

## A SCHEMA OF RESEARCH NEEDS IN ADULT-EDUCATION

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### The Task

The development pattern of social and technical change in the United States and throughout the world is exerting a great pressure on adults for retraining, continuous education and new learning. This pressure, long predicted by those engaged in adult education, calls for answers to questions not previously resolved by practice or research. The need for solution to pressing problems about the education of adults is recognized and immediate.

The Commission of the Professors of Adult Education of the Adult Education Association in the U.S.A. has been concerned about the paucity of sound basic research, as well as the limitation of applied research completed to date. Efforts of its members in preparing the new volume, **Adult Education: Outline of an Emerging Field of University Study**,\*\* often were frustrated by lack of research base to support the framework of the field.

The United States Office of Education and Federal Extension Service in the United States Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with State colleges and universities have encouraged the undertaking of fundamental adult education research projects and the development of graduate programmes.

The University of Wisconsin, one of 26 institutions with advanced degree programmes in Cooperative Extension and one of 15 with

doctoral programmes in Adult Education, is engaged in a number of applied research projects developed as a means of resolving problems of the field level adult educator.

These four organizations joined forces to make possible a study of the contribution of the research of selected disciplines to adult education and the research needs of adult education. In accomplishing this task it was necessary to develop a structural model for guidance in reviewing past research and structuring for the future. It is this scheme of research need that is identified in this report.

### Choice of the Framework for Research

Research needs found in the literature and those suggested by interview with a selected group of national leaders can be structured in a number of ways. Reasonable structure such as these could be made:

By programme area (homemaking, parent education, vocational training, liberal studies, etc.)

By institution (public schools, evening college, Cooperative Extension, libraries, etc.)

By discipline (psychology, anthropology, sociology, etc.)

By application (learning, teaching, social change, guidance, etc.)

The framework chosen was *application*, this type of structure, some of the identified areas of research need are tied almost completely to a specific discipline or an applied field and some are associated with certain programme area.

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ely to a specific discipline or an applied field and some are associated with certain programme area.

In structuring the research needs by application, care was taken not to overlook the potential of basic research in any discipline. Research which eventually may contribute to adult education is not limited to that which now shows a promising line of application. The potential for projective, theoretical and speculative research is developed from the interrelationship between the applied fields and the discipline and should be recognized. It is often in the speculative area that breakthroughs on new approaches to investigation are made.

The choice of a framework related to application is somewhat allied to the reference points used by Brunner<sup>1</sup> in *An Overview of Adult Education Research*. It is unlike the apter in the *Handbook of Adult Education*<sup>2</sup> which is organised around programme areas 1 institutions; and it is unlike the Hendrick<sup>3</sup> chapter in the *Encyclopedia of Education Research* which concentrates on programmes.

### Framework and Needed Research

Research needs identified during the use of this investigation were organized by lication into three interrelated categories. three categories of application, noted in are I, are:

1. The Adult as an individual and a learner
- II. The Adult's Response to Social-Cultural Phenomena

II. The Adult Education Enterprise.

If one considers a specific area of research and it is placed in one category of application even if it is closely allied with another. For example, an item on personality and

behaviour change could be placed in either the *Learning* or the *Adult's Response* category. It would also be reasonable to reinterpret areas of research need in the *Adult Education Enterprise* category and place them in *Learning* or *Adult's Response*. The intention is to provide a tenable structure that can be used as a base for further development of research in the field.

Figure 1 demonstrates that there are disciplines in addition to psychology, sociology and anthropology which contribute to the field. All of these disciplines, in coordination with the adult education enterprise and the total field of education, provide the climate in which projection, theory building and speculation can occur. When this occurs the potential is present for development and experimental programmes in adult education.

Examples of research needs identified that were placed in each of the three categories as follows:

### I. The Adult as an individual and a learner

What are the most appropriate conditions for adult learning? What are the personal (internal) factors that lead to changed behaviour in adults?

What are the conditions under which one "learns to learn" and what educational ingredients encourage "learning to learn" in adults?

### II. The Adult's Response to Social and Cultural Phenomena

In what ways can the existing social economic and cultural information be used effectively in planning and conducting programmes of continued learning?

What are the factors of socio-cultural change that most influence learning?

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### III. The Adult Education Enterprise

What resources within the instructional group can be used to maximize the achievement of individual and group objectives?

By what means can the educationally, technically, and culturally illiterate be educated for economic and social self-sufficiency?

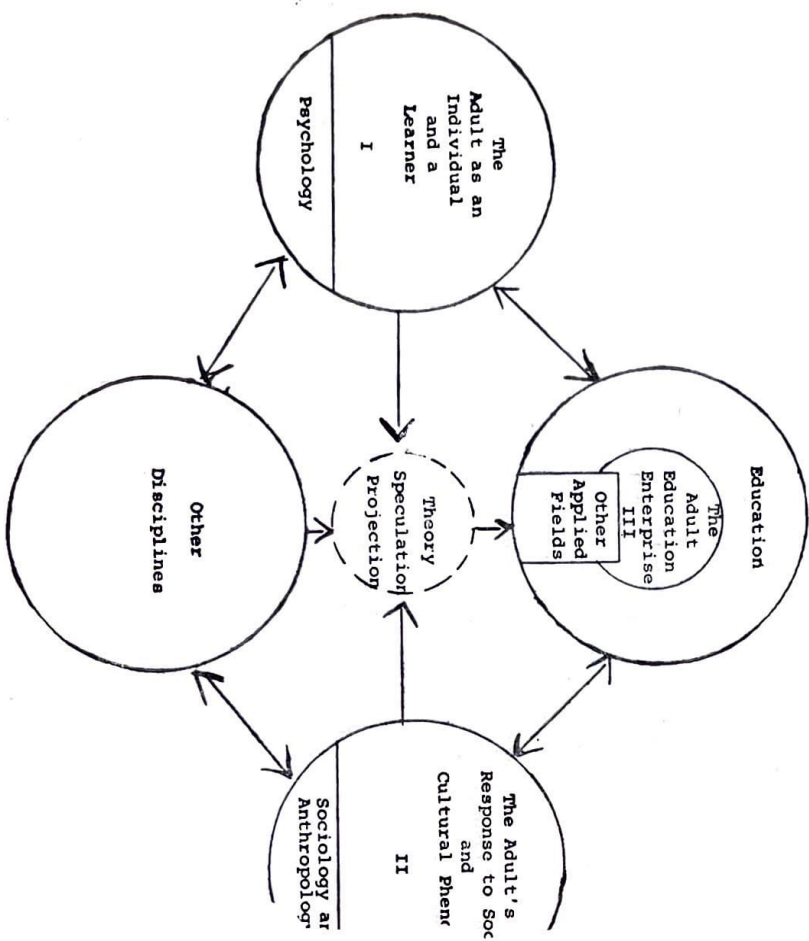
Who are the participants in adult education? What has been the quality and quantity of participation in the past? What is it likely to be in the future?

#### The Look Ahead

The organization of areas of research into

categories of application should not close the door to theoretical explorations, basic research or speculation. In a field that is very practical on the one hand (vocational retraining programmes) and theoretical on the other (development seminars) there is a usual opportunity for systematic exploration of both the past and the future.

There are theoretical questions at both the edge and heart of adult education that are paring by minds searching for truth. Strategy and policy formation in adult education



and examination. Applied researchers often consider behaviour as a one-to-one relationship between factors when behaviour of adults is so complex for this kind of simplification. The potential that institutions of continued learning have to manipulate educational variables in the board community setting often ignored when, indeed, this manipulation may

be the significant element of cultural change. The applied research needs identified in relation to the schema in Figure 1 should be pursued with all possible speed and with a positive concern for the philosophical and theoretical contemplation and speculation that can help provide a basis for judgment and a guideline for development.

#### REFERENCES

1. Brunner, Edmund-des; Wilder David S.; Kirchner, Corinne, Newberry, Johns; An *Overview of Adult Education Research*. Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., 1959 p. 243.
2. Kreitlow, Burton W., "Research in Adult Education" *Handbook of Adult Education in the United States*. Chicago: "Adult Education Association of the U.S.A. 1960, p. 115. Hendrickson, Andrew, "Adult Education," *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (Chester W. Harris, editor) New York: The Macmillan Co., 1960.

*ANYBODY can become angry—that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.*

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