



Using the Interactive Program Planning Model

A program planning model is meant to be *used* rather than simply tucked in a file folder or left on a bookshelf. Thus, before deciding to try any program planning model, program planners should examine their own beliefs and values about planning programs for adults to determine whether the model fits with who they are and how they prefer to practice. If, for example, they prefer to work solo, the interactive program planning model will not work for them. (Remember that one of the basic assumptions of the model is that collaborative planning is a given in most planning situations.) Once planners have decided to use a particular model, they need to make some preliminary assumptions about the planning situation so that initial decisions about the planning process can be made. Developing these planning assumptions will, among other things, assist staff in determining whether they need to use all or only parts of the planning model. Finally, making decisions about how and what programs to plan requires more than just knowing how to plan programs effectively; it often involves making decisions that have moral and ethical consequences for the participants, the planners, and the program sponsors. Each of these important topics related to the use of the interactive program planning for adults—identifying personal beliefs about program planning, developing up-front planning assumptions, determining what parts of the model are needed, and ethical issues of program planning—is discussed in this chapter.

Identifying Personal Beliefs Related to Program Planning

In applying the interactive program planning model, program planners need to know what they stand for as educators and trainers. More specifically, they need to be able to identify their beliefs and values and determine working philosophies about the program planning process (Apps, 1973, 1991; Boyle, 1981; Zinn, 1990b). By articulating these beliefs and values, program planners can determine whether or not the interactive model fits what they believe and how they work. (If it does not, perhaps they might be willing to reflect on their present practice and modify or change their beliefs so that the model could be a useful resource and enhance their practice.) For example, do they see the program planning process as sequential or as a highly flexible

and interactive process in terms of what planners do first, second, and so on? Do they believe in the basic assumptions of the model, such as the assumption that program planning is a cooperative endeavor involving complex interactions among institutional priorities, people, and events? And do they believe that adults can and do want to learn, regardless of their age, and that adults tend to learn best when their experiences and prior knowledge are incorporated into learning activities?

Boyle (1981) and Apps (1991) have provided useful categories to assist educators and trainers in articulating and examining their working philosophies on program planning. The various categories, as illustrated below with sample belief statements, incorporate ideas about what people believe about the purpose of education, the program planning process, adults as learners, and the process of learning.

The Purpose of Adult Education

- The purpose of educational programs is to promote changes in the way workers behave so their job performance is enhanced.
- The purpose of educational programs is to encourage the growth and development of individuals.
- The purpose of educational programs is to assist adults to bring about change in societal norms and values.

The Program Planning Process

- Program planners should act as content experts and/or managers of the planning process, making sure that all necessary tasks are completed.
- Program planners should serve as coordinators and facilitators in the planning process, enabling all parties (such as participants, supervisors, funding sources) to have an active role. They also may be content experts.
- Program planners should act as the negotiators between and among the various groups involved in the planning process. They also may be content experts.

Adults as Learners

- Adults can and do want to learn regardless of age.
- Adults have a rich background of knowledge and experience that should be used in the learning process.
- Adults, for the most part, are pragmatic in their learning. They want to apply their learning to present situations.

The Learning Process

- Participants learn best when new information/skills build on past knowledge and experience.
- Participants are more motivated to learn when a variety of teaching methods are used.
- Participants learn both in independent, self-reliant modes and in interdependent and collaborative ways.

One instrument that is useful in assisting planners to deter-

mine their underlying beliefs about program planning is Zinn's (1990a) *Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory*. The purpose of that instrument is to help educators identify their personal philosophy of education as related to the categories described by Boyle and Apps. The inventory is self-administered, self-scored, and self-interpreted, which makes it easy for planners to use in clarifying their personal beliefs about areas important to the program planning process.

Rarely do persons involved with planning programs ever fully articulate their personal beliefs about program planning; yet a system of beliefs and values guides their actions. Contrast, for example, two different people responsible for developing educational activities.

Scenario 1

Bob C. involves as many people as possible in designing the educational activities for which he is responsible. He has a very active education committee and uses a variety of ad hoc groups in the planning of new programs and other educational initiatives. He strongly advises his instructors to use participatory methods in their program delivery and to gear their material to what would be useful to the participants back on the job. He ensures that all participants receive prompt feedback on what they have learned (whether it be information, skills, or changes in attitudes and values), both during the sessions and when they try to apply the material to their specific work situations.

Scenario 2

Wanda R., on the other hand, prefers to plan educational activities by herself, although she occasionally hires outside consultants to assist. She finds working with committees and with staff outside her unit very cumbersome. She does not like her instructors to waste any time in class and requests that they stick strictly to the topic at hand and make sure the participants know the content. Wanda requires pre- and posttests for each session, but no follow-up training or evaluation is done once the program is completed. Wanda believes that follow-up activities are a waste of time and money. If the participants did not get the material the first time (she believes), they did not really want to learn it in the first place. Wanda also assumes that it is the participant's responsibility to be able to apply the material, not hers.

Although most program planners do not take the time to spell out clearly and precisely their working philosophies, being cognizant of and acting on one's beliefs about program planning is critical in planning programs for adults. Adult learners and program sponsors are usually quick at making judgments about planners who espouse one set of beliefs and then act in opposition to those beliefs. For example, if potential program participants are asked for ideas for future programs, they want to see those ideas used; and if their ideas are not used, they want to know why. Likewise, if organizational sponsors expect certain outcomes (and have been promised that all of those outcomes will be addressed), they do not like the planners of the event to respond to only some of their expectations. And when program planners say they are interested in fostering change in participants, or-

ganizational practices, and the like, administrators and participants expect them to take this charge seriously and not simply assume that the changes will happen through the good intentions of participants and/or sponsors. In essence, adult learners and sponsors of educational and training programs expect program planners to plan and deliver what they say they will deliver. For program staff to do otherwise often results in angry—or even worse, indifferent—participants and the attitude that educational and training programs are a waste of time and money.