

ADULT LEARNING BEHAVIOR IN FARM MECHANICS COURSES

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What relationship exists between adult students' learning, satisfaction with the course, and persistence in attendance? This question was explored in a study of 519 adult farmers in forth-four farm mechanics courses organized by Vocational Agriculture teachers and taught by special instructors. Each course was conducted for twenty clock hours.

Measures of student verbal gain, manual gain, satisfaction, and persistence were obtained. Verbal gain was determined by pretests and post-tests. Manual gain was derived from a rating scale of task performance at the beginning and ending sessions of the courses.

Student satisfaction was determined by administering a ten-item Likert type scale with five items directly concerned with course content and five items dealing with the teacher's approach to the subject matter. Persistence was measured by the number of dropouts before the seventh class session in each course.

Findings. The correlation between measures of student learning behavior is shown in Table 1. When all courses were combined, a significant positive correlation was found between verbal gain and manual gain. No significant correlation was found between verbal gain and satisfaction, verbal gain and persistence, and satisfaction and persistence. On the basis of the results of the statistical analysis it was concluded that while the correlation of student behavioral change measures varied between courses, manual gain was significantly positively correlated with verbal gain, satisfaction was significantly negatively correlated with manual gain, and no significant correlation existed between verbal gain and satisfaction, satisfaction and persistence, and verbal gain and persistence.

Significant correlations were not found between verbal gain and satisfaction nor between verbal gain and persistence. It seems reasonable to expect that adults whose major objective in attending classes was to develop manual skills may have perceived verbal skills to be of little importance and consequently may not have related satisfaction to this aspect of the learning process. The lack of an exhibited significant relationship between satisfaction and persistence may be partially explained by the fact that no satisfaction scales were administered to students that dropped out of the classes.

TABLE I
CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENT LEARNING BEHAVIOR
IN FARM MECHANICS COURSES

	Verbal Gain	Manual Gain	Satisfaction
Manual Gain	.34*		
Satisfaction	-.08	-.48*	
Persistence	-.09	-.25	-.08

* At the .05 level, the .r is .30 with 42 df.

The existence of a significant correlation between manual gain and satisfaction and the lack of a significant correlation between verbal gain and satisfaction lends itself to the speculation that adult students perceive manual skills to be more closely related to their objectives for taking the occupational education courses than are verbal skills. In view of the generally accepted notion that verbal communication skills are essential to occupational success, studies are planned to determine the relationship between the adult students' perception of the need for verbal skill in an occupation and the need for verbal skills as perceived by those already engaged in the occupation.

Speculating that the factors affecting adult attendance largely lie outside the social and physical domains of the classroom and institution, a series of studies concerned with the identification of specific operant social systems generating and maintaining attendance in adult occupational education programs is recommended. Such studies could be valuable in adult farmer education program planning.

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A PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAM FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

by

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Supervised work experience programs are in vogue in vocational education. Emphasis in the past had been with programs at the secondary level. Presently, practical experience, both supervised and unsupervised, is being encouraged and offered at the several levels of educational endeavor in colleges and universities. The changing school-community