PARTICIPANT EVALUATION OF ADULT RESIDENTIAL CONFERENCES AT THE DONALDSON BROWN CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTER

BY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM SITUATION

Adult and Continuing Education is assuming an increasingly important role in the field of education. This increased role results from the need for adults to update their work skills, to become aware of the latest innovations in areas of interest, to exchange ideas in problem-solving and to learn for the sake of self improvement. One important resource for meeting the continuing education needs of adults is the continuing education centers operated by universities.

The Donaldson Brown Continuing Education Center, located on the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia, represents such an operation. The Center has served as a residential learning facility in the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Extension Division for the last seven years. Its main responsibilities include hosting educational conferences, sponsoring adult learning activities and assisting in the planning of adult education programs.

The Center staff expressed a need for information about the participants attending their programs; for example, the staff members wanted such data as educational level, sex, occupation, purpose for attendance and age of the participants. The program facilitators

who work with the conference sponsors were concerned about the degree of participant satisfaction with the Center facilities and learning environment. They were also interested in isolating factors which contribute to the "success" of an educational conference.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem investigated in the study was: How do participants view the quality and importance of certain aspects of a conference situation?

Specific questions were developed which helped in the collection of data:

1. What do participants view as the strongest and the weakest aspects of their conference experience?

2. What do participants view as the most and the least important aspects of their conference?

3. Are the most important aspects of a conference also the strongest elements as perceived by the participants of a conference?

4. Do the participants view various conference areas differently according to their age, sex, education, previous conference attendance or purpose for attending this particular conference?

5. How is the participant's view of the strength and importance of various aspects of a conference related to the personal satisfaction derived from the conference?

MAJOR ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

In order to conduct this survey, several assumptions were made about the participants and the testing situation.

1. Participant evaluations are a reliable source of information about a conference which can be used for future conference planning.

2. Participants are capable of understanding the survey questions and will respond with true statements of their feelings.

3. Participants have differing views about various aspects of a conference and attach varing degrees of importance to these conference attributes.

4. Variance in responses is attributed to true differences of opinion in the strength and importance ratings.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited by the following factors:

1. The survey sample consisted solely of conferences sponsored by the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Extension Division and therefore the results may not be generalizable to other residential centers.

2. All meetings held in the Center within a three month period, during the months of April, May and June, 1974, could not be evaluated because some conference leaders refused to participate, some conferences were conducted concurrently, last-minute scheduled

conferences were not made known to the investigator and some of the meetings held in the Center were not assemblies with an educational purpose.

3. Questionnaires could not be administered to all conferences at the same time of day or at the same point in the conference schedule. This may account for lack of response and participation by some tired or absent individuals.

4. Participants were required to fill out an evaluation form if they were receiving Continuing Education Unit credit for their conference. Members of other conferences were asked to participate, but their cooperation was in no way required by their sponsor.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Several terms used throughout this study are defined in order that their meaning and the context in which they are used will be clearly understood.

Adult and Continuing Education: the area of education which serves an "adult" public after their formal schooling has been completed.

Participant satisfaction: a high rating on achievement of an individual's goals for the conference as well as a desire to attend similar conferences in the future.

Adult Residential Education: "an organized group activity, involving temporary residence at the study site (a residential center) as a planned part of the activity, which is designed to increase the knowledge, skills, or sensitivity of individual adults; and/or is

designed to accomplish a task, or create a product, through group effort." (Buskey, 1970, p. 2).

Continuing Education Unit: "a uniform measure of attainment in non-credit educational programs. One CEU represents ten contact hours of participation in an organized educational experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction and qualified instruction." (National Task Force of the National Universities Extension Association, 1974, p. 3).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Participant evaluation of conferences at the Donaldson Brown Continuing Education Center has revealed several important findings. Participants indicated that the aspects of a conference which they found to be of highest quality were helpfulness of staff, ease and coordination of registration and the comfort of lodging facilities. This finding demonstrates the important contribution of the learning environment to adult residential education.

The items of greatest importance to the participants were those of the speakers' ability to get ideas across, speakers' knowledge of the subject, presentation of useful information and helpfulness of staff. The participants were most concerned about the program content and presentation.

In analysis of the data, four factors emerged which designate the basic areas of concern to the conference attenders. These factors include: (1) Learning Environment - Structured, (2) Learning

Environment - Interactive, (3) Facility Support, and (4) Administrative Preparation. Satisfaction with the overall conference experience is positively related to the structured learning environment and to the interactive learning environment. Women and the less educated conference attenders demonstrated a greater degree of approval of the interactive learning environment.

The research design and methodology of the study present a unique approach for studying various aspects of a residential adult education conference. The value of this study for other researchers lies in the methodology employed. The evaluative instrument used in this study was felt to be a useful research tool for the evaluation of various aspects of the residential conference situation. The questionnaire focuses on discreet areas of a conference rather than attempting to measure conference value as a whole. This differential approach provides specific information which can be utilized by the planners of adult programs.

Factor analysis of the value of 21 conference aspects revealed that the participants did view the conference differently in terms of four general areas. Correlational analysis of factor scores and demographic information proved to be a meaningful method for determining the relationship between participants' backgrounds and the different conference factors.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Few studies have been published in the areas of residential education centers and of conference evaluation. Researchers studying adult education are just beginning to focus on the phenomenon of adult learning at residential centers.

The review of the literature focuses on five aspects of adult residential education: (1) characteristics of the adult education center, (2) typology of residential adult education programs, (3) participants' role in planning, (4) participant descriptors and (5) conference evaluation.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTER

The two outstanding characteristics of a university adult education center are its unique environment and the relationship of the center's administrative staff to the academic faculty of the university. The residential education center provides a unique environment for adult learning. Adult learning is enhanced at a facility which contains lodging, dining and meeting rooms under one roof and organization. The uniqueness apparent in a university center is its remoteness from everyday life, informal groups of learning adults with diverse ideas and needs and time allotment requiring intensive learning (Welden, 1966).

Kafka (1971) discovered that some of the factors in residential

adult education programs which contribute to effective meetings are: detachment from everyday distractions; convergence on a single topic and group cohesiveness. He concluded that residential education centers had important advantages over other forms of continuous learning.

Most continuing education centers related to a university use the academic faculty as instructors and leaders for adult programs. Since the faculty of the university must contribute heavily to its residential programs, it is necessary to understand the relationship between the faculty and the residential center's administration. Goebel (1969) conducted a study of the relationship of faculty resources to extension educational centers. He developed a concept of "dual hierarchy" to explain the relationship between a university continuing education center and the university's academic branch. Dual hierarchy is based on two assumptions. First, the center as a functional operation is dependent on certain information and ability of the university's academia. Secondly, there is no definite pattern of cooperation and coordination for the transfer of these resources to the center's programs. Therefore, these two branches of education tend to coexist as separately operating systems. Goebel concluded that faculty members must view the center teaching situation as compensatory or worthwhile before they will participate in a conference. When responsibility for adult education programs is not required of academic faculty members, the center must rely on volunteers.

A TYPOLOGY OF ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN RESIDENTIAL CENTERS

John Henry Buskey (1970) developed a typology of adult education programs conducted at the University of Chicago Center. The five major types of programs were identified as follows: (1) "Acquisition and comprehension of information or knowledge", (2) "Application of knowledge to particular situations", (3) "Analysis or exploration of situations", (4) "Synthesis or creation of plans or products", and (5) "Integration of personal values program" (Buskey, 1970, p. 106).

The conferences for acquisition and comprehension of knowledge assemble individuals for the purpose of updating the participants' present body of knowledge concerning a topic. The participants may desire to solve common problems by discussing them in a group. Conferences which impart general knowledge about a subject to individuals with limited formal schooling also fall into this catagory.

In the application of knowledge conferences, the participants are searching for particular knowledge or skills or problem-solutions which they can apply to their reference group. An attempt is made to reach a consensus or a specific goal during the course of the conference.

An indepth search and discussion of social issues or problems occur in conferences concerned about an analysis of situations. The existing situation and factors affecting the topic are throughly explored and analyzed. Conflicting points of view are encouraged and expected.

Synthesis or creation conferences combine and analyze bodies

of existing data in order to produce a new and better product, approach or theory. The key is the eclectic process evident in the meetings.

The fifth type of conference concentrates on personality problems and the participant's own value system. The emphasis is on individual change.

Buskey's typology has not been utilized or tested by further research. Adult educators in the field of residential education have indicated that his typology is helpful in classifying the many types of conferences which a program planner encounters in residential adult education (Houle, 1971).

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPANT PARTICIPATION IN THE PLANNING PHASE

Residential adult education centers must provide a wide variety of courses and training programs in order to meet the demands and needs of potential clients. One way to discover adult needs is to involve them either directly or indirectly in the planning phase. James E. Welden (1966) studied the influence of participant representation on the planning committee for variable program effectiveness. He sampled conferences which utilized knowledge of the participant in the planning phase and those which did not. Three ways in which he measured program effectiveness were: "(1) perception of satisfaction with the program's objectives, leadership, format, material and morale; (2) valuations of theoretical, practical, social and aesthetic motivations; (3) interest in continuing to read, to acquire materials, to participate in and to initiate educational activities" (Welden, 1966, p. 105).

In the spring of 1965, Welden administered a pretested evaluation form to 1026 male and female participants attending 47 different conferences at five university centers sponsored by the Kellogg Center. Correlations between responses and t-tests on the means were used to compare results between groups. Participants of the representively planned conferences were more satisfied with the total conference and indicated more frequently that the conference helped them achieve their purpose for attending, but they did not express more interest in continuing education activities than the attenders of non-represented programs.

PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS AND PURPOSES FOR ATTENDING CONFERENCES

Some of the research in adult education has dealt with the description and purpose of the individuals who attend the programs. Conference participants are employed in diverse occupations, and they represent all socioeconomic levels. They have a variety of reasons for attending conferences: to receive information, to discuss ideas with others in similar situations, to find solutions for problems, or to further their education. They have a variety of motives for their attendance. Often an employer will encourage the attenders by the promise of a promotion, a raise or by recognition. At times, an individual may want to attend in order to get away from his responsibilities for awhile. A conference is often an advantageous place to make social or business contacts (Gessner, 1970).

James Jackson (1956) administered different types of questionnaires in a study of various attitutes about a conference. He administered these questionnaires to the planning committees, to participants and to invited individuals who had decided not to attend the conferences. The participants and non-participants were in agreement concerning the goals of the programs to which they were invited. The two factors which influenced the participants to attend appeared to be the renown of the speakers and the encouragement of their employers.

The planning committees were asked to rank given conference goals according to their perception of the goals of the participant and the non-participant. The participants and non-participants were individually asked to rank the goals of the conference as they perceived them. The planning committee's rankings of the goals highly correlated with the participants' rankings, yet not as highly with the non-participants' rankings (Jackson, 1956).

The planning committees' misconceptions of the non-participants' goals may have resulted in the non-participants' decision not to attend the conference. Maximum program attendance can be attained only when planning committees consider the needs and goals of all potential participants.

EVALUATION OF CONFERENCE "SUCCESS" OR SATISFACTION

Research in the area of conference evaluation at residential centers is very limited. The studies which have been conducted are mainly non-experimental in their design, and they focus on the

participant's satisfaction with the total conference.

By a pre- and post-test design, Kafka (1971) studied the relationships among achievement (successful synthesizing of material), satisfaction with the whole conference and an individual's preconceived ideas about the conference. He concluded that preconceived ideas were a greater predictor of an individual's achievement than attitudes toward the total experience.

Kafka found three advantages of a residential center: (1) detachment from everyday distractions, (2) convergence on a single topic, and (3) group cohesiveness. These three advantages proved to be negatively correlated to achievement in an introductory program and positively correlated in more advanced programs. The neophyte participant may be unaware of what to expect from his first program which results in a slower adjustment to the residential situation.

Only a few attempts have been made to define and measure success of a conference. Kropp and Verner (1957) developed a scale to measure overall satisfaction of a conference. O'Shea and Ranofsky (1964) found several problems with the scale when they attempted to evaluate a program for dental educators. Their results indicated that item 13 of the scale ("It was too general") was not a highly discriminating item to determine overall effectiveness. O'Shea and Ranofsky also pointed out that the Kropp-Verner Scale was a multidimensional attitude scale. Participants were asked to compare items concerning personal satisfaction to items concerning program objectives.

The Kropp-Verner Scale has other limitations. The items are

assigned a numerical weight, yet one cannot assume that the statements are related in an interval fashion. There is no apparent relationship between the items to warrant a more negative or positive coding as a result of the indicated attitude.

Lacognata (1962) conducted "An Analysis of Selected Conference Programs" in which he obtained descriptive data from participants about conferences held at the Kellogg Center at Michigan State University. He dealt with five major catagories: (1) social characteristics, (2) communication, (3) motivation, (4) expectations, and (5) participant evaluation of conference attributes. Lacognata's contribution to the field of conference evaluation is specific questionnaire items which he developed to measure participant attitudes.

Max L. Densmore (1965) studied the relationship between the amount of new information which participants felt they had gained and their feeling of total conference satisfaction. Six hundred and thirty individuals in 10 conferences at Michigan State University's Kellogg Center for Continuing Education were sampled. He assumed that "the happier and more satisfied an individual is, the more he feels he has learned and benefited -- regardless of actual cognitive achievement -- and is able to apply what he has learned more than individuals with low levels of satisfaction [morale] associated with the learning experience" (Densmore, 1965, p. 6).

Densmore concluded that (1) women were more favorable toward conferences than men, (2) occupation and type of industry had a noticeable effect on participant satisfaction, and (3) the judgement of

the quality of the program was related to the amount of overall satisfaction as perceived by the attender. Densmore's findings support the idea that many personal and occupational factors affect the way in which a participant views his learning experience.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Donaldson Brown Continuing Education Center displays many of the characteristics of a university adult education center which were discussed in the review of the literature. The Continuing Education Center is a facility which contains a unique learning environment which enhances concentration by elimination of distraction. All types of programs are sponsored by the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, ranging from basic information acquisition to synthesis and integration of new concepts.

The Donaldson Brown Center relies heavily on the university's academic faculty for information and instruction. The Center and the faculty of Virginia Tech do not exist entirely as a dual hierarchy. Although the Center is dependent on the faculty, there is a system of cooperation between the two areas. The Extension Division at Virginia Tech has extension faculty members in most of the colleges on campus. Since the extension faculty and the Center staff have similar goals of promoting adult education programs, the transfer of faculty resources is facilitated.

The Center's program planning staff strives to include three components in the planning phase: (1) a center program staff member,

(2) the main faculty resource contact, and (3) the conference leader or financial sponsor. From these three sources and information from past conferences held in the Center, the members of the planning committee develop objectives and activities which correspond to their perception of the clients' needs.

Program evaluation is a vital component of the Center's conference process. From time to time, the Center's administrators examine their means of evaluation. This researcher prepared an evaluation form for the Center in order to gain additional information about the conference participants. Drawing from the literature, the study focuses on several aspects of participant evaluation. First, information was sought to describe the participants in terms of purpose for attending, age, sex, income level, occupation and financial incentives. Second, this study measured satisfaction with the overall conference by asking the participants to indicate their attitude toward this conference and by asking if they would attend similar conferences in the future. Finally, this study sought to examine the relationship between overall conference success, demographic characteristics and attitude toward various aspects of the residential environment.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study investigated participant evaluation of residential adult education programs. The survey sought to identify participant characteristics and attitudes about the conference environment. The study was conducted for and in cooperation with the staff of the Donaldson Brown Continuing Education Center in Blacksburg, Virginia.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Normative research allows the investigator to sample large sections of the population in order to gain insight into the characteristics and behaviors of that population. Participants of conferences sponsored by the Donaldson Brown Continuing Education Center served as the population.

The study was conducted during the months of April, May and June, 1974. This time frame was selected in agreement with the directors of the Center in order to obtain a representative sample of conferences. Because of the difficulty in scheduling evaluations of off-campus programs and conferences with simultaneous time frames, some of the programs held during the three month period could not be evaluated. The program directors, however, felt that the selected conferences were representative of the conferences which were conducted. The sample consisted of 450 males and 483 females who attended 23 conferences sponsored by the colleges of Agriculture,

Business, Education, Arts and Sciences, Home Economics and Engineering.

INSTRUMENTATION

The evaluation instrument (in the Appendix) consisted of four pages of multiple-choice and open-ended items. The preliminary section was concerned with collecting demographic and conference satisfaction data.

The remainder of the questionnaire consisted of 21 factors which affect the successful outcome of a conference. These items were selected from a pool of factors suggested by frequent clients of the Center. Participants were asked to rate these items on two scales. The Strength Scale ranged from very weak to very strong on a four-point scale. Individuals were requested to indicate the quality of each listed factor as they observed it in their conference. The Importance Scale is a three-choice scale by which a participant records his feelings concerning the importance of this factor to the conference.

The questionnaire also contained open-ended items, asking the participants to identify the best and worst things about the conference and to offer suggestions for the improvement of weak or very weak factors.

A preliminary study was conducted to determine time length for administering the evaluation and readability of the questionnaire. Several graduate students and faculty members answered the

preliminary questionnaire and made suggestions for clarification of the questions.

SURVEY PROCEDURE

Following tentative approval of the questionnaire by the Director of the Center, the investigator met with the program directors. The questionnaire was reviewed and changes were made according to the program directors' suggestions. After final approval of the questionnaire by the Director of the Center, a letter was sent by the appropriate program director to the conference contact persons. The letter gave permission to utilize this questionnaire as as evaluative instrument in place of the normal survey. The program director also requested the contact persons' cooperation in the study and mentioned that the researcher would contact that person to make additional arrangements.

At an arranged meeting with each of the individual chairmen, the purpose of the study was discussed, a copy of the questionnaire was presented, time and date for evaluation were established and the contact persons were guaranteed a copy of their individual conference results within a week following their conference.

The 23 groups in the survey received the evaluation instrument on the last day of their meeting. The groups took from ten to fifteen minutes to complete the survey. Each conference's results were mailed to the conference leader within a week after their participants completed the questionnaires. This report consisted of the objective

response frequency and any other comments made by the participants. It was felt by both the leaders and the investigator that immediate questionnaire feedback was necessary for proper conference evaluation and future planning.

The questionnaire administrator asked participants of each selected conference to express their perception of the quality and importance of the specific areas of their conference. The quality or Strength Scale was to be answered according to the conference which they were presently attending. The Importance Scale required that they relate the importance of each item, as they personally viewed it, to the success of a similar conference. It was explained that the individual results of the questionnaires would be confidential and anonymous. Participants were also told that their real feelings were extremely important to the planners of future conferences. A composite of their conference's results would be sent to the conference leader to help assess the value of the conference. In six cases, contact persons attached a page of specific questions to the back of the questionnaire or administered a separate list of information-soliciting questions.

Additional demographic data were collected from the Center's reports, including the number of individuals enrolled in the conference, college sponsor and whether the conference carried Continuing Education Unit credit. Of the seven colleges at Virginia Tech, Architecture was the only college which did not sponsor a course during the three months.

In addition to the on-campus conferences, evaluations were also obtained for conferences conducted at Richmond, Dahlgren, Salem and Martinsville.

TREATMENT OF DATA

The multiple-choice items were keypunched on computer cards. Additional data were coded and added to each individual's card including conference number, college sponsor, CEU credit and number of participants answering the questionnaire in his conference.

The computer program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Nie, Bent and Hull, 1970) was used to obtain a frequency distribution, percentage of total response and measures of central tendency for each variable. The 21 items of the Strength Scale were factor analyzed by means of the Biomedical Computer Programs (Dixon, 1973). A factor score for each factor was punched for each individual by the BMD08M program. These cards were integrated with the original data and a correlation matrix was produced by the BMD program 03D.

Information was obtained from the questionnaire open-ended items by making a list and tabulation of participant responses. The individual conference leaders as well as the Center's program planners indicated that the comments and suggestions of the participants enabled them to obtain further insight into their clients' needs and expectations.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results will be presented in four sections: (1) participant characteristics, (2) quality and importance of various aspects of the conferences, (3) major areas of concern, and (4) relationship of participant characteristics to areas of concern. Discussion of the results will follow each section.

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Nine hundred and thirty-five individuals attending twenty-three conferences sponsored by the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Continuing Education Center comprised the sample for the study. Demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

The average participant was approximately 40 years of age, had a technical degree, had attended approximately three prior conferences in the last two years and attended this conference primarily to obtain technical information or to update work skills. Approximately equal numbers of men and women participated. The categories which indicated the greatest frequency of response were having a high school degree, having all expenses paid for the conference and having attended only two previous conferences. Ninety-nine percent reported that they planned to attend future conferences.

Thirty-nine percent indicated more than one purpose in

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	Number	Percentage
Age		
below 20 years	4	0.4%
20 - 29 years	168	18.0%
30 - 39 years	223	23.9%
40 - 49 years	253	27.1%
50 - 59 years	234	25.1%
60 years or over	51	5.5%
Sex		
males	450	48.2%
females	483	51.8%
Education		
not high school graduate	115	12.4%
high school graduate	272	29.2%
less than 2 years college	105	11.3%
A.A. or technical degree	19	2.0%
more than 2 years of college	58	6.2%
bachelor's degree	123	13.2%
graduate work	77	8.3%
master's degree	113	12.1%
Ph.D. or M.D. degree	49	5.3%
Occupation		
farming occupations	4	0.4%
clerical work or sales	48	5.2%
professional or research work	101	11.0%
craftsman	79	8.6%
non-paid workers	7	0.8%
skilled laborers	48	5.2%
technician or semiskilled	94	10.2%
public services	99	10.8%
administrative positions	440	47.8%

Table 1 (continued)

Characteristic	Number	Percentage
Expenditures (% paid by participant)		
all (100%)	106	11.5%
most (75-99%)	12	1.3%
half (50-74%)	10	1.1%
some (25-49%)	80	8.6%
none (expenses paid)	718	77.5%
Prior short course attendance		
none	136	14.5%
one	124	13.3%
two	241	25.8%
three	141	15.1%
four	99	10.6%
five	47	5.0%
six	52	5.6%
seven	21	2.2%
eight	18	1.9%
nine	56	6.0%
Purpose of conference attendance		
technical information	467	49.9%
discussion with others	349	37.3%
to get away for awhile	28	3.0%
raise or promotion	36	3.9%
update work skills	448	47.9%
learn for learning's sake	146	15.6%

attending the conference. In order of highest frequency, the purposes listed by the participants were "to obtain technical information", "to update work skills" and "for discussion with others in my field." It is interesting to note that 22 percent of the individuals answering this question mentioned that one of their purposes for attending was to learn for the sake of learning.

Of the 935 participants who attended the conferences, 78 percent replied that they were satisfied with the results of the overall conference. Only 2.4 percent were not satisfied with the conference attended.

QUALITY AND IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE CONFERENCES

Tables 2 and 3 report the frequency distribution, percentage, and sample size for each item in the Strength and Importance Scales. The Strength Scale measured the quality of each listed item as perceived by the participant. The Importance Scale provided a three-choice scale by which a participant recorded his feelings concerning the importance of this factor to the conference.

The items with the highest positive responses on the Strength Scale were: helpfulness of staff, ease and coordination of registration and comfort of lodging facilities. The items with the most negative responses on the Strength Scale were: opportunity for problem-solving sessions, availability of recreational facilities, use of audio-visual aids and adequate pre-conference information.

The items with the highest positive responses on the Impor-

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of Strength Scale

Conference Item	very weak	weak	strong	very strong	number
Speakers' knowledge		14 1.5%	437 48.3%	454 50.2%	905
Opportunity for discussion	15 1.7%	87 9.7%	418 46.4%	381 42.3%	901
Stimulation of new ideas	9 1.0%	113 12.6%	432 48.1%	344 38.3%	898
Attention to conference	4 .5%	22 2.5%	376 42.6%	481 54.5%	883
Speakers' ability	1 .1%	39 4.3%	416 46.2%	444 49.3%	900
Meeting room comfort	26 2.9%	76 8.4%	295 32.7%	505 56.0%	902
Food service quality	18 2.1%	65 7.5%	318 36.6%	468 53.9%	869
Pre-conference information	34 3.8%	132 14.8%	393 44.0%	335 37.5%	894
Attainment of objectives	10 1.2%	54 6.4%	467 55.2%	315 37.2%	846
Audio-visual aid use	63 7.4%	98 11.5%	339 39.8%	351 41.2%	851
Useful information	4 .4%	67 7.5%	387 43.3%	436 48.8%	894
Problem-solving sessions	36 4.1%	198 22.7%	408 46.8%	230 26.4%	872
Time to make arrangements	9 1.0%	64 7.4%	415 48.2%	373 43.3%	861
Necessary working materials	15 1.8%	74 8.7%	367 43.1%	395 46.4%	851
Chance for group rapport	11 1.3%	102 12.2%	396 47.4%	326 39.0%	835
Lodging facilities	9 1.1%	34 4.3%	239 30.4%	505 64.2%	787
Ease of registration	3 .4%	20 2.4%	241 28.4%	584 68.9%	848
Conference length	5 .6%	56 6.6%	417 48.9%	374 43.9%	852
Development of new interests	10 1.2%	70 8.3%	430 50.7%	338 39.9%	848
Helpfulness of staff	1 .1%	10 1.1%	234 26.8%	628 71.9%	873
Recreational facilities	44 6.3%	130 18.7%	279 40.2%	241 34.7%	694

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage of Importance Scale

Conference Item	little impt.	some impt.	great impt.	number
Speakers' knowledge	5 .6%	133 15.0%	746 84.4%	884
Opportunity for discussion	18 2.1%	245 27.9%	615 70.0%	878
Stimulation of new ideas	22 2.5%	210 24.2%	637 73.3%	869
Attention to conference	26 3.0%	222 26.0%	606 71.0%	854
Speakers' ability	2 .2%	128 14.7%	743 85.1%	873
Meeting room comfort	17 2.0%	225 25.9%	626 72.2%	868
Food service quality	36 4.2%	256 30.2%	556 65.6%	848
Pre-conference information	38 4.4%	255 29.5%	571 66.1%	864
Attainment of objectives	10 1.2%	237 28.8%	575 70.0%	822
Audio-visual aid use	55 6.6%	287 34.6%	488 58.8%	830
Useful information	7 .8%	143 16.7%	708 82.5%	858
Problem-solving sessions	36 4.3%	310 36.7%	498 59.0%	844
Time to make arrangements	29 3.5%	289 35.1%	505 61.4%	823
Necessary working materials	38 4.6%	261 31.9%	519 63.5%	818
Chance for group rapport	25 3.1%	287 35.7%	492 61.2%	804
Lodging facilities	16 2.1%	198 25.8%	554 72.1%	768
Ease of registration	39 4.8%	206 25.2%	571 70.0%	816
Conference length	19 2.3%	268 32.2%	545 65.5%	832
Development of new interests	21 2.6%	249 30.5%	545 66.9%	815
Helpfulness of staff	11 1.3%	148 17.5%	688 81.2%	847
Recreational facilities	157 22.4%	242 34.5%	302 43.1%	701

tance Scale were: speakers' ability to get ideas across, speakers' knowledge of the subject, presentation of useful information and helpfulness of staff. Of less importance were: the availability of recreational facilities, use of audio-visual aids and opportunity for problem-solving sessions.

Table 4 presents the mean or average response for each aspect of the conference on both strength and importance. These means were then ranked to obtain a comparison of the quality of the most important items. As evident from both frequency tables and the means, several items were not awarded a strength comparable to their importance. The items with the highest means were the speakers' knowledge and ability to get ideas across. The means for these items were of marginal strength compared to several other items which had higher strength means. Useful information was ranked third on the Importance Scale yet it was ninth on the Strength Scale. Opportunity for discussion was 14 on the Strength and 9.5 on the Importance Scale. Obtainment of objectives was also ranked 14 on Strength and 8 on Importance. One notable difference was stimulation of ideas which was very high (5) in importance and only moderately strong (16.5) in strength.

Conference aspects receiving the highest quality ratings were in the area of facility support: helpfulness of staff, ease of registration and comfort of lodging. This result lends support to the belief that the residential learning environment is conducive to a "successful adult learning experience."

The participants indicated that the most important aspects of

Table 4

Means and Rankings of Strength and Importance

Conference Item	Strength[a]		Importance[b]	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Speakers' knowledge	3.49	5	2.84	2
Opportunity for discussion	3.29	14	2.68	9.5
Stimulation of new ideas	3.24	16.5	2.71	5
Attention to conference	3.51	4	2.68	9.5
Speakers' ability	3.45	6	2.85	1
Meeting room comfort	3.42	7.5	2.70	6.5
Food service quality	3.42	7.5	2.61	15
Pre-conference information	3.15	18.5	2.62	14
Attainment of objectives	3.29	14	2.69	8
Audio-visual aid use	3.15	18.5	2.52	20
Useful information	3.40	9	2.82	3
Problem-solving sessions	2.95	21	2.55	19
Time to make arrangements	3.34	11.5	2.58	17.5
Necessary working materials	3.34	11.5	2.59	16
Chance for group rapport	3.24	16.5	2.58	17.5
Lodging facilities	3.58	3	2.70	6.5
Ease of registration	3.66	2	2.65	11
Conference length	3.36	10	2.63	13
Development of new interests	3.29	14	2.64	12
Helpfulness of staff	3.71	1	2.80	4
Recreational facilities	3.03	20	2.21	21

[a]Based on a four-point scale: 1 = very weak; 4 = very strong
[b]Based on a three-point scale: 1 = little; 3 = great

the conferences were: (1) the speakers' knowledge and ability, (2) useful information received, and (3) helpfulness of staff. In planning conferences it is important to select carefully the resourse persons who will be used in the meetings. Planners should ensure the credibility of speakers, practicality of the information to be presented and the helpful attitudes of the conference staff. Conference participants expect the staff to be helpful regardless of whether they perceive the staff to be the faculty or employees at the facilities.

The items which had the lowest means on the Strength Scale were also the items rated lowest on the Importance Scale: (1) availability of recreational facilities, (2) use of audio-visual aids, and (3) opportunity for problem-solving sessions. The usage and need for these aspects varied from one conference to another. The absence of audio-visual aids, recreational activities and problem-solving sessions in a conference may have caused the participants to rate the quality and importance of these items as low.

The correlations of Strength scores with the corresponding Importance scores are presented in Table 5. The items showing a high correlation are use of audio-visual aids (.53), provision of necessary working materials (.54), and availability of recreational facilities (.55). These correlations suggest that participants who tended to rate these aspects high on quality also tended to rate them high on importance. The individuals who tended to view these areas as weak felt that they were not very important. Items showing a slight or no correlation were speakers' knowledge of the subject (.28), speakers'

Table 5

Correlations of Strength and Importance Scores

Conference Item	Correlation	Number
Speakers' knowledge	.28	874
Opportunity for discussion	.27	860
Stimulation of new ideas	.31	856
Attention to conference	.41	839
Speakers' ability	.23	860
Meeting room comfort	.33	855
Food service quality	.39	834
Pre-conference information	.37	852
Attainment of objectives	.35	803
Audio-visual aid use	.53	810
Useful information	.36	847
Problem-solving sessions	.39	827
Time to make arrangements	.38	808
Necessary working materials	.54	798
Chance for group rapport	.42	786
Lodging facilities	.33	741
Ease of registration	.39	799
Conference length	.31	806
Development of new interests	.44	799
Helpfulness of staff	.42	831
Recreational facilities	.55	659

ability to get ideas across (.27) and opportunity for discussion (.23). The interpretation of these slight correlations supports the premise that the strength and attributed importance of these items were not strongly related. That is, individuals who tended to rate an item as strong rated its importance little differently than did those individuals who indicated that the item strength was weak.

MAJOR AREAS OF CONCERN

In order to define areas of concern in the conference situation, the Strength Scale was factor analyzed by use of computer program BMD08M (Dixon, 1973). The principal component method was employed. The rotation was orthogonal.

The number of factors was determined by Kaiser's criterion of selecting factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The four factors selected had the following eigenvalues: Factor 1, 6.45; Factor 2, 1.71; Factor 3, 1.15; Factor 4, 1.02. These four factors accounted for 49 percent of the total variance.

Factor loadings with absolute values of .3 or greater were considered meaningful for interpreting each factor. The factor names were selected to represent a composite of the items which had the highest factor loadings for each factor. The first factor was entitled Learning Environment - Structured because it contained high loadings of: (1) speakers' knowledge of the subject, (2) speakers' ability to get ideas across, (3) stimulation of new ideas, (4) attainment of stated program objectives, and (5) presentation of

Table 6

Strength Factor Loadings and Communalities

Conference Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Communality
Speakers' knowledge	0.74	0.02	0.09	0.02	.5500
Opportunity for discussion	0.27	0.08	0.11	0.62	.4720
Stimulation of new ideas	0.58	0.03	0.14	0.34	.4777
Attention to conference	0.42	0.17	0.39	0.05	.3620
Speakers' ability	0.66	0.09	0.05	0.24	.4975
Meeting room comfort	0.06	0.54	0.09	0.46	.5102
Food service quality	-0.11	0.66	0.08	0.18	.4833
Pre-conference information	0.07	0.10	0.64	0.25	.4899
Attainment of objectives	0.59	0.13	0.33	0.23	.5261
Audio-visual aid use	0.42	0.22	0.01	0.51	.4816
Useful information	0.67	0.15	0.07	0.40	.6400
Problem-solving sessions	0.31	0.02	0.17	0.70	.6078
Time to make arrangements	0.06	0.07	0.80	0.07	.6618
Necessary working materials	0.12	0.27	0.38	0.44	.4207
Chance for group rapport	0.14	0.15	0.19	0.70	.5666
Lodging facilities	0.10	0.73	0.18	-0.02	.5681
Ease of registration	0.20	0.50	0.41	-0.04	.4562
Conference length	0.25	0.17	0.41	-0.17	.2874
Development of new interests	0.52	0.17	0.09	-0.42	.4895
Helpfulness of staff	0.39	0.44	0.20	-0.17	.4220
Recreational facilities	0.20	0.54	0.01	-0.13	.3543

useful information. Other significant loadings on this factor include attention to conference details by leaders and staff, use of audio-visual aids, development of new interests and helpfulness of staff.

Facility Support, the second factor, has significant loadings of (1) physical comfort and arrangement of meeting rooms, (2) food service quality, (3) comfort of lodging facilities, (4) ease and coordination of registration, (5) helpfulness of staff, and (6) availability of recreational facilities. The highest loadings were food service quality and comfort of lodging facilities.

Factor three, Administrative Preparation, is defined by the high loadings of adequate pre-conference information and adequate time to make arrangements after receiving conference information. Other significant factor loadings are: (1) attention to conference details by leaders and staff, (2) attainment of stated program objectives, (3) provision of necessary working materials, (4) ease and coordination of registration, and (5) length of conference.

Learning Environment - Interactive is the fourth factor. The highest loadings are the items of opportunity for discussion, opportunity for problem-solving sessions and chance to develop group rapport. Other significant loadings on the fourth factor were: (1) stimulation of new ideas, (2) physical comfort and arrangement of meeting rooms, (3) use of audio-visual aids, (4) presentation of useful information, (5) provision of necessary working materials, and (5) development of new interests.

Results of the factor analysis indicate that participants

rated the quality of their conference experience in four areas: (1) Learning Environment - Structured, (2) Facility Support, (3) Administrative Preparation, and (4) Learning Environment - Interactive. Some of the items had significant loadings on more than one factor.

The two factors concerned with the learning environment have four common item loadings: (1) stimulation of new ideas, (2) use of audio-visual aids, (3) presentation of useful information, and (4) development of new interests. These items are important qualifiers of the conference experience regardless of the amount of structure in the sessions.

Attention to conference details by leaders and staff and attainment of stated program objectives showed significant loadings on the factors of Learning Environment - Structured and Administrative Preparation. This might be explained by the fact that participants held the conference leaders and speakers responsible for these two items or this may be the result of courses in which the main speaker was the conference leader or administrator.

Helpfulness of staff loaded significantly on the factors of Learning Environment - Structured and Facility Support. An explanation for this could be that some participants considered the "staff" to be the main speakers or resource persons and some interpreted staff to mean the center personnel.

Meeting room comfort was an important consideration both in facility evaluation and for enhancing an interactive learning environment. The main complaints about the comfort of the meeting rooms

occured in conferences which were conducted in a structured learning environment.

In addition to pre-conference information, administrative preparation should involve providing necessary working materials and coordinating registration.

The length of conference items was a moderate loading on the third factor of Administrative Preparation. The average conference length was two to four days. Comments from participants indicated that this was a satisfactory number of days for the short course. Therefore, participants were not very concerned about this aspect of the conference.

RELATIONSHIP OF PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS TO AREAS OF CONCERN

Several of the demographic variables showed a moderate correlation with the factor scores corresponding to each of the four factors. The results in Table 7 indicate that several items correlate with Factor 4, Learning Environment - Interactive: overall satisfaction with the conference (-.27), necessary working materials (.32), opportunity to develop group rapport (.33), the mean of the importance scores (.26), sex of the participant (.30, 1 = male and 2 = female) and educational level (-.31). Time to make arrangements after receiving pre-conference information was the only correlation with Administrative Preparation. Facility Support demonstrated a correlation of .30 and .32 respectively with the importance of food service and the importance of lodging to the conference. Learning Environment

Table 7

Correlations of Factor Scores and Other Variables

Conference Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Overall satisfaction (1=satis., 4=unsatis.)	-.36	N.S.*	N.S.	-.27
Importance of food service	N.S.	.31	N.S.	N.S.
Importance of lodging	N.S.	.32	N.S.	N.S.
Importance of time to make arrangements	N.S.	N.S.	.32	N.S.
Importance of necessary working materials	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	.32
Importanae of development of group rapport	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	.33
Importance mean	.26	N.S.	N.S.	.26
Sex of participant (1=male, 2=female)	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	.30
Education of participant	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	-.31

*Correlation coefficient not significant at the .01 level of probability.

- Structured showed a correlation of -.36 with the overall satisfaction of the conference.

Overall conference satisfaction was negatively correlated with conference aspects relating to a structured and interactive learning environment. If the participants perceive structured and interactive aspects of a conference as being strong or good, they feel satisfied with the results of the whole conference. Alternately this outcome implies that those individuals who did not perceive the conference as being worthwhile tended to be particularly dissatisfied with the speakers and the discussion opportunity.

Individuals who rated the quality of the facilities as being strong to very strong tended to also rate food service and lodging as being important. Those participants not rating facilities very strongly tended to view food service and lodging as being less important. From this it might be concluded that participants view conference facility quality according to the importance which they attribute to lodging and food service at their conference.

Participants who viewed the administrative preparation as a strong factor in their conference felt that time to make arrangements was an important aspect of the conference. Those who tended to indicate that time to make arrangements was not very important tended to rate the quality of the administrative preparation as less strong.

The working materials tended to be important to individuals who indicated that the interactive learning experiences were very strong. The item "necessary working materials" is somewhat ambiguous

and may have been interpreted differently by individuals. Also it is not known what materials are viewed as being important for each conference participant. A conference which proved strong in interactive opportunity may be a conference in which the working materials provided were sources of information for the discussions.

Participants who judged the development of group rapport as being important tended to rate the interactive learning environment as being strong. This could be interpreted to mean that participants were given more opportunities to meet in informal groups and as a result group rapport developed and was more important to the group members.

Several of the demographic characteristics of the participants produced significant correlations with the four factors. Females tended to feel that the interactive environment was of high quality. The participants with less formal education also viewed the more informal environment as being strong. These results may be due to the fact that these two groups react more favorably to informal small group situations. On the other hand the male and professional clients may prefer conferences which are concise and factual. These people may have been seeking specific information or facts which are best transmitted through a speaker.

Two of these correlations are related to Densmore's results (1965). Densmore found that women displayed a more favorable view toward conferences than men. This study tends to support this conclusion in the area of interactive learning in a conference.

Densmore also concluded that the quality of the program was related to the amount of overall conference satisfaction as perceived by the participant. This study found that overall satisfaction was related to the quality of the program but the relationship depended on two factors. Quality was positively related to a structured learning environment and to the interactive learning environment.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The Donaldson Brown Continuing Education Center on the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University is a residential facility for adult learning. The Continuing Education Center's Director and program staff expressed a need to obtain more information about the participants who attended the Center's programs. The Center staff wished to determine: (1) demographic characteristics about the participants such as sex, education, occupation, age, and purpose for attendance, (2) degree of participant satisfaction, and (3) factors which influenced success of a conference.

The problem investigated in the study was: How do participants view the quality and importance of certain aspects of a conference situation?

The testing environment, the Continuing Education Center, possessed several characteristics which made it a unique environment for adult education: (1) the Center has lodging, dining, and meeting rooms under one roof and management, (2) the Center's residential environment enhances concentration, focus and convergence of participants on a single topic, and (3) several types of programs are planned and facilitated by the Center program staff.

The study was conducted during a three month period, in the

months of April, May and June, 1974. Since some of the programs at the Center were held concurrently, all of the programs could not be sampled. The program directors of the Center determined a representative sample of the conferences held in the Center. The sample consisted of 450 males and 483 females attending 23 different conferences sponsored by the Virginia Tech Extension Division.

The survey instrument consisted of a four page questionnaire of multiple-choice and open-ended items. The questions were designed to collect information concerning: (1) demographic characteristics of the participants, (2) the quality and importance of various aspects of a conference, (3) the best and worst points about the meetings, and (4) suggestions for improvement. After preliminary testing and review by the Director of the Center and several graduate students and faculty members, one of the Center's program directors contacted the leader or sponsor of each conference through a letter. This communication contributed support to the study and requested cooperation from the respective conference leaders. The researcher met with each contact chairman to discuss the questionnaire's purpose, administration and distribution of results.

The questionnaire was administered to the participants of twenty-three conferences during a break on the last day of their meeting. The administrator asked the participants to relate their perception of the quality and importance of specific areas of their conference. The value of their responses was emphasized and confidentiality was insured.

The questionnaires were analyzed by computer programs SPSS, BMD08M, and BMD03D to produce response frequencies, conference factors and a correlation matrix. The results indicate several conclusions about participant satisfaction with conferences sponsored by the Donaldson Brown Continuing Education Center.

The findings indicated that participants rated the facilities as the strongest aspect of the conference, including comfort of lodging facilities, ease and coordination of registration and helpfulness of staff. The participants also responded that the most important aspects of a conference were the speakers' knowledge and communication ability and useful information obtained from the conference. The participants were most concerned about the programs' content and presentation.

When the Strength Scale was factor analyzed, four factors emerged which reflected how the participants felt about the quality of their conference. These factors included: (1) Learning Environment - Structured, (2) Learning Environment - Interactive, (3) Facility Support, and (4) Administrative Preparation. Individuals who expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the overall conference tended to rate the structured and interactive environments as very strong. The female participants and the less educated individuals tended to indicate that the participants evaluated their conference in terms of the learning activities (structured and interactive). Dissatisfaction with the overall conference may have stemed from a poor choice of speakers or a lack of enough time for discussion in small groups and

exchange of ideas. Women and less educated individuals may have felt more comfortable meeting in small peer groups since they rated the interactive learning environment higher.

Participants who rated the quality of administrative preparation as strong tended to indicate that this aspect of a conference was very important. Accordingly, it would seem that administrative preparation was consistently effective with respect to this aspect of conference planning.

There appears to be many factors which affect a successful conference: the planning, the speakers, the information received, the food and lodging facilities. Therefore, much more can be learned about the conference situation when the evaluation focuses on various aspects of a conference rather than the conference experience as a whole.

CONCLUSIONS

Uses of the Study by the Donaldson Brown Staff

The staff of the Donaldson Brown Continuing Education Center can benefit from the study in four ways: (1) The staff can gain information about the people who attend adult education programs. (2) The staff can obtain feedback on the quality and supportiveness of the Center facilities. (3) The program planning staff can determine the factors which are important for a successful conference. (4) The staff can gain information about the evaluation process which will provide the most useful information about the conferences.

Knowledge about the characteristics of the average attender can be useful during program planning sessions. The average participant of the Center's programs was about 40 years of age, had a technical degree, had attended about three prior conferences in the last two years and attended this conference to obtain technical information and to update work skills.

The facilities of the Center were considered by the participants to be very conducive to adult learning and interaction. The Center staff is reinforced in their belief in the importance of comfortable lodging, ease and coordination of registration and helpfulness of the Center staff.

Continued attention should be given to the selection of the conference speakers and the program content. These factors are vital to conference success and participant satisfaction.

The Center's administrators became more aware of the need for several types of evaluative instruments which can be administered to different types of conferences. It is important that these instruments be carefully scrutinized and revised to ensure that they are providing the program planners with reliable information about the conferences.

For the purposes of this study only the closed-ended items were analyzed. The responses to the open-ended items, however, did provide valuable information for the planning of future conferences.

Uses of the Study as a Model for Further Research

This study has implications for researchers in the field of conference evaluation. The methodology employed is a unique approach to measuring conference success. The uniqueness of the methodology is apparent in: (1) the use of both closed- and open-ended questions, (2) the measurement of both quality and importance of the conference aspects, (3) the use of factor analysis to group the aspects into four areas of participant concern, and (4) the comparison of the factor scores and importance items to the demographic characteristics of the participants.

The demographic and conference data were collected by means of both closed- and open-ended items. The closed-ended items allowed the investigator to obtain dichotomous and ordinal data. The open-ended questions encouraged the participant to express his feelings and to give suggestions for the improvement of weak conference factors.

Two scales were used in the questionnaire to rate the conference aspects. The Strength Scale sought to measure the quality of each conference attribute. The Importance Scale weighed the importance of each aspect for a successful conference. It is not sufficient to determine the quality of conference aspects without weighting the importance of the aspects.

Factor analysis was employed to determine if participants viewed certain conference aspects in similar ways which led to the formation of four major areas of concern.

The final analysis involved the construction of a correlation

matrix containing all of the relevant variables of participant characteristics, factor scores, strength and importance items. The correlations produced from this matrix demonstrated relationships which existed between these variables.

One modification of the model would facilitate analysis of the data. The Importance Scale could be expanded to a four-choice scale to enable a closer comparison on the responses, percentages and means.

Researchers in the field of conference evaluation can use this study as a model for evaluation in other conference settings. Researchers are encouraged to survey participants and administrators of the testing facility to determine the conference aspects which greatly affect the success of a conference. The conference items in this study may not necessarily pertain to conferences at other facilities. The list of items to be rated by the participants should reflect the aspects of a conference which most directly affect participant satisfaction.

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APPENDIX

SPECIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE and STATE UNIVERSITY
Blacksburg, Virginia

SPECIAL QUESTIONNAIRE
for
Participants in Conferences and Short Courses

Please mark your answer by circling the most appropriate response.

1. What is your age?

   1. Below 20 years
   2. 20 - 29 years
   3. 30 - 39 years
   4. 40 - 49 years
   5. 50 - 59 years
   6. 60 years or over

2. What is your sex?

   1. Male
   2. Female

3. What is your level of education?

   1. Not high school graduate
   2. High school graduate
   3. Less than two years college work
   4. A.A. degree or technical degree
   5. More than two years of college but not bachelor degree
   6. Bachelor degree
   7. Graduate work but no advanced degree
   8. Master.degree
   9. Ph.D. or M.D. degree

4. What is your occupation? Be specific. _____

5. What part of the expenditures for this conference were you required to finance from your personal funds?

   1. All (100%)
   2. Most (75 - 99%)
   3. Half (50 - 74%)
   4. Some (25 - 49%)
   5. None (Expenses paid)

6. How many conferences or short courses have you attended in the last two years? _____

7. Based on the conference you are now attending, would you attend similar conferences sponsored by the Extension Division of Virginia Tech in the future?

   1. Yes
   2. No

8. Which of the following best describes your purpose in attending this conference?

   1. To obtain technical information
   2. For discussion with others in my field
   3. To "get away for awhile"
   4. To enhance the likelihood of a raise or promotion
   5. To update work skills
   6. To learn for the sake of learning
   7. Other _____

9. To what degree did you satisfy your purpose in attending this conference?

   1. Greatly satisfied
   2. Slightly satisfied
   3. Slightly unsatisfied
   4. Greatly unsatisfied

10. What was the best thing about your conference - short course?

11. What was the worst thing about your conference - short course?

12. There are many factors which affect the attainment of your objectives for a conference or short course. Please rate each of the following items in terms of the relative strength of the conference. Also, rate each item as to its importance in the conference.

Under each item space has been provided for any comments.

STRENGTH					IMPORTANCE		
very weak	weak	strong	very strong		little	some	great
1	2	3	4	Speakers' knowledge of the subject	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Opportunity for discussion	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Stimulation of new ideas	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Attention to conference details by leaders and staff	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Speakers' ability to get ideas across	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Physical comfort and arrangement of meeting rooms	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Food service quality	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Adequate pre-conference information	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Attainment of stated program objectives	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Use of audio-visual aids	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Presentation of useful information	1	2	3

STRENGTH					IMPORTANCE		
very weak	weak	strong	very strong		little	some	great
1	2	3	4	Opportunity for problem-solving sessions	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Adequate time to make arrangements after receiving conference information	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Provision of necessary working materials	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Chance to develop group rapport	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Comfort of lodging facilities	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Ease and coordination of registration	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Length of conference	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Development of new interests	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Helpfulness of staff	1	2	3
1	2	3	4	Availability of recreational facilities	1	2	3

13. If you have responded "very weak" on any item, please describe the problem and suggest ways that the conference could have been improved.

14. Please make further comments about this conference.

That's All. Thank you!

VITA

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The results of this study are significant only for the staff of the Donaldson Brown Center; however, the methodology employed is a unique approach to conference evaluation. The uniqueness of the study is the use of both strength and importance scales, factor analysis and the correlation of factor scores and demographic items.