DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 070 904   AC 014 021

ABSTRACT

        Adult basic education programs must teach the "social
living skills" disadvantaged adults need, as well as basic literacy
skills. In creating an ABE program, one must first assess the needs
of the target population--through surveys, group meetings, an
advisory council of members of the target population, demographic
studies, and consideration of physical requirements. Population
needs, facilities, staff, budget, and time schedule determine the
type of organizational model used--community-based, home-based,
employment-based, institution-based, community college-based, or
public school-based. Instructional designs may take the form of a
laboratory program, a traditional classroom, individualized
instruction, a tutorial program, or a combination of approaches.
Recruitment can best be accomplished through personal canvassing,
linkages with agencies serving the target population, use of the mass
media and other public relations efforts, and cooperative efforts
with business, industry, and labor groups. Retention of students
depends on such factors as the sympathy and sensitivity of the staff,
the physical facilities, a sense of social ease, and the relevance of
the curriculum. Student evaluation, on an individual basis, through
informal or formal testing is necessary for initial placement,
individual prescriptions, and assessment of progress. Program
evaluations, and changes based on them, are essential to assure that
the program is meeting its objectives. (KM)

ED 070904

CREATING ADULT

BASIC EDUCATION

PROGRAMS

Paper Prepared for

National Right to Read

Training Conference

Dolores M. Harris, Director

Glassboro State College

Adult Education Resource Center

President John F. Kennedy, in his education message of 1962, stated that: "The twin tragedies of illiteracy and dependency are often passed on from generation to generation. There is no need for this. Many nations--including our own--have shown that this problem can be attacked and virtually wiped out." People in the United States, one of the most affluent nations in the world with a long tradition of free public education, had mistakenly assumed that the populace was well educated. Events in the 60's, including disturbances in the urban ghettos, served to awaken many people to the fact that there were millions of men and women in our country whose low educational attainment prevented them from full participation in the society as workers, heads of families and citizens.

According to 1960 census figures, approximately 24 million adults in the United States are completely illiterate or have so little formal education that they are classified as functional illiterates, unable to keep pace with the demands of modern society. In New Jersey, 2.5 million adults do not have a high school diploma, 90,000 have never attended school at all. The situation is summed up by Roger Axford, "We are by no means an educated people in America, although we have one of the highest ratings in terms of educational opportunity."[1]

Are these uneducated and undereducated adults the forgotten members of a technological society that threatens even highly educated and skilled human beings with obsolescence within a lifetime?

Axford says that one of the most rapidly growing areas of adult learning is that known as adult basic education.[2] Federally funded public school adult education programs, Manpower Training Programs, and other programs are giving new hope to people who once thought they had been committed to a marginal existence in a world which regards education as a mechanism for upward mobility,

---

1. Roger W. Axford, Adult Education: The Open Door, Scranton, International Textbook Company, 1969, p. 8.

2. Ibid.

1   2

as well as a means for achievement of a higher level of economic attainment.

The vast majority of adult basic education students fall into the category of the disadvantaged, and are relegated to the lowest socioeconomic levels. Poor nutrition, inadequate health services, and other problems concomitant with being poor make existence a bleak prospect for these individuals. Most devastating is the loss of hope that results from years of frustration and failure.

What motivates the typical adult education student to return to school, where many have already experienced failure numerous times?

The Reverend David W. Barry, Executive Director of the New York City Mission Society, cited one reason as he discussed the urban poor with whom he works: Jobs are increasing in the cities, but these jobs are not for them. Once, the way to escape from poverty was hard work, drudging work. There is still drudgery among the urban poor, but the supply of these jobs has long since fallen behind the demand. For today's poor there is something worse no work at all.....no promise that a strong back and willingness to work will let them inch up the ladder of success. [3]

The changes stemming from alterations in the production functions in a society which is becoming increasingly technological comprise another motivating factor which encourages adults to return to the educational setting. Advanced mechanization and automation are resulting in the displacement of men by machines. Many of those displaced especially those who are no longer young, move into either the ranks of the unemployed or the underemployed because new jobs demand more education or training.

---

3. Arthur B. Shostak and William Gomberg, ed., New Perspectives on Poverty, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1965, p. 17.

2

3

Sheppard estimated that approximately 7.5 million of the 26 million new young entrants into the labor market during the decade from 1950-1960, were school drop-outs.[4] These "push-outs" often return to adult education classes where they seek a second chance to attain the skills they need to succeed in the world of work.

Parents who want to help their children with homework, grandparents who never had a chance to get an education, retired people who want to learn to read their Bible or even the newspaper, are other people who enroll in adult basic education courses.

English as a Second Language classes attract people who must learn to speak English to function in a new environment. Some may be literate and well educated in their own language, but need instruction to help them adapt to the differences in languages and customs that confront them in a new land.

Reasons for enrolling in adult basic education classes may be varied, but one factor remains constant. The disadvantaged adults for whom..."education has been unavailable, inaccessible, or at best, a failure; have been denied one of the vital rights of every individual in this nation--the right to read at a survival level."[5] The elimination of illiteracy is an admirable goal, but adult basic education programs must encompass much more than instruction in basic skills to serve the needs of adult students. The disadvantaged adult student also needs a core of concepts and information if he is to cope with present social and employment conditions. This core, the social living skills, includes orientation to the world of work, fundamental health and science concepts, consumer education, home and family living, and citizen rights and responsibilities.

4. Harold L. Sheppard, "The Young Who Are Poor," Poverty as a Public Issue, Ben B. Seligman, ed., New York, The Free Press, 1965, p. 104.

5. Angelica W. Cass, Basic Education for Adults, New York: Association Press, 1970, p. 16.

4

Making A Needs Assessment

A variety of delivery systems have been developed to provide services in the area of adult basic education in an attempt to meet the individual needs of clients with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, aspirations, and interests. Before planning and implementing any program, it is necessary to employ a system of planning to determine the appropriate model to be utilized in a particular community. A community could be defined as an urban ghetto neighborhood, a suburban town, a rural area, or even a prison. The problem is to determine what model is best to meet the needs of your community.

Needs Assessment

Th first step is to determine what the present situation is in order to determine goals, objectives to meet those goals, and the development of strategies to accomplish your objectives.

Your survey of the existing situation might begin with a study of the characteristics of the community's population. Basic questions might include: Will the program serve English-speaking or non-English speaking people? Is the potential population composed chiefly of women with small children who might find it difficult to study outside the home? Are the clients in the prison setting there for short-term sentences or is the prison population primarily composed of long-term inmates? Are your potential students interested in acquiring necessary skills to obtain employment?

The target population itself is one of the best sources of information. Door to door canvass, questionnaires, and meetings with community groups can be utilized to assist in assessing the needs of the target population. The mechanics of the personal survey are rather easy to accomplish; the test comes in synthesizing the results and using them in developing program that will meet the needs of the people.

4   5

An advisory council which includes members of the target population can
provide much assistance in the initial planning. A cooperative Education
Project designed to serve migrant and seasonal workers and the rural poor this
summer has developed such a council. Seven offi es in the New Jersey State
Department of Education have combined funds and resources to operate the
project through the Glassboro School System. One of the Puerto Rican members
stated: "There are some of us who need to learn English. I can speak good
enough, but I need to learn how to read and write." A farmer said that there
was a need for some of his workers to learn some welding to repair equipment
on the farm. Another person stated that the migrant workers needed to learn
how to bank their money because they often get robbed when they keep large sums
on their persons. The consumer can help to define his own needs.

Surveys are sometimes restricted to opinions from a sample of the target
population concerning their interests and expressed needs. A comprehensive
survey should include an examination of demographic data.

Two experimental WIN Centers located in New Jersey found that such
demographic information summarized by location was useful in showing the
economic, sociological and educational impact of a Center to the target
population. Areas of special needs that were defined assisted the staff in
developing activities that would address particular problems. As an example,
the initial proposal plans did not make provision for the inclusion of English
as a Second Language in the Newark center. A demographic study of the area
revealed that the Center was located in the predominantly Spanish-speaking
North Ward and that there was a need to incorporate provisions for instruction
in conversational English.[6] Linkages should be developed with appropriate
governmental and community agencies which can assist in the collection of

---

6. Vivian M. Scurifman, ed., Guidelines for ABE Learning Centers, Office
of Adult and Continuing Education, New Jersey Department of Education, 1970, p. 3,4.

demographic data.

As an integral part of the needs assessment proc .s, it is necessary to
collect data relative to physical characteristics tha will affect the program.
Accessibility to the site by means of public transport tion is often very
important. Provisions for sufficient parking should b. made if the students
are planning to use their own cars as transportation. Classes scheduled in the
day-time versus evening classes might be a consideraticn in areas where people
are afraid to travel to the Center at night. Evening classes might be scheduled
in an area where most of the potential population works during the day.
Supportive services, such as baby sitting, might have to be developed if young
mothers have been identified as the target population to receive services.

The identification of community resources is important. Such identification
reveals the existence of programs already established to serve the students and
minimizes the possibility of duplication of services. Early identification also
provides the ABE staff with a knowledge of possible resources for the development
of supportive services. Sources of referral, both to the ABE program and from
the program to other agencies, can also be determined.

Organizational Models for ABE Programs

Various org nizational designs are avai. ble for ABE programs. The model chosen depends u on the characteristics of the population to be served, available physical f lities, number of staff available, numbers of students to be included, the buc et, and the time schedule cf operation. For purposes of this paper several ty 's of program organization shall be discussed with suggestions for l ations and description of a specific program as an example of that catego y.

Commu ty-Based Programs

mmunity-based programs might be located in neighborhood cente's, housing projec community rooms, settlement houses, individual h mes, Y's, e c.

e Adult Armchair Education Project operated by the Opportunities Indust ialization Center, Inc. is an example. Enrolled students gathered in one of the homes on their street, usually cne with which they were already famili . class materials were developed from discussion topics raised most often the groups themselves. Students were allowed to progress through readin, and math lessons at their own pace. A unique feature was the class projec each group was encouraged to participate in. Each class chose a commun y problem to salve through the leadership of a fellow student, the resulta t involvement with the existing government structure taught them to negotia e the system to their own advantage.[7]

---

7. Ronald Howard, Adult Armchair Education Proje t: Second Annual Report, Philadelphia: Opportunities Industrialization Ce ter, Inc.

7

Home-Based Programs

Home-based programs quite obviously are designed for participants who would find it difficult to leave their homes to obtain education.

The Kitchen Table Program in Maine was instituted in an effort to over-come the reluctance of some adults to come to school. The teacher goes to the home of a student and meets with the student and some of her eighbors.

In California, volunteers work with mothers on an individual basis, building a program around the development of literacy skills, English as a Second Language, and basic information related to home and family life problems

Employment-Based Programs

Employment-based programs may be held in any facility where the cooperation of the employer permits them. Some businesses and/or industries merely provide space for classes, others will permit employees released time to attend; nearly all are willing to assist in recruiting their workers. Employment-based programs may be of two types: instructional programs related specifically to the job, or classes which are designed to permit employees to raise their educational level because they will be better workers and citizens.

In Vineland, New Jersey a food processing plant moved to the outskirts of town. Its predominately Spanish-speaking worker force had to commute from their residences in town and began getting traffic tickets because many had no licenses. An in-plant program was established to teach them to read well enough to pass the driver's test. The program grew to encompass adult basic education, high school equivalency and English as a Second Language classes at the request of the workers.

8

9

Institutional Programs

Classes may be held in hospitals, prisons, nursing homes or any other institution where people can benefit from adult basic education instruction.

The Office of Adult Basic Education, Bureau of Adult and Continuing Education, New Jersey State Department of Education, in cooperation with several prisons offers classes for inmates. Some problems which correction programs face are: Motivating inmates to attend classes, work schedules which often make it necessary for inmates to change scheduled class time, transfers and short-term sentences.

In order to alleviate some of the problems, programs stressing individualization of learning are planned. Educational records must be carefully kept so that they can travel with a student if he is transferred to another class or another facility. Wherever possible, students are counseled to continue their education in existing outside programs when they are released. Basic skills are taught through the utilization of materials that will assist the development of the student in the social living skills areas. Participation in social adjustment classes and limited vocational training is a part of the total program for the inmates.

Community College Programs

The nature of the population that enrolls in community colleges makes it imperative that classes be offered in basic skills. High school graduates who are functional illiterates, students who may sign up for classes without taking entrance tests, students who may have completed only eight years of school or less--these are some of the people who enroll in community college classes. There is definitely a need for remedial instruction in the basic skills at the community college level and also at the four-year institutions where admissions

policies permit open enrollment and/or have special programs for disadvantaged students.

Adult basic education classes scheduled at county colleg·s have some very distinct advantages. Mere attendance at classes on a college campus is a motivating factor to many students. Flexible scheduling and a centralized location may also be drawing cards. Opportunity for greater anonymity may be attractive to some students who are extremely sensitive about their handicap.

The Learning Center located at the Bergen County Community College at Paramus, New Jersey services approximately 1200 students per year. Thirty-five (35) per cent are enrolled in order to qualify for college programs, the other 65% are those who would ordinarily participate in adult basic education and high school equivalency programs in public school facilities. Flexible scheduling permits students to attend at their convenience during the 70 hours that the Center is in operation. Materials used include software only; students and instructors keep accurate and complete re   ds.

Public School-Based Programs

Public School-based programs are probably the most famil:ar and most numerous types of programs presently offered   ' adults. The· a ·e usually

policies permit open enrollment and/or have special programs for disadvantaged students.

Adult basic education classes scheduled at county colleg·s have some very distinct advantages. Mere attendance at classes on a college campus is a motivating factor to many students. Flexible scheduling and a centralized location may also be drawing cards. Opportunity for greater anonymity may be attractive to some students who are extremely sensitive about their handicap.

The Learning Center located at the Bergen County Community College at Paramus, New Jersey services approximately 1200 students per year. Thirty-five (35) per cent are enrolled in order to qualify for college programs, the other 65% are those who would ordinarily participate in adult basic e lucation and high school equivalency programs in publiㄴ school facilities. Flexible scheduling permits students to attend at their convenience durirg the 70 hours that the Center is in operation. Materials used include software only; students and instructors keep accurate and complete re ᠃ds.

Public School-Based Programs

Public School-based programs are probably the most famil: ar and most numerous types of programs presently offered ' adults. The a ·e usually located in public schools or in other facilit: rent:d, admi is ered, and staffed by the public schools. They may be s duled as full- :i e or part-time operations. Reports in the literature are ab ant a d shoulc b consulted for the value of their findings to other base cogra s.

Approaches for AEL Instruction

Instructional designs for ABE instruction may take many forms. A total laboratory program, the traditional classroom orientation program, individualized instruction, tutorial or a combination of approa' ⁻ .∍ utilized.

In general, disadvantaged adults associate the traditional classroom approach with previous rejection and failure and may employ defense mechanisms which can become barriers to learning. However, this approach should not be summarily excluded because there are some adults who find it comforting when they are facing a new and uncertain experience. It remains the responsibility of the teacher to adapt the program and provide for the individual needs of the student.

Learning Lab

The learning laboratory necessitates a wide range of instructional materials and equipment; self-directional and programmed materials, including both hardware and software; and tutorial instruction. A learning lab program usually features an open enrollment policy, flexible scheduling, availability of services throughout the day and evening, and completely individualized learning program.

The laboratory designed for use with adult basic education students should have materials ranging in readability levels from grades one through eight! Electronic equipment is desirable, but programmed and self-directed workbooks may be utilized just as well when financing (of purchases) is a problem. Smith, Martin and Ulmer describe materials that illustrate the different methodologies that should be available in an adult education center. They include: The programmed instruction approach, the packaged kit approach, the worktest approach, the linguistic materials utilizing carefully controlled vocabulary, and textbooks

similar in layout to textbooks for children and college students.[8] They do not
discu ̄ams dependent upon hardware, such as EDL or Systems 80 which
certainly should be included in a learning lab

Classr m Orientation Approach

The classroom orientation connotes a more traditional instructional
approach. It is usually characterized by fixed enrollment, fixed scheduling
and the use of one instructor. Too often, it also means the lecture approach.

Group orientation necessitates greater homogeneity in grouping of students,
but it is possible to effect individualization of instruction through the use of
self directional and programmed instruction. "Cluster groups" where a few stu-
dents are instructed in one specific skill may also be utilized in this type of
classroom.

Combination Programs

Some of the WIN Centers in New Jersey are examples of the blend of learning
lab and group instruction approaches. The Centers are open to WIN students and
to "walk-ins," adults who enroll voluntarily. While WIN students are obligated
to attend classes five hours a day, the Center must be flexible enough to meet
the needs of the walk-ins who often cannot follow the same schedule.

Students are grouped for instruction, but individualization within the
group is accomplished through the use of programmed materials utilizing both
hardware and software, and materials such as those described previously in the
section on Learning Laboratories.

Group instruction is utilized for teaching in the area of social living
sk lls and in the English as a Second Language classes.

---

[8]Edwin Smith, et al., Guide to Curriculum for Disadvantaged Adult
Pr grams, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1972, p. 51.

The use of paraprofessionals as tutors or aides also contributes to individualized learning for adults. The Passaic County Learning Center makes extensive use of volunteer tutors in its ABET program operated with the cooperation of Church Women United in the area.

Recruitment and Retention

Most adult basic education programs reach only "the cream of the crop," about five per cent of the people who need them. One of the most urgent problems is recruiting students for programs, especially those who are expected to enroll voluntarily. The disadvantaged adult population has already experienced failure in the educational milieu; past experiences give them no reason to expect that education is the key to a better life for them. Recruitment is a "selling job" which requires creativity, patience, hard work, persistent effort and the development of many resources. It can be seen as an initial effort to get a program started, but it is also an on-going effort through measures taken to retain enrolled students and attract new ones.

Suggested Procedures for Recruitment

1. Personal Canvassing of Target Population

Face-to-face contact with the target population is probably the best method to recruit adult basic education students. Recruiters indigenous to the target population will meet with more success than an outsider. Whenever possible, these people should be hired as paraprofessionals in the programs. However, care should be exercised in choosing the recruiters because there is no guarantee that ethnic background or residence in a community is an assurance that the recruiter will relate to the target population. It is also wise to remember that the qualities in a person that cause you to categorize him as a leader are not necessarily the same criteria that the disadvantaged adult uses in making his value judgments.

Once the recruiters have been identified, it is necessary that they receive training before going out into the community. Basically, the recruiter needs to know the aims and goals of the program he is attempting to sell and what services the program can offer to those he is asking to participate. He also needs some assistance in learning how to open a conversation, counter objections, end an interview and other techniques related to successful contacts with people. Lectures, films, demonstrations, role-playing, etc. are useful techniques when developing training activities for recruiters.

The most important aspect to be considered is that the indigenous recruiter must see the program as worthwhile, must see its benefit to himself as well as others, and has the ability to establish rapport with people so that he becomes an effective salesman. Potential students find it much harder to reject a personal invitation by a person who shares their background than they would to reject mass appeals by flyers, newspaper articles, etc. When that program is presented as a means to serve the individual's needs, the personal appeal is reinforced. The personal canvass can be seen as the first step in a process which attempts to prove that somebody does care about the person who has probably faced only rejection and neglect in previous educational experiences.

2. Development of Inter-Agency Linkages

Inter-agency linkages are important to establish for two reasons. Agencies such as Model Cities, legal aid offices, community action groups and others are agencies which are already active in serving the target population. Employment agencies, drug rehabilitation centers, community service groups and many other governmental and community agencies can: (1) be a source of referral of students to the program; (2) be a source of referral of students from the program to

15

obtain for them the supportive services that so many disadvantaged adults require to stay in an educational setting.

One important thing to remember in planning the recruitment campaign is that others besides the target population should know about your program. The gas station proprietor who reads about the program in the newspaper, or the woman who heard about ABE classes at a Woman's Club and hires domestic help in need of basic education may be a source of referral.

3. Utilization of the Mass Media

Flyers, brochures, radio, television, and newspaper announcements can be included in a recruitment campaign.

Flyers and handbills, posters, etc. should be designed to present a message with as few words as possible. If they are to be distributed in a neighborhood where the majority of the residents are non-English speaking, they should be written in the language of the residents. Newspaper articles should clearly state what the program is offering, where it is located, when it is in session and any other pertinent information. Pictures of students involved in the classes can be an added attraction.

Television and radio spot announcements should be transmitted over stations that the target population listens to. Appropriate music in the background and people from the target population featured in the presentation will be more effective than a mundane announcement.

4. Cooperative Efforts with Business, Industry, and Labor Groups

Business, industry, and organized labor groups should be contacted to assist in recruitment of workers in these organizations. Personnel may assist the ABE program by making announcements at meetings, putting posters on plant bulletin boards, making direct referrals, etc. Often classes can be scheduled on-site for workers who need basic education.

17

Other Techniques for Recruitment

1. Have the mayor proclaim Adult Education Week.

2. Use a sound truck.

3. Put an announcement in church bulletins.

4. Get grocery stores to put announcements in customer's bags.

5. Use high school or college students to hand out literature in a shopping center.

6. Put announcements on car windshields in areas such as bowling alley and shopping center parking lots.

7. Send announcements home through the public schools with children.

8. Sponsor a poster contest in the schools where children of the target population attend.

The possibilities are endless, a recruitment campaign is limited only by individual imagination and energy.

Retention of the ABE Student

Education for the adult, especially the disadvantaged adult, is markedly different from education for children because the adult attends voluntarily. There is no law that says the adult must attend school to a certain age or until he meets some other criteria; the adult will leave if his needs are not met. Even in programs where stipends are paid--although stipends are certainly an inducement to attendance--students may remain in class physically but may become "in-class dropouts" who have withdrawn from the situation psychologically and emotionally. Retention of students is complex, there is no simplistic solution. Some of the factors to be considered include staffing, location, curriculum, follow-up services.

Staffing

Dr Reese Wells says that one must have compassion to administer programs of basic education for adults. While it is important for the administrator to

know about organizational charts, budget making and ot r areas of administration, the most important area of knowledge must concern the disadvantaged adult.[9] Dr. Reese's observation about administration i equally true for all other staff members!

Students are not objects of pity, but they do require an understanding of the life styles they have developed and the implications for participation in the basic education program. All staff members, including the secretary in the program, should have training sessions which are related to the characteristics of the disadvantaged adult learner, and the development of sensitivity in dealing with his problems. Staff members who cannot communicate with students, who look down upon them, or display a paternalistic attitude have no place in the program.

Physical Facilities

As previously discussed, location of site depends upon accessibility to the target population, the needs of the students and various other factors. Once the site has been selected, informality becomes the key in arrangement of the physical facilities. Furniture should be tables and chairs that can be rearranged for large and small group activities; avoid desks in rows. Lighting and acoustics should be excellent because many of the students who are older may have auditory or visual deficiencies. Carrels for independent study are imp rtant. Materials should be stored in easily accessible places.

The ABE Student Needs to Feel At Home

To meet the needs of students, it is desirable to have individualized instruction, but it is equally necessary to foster activities which gi e tl e

---

9. Reese Wells, How to Administer Programs for Disadvantage dults, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1972, p. 7.

student a sense of belonging to the group. It should be remembered that adult students sometimes attend classes because they have social needs as well as academic problems.

Serving coffee at break time can be as important as any other factor if it promotes the development of interpersonal relationships. Dr. Reese states that the affective factors of the program, which cause the student to enjoy being a part of it, are as important as the cognitive factors.[10]

Relaxation does not mean anarchy. An important aspect of the ABE program is the development of attitudes that will enable the person to make a better adjustment to society. Research has shown that laissez-faire attitudes on the part of the instructional staff can be interpreted by students to mean that the staff doesn't really care about them. It is up to the teacher to strike the happy medium in his classroom.

Curriculum

During the recruitment campaign, the adult basic education student is told that enrolling in the program will enable him to meet his needs. The program has to deliver what is promised or the student will drop out. Students should have the opportunity to help set their own goals. Counseling is sometimes necessary to help students rearrange their priorities and set more realistic goals, but the curriculum should be related to the expressed needs of the student as much as possible.

Acquisition of skills and concept development should be interrelated. Using math to figure out a budget will be much more meaningful than adding and subtracting a column of figures. Reading lessons become more meaningful when the

---

10. Wells, op. cit., p. 36.

the vocabulary and content are related to a student problem, such as how to read a recipe or obtain a driver's license.

It is important to choose materials that are adult-oriented because the content of good materials is designed to give instruction in the basic skills within the context of adult life situations.

Students need assistance in setting short-term goals which they can achieve. Learning experiences must be tailored to help students experience successes and avoid failures. Try to relate each day's instruction to the expressed goals of the students. Make daily lessons as exciting as possible. Vary the mode of presentation. Example is the best teacher; exhibit a positive attitude toward the student and his instructional program.

Recruitment and retention are inextricably interwoven. During recruitment, the student is promised that he will receive assistance in meeting his individual needs; retention depends upon how well the program delivers the promised services.

The most successful advertisers of the program are the students enrolled who will carry the message back to the community and encourage others to come.

Evaluation in ABE Programs

Evaluation in the adult basic education program can be informal and/or formal; it can apply to individual student or total program. Evaluation is necessary because it provides guidelines for planning student's learning experiences and to determine program efficiency. Evaluation also reveals the need for alterations in strategy to achieve determined objectives.

Student Evaluation

Failure to learn can be attributed to beginning students at the wrong starting point, giving them inappropriate amounts of material to be learned at one time, utilization of wrong methods or presenting material to be learned at the wrong time. Most skills and concepts are developed along a continuum. Students are individuals; this precludes the possibility that all students can be at the same point on the continuum at the same time. Individuals also differ with respect to their learning power, their learning styles and learning modality strengths, their backgrounds that they bring to class, their degree of flexibility and even in their individual value systems which affects the validity of an approach.

It is imperative the teacher find out as much information about a student as possible if the student is to be placed at his proper instructional level with appropriate methods and materials. Informal or formal testing is the only way to collect the necessary data.

Screening, either formal or informal should be done before initial placement to ensure that students are placed at instructional level, not at frustration level. Whenever possible, initial screening should be done on an individual basis. Continuous diagnosis assists the teacher in developing individual learning prescriptions for students.

21

The Individualized Learning for Adults Program which was developed by Research for Better Schools and field tested in selected programs in southern New Jersey and other sites in the country features continuous diagnosis. Students receive a placement test, then are pre-tested to determine their knowledge of a particular skill. Individual prescriptions allow students to work on weaknesses in a specific skill. A post-test determines the mastery of the skill.

Many tests are available for determining adult student levels and achievement status. A New Jersey State Department of Education booklet, prepared by the Office of Adult Basic Education, gives information about different kinds of tests, their validity, the standardization sample, reliability and practicality for use with adults.[11]

Quantitative data is important, but the perceptive adult educator also relies on qualitative data. Subjective assessment of student change in behavior; the student's expressed thoughts about his own achievement and other factors are to be weighed in evaluating students.

Some Guides for Student Evaluation

1. Do not test students until a comfortable relation between staff and student has been developed.

2. Prepare the new student carefully for initial testing.

3. Explain the purposes of a test.

4. Help the student to understand that results are kept in strict confidence; other students will not know his deficiencies.

5. Create a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere for the testing situation.

6. Use test results in the counseling sessions to assist students in becoming more realistic in assessment of his present status in relation to his aspired for goal.

---

[11]Robert Arents, et al., Guidelines for Testing the ABE Student, Trenton: New Jersey State Department of Education, 1971.

7. Use tests that are designed for adults.

8. Remember that tests are only one indicator of a student and should not be relied upon for total evaluation.

9. Performance-based evaluation is more appropriate than a traditional grading system approach.

Program Evaluation

Shearon says that the primary role of adult educators is to assist adults in effecting desirable changes in their behavior patterns. He further states that adult educators tend to assume that teaching reading, writing, and computational skills results in the disadvantaged adult getting a job or upgrading his employment skills, enhancing self-esteem, becoming a better citizen, etc.[12] Unless there is means for evaluating a program, assumptions may be invalid and a program might not be achieving the objectives established.

If adult basic educators expect to receive continued support from society, they have the responsibility to prove the worth of programs to justify continued support. The fact that only five per cent of the target population is enrolled in ABE programs also indicates a need for evaluation. Programs must make an assessment of what they are doing and use the findings to change their programs to attract more of the 24 million adults that have been identified as educationally disadvantaged.

Conclusion

Adults tend to see themselves as responsible, self-directing individuals. They will resist learning in situations that conflict with their ideas of self-autonomy. They can help to diagnose their own needs, help plan their own learning and evaluate their own progress toward their goals.

[12]Ronald W. Shearon, "Evaluating Adult Basic Education Programs, Adult Leadership, Washington, D. C.: Adult Education of USA, May 1970.

numerous types of programs presently offered · adults. The· a ·e usually

located in public schools or in other facilit:. rent·d, admi is ered, and

staffed by the public schools. They may be s . duled as full· :i e or part-time

operations. Reports in the literature are ab· · ant a .d shoulc b consulted

for the value of their findings to other base. rogra s.

11

Adults have much experience to draw upon ind these expe ·i nces have

implications for program planning. They deper·d less on vic· ·i ,us meur.;

for getting information and can learn better through action pr ojects,

field projects, demonstrations, case method ar·i similar techni ues. Pe ;

experiences can also present a barrier to lear·iing unless adults are h· ed

to change their fixed habit patterns; a non-th ·eatening environment wil·

promote learning.

The adult basic educator has an awesome ·· ·sponsibility. He must

teach people who have experienced failure and ·jection once, people whc

often have no reason to value education. He   ·i a·id should utilize all

the resources available to help him in his ta: .
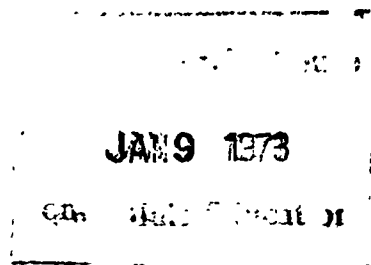
Adults have much experience to draw upon and these experiences have

implications for program planning. They depend less on vicarious means

for getting information and can learn better through action projects,

field projects, demonstrations, case method and similar techniques. Past

experiences can also present a barrier to learning unless adults are helped

to change their fixed habit patterns; a non-threatening environment will

promote learning.

The adult basic educator has an awesome responsibility. He must

teach people who have experienced failure and rejection once, people who

often have no reason to value education. He can and should utilize all

the resources available to help him in his task.

24

25

24

25