

# THE LEVEL OF AGREEMENT AMONG SUPERINTENDENTS, PRINCIPALS, AND INSTRUCTORS CONCERNING ADULT AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Oren L. Christmas, Research Consultant  
Michigan State Department of Education

Over the years, there have been several research studies investigating adult agricultural education programs and the perceptions of instructors and administrators (Ekstrom and McClelland, 1952; Phipps, 1980; Loreen, 1958; Adelaine and Foster, 1987). All of these studies obtained responses from public school administrators and vocational agriculture instructors. These responses were then generally grouped into areas that pertained to similar concepts. Some of these concepts were the funding, mission of, and the need for adult programs. Particularly lacking in these studies and research similar to these is investigation into the level of agreement among school administrators and adult education instructors concerning adult education.

## Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of was to study the level of agreement among public school administrators and vocational agriculture instructors concerning adult education. The specific objectives were to investigate the following in schools with adult agricultural programs: 1) the perceptions of superintendents, principals, and secondary vocational agriculture instructors toward the benefit, need, funding, and operation of an adult agricultural education program; 2) the provisions of local school policy pertaining to the adult agricultural education program; and 3) the level of agreement among superintendents, principals, and instructors concerning the benefit, need, funding, operation, and policy addressing local adult education programs.

## Procedures

The population was all secondary schools in Ohio that offered vocational agriculture programs in agricultural production or farm business management during 1985-86 and that received reimbursement from the Ohio Department of Education for adult programs in production agriculture or farm management (excluding full time adult instructors). Since data were collected during the 1986-87 school year, schools constituting the frame were those in which the superintendent, principal, and vocational agriculture instructor(s) in 1986-87 were the same individuals as in 1985-86. Consequently, the frame consisted of 89 schools. A random sample of 42 schools was then drawn.

Data were obtained from researcher-designed questionnaires and from official records in the Ohio Department of Education. Content validity of the questionnaires was established by a panel of experts. The questionnaires were pilot tested with a group of superintendents, principals, and vocational agriculture instructors in schools not included in the sample. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the attitude scale items were .87 for superintendents, .81 for principals, and .76 for vocational agriculture instructors.

Data from superintendents, principals, and vocational agriculture instructors were collected by mail questionnaire using procedures suggested by Dillman (1978). Of the 126 questionnaires mailed, 86 percent were returned. Since the unit of analysis is a school, complete data for a school required that usable questionnaires be returned from the superintendent, principal, and at least one vocational agriculture instructor in the school. Complete data, including usable questionnaires and data from records in the Ohio Department of Education, were available for 26 of the 42 schools.

For responses to questionnaire items, early, middle, and late respondents were compared with no significant differences between groups. Responses to the questionnaire of respondents from complete-unit schools (superintendent, principal, and vocational agriculture instructor responded) were compared also to respondents from schools where one or more of the individuals did not respond. This analysis did not reveal significant differences in the responses of superintendents, principals, or instructors between complete-unit schools and noncomplete-unit schools. Also, complete-unit schools were compared to noncomplete-unit schools on data collected from Ohio Department of Education records. These comparisons indicated no significant differences between the schools used in the analysis (complete-unit schools) and schools not used in the analysis (noncomplete-unit schools). The analyses reported in this paragraph indicate that nonresponse to the mail questionnaire is not a major threat to the external validity of the study.

## Results

Perceptions of Superintendents, Principals, and Instructors: The group of attitude variables included 14 variables: attitudes of superintendents, principals, and instructors about the benefits, need, funding, and operation of adult programs. Superintendents, principals, and instructors in general indicated that adult agricultural programs are a benefit to the community, school, the participants, and the instructor. Analysis of variance indicated no significant differences between superintendents, principals, and instructors on their response to the benefit domain statements.

Concerning the statements asking if there was a need for an adult agricultural education program superintendents, principals, and instructors all indicated that adult agricultural programs in the school district were needed. Analysis of variance indicated no significant differences between superintendents, principals, and instructors on their response to the need domain statements.

The next domain of interest pertained to the funding of adult agricultural programs. Superintendents tended to indicate that the adult participants should assume some of the financial responsibility toward supporting the adult program while principals either disagreed or were neutral toward the adult clientele paying fees for the adult program. Instructors indicated that the adults should not pay fees for participating in the adult program. Analysis of variance indicated that there were significant differences between the instructors' perceptions and those of superintendents and principals.

The final domain of interest addressed the operation of the adult program. This domain included the technical and professional competency of the instructor, that the instructor has the time and should be the one to teach the adults, and that the adult education program should serve the entire agricultural community. Superintendents, principals, and instructors were in agreement with these statements. Analysis of variance indicated no significant differences between superintendents, principals, and instructors on their response to the operation domain statements.

District and School Policy for Adult Programs: The second objective concerned the provisions of **local policy pertaining** to the adult agricultural program and to the instructor of the adult program. A policy index (Figure 1) was developed from questions addressing whether or not policy existed and if it did was it written district or local policy, or was it non-written district or local policy. In addition to these questions the agreement of the principal and instructor with the response of the superintendent and the agreement of the instructor with the principal was built to the index. The index ranged from 1 indicating no policy to 7 indicating that there was written district and local school policy pertaining to the adult program and the instructor.

Table 1  
Policy Categories for Schools

Policy Index	Adult Program District Policy	Adult Program School Policy	Instructor District Policy	Instructor School Policy
7	X X X	X X X	x x x	x x x
6	X X X	X X X	x x x	
5		X X X		X X X
4	x x x		X X X	
3		X X X		
2	X X X			
1				

**Note:** For schools to be included in a particular category indicated by "X" in the above figure the following conditions must be true: (1) For district policy: (a) the superintendent must indicate there is policy, and (b) at least the principal or instructor must agree with the superintendent. (2) For school policy: (a) the principal must indicate that there is policy, and (b) the instructor must agree with the principal.

Presented in Table 1 are the results of the policy index pertaining to the adult program and vocational agriculture instructor. Slightly over one third (34.7%) of the superintendents, principals and instructors indicated there was no policy, either written or non-written but generally understood.

The remaining (63.3%) superintendents, principals, and instructors indicated that they have policy, either written or non-written but generally understood, that addresses the adult program or the instructor teaching adults.

Table 2

Policy Pertaining to the Adult Program and the Vocational Agriculture Instructor

Policy Index	Frequency	Percent
1	9	34.7
2	1	3.8
3	1	3.8
4	4	15.4
5	7	26.9
6	1	3.8
7	<u>3</u>	<u>11.6</u>
Total	<u>26</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Agreement Among Superintendents, Principals, and Instructors: To determine the degree of agreement among superintendents, principals, and instructors Kendall's W, the coefficient of concordance, was calculated for each school on each domain of the attitude scale.

Reported in Table 2 are the results of the Kendall's W grouped in order of magnitude according to Davis (1971). The majority of the respondents were in agreement among each other that adult agricultural programs were a benefit to the school, community, participants, and the instructor. Likewise, the majority of the superintendents, principals, and instructors were in agreement that there was a need for adult agricultural programs in the school district. Over half of the respondents agreed with each other that the participants in the adult programs should not pay fees for attending. All of the superintendents, principals, and instructors were in agreement among each other that the (secondary) vocational agriculture instructor was both technically and professionally competent, that they should conduct the adult program, and that the adult program should serve the entire agricultural community.

Table 3

Degree of Agreement Among Superintendents, Principals, and Instructors Toward the Benefit, Need, Funding, and Operation of Adult Agricultural Education Programs

Degree of Agreement	Verbal Interpret	Benefit		Need		Funding		Operation	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
.01 - .09	Negligible	—	—	—	--	9	34.6	—	—
.10 - .29	LOW	9	34.6	5	19.2	--	—	3	11.6
.30 - .49	Moderate	10	38.5	4	15.4	7	26.9	13	50.0
.50 - .69	Substantial	6	23.1	9	34.6	7	26.9	6	23.1
.70 - .99	Very High	1	3.8	8	30.8	--	—	4	15.3
1.0	Perfect	—	—	—	—	3	11.6	—	—
Total		26	100.0	26	100.0	26	100.0	26	100.0

Conclusions and Recommendations

Superintendents, principals, and instructors are in general agreement among each other that adult agricultural education programs are a benefit to the community, school, participants, and the teacher. They also agree that adult agricultural education programs are needed in the school district.

Superintendents, principals, and instructors are in general agreement among each other that the adult clientele should assume some of the financial responsibility for participating in adult agricultural education programs, however, there were definite differences between instructors, principals, and superintendents concerning the specific statements about the funding of the adult programs.

Superintendents, principals, and instructors are in general agreement among each other than the vocational agriculture instructor is competent to teach and should teach the adult agricultural education program.

Superintendents, principals, and instructors are in general agreement among each other that there exists some form of policy that addresses adult education programs and the instructor's role in this program.

In Ohio, state department of education personnel and teacher educators should be cognizant of the following in designing strategies and activities to improve and expand the offering of adult education in agriculture by high schools that provide vocational agricultural programs: 1) When working with schools regarding adult education, it is important that school administrators, as well as vocational agriculture instructors, be the focus of consultation and advisement; and, 2) Continued efforts should be made to increase the existence and explicitness of policy regarding adult education as a function of the school.

#### References

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