

Usefulness of Study/Contribution to Profession

For years, volunteerism has been a necessity in many facets of extension work. Additionally, personnel-related resources have become precious commodities in light of federal cuts for extension efforts. This underscores the importance of research supporting the needs of volunteers in extension activities. The authors of this study are to be commended for recognizing an urgent need and concern for the professional needs of such a vital group. An excellent in-depth review of the literature provided support for this research. The information collected in this study can offer insight for future establishment of volunteer research and an initial baseline of data for their learning styles. Additional time may be given to some careful editing of this paper to add to its usefulness in the profession.

Procedural Questions & Concerns

Two instruments were used to collect data in this investigation. Use of the GEFT to determine volunteers' learning styles was an appropriate choice, as its validity has been proven, and this instrument has become a standard in the profession. However, little discussion was given in the methodology to the "researcher-developed questionnaire" which leads to the majority of discussion in the results, conclusions, and implications of the research. How was the instrument structured? Did it use Likert-type scales, open-ended questions or another means of acquiring this information? What safeguards were taken to protect the reliability of this instrument?

Although the literature review mentioned a relationship between age and GEFT scores, no specific objective stated the intent of this analysis.

Possibly, the lack of training for volunteers was the most critical finding of this study.

Thoughts for Future Research in this Area

To develop a credible baseline of learning styles of volunteers, all five Florida districts should be sampled in the future. The study of a more homogeneous volunteer base, such as Master Gardeners, may aid greatly in their training, while contributing to the overall base established in this study.

Another consideration may be a specific needs assessment of teaching/educational skills of volunteers. The authors of this research found that little training has been given to volunteers, now what areas might help them the most?