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ABSTRACT
                Three relatively distinct groups demonstrating
personal and professional interest in environmental education for
adults are environmentalists, environmental educators, and adult
educators. The agenda of each group, its potential contribution, and
its limitations are discussed. The development of communication and
cooperation among these groups, perhaps leading to joint programming
and planning and enabling each to achieve its educational and
environmental objectives more effectively, is described. The
importance of professional environmental educators in initiating,
supporting, and participating in cooperative efforts is emphasized.
Sections include (1) "How are Social and Political Responses
Related?"; (2) "What Bridges Can Be Built?"; (3) "Objective:
Knowledge and/or Action?"; and (4) "What Programs and Models Exist"?
(KR)

Environmental Education for Adult Learners

Environmental educators typically identify individual and societal improvement in environmental behavior as their primary objective. However, there is little evidence that they have achieved much success (Gigliotti, 1990). Working toward positive behavioral change with school children has produced modest gains, but finding ways of changing the environmental behavior of the adult population, and of society in general, has been more difficult.

In the main, environment has not been identified as a high priority by American society; it is generally perceived as a "second-order issue" (Dunlap, 1987). Though national opinion polls consistently show high rankings for environmental concerns, the adult public's first thoughts about the environment appear to be are in terms of aesthetic and amenity values, with secondary concern about specific environmental problems at local, rather than national or global, levels.

A number of factors have combined to produce this result. Primary among them are multiple actual and potential priorities which vie for the attention of the adult public. War, threat of war, a number of pressing social issues, and individual and societal economic concerns are readily identifiable; all are typically seen as more urgent than environmental concerns.

How are Social and Political Responses Related?

"Environment" has not yet engendered compelling social and political responses on the national scene, though it is gaining momentum. The modern environmental movement has come a long way since the 1960s; "Environmentalism has become a part of the American culture and environmentalists now constitute a major social movement" (Imel, 1990). This movement has been characterized as creating an emerging new societal environmental paradigm, "...advocating thoughtful consideration of where we are going, careful and subdued production and consumption, conservation of resources, protection of the environment, and the basic values of compassion, justice, and quality of life" (Milbraith, 1984: 14).

A number of studies have indicated that public environmental knowledge remains low, despite increasing interest. But interest exists, along with some verbalized public commitment. For example, the Kettering Foundation reported (1990) that participants in its 1989-90 National Issues Forums were marginally opposed to building more nuclear power plants, more favorably disposed toward increasing government funding to spur development of solar energy, and generally in agreement with possible proposals for tax increases for development of solar energy and provision of additional mass transit in urban areas, to reduce air pollution caused by gasoline-fueled vehicles.

What Bridges Can Be Built?

Opportunity and need for environmental education for the adult general public are readily inferred, giving adult educators the opportunity to build bridges between learners and scientists, improve the environmental performance of their own facilities, and initiate dialogues about other societal concerns (Prazmowski, 1990). However, specific roles and mechanisms for adult educators have not been defined, nor have possible working relationships with interested parties, including environmental educators and environmentalists, been well explored.

Field (1989) notes that environmental groups have attained some levels of educational success without the assistance of professional educators, but there appear to be both opportunities and needs for adult educators. What environmentalists call "education" is often the broadcasting of their own perspectives; their messages may be biased.

Objective: Knowledge and/or Action?

A distinction in purposes between adult environmental learning and adult environmental transformation has been described by Finger (1989: 31). The former is cognitively oriented, designed to provide knowledge about specific environmental issues (education about the environment), while the purpose of the latter is to promote adults who are knowledgeable, concerned, and ultimately willing and able to act positively to protect the environment (education for the environment). Environmentalists, and most environmental educators, support the "action" objective, with the frequently unwarranted assumption that cognitive competence has already been achieved. This is less likely true of adult educators, who are accustomed to meeting the needs of individuals rather than groups, and are typically concerned with knowledge rather than action objectives. Adult educators normally adopt apolitical, noncontroversial postures, and may be uncomfortable working with environmental groups and issues (Imel, 1990).

What Programs and Models Exist?

A number of viable adult environmental education programs are in existence. They provide partial models for those wishing to become involved, or increase their effectiveness, in this field. Brief summaries of three are provided below.

A model program which synthesizes tested education outreach strands about risks and management strategies dealing with toxic substances into a system for application to public policy education about other environmental issues has been described by Andrews (1990). First, an appropriate target audience is

identified--community power actors, leaders, and/or citizens known to participate in public policy decision making. Next, a pedagogical strategy is chosen, perhaps from a traditional model, a model designed to develop predictors of responsible environmental behavior, an advocacy model, a consequences education model, and/or a change theory model. Possible delivery mechanisms include courses/workshops, exhibits, personal problem solving/personal contact with experts as forms of citizen participation, media presentations, and libraries. Themes of preferred adult learning and participation styles include: interest in topic, level of enjoyment in meeting in groups, and use of a variety of mechanisms for delivery of information.

As a supplement to a statewide recycling program in New Jersey, a survey was conducted to identify sources of information residents feel are most useful in learning about it (Simmons and Widmar, 1989). Responses reflected the utility of a broad range of potential sources of information. In terms of mass media, newspaper stories were found to be particularly effective, followed by newspaper ads, television programs, radio programs, and magazine articles. Respondents also indicated that information received directly in the mail was helpful, as were leaflets left with the residents' garbage cans or recyclables at the curb. Promotional contests were not seen as a particularly helpful source of information, nor were community-based methods (displays at shopping malls, etc.). No single source was identified as "the way" of disseminating information; instead, the data suggest that a diverse strategy which takes advantage of the media's ability to capture people's attention, provides specific information directly to residents through the mail, and taps into the educational system should effectively reach the desired audience.

Successful environmental education programming for both management and labor in primary-resource industries where workers have a direct impact on the environment requires the use of adult education principles in design and use. Camozzi (1990) identifies four building blocks in the development of the trust necessary to initiate and pursue such programming: ability to participate in constructive dialogue based on a sensitivity to the constraints and practical problems faced by the industry; dealing honestly with the industry in terms of personal feelings, beliefs, and knowledge limitations; knowledge and enthusiasm regarding environmental issues; negotiation as adult educators, not as "an environmental mission." She notes:

> the basic principles of adult education
> (needs assessments, self-directed learning,
> and formative evaluation) are not
> commonly known. Too often,
> environmental educators stress the
> message rather than the medium by
> which the message should be conveyed,
> and tend to rely on conventional
> pedagogical approaches inappropriate
> to adults.

Summary

Three relatively distinct groups demonstrating personal and professional interest in environmental education for adults are environmentalists, environmental educators, and adult educators. Each group has its own agenda, its potential contribution, its limitations. But this description is common to most multi-disciplinary situations, and may be viewed as a challenge rather than an inhibitor. The development of communication and cooperation among these groups, perhaps leading to joint programming and planning, will able each to achieve educational and environmental objectives more effectively.

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