

Diversity in Ideology and Practice

For those of you who'd like to explore this topic further, I'd refer you to Chapter One in the book *Ethical Issues in Adult Education*. Brockett says adult education is characterized by extreme diversity in ideology and practice. So is Extension education. In a field that is as action-oriented as adult education...it is easy to become so focused on pragmatic issues inherent in the day-to-day operation of a program that some of the broad questions confronting the larger field can easily become overlooked or relegated to secondary importance. Regardless of the specific setting in which one practices, it is vital that the adult educator not lose a grasp of his or her basic mission.

The Extension System must constantly keep its mission in front of its personnel and ask why certain behaviors or practices are being done rather than focus only on questions of what and how. We can't continue to rely on reactive approaches to decision making such as, "We've always done it this way" or "I'll keep shooting from the hip" in trying to fulfill my role as educator. As educators in the Cooperative Extension System, we must continually search for balance as we serve multiple audiences. This means setting priorities based on anticipated consequences of our actions and accepting responsibility for those actions. We must know and be clear about who we are and why we do what we do. Update your Extension philosophy's base-that's the point!