ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the learning styles and preferred methods of receiving agricultural information on new or innovative farming practices among Yuma, Arizona area growers, pest control advisors, and industry personnel. A review of the literature suggested there is a continual need for evaluation of instructional methods and technology in adult education (Martin & Omer, 1990). Most studies in adult education in agriculture have focused on the need for adult education (Creswell & Martin, 1993). Those studies which have focused on instructional methods recommended further study was needed on the appropriate methods and tools to use in adult education programs in agriculture (Creswell & Martin, 1993).

As non-experimental correlational research, variables were identified, but were not controlled by the researcher. Furthermore, this study was a small sample of continuing adult agricultural education learners in Yuma County. From this study, learning styles of adult agricultural education learners and their preferred methods of receiving agricultural related information were determined; however the findings of this research are limited only to those who participated at the time of the study.

Conclusions from the study indicated the following: overall, the majority of participants in the study reported a kinesthetic learning modality. A visual learning modality was the second highest reported among participants. Specifically, the majority of growers reported a kinesthetic learning modality, the majority of PCAs reported a visual learning modality, and industry personnel reported an aural modality preference. With diversity in learning styles among adult continuing agricultural education learners, Extension agents and instructors of adults must recognize learning differences among their students to understand how students perceive and
process information. Overall, all participants in the study learn best when agricultural information is delivered by field demonstration methods. Although, when comparing across professions, growers learn best by field demonstrations, PCAs learn best by instructor/lecture workshops, and industry personnel learn best by a one-one-one approach. Overall, participants in the study across the three professions reported that panel discussions were the least effective delivery method. To better meet educational needs of adult continuing agricultural education learners, Extension’s educational program delivery should reflect adult continuing agricultural education learners preferred delivery method among agricultural professions.

A moderate correlation (Davis, 1971) exists between learning styles and the demographic characteristics of age, education, and profession. A low correlation exists between learning styles and the demographic characteristics of gender, and number of years worked in the agricultural industry. Extension agents and instructors of adult continuing agricultural education learners should focus on the demographic characteristics of age, education, and profession when seeking to develop program delivery methods that will effectively meet the needs of these learners. In opposition, Extension agents and instructors of adult continuing agricultural education learners should not focus on the factors of gender or the number of years worked in the agricultural industry when seeking to develop program delivery methods that will effectively meet the needs of these learners.

Overall, all participants in the study learn best when agricultural information is delivered by field demonstration methods. Although, when comparing across professions, growers learn best by field demonstrations, PCAs learn best by instructor/lecture workshops, and industry personnel learn best by a one-one-one approach. Overall, participants in the study across the three professions reported that panel discussions were the least effective delivery method.
To better meet educational needs of adult continuing agricultural education learners, Extension’s educational program delivery should reflect adult continuing agricultural education learners preferred delivery method among agricultural professions.

Low correlations (Davis, 1971) exist between the demographic characteristics (age, years worked in the agricultural industry, education, and gender) and preferred delivery methods of adult continuing agricultural education learners. A moderate correlation (Davis, 1971) exists between the demographic characteristic, profession and preferred delivery methods of adult continuing agricultural education learners.

Extension agents and instructors of adult continuing agricultural education learners should not focus on the demographic characteristics age, years worked in the agricultural industry, education, and gender when seeking to develop program delivery methods that will effectively meet the needs of these learners. However, Extension agents and instructors of adult continuing agricultural education learners should focus on the demographic characteristic (profession) when seeking to develop program delivery methods that will effectively meet the needs of these adult learners.

Overall, low correlations (Davis, 1971) exists between VARK learning styles (visual, aural, read/write, and kinesthetic) and preferred delivery methods of adult continuing agricultural education learners with PCA professions. A moderate correlation (Davis, 1971) exists between VARK learning styles (visual, aural, read/write, and kinesthetic) and preferred delivery methods of adult continuing agricultural education learners with a grower or industry personnel profession.

Extension agents and instructors of adult continuing agricultural education learners should focus on the learning styles of their students when seeking to develop program delivery
methods. To effectively meet the needs of clientele, specifically growers and industry personnel, Extension educators must understand the learning styles of those within these two professions.