

Book Reviews/Comptes Rendus

Richard E. Anderson and Elizabeth Swain Kasl, editors. *The Costs and Financing of Adult Education and Training*. Lexington, Massachusetts and Toronto: Lexington Books, 1982, 331.

Adult education is often thought of as being offered by universities, community colleges, and school boards as a part-time adjunct to their principal activities. However, it becomes clear upon reading this research that adult education is conceived in its broadest sense to include the aforementioned activities as well as proprietary schools, private tutors, community organizations, professional associations, labour unions, and private sector employers.

In each instance, the individual author followed a stylized format detailing the incomes per participant-learning hour (PLH), the costs for each PLH broken down for Level 1 (instructors and other direct costs), Level 2 (indirect costs including administration costs, curriculum development, telephone and office supplies) and Level 3 (overhead). Obviously, in some instances Level 3 costs were either not available in sufficient detail or could not be estimated reliably (private sector employees, labour unions, etc.).

The book is organized so as to introduce the reader to cost-benefit analysis and the problems in cost accounting both generically and with specific reference to adult education. Thus the reader does not have to be introduced to the conceptual problems each time they occur.

The next section consisting of eight chapters examines each of the case studies. Of obvious interest to the readers of this journal would be Chapter 4 which details the costs and income per PLH for colleges and universities. Richard Anderson, one of the editors of the book is the author of this chapter and he finds a total income of \$2,600 per course, Level 1 costs of \$1,050 per course, Level 2 costs \$425, and Level 3 costs of \$810 per course, leaving a net income of \$315 per course.

Anderson then details the costs per PLH for several courses offered at a number of institutions and finds the net income to vary from -\$7.60 (job-search skills) to +\$4.40 (basic accounting). The only courses for which the net income per PLH is positive, are those in which average class size exceeds 20. The author concludes "that the margin between deficit and surplus changes very rapidly as enrollments increase from twelve to twenty students per course" (p. 75). If overhead is not considered, adult basic education and spanish have positive values per PLH with 14 and 13 students respectively. All courses cover Level 1 costs, regardless of enrollment level.

Off-campus and evening programs generate larger surpluses than do non-credit programs offered on campus. Those institutions offering 340 or more courses per annum are also more likely to generate a surplus.

Anderson, in his chapter on colleges and universities has managed to do a credible academic work without making the reading difficult or boring. Indeed, the availability of data and the excellent style combine to make this one of the better chapters in the book.

One other chapter's author deserves particular attention. Laurence M. Weinstein looked at the three most difficult areas of adult education (professional associations, labour unions, and private sector employers) and in each case did an excellent job of handling his material. With gaping holes in the available data and reluctant organizations, Weinstein has been able, using a case method approach to approximate the cost data for the three chapters. Because Weinstein takes such care to explain his methodology, the reader can place a great deal of confidence in his figures.

On a cost per PLH basis, the final chapter points out that employers spend \$26 on internal training with public school boards costing only \$2. Colleges and universities which have 38% of the U.S. market cost \$5 per PLH.

The final overview chapter also points to the factors which affect costs most including scale (there are significant economies of scale) and overhead (here, colleges and universities which have libraries, computers, and so on cost a great deal more than other organizations).

Comparing across organizations for the same course is possible in several instances in the final chapter. For instance, for the adult basic education program, including remedial english, the costs per PLH vary from \$0.95 in public school systems to \$15.39 in community organizations.

While these issues of overview are of interest to the general reader, of more importance to the decision makers are the implications which are made explicit. For instance, the question of part-time versus full-time instructors is addressed with the conclusion that part-time instructors cost less but may contribute less benefits. They also suggest co-operation between providers but in order to curtail the wrong kinds of competition suggest that some constraint might have to be put on college and university faculty offering course in competition to their own institution. On the latter issue, the authors are careful to warn that faculty should not be constrained in other activities such as consulting.

Although the reading is often dull, the book is well-planned and the research on which it is based is well-executed. The book ought to be *must* reading for those responsible for continuing or adult education in the various organizations, for the book shows the importance of records and cost allocations. The authors continually point to the missionary zeal of their respondents but the lack of data on which their decisions are based. This has a cumulative effect on the reader of clarifying the importance of data.

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