data for my Master’s thesis.

Background of the study: The interest in this topic has been motivated both by my personal educational challenges as an adult immigrant, a trained adult educator and a dilemma of possible learning challenges other immigrants may experience, especially those without a prior formal education in a new society, with the need to learn a new language/culture. I wish to understand how Oslo V.O instructors define and address learning difficulties among the above mentioned people and what theories they apply if any. In the course of the interview possible questions such as forms of professional preparedness for instructors in the process of training for teaching adults specifically with learning difficulties? It is hoped that this research will help create an in-depth understanding and increase awareness on the peculiarity of the adult learner and his/her learning needs as it relates to learning difficulties.

Confidentiality Issues and participation rights: The interview is designed to be approximately one hour and will be conducted among 5 instructors. All the information given will be kept confidential and will be stored in a secure place. Upon
completion of this project, all data will be destroyed. Names of interviewees will be withheld and sensitivity will also be used when describing the school context and the instructors as regards to anonymity. The Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD) has also given an approval for this study, and upon request I could present their approval slip. Interviewers may withdraw at any time and for whatever reason. Participation is voluntarily, however, please feel free to expand on the topic or talk about related ideas. Also, if there are any questions you would rather not answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, please say so and we will stop the interview or move on the next question, whichever you prefer.

Should you need further information, you can contact me on 97024189 or Ivar Morken on (phone number).

………………………………    ……………………….

Participant’s Sign          Date

Interviewer’s Sign          Date
Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Study: “Understanding Learning Difficulties in Adult Education among immigrants in Oslo” (Teachers’ Perspectives on Practice)

The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study, conducted by the investigator as part of her studies at University of Oslo (UiO) as a Masters student in the in Special Needs Education Program. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate, or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with this investigator or Lesley University.

The purpose of this study is to gather the perspectives of adult basic education (ALE) teachers regarding teaching adult learners with learning difficulties. Data gathered in this study will be used to bring ALE teachers’ voices to the discourse on teaching ALE learners with learning difficulties, and is expected to contribute to the development of teaching practice in ABE programs.

Data will be collected using demographic data sheets and individual interviews with participants. Interview sessions will be audio taped, and the investigator will also take handwritten notes of participants’ responses during the interviews. Participants’ written responses on the demographic data sheet and oral responses to the interview questions will be the only data collected in the study. Demographic data sheets, audiotapes, handwritten notes, and transcribed interview responses will be kept in a locked box, accessible only to the investigator. The data collected in this pilot study may be used for future research presentations and/or published papers; however, your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and only the investigator will know your identity. There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefit associated with your participation is the information gained about teachers’ perspectives on practice in adult basic education. Do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participating or during the study. I would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed.

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign this consent form. You are signing it with the full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this form will be given to you to keep.
Participant’s Signature:

I am 18 years of age or older. The nature and purpose of this research have been satisfactorily explained to me and I agree to become a participant in the study as described above. I understand that I am free to discontinue participation at any time if I so choose and that the investigator will gladly answer any questions that arise during the course of the research.

Date, Investigator’s Signature, Name

Chineme L Emeodi

University of Oslo

lilianemeodi@yahoo.com
Interview Guide/Questions:

- Please can you tell me what your name is?
- Please can you tell me your age?
- How long have you worked as an educationist?
- How long have you worked as an adult literacy instructor?
- What do you think about the term learning difficulty?
- How would you define it? Give me two words to describe what learning disability means to you. Do you think there is any different between learning disability and learning difficulty?
- Do you think your years of experience have changed your understanding/perception of learning difficulty?
- When you hear of the theory of andragogy what comes to your mind?
- What factors or behaviors in your student will lead you to think or presume that the student may be showing signs of learning difficulties?
- In 5 minutes or less, tell me a story about a time when you were worried about a student’s learning or unsure about how to meet a student’s learning needs?
- How do you think ALE programs can better help students with learning difficulties?
- Are there programs such as on-the-job courses to prepare you continually for the dynamic changes in the field of the adult literacy education?
- Is there anything more information you would like to add about the topic of learning difficulties or teaching students with learning difficulties in ALE?
- What questions didn’t I ask that I should have?

Thank you so much for participating in this study.
### Brief summary of the Thematic-Analysis Development process for this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Phases of Analytic Framework</th>
<th>Explanation and Description of Resulting Changes to Coding Scheme</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcribed all 4 interview audiotapes, verbatim</td>
<td>Logged all in electronic data analysis journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listened to each interview 4 times or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Initial read through all 4, to highlight where each question was located in each transcript, and for overall feel of transcripts as a whole and to see what general themes emerged</td>
<td>Generating Initial codes: influence of students cultural background; identity/role as a teacher; student outcomes; influence of how they were taught; frustration With lack of know-how in regards to ALE learning difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Second read through all 4 for overall feel, a few notes taken of more general variety</td>
<td>Areas of similarity and overlap Using details gathered from Data Summary Tables, refined preliminary categories to begin coding: identifying learning difficulties etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Third read: searching for theme by compiling Data Summary Tables to capture important data in relation to research question</td>
<td>Fourth review of transcripts lead to dropping the some initial codes by asking relevant questions such as; is this a theme (it could be just a code)? If it is a theme, what is the quality of this theme (does it tell something useful about the data set and research question)? What are the boundaries of this theme?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Review of potential themes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Validating of themes with other colleges in the field</td>
<td>Sent out the themes so far to a college at Brussels University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Final arrangement of themes so they clearly answer the research questions.</td>
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Dear Sir/Ma,

Letter of Information on my Master’s thesis in Special Needs Education and Data Collection.

I am completing a Master’s program at the University of Oslo at the department of Special Needs Education and will be writing a Master’s thesis with the Topic; LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION; A STUDY AMONG IMMIGRANTS IN OSLO.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about ways to carry out a research study and finding out about how learning difficulties are addressed in basic adult education among immigrants in Oslo, for example, the methods instructors use in enhancing learning among learners etc.

This research will be carried out in Oslo and the instruments for data collection will be semi-interview and observation. The respondents will be selected based on voluntary will to participate in this research and can withdraw from this research at any time they are no longer willing to participate.

Simple questions will be asked by the interviewer to the interviewee with the purpose of getting answers to how learning difficulties are perceived and addressed in adult education centers.

The participants are made up of adult educators and adult learners because both perspectives are important in this study.
At the end of the data collection, a brief compilation of the data will be made and conclusions will be drawn based on the answers given to me by the anonymous participants. Two points are very important in the process of this master’s thesis data collection. They are:

- guaranty of anonymity for the informants
- protect the identity of the informants by substituting their name and pseudonyms

Finally in June, all data collected after being used will be deleted and shredded from paper and data machine.

Kind Regards,

Chineme Lilian Emeodi

<mobile #>