DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 208 170 CE 030 224

AUTHOR Miles, Leroy; Parson, Steve R.
TITLE The Community Educator's Guide to Adult Learning.
INSTITUTION Virginia Univ., Charlottesville. Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education.
PUB DATE Jun 78
NOTE 37p.
AVAILABLE FROM Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education, University of Virginia, School of Education--Ruffner Hall, 405 Emmet St., Charlottesville, VA 22903 ($2.00).

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; Adult Learning; *Adult Programs; *Community Education; Educational Planning; Individual Needs; Lifelong Learning; Needs Assessment; *Program Development; Program Evaluation; Recruitment; Staff Development; Teacher Education; *Teacher Role; Teacher Selection

ABSTRACT

This monograph for community educators is intended to provide a basic background in adult education and some of the basic principles of adult learning that will assist in development of more effective adult education programs. Section 1 focuses on the role of adult education, especially lifelong learning, and the community educator's role in adult education. A discussion of adult learning in section 2 describes some basic assumptions and implications about adults as learners, including importance of the adult's self-concept and the adult's readiness and orientation to learning. Section 3 considers five steps in program development: determining needs of adults, enlisting adult participation in planning, formulating goals and objectives, designing a program plan, and planning and carrying out evaluation. Selection and training of instructors are overviewed in section 4, while section 5 addresses evaluation, both its purposes and the process. (YLB)

the community educator's Guide to

Adult Learning

by:
Leroy Miles
and Steve R. Parson

THE COMMUNITY EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO ADULT LEARNING

by

Leroy Miles
Associate Professor
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Steve R. Parson
Associate Professor
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Published by

Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education
University of Virginia
School of Education
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

The University of Virginia Center serves as the regional coordinating representative for the Mid-Atlantic Consortium. This program is made possible by a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Acknowledgement

A special thanks is extended to Robert G. Templin, Center for the Study of Higher Education, University of Virginia for his critical review and suggested content improvements of this monograph. Cover Design—A V Communications, School of Medicine, University of Virginia. Typesetting—Fred Heblich

Printed in the United States of America

Charlottesville, Virginia
JUNE – 1978

Table of Contents

PREFACE

The rapidly moving events of recent years have made it increasingly evident that the endeavors we call community education and adult education are in a state of ferment. The people who are the practitioners in these two movements are often perceived as apostles of change. As change agents, as facilitators of community development, or as program administrators, they have responsibilities to their clientele as well as to themselves.

In some localities the distinctions between community education and adult education are irrevocably blurred; in other situations there are separate programs, practices, personnel, and philosophies. In any event, the activities we know as community education and as adult education are going on in more and more places and with steadily increasing frequency.

It is essential that community educators and adult educators know and understand each other if they wish to make the best possible use of the human and physical resources at their disposal. Frequently, the first step in arriving at this understanding takes place at the local level when a community educator or an adult educator makes the simple effort of trying to get acquainted with the other person. Another way is for seasoned practitioners to set their thoughts down on paper for the benefit of those interested enough to spend a little time reading to learn from the experiences of others.

Leroy Miles and Steve Parson have distilled the knowledge from their own experiences and from their extensive research in community education and adult education to produce this readable and practical monograph. As a person who has consistently urged adult educators and community educators to build bridges rather than fences, I commend this monograph to you. It is a notable contribution to increasing understanding and more effective interaction between community educators and adult educators.

James R. Dorland
Executive Director,
National Association for Public Continuing
and Adult Education

SECTION I
The Adult Learner in American Society

The development of educational programs for adults has always been a major function of the practicing community educator. The literature of community education has consistently stated that adult education is an important program component. Nevertheless, little attempt has been made to provide the community educator with the "how's" and "why's" of adult education. Few community educators have acquired the knowledge base in adult education which is obtained through graduate study, although some have attempted to develop knowledge and skills through occasional courses, workshops, conferences, inservice training programs, etc. The vast majority however, are developing educational programs for adults without the requisite skills and knowledge necessary for effective programming.

The community education concept has expanded from a handful of community schools in the early 1930's to approximately 1,400 today. This tremendous increase in community education activity has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in adult participation in a variety of formal and non-formal educational programs. In fact, this great flux of adult educational activity in recent years has made it the fastest growing segment of our educational system. Unfortunately, the training of persons to work with this adult group has not kept pace.

This monograph is designed to provide the community education practitioner with a theoretical base for adult education programming. Its focus is on adult learning theory and implications for teaching and learning, program development principles and procedures, administrative principles, and principles and methods of evaluation. It will have served its purpose if adult education programs are improved and if community educators are stimulated to pursue a more in-depth knowledge in the field of adult education.

The Role of Adult Education

Adult and continuing education is the most rapidly growing segment of our educational enterprise. The pluralistic characteristics

of educational provisions for adults make it difficult to obtain accurate enrollment data. Estimates over the past decade or so have varied because of the increasing involvement of adults in educational programs sponsored by both educational and non-educational institutions.

In terms of adult education programs sponsored by educational institutions—elementary, secondary, and beyond—the rise in adult participation has been phenomenal. In colleges and universities, for example, the enrollment patterns during the last decade have been influenced greatly by an increase in older students who participate mainly on a part-time basis. In fact, part-time credit activities have increased more rapidly than full-time credit activities and now exceed full-time enrollment in colleges and universities. When the multiplicity of non-credit activities for adults are added, the resulting figure shows that adults now outnumber traditional age students in higher education.[1]

Adults involved in educational activities outside of traditional educational institutions also contribute to this tremendous upsurge in participation. This may be due, in part, to the growing number of education and training personnel who recognize the fact that many millions of adults are experiencing the need to seek education and training outside of formal educational institutions. Increasingly, more emphasis is being placed on adult education in institutions such as churches, business and industry, labor unions, governmental agencies at all levels, and hospitals.

Estimates of participation in such programs have varied. Moses[2], for example, estimated that as many as 60 million adults engaged in educational activities sponsored by organizations outside the regular schools and colleges during 1970, which was more than the estimated number of students enrolled in formal education from kindergarten through graduate and professional school during that year. If the large number of adults who engage in self-directed learn-

---

[1]Fred Harrington, *The Future of Adult Education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977.

[2]Stanely Moses, *The Learning Force. A More Comprehensive Framework for Educational Policy.* Syracuse. Publications in Continuing Education, Syracuse University, 1971.

ing activities (a figure which is rarely reported) were added to these figures, enrollments would be even higher.[3]

Accurate participation data are difficult to obtain and estimates may be inaccurate depending on one's point of reference. In spite of the possible inaccuracies, adults appear to be seeking learning opportunities in greater numbers and in a variety of learning environments. In addition, the trend seems to be clear that new conceptions about education and training for all age groups must be developed.

Several major forces have combined to create the interest in, and need for, lifelong learning. Three of these forces are cited here; but because many interacting variables are involved, a more exhaustive list of equal significance could be developed.

The first of these variables can be described as the rapidity of technological and social changes that have occurred in America in this century. The reader is well aware of the changes that have transformed transportation, communication media, and similar components of society; and there is little need to recount these changes here. It is important to note, however, that the changing nature of society requires that every citizen gain new skills, new understandings, and new intellectual orientations to adapt to the changes about him. Formal education, as we know it, does not adequately prepare one for the constancy and rapidity of change. Lifelong learning is imperative if adults are to cope with the explosion of knowledge and to understand societal differences as they evolve. The case for lifelong learning was made quite succinctly by Hiemstra[4] when he stated that "educators have started to realize that the life skills necessary to cope with rapid change, never-ending inflation, and constant evolving lifestyles are not completely developed in formal K-12 schooling efforts."

A second force which has contributed to the need for lifelong learning may be referred to as occupational obsolescence. Rapid technological changes and advancements in knowledge have made it

---

[3]Allen Tough, *The Adult's Learning Projects.* Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1971.

[4]Roger Hiemstra, *Lifelong Learning.* Lincoln, Nebraska: Professional Education Publications, Inc., 1976, p. 7.

difficult, if not impossible, for many adults to maintain proficiency in their present employment. Likewise, these changes have made the unskilled person virtually unemployable. It is no longer feasible for workers to rely on previously learned skills and knowledge to last them through their work careers. In fact, many people face several career changes in a lifetime because of occupations becoming obsolete. Consequently, adults frequently must turn to learning to maintain or regain competence.

A third force contributing to the need for lifelong learning relates to the increasing emphasis being placed in recent years on the needs of special interest groups such as women, minorities, and the aged. Women are moving into the workforce in greater numbers. Minorities are beginning to gain more and more opportunities never before afforded them. More prestigious and better paying jobs are becoming increasingly available for members of these groups. The consequence of these advancements is that increased opportunties must be made available to help these groups cope effectively with these changing conditions.

The Community Educator's Role in Adult Education

In the early days of the community education movement there was heavy emphasis placed on the community educator's role as a programmer. Working out of a community school, they assisted the community in identifying needed programs and often began to develop programs to be offered by the community school. These program offerings varied from cultural, recreational, social, and health programs to academic courses. The participants ranged in age from young pre-schoolers to senior citizens.

The deficiency in the role that was developed in the first community education programs lay in the fact that it ignored other agencies in the community which had the resources and responsibility to develop programs. Ignoring them often caused disputes, sometimes bitter, over program duplication, turf and territory. These kinds of disputes were particularly evident among recreators and adult educators.

Since those early beginnings there has been a shift in the role of the community educator who is now expected to coordinate, facilitate, and in some cases, initiate programs and resources for the

community. The community educator now has the responsibility of helping people identify individual and collective problems of the community, and as Minzey wrote:

> He then serves as "matchmaker" in bringing the problems and resources together. In instances where there are no resources to deal with a specific problem, it is then his role to solicit the development of such a resource from the existing resources or use his community members to develop an appropriate program. The community school director or coordinator becomes the agent for assisting all community resources to expand their programs; in no instance should he duplicate services which are effectively and appropriately provided by others.[5]

In this "matchmaker" role the community educator is involved with community agencies in program planning, program administration, and evaluation. The community educator also finds times when the primary role becomes that of developing programs to fill the gaps where other resources do not exist. One description of the community educator's relationship with community agencies specified the following functions:

- Providing consultant services in connection with adult and youth education projects of other community organizations.
- Developing cooperative projects with other agencies.
- Arranging special aspects of the public school adult and youth programs which require the cooperation of other agencies.
- Serving on organizational committees as a result of local position as director of the Community School program.[6]

In summary, the community educator plays a very important role in providing programs for adults. He works with people in the community to identify their own needs and seeks the resources to meet them. He serves as a catalyst to bring existing resources and

---

[5]Jack Minzey, "Community Education: The Facilitator for Others to Do Their Thing," *Leisure Today*, (April, 1974), p. 4-5.

[6]John W. Warden, (ed.), Toward Community: *A Community Education Source Book.* Charlottesville, Virginia; Mid-Atlantic Community Education Consortium, 1976, pp. 153-154.

programs together with people. In programming, the community educator works with other community agencies when these agencies have the resources to match particular needs. The community educator's role could be summarized in the phrase, "a facilitator for others to do their thing."

In order to maximize efforts, especially in developing programs for adults, certain basic knowledge about adult education would be helpful. The following sections focus on key elements of adult education theory and principles and their relationships to community education practice.

SECTION II
Adult Learning

Learning is difficult to define; it has several uses. Some of the common conceptions of learning are:

> Learning is the acquisition and mastery by a person of what is already known on some subject.
>
> Learning is the extension and clarification of meanings of one's own individual experience.
>
> Learning is a process (in which) one tests ideas and generalizations relevant to some delimitable problem, and tests them in some more or less objectified and controlled experiences designed for the purpose.[7]

Learning, then, has several connotations. A common thread that permeates many definitions is that learning results in certain kinds of changes, the most common being the commiting to memory of facts; the acquiring or improvement of a skill or process, and the development of a changed attitude.

Regardless of the definition of learning, our conceptions have been formed largely from what is known about learning in children and animals. Not only has research shown that adults can learn, but a new technology is rapidly being developed which emphasizes that adults learn differently from children and youth. This new technology is referred to as "andragogy" and its leading proponent has been Malcolm Knowles.[8] By definition, andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn. Pedagogy, on the other hand, means the art and science of teaching children.

According to Knowles, andragogy is premised on at least four crucial assumptions about adults as learners.

---

[7] J. R. Kidd, *How Adults Learn,* rev. ed. New York: Association Press, 1973 p. 24.

[8] For a more detailed description of andragogy, see Malcolm S. Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education,* New York: Association Press, 1970.

An adult's self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.

An adult accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.

An adult's readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles.

An adult's time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application.[9]

An awareness of these basic assumptions about adults as learners yields some crucial implications for the teaching-learning transaction in adult educational activities. These assumptions and implications are briefly described below.

Implications of the Adult's Self-Concept

By far, the most important difference between adults and youth centers around the self-concept. Children regard themselves as primarily dependent personalities for whom the adult world makes most of the important decisions which affect their lives. Most adults, on the other hand, think of themselves as being responsible for their own decisions and the consequences of those decisions. In fact, it can be said that a person becomes an adult psychologically at the point at which he begins to accept responsibility for managing his own life. When an adult reaches psychological maturity, he has a strong need to be self-directing, i.e., he does not like being talked down to, embarrassed, or punished. When adults find themselves in situations that do not enhance their self-respect, i.e., being treated like children, they tend to resist or flee the situation. Hence, little learning transpires in such environments.

One very important implication of the self-concept for enhancing adult learning experiences is the establishment of a climate conducive to learning. Establishing a climate which places a premium on "adultness" requires that the physical environment be one in which adults feel at ease. Room arrangements, furnishings,

---

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

equipment, etc. should be suitable for adults. Special attention should be given to factors associated with the aging process such as visual acuity, physical strength, and declining motivation when establishing the physical environment for adult learning activities.

A further condition of "adultness" is reflected in the way adults are treated by managers, administrators and teachers. The behavior of these key people and the attitudes which they convey toward adults influence the learning climate. Attitudes which reflect a willingness to listen and which demonstrate an interest in and respect for adults greatly enhance the learning climate.

Another important implication regarding the adult self-concept is the way in which the learning needs of adults are determined. In child-centered learning, it is the teacher who decides what is to be learned. In adult learning situations, this approach is tantamount to daring the students to learn because a self-respecting, self-directing person will resist having another person's will imposed on him.

A third implication is that adults should play an active role in planning and implementing their own learning. Planning and implementing should be adjacent responsibilities of the teacher and student. Commitment to learning is enhanced when participants have been involved in planning and implementing their own programs. The role of the teacher should be to serve as a procedural guide and a content resource. Teachers who do all the planning for their adult students generally experience students who are apathetic, resentful, and withdrawn.

A fourth and very significant implication is the evaluation process. In keeping with the principles of andragogy, adults should be involved in both formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation refers to evaluating the components of a program as they unfold to determine progress made. Summative evaluation, on the other hand, refers to the evaluation of the completed program or process, usually to determine whether or not to recycle it or to make relevant changes. An evaluation process which involves the mutual collection of data by student and teacher about possibilities for further development causes less conflict with the self-concept than being given a "grade" by a teacher. The appraisal of data collected on performance should also be the joint responsibility of teacher and student.

The Adult's Readiness and Orientation to Learning

In our culture, it is generally accepted that children and youth become ready to learn particular things in a natural sequence. This readiness to learn is determined by the developmental tasks which, at their peak, present "teachable moments."

It is well known that adults have their developmental tasks, too, which produce readiness to learn and teachable moments. Developmental tasks may be thought of as changes that take place in individuals as they progress through the life cycle. They must be achieved at or about a certain period in life if a person is to be judged competent. In adults, these changes are more subtle since they are tied less to visible physiological processes and more to social and situational developments. The importance of readiness for the educator is that he should be aware of the sequence of developmental tasks and the scheduling of educational activities to coincide with this sequence.

Children and youth tend to think of education as the accumulation of a reservoir of knowledge that will be useful when they become adults. Their time perspective is one of postponed application. Accordingly, they have a subject-centered orientation to learning which they perceive as a process of storing up subject matter.

Adults, on the other hand, tend to think of learning as a way to become more effective in dealing with current life problems. Their time perspective is one of immediate application. Their orientation to education, then, tends to be problem-oriented.

The adult's orientation to learning becomes significant for at least two important reasons: (1) the educator must base programs on the everyday problems of adults; not on some logical subject matter sequence, and (2) the educator must provide the adult with the opportunity to practice a new learning as soon as possible.

If educators are to be successful in providing channels for self-actualization, they must know how to set up learning experiences and how to recognize them when they occur. Learning theories help to organize existing knowledge and generate research that can provide guiding threads toward new knowledge. A knowledge of the various theories of learning and the principles derived from them that are useful for adult learning situations can greatly enhance the work of the practicing community educator.

Implications of the Principles of Adult Learning

Drawing mainly from three schools of psychology, learning theories can be broken down into: (1) Connectionism, (2) Gestalt psychology, and (3) Functionalism. From these schools of thought, some key principles of learning are derived for the practice of adult education.

- A motivated individual learns more rapidly than one who is not as highly motivated.
- Learning under the control of reward is usually preferable to learning under control of punishment. Correspondingly, learning by success is preferable to learning motivated by failure.
- Learning under intrinsic motivation is preferable to learning under extrinsic motivation.
- Tolerance for failure is best taught through providing a backlog of success that compensates for experienced failure.
- Individuals need practice in setting realistic goals for themselves. Realistic goal-setting leads to more satisfactory improvement.
- The personal history and experiences of the individual may hinder or enhance his ability to learn.
- Active participation by an individual is preferable to passive reception.
- Meaningful materials and meaningful tasks are learned more readily than nonsense materials or other non-meaningful tasks.
- There is no substitute for repetitive practice in the learning of motor skills.

- Information about the nature of a good performance, feedback about mistakes, and knowledge of success aids learning.

- Transfer to new tasks will be facilitated if the learner can discover relationships for himself.

- Spaced or distributed practice is advantageous in fixing material that is to be retained.

The community educator has the responsibility to see that adult education instructors are aware of the implications of adult learning theories for their instructional programs. Instruction should be centered around problems that adults actually face in their daily lives such as reading want ads, filling out employment application forms, reading menus, and completing income tax forms. Problems provide energy, direction, and sustaining force to the activities of the learner. The teacher's obligation is to provide situations in which the learner sees a broad range of problems and learns to solve them for himself. Further, the teacher's role is to help adults identify real life problems that can be used during classroom instruction.

The experiences of the learner should be used as resources for learning. Experiences that are meaningful for learning situations must be suited to the adult learner's capacity to perceive, his age, his interests, his readiness and his capacity to understand.

The learner must be free to deal with the learning experience. The adult learner who is emotionally and psychologically free is ready to start on the process of acquiring the necessary behavior with which to learn and grow. For learning to proceed creatively and optimally, the adult learner must be adjusted emotionally to the learning situation, fellow students, and the classroom climate. Such a climate should be supportive, accepting, spontaneous, and reality-centered.

The role of the teacher is to establish the climate for effective learning. It is important that the goals of the broad learning quest be set by the adult and teacher jointly. The learner must be free to make errors, to explore alternative solutions to problems, and to participate in decisions about the organization of his learning environment. After goals have been mutually agreed upon, the role

of the teacher is to help the student refine those goals into specific learning objectives.

The learner must have feedback about progress toward goals. Evaluation of progress toward goals, particularly when goals have been mutually set by the learner and the teacher, is highly important. Testing is generally most effective when it is used to evaluate the adult learner's progress; not as a measure of pass or fail. The role of the teacher is to help the student determine appropriate evaluation tools and how to use them effectively in collaborative evaluation.

SECTION III
Program Development

In keeping with the principles of andragogy, program development is distinguished from curriculum development in this monograph. Curriculum development connotes the formal credit courses that usually lead to a diploma or degree. Traditionally, "curriculum" has been associated with educational activities for children and youth. The term "curriculum" often carries unpleasant memories of earlier experiences in formal schooling that affect the involvement of adults in educational pursuits.

In the field of adult education, "program" is commonly used to describe the type of activities developed by a voluntary association, agency or non-educational institution for its public. Program indicates a more informal, non-credit type of activity. The distinction between curriculum and program reflects the need to develop programs especially for adults rather than to carry over, unchanged, the programs developed for children and youth. Most community school adult education activities would fall under the category of program rather than curriculum, even though sponsored by an educational institution.

Because adult programs are largely non-formal, voluntary and non-credit type activities, a variety of questions must be raised in appraising the initial steps in program development. Some of these questions are:

1. What are some of the problems which education can help solve?

2. What population groupings can be served most effectively?

3. What are some of the social characteristics of the public to be reached?

4. What is the history of the organization in past programming efforts?

5. What areas of controversy and conflict may impede the development of effective program activities?

These and other questions must be considered in effecting programs for adults. They require program planners to take a close look at the unique circumstances surrounding the adult as a learner in order to develop programs that are creative and worthwhile.

Principles of Program Development

In adult education, we find programs of a credit and degree oriented variety offered in formal educational institutions as well as non-credit programs offered in other institutions or agencies. In formal institutions, credit programs for adults are often controlled by the established academic standards of the institution, thereby minimizing the possibility of changing educational activities to adhere to andragogical principles.

Educational programs that are not under pressure to conform to traditional curricula and methods, i.e., programs that are designed specifically for adults in a non-formal setting, tend to be more flexible in terms of how they are developed. In this regard, there appears to be consensus among adult educators as to the formal steps in successful program development, whether for a single meeting or a series of meetings. These steps of the process are:

1. Determining the needs of the adults,
2. Enlisting participation in planning,
3. Formulating goals and objectives,
4. Designing a program plan, and
5. Planning and carrying out a system of evaluation.

Needs of Adults

Since adults do not have to "go to school," but undertake adult education experiences voluntarily, programs must be based on their needs and interests which they are to recognize as theirs. Two kinds of needs have significance for program development in adult education: basic needs and educational needs. Basic needs are important in that they provide the deep motivating force for learning, and in that they prescribe certain conditions that the educator must take into account if he is to help people learn. They can be described as needs relating to human biological and psychological requirements.

The primary concern in this monograph is with educational needs since these are the needs that become the springboard of program development in adult education. Educational needs may grow out of basic needs. An educational need may be defined as something a person ought to learn for his own good, for the good of an organization, or for the good of society. It is the gap between his present level of competence and a higher level required for effective performance as defined by himself, his organization, or his society. The more concretely learners identify their own educational needs, the greater the intensity of motivation to participate in an educational experience.

Information related to needs of individuals can be obtained from several sources; the most important source being the individuals themselves. Although one cannot be assured of obtaining completely reliable information from individuals directly, this approach, nevertheless, is likely to yield the most accurate information.

Other sources are also valuable in needs assessment. Indications of needs may come from people in "helping roles" such as counselors or paraprofessionals, literature (journals, books, government publications), organization and community surveys, and from close personal friends and associates.

Methods of Needs Assessment

There are a number of needs assessment methods that may be appropriate for any given agency, organization or community. These methods vary in terms of comprehensiveness, complexity, cost, time required to conduct them, information received, and in relative effectiveness. The community educator must determine the most appropriate method(s) for use in his community. Some approaches that may be useful are: (1) the key informant approach, (2) the community forum approach, (3) the rates-under-treatment approach, (4) the social indicators approach, and (5) the survey approach.[10]

Key Informant Approach. This method is particularly useful to community educators in assessing community needs for adult

---

[10]George J. Warheit, Roger A. Bell, and John J. Schwab, *Planning for Change: Needs Assessment Approaches.* HEW, NIMH, (Washington, D.C.: 1974), pp. 27-28.

education programs. In this method, information is secured from those in the geographic area who are in a good position to know what the community's needs are. A person who is chosen as a key informant to provide essential information for programming must be one who has knowledge of the community, its people, their needs, etc. Examples of persons most likely to be chosen as key informants are clergymen, civic leaders, active volunteers, employment office personnel, officials in welfare agencies, guidance counselors and university and college faculty.

The key informant is simple and inexpensive to implement. It allows the input and interaction of a great many individuals, each with his own perspective of the needs of individuals within the community.

The primary disadvantage of the method is that it has a built-in bias because it is based on the views of individuals who would tend to see the community from their own perspective. Because these informants are not representative of the total community, many important needs may not be uncovered.

Community Forum Approach. The community forum approach utilizes the views of interested individuals who are asked to come together as a group to discuss needs of the community. To utilize this approach the community educator should: (a) formulate objectives for the meeting, (b) determine the format for the meeting, (c) publicize the meeting via letters, mass media, personal contacts, (d) conduct the meeting, and (e) record and summarize the ideas developed.

The principle advantages of this method are the ease in arranging the meeting and the lack of expense required to conduct it. This approach also provides an excellent opportunity for input from many different segments within the community.

The major disadvantages are the difficulty in defining strategically located meeting sites and the difficulty in obtaining a representative sample of the community so that important views of significant segments of the population are not bypassed. Another very important disadvantage is that skilled group leaders may be difficult to find. In such situations, meetings are likely to degenerate into gripe sessions.

Rates-Under Treatment Approach. The rates-under-treatment

approach to needs assessment is based on a descriptive enumeration of persons in a community who have utilized the services of particular agencies. The underlying assumption is that one can estimate the needs of the community from a sample of persons who have received services. For example, the community educator could examine the records of the employment agencies to determine adult vocational training needs.

The advantages of this method accrue mainly from the availability of data and the relatively low cost incurred in securing and analyzing them. In addition, a study of this sort could provide information pertaining to the kinds of services that are being provided in the community.

One obvious disadvantage to this approach is the difficulty in guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality of information, which causes reluctance on the part of many agency heads to divulge information. Another important potential problem is that there may be a large discrepancy between those who seek and/or receive services and those who do not, which may cause a distorted picture of reality.

Social Indicators Approach. The social indicators approach to assessing the needs of a community is based primarily on inferences of need drawn from descriptive statistics found in public records and reports. Some common indicators which the community educator can examine are social conditions within which people live such as overcrowding, economic conditions, substandard housing, and spatial arrangements of the community's people and institutions, as well as sociodemographic characteristics of the population such as age, race, sex, and income. When these factors are analyzed they can provide the community educator with valuable information about the needs of people within a community.

There are several advantages to using this approach. One important advantage is that this approach can be developed utilizing a vast data pool that already exists such as the census reports and statistics of governmental agencies at all levels. Another positive factor is that this approach can serve as a foundation upon which other needs assessment approaches can build.

The major disadvantage is that these indicators are only indirect means of determining needs of persons. Consequently, the results obtained may be unreliable if used alone.

Survey Approach. The survey approach is perhaps the most familiar of all assessment methods. It is based on the collection of data from a sample or an entire population of persons living in a community. The most commonly used methods of data collection are the interview schedule and the questionnaire. The survey approach has been the most frequently used approach by community educators; however, exclusive use of the survey approach may not be the most effective and reliable means of needs assessment.

Participation in Planning

The second important principle of program development involves the enlistment of the participation of learners in planning. This principle is in agreement with a fundamental precept of community education which states that when people participate in planning an activity, they tend to feel committed to that activity. In adult education, as in all aspects of community education, planning should be *with* people, not *for* people.

Some benefits that flow from the participation of adults in the planning of their own learning experiences are: (1) they have greater responsibility for the enterprise because they have helped in its creation; (2) they may be led to recognize needs which before were not consciously felt; and (3) planning can be as much a learning experience as can direct instruction.[11]

Goals and Objectives

Once the needs are clearly identified, the goals and objectives of the adult education program can be formulated. The principle of enlisting participation in planning is particularly emphasized in this phase of program development. The community should be involved in the establishment of goals and objectives for the overall adult education program, and the goals and objectives for individual

---

[11] For a comprehensive review of a variety of citizen participation vehicles, see Warden, J. W., *Citizen Participation: What Others Say—What Others Do*, Charlottesville, Virginia: Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education, University of Virginia, 1977.

learning ventures should be established through the cooperative efforts of learners and the instructor.

There is a need to establish two major types of goals for adult education programs. One set of goals is needed for the overall direction of the program. An example might be as follows:

> Goal 1.0: To maintain an institutional atmosphere that is conducive to adult learning.

This goal would address some overall programmatic or institutional direction.

The second type are those goals needed to guide individual learning that takes place within a particular program. A sample goal for G. E. D. Preparation Program[12] might be:

> Goal 2.0: Students enrolled in the G. E. D. Preparation Program will successfully complete the examinations and be awarded high school equivalency certificates.

Both goals are stated in rather broad terms. In order to specify the desired changes that will need to take place to reach the goal, it becomes necessary to state specific objectives in measurable terms.

Objectives are the desired results or outcomes expressed in terms of behavior changes among participants. They should state, in precise terms, the change desired if they are to serve as effective guides to participants, teachers, and administrators in planning adult education programs. They should be clear enough to indicate to all exactly what is intended. Otherwise, numerous interpretations, many of which might contradict each other, may cause confusion concerning the desired outcomes. Understanding and acceptance of educational objectives usually will be enhanced when the objectives are developed cooperatively by the teacher and the learner. Persons who have had a share in deciding what is to be done will understand it better and will be more interested in doing it than will those who must accept an objective developed by someone else.

---

[12] G. E. D. refers to the General Educational Development examinations given to award high school equivalency certificates.

To accompany the program goal dealing with institutional atmosphere the following objective might be stated:

> Objective 1.1: By September 15, all instructors in the adult education program will participate in a two-hour in-service education program designed to make them aware of and to help them understand adult learning needs.

The objective specifies the population, the result desired, the acceptable criterion level, and a time target.

A sample objective for the goal on the G. E. D. Preparation Program might be:

> Objective 2.1: At the end of the first six weeks of instruction 80% of the students enrolled in the G. E. D. Preparation Program will achieve a 75% score on the mathematics examination.

Program Plan

A program plan refers to the transformation of program objectives into a pattern of learning activities. The design will be based on whether the objectives call for the solution of a problem, mastery of subject matter, or acquisition of a skill. The particular objectives of the program will, in part, determine whether one method or another or a combination will be used.

Other considerations of a particular method are:

- The character of the subject matter
- Available leadership
- Available facilities
- The character of the learners
- Available time

Some of the common methods and techniques used in adult education are:[13]

Clinics	Panels
Institutes	Forums
Workshops	Role playing
Discussion groups	Short courses
Conventions	Demonstrations
Conferences	Interviews
Committees	Field Trips
Seminars	Tours
Case Studies	Simulations
Symposia	Games

System of Evaluation

An essential part of the process of program development is the establishment of a system of continuous formative evaluation to determine the extent to which the objectives of the program are being realized. There is also a need for conducting summative evaluation of a completed program or process. Evaluation will help the community educator to make better decisions in addition to providing documentation for accountability purposes. The evaluation process will be discussed in detail in a later section of this monograph.

---

[13]For further information on methods and techniques, See Barton Morgan, Glenn E. Holmes, and Clarence E. Bundy, *Methods in Adult Education.* 3rd. ed., Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Press, 1976; and Paul Bergvin, Dwight Morris, and Robert M. Smith, *Adult Education Procedures,* New York: Seabury Press, 1963.

SECTION IV
Selection and Training of Instructors

It is of primary importance that the community educator be competent in the administration of programs and possess skills obtained through formal inservice training. The extent and quality of participation by adults in an adult education program can be improved substantially if the community educator does an effective job in selecting, training, and utilizing both paid employees and volunteers.

One aspect of community education is that as more and more community members get involved, the number of talented people available as leaders and instructors increases. Many citizens in the community, who are able to meet established criteria, have skills which they wish to share. Often, the community educator can make choices of personnel from among many possibilities; whereas, on other occasions the choices are limited. Nevertheless, the criteria for selection of personnel should be determined and stated. Such standard requirements as status in the community or occupational group, previous teaching experience, etc., are desirable criteria only when they are compatible with certain personality characteristics. The selection process can be enhanced if the following characteristics are applied as criteria:

- An instructor must not only have knowledge but also must be a successful practitioner of the subject or skill.
- An instructor must be enthusiastic about the subject and about teaching it to others.
- An instructor must have—or be capable of learning—an attitude of understanding and permissiveness toward people and possess other personality traits, such as friendliness, humor, humility, and interest in people, which make for effectivenss in leading adults.
- An instructor must be creative in teaching methods; must be willing to experiment with new ways to meet the changing needs and interests of adults; and must be concerned more with the growth of the individual than with the presentation of facts.

- An instructor should be intrigued with the notion that adults are different from children as learners, and should express a positive attitude toward the prospect of participating in an in-service training program regarding the teaching of adults.[14]

Because many adult education classes do not involve the granting of formal credit for degrees and diplomas, instructors do not usually need to be certified teachers holding collegiate degrees. However, this does not mean that instructors in adult education programs do not need training. In fact, staff development should be viewed as a continual process.

The community educator may wish to use the following questions in evaluating each of the instructors teaching in adult community education programs. Frequent "no" answers to these questions might indicate some needs for staff development.

- Does this instructor involve adult learners in diagnosing their own learning needs?
- Does this instructor encourage adult learners to take an active part in planning and implementing their own learning activities?
- Does this instructor give adult learners opportunities to practice a new learning as soon as possible?
- Are the materials and examples used by the instructor in class meaningful and relevant to adult learners?
- Does this instructor involve adult learners in evaluating their progress toward the learning objectives?
- Does this instructor establish a climate appropriate for adult learning?

Answers to these questions may be obtained by visiting classes, participating in discussions with instructors and students, or using

---

[14] Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education, p. 163.*

formalized evaluation procedures.

The community educator should accept the resonsibility for developing a training program to increase the effectiveness of instructors. Resources to assist in developing a training program are available from a variety of sources, such as University Centers for Community Education Development, State Departments of Education, the Cooperative Extension Service, and colleges and universities with adult and continuing education programs.

In the process of establishing a training design for staff development, the effectiveness of the training events can be enhanced by adhering to principles of adult learning and following these guidelines:

1. The design should provide a core program that includes the particular knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to work with adults, while allowing the instructor to build upon his experiences and capabilities.

2. The design should encourage individuals to evaluate themselves continually.

3. The design should allow teachers to try out new skills in a practice situation.

4. The design should encourage the use of educational media as well as multiple combinations of materials and approaches.

5. The design should include flexibility factors which allow adaptation over a long period of time and under continually changing conditions.

SECTION V
Evaluation in Adult Education

Evaluation is defined as the process of determining the extent to which objectives have been obtained; it is an essential part of the process in administering programs. In adult education, as in other areas of education, an administrator must make judgments about results obtained from programs. Too often, however, evaluation is difficult because programs are based on snap judgments with limited evidence and no systematic procedure for measuring results. Moreover, goals and objectives for programs are often absent. Thiede succinctly summarized the difficulties inherent in the evaluation process:

- Goals and objectives are frequently unstated or when stated, are sometimes vague, almost always broad and comprehensive, and are not agreed on.
- The individual is complex and constantly changing—and doesn't stand still while measurements are being made.
- It is difficult to devise ways to measure the educational changes taking place.
- Interpretation of results under these limitations is an uncertain and difficult process.[15]

Purposes of Evaluation

Evaluation has several purposes, and one or more may be stressed for a particular program. Thiede defined these purposes as:

1. Guiding individual growth and development,
2. Improving programs,
3. Defending programs, and
4. Facilitating and encouraging staff growth and psychological security.[16]

---

[15]Wilson Thiede, "Evaluation and Adult Education," in *Adult Education: Outlines of an Emerging Field of University Study*, ed. by Gale Jensen, A. A. Liveright, and Wilbur Hallenbeck, Washington, D. C.: Adult Education Association of the U. S. A., 1964, p. 292.

[16]*Ibid.*

Knowles used a slightly different approach to defining the purposes of evaluation. He divided program evaluation into two principle components and specified the elements to be evaluated as follows:

1. Improvement of organizational operation—including such aspects as its planning process, structure, decision-making procedures, personnel, physical facilities, finances, recruitment, training, public relations, and administrative management.

2. Improvement of its (organizational) program—including such aspects as objectives, clientele, methods and techniques, materials, and quality of learning outcomes. [17]

The systematic evaluation of all these aspects is essential for the successful adult education program. Meaningful evaluation requires the continuous assessment of the evaluation process itself.

The Evaluation Process

The evaluation process contains the following steps:

1. *Determining What to Evaluate.* Deciding on what will be evaluated necessitates having a clear understanding of the objectives of the program. Thus, evaluation is built upon clearly stated, well defined, agreed upon objectives. These objectives should be formulated at the outset of the program. If programs are not based on objectives, conducting a worthwhile evaluation becomes almost impossible.

The establishment of goals and objectives for the overall program and for individual programs provides the necessary tools to begin the evaluation process. Without predetermined goals and objectives, it is difficult to measure progress and to make necessary adjustments.

2. *Determining Acceptable Evidence.* This phase of the evaluation process involves establishing criteria for determining the extent to which objectives have been achieved. Therefore, learning objectives should be stated so that they specify behaviors at various

[17] Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education,* p. 223.

levels of attainment. They should be organized in a way that the learner would be able to observe progress from the beginning of a learning venture to its termination.

Objectives should specify the intended result of a particular program. These are statements of intended results that can be compared to actual results in identifying discrepancies. An examination of these discrepancies is useful in determining needed changes in the program.

3. Collecting Evidence. A variety of methods can be used for obtaining information to evaluate results of a program or a specific learning venture. The best results are obtained, however, when a combination of approaches is used. Some of the more common methods of data collection involve obtaining the reactions of participants through: (a) interviews, (b) questionnaires, (c) tests (standardized and teacher made), (d) case studies, (e) group discussions, and (f) advisory councils. It is important to point out that since most of this information is based on personal judgments by people, it can be biased. Every effort should be made to insure that data collection instruments are as valid and reliable as possible.

4. Summarizing and Evaluating Evidence. Methods of summarizing collected data depend heavily upon the nature of the program or specific learning activity. Data can be summarized by counting, describing, and/or analyzing, according to the nature of the objectives. Thus, the relative emphasis placed on the method used to examine the data will depend upon one's purpose for the evaluation. Some objectives may require only a pooling of judgments about the attainment of objectives. Other objectives, particularly those dealing with measuring specific behavioral changes, may require elaborate quantification and statistical applications. When these data have been analyzed and interpreted, it becomes the duty of the community educator to feed this valuable information back into the system so that the necessary changes can be made in the program.[18]

---

[18] For a more complete treatment of evaluation see Wood, G. S. and D. A. Santellanes, *Evaluating A Community Education Program*, Midland, Michigan: Pendell Publishing, 1977.

SECTION VI
Summary

Community educators are becoming aware of the need to be better equipped to work with adult education programs. Because few community educators possess an academic background in the discipline of adult and continuing education, this publication was designed to provide some basic principles in adult education. The responsibility for acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to perform all aspects of the job must be accepted by each community educator in the field. Perhaps they may be motivated to continue their own education by taking advantage of education and training activities in adult education. Courses, workshops, conferences, and institutes which focus on principles and practices of adult education in this field are available at many colleges and universities throughout the country.

Lack of preparation in adult education may cause several types of problems. As community educators endeavor to work cooperatively with other agencies in the joint development of adult education programs, a deficiency in knowledge will reflect on their level of professionalism. Another important problem is that which arises out of poorly developed programs. Since most adult education involves voluntary participation, programs that fail to meet participants' needs will not be supported. It has been said that when it comes to evaluation of programs in adult education, "adults vote with their feet." A few programs that do not measure up to the demands of the community will reflect on the total community education program.

This publication has been designed to provide community educators with a basic background in adult education and with some of the basic principles of adult learning which will assist in the development of more effective adult education programs.

Selected Bibliography

Bergevin, Paul E.; Morris, Dwight; and Smith, Robert M. *Adult Education Procedures*, New York: Seabury Press, 1963.

Harrington, F. H. *The Future of Adult Education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publisher, 1977.

Hiemstra, Roger. *Lifelong Learning.* Lincoln, Nebraska: Professional Educators Publications, 1976.

Kidd; J. R. *How Adults Learn.* (Rev. Ed.) New York: Association Press, 1973.

Knowles, Malcolm S. *The Modern Practice of Adult Education.* New York: Association Press, 1970.

Minzey, Jack. "Community Education: The Facilitator For Others To Do Their Thing." *Leisure Today*, April, 1974, 4-5.

Morgan, Barton; Holmes, Glenn E.; and Bundy, Clarence E. *Methods in Adult Education.* 3rd ed. Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Press, 1976.

Okes, Imogene E. *Participation in Adult Education 1969 Initial Report.* Bulletin 1971. Washington, D. C.: U. S. Department of Health Education and Welfare, Office of Education, U. S. Government Printing Office, 1971.

Thiede, Wilson. "Evaluation and Adult Education." *Adult Education: Outlines of an Emerging Field of University Study.* Edited by Gale Jensen, A. A. Liveright, and Wilbur Hallenbeck. Washington, D.C.: Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., 1964.

Tough, Allen. *The Adult's Learning Projects.* Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1971.

Warden, J. W. *Citizen Participation: What Others Say—What Others Do.* Charlottesville, Virginia: Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education, University of Virginia, 1977.

Warden, John W., ed. *Toward Community: A Community Education Source Book.* Charlottesville, Virginia: Mid-Atlantic Community Education Consortium, 1976.

Warheit, George J.; Bell, Roger A.; and Schwab, John J. *Planning for Change: Needs Assessment Approaches.* HEW, NIMH, Washington, D. C., 1974.

Wood, G. S. and D. A. Santellanes. *Evaluating A Community Education Program.* Midland, Michigan: Pendell Publishing, 1977.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Leroy Miles is an Associate Professor, Adult and Continuing Education, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. His primary research interests are in the areas of competencies needed by adult educators and effective use of groups in adult education programs. He has written articles on the topics of career development and developing graduate programs for adults. Dr. Miles received an Ed. D. degree from Indiana University in 1971 and is presently a member of the Adult Education Association of U.S.A., the Commission of Professors of Adult Education, the Adult Education Association of Virginia, and Phi Delta Kappa.

Steve R. Parson is currently the Director of the Cooperative Extension Program for Community Education, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The Center for Community Education at VPI is the first one in the nation established by the Cooperation Extension Service. Dr. Parson is an extension specialist and an Associate Professor in the College of Education. He received an Ed. D. degree from Western Michigan University in 1974. He is presently a member of the National Community Education Association Board of Directors (1977-79) and is President of the Mid-Atlantic Community Education Consortium (1977-79).

Mid Atlantic Community Education Publications

- *Mid-Atlantic Informational Portfolio*
  Cost–$3.95 per Portfolio. A collection of reprints and publications providing an overview on Community Education.

- *Administrators' & Policy Makers' Views of Community Education.*
  Edited by Larry E. Decker and Virginia A. Decker. Single copy–$3.00, bulk prices available. The collection of 14 articles by Governors, State and Local Superintendents and other policy makers and administrators. 1977, 64 pages.

- *Citizen's Participation. . . What Others Say. . . What Others Do. . .*
  By John Warden. Single copy–$1.00, bulk prices available. An overview on citizen's participation with key references, quotations and participation vehicles highlighted. 1977, 24 pages.

- *The Community Educator's Guide to Adult Learning*
  By Leroy Miles and Steve R. Parson. Single copy–$1.00, bulk prices available. This monograph focuses on adult learning theory and principles and methods of program development. 1978, 32 pages.

- *Public Schools: Use Them Don't Waste Them*
  Edited by Michael H. Kaplan. Single copy free, bulk prices–$22.00 per 100. A promotional booklet drawing upon the editorial comments of syndicated columnist Sylvia Porter. 1975, 12 pages.

- *What Others Say About Community Schools*
  Edited by John W. Warden. Sample copy free, bulk prices–$24.00 per 100. A collection of supportive statements about Community Schools. 1976, 16 pages.

ORDER FROM. Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education
School of Education, Ruffner Hall
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903