

1963

## **A study of adult education needs and interests in Amherst and regional community.**

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A STUDY OF ADULT EDUCATION NEEDS AND INTERESTS  
IN AMHERST AND REGIONAL COMMUNITY

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A STUDY OF ADULT EDUCATION NEEDS AND INTERESTS  
IN AMHERST AND REGIONAL COMMUNITY

by

Charles E. Abramson

A problem presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the  
Master of Education Degree  
School of Education  
University of Massachusetts  
1963

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	vii
Chapter	
I - INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
General Views of Adult Education . . . . .	1
The Community Approach and Role of the Public School . . . . .	3
Background of Adult Education In Amherst . . . . .	4
Purpose of the Study . . . . .	7
Assumptions and Limitations . . . . .	7
Summary . . . . .	8
II - OUTLINE OF PROCEDURE . . . . .	11
Statement of the Problem . . . . .	11
Subjects and Materials . . . . .	11
General Procedure . . . . .	12
Summary . . . . .	14
III - REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE . . . . .	17
Development and Concerns of Adult Education . . . . .	17
Overview of Adult Education Research . . . . .	21
Adult Education Research Studies . . . . .	22
Research From Other Fields . . . . .	27
Summary . . . . .	30
IV - AN ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES . . . . .	33
Interpretation of Questionnaire Returns . . . . .	33
Educational Levels . . . . .	33



IV - AN ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES (Cont'd.)

Occupational Background . . . . .	34
Ranking of Adult Education Subject Areas . . . . .	36
Concerns of Adult Education . . . . .	38
Public School's Responsibility . . . . .	40
Benefits of Adult Education . . . . .	40
General Feeling of Participants and Non-Participants . . . . .	41
Registration and Tuition Fees . . . . .	42
Reasons For Taking Adult Education Courses . . . . .	44
Credit Courses In Adult Program . . . . .	44
Reasons For Drop-Outs . . . . .	45
Age Distribution of Respondents . . . . .	45
Residence of Respondents . . . . .	47
Rating of Present Adult Education Program . . . . .	48
Significant Comments . . . . .	49
Summary . . . . .	51
V - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	54
Restatement of Problem . . . . .	54
Conclusions . . . . .	54
Recommendations . . . . .	55
Suggestions for Future Research . . . . .	57
APPENDICES . . . . .	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	64

LIST OF TABLES

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Amherst and Region Adult Education Program Survey . . . . .	6
2. Educational Levels Reached . . . . .	34
3. Occupational Backgrounds . . . . .	36
4. Ranking of Adult Education Subject Areas . . . . .	38
5. Concerns of Adult Education . . . . .	39
6. Benefits of Adult Education . . . . .	41
7. Feelings on Registration and Tuition Fees . . . . .	43
8. Reasons for Taking Adult Education Courses . . . . .	44
9. Reasons for Drop-outs in Adult Education in Amherst . . . . .	46
10. Age Distribution of Respondents . . . . .	47
11. Residence of Respondents . . . . .	48
12. Ranking of Adult Education Program Features . . . . .	49



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

General Views of Adult Education. Adult education should be thought of as a natural continuation of the learning process which continues as long as one lives. It is education, planned and meaningful, not just "fads" and "frills". The major purpose of a true adult education program is to enable the adult to function more efficiently - as a citizen, as a parent and homemaker, and as a worker.

Even though programs are constantly growing, adult education is still having trouble in gaining public recognition as "real" education. "In far too many quarters, it is regarded as an amorphous hodgepodge of freakish activities, catering only to the whimsical caprices of people with extra time on their hands."<sup>1</sup> Simply stated, adult education has been misinterpreted, because many people think of it as a fad with courses and activities of little real value and the apparent purpose to keep people busy.

To gain a better understanding of adult education, it is important to keep in mind the following points, each of which represents a small part of the program but is not the exclusive purpose: (1) Adult education has some recreational value but it is not recreation alone; (2) It is not a program of arts and crafts, even though there is a

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<sup>1</sup>. Arthur Crabtree, "What Adult Education Is - And Is Not", New York Times (Magazine Section), May 27, 1962, p. 62.



certain amount of these activities of value in adult education; (3) Adult education should be a purposefully planned activity and does not exist primarily for worthy use of leisure time; and (4) It does not exist exclusively to teach a man to earn a living. In regard to this last point, perhaps more important than vocational understanding is that men learn to live an intelligent life.

It is no longer right to think of adult education as serving a strictly remedial function. "Adult education must now serve both the educated and the undereducated. In fact, on those with the heaviest responsibilities will fall the greatest necessity for continued learning."<sup>2</sup>

There is a great need in the fast-changing world of today for the adult population of America to continue to learn. A glance at statistics on American education shows that more adults are enrolling for further education than there are youngsters in all of our public schools. This comparison may be misleading, as the total of thirty-five million grown-ups pursuing further learning includes persons registered for evening courses at colleges and universities, community colleges, and technical schools, as well as the public-school adult education program. It is this latter group, the formal public school adult education program, that is the concern of this study. Between two and three million adults are seeking expanding opportunities each year in the adult education programs offered through our public schools, and more

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<sup>2</sup>. Thomas D. Bailey, "The School Administrator's Responsibility for Providing an Adequate Program of Adult Education", School Life, February, 1960, p. 2.

than twenty states contribute some form of financial aid for adult education. The need for continuous growth represents the main idea of adult education.

The Community Approach and the Role of the Public School. In a democracy, it is necessary to have a community approach to adult education. Much of one's learning takes place in the family, in the neighborhood, and in other such immediate groups. Cultural development should be community oriented, because the basis of culture is heavily influenced by "face-to-face" relationships. This principle applies to education throughout life.

Adult education developed within the community is more likely to bring about useful change in the community than anything that is brought in from the outside. In other words, it is assumed that people know their own needs, or can determine them with some assistance, better than those from the outside can identify them.

The public schools have a responsibility of meeting the demands of the adult members of the community. The center for adult education in many communities is the public school, and this is the logical place to provide the more formal programs of adult education. Public schools are the best prepared to raise the educational level of the entire community as well as teach parent and family-life classes and citizenship classes.

A number of reasons makes the public school an obvious and logical place for adult programs: (1) It is publicly supported by the same adult population which requires its service; (2) The public school has existing plant and trained personnel to teach and administer the adult



education program; and (3) The public school is acceptable and inexpensive for adult use.

The community which the public school serves can benefit in many ways from the adult education program. First of all, an adult program conducted in a public school can make for dual use of materials and equipment by the pupils during the day and the adults at night.

A program for adults may also bring people into the schools who might not otherwise ever enter them. These people, parents and citizens, will come in contact with teachers and administrators and become aware of school problems. This may lead to better support of the total school program. Finally, the cost of a new school may seem much more reasonable when a community sees the building in use both day and night. An adult education program helps the children of our communities in an indirect way as was pointed out in a speech by former U. S. Commissioner of Education, Laurence G. Derthick:

"As a nation we are not yet sufficiently appreciative of the fact that better informed adults mean richer developmental experiences for children. Thus, providing public funds for adult education should be regarded also as an investment for the children. Our nation certainly does not lack the resources to make additional investments in education."<sup>3</sup>

Background of Adult Education In Amherst. Adult education had its start in Amherst in 1948 when four courses were offered to adults in the community. In the 1955-1956 school year, the Regional School District was formed and included besides Amherst, the towns of Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury. At that time, nine classes were organized

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3. Holmbraker and Reynolds, "The Public Adult School", NEA Journal, May, 1959, p. 46.



with six teachers participating in the program.

The Amherst Regional Adult Education program has increased extensively in the past seven years. In the school year of 1961-1962 thirty-six classes were listed with thirty-one teachers. Table 1 shows the growth of the local adult education program based on available figures for courses offered, the number registered and enrolled, and the number of teachers by year.

An advisory committee consisting of thirteen lay members of the community was in operation during the 1961-1962 school year. This committee served to give helpful suggestions regarding the present program and the advisability of certain course offerings.

The school year for 1962-1963 showed a slight decline from the peak year of 1961-1962 in as much as 700 adults registered for courses and 500 were listed as enrolled in classes. Twenty-three courses were offered, and twenty teachers took part in the instructional phase of the program.

Several factors were responsible for the decrease in the scope of the program for adults in 1962-63: (1) The difficulty encountered in securing teachers for certain courses, (2) the dropping from the curriculum of some courses which were not felt to be of significant value to the community, and (3) the difficulty in scheduling classes at the proper time and place.

At the present time, adult education courses are offered Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings at the Regional High School and Regional Junior High School in Amherst. Residents of Amherst, Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury may attend by paying a \$1.00 registration

fee for each course taken. Those outside the region are assessed \$5.00. There are no actual tuition charges. The materials used in classes are provided by the students.

TABLE 1

## AMHERST AND REGION ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM SURVEY

Year	No. Courses Offered	No. Registered	No. Enrolled	Teachers
1948-49	4	..	..	4
1949-50	5	..	..	5
1950-51	5	..	..	6
1951-52	5	..	..	6
1952-53	8	..	..	..
1953-54	10	..	..	11
1954-55	..	..	..	..
1955-56	9	..	..	6
1956-57	16	..	..	13
1957-58	23	..	..	21
1958-59	25	..	461	19
1959-60	29	..	596	23
1960-61	27	633	531	27
1961-62	36	950	787	31
1962-63	23	700	500	20

Courses offered in the 1962-1963 adult education program in-



cluded: Sewing (Beginning and Advanced), Hooked Rugs (Beginning and Advanced), Braided Rugs, Decorated Ware, Screen Process Printing, Handcraft Gifts and Decorations and Advanced Leathercraft, Woodworking for Men, Furniture Refinishing, Chair-Caning, Typing (Beginning and Intermediate), Basic English, Modern Mathematics, Americanization, and Foreign Languages (French, Spanish, Russian, German).

Purpose of the Study. This study is concerned with an attempt to determine what the community (Amherst and Region) would like to have included in the adult education program and attitudes and suggestions which relate to the present program for adults.

The Amherst-Pelham Regional District School Committee, in an attempt to make improvements in the existing public-adult-education program, expressed the need for securing information relating to educational interests and desires of adults in the region. As a member of the teaching staff at the Regional High School in Amherst, this author became aware of the school committee's interest in securing someone to carry out a local study on adult education. The relationship of this request by the school committee to the investigator's problem requirement at the University of Massachusetts and the implications such a study might have to the overall educational program in the communities of Amherst, Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury were the main factors for interest in this problem.

Assumptions and Limitations. Results of a local study on adult education should show whether the program for adults as it now exists rates favorably or otherwise in the eyes of the public.

An analysis of the results should further indicate what general



areas should be stressed in the adult education program for this regional community.

The findings of the study should also point out features of the adult education program, such as financing, course offerings, and major concerns, which could benefit by change.

There are obvious limitations to any study concerned with the needs and interests of people. Since needs and interests are not always the same, concern in program planning should be given to both. Providing classes and services on popularity alone should be avoided, because people do not always recognize their needs.

Other possible limitations to this study are: (1) A lack of responses from some representative groups within the total community served by the schools; (2) the failure to get an accurate distribution of feelings from persons now enrolled, those who have never taken part in the program for adults, and individuals who dropped-out of the program for some reason; and (3) the inability to include all factors associated in some way with needs and interests of the community.

Summary. The adult education movement in America is an ever-growing part of the total educational program. To keep pace with changes in our society, the program for adults must be sufficiently varied to reach all the people in the community and help them to live as useful members of a democratic society.

The public schools, because of availability of facilities and teachers, are logical places for adult education programs in our communities. The community will benefit from use of the school by adults through individuals gaining a better understanding of the school's work

and justifications for financing the educational program.

From its inception in 1948, the program of education for adults in Amherst has shown a continuous growth in participation and number of courses offered.

An awareness of the importance of a proper program for adults by the Regional District School Committee has prompted a study to determine what the present needs and interests of the community are at this time. It is hoped that the results of this study will eventually lead to a better understanding of adult education as it relates to the total community.



CHAPTER II

OUTLINE OF PROCEDURE

## CHAPTER II

### OUTLINE OF PROCEDURE

Statement of the Problem. The study as formulated by the investigator is concerned with the following problem: What are the public-adult-education needs of the towns of Amherst, Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury based on attitudes and suggestions relating to present adult education program and the educational interests and desires of adults in the region or community?

Subjects and Materials. Three groups were used in this study. The first group consisted of the 500 persons who were enrolled in adult education classes for the 1962-1963 school year. Groups two and three included an additional 500 residents within the region. Individuals in group two were selected from a listing of past enrollments and recorded drop-outs. Persons in the third group were selected by occupation and percentage basis for each of the towns in the region.

A local questionnaire was mailed or distributed to 1,000 selected adult members of the community (region). Included with the questionnaire was a letter of enclosure to explain the purpose of this study. See Appendices A and B at the end of this study for copies of questionnaire and letter of enclosure, respectively.

The questionnaire consisted of fourteen questions and included the following areas: personal data, evaluation of present program, general feelings on the local program, and possible benefits and



concerns of adult education.

The author secured a variety of books, periodicals, and other material in the field of education and adult education in order to gain informational and background material for a better understanding of the problem. Much background material on the Amherst Regional Adult Education Program was provided by the local adult education director, Mr. Robert Domina. Such things as enrollment figures, course offerings, and selected reference material as used by Mr. Domina were very useful in this part of the study.

Letters were sent to known sources for any available literature on the subject of adult education. These sources included: The U. S. Office of Education, the National Association of Public School Adult Education, Adult Education Association of the U. S. A., American Institute of Public Opinion, and others. Selected books and publications on adult education research and related research studies were purchased for review and comparative study.

An apparent lack of research in the field of adult education was noted at local, state, and national levels, especially as related to educational needs and interests. There were some studies made by adult educators and researchers from the fields of sociology and psychology which proved valuable to this investigator. A summary of research studies in adult education is included in Chapter III.

General Procedure. The initial step in carrying out this study was to assemble the informational and background material on public-adult-education in America. This material was studied, and important parts were abstracted for future use in the author's local study on

adult education.

A summary of research material in adult education and other fields which had significance to individual and community needs was then made with the hope of finding useful information for reference and comparisons. As mentioned previously, actual studies on adult needs in education are very few in number.

The next phase of the study consisted of distributing the prepared questionnaire to selected groups within the combined communities served by the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District. Questionnaires were mailed on March 2, 1963, and the deadline for returns was given as March 15, 1963. It was decided at the time of sending this material, to keep a day to day record of the returns. As mentioned earlier in this Chapter, a total of 1,000 people were contacted and requested to fill out and return the questionnaire.

Returns began coming in on March 4 and continued until April 8, with the total number reaching 442.

It was gratifying to the investigator to receive 44.2% of the total number of questionnaires that were sent out to individuals in the community.

Prior to the time that returns started to come in, a chart was prepared for the purpose of tabulating responses to the various questions. On questions requiring the respondent to rank items or areas by number, (example - 1-top choice and 5-least important), it was decided to assign a point value to the numbers in order to insure proper order in the final tally. The tabulating process was relatively easy, and it was decided that the use of a prepared tabulating card or mechanical device



would not be necessary in arranging and counting the data.

At the conclusion of tabulating the returns, totals were recorded of the areas within each question and tables prepared to enable the investigator to make a proper study of the results. Chapter IV of this report includes an analysis of the questionnaire responses and a summary of the significant comments.

The final part in actual procedure used in the study was to put the results in order and arrive at proper recommendations to submit to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee. Recommendations and suggestions appear in Chapter V.

Summary. In dealing with the actual curriculum of an adult education program, it must be remembered that such a program must grow out of the needs and interests of individual citizens of the particular community. No program of adult education can be adequate unless it is structured to fit the community it seeks to serve. This forms the basis for this report.

A study of needs and interests can be made in many ways: the vocational and occupational interests of people in the community, their age distribution, their avocational interests, organizational affiliations, economic earning levels, number of years of schooling completed, reading interests, nationality backgrounds, and health statistics. People vary greatly in many characteristics, such as educational and economic levels, not only between communities, but in neighborhoods of the same community.

In preparing the questionnaire for this study, all possible areas for determining needs and interests were considered, and those that



seemed most useful and significant were used to formulate questions.

To gain a better understanding of public-adult-education in America, a number of books, periodicals, and pamphlets were reviewed for possible relationship to the study. Chapter III includes a review of literature as it relates to adult education and research in the adult education field.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

## CHAPTER III

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Development and Concerns of Adult Education. The development of adult education in America has been a gradual process, probably having its start in early New England town meetings where people discussed community problems. In 1826, the formation of "American Association of Adults for Mutual Education" eventually led to lecture series on varied subjects. Around 1900 the idea of university extension courses was brought to our country from London and Oxford. Adult education became a formal part of education in 1925 by the establishment of the "American Association for Adult Education". Since that time much has gone into the development of this relatively new field of education - financial aid, constant thought and effort, changing values, and the age of automation are all a part of recent advances in adult education.

The period between 1946 and the present time has shown the greatest growth in adult education programs. It is very evident in today's atomic age that educational opportunities must be broadened so that educated adult citizens may understand and solve the many problems.

"Education for adults must be dynamic and forward-looking. In a world as changing as ours, education can no longer have fixed goals in the old sense. It can have no stopping points. It cannot be thought of as an accomplishment - as something to be gained while young and



used as needed for the remainder of life."<sup>1</sup>

Historically, public school adult education has been built on the concept of meeting individual needs. There is some evidence now to indicate that there will be an increasing emphasis on meeting community needs. One reason for the concern for community needs is to gain and hold adequate support for public education. Other community needs include civil defense, social planning, social values, and social disorders such as crime, delinquency, and family disorganization.

The idea of adult education at the start was to offer opportunities for immigrants to learn English or to enable boys and girls who had to leave school an opportunity to complete their formal education. These concepts of the role of the public school in adult education remain important; there are an estimated three million foreign-born individuals in the United States who have not become citizens and two million adults who have not gone to school at all.

In time, the emphasis in adult education was broadened from a strictly remedial program to one which made it possible for employed adults to study new trades or to increase their present occupational skills. Included with this development in adult education was the recognition of homemaking as an important vocation.

The second half of the twentieth century found public schools setting their curriculum for adults toward still another area: the provision of opportunities for all adults in the community - including

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1. Homer Kempfer, Adult Education (New York:McGraw-Hill, 1955), p. 33.

those with full formal education - to have the opportunities to increase knowledge and to acquire skills necessary for making decisions as citizens of a democracy.

An important part of education in our country is the philosophy and practice of democracy. Many Americans have shown a lack of desire to participate in the affairs of democracy or do not know how to take part intelligently. The areas of civics, public affairs, and international understanding are very important to the adult population and should be stressed in the public adult education program.

Perhaps the first consideration in regard to the kind of adult education needed in a democratic society is that adults demand education that has merit for them and serves their recognized needs. As grownups are responsible for their own development, the first characteristic of education for adults is to enable them to set their own purposes.

Other conditions which form the basis of what adults wish in education for themselves are: (1) adults want educational experience that will help them master life, not merely learn organized subject matter; (2) adults want their learning to be immediately useful; (3) adults want to be directly involved in the learning process; (4) adults demand methods which most efficiently develop skills, habits, useful knowledge and attitudes; (5) they want the kind of education which will help them in controlling and enjoying their changing environment; (6) adults demand competent leaders who have the ability to relate a special field to the purposes of the learner.

The kind of education desired by adults will influence the approaches, methods, techniques, and subject matter used in other levels



of education. In addition, the combination of adult learning with life may build and spread the community-school idea through all levels of education.

After a careful study has been made of the people in the community and neighborhood, it is possible to match course offerings with needs and interests. A limited number of broad groupings or subject areas has been formed by studying hundreds of community adult education programs in the country. New York and California, states which are relatively advanced in state aid, supervision and control, have classified the accepted fields of adult education as follows:<sup>2</sup>

- |                                  |                                |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Agriculture                   | 9. Safety and Driver Education |
| 2. Americanization               | 10. Industrial and Trade       |
| 3. Arts and Crafts               | 11. Remedial                   |
| 4. Business and Distributive     | 12. Miscellaneous              |
| 5. Civic and Public Affairs      | 13. General Academic           |
| 6. Engineering and Technological | 14. Homemaking                 |
| 7. Elementary                    | 15. Health and Physical        |
| 8. Parent and Family Life        | 16. Music                      |

Elementary adult education for those who must compensate for education missed in childhood is still needed in nearly every program.

The major part of the adult education curriculum, however, is being set up around the needs and interests of adults who have completed considerable schooling.

"To meet the challenge of the space age, the curriculum of adult education will have to provide studies in subjects as current as the morning headlines and as old as organized knowledge; as functional as the skills of a new job and as rewarding as the humanities; as vital as pending legislation and as sensitive as human relations; as close as a community

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2. George C. Mann, "The Development of Public School Adult Education", Chapter 1 of Public School Adult Education, (Los Angeles: Fashion Press, Inc., 1956), pp. 6 and 7.



problem and as remote as a missile's orbit; as intimate as family living and as public as international peace; as elementary as the three R's and as advanced as the education needs of the adult community it proposes to serve."<sup>3</sup>

Overview of Adult Education Research. There have been a number of studies made by sociologists and psychologists which can be considered as research in adult education. Where effective research is available, much of it has been conducted by social scientists and not by adult educators.

Research in adult education has increased markedly, however, between 1958 and 1963. Studies during this time have included controlled experimentation, comparative analysis, and descriptions of single programs. The fault of the latter type is that these studies are descriptions only, and no real attempt has been made to identify implications of findings for program improvement. A definite need exists for continued and improved research in the field of adult education. A few areas, such as adult learning, have been explored quite thoroughly while others have received almost no research attention.

The adult educator is dealing with volunteers, and because of this there is a tendency to use numbers as the sole basis of evaluation. Research is probably even more necessary in a volunteer program than it is in the compulsory level of public school education.

Some research is being carried out by state and national headquarters of adult education, but this is limited.

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<sup>3</sup>. Thomas D. Bailey, "The School Administrator's Responsibility for Providing an Adequate Program of Adult Education", School Life, February, 1960, p. 5.

Graduate degree programs in colleges and universities have contributed some studies on adult education. As these programs grow, the studies will include resolution of hypotheses and experimental programs.

Perhaps the best research is being carried out by special organizations and foundations such as the "Center for the Study for Liberal Education for Adults", the "Fund for Adult Education", and the "Kellogg Foundation". The Adult Education Association of the U. S. A. has added to the research through special studies and self surveys.

As mentioned earlier, much of the research in adult education has been directed at the adult and learning. The motivations of adults and their attitudes and interests are just beginning to be used in studies. The area of methods and techniques of teaching adults has received some research attention. At this time, however, we are learning more from studies related to adult education which come from sociology and psychology.

Current problems and issues in adult education research can be classified under six categories:<sup>4</sup>

- (1) "Needs and wants of individuals and groups", (2) "plans and purposes of the adult education agency", (3) "the resources of adult education and the community", (4) "the operations of the adult education agency", (5) "methods of teaching adults", and (6) "the outcomes of adult education".

Adult Education Research Studies. Research studies in the field of adult education were reviewed by the author, and references to

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<sup>4</sup>. Burton W. Kreitlow, "Research In Adult Education", 1960 Handbook of Adult Education, pp. 112-114.



studies that relate to the local problem are included in this section. A number of ideas from these studies proved useful in the preparation of the local questionnaire.

There is no exact guide for setting up adult programs, because adults are not so likely as children to accept predetermined courses. The voluntary nature of adult education forces the program director to be his own curriculum expert. The adult educator's first task is to identify needs and interests which adults feel or can be led to recognize.

Program building in adult education is a continuous job, because educational needs of adults change greatly according to economic conditions, world tensions, the domestic situation, and changes in civilization. Sound program building, therefore, requires continuous identification of adults' needs and interests.

An easy way for directors to find out what adults want to learn is to be alert to their individual requests for courses. More programs are based on individual requests than on any other indication of need. This is, no doubt, the most conservative method of programming, but programs based largely on individual requests are usually weak.

In the evaluative study reported by Kempfer<sup>5</sup>, the relative merits of thirteen methods of identifying educational needs and interests of adults were listed in order of merit as follows:

1. Cultivation of "coordinators" or liason people in industry,

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<sup>5</sup>. Homer Kempfer, Identifying Educational Needs of Adults, U. S. Office of Education Circular 330, 1951, pp. 40-51.

business, labor, and community organizations who watch for opportunities for education to perform a service

2. Receiving requests from business, industrial, labor, and community groups

3. Studies of deficiencies of adults

4. Maintenance of extensive personal acquaintance with community leaders and groups

5. Examination of census and similar data

6. Making systematic surveys of business, civic, and industrial life of the community

7. Examination of published surveys of other communities and similar literature

8. Examination of catalogs, schedules, publicity materials, and programs of comparable institutions

9. Acting on hunch

10. Being sensitive to civic, personal, and social problems of people which can be alleviated by education

11. Checking on known interests of people

12. Utilization of check lists and other interest finders

13. Receiving individual requests.

An idea of the public's understanding of adult education can be seen by examining responses given to a questionnaire on this topic which was sent out by Thomas L. Cotton, former president of the New York Adult Education Council, to members of the American Education Association.<sup>6</sup>

Nearly half of those answering felt that the general public considers adult education as predominantly vocational and one-fourth as

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6. Thomas L. Cotton, "Public Understanding of Adult Education", Chapter II of Handbook of Adult Education In the United States (Chicago: Adult Education Association of the U. S. A., 1960), pp. 129-137.



recreational. The other one-fourth saw it as academic or cultural.

Most of the respondents characterized the public image of adult education by decades as follows: The 1910's and 1920's as mostly "citizenship training", "teaching the foreign-born", and Americanization; from 1920-1950 the image grew strongly as vocational; the cultural aspect of adult education shows strongly in the 1950's and projects an emphasis in the 1960's.

In answer to the question on the chief means used by adult educators to create public understanding, "fact to face" promotion rated as most effective with adult education concepts. Promotion by literature and publicity was the next highest in rating, and conferences and meetings rated third in effectiveness. Legislative activity was the least effective means in this rating.

Another question is concerned with the main obstacles to the creation of an accurate public image of adult education. Answers to this question were varied and reflected confusion and lack of communication. Some of the mentioned obstacles were: (1) Common image of adult educated not accepted; (2) adult education a luxury not a necessity; (3) education is for children; (4) vocational interests predominate; (5) a failure to involve community leaders; (6) communication of facts and attitudes is lacking; (7) a need for clearing house of materials; (8) many seek entertainment rather than education; and (9) leaders lack interpretive skills.

Of the different statements made in answer to the question on trends noted in the American concept of adult education, the highest number said that the trend is toward community improvement as a concept.



Many stuck to the usual concept that adult education is for the individual's benefit, and the trend toward benefit of the family as a concept rated third. Answers to this question indicate that the concept of adult education for community improvement is growing.

A study made in 1951 indicated marked differences in enrollment trends in the large, medium-sized, and small cities.<sup>7</sup> The most rapid expansion of enrollment in the metropolitan areas was in public affairs, safety and driver education, and remedial education. In middle-sized cities the greatest increase was in recreational skills, followed by agriculture and safety and driver education.

The subjects in order of enrollment in all schools in 1951 were ranked as follows:

1. Civic and public affairs
2. Commercial and distributive education
3. Vocational and technical guidance
4. General academic education
5. Homemaking education
6. Americanization and elementary education
7. Health and physical education
8. Parent and family life education
9. Practical arts and crafts
10. Fine arts
11. Recreational skills
12. Safety and driver education
13. Agriculture
14. Personal improvement
15. Remedial education

Even though enrollment figures or popularity of courses is not the only means of selecting courses for the program, it is interesting to compare the above ranking of subjects with the rating of general

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7. A Study In Urban Public School Adult Education Programs (Washington:National Education Association, 1952), pp. 15-25.

areas by adults responding to this question on the local questionnaire in the Amherst Region. This appears in Table 4 of Chapter IV, and the rating of a number of the course areas is quite similar to the standings in the National Education Association's study.

There have been very few studies on adult needs and interests relating to education. One such study whose purpose was to discover the "educational interests" of adults by means of a questionnaire was made in 1949 by Perdue B. Graves.<sup>8</sup> The major interpretation the author made of his findings does not relate directly to the stated purpose, but rather serves to point to the need for further research. He found that the greatest need was for more information about existing programs, because many courses which people favored attending were being offered at the time.

"It is possible that more could be learned about adult interests if enrollments in adult education activities were studied in a number of communities and related to the age and sex of the participants, holding educational and socio-economic statuses constant. The hypothesis here is that if a sufficiently large body of data showed consistent patterns by age groups, knowledge as to the influence of age on interests might be enhanced to the advantage of program building."<sup>9</sup>

Research From Other Fields. The field of psychology contributed a series of studies on the psychology of the adult, and those dealing with adult intelligence and capacity to learn were particularly im-

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8. Perdue B. Graves, An Investigation of Adult Education Needs and Interests In Topeka, Ed. D. dissertation, Univ. of Kansas, 1949.

9. Edmund Brunner, et al., An Overview of Adult Education Research, Chapter V, "Adult Interests and Education" (by Kirchner), Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., Chicago, 1959, p. 87.



portant to the adult education movement. The pioneer and fundamental research in this area is E. L. Thorndike's famous, Adult Learning.<sup>10</sup> This detailed study showed that adults can learn, but at a slowly declining rate of about one per cent a year from ages 45-70 years.

Thorndike pointed out that adults learn less than they might partly because they underestimate their ability to learn and partly because of self-limitations resulting from narrowness of interests. This would seem to indicate that in building a program of education for adults, consideration should be given to adequate motivation.

Another contribution of Thorndike's study was to call attention to adult learning as a highly important area for psychological research. Subsequent studies in the field confirmed Thorndike's basic finding and also extended it.

One of the basic pieces of research on this point has been conducted by Irving Lorge. Lorge sums up the findings of research in this area as follows:

"Whenever learning ability is measured in terms of power ability - i.e. learning without stringent time limits, the evidence is clear that the learning ability does not change significantly from age 20 to 60 years."<sup>11</sup>

Psychologists have devised a number of tests to measure adult learning and intelligence, but most of these have used items of high specificity. There has been little done with reference to learning as

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10. E. L. Thorndike, Adult Learning, New York:Macmillan, 1928.

11. Irving Lorge, Education for Later Maturity, New York:William Morrow and Company, 1955.



related to ideas and attitudes.

Sociologists working in the field of adult learning use the term "acceptance" rather than the term learning. Acceptance refers to learned behaviors and ideas. Adult learning as related to sociological aspects has not been clearly defined. The motivations of participants in adult education are often not only social in character, but also quite different from what their instructors might think them to be.

In 1935, Professor Wayne Dennis presented an overview of the research on adult interests.<sup>12</sup> Dennis asserts that the study of human interests is the study of one's choice of activities. The important thing in education is to determine under what conditions educational activities will be chosen over other activities. Dennis concludes that activities are the best indicators of interests. He further argues that psychological interest tests show only what people will "say" not what they will "do".

A study of vocational interests by means of an interest inventory was initiated by Edward K. Strong in the early 1930's and was later continued for a period of 22 years.<sup>13</sup> The primary finding is that approximately the same rank-order of occupational interests is maintained over one to twenty-two years. Another finding pointed to a decrease from age 25 to 55 in social interests, with an increase in individual interests. Strong's data, when fully analyzed, shows that

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12. Wayne Dennis, "Adult Interest as Related to Education", Interests and Abilities and Techniques of Adult Education, Univ. of Virginia, 1935.

13. Edward K. Strong, "Permanence of Interest Scores Over 22 Years", Journal of Applied Psychology, 35, 1951.

interests best liked at 25 tend to increase, while those least liked tend to decrease.

The relationship between education and income has been proven significant by agricultural extension and workers' education studies as well as others. Findings indicate that adults of lower education and income status take part less in adult education activities than do others. This would suggest that more attention might be given to planning the program for lower status groups.

In 1952, an intensive study of recreation and the aging process was carried out to investigate the distinction between desired and actual participation.<sup>14</sup> The sample included adult men, ages 20-59, having a range of income from 0 - \$7,000 and varying levels of education. Baley found that the higher the income, the fewer the recreational activities that were liked. The activities were also more individualistic in the higher income groups.

Summary. Adult education programs in the United States have shown considerable growth in enrollments and course offerings from 1946 to the present time. During this period, the concept of public adult education has shown a gradual change from meeting individual needs to meeting the needs of the family and community. To meet the many changes of the space age, programs for adults must be broadened and constantly evaluated for possible revision.

Research in adult education has not been extensive, but it has

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<sup>14</sup>. J. A. Baley, Recreation and the Aging Process, Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1952.



increased in the last five years. Many of the important studies have come from the fields of sociology and psychology. There is a continued need for improved research in adult education, and areas such as motivation of adults and attitudes and interests are particularly important for future studies.

The studies which have been considered in this chapter were important to the author's local study on community needs and interests.



CHAPTER IV

AN ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

## CHAPTER IV

### AN ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Interpretation of Questionnaire Returns. The investigator had a number of areas to consider in order to properly interpret the returned questionnaires and to relate the findings to educational needs and interests of the community. These areas included: individual characteristics, general areas and concerns of adult education, evaluation of the present program, reasons for drop-outs, and educational and occupational backgrounds of adults in the community. Each of these areas was felt to be important in attempting to determine needs and interests of adults in Amherst and the regional district. A few of the areas of concern received considerably more attention in the various parts of the questionnaire.

Educational Levels. It was mentioned earlier in this study that although elementary education is still needed in programs of adult education, a large part of the curriculum should be set up for adults who have completed considerable education. This idea is based on the fact that people of today are completing many more years of schooling than ever before in the country's history.

Results of this question are shown in Table 2. It was found that a very high percentage of those replying had graduated from high school or college. These two areas made for a total percentage of 57.9 with 29.2% being high school graduates and 28.7% college graduates.



A particularly interesting finding was that 93.2% of the total had reached the high school graduate level or higher, and only 6.8% were in the "elementary" and "attended high school" levels.

TABLE 2

## EDUCATIONAL LEVELS REACHED

Educational Level	Number	Percent
Ended in Elementary Grades	7	1.6
Attended High School	23	5.2
High School Graduate	129	29.2
College Graduate	127	28.7
Advanced Study	70	15.8
Graduate Degree	<u>86</u>	<u>19.5</u>
Total	442	100.0

The author feels that the figures on educational levels support the idea that a large part of the curriculum for adults should be designed for those who have completed considerable education. As Amherst is an educational center, the influence of higher education appears to be a significant factor in the very high level of education reached by adults in the region.

Occupational Background. Characteristics of people served by public school adult education were summarized by Louis K. Mather as follows:

"They come from all age groups - from the retired and

aged, from those in the prime of life and productive power, and from young people just out of high school. A quarter of all enrollees are workers, both highly skilled and otherwise. Another quarter are housewives. One student out of six, it is estimated, is a clerical or business worker. Only one in twenty is a professional person. One participant in every fifty is illiterate. Every thirteenth student is an alien preparing himself through Americanization courses to seek U. S. citizenship. Fewer than one in two hundred is a physically or mentally-handicapped person taking part in remedial education courses."<sup>1</sup>

Individual characteristics were considered in three questions of the investigator's questionnaire - the first on educational level, the second on occupational background, and the third area was covered in question twelve dealing with age ranges. The summary as given by Mather was felt to be important in showing the wide range of interests that must be considered in program planning.

It must be remembered that characteristics of people will vary greatly between communities and even within a given community. See Table 3 for a general breakdown of occupations of adults in Amherst and region.

The figures and percentages that were arrived at by tabulation of the question on occupation or area of employment seemed significant in a number of respects: (1) A large percentage (25.8) of respondents, whether enrolled or not, were housewives; (2) the 23.1% for those in the field of education further substantiated the view of Amherst as a highly educational community; and (3) the combined percentage of 21.9 for persons employed in business (11.3%) and clerical type work (10.6%),

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<sup>1</sup>. Louis K. Mather, The New American School For Adults, (Washington:National Education Association, 1955), p. 11.



related closely to Mather's finding of one out of six in adult education as being a clerical or business worker. Results of this question also pointed to the type of community to be serviced by the adult education program - a community with very little industry and high in the areas of business, professional, and educational type work.

TABLE 3  
OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUNDS

Area of Employment	Number	Percent
Agriculture	13	2.9
Business	50	11.3
Armed Forces	6	1.4
Technical	17	3.8
Education	102	23.1
Construction or Labor	7	1.6
Student	17	3.8
Housewife	114	25.8
Industry	15	3.4
Clerk, Bookkeeper, Stenographer	47	10.6
Medicine, Law, etc.	30	6.8
Sales Representative	5	1.2
Local, State, or Federal Government	<u>19</u>	<u>4.3</u>
Total	442	100.0

Ranking of Adult Education Subject Areas. A ranking of approved

subjects in public adult education was discussed in Chapter III of this study. The subjects were ranked in order of enrollment and included schools of large, medium-sized, and small cities as surveyed by the National Education Association in 1951.

It was interesting to note the similarities that existed upon studying the answers to this question on the investigator's questionnaire and relating them to the N. E. A. study. Persons were asked to rank what they felt were the five most important areas of adult education for their particular community. By assigning a point value to numbers recorded under each area, the author was able to determine the top seven general areas in order of importance. Table 4 shows the results of tabulation on this question. The last column of the table gives the comparative rank of listed subject areas as determined by the National Education Association's 1951 study.

It can be readily seen that three areas, (civil and public affairs, homemaking, and health and physical), received identical rankings on both the local questionnaire and the national study on enrollment figures. This would indicate a definite relationship between interests of adults in the Amherst region and available enrollment figures for courses offered on the national level. A very close ranking, (3 on the local questionnaire and 4 on the national study), was further noted in the "general academic" area.

The findings on this question were important in as much as individual needs and interests within the community pointed to highly important areas such as "civic and public affairs", "general academic", and "parent and family life". These areas have not been extensively



TABLE 4  
RANKING OF ADULT EDUCATION SUBJECT AREAS

Local Ranking	Subject Area	No. of Times Ranked	Converted Point Totals	1951 Ranking of N. E. A.
(1)	Civic and Public Affairs	254	878	(1)
(2)	Arts and Crafts	245	809	(9)
(3)	General Academic	199	642	(4)
(4)	Parent and Family Life	176	583	(8)
(5)	Homemaking	148	415	(5)
(6)	Industrial and Trade	132	382	(2)
(7)	Health and Physical	146	360	(7)

covered in the present or preceding programs for adults in Amherst.

Concerns of Adult Education. A question dealing with concerns of adult education was included in the investigator's questionnaire, and the individual was asked to check on a continuum scale whether he felt the program should be recreational, vocational, or academic (see question 4 in Appendix A of this study).

According to the instructions given, a check at the extreme ends of the scale would indicate purely recreational or academic courses, while a check at the mid-point would show a balanced program consisting of equal attention to recreational, vocational, and academic subjects as the total concern. To indicate vocational tendencies, the respondent placed a check in the square or squares nearest the mid-point.

Although this question proved difficult to understand by those

replying, a total of 368 persons checked where they felt the concern of adult education should properly be placed. Of this total 191 or almost 52% indicated that all three areas should receive equal attention in the overall adult education program. By examining the remaining responses, it was found that 110 (29.8%) of the total saw the concern to be toward the "academic" and 67 (18.5%) took the view toward recreation as the concern. A picture of the concerns of adult education as seen by those answering this question is presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5  
CONCERNS OF ADULT EDUCATION

Concern	Number	Percent
Recreational	15	4.1
Vocational Tendency	56	15.2
Academic	16	4.2
Balance of three (3)	191	51.7
Combination of Areas	<u>90</u>	<u>24.8</u>
Total	368	100.0
Toward Recreation	67	18.5
Toward Academic	110	29.8
Balanced Program	<u>191</u>	<u>51.7</u>
Total	368	100.0

The author had hoped to find at what point along the scale



leading from recreational to academic, the largest concentration of responses would fall. Perhaps the only real finding in this question was that over half of those answering felt that a balance of recreational, vocational and academic areas should be offered in the Amherst program.

Public School's Responsibility. Question number five on the local questionnaire was concerned with whether or not the public schools should have a responsibility in meeting the educational demands of the adult members of the community. This particular question had little bearing on the overall study other than to see if the people honestly felt that the public school was the logical place in which to conduct a program of education for adults.

In answer to this question, 354 respondents checked "Yes", 56 marked "No", and 32 did not reply. Reasons given for not seeing the public school as having the responsibility were: (1) teachers have enough to do already, (2) public schools are for the children, (3) adult education is a supplement for those interested, (4) to educate our children is the only responsibility, (5) may properly assume but has no obligation to do so, (6) taxpayers are overburdened by salaries of teachers, and (7) no, if the aim is recreational.

Benefits of Adult Education. A few studies have noted that there is a trend in the American concept of adult education toward community improvement as the major benefit. In an attempt to determine what people in Amherst felt the benefit of adult education to be, the investigator constructed a continuum as used in the question on adult education concerns. The respondent could check anywhere along the scale,

to show benefit to the individual, family, or community. A mark in the middle was to denote equal benefit to all three. Table 6 summarizes the findings of this question.

TABLE 6  
BENEFITS OF ADULT EDUCATION

Benefit	Number	Percent
Toward Individual	112	30.2
Toward Family	20	5.4
Toward Community	58	15.6
An Equal Benefit to Each	<u>181</u>	<u>48.8</u>
Total	371	100.0

It is reasonable to believe that adult education starts for many as an individual betterment idea and as time goes by leads to family improvement and on to community development.

General Feeling of Participants and Non-Participants. The seventh question on the questionnaire consisted of several parts with the main section to show how many of the respondents had ever been enrolled in the adult education program and how many had never participated in the program. Results on this part of the question revealed that 317 (71.7%) had at some time taken part in the program for adults in Amherst and 125 (28.3%) had at no time enrolled.

Those who answered "Yes" to enrollment were asked to check whether they felt the program for adults in Amherst was: (1) a good



program, (2) needed to be broadened, or (3) of very little value. Tabulation of replies showed that 216 (66.6%) felt it to be a good program and 101 (31.5%) thought the program should be broadened. Only 7 (1.9%) of those answering viewed adult education as having very little value.

The last section of this question consisted of a check by respondents who had answered "No" to enrollment, to show reason for not participating in the program. Of the 125 who had indicated non-participation, 123 replied as follows: "other obligations" (45), "lack of time" (45), "not informed" (4), and "courses do not meet my needs" (37).

The findings on this part of the questionnaire seem to indicate several things in regard to enrollment and general feelings for the program: (1) A good percentage of the residents have taken advantage of the adult education program in Amherst; (2) those who have participated feel that the program is good, for the most part, but could be broadened to include other areas; (3) non-participation is largely a matter of other obligations or a lack of time as expressed by 75% of those in this category; and (4) nearly .25% of the non-participants are not taking part, because courses do not meet their needs.

Registration and Tuition Fees. In an attempt to determine feelings on costs of the adult education program, question eight allowed for a selection of one of three possible ways to finance the program. The choices were (1) "present fee of \$1.00 for those in region and \$5.00 for others is appropriate", (2) "would favor raising the fee (registration and tuition) to improve program", and (3) "no

fee for residents of the region - should be part of the total educational program."

A total of 242 or 54.8% of those answering felt that the present fee was adequate, while 188 (42.5%) indicated that they would favor raising the fee. Only 12 respondents (2.7%) checked the statement that no fee should be charged.

Table 7 summarizes the results of this question.

TABLE 7

FEELINGS ON REGISTRATION AND TUITION FEES

View of Respondent	Number	Percent
Present fee is appropriate	242	54.8
Favor raising the fee	188	42.5
No fee for residents	<u>12</u>	<u>2.7</u>
Total	442	100.0

Fees for public school adult education are usually concerned with instructional costs, only, and not with the basic costs of plant operation, maintenance, and administrative leadership. Results of the findings on local adult education costs would lead the investigator to believe that the majority of persons favor a minimum tuition and registration fee.

A number of comments relating to fees expressed the idea that a raise in tuition might help to keep the drop-out rate lower. Another feeling was that adults can and should pay for this type of program.



Reasons For Taking Adult Education Courses. A question on reasons for taking an adult education course was included in the study for the purpose of seeing why adults take part in the educational program. Tabulation of returns on this question showed that three of the five choices rated very close as reasons for participation, and this is shown quite clearly in Table 8.

TABLE 8

## REASONS FOR TAKING ADULT EDUCATION COURSES

Reason	Number	Percent
Enrichment	169	38.3
Social or recreation	86	19.5
Supplement or improve education	170	38.5
Gain better understanding of child's work	19	4.3
Improve skills	173	39.2

An examination of the figures in Table 8 shows that many of the 442 returns included a check for more than one reason for taking a course in adult education. The author feels that because the areas of enrichment, supplemental education, and improvement of skills are so closely related, this resulted in a close distribution.

Credit Courses In Adult Program. Available evidence indicates a gradual shift away from credit programs toward relatively informal programs in public school adult education. This can be best explained by the increasing number of individuals completing high school each

year.

In answer to the question on whether or not credit courses that would lead to diploma requirements for high school graduation should be added to the adult education program in Amherst, 293 replied "Yes", 106 answered "No", and 23 did not reply.

It should be noted that of the 293 that responded in favor of adding credit courses, many qualified their answer by stating that this should be done if the need is great enough. A separate study on this area might be necessary in order to prove the need for course offerings of the credit type.

Reasons For Drop-Outs. Another area which would certainly benefit from further study is the problem of why people drop out of adult education programs. It was felt that a question on reasons for drop-outs might be of help in determining certain aspects of the adult program in Amherst.

Individuals filling out the questionnaire were asked to check one of the five listed reasons for withdrawing from the program. A total of 140 persons filled in this question, and this indicates, by relating to question 7 which had 317 as being enrollees, that over 33 percent of the respondents were drop-outs at some time. Table 9 summarizes the investigator's findings on the local drop-out problem.

As might be expected, the largest number of persons, 96, checked either "lack of time" or "personal reasons" for the factor in their dropping from the program. This represented a combined percentage of 68.6 of the total number answering this question.

Age Distribution of Respondents. As mentioned earlier in this



chapter, individual characteristics were considered under several parts of the questionnaire and consisted of educational level, occupational background and age level. This latter area, age level, was included in question number 12 which asked the individual to check his age bracket. The investigator hoped to find from this question, a sample of possible age distributions in the adult education program. The results of tabulation on age levels are shown in Table 10.

TABLE 9

## REASONS FOR DROP-OUTS IN ADULT EDUCATION IN AMHERST

Reason	Number	Percent
Teaching ineffective	20	14.3
Course content disappointing	14	10.0
Lack of time	54	38.6
Personal reasons	42	30.0
Lost interest in course	<u>10</u>	<u>7.1</u>
Total	140	100.0

An interesting finding on the age distribution of respondents was that 57.9% of them were within the age range of 30-49 years. It was further noted that 80.5% of the returns showed an age of 30 or over.

Studies on age have given evidence that although interests do not alter greatly with aging, there is a trend away from social interests to individualized ones. The concentration of replies within the 30-49

age brackets in the author's study appears to support the high educational level factor as reported in the analysis of question one.

TABLE 10  
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

Age Bracket	Number	Percent
18 - 19	10	2.3
20 - 24	35	7.9
25 - 29	41	9.3
30 - 39	123	27.8
40 - 49	133	30.1
50 - 59	74	16.7
60 and above	<u>26</u>	<u>5.9</u>
Total	442	100.0

Residence of Respondents. In question thirteen, the individual was asked to check the town in which he lived. The purpose was to see how closely the breakdown would compare with the regular public school (Regional) enrollment figures. Table 11 gives the breakdown of findings on residence, and the relationship with school enrollment figures can be seen by examining the last column in the table.

The results on residence of respondents gives the expected breakdown by towns with Amherst having the high of 84.2%. By comparing percentages tabulated on the questionnaire with percentages on enrollment figures for the Amherst Regional Junior and Senior High Schools, a



natural relationship can be seen. The only real value of these findings to the author's study is to support the location of the adult education program in the Regional High School (Amherst) as the logical place for such activity.

TABLE 11  
RESIDENCE OF RESPONDENTS

Town	Number	Percent	Enrollment by Percentage* In Regional Schools
Amherst	372	84.2	79.8
Pelham	20	4.5	6.8
Leverett	28	6.3	10.7
Shutesbury	3	0.7	2.7
Outside Region	<u>19</u>	<u>4.3</u>	<u>. . .</u>
Total	442	100.0	100.0

\*From figures in 1962 Town Report

Rating of Present Adult Education Program. The final question on the local questionnaire was a rating of program features by those persons who were enrolled at the time of filling out the form.

Features listed were: (1) teaching staff, (2) course offerings, (3) location of program, (4) scheduling of classes, and (5) available facilities. The persons completing this question were asked to rate the program by placing the number "1" for best feature of program, "2" for next best feature, "3" for third choice, "4" for fourth choice,

and "5" for least desirable feature.

The investigator used the same procedure as described in question three, "ranking of subject areas", to tabulate the returns; a point value was assigned to each number as it appeared under the feature - five points for a number one ranking and one point for a number five ranking. Table 12 gives a picture of the rank order of program features.

TABLE 12

RANKING OF ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM FEATURES

Ranking	Program Features	No. of Times Ranked	Converted Point Totals
1	Teaching staff	148	642
2	Location of program	131	365
3	Course offerings	103	355
4	Available facilities	129	330
5	Scheduling	124	260

Significant Comments. There were a number of good comments included at the end of many of the returned questionnaires. This was very satisfying to the author, as nearly all of the remarks were constructive in nature and well-written. Some of the more frequently mentioned points or most significant comments to this study were:

1. A very worthwhile, useful, and relaxing program.
2. Raise in fee might help to keep drop-out rate lower.
3. A need for more advanced publicity on program.



4. Credit courses should be offered.
5. Examine "advanced" courses for proper contents and progression - same for "beginners" - language an example.
6. Explain the procedure to follow in getting a course started.
7. Would like to see a physical fitness program.
8. Adults can and should pay for this type of program - it should be self-supporting.
9. Recommend the use of mimeograph instruction sheets and group lectures.
10. Evaluation of program should be a continuous process as needs and desires change from year to year.
11. Include Spanish in the program and request Gregg shorthand refresher course.
12. Added physical education type classes and explore possible use of the college pools.
13. An interest in investment and foreign language courses.
14. More needs to be done to train and educate the person who is not going on to college or who has dropped out of high school.
15. A well-organized course on family relations or problems to help deal with community problem of juvenile delinquency. Such a course to include outside speakers, homework, and required reading.
16. Our civilization of today requires education to be a life-long process; one needs more training in humanities, social science, and science to best understand the environment. There are also utilitarian demands - skills developed early in life become no longer needed. Technology and the demands of change create tremendous needs for new skills, e.g. computer programming, electronics technicians, appliance repairman.
17. Amherst can and should make every effort, consistent with sound financing, to continue the scope of its adult education program and make Amherst a leader in the field of adult education.
18. Take advantage of University and Amherst College for specialized courses.



19. Adult education should be the concern of all persons especially in the critical times which confront us. The courses offered should be such that they not only benefit the individual but also benefit the community as a whole.

Summary. A study of the questionnaire returns has pointed to a number of interesting findings relating to feelings on the existing program for adults and indications on educational needs and interests of persons in the community. The author has presented the results of tabulation on the local questionnaire in this chapter with the hope that a clearer picture of adult education in Amherst will be seen by the reader.

The analysis of returns has shown the following: (1) A large percentage of residents has achieved a high level of education; (2) occupation figures indicate that Amherst is a non-industrial community which is highly oriented to business, professional and educational type work; (3) respondents expressed high interest in the course areas of "civic and public affairs", "general academic" and "parent and family life", (4) over half of those answering viewed the concern of adult education as equal attention to recreational, vocational, and academic areas; (5) the public school as the logical place for adult education programs was overwhelmingly favored by the respondents; (6) a feeling by many (48%) that adult education gives equal benefit to the individual, family, and community; (7) present program for adults in Amherst is seen as quite good by participants; (8) the main factors for non-participation are lack of time and personal reasons; (9) although the present fee for courses is favored, an indication is that many would approve of a slight raise in tuition and registration



fee(s); (10) main reasons for taking courses are to improve skills, supplement education, and enrichment; (11) many persons feel that credit courses should be offered in the adult education program; (12) about 33% of the respondents were "drop-outs" with the main reasons for leaving given as "lack of time" and "personal reasons"; (13) over 80% of those answering were thirty years of age or older; (14) figures on residence support the Regional High School as the logical place for the adult education program; and (15) teaching staff rated as the best feature of the present adult education program, followed in order by location of program, course offerings, available facilities, and scheduling.

**CHAPTER V**

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Restatement of Problem. The author, in presenting this study, has been dealing with the problem of educational needs and interests of adults in the regional community serviced by the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District. In order to determine what these needs and interests are, the study has attempted to analyze suggestions and attitudes which relate to the existing adult education program and interests and desires on education as indicated by the questionnaire responses.

Conclusions. It was evident from the start that very little research had been accomplished in the field of adult education on the particular area of needs and interests. This fact, however, was not seen as a handicap to the study, because the investigator was primarily interested in the citizens of this particular community. The first conclusion, therefore, is concerned with the idea that an adult education program must be structured to fit the community it seeks to serve. In this respect, Amherst and the surrounding region was found to be a non-industrial community with many of the residents involved in business, education, and professional-type work. The average educational level reached seems to be relatively high.

The second conclusion is that there appears to be a genuine interest in the adult education program in Amherst as evidenced by the

good percentage (44.2%) of returns on the questionnaire phase of this study and the many worthwhile comments which were submitted by respondents.

A third point which the writer feels to be important is the stand taken by the Amherst-Pelham Regional District School Committee on the value of a program of education for adults. This can be seen by studying the constant growth of course offerings and the willingness to supply a program director and professional teaching staff. A further indication of their interest in adult education is seen in the form of this study which came about as a result of school committee desire to determine educational needs and interests of adults in the community in order to make improvements and adjustments where needed.

There is an apparent interest in a number of curriculum areas that have not been fully explored in the local adult education program. The conclusion in this respect is that courses dealing with civic and public affairs, general academic areas, and parent and family life, represent needs as well as interests for adults in nearly all communities.

As expressed in the results of questions four and six on the questionnaire, the author concludes that there is a need for a balanced program of recreational, vocational, and academic areas which will bring benefit to the individual, the family, and the community.

The final conclusion is that a very good indication of adult needs and interests can be found from a careful study of the significant comments as listed in the previous chapter.

Recommendations. A study of the present adult education program



in Amherst has led to the following general recommendations by the investigator:

1. There is a need for continuous evaluation of the overall program.
2. The concept of a broadened program for adults is important in program planning.
3. Continue to use the community advisory committee and give special attention to the selection of committee members.
4. To insure proper progression in certain courses, the "beginning" and "advanced" levels should be studied for parts to be included in each.
5. Study the possibility of expanding the facilities for adult education to include part-time use of college and University facilities.

An analysis of the questionnaire responses and a study of important findings in the field of adult education have prompted the author to make the more specific recommendations as listed below:

1. In planning the program give careful consideration to the general areas of adult education that adults in the community feel are most important - civic and public affairs, arts and crafts, general academic, parent and family life, homemaking, industrial and trade, and health and physical education.
2. The curriculum should serve to reach a wide range of educational needs by including the seven cardinal principles of education as basic program objectives.
3. Evaluation of the program for adults should be a continuous process as needs and desires within the community change from time to time.
4. Be ever-mindful of the expanding scope of adult education activities. The need for continuous growth represents the main idea of adult education.
5. Members of the community advisory committee should be selected on the basis of representation from such areas as age levels, religious groups, occupational backgrounds, socio-economic groups, and community organizations.
6. It is important to consider overall community needs in

planning the program for adults. These might include an understanding of public education, civil defense, social values, and social disorders.

7. The problem on whether or not to add credit courses to the local adult education program should be studied to determine if the need for such courses is great enough for their inclusion in the program.

Suggestions For Future Research. There is a definite need for continued research in adult education at all levels - national, state, and local. The voluntary nature of adult education implies that additional information on existing programs is important for comparisons and improvements to the local program of education for adults.

The author suggests that the following topics or areas might prove to be important research studies of value to the Amherst Adult Education Program:

1. A study on the need for adding credit courses to the adult education program.
2. A study of the reasons for drop-outs in the program for adults.
3. Periodic evaluation of the local adult education program.
4. A study on adult education resources within the community.
5. An analysis of teaching methods used in the various adult education courses.
6. A survey on outcomes of adult education.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ADULT EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this study is to determine what the community would like to have in the adult education program and attitudes and suggestions relating to the present program for adults.

INSTRUCTIONS

\*Question 4: (1) - all recreation; (4 & 6) - strongly vocational; (5) - equal attention to each classification; (10) - all academic.

\*Question 6: (1) - individual only; (4 & 6) - strongly family; (5) - equal benefit to each classification; (10) - community only.

\*Numbers in between mid-point and extremes would indicate tendencies to combine classifications.

1. Please check the educational level that you have reached:

Ended in elementary grades  Attended high school  High school graduate  College graduate  Advanced study  Graduate degree.

2. Occupational background (check area of employment):

Agriculture  Business  Armed Forces  Technical  Education  
 Construction or Labor  Student  Housewife  Industry  
 Clerk, Bookkeeper, Stenographer  Medicine, Law, etc.  Sales Representative  Local, State, or Federal Government.

3. Please rank, (5 only), the general areas of adult education that you feel are most important for our community (1-top choice, 5-least important):

<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety & Driver Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Americanization	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial & Trade
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Crafts	<input type="checkbox"/> Remedial
<input type="checkbox"/> Business & Distributive	<input type="checkbox"/> General Academic
<input type="checkbox"/> Civic & Public Affairs	<input type="checkbox"/> Homemaking
<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering & Technological	<input type="checkbox"/> Health & Physical
<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Music
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent & Family Life	



4. Place a check in one of the boxes to indicate what you feel should be the concern of adult education:

<u>RECREATIONAL</u>			<u>VOCATIONAL</u>				<u>ACADEMIC</u>		
Purely recreational			Occupational interests				Supplemental education		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5. Should the public schools have a responsibility of meeting the educational demands of the adult members of the community?  Yes  No  
If answer is "No", please explain why. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Check in square under number to show what you feel should be the benefit of adult education:

<u>Individual Benefit</u>			<u>Family's Benefit</u>				<u>Community Improvement</u>		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7. Are you now or have you ever been enrolled in our adult education program?  Yes  No

7a. If answer is yes, what is your feeling on present program?

A good program  Program should be broadened  very little value.

7b. If answer is no, please check one:

other obligations  lack of time  not informed  courses do not meet my needs.

8. Please indicate your feeling on registration fee and tuition for courses (check one):

Present fee of \$1.00 for those in region and \$5.00 for others is appropriate.

Would favor raising the fee (registration and tuition) to improve program.

No fee for residents of the region - should be part of the total educational program.

9. What would be your reason for taking an adult education course?

Enrichment  Social or recreation  Supplement or improve education  Gain a better understanding of my child's work in school  Improve skills.

10. Would it be wise to add credit courses that would lead to diploma requirements for high school graduation?  Yes  No

11. If you at some time dropped out of the adult education program, please check reason for leaving:

Teaching ineffective  Course content disappointing  Lack of time  
 Personal reasons  Lost interest in course.

12. Please check age bracket of individual filling out this form:

(18-19)  (20-24)  (25-29)  (30-39)  (40-49)  (50-59)  
 (60 and above).

13. Check the town in which you reside:

Amherst  Pelham  Leverett  Shutesbury  Outside of region.

14. If presently enrolled, please rate existing program on the following features. Rank in order of importance by using numbers 1-5 as follows:

<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching staff	1. Best feature of existing program.
<input type="checkbox"/> Course offerings	2. Next best feature.
<input type="checkbox"/> Location of program	3. Third choice.
<input type="checkbox"/> Scheduling of classes	4. Fourth choice.
<input type="checkbox"/> Available facilities	5. Least desirable feature.

15. List below any comments that you might have regarding adult education: (Use reverse side of this form, if necessary.)



APPENDIX B

LETTER OF ENCLOSURE

The Amherst-Pelham Regional District School Committee, in an effort to make improvements in the existing public-adult-education program, has expressed the need for securing information relating to educational interests and desires of adults in the region.

As a part of my Master's Degree requirements at the University of Massachusetts, School of Education, I am sending out the enclosed questionnaire to individuals who will form a representative cross-section of our community. The results of this study will be tabulated and analyzed for implications relating to the existing adult education program, and recommendations for changes will be submitted to the school committee.

At the present time, adult education courses are offered Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings at the Regional High School and Regional Junior High School in Amherst. Residents of Amherst, Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury may attend by paying a \$1.00 registration fee for each course taken. Those outside the region are assessed \$5.00. There are no actual tuition charges. The materials used in classes are provided by the students. Subjects offered in the 1962-1963 program include: Sewing (Beginning and Advanced), Hooked Rugs (Beginning and Advanced), Braided Rugs, Decorated Ware, Screen Process Printing, Handcraft Gifts and Decorations and Advanced Leathercraft, Woodworking for Men, Furniture Refinishing, Chair Caning, Typing (Beginning and Intermediate), Basic English, Modern Mathematics, Americanization, and Foreign Languages (French, Spanish, Russian, German).

The enclosed questionnaire requires very little time to complete. You are asked to check appropriate answers to some questions or to simply rank by number the listed items in questions so indicated. **YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO SIGN YOUR NAME TO THIS FORM.**

Please complete the questionnaire as soon as possible and return it to me by March 12, 1963 in the envelope provided.

Thank you for your assistance in this important study.

Sincerely yours,

Charles E. Abramson

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PROBLEM APPROVED BY:

Chas. J. Oliver  
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(Problem Committee)

DATE June 3, 1963





