

Research in Brief



MASON E. MILLER, *editor*

ADULTS—WHY THEY TAKE CLASSES

Key Finding: Among people who attend adult education classes, those with higher education may be attending more for “self-actualization,” while those with less education may attend because of economic motivations.

It’s obvious to Extension educators—as to other adult educators—that people with more education are the ones who tend to come voluntarily to meetings, workshops, and other instructional programs. If we accepted this observation rigidly, it would mean that only persons with high educational levels would attend. That’s not true.

People attend out instructional programs who haven’t completed high school; and not everyone with more than a high school education attends. Thus, knowing the educational level of our intended audience tells us something, but it’s not the whole picture.

Douglass and Moss asked, “What else?” They uncovered some clues about further differences between higher and lower educational-level audiences and why they participate in adult education classes.

The Study in Brief

Douglass and Moss talked with one adult resident from each of 611 housing units in Columbia County, Wisconsin—86 per cent of the 71 housing units in their sample. They looked at two groups in the sample:

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(1) a "high-education" group of 128 that had more than grade 12 education and (2) a "low-education" group of 274 that had completed less than grade 12.

Through the interviews and the California Test of Personality, the researchers examined two kinds of factors: (1) positions the person held in the social structure because of age, income, and the like and (2) something of his personality and psychological make-up.

For the low-education group, positional factors seemed to be the ones associated with whether or not a person participated in adult education classes. *Age*: young and old adults in this group tended not to participate as much as those in their middle years. *Employment status*: those employed participated significantly more than did housewives, retired persons, and the unemployed. *Income*: here the trend was—the higher the income, the more tendency to participate. *Family status*: participation by married adults increased significantly as the number of children under 19 years of age increased.

One of the psychological factors—*withdrawal tendencies*—was associated with participation among this low-income group. The more a person showed characteristics such as sensitiveness, loneliness, and self-concern, the less likely he was to participate.

For the high-education group, only one of the various factors tested—*social skills*—seemed to differentiate. A socially skillful person is defined as "one who shows a liking for people, who inconveniences himself to be of assistance to them, and who is diplomatic in his dealings with both friends and strangers."

Douglass and Moss see the low-education group positional factors as having a possible economic base—this group takes part in adult education because they want better pay and better positions. The high-education group does not seem as motivated by these goals. They may be more motivated by the desire for "self-actualization"—the desire to fulfill one's talents, capacities, and potentialities, and to have a more complete understanding about people, the universe, and oneself.

Implications for Extension

This study confirms other research—the higher the educational level, the more people tend to participate in adult learning situations. With the educational level in America rising, this should mean an expanding clientele for adult education programs.

But the tentative identification of the strength of the economic drive among the lower-educated group, and of the self-actualization drive among the higher-educated suggests different orientations for our Extension programs when dealing with these two groups separately. You may teach essentially the same materials or principles. However, with one type of audience you need to point out (both in prepublicity and during instruction) just what the gains and applications are that will mean a better job, more skill, better pay. While these factors also may be impor-

tant with the other group, you need to make clear how the "students" are improving themselves in a wide variety of ways—and to give them freedom to improve in their own ways and own directions.

What about the Extension audience where you have both? Ideally, you'll keep both subgroups in mind, and give them both the kind of educational programs they want and need. This may mean compromise and less effectiveness on your part. But often that's the way this particular situation is.

Mohammad Douglah and Gwenna Moss, "Differential Participation Patterns of Adults of Low and High Educational Attainment," *Adult Education*, XVIII (Summer, 1968), 247-59. Prepared by: Mrs. Kari Holtan Nodenes, Edwin H. Amend, and Mason E. Miller.

DIFFERENT CLIENTELE FOR AREA SPECIALIST VS COUNTY GENERALIST?

According to a study of participants in dairy testing programs in Missouri and Nebraska, clientele for area specialist and county generalist programs did not differ. Clientele of an area dairy specialist program were compared with clientele of a generalist county base program on age, educational level, size of farm business, farm ownership, years of farm experience, years of participation in dairy testing, participation in short courses and workshops, attitude toward credit, innovativeness, farm practice score, ranking of sources of information, and attitude toward Extension Service.

In practically every case, there was no statistically significant difference between clientele in the two kinds of programs. The only difference was that in Missouri the specialist clientele were significantly more favorable toward Extension than the generalist clientele sample. Thus, administrators hoping to find help for making a decision as to which pattern to follow—using the county as a base unit, or going to multicounty units with specialized agents working in various fields—will find little here to help them decide which way to organize.

John G. Gross, "Clientele Difference of a Cooperative Extension Program as Related to Base of Organization," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, January, 1969.

A TISKET—A 4-H TASK-ET

What 4-H leaders perform most of the tasks critical to success of 4-H project work? This question was raised in 14 Tennessee counties. In each county there were 1.9 or more full-time Extension staff equivalents responsible for 4-H work. Another requirement was that there must be between 11 and 30 leaders in the county or more than 70 leaders.

Agents listed 55 tasks they felt were extremely or very crucial to 4-H project success. Leaders performing 1-29 of these tasks were put in the low-task group; those performing 30-55 were placed in the high-task group. Leaders who were housewives, teachers, laborers, or professionals

were most likely to be performing more of the 55 tasks considered crucial, and to feel that they were qualified to perform those tasks. Leaders who were farmers were both performing fewer of the tasks and felt less qualified to do so.

Leaders who had received more training were more likely to perform a higher number of tasks than were leaders who received little or no additional training. They also felt more qualified to perform the tasks. However, the recency of receiving training and whether the leader felt a need for additional training were not significantly related to the number of tasks the leader felt qualified to perform.

Interestingly, among the 27 agents involved, those who provided information to leaders frequently or occasionally by radio, home visits, training meetings, newspapers, and newsletters did not have a higher percentage of leaders who performed a high number of tasks than agents who used those methods seldom or never. No speculation or explanation of this finding is offered.

Anna Bernice Lucas and Cecil E. Carter, Jr., "Characteristics of Low and High Project Leader Task Performance and Task Qualified Groups in Selected Tennessee Counties," Extension Study No. 2, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, July, 1969. Adapted from author abstract.

ABSTRACTS FROM ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON ADULT EDUCATION*

AC 004 010MI *Factors Associated with Adjustment of Foreign Students Studying Extension Education at Selected Land-Grant Institutions.* Walter Theodore Wilkening. University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1965.

Studied the total foreign student population in agriculture extension at Cornell, Kansas State, Michigan State, Wisconsin, and Mississippi—80 students representing 28 developing nations. Major adjustment problems were to the educational system and being away from family, friends, language, and cultural environment. Ninety-three per cent were satisfied with the objectives of their study tour. All desired more practical experiences in extension activities. Those best adjusted personally were satisfied with their preparation for the study experience, the suitability of housing, and their attitude toward extension graduate study. These students were different from other foreign students in that they were exclusively from developing nations, were older, and had had work experience.

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- AC 003 068 *Why Adults Learn: A Study of the Major Reasons for*
ED 025 688 *Beginning and Continuing a Learning Project.* Allen
Tough. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto.

Studies 35 adults in the Toronto area. Single most common and most important reason for adult learning is the desire to use or apply knowledge and skill. Commitment to producing, accomplishing, or doing something came first. Then came the decision to learn certain knowledge and skills as one step toward that goal. The second largest number of adult learning projects began as a result of puzzlement, curiosity, or a question. Major reasons for continuing learning were: enjoyment from receiving the content, pleasure from learning activities, and satisfaction from possession of knowledge.

- AC 003 675ME *A Study of Program Leadership Among Extension*
ED 026 606 *Specialists Directed Toward Learning What Factors*
Augment and Deter Leadership Expression. Leon
Claud Michaelsen. Cornell University, Ithaca, New
York, 1967.

Questionnaires were sent to specialists in 10 states who devoted 50 per cent or more of their time to Extension work in production, management, and resource use, and to those working in marketing. Specialists aged 45-55 exercised more leadership than older or younger specialists. Those supervised by Extension personnel exercised more leadership than those supervised by university department personnel. Specialists exercised greater leadership if they thought that such leadership was regarded favorably by administrators, felt their leadership would be accepted by others, and received either supportive or restrictive feedback from important others in their professional world. Despite the importance of leadership in most position descriptions, leadership tended to be de-emphasized by tradition, operating procedures, and official attitudes.

- AC 003 460MI *Differences in Perceptions of Needs for Nutrition Ed-*
ucation as Seen by Homemakers from Different Age
Groups and by Lay and Professional Leaders. Janina
Mary Czajkowski. Boston University, Boston, Massa-
chusetts, 1963.

A Connecticut study of perception differences. Lay leaders tended to judge the relative importance of homemakers' problems in terms of homemakers in their own age category. Professionals tended to judge problems by their inherent scientific importance. Homemakers tended to judge in terms of their own situation. The professionals tended to see problems as more numerous and persistent than did the homemakers. Problems such as time and money were seen as persistent concerns by all three groups.