

ACHIEVING THE

The Challenge

With today's technology, human obsolescence is too probable to be ignored and too easily offset to be tolerated. Knowledge is power in this era of unprecedented complexity. Accordingly, a fifth freedom has arisen to support the other four—the freedom of people of all ages to continue their education.

Galloping social change affects the engineer and the stevedore, the homemaker and the small businessman. Continuing education can assist adults both to adapt to and to influence social change. The need to cope more effectively with the world around them is an urgent concern of all adults, as most traditional ideas and techniques undergo reexamination. For most adults more effective coping depends on the freedom to continue learning.

Business and the military recognize the necessity to retrain people to meet increasingly complex job requirements. Industry and the armed forces together spend more money each year to educate adults than all the public schools in America spend on children and youth.

Continuing adult education is an investment in human resource development which benefits the community as well as the individual. This investment is the most powerful way to increase the quality of living in this country. The adult who furthers his general education discovers new opportunities and thereby expands the nation's human resources. The adult who learns more about the arts can participate more fully in the cultural life of his community. The adult who expands his job skills adds immediately to his and the nation's economic capital. The adult who studies public affairs becomes a more responsible

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citizen, in relation both to government and to the voluntary associations which constitute the fabric of community life. In these and other ways, adult education is crucial to contemporary society.

The Scope of Adult Education

In the United States last year, about 30 million adults participated in part-time educational programs sponsored by the adult education agencies of schools, colleges, universities, libraries, employers, unions, churches, voluntary associations, and community agencies. But, because most adult education programs are voluntary and underfinanced, annual participation rates are much higher among the educated than the undereducated. Among adults with less than eight years of schooling, about six per cent participated, compared with 24 per cent of high school graduates, and 47 per cent of adults with some graduate study. This relationship between educational level and rate of participation in adult education is especially important in large cities where more than half of the adults lack a high school diploma and many thousands of them are functionally illiterate. The most urgent challenge to adult education is to extend the opportunity system that teaches the less advantaged in each community. To do this will require the concerted efforts of agencies of all types which sponsor adult education programs.

It is appropriate that the variety of adult education agencies reflects our pluralistic society. Agencies of some sponsors, such as employers, labor unions, churches, and voluntary associations are closely associated with members who confront the need to study and learn. Agencies of other sponsors, such as schools, colleges, and libraries are closely associated with educational resources such as books, laboratories, and teachers. Typically, the organizational unit or agency most directly engaged in adult education is a dependent unit of a larger organization such as a school or an employer, whose main purpose is not adult education but educating children for producing goods or services. The effective adult education

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agency both complements the other activities of the larger organization and attends to its unique function. Excellent agencies collaborate with other adult education agencies and community organizations when doing so will increase program effectiveness.

As in most endeavors, excellence costs money. Effective adult education requires appropriate facilities, teachers, and materials. For the field of adult education generally, diversified sources of support are essential. Some programs can be operated primarily from fees paid by participants or by allocations by the larger organizations, such as the employer. But, especially for basic education programs for less advantaged adults, massive underwriting by tax funds is necessary. For most programs, ways must be found to stabilize financial support so that planning, staffing, and programming is possible over a span of years.

Each community needs a variety of well supported adult education agencies that are well known and accessible to the public, and in which competent leaders develop and administer effective educational programs especially for adults—programs that complement each other, so that any adult can study any topic at any time.

Because adult education is for adults, its programs must be relevant to the major life roles of adulthood such as worker, citizen, family member, user of leisure, and organization member. Excellent programs provide feedback to the adult learner about his progress so that he can make adjustments. Excellent programs select from the rich variety of ways of learning those that best fit the objectives and the participants. Some settings and methods for learning relate especially to the circumstances in which adults confront the need to know and in which the new knowledge will be applied. Examples include work and neighborhood groups. Correspondence study and evening classes are more individually oriented approaches. Agencies that intend to serve less advantaged adults need to reflect this in their methods of reaching and teaching adults.

Excellent adult education programs cannot exist “only on paper.” There must be sufficient program visibility and public understanding so that adults in the target population choose to participate. Excellent agencies not only furnish educational counseling for adults as a single door to the larger organization, but also collaborate with other agencies to provide neighborhood centers where interested adults can obtain information about relevant programs.

Adult learners are not the only part-time participants in their programs: most teachers of adults teach only part-time. This tends to shift the responsibility for program excellence toward the professional leadership in adult education programs. As a result, administrators tend to be the purveyors of research findings and professional knowledge. Excellent agencies have continuing procedures to recruit and develop adult education staff. University graduate programs for preparing adult educators and associations of adult educators can assist in the vital process of staff improvement.

The fifth freedom will be realized to the extent to which our society is willing to invest in human resources development. A major investment will result in a great variety of adult education programs with the scope and depth and excellence that have been indicated. The desired outcome is an educative community in which any adult who wants to do so has the opportunity to learn about any topic, at any time, without unnecessary restrictions.

Imperatives for Action

Discussed below are the issues that most need to be resolved if the effectiveness of continuing education for adults is to be substantially extended. The selected issues relate to public responsibility, the undereducated, financial resources, educational leadership, effective teaching, and agency functioning. In each instance, specific actions must be taken by various individuals and groups if the issue is to be resolved. It is up to

adult educators to provide and stimulate the leadership to encourage action.

1. *Public responsibility*—**MORE ADULTS FROM ALL OCCUPATIONS SHOULD BE HELPED TO GREATER COMPETENCE IN THEIR PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITIES AS CITIZENS.** Solving our most urgent social problems—such as those related to intergroup relations, pollution, health, education, transportation, and international relations—will require our collective action as citizens, aside from the private actions we may take as workers or members of families. In contrast to the incentives of money, promotion, and direct satisfaction typically related to adult education in the private sphere, the results of increased competence in public responsibility are more diffuse and less recognized. Paradoxically, the individual is often expected to pay a greater portion of the costs for adult education related to public responsibility than he pays for work-related adult education. Adults from all occupations and social classes need education for public responsibility because the solution of social problems requires a broad base of participation. For instance, improvement of intergroup relations requires effort by the several groups involved; reduction of pollution demands wide support for legislation and private action.

The major actions needed to resolve this issue are listed below:

- a. Legislation should be enacted at the city, state, and federal levels to provide funds to support adult education for public responsibility.
- b. Schools and colleges should collaborate with a wide variety of private organizations to develop adult education for public responsibility.
- c. Most adult education agencies should include within their offerings some programs of adult education for public responsibility.
- d. Voluntary associations should emphasize explicitly the adult education function that is typically a major purpose for their existence.
- e. The mass media should be encouraged to stress the importance and availability of adult education for public responsibility.
- f. A clearinghouse arrangement should make available to adult education agencies detailed ideas about the development of programs of adult education for public responsibility.
- g. Foundations should be encouraged to offer

grants for innovative and demonstration projects on adult education for public responsibility.

- h. Individual agencies should develop seminars on public problems that are designed to assist adults in relating knowledge and action.

2. *Undereducated*—**A LARGER PROPORTION OF UNDEREDUCATED ADULTS SHOULD BE HELPED TO ACQUIRE BASIC LITERACY AND JOB SKILLS.** The undereducated adults in our society are undereducated in various ways. Two of the ways are inadequate literacy and job skills. For many undereducated adults, any substantial upward mobility will entail participation in adult education. A more secure and abundant life for each individual is desirable, but, in addition, society has a major stake in human resource development as an important component in economic growth and social progress. Existing programs to develop basic literacy and job skills reach only a small portion of the people who need them. Reaching a larger proportion will require expanded financial underwriting and programs that fit the life styles of the undereducated. Because most existing adult education programs are middle-class oriented, effective adult education for the undereducated may entail new approaches. Only recently appreciated is the role that leaders in the local neighborhood can perform in assisting adults to learn through participation in local action programs.

Major actions that should be taken to resolve this issue are listed below:

- a. Appropriations should be increased at both the federal and state levels so that adult education can be provided for more undereducated adults.
- b. Undereducated adults should be involved in planning programs that fit their life style and thus attract more of the undereducated.
- c. Legislative and administrative guidelines should be altered so that most projects for undereducated adults include both literacy and occupational education components.
- d. The public schools should offer more day-time adult education programs for the undereducated.
- e. Most voluntary associations should be enlisted to contribute in some way to adult education for the undereducated.
- f. Partnerships should be established between public and private adult education agencies

to develop more effective programs for undereducated adults.

g. Employers and other groups should develop ways to help undereducated adults increase economic productivity and overcome poverty.

h. Agencies should develop vestibule programs that will assist the least educated adults to enter and succeed in other adult education programs.

3. *Financial Resources*—THOSE WHO ALLOCATE RESOURCES FOR ADULT EDUCATION SHOULD BE HELPED TO UNDERSTAND THAT ADULT EDUCATION IS AN INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT. Limited funds severely restrict the extent to which adult education can accomplish its mission. For instance, present programs of adult basic education can accommodate only a small portion of the illiterate adults, and current programs of continuing professional education keep only a small proportion of doctors, lawyers, and engineers up to date. However, "more means better" is a familiar plea in the competition for limited resources.

Those who allocate resources (policy board members, legislators, and foundation executives) should recognize that adult education is not so much a "cost of operation" as an "investment" in human resource development that will be reflected in increased productivity, economic growth, and enriched quality of life. In addition to policy and appropriations, public support of adult education by community leaders is needed.

The major actions that should be taken to resolve this issue are listed below:

a. Adult education agencies should publicize through the mass media those instances in which an investment in adult education has been tangibly returned to society.

b. Adult education agencies should sponsor informational programs about human resource development to increase public understanding; this will influence national and local priorities.

c. Adult educators should enlist individuals and groups interested in the benefits from specific areas of adult education, in an effort to broaden the general financial base of adult education; this is especially important in regard to federal funds.

d. Staffs of adult education agencies should seek help from their parent organizations

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in broadening the financial base for adult education.

4. *Educational Leadership*—FULL-TIME POSITIONS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED FOR ADULT EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS WHO CAN WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH BOTH THE SPONSORING ORGANIZATION AND THE SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY TO BE SERVED. Because adult education learners and teachers tend to be part-time, competent full-time administrators are very important. Effective full-time administrators are needed to do detailed staff work so that the students' time will be well spent. Administrators must bring sufficient stability and continuity so that innovation and change are possible. To perform this role requires a high level of professional competence. Effective adult education administrators must function both in the parent organization and in the community, so they can help to correlate current and emerging community problems, individual needs, organized knowledge, and responsible action. In part because of their community experience and educational focus, adult education administrators can contribute to community planning for human resource development. Some of the administrative staff must relate effectively to the agency's target population. Toward this end, some staff should be recruited directly from the target population.

The major actions necessary to resolve this issue are listed below:

- a. State legislatures should enact legislation to provide state aid for full-time directors of tax-supported adult education programs at the school and college levels.
- b. Adult education sponsors should establish position descriptions and salaries for adult education administrators that will attract and retain competent and dedicated personnel.
- c. University graduate programs that prepare students with majors in adult education should be supported and expanded.
- d. The public must be educated regarding the crucial leadership role of the full-time administrator.

5. *Effective Teaching*—ADULT EDUCATION AGENCIES SHOULD HELP TEACHERS FACILITATE INDIVIDUAL LEARNING. Included within the term "teachers" are a wide variety of mentor roles including classroom instructors, counselors, writers of educational materials, and adult education specialists in informal settings such as community development and group relations. Since most teachers of adults are also employed full-time elsewhere, extensive in-service education is usually essential for a high level of effectiveness. Teachers of adults should be encouraged to use adult-oriented methods that encourage active participation by both teacher and learner in program planning and in the teaching-learning transaction. Agency administrators should emphasize evaluation of methods and materials in light of learner needs in an effort to produce optimum results.

The major actions that should be taken to resolve this issue are listed below:

- a. Associations of adult educators should inform teachers of adults about the range of effective instructional procedures available for adults.
- b. Associations of adult educators should assist administrators to conduct more effective in-service education for their teachers.
- c. Graduate programs with majors in adult education should prepare written instructional units for use in educational programs for teachers of adults.
- d. Foundations and governmental granting agencies should support interdisciplinary teams to demonstrate helpful new ideas to individual agencies.
- e. Individual agencies should use procedures related to objectives, learning experiences

and evaluation to increase the "learner orientation" of their programs.

6. *Agency Functioning*—ADULT EDUCATION AGENCY POLICY BOARDS SHOULD DECIDE UPON PRIORITY GOALS FOR EACH AGENCY IN A WAY THAT CONSIDERS THE AGENCY'S UNIQUE POTENTIALS. No one agency can encompass all aspects of adult education so each needs to recognize ways in which its efforts are complemented by those of other agencies, such as complex knowledge by the universities, educational counseling by the community colleges, job application by employers, and leadership development by voluntary associations. In some instances, the linkage between an adult education agency and a community organization such as neighborhood association or labor union is important for keeping congruence among problem, education, and application. A crucial criterion of agency functioning is its effectiveness from the learner's viewpoint. Some aspects, such as attractiveness of facilities or convenience of scheduling, relate directly to the learner. Others, such as professional libraries, research, and graduate study, take the form of support systems that should be diversified and accessible for use by adult educators.

The major actions that should be taken to resolve this issue are listed below:

- a. The policy boards of sponsors of adult education programs should explore agency resources in relation to the needs of adults in their target population and then emphasize their unique mission.
- b. Associations of adult educators should analyze interrelationships between agencies in each service area regarding complementarity, overlap, and gaps in their efforts to serve adults.
- c. Community groups should be encouraged to take the initiative in requesting service from adult education agencies.

Accomplishment of the proposed actions related to these six issues will substantially increase the extent to which adult education can achieve society's expectations. In most instances, this will require a partnership between individual agencies, adult education professional associations, and other individuals and groups that influence public policy and benefit from adult education. Welding this more effective partnership should be a primary goal of adult educators. Achieving the fifth freedom depends on it.