8 How common and important is each type of planner?

Some findings from our 1970 survey were reported in Chapter 3. We turn now to the findings concerning the type of planner chosen for each learning project.

Which Type of Planner Do People Choose?

The 66 adults interviewed in the 1970 survey conducted 538 learning projects during the 12 months before the interview. Table 8, which presents the percentages of learning projects that fell into the four different categories of planner, indicates who was primarily responsible for the detailed day-to-day planning in each project.

Two-thirds of all the projects were planned by the learner himself. All but three of the interviewees conducted at least one self-planned project. The mean number of self-planned projects per person was 5.8, as shown in Table 9. Almost half the interviewees conducted at least one project that was planned by a group or its leader. Almost the same number conducted at least one project planned by another person in a one-to-one relationship (Table 9). These two types of planners together, though, were responsible for only one-fifth of all the projects, as can be seen in Table 8. Both tables indicate that projects with mixed planning were fairly significant, but nonhuman planners were fairly rare.

The findings for the two youth groups are fairly similar to the adult pattern. The most common planner is the learner himself. Second is a group or its leader-instructor. Apparently, as an individual moves from the age of 10 to adulthood, the proportion of self-planned projects increases, and his reliance on a group decreases. The figures are provided in Table 10.

Additional Findings

Several additional findings emerged from our 1970 survey. First, we divided the adult projects planned by a group or its leader-instructor into two categories. The

interviewees classified most of their group-planned learning projects in the following way: "This group was sponsored by an educational institution, or it had an instructor or leader or speaker who was assigned to that group or was paid for this task." About one-fifth of the group-planned projects, though, were in the other category: "It was just a group of equals meeting outside of any organized or institutional framework, and taking turns planning their own learning activities."

Table 8 / On What Types of Planners Do Adults Rely?

Primary planner	Percentage of projects
The learner himself	68
A group or its leader-instructor	12
One person in a one-to-one situation	8
A nonhuman resource	3
Mixed (that is, no dominant type of planner)	9

Table 9 / Frequency of Various Types of Planners

Type of planner	Number of adult interviewees (N = 66) with at least one project	Their mean number of projects using the given type of planner
The learner himself	63	5.8
A group or its leader-instructor	32	1.9
One person in a one-to-one situation	31	1.4
A nonhuman resource	8	2.0
Mixed (that is, no dominant type of planner)	26	1.9

Adult learning projects planned by another person in a one-to-one situation were also divided into two classifications. In the majority of these projects, the person who served as planner "was paid to do so [paid by the learner or by someone else], or was doing so because this was a definite responsibility for him, or part of his job." On the other hand, in two-fifths of the projects, the planner was helping "primarily because he was a friend or relative." A few of the friends and relatives happened to be trained or professional instructors in the subject matter, but were chosen primarily because of the personal relationship.

Some additional findings are based on supplementary analyses of the adult data. When the figures for the four types of planners are combined in various ways, some interesting percentages emerge.

Table 10 / On What Types of Planners Do Children and Adolescents Rely?

Primary planner	For 16-year-olds, the percentage of projects	For 10-year-olds, the percentage of projects
The learner himself	46	41
A group or its leader-instructor	29	33
One person in a one-to-one situation	12	8
A nonhuman resource	3	0
Mixed (that is, no dominant type of planner)	10	18

Note. – Learning projects that were motivated primarily or partially for credit are not included in this table.

One of these percentages is based on Table 8. Approximately two-thirds (68%) of all learning projects are planned by the learner himself. Only one-third are planned by someone other than the learner, that is, by an "external" planner.

In a second analysis, we determined how many learning projects were professionally planned, rather than planned by the learner himself or by some amateur planner. To be more precise, we were interested in the proportion of projects planned by a paid person (or a person who was doing this as part of his job or responsibility as a volunteer in some agency), sponsored by an institution, or pursued for credit. Only one-fifth (19%) of the projects fell into this category. The other 81% were planned by the learner himself, by a friend or relative, or by a group of peers unrelated to an institution. The detailed calculations are presented in Table 11.

Finally, it is interesting to note the relatively small number of projects in which the learner had little influence on the detailed procedures and content. In these projects, the planner did not seriously take into account the characteristics, needs, problems, and questions of each particular learner. Even if all projects planned by a group (or its leader or instructor) or a nonhuman resource fit here, the total is still only 16% of all projects. A very high proportion (84%) of learning projects are marked by individualized planning. That is, the planning is designed with a particular learner in mind.

Table 11 / Number of Learning Projects Planned by the Learner or an Amateur Compared to Professionally Planned Projects

Projects planned by the learner or by an amateur	Self-planned	368
	A person who is a friend or relative (and not a trained instructor)	11
	Groups that were equals, outside of any institutional framework	12
Total		391[a]
Projects planned by a paid or professional person, sponsored by an institution, or pursued for credit	A person who is a paid instructor, or helping as part of his job	24
	A person who is a friend or relative, but also happens to be a trained instructor	4
	A group sponsored by an institution and/or using an instructor or leader paid for this task	50
	A nonhuman resource	16
Total		94[b]

Note. – The total number of projects was 485, because 53 of the 538 learning projects were excluded from these calculations: 50 projects which had no dominant planner, and 3 projects in which the person responsible for the planning in a one-to-one situation was not classified further.

[a] This total is 81% of 485.   [b] This total is 19% of 485.

Other Surveys

Several other studies have also been interested in how many adult learning efforts rely on a group or institution, and how many are self-planned. These studies include Blackburn (1967, 1968), Harold Huston's doctoral dissertation (in progress), Johnstone and Rivera (1965), Litchfield (1965), Parker and Paisley (1966), Shorey (1969), and Yadao (1968).

Johnstone and Rivera treated self-planned learning projects merely as a residual category. In some subject matter areas (technical arts and hobbies, gardening, and home improvement skills), they found that at least 80% of all learning projects

were self-planned. They stated that "the incidence of self-education throughout the adult population is much greater than we had anticipated [p. 37]." Blackburn (1967) was so impressed by the frequency of individual methods that he made the following recommendation: "Additional attention by educators should be devoted to designing and facilitating appealing educational experiences which adults can undertake through individual methods of study [pp. 207-208]."

None of the earlier studies, however, found as much self-planned learning as our survey discovered. Our 1970 survey indicates that most adults conduct several majo learning efforts a year, and plan most of their learning themselves.

Several factors account for the differences between this survey and the earlier ones. Basically, the earlier studies uncovered only the learning efforts that the person could recall fairly quickly and easily. It is probably easier to recall a course or conference or discussion group than it is to recall most self-planned learning efforts. Consequently, many self-planned projects remained undetected in previous studies.

To reduce this error, we probed intensively for all of the person's learning projects In our interviews, we used long lists of subject matter and learning methods to stimulate recall. Instead of asking a single blunt question, we tried several different ways of asking the person to recall additional projects. Each learner was interviewed intensively: mailed questionnaires, or interviewing the learner's spouse instead of the learner himself, did not seem appropriate to us. A two-hour interview was devoted exclusively to discovering all the person's projects during the preceding year, and gathering certain basic data about these projects.

Further surveys, using larger samples as suggested in Chapter 3, are needed to develop a complete and accurate picture of the relative frequency and importance of each type of planner. Despite our intensive efforts, the interviewers feel that in some interviews we failed to uncover all of the learning projects. Perhaps self-planned learning is even more common than our figures indicate.

The field of comparative adult education might benefit from a survey of learning projects in several regions of the world. Youth learning in various countries can perhaps best be compared by focusing on institutions – schools and colleges. With adults, though, only a small portion of their total learning occurs in an educational institution. Consequently, comparative adult education could focus on the adult's learning efforts in various countries, including all four types of planner.

Comparing the Four Types of Planners

Our 1970 survey also differed from earlier studies by questioning the person intensively about the duration of each project, and by asking him to rate its importance on three criteria. The data from these questions are presented in Table 12, which enables us to compare the four types of planners.

In the top row, it is evident that self-planned and mixed projects are typically of much longer duration than the other three types. Common sense might suggest that a self-planned project would tend to be much shorter than a commitment to attending a group. According to the data, however, the opposite is true.

The second row shows the responses to the following question: "Please think for a moment about how much knowledge, information, and understanding you gained as a result of this one learning project — or think about how much your skills and habits improved — or how much your attitudes or sensitivity changed." Again, contrary to what would be expected, the amount of change or learning in a group is less than in a self-planned project. Also, the interviewees estimated that they learn about as much in each self-planned project as in a project planned by an object or person.

The second question about the importance of each learning project was this: "How enthusiastic have you been about having this new knowledge and skill?" Although the differences are not great, people seemed a little more enthusiastic about the knowledge and skill gained through self-planned and person-planned projects than that gained from a nonhuman resource or a group.

Table 12 / Duration and Importance for Each Type of Planner

Measure	Self	Group or its leader	Person in one-to-one	Nonhuman resource	Mixed
Number of hours per project	119	47	63	33	141
	94	35	20	19	63
Magnitude of change, or of	7.0	5.4	7.0	7.5	6.9
new knowledge and skill	7.1	5.0	10	7.5	7.1
Magnitude of enthusiasm	7.2	6.0	7.4	5.9	7.3
about having the new	7.0	5.5	10	5.0	7.5
knowledge and skill					
Magnitude of the benefits	5.5	3.9	4.6	4.6	6.6
to other people of the	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.2
learner's new knowledge					
and skill					

Note. – In each cell, the upper figure is the mean (the "average" person), and the figure below it is the median (the person in the middle, or the "typical" person). These calculations are based on individuals, not on the total number of learning projects. That is, the mean of the measure in each cell was first found *for each individual*; then the mean and median of these means were calculated. In the three measures of importance, 10 was the highest possible point on the scale and 0 was the lowest.

The four credit projects are not included in this table.

The third question asked about the usefulness or importance of the learning project to other people in the world: "Let's set aside your own benefits for a moment, and look at any benefits for *other* people. Your new knowledge and skill might have been of some benefit to your family, your friends and relatives, your boss, your company or organization, your field, or even to people who live in other places." The bottom row in Table 12 does not indicate any clear or marked differences in this regard among the various types of planners, except that mixed planning tends to be high.

A summary of Table 12 might be useful at this point. In general, self-planned and mixed projects tend to be higher in duration and importance than other types of learning projects. That is, if a learner does not turn over the planning responsibility to a single person, group, or object, he spends more time at the learning and considers it more significant. Projects that rely on a group or object tend to be fairly low on most of the measures.

For the youth groups, no consistent differences in duration are evident. However, the group and self-planned projects tend to be rated especially high in importance.