The Learning Projects of Municipal Elected Officials

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to each of these lifelong learners with my love and deepest appreciation:

- my husband Harvey, who has so strongly supported me throughout this process
- our adult children, Elizabeth, Jonathan, and Rebekah, who walked this path with me, providing encouragement on every step of the journey
- my maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Rebecca Seiber Lovelace, who nurtured my love of learning and frequently urged me to “start something!”
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Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory study was to describe the learning projects related to the governmental role of a selected sample of elected municipal officials in a geographic region of a Southeastern state. The study includes the revision of Tough's (1975) learning projects interview schedule and the addition of eight demographic items.

Participants were selected by using a random number generator to choose 12 cities from seven population groups, creating a stratified sample of 68 elected officials, 41 of whom agreed to be interviewed. Demographic information revealed that the participants were a mix of mayors (26.8%), vice-mayors (19.5%), and city councilmembers (53.7%). More than half (56.1%) served in cities with city managers or chief administrative officers and 29.3% were in their first two years of service. Nearly three-fourths (73.2%) were men; 87.8% were age 50 or older; and, 61% held a bachelor's degree or higher.

Data analysis revealed that the participants conducted a mean of 6.68 learning projects during the previous year. The predominant primary planners of the 274 learning projects were the learners (32.1%), peer groups (20.1%), and groups with a professional (19.3%). Participants in city manager cities spent significantly fewer hours (M = 62.18, SD = 87.03) per learning project than participants in cities without a city manager (M = 90.00, SD = 135.02), t (246.93) = 2.05, p = .042, d = 0.25, 95% CI [1.04, 54.60]. An ANOVA showed that the effect of elected office on the mean number of hours spent conducting each learning project was significant at the $p < .05$ level, [$F(2, 271) = 9.17$, $p < 0.001$]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated three significant pairwise comparisons. First, mayors devoted significantly ($p < .001$) more hours (M = 119.74, SD = 152.89) per learning project than did vice-mayors (M = 36.77, SD = 43.57). Mayors spent significantly (p = .029) more hours (M = 119.74, SD = 152.89) per

learning project than did councilmembers (M = 76.59, SD = 113.21). Finally, councilmembers spent significantly (p = .043) more hours per learning project than did vice-mayors.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

Elected officials in local government frequently assume office without prior knowledge of their official duties and are often forced to learn on the job. Although public administration scholars have identified knowledge and skill areas that local elected officials require, little research has been conducted by interviewing the officials themselves. In 1971, Allen Tough published the results of his seminal research on adult learning projects, which he described as a "highly deliberate effort to gain certain knowledge and skills (or to change in some other way)" (p. 1). Among his participants were mayors and city councilmembers from two cities. The elected officials in Tough's study were very active in their own learning. His typical politician spent an average of 1,189 hours in 6.7 learning projects annually. These projects included both personal and work-related learning projects. Now, more than 40 years later, colleges and universities, cooperative extension, the philanthropic community, and good government organizations are providing governance education for local officials (Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997). Too often, however, local elected officials are either choosing not to participate in governance education or reside in small or isolated communities where such educational opportunities are less accessible. Local officials may, therefore, decide to engage in their own learning activities to educate themselves about the various requirements of their practice. Discovering what local politicians say they need to learn to do their jobs may inform the practice of the educators who provide good governance training opportunities. Pinpointing the barriers to learning that these political representatives encounter and the resources they use can impact the focus of organizations involved in their training.

In a literature review by Vogelsang-Coombs (1997), she synthesized resources from the adult education literature and applied them to governance education:

> Governance education is a special case of adult education. City councils are aggregations of adult learners, Adult learners expect education to help them solve practical problems, using an instructional methodology tailored to fit their life experiences (Dewey, 1966; Lewin, 1951; Knowles, 1990). (p. 491)

Through their life experiences and because they are adult learners, city councilmembers, "learn to reinterpret the meaning of actual events and their most troubling political controversies (Dewey, 1963)" and use this new knowledge to inform their decision-making (Vogelsang-Coombs, p. 491). Although outside events may trigger a need for city councils to learn, the motivation for learning often comes from within the individual (Rogers, 1969, p. 5). Because learning occurs within a person, a change in attitudes or behavior is often an indication that learning has taken place (Schein, 1991). Tough (1971) noted that learning could encompass knowledge, insight, understanding, skill, performance, or changing one's attitudes, emotional reactions, or behavior (p. 1).

In order to do their jobs well, city councilmembers need to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills. Local representatives need to gain knowledge about many aspects of public administration, but particularly budgeting and performance measurement. Although state municipal leagues often hold budget workshops, few organizations provide training on performance measurement (Ammons, 2001; Folz & French, 2005; International City/County Management Association, 2016b; Kelly & Rivenbark, 2003; Lindblom, 1968/1980; Svara, 1990; Vogelsang-Coombs, 2001; Vogelsang-Coombs & Miller, 1999). Without such training, however, councilmembers may be unable to provide oversight for their municipalities. Local officials also

need to possess or develop several qualities and skills, including: leadership; credibility; team-building; decision-making; problem-solving; and coping with change (Burks & Wolf, 1981; National League of Cities, 1980; Sweetwood, 1980). To meet their needs, elected leaders may turn to good government organizations and other providers of governance education.

Local elected officials, however, are not developing their capacity for governance through formal training opportunities (Paddock, 1996). Several factors can cause this problem: most elected officials serve cities part-time; they may believe that being sent to training diminishes their abilities in the view of their constituents; as generalists, they may be overwhelmed by the technical complexity of public issues; they tend to over-manage and under-lead their cities; and they typically receive some training from their state municipal league on procedures for passing legislation and attending to the municipal budget (Paddock, 1996; Vogelsang-Combs & Miller, 1999). Livingstone (2002) reported that about 70% of Canadians indicated that their most important job-related knowledge came from other workers or learning on their own, instead of from employment-related courses. While some local elected officials may be interested in pursuing informal learning options, Livingstone noted several barriers to informal learning, including: courses that are at inconvenient times or places; lack of time to participate; family responsibilities; and, courses that are too expensive. In fact, city councilmembers can become expert at avoiding both formal and informal learning, especially when they are the ones who need it the most (Argyris, 1993).

Statement of the Problem

Local elected officials are selected from among average citizens in a community and rarely come to the job with the necessary knowledge and skills. Elected officials in local government frequently assume office with no prior knowledge of their formal responsibilities

and are often compelled to learn on the job. In smaller towns and cities, newly elected officials may find their access to educational resources is limited.

The findings of previous research studies related to the training of local elected officials indicate that the training these officials currently receive does not meet their information needs (Haas, 1991; Jacobson & Warner, 2008; Miller, 1990; Paddock, 1996; Slack, 1990; Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997; Vogelsang-Coombs & Miller, 1999). The need for information to do their jobs, coupled with the lack of adequate training, drives many local elected officials to identify, plan, and carry out their own learning activities. Yet little is known about how these officials engage in such activities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory research study was to describe the learning projects related to the governmental role of a selected sample of elected municipal officials in a Southeastern state. The study includes the revision and modernization of Tough's (1975) learning projects interview schedule. The revised schedule consists of ten questions related to participants' learning projects that were adapted from Tough's original interview schedule. Eight demographic items were added to the revised schedule.

Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

1. What was the number of learning projects conducted by elected municipal officials during the past 12 months?
2. What was the thematic content of the learning projects?
3. How much time was spent on learning projects?
4. Who was the primary planner of the participants' learning projects?

5. What resources were used during the learning projects?
6. What barriers or obstacles were encountered while engaged in learning projects?

Conceptual Framework

The current study is firmly situated within the conceptual frameworks of self-directed learning and Allen Tough's adult's learning projects research. Both concepts came out of the research of Cyril Houle (1961) and his line of inquiry that investigated the total learning activities of adults. Houle identified three major types of participants in continuing education, one of which was the learning-oriented person who seeks knowledge for its own sake. Brockett and Donaghy (2011) suggested that Houle influenced the evolution of self-directed learning in two ways: first, through the publication of *The Inquiring Mind* (1961) and second, through the work of two of his students, Allen Tough and Malcolm Knowles. Knowles' focus was from the practitioner's point of view, while Tough developed a strong research perspective.

In his earliest works, Tough (1967) used the term "self-teaching," but later replaced it with the term "self-planned learning project" (p. 2). With Tough's (1965) initial investigation into the nature of self-learning, a systematic inquiry of the self-learner began to emerge. He discovered that adults can perform teaching tasks for themselves and that while they are engaged in self-planned learning, adults seek help from a variety of sources.

In *The Adult's Learning Projects* (1971), Tough interviewed 66 adults from seven different population groups, including politicians, psychology and sociology professors, factory workers, women and men in jobs at the lower end of the white-collar scale, elementary school teachers, and mothers. His participants averaged eight learning projects per person and these adult learners spent about 104 hours, on average, conducting each project (p. 18). When Tough interviewed elected municipal officials, he found they were very involved in their own learning

projects. The typical mayor or city councilmember spent an average of 1,189 hours on 6.7 learning projects annually. These projects included both personal and work-related learning projects. In reporting the outcome of his study of learning projects, Tough (1971) focused on three themes: the decision of the learner to engage in learning, the planning of the learning, and the help that the learner seeks and obtains. Of the total number of participants, 68% reported that the learner was the primary planner of the learning effort. “Probably the most important finding to emerge from Tough’s study … pertains to the question of who assumes responsibility for planning learning projects” (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991, p. 43).

Tough (2002) later reported that he was surprised to discover that about 80% of the learning projects occurred in informal settings. Only 20% of the projects were institutionally organized, typically in a one-to-one setting with an instructor and the adult learner, such as art or music lessons. “That’s when I came up with this idea of the iceberg as metaphor, because so much of it is invisible. When we looked at the informal part below the surface of the ocean, we distinguished three kinds of ‘planners’” (Tough, 2002, p. 2): the learner, the learner with a peer, and the learner with a group of peers. The iceberg metaphor became part of the conceptual framework of the adult’s learning projects line of inquiry, providing a visual image of the vast majority of adult learning that takes place in an informal setting, learning efforts that had been largely ignored prior to Tough’s research.

Tough (1971) challenged future researchers to undertake further surveys on the frequency and importance of learning projects. The majority of the early replication or verification studies selected populations based on the occupation of the participants (Allerton, 1974; Benson, 1974; Coolican, 1973; Fair, 1973; Johns, 1973; McCatty, 1973). Fair asked participants to identity learning difficulties or barriers to learning they encountered, in addition to the resources they

used with their learning activities. Recent research on learning projects also included questions about resources used, as well as barriers or obstacles to learning that the learner encountered (Harrison, 2010).

Merriam (2004) identified andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformational learning as forming the cornerstones of adult learning theory today. Knowles' (1980) concept of andragogy focused more on the characteristics of adult learners, rather than on the nature of the learning itself (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). In acknowledging the importance of Tough's research perspective, Merriam observed that the primary impetus for self-directed learning came from Tough's research with Canadian adult learners. When Tough documented the learning projects, projects that involved planning but did not depend on a classroom or instructor, "that generated one of the major thrusts of research in the field of adult learning" (Merriam, 2004, p. 204).

Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) divided self-directed learning research into three categories, each defined by the research methodology: 1) learning projects research, descriptive survey studies based on Tough's methodology; 2) quantitative measures of self-direction that measure levels of self-directedness and include Guglielmino's (1978) Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale; and 3) qualitative studies involving observation and in-depth interviews to build theory and provide rich descriptions of the self-directed learning phenomenon. In contrast, Caffarella (1993) categorized self-directed learning research according to the form and process of learning, learning characteristics and preferences, and cultivating learner initiative and control in informal settings. Adult learning projects research and this study center on the process of learning, rather than on the personality characteristics of the individual learner.

The current study focused on the learning projects of elected municipal officials, a group of learners who are, by the nature of their governmental role, often acting and learning within a peer group: the city council, the board of aldermen, or the board of commissioners. Study participants were also adult learners, who were actively pursuing individual learning projects that required them to be self-directed in meeting their learning needs and goals. Even within their self-directed learning, the elected officials required resources and the assistance of others. They encountered the obstacles and barriers to learning that learning projects research participants and other self-directed learners encounter. This study builds on the previous research of the adult's learning projects and fits within the conceptual frameworks of both self-directed learning and the adult's learning project research. Because these learners are self-directed as individuals, as well as within the council, they also share some elements with collaborative learners. In collaborative learning,

> the emphasis is on both individual and group learning. The teacher becomes a member of the group and participates with students in the joint creation of new knowledge. The flow of communication is from member to member, member to group, and group to member. The basis of their joint action is the members' own experiences. (Peters & Gray, 2005, p. 16)

Deficiencies in Existing Knowledge

When Tough (1971) interviewed elected municipal officials, he discovered that they were very involved in their own learning projects. The typical politician spent nearly 1,200 hours in 6.7 learning projects annually. Two-thirds of the learning projects were self-planned, indicating the deep involvement of the participants in their own acquisition of knowledge and skills. Although several research studies relate to the training of elected municipal officials, most of the

findings illustrate that the training officials currently receive is inadequate for their information needs (Haas, 1991; Jacobson & Warner, 2008; Miller, 1990; Paddock, 1996; Slack, 1990; Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997; Vogelsang-Coombs & Miller, 1999).

Research in the subject areas of political science and public administration has centered on different aspects related to the life and work of public officials. Training efforts have focused on municipal government as a learning organization (McGrath, 2002), theory and practice of city management (Lazenby, 2009), and the training of government officials (Haas, 1991; Jacobson & Warner, 2008; Miller, 1990; Paddock, 1996; Slack, 1990); therefore, each aspect has a role to play in public officials' learning. Slack (1990) mailed a questionnaire to randomly selected city managers and mayors in the United States. The survey included 30 items in five broad categories of local government training and assistance needs: information, maintenance and operation, dealing effectively with the external environment, fiscal concerns, and human resource management. Respondents in smaller communities (30,000 and under in population) indicated a greater need for training than their counterparts in larger cities, with smaller communities needing more assistance in the areas of information, organizational maintenance and operation, and fiscal matters.

Paddock (1996) reviewed the training available to elected municipal officials in the United States. She included training offered by municipal leagues, professional associations, and universities and, like Slack (1990), found that needs vary with community size. Paddock identified three areas of training needs: general information, including legal and statutory information, as well as budgeting processes; technical training in municipal services; and policy making and team building. She observed that providing comprehensive training may be especially difficult due to: frequent turnover in city councils; councilmembers' lack of previous

experience in government; the diversity of the issues they face; the limited time they can devote to training; and some resistance to training.

Research conducted at the School of Government (SOG) at the University of North Carolina indicated a gap in recently elected officials' understanding of what it means to lead and govern their jurisdictions, causing the SOG to change its focus from management to leadership (Jacobson & Warner, 2008). Subsequently, the faculty developed a model to give appointed and elected officials a foundation in core concepts and principles. Nevertheless, the SOG faculty still provides training on the technical aspects of the work of local government officials.

Evaluations of SOG training classes for local elected officials revealed several learner preferences. Participants indicated they want to incorporate experiential learning to find out about best practices and what other local governments are doing that works (Jacobson & Warner, 2008). "Elected officials and managers see themselves as experts, with a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with others. They view their experiences and insights as valuable as the instructor's knowledge" (Jacobson & Warner, 2008, pp. 166-167).

Lazenby's (2009) research grew out of a concern that the curricula of Master of Public Administration programs did not adequately prepare individuals to step into local government senior leadership positions. Lazenby's research provided useful insight into curriculum deficiencies of MPA programs, but left a gap in the literature related to how local representatives learn what they need to know to perform their jobs.

Because political decisions rarely please everyone, local elected officials are frequently called upon to manage political conflict; and, to manage political conflict, these officials need leadership skills that will bring a variety of people together to support their policies and allocation of resources. Although they can be taught the consensus building skills that are

required for effective governance, political conflict makes some local elected officials uncomfortable and likely to avoid such learning opportunities (Lasswell, 1967; Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997; Vogelsang-Coombs & Miller, 1999).

Small cities, with populations between 2,500 and 25,000, account for about 80% of the cities in the United States (International City/County Management Association, 2014, p. xxii). Municipal leagues and other good governance organizations do not always reach the elected leaders of the smallest cities and towns, even though these officials may have the greatest need. No research could be identified that indicates how these elected leaders of small cities acquire the knowledge and skills they need.

Significance of the Study

Interviewing a sample of elected local government officials about what they have learned in order to perform their governmental role adds important information to adult learning, self-directed learning, and public administration knowledge bases. This study investigated, described, and categorized certain characteristics of deliberate, self-directed learning activities conducted by a selected sample of municipal elected officials. Identifying their recent learning activities provided a way to assess the needs of the learners as they sought to become more knowledgeable about their professional practice; therefore, the findings can also inform those agencies and good government organizations that have responsibilities for training local government officials. Public administration scholars and researchers can use the findings to improve the content of MPA programs, as well as formal and informal training courses for local elected officials.

Updating Tough's interview schedule has the potential to improve the practice and contribute to the literature of adult learning and self-directed learning because the revised schedule will become a vehicle for better understanding the learning efforts of adult learners.

Using Tough's modified interview schedule provides a familiar, but improved resource, which focuses on the learning projects that are related to a person's work, practice, or role rather than all aspects of a person's life.

Assumptions

This research study was designed with several assumptions in mind. First, it is assumed that elected municipal officials are participating in learning projects related to their governmental role. This assumption is based on the findings of earlier studies, with various populations, indicating the prevalence of learning projects in the workplace and is supported by Tough's original learning projects research (1971) and several subsequent studies (Allerton, 1974; Benson, 1974; Fair, 1973; Harrison, 2010; McCatty, 1973). Fair's (1973) study on the learning projects of first-year teachers was the only one to focus entirely on workplace learning projects and his findings were comparable to other verification studies.

Second, local elected officials are able to identify and communicate their learning activities truthfully and accurately. Roulston (2010) voiced her concerns with research participants who do not always do what they say they do and may not tell the truth (p. 55). The learning projects interview schedule, with its corresponding prompt sheet, is meant to improve recollection of learning activities.

Finally, it is assumed that learning projects are essential in developing the skills and knowledge that municipal officials need to serve their constituents. Learning projects assist elected officials in their professional development. Mayors and city councilmembers plan learning projects that help them acquire technical skills, as well as leadership skills, so that they can better carry out their role in city government.

Limitations

There are several limitations of the adult learning projects studies. By definition, a learning project requires a minimum of seven hours of involvement to qualify; therefore, with the exception of Coolican (1973) and Harrison (2010), planned learning projects of shorter durations have not been considered (Allerton, 1974; Johns, 1973; McCatty, 1973). There is also no attempt to measure the quality of the learning experiences, only the quantity (Johns, 1973; Johnson, 1973; McCatty, 1973; Tough, 1965, 1967, 1971). McCatty noted that his "study measured the extent of learning effort rather than the extent of learning" (p. 116). The relationships of this study to the fields of adult learning and self-directed learning can be explored only as they relate to the variables cited for research.

The most frequently mentioned limitation is that the learning projects studies relied on the memory of the participants to recall information over a six or 12 month period (Benson, 1974; Coolican, 1973; Davis, Bailey, Nypaver, Rees, & Brockett, 2010; Denys, 1973; Field, 1977; Harrison, 2010; Johns, 1973; McCatty, 1973). Johns (1973) noted that his participants had difficulty in accurately recalling the number of hours they devoted to their learning projects. McCatty (1973) was concerned that in some cases, only fragments of projects were considered because any part of the learning project that was outside the 12-month period was omitted from the study (p. 117). Allerton's (1974) participants collected information in a diary, but monthly visits to the subjects during the research period may have influenced the nature of the data collected. Allerton voiced concern that some participants may have reported more learning efforts than normally conducted or may have reported only the projects they considered to be their best learning activities (p. 52).

Harrison (2010) observed that small and focused sample sizes are common in the learning projects studies, primarily due to the time needed to conduct each interview. Elected officials are often responsible for balancing their governmental duties with a fulltime job; therefore, potential participants may have chosen not to take part in the study due to time constraints. Because the sample sizes of learning projects studies are usually small and geographically focused, the results of these studies are customarily not generalizable.

Delimitations

According to the state governmental consulting agency, as of April 2014, there were 2,058 municipal elected officials serving in 345 cities in the Southeastern state in which this research took place. Because of the time required for travel to interview each participant, this study was limited to elected officials in one geographic region of the state. Limiting the focus of the study to that region reduced the study population to 598 elected officials in 111 cities. To provide statewide coverage, the study could later be replicated in two other regions.

Even after the geographic area was reduced to one region of the state, a random sample still required much travel time to cover the region. Rather than use a random sample, the decision was made to use a stratified sample of the regional population group, which allowed the sample to be taken from a few cities in the region. Using a cluster sample (randomly selecting one or two cities from each of seven population groups) would have given each of the cities equal weight in the sample. Nearly half of the cities in the region, however, have populations of less than 2,000 and 84% have populations of less than 10,000. The decision to use a stratified sample rather than a cluster sample allowed more weight to be placed on regional cities with smaller populations by including the elected officials of more small cities in the sample.

Finally, in Tough's study and most of the subsequent verification studies, participants were asked about all of their learning projects. In this study, the focus was narrowed to only those learning projects that applied to the participant's role as an elected municipal official. Some interesting information about the nongovernmental-related learning projects was certainly lost. It might have been more difficult to compare the findings of this study with earlier studies that included a broader scope of learning projects. By focusing only on their governmental learning projects, however, the participants may have experienced less fatigue and been more likely to complete the survey questions about their various projects. This change to the interview schedule may have improved recall, reduced the overall length of the interview time, and improved validity.

Definitions

Several terms related to self-directed learning and municipal government were used throughout this study. These terms are defined below:

Episode. Tough (1971) defined an episode as "a period of time devoted to a cluster or sequence of similar or related activities, which are not interrupted much by other activities." (p. 6). Each episode has a definite beginning and ending. All the learner's experiences, including the time the learner spent in planning the activity, are included as a part of the episode.

Good government organization. Wechsler (2012) defined good government organizations as "those that have been around for a while, are seen as nonpartisan, and have deep connections in the community" (p. 30). Certainly, some good government organizations go back to the Progressive Era, but there are new organizations that are equally effective. Examples of good government organizations that focus on improving local government include the

International City/County Management Association, the League of Women Voters, and the National Civic League (Rubio-Cortés & McGrath, 2013).

Informal learning. Informal learning is any learning that takes place outside of the direction, or curriculum, of formal or non-formal educational institutions. Livingstone (2001) defined informal learning as "any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria" (p. 4). He noted that intentional informal learning and intentional informal training are characterized via the retrospective recognition by the learners that they have learned something outside a prescribed curricular setting and have gone through a process of acquiring knowledge either on their own or with a mentor (pp. 4-5). Tough (2002) observed that "informal learning is a very social phenomenon" (para. 12) and that the average person interacts with 10 or 11 people during one learning project.

Knowledge and skill. Tough (1971) used the terms knowledge and skill to describe the entire range of intended or desired changes in a person's "self-concept, perception and understanding of others, deep feelings or creativity" … "aimed at modifying overt behavior" … "attitudinal beliefs and emotional change" … [or] "designed to develop physical skills" (p. 3).

Learning project. Tough (1971) defined a learning project as:

> "simply a major, highly deliberate effort to gain certain knowledge and skill (or to change in some other way). Some learning projects are efforts to gain new knowledge, insight, or understanding. Others are attempts to improve one's skill or performance, or to change one's attitudes or emotional reactions. Others involve efforts to change one's overt behavior or to break a habit" (p. 1).

For the purpose of this study, a learning project was defined as a combination of related learning episodes that are composed of seven or more hours of dedicated time to an effort to gain knowledge and skill that relates to the participant's governmental role (Tough, 1971).

Planner. The planner is the person or resource that is responsible for more than 50% of planning and decision making in the learning project. According to Tough (1971), the planner guides what, when, and how learning takes place (p. 77). The learning projects interview schedule separates the planning function into one of four categories including: a group of learners, a one-to-one situation, a non-human resource, and the learner. For any project in which two or more of the four types of planners are used and none of them is clearly dominant, the researcher categorized the planner as having mixed responsibility.

Chapter 1 of this study presented the introduction, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, deficiencies in existing knowledge, significance of the study, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and definitions. Chapter 2 provides a review of foundational literature in adult learning, culminating with Tough's learning projects study and includes the verification studies that resulted from his research, as well as criticisms of this line of inquiry. Chapter 2 also reviews research studies on the education and training of local government officials and literature that addresses what it means to be a municipal elected representative, types of political structures that affect how office holders perceive their responsibilities, the impact of form of government on councils, key areas of knowledge for municipal elected officials, governance education, and potential barriers to learning for municipal officials.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Four areas of literature were considered in order to provide a clear picture of the learning projects of elected municipal officials. These areas are: foundational literature related to the adult learning projects research; literature that relates to the replication studies; literature concerning continuing education for local government officials; and, literature about obstacles to adult learning. The current review is intended to present an historical overview and touch on criticisms within the field.

Adult Learning: Early Research

In 1971, Canadian adult education scholar Allen Tough published *The Adult's Learning Projects*. Tough's scholarship was influenced by the research interests of Cyril Houle (1961), as well as by the studies of Tough's contemporaries, especially Johnstone and Rivera (1965). While Tough's publications created much interest and inspired many replication studies, not all adult educators agreed with his priorities and tired of the verification studies. Over time, the learning projects approach became less popular and was replaced by different research methods. With changes in technology, however, there has been interest in revising Tough's interview schedule to study the learning projects of contemporary adults.

Influence of Cyril Houle

After the Industrial Revolution, most educational researchers in the United States focused their attention on the learning activities of children (Coolican, 1973). Cyril Houle (1961) began a line of inquiry that investigated the learning activities of adults. Houle believed that the desire to learn is not shared equally by everyone. He identified three major types of participants in continuing education, according to their learning orientation: (a) goal-oriented, those who use

education to accomplish an objective; (2) activity-oriented, those who use adult education as a means of satisfying social needs; and (3) learning-oriented, those who seek knowledge for its own sake. Houle shaped the progression of self-directed learning with a two-fold approach; first, via the publication of *The Inquiring Mind* (1961) and second, through the efforts of two of his students: Allen Tough and Malcolm Knowles (Brockett & Donaghy, 2011).

Brockett and Donaghy (2011) proposed that one way to assess the influence of Houle, Knowles, and Tough on the literature of self-directed learning was to determine how their works have been used by more recent scholars in this subject area. In a Delphi survey by Confessore and Confessore (1992), Tough's *The Adult's Learning Projects* and Houle's *The Inquiring Mind* ranked first and second, while Knowles' *Self-Directed Learning* ranked fifth.

Two recent citation analyses indicate the works of Houle, Knowles, and Tough still influence the self-directed learning literature. Conner, Carter, Dieffenderfer, and Brockett (2009) analyzed citation lists for 158 articles published in 18 adult education periodicals between 1980 and 2008. Tough's *The Adult's Learning Projects* was the most frequently cited work, while Knowles' *Self-Directed Learning* ranked second, and Houle's *The Inquiring Mind* ranked fourth. In a second citation analysis, Kirk, Shih, Smeltzer, Holt, and Brockett (2012) obtained similar results from an examination of the first 13 issues of the *International Journal of Self-Directed Learning* (2004-2011). In the study by Kirk et al., Knowles' *Self-Directed Learning* ranked first, Tough's *The Adult's Learning Projects* ranked third, and Houle's *The Inquiring Mind* tied for fifth among the most frequently cited publications. The results of these two citation analyses provided a strong indication that the influence of Houle, Knowles, and Tough remains robust in the literature of self-directed learning (Brockett & Donaghy, 2011).

Houle, Knowles, and Tough set the stage for future work in self-directed learning. Knowles and Tough studied with Houle at different times and contributed to self-directed learning in dissimilar ways. Long before he began his doctoral study with Houle, Knowles was interested in self-directed learning (Brockett & Donaghy, 2011). Knowles' focus was from the practitioners' point of view, as seen in his *Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Teachers and Learners* (1975). During Tough's study with Houle, he began to develop his strong research perspective.

In January 1963, Cyril Houle gave his graduate students the assignment to analyze and describe the way they had applied his fundamental steps of program development in one of their own educational programs. Allen Tough was in Houle's class and chose to write about his own self-education as he prepared during the five weeks before his Ph.D. French examination. Tough (1967) was "surprised to discover that he had followed most of the fundamental steps of program development during that self-teaching project, although at the time he had not been aware that he was doing so" (p. 1). Tough's analysis led to his dissertation topic and to two related studies about adult self-teachers (Donaghy & Tough, 2005; Tough, 1965, 1966, 1967). Tough's early studies were also influenced by the research of Johnstone and Rivera (1965).

Johnstone and Rivera Study

The Johnstone and Rivera study (1965) was the first to document the extent of self-planned learning activities of adults in the United States. Johnstone and Rivera estimated that "approximately 25 million American adults, more than one person in five, had been active in one or another form of learning during the twelve–month period just prior to June, 1962" (p. 1). Almost eight percent of the sample reported participating in at least one self-education project during the year. When adults were asked if they had been engaged in independent study since

leaving school, 38% recalled at least one instance in which they had been involved in learning something on their own. Johnstone and Rivera commented on this finding in their survey:

> Perhaps the most surprising … is the estimate of close to nine million persons who were active in independent studies. To the authors' knowledge, this type of measure has never before been extracted from a national sample of a population which in itself suggests that self-instruction is probably the most overlooked avenue of activity in the whole field of adult education. (p. 37)

Tough was intrigued by the findings of the Johnstone and Rivera study, which coincided with his own budding interest in self-directed learning.

Tough's Learning Projects Study

Tough (1965) initiated his exploration of the attributes of self-learning in his dissertation, focusing on the teaching tasks performed by adult self-teachers. His findings were based on interviews with 40 adults engaged in teaching themselves. Tough discovered that adults can indeed carry out the tasks of teaching for themselves and consult multiple sources during their self-planned learning efforts for any assistance that they need. In reflecting about his dissertation topic, Tough remembered Houle's initial reaction:

> I ended up doing a thesis on the help that people get from other people in doing self-directed learning. I found that exciting because Mr. Houle, my major advisor, actually thought it was a very dumb topic. He wondered why you would get help when you're learning something on your own. It simply didn't make sense to him at first. But what I actually found was that people got help from an average of ten to twelve different people with each thing they learned. It was the opposite of what we thought. I think a self-directed learner is actually being more social than occurs in many classrooms and more

> seemingly social kinds of learning. As I have mentioned, self directed learning does not appear to be a private or an individualistic kind of thing. (Donaghy & Tough, 2005, p. 3)

In a summary of his dissertation, Tough (1966) reported that there were four factors why self-teachers might seek some assistance. First, they are trying to master skills or areas of knowledge that are new to them. Second, because they are not trained and experienced educators, they may not know what activities are needed for learning. Third, they may have doubts and fears while learning or feel inferior when performing at a beginner's level. Fourth, adult self-teachers usually have contact with many individuals on a daily basis and can select particular individuals from whom to obtain assistance or advice. Tough found that the forty participants used a total of 424 assistants. For Tough, the consequence of his research was that educational institutions

> should facilitate independent study programs, doctoral research, and other self-teaching projects by deliberately providing appropriate assistance…. An educational counselor might be available to help him select his goals and plan his strategy, a subject matter expert to recommend sources of information and to help with difficult parts, and a librarian to help him select and find particular materials. (p. 37)

Peters and Gray (2005) observed that Tough's work on the adult's learning projects "was perhaps the first to show that an otherwise individualistic, self-motivated teaching and learning activity often involves a great deal of input from others" (p. 13) and that the verification studies confirmed this relational aspect of self-directed learning.

A later study by Tough (1968) on the primary reasons for beginning and continuing a learning project provided additional insight into adults' conscious motivation, both when they begin a deliberate sustained effort to learn and also at the midpoint of the learning project. In this

study, Tough investigated the complexity of motivation to participate in learning activities. A sample of 35 adults were interviewed extensively and asked to identify from a list of 13 hypothetical reasons for participation those reasons that were a part of their motivation. The most common reason given for participation in learning activities was the expectation of using the knowledge or the skill learned.

In *The Adult's Learning Projects* (1971), Tough studied seven groups of learners: blue-collar factory workers, women and men in jobs at the lower end of the white-collar scale, beginning elementary school teachers, municipal politicians, social science professors, and upper-middle-class women with preschool children. In two-hour interviews, he probed for all of each person's learning projects, using long lists of subject matter to stimulate recall.

Among the seven groups interviewed, the politicians reported the second highest number of hours spent in learning. This sample was composed of 10 full-time elected municipal officials in two large cities, including two mayors. All had been in office for more than one year. Their educational level ranged from Grade 8 to a bachelor's degree. Tough reported that the typical politician spent an average of 1,189 hours in 6.7 learning projects annually. Their range of total hours spent in learning projects was 365 to 2,403 hours and the number of their learning projects ranged from 4 to 9. The mean number of hours spent in each individual learning project was 190, with a range of 54 to 464 hours. In the overall sample, Tough determined that the adults spent an average of 700 to 800 hours in deliberate learning projects annually. Approximately two-thirds of this learning was self-planned by the learner, with some help from others.

Tough's Interview Schedule: Benefits and Challenges

None of the earlier studies uncovered as much self-planned learning as Tough (1978) found; however, the earlier studies revealed only the learning activities that the participant could

recall easily and quickly. Tough (1971) suggested that it was easier for the participants in earlier studies to recall courses, conferences, or discussion groups than it was to recall self-planned learning efforts; therefore, many self-planned learning projects probably remained unreported in previous studies. Despite his extensive efforts, Tough (1971) reported that "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" (p. 89). To reduce this error, Tough (1975) developed a probing two-hour interview that employed several different ways of asking the participant to recall additional projects.

Tough recalled that his original intention for his book on learning projects was that it focus on the whole range of intentional adult learning.

> About halfway or a third of the way through writing it, I realized people weren't going to take this book seriously unless I documented how much of this learning occurs. That's when I decided to do a fairly rigorous interview schedule and train interviewers to study this. The part of my work that's been most recognized is this interview schedule for studying the four kinds of learning projects to document the amount of learning that is self directed. (Donaghy & Tough, 2005, p. 4)

A copy of Tough's original interview schedule (Tough, 1975) is included in Appendix A. This schedule has recently been updated (Harrison, 2010; Davis et al., 2010) to reflect changes in technology. In most of the previous studies, the interviewers were seeking to uncover all aspects of the participants' learning during the previous twelve months. Tough's own interview team recognized that, even with the probe sheets, it was doubtful that they were capturing all of the learning projects of an individual (Tough, 1971). Asking an individual to recall all of his or her learning projects for a twelve-month period places a large load on the participant, when, in some

cases, the interviewer may be concerned with only a particular line of inquiry. Because the prompt sheets were written in the early 1970s, the content is very dated, including potential learning topics such as: man in space, typing, data processing, and driving a car. Most learning projects researchers modified the interview schedule to better fit their own studies. A few interviewers modified the format of the schedule, such as having the participants maintain a diary of learning projects (Allerton, 1974; Denys, 1973). Most researchers, however, revised the prompt sheets around a particular subject area (Coolican, 1973; Denys, 1973; Fair, 1973; Field, 1977; Johns, 1973; Johnson, 1973; McCatty, 1973; Morris, 1977).

Tough's learning projects research immediately sparked many similar studies, both in Canada and the United States. Additional studies were conducted with adults in Ghana, Jamaica, and New Zealand. It is worthwhile to review the work of those researchers who were inspired by Tough's early studies and continued his line of research.

Replication Studies

In 1971, Tough encouraged prospective scholars to advance the study of learning projects and conduct additional surveys and research. Understandably, most of the earliest studies came out of the University of Toronto, where Tough was affiliated (Armstrong, 1972; Denys, 1973; Fair, 1973; Farquharson, 1975; Field, 1977; McCatty, 1975; Morris, 1977). In the fall of 1998, the National Research Network on New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL) surveyed 1,500 Canadian adults about their current learning (Livingstone, 1999, 2002). The NALL survey was the first large-scale survey in Canada and one of the most extensive; it examined the full range of adults' learning activities, including schooling, continuing education, and informal learning. Most of the earlier replication or verification studies surveyed populations based on the

occupation or vocation of the participants; two of such Canadian studies will be considered in more detail.

Fair (1973) examined the learning projects of elementary-school teachers during the first 26 weeks of their careers. Similar to many elected municipal officials, Fair's participants were beginning a new vocation. Although Tough (1971) was interested in collecting information about all the learning projects of adult learners, Fair revised the interview schedule to consider only the professional learning projects: "I'm interested in listing the things related to your role as a teacher that you have tried to learn since the beginning of September" (p. 168). Fair also revised the probe sheets in Tough's interview schedule, customizing them to reflect terms, subjects, and resources in the field of education. Fair's data were collected for 26 weeks, rather than for an entire year. During this six-month period, the new teachers undertook an average of 8.8 professional learning projects and spent a total of 500 hours at them, for an average of 57 hours per project. The teachers ranked 97% of their projects as being either extremely or moderately important in helping them become more effective teachers. In 63% of the projects, the teacher was trying to learn about the subject to be taught to the pupils. When considering who planned the learning, 97% of the projects were planned by the teachers themselves. They used an average of 3.6 resources to help with each project. In 74% of the projects, the novice teachers went to other teachers for advice. In 41%, consultants were a source of help, and in 35%, principals and vice-principals assisted them. Fair also reported the obstacles to learning the teachers experienced. The 35 beginning teachers identified 230 learning difficulties, for an average of 6.6 problems per teacher. Identifying what to learn was difficult for 57% of the participants. While 49% had trouble deciding how to begin their learning projects, 42% reported difficulty finding and arranging time for learning.

McCatty (1973) studied the learning projects of professional men. He reported that the average interviewee participated in 11.1 learning projects annually and spent 1,244 hours on them during the 12 months prior to the interview. Vocational subject matter accounted for 55% of their learning efforts. McCatty noted three sub-clusters of vocational projects: keeping current in a vocational area; acquiring a specific piece of knowledge to handle a specific case or do a particular job; and a third type, in which the application of the learning was general and on-going, but the learning itself was specific with a definite duration. This third type of learning included learning about a new discovery in the field, as well as learning about new job responsibilities (McCatty, 1973, pp. 46-48). Self-planned learning was employed in 76% of the projects. McCatty expanded Tough's original list of probes, including items such as: research techniques; the role of one's own profession or occupation in the larger society; and the information necessary for handling a particular case, client, project, or responsibility at work (pp. 132-133). McCatty did not ask the professional men any questions about obstacles to learning that they may have encountered.

At the same time that Canadians were replicating Tough's studies, similar research was being undertaken in the United States (Allerton, 1974; Benson, 1974; Coolican, 1973; Johns, 1973; Johnson, 1973; Peters & Gordon, 1974; Varlejs, 1999). Hiemstra (1975) based his study of older adults and learning on the research of Tough (1971). Hiemstra obtained demographic data about his participants (gender, race, marital status, education, occupation, age, living arrangement, social class, and urban-rural location) that many earlier studies had not included. Twenty years prior to Livingstone's (1999) national study of Canadian adults, Penland completed a similar national study in the United States (1977, 1979). Penland interviewed 1,501 adults and reported that 78.9% perceived themselves as continuing learners. Three of the studies

conducted in the United States will be reviewed. Like Fair's (1973) and McCatty's (1973) studies, the participants of these studies all held professional positions.

Johns (1973) studied selected characteristics of the learning projects of practicing pharmacists in the Atlanta area. The average pharmacist completed 8.4 learning projects for an average of 1,046 total hours, with an average of 124 hours per project during the twelve months prior to the interview. Job-related subject matter accounted for 30% of the total projects, followed closely by hobbies and recreation (26%) and home and family (14%). Johns found that 75% of all the learning projects were still active, indicating that most of the participants maintained several learning projects simultaneously. Learner-planned projects accounted for 56% of the total learning activities, and the pharmacists also used inanimate planners (19%) and group processes (16%). Johns utilized Tough's original interview schedule (1975) but added questions about the preparatory steps that learners may take (pp. 104-105). Johns did not ask the pharmacists about any obstacles they encountered during their learning activities.

Benson (1974) studied the learning projects of college and university administrators in Tennessee. The administrators completed an average of 4.6 learning projects in the twelve months preceding their interviews, spending an average of 269 hours on each project. Job-related projects accounted for 84% of the administrators learning projects, and 65% were related to the "decision-making" and "coordinating" functions of their professions (p. 41). Administrators directed 70% of their own learning, but also used group processes 28% of the time. Their higher usage of group-based learning experiences was indicative of their frequent attendance at conferences and workshops for instructional purposes. Administrators identified lack of time as their most frequently occurring obstacle to learning, causing difficulties in 54% of their projects. A related problem, arranging their schedules, accounted for another 31% of their impediments.

Benson revised Tough's (1975) interview schedule, changing the prompt sheets to reflect topics in higher education administration.

After a 35-year hiatus, a new interest in the learning projects line of inquiry was invoked with the advent of two research projects. Faculty and graduate students from the University of Tennessee (Davis et al., 2010) updated Tough's original survey instrument in order to consider the learning projects of graduate students in the schools of education and nursing. A convenience sample of 40 graduate students was interviewed using Tough's interview schedule, which was updated and modified to include questions related to technology use. The researchers increased the minimum number of hours for a learning project from seven to eight hours, which they deemed equivalent to one working day. A total of 435 learning projects were recorded, with the number of learning projects ranging from three to 25 projects per participant and an average of 10.9 projects per year per individual. Of these 435 total projects, 208 (47.8%) were planned primarily by the learner, followed by 65 (14.9%) planned by a group with a leader. Adding all technology usage together (Internet, web videos, electronic journals, computer programs, software, and webinars), 41.5% cited computer technology as the major source of information. Understandably, the majority of the graduate students' learning projects (67.6%) were reported as being undertaken for credit.

Harrison (2010) chose to revisit the iceberg with his study of technology, self-direction, and the learning projects of small business owners. Harrison examined the learning projects of 35 small business owners, using a revised and modernization of Tough's interview schedule. The respondents participated in a mean of 6.8 learning projects over a 12-month time period. Harrison observed that the learner was the primary planner of 55.9% of all learning projects, with a mix of planners used in 22.7% of the cases. This study found that African-American small

business owners identified the learner as the primary planner in 71.9% of learning projects, much higher than the overall mean. Demographic information indicated that 88.6% of the participants had at least an intermediate computer skill level. The Internet was indicated as a resource in 43.3% of learning projects, second only to print sources (54.2%). Harrison recommended that future research explore the learner's perception of the benefits of various forms of technology for conducting learning projects.

Criticisms of the Replication Studies

Adult educators did not always understand or agree with Tough's priorities and his work drew both praise and criticism. Brookfield (1984) acknowledged that Tough's body of work was important to the field of adult education for three reasons. First, Tough's research was instrumental in shifting the focus of the educator's attention onto the phenomenon of adult learning, rather than equating adult education with program planning skills. Second, Tough's studies challenged the assumption that adult learning happens only with a professional teacher. Third, Tough's findings "helped to break down the false dichotomy in which institutionally sponsored learning is seen as purposeful and deliberate and learning occurring in non-institutional contexts is held to be serendipitous, ineffective and wholly experiential" (Brookfield, 1984, p. 60).

Brookfield (1984) opined that enough research had been carried out in the field of self-directed learning with adult learning projects, "At some point, however, it is important that adult education researchers cease reinventing the self-directed learning research wheel and accept that the propensity and capacity of many adults to conduct learning projects is now well proven" (p. 60). He offered four criticisms related to the state of self-directed learning research and his own suggestions for shifts into a new direction. Brookfield's criticisms referred to:

1. The emphasis on middle class adults as the sampling frame for studies of this mode of learning;
2. The almost exclusive use of quantitative or quasi-quantitative measures in assessing the extent of learning and the concomitant lack of attention to its quality;
3. The emphasis on the individual dimensions of such learning to the exclusion of any consideration of the social context in which it occurs and; finally,
4. The absence of any extended discussion of the considerable implications raised by these studies for questions of social and political change. (p. 60)

Brookfield (1984) continued, criticizing those researchers who had been "methodolatorous" in their "commitment to measurement scales, structured interview schedules, questionnaires, and prompt sheets" (p. 63). In his criticism of self-directed learning research, Brookfield (1984, 1985) recognized that Tough, however, had not been guilty of ignoring the social context of self-directed learning.

Acknowledging the significance of Tough's early research, Brookfield (1984) noted the phenomenon of the "self-deprecation of the self-directed learning by the learners themselves" (p.68). This concept indicated that learners do not place equal value on learning directed by a formal institution and learning that they direct. Brookfield concluded, "Once adults believe that the act of learning can be undertaken without the approval or assistance of professional educators and that the locus of control can remain centered in the adult learner, then a realization is created that adults have the power to alter their individual and social environment and to create their own reality" (p. 69).

In his response to Brookfield's criticism, Brockett (1985) addressed each of Brookfield's (1984) four criticisms. In response to the first criticism that self-directed learning research

focuses primarily on middle-class samples, Brockett noted five studies of underrepresented adults. To counter Brookfield's second criticism that self-directed learning research has been methodolatorous, Brockett stated that contemporary self-directed learning research had been following at least three distinct lines of inquiry, including: the descriptive research that came out of the learning projects interview schedule; the relationship between self-directedness and a range of psychological variables, which came out of the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) (Guglielmino, 1978); and several studies exploring questions addressed through various qualitative methodologies, including content analysis and case study. Brockett conceded that the third and fourth criticisms were perhaps valid. The social setting in which self-directed learning takes place has not been explored to the extent that individual or personal dimensions of the research have been investigated. Brockett agreed with Brookfield that most researchers fail to address the political implications of their research.

Brookfield (1985) countered Brockett's comments concerning the author's concept of self-directed learning. Brookfield affirmed the truth of his original statements that there have not been enough studies of the capacity of working class adults to learn in a self-directed mode; that current measures for studying self-directed learning readiness are unsuitable for working class adults; and that quantitative measures have been used almost exclusively. Brookfield, however, acknowledged that Tough's studies "have been instrumental in opening up the minds of countless educators to the reality of purposeful, valid learning occurring outside formal educational institutions" (p. 61). Brookfield asserted that, although he and Brockett have dissimilar views, both "are disturbed at the creeping orthodoxy which threatens to exercise a conceptual stranglehold on research and theoretical speculation" in the field of self-directed learning (p. 64).

In 1987, Caffarella and O'Donnell reviewed the self-directed learning literature, including both data-based and conceptual articles. In their review, one of the categories that emerged was the verification studies, as illustrated by research that replicated Tough's work. Caffarella and O'Donnell made these criticisms of verification studies: the populations are usually middle class; the Tough schedule requires probing and prompting, which can contaminate findings; subjects must look back in time to reflect on their learning experiences; and in general, enough verification has been completed. Caffarella and O'Donnell (1987) stated that although "we would agree with Brookfield that verification studies have dealt primarily with the middle class, we must also agree with Brockett that evidence of self-directed learning among the 'hard-to-reach' (many of whom are not middle class) population does exist" (p. 201). Caffarella and O'Donnell reported that verification studies had reached a point of dullness and they would like to be surprised by the results of future verification studies. "The greater the surprise or astonishment with self-directed learning findings, the greater the new knowledge. Verification studies with minority groups, hard-to-reach populations, and people from other cultures may produce surprises" (Caffarella & O'Donnell, 1987, p. 201).

In 2005, Donaghy examined several aspects of self-directed learning, including collaboration and the importance of others being involved in the learning process. Donaghy based his research on interviews with eight scholars in the field of self-directed learning, including Tough. In an interview (Donaghy & Tough, 2005), Tough stated that he believed self-directed learning was intricately connected to society. "For example, when we interviewed politicians, we found that they do lots of learning—fortunately. We were pleased to find a connection between social issues and society and individual learning" (Donaghy and Tough, 2005, p. 7). It is of interest that at no time in the 1970s, nor during the resurgence of attention to

learning projects in the 1990s, did researchers revisit the learning projects of municipal elected officials; however, some political science and public administration researchers were concerned with this particular group of learners.

Research Studies on the Education and Training of Local Government Officials

Local government elected officials are selected from among their peers and seldom take office with the requisite knowledge and skills. Public administration scholars have identified a broad array of skills, knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes that municipal elected officials should possess, and several universities, states, and good government organizations provide governance education for their local elected officials. No two cities are exactly alike and vary according to their form of government, the range of services they offer, the type of elections they hold, and the balance between politics and administration that exists in each municipality. All these factors impact how city councilmembers view their representational roles and affect how they govern. Because local elected officials are adults, adult education techniques can be used effectively to educate and train these potential learners (Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997). To better understand elected municipal officials as adult learners, it is necessary to appreciate how they are situated in the local political structure.

What Does It Mean to be an Effective Elected Representative in Contemporary Local Government?

Cities are not uniform in their organization, and several configurations of city government may be found today. The city's charter defines the organization, powers, functions, and essential procedures of the municipal government and details the form of government, as well. The National League of Cities (2013) recognizes five historical forms of city government: council-manager; mayor-council; commission; town meeting, and representative town meeting.

Cities also vary in election procedures and in the range of services they provide. The impact of Reformism accounts for many of the differences found in municipalities, including which offices are elected. In most cities, elected officials include the city councilmembers, aldermen/alderwomen, or commissioners and, often, a mayor. These elected officials have diverse perspectives about what it means to be an effective elected representative in contemporary local government.

What is a city council? A city council is composed of civic-minded volunteers, who have been elected to lead a city. According to Svara (1990), city councils have three characteristics in common with all legislatures: a city council is collegial, deliberative, and representative. Each member has equal status and exercises one vote. The council deliberates as a group before enacting laws. Its members are no more expert than the citizens from whom they are elected (Dahl, 1998; Pealy, 1958). A council must consider citizens' views before, during, and after it legislates, as well as weigh the citizens' views against the long-term interests of its city (Nalbandian, 1999). To govern, council members must obtain a majority. In most cities, it takes only three or four council members to pass legislation. Elected officials, therefore, must influence each other through their group processes. City councils govern municipalities by making policies. These policies come out of their group decisions. In the past, party leaders learned how to participate in coalitions through the efforts of the party machine. With the advent of Reformism and the decline of the party machine, local elected officials lost a major source of governance training (Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997).

Reformism. Prior to the reforms of the Progressive Era, councilmembers represented their local areas and the particular interests of the constituents who elected them. Councilmembers in the ward system were much less concerned with other sections or groups

within their cities, and the ward system was criticized for giving more influence to the separate wards than to the city as a whole (Hays, 1964). Because most elected officials were from the lower- and middle-class, they often opposed reforms in municipal government, which were typically spearheaded by members of the upper-class. Reformers, however, proposed that the highly-fragmented, weak-mayor-council governments, which were predominant, were not adequately serving the interests of all city residents (Svara, 2001).

Reformed cities are characterized by the implementation of nonpartisan ballots, at-large elections, and city manager government. Party organizations are less influential in reformed cities; a wider range of groups are influential in council-manager cities than in mayor-council cities; and council-manager cities are more likely to be influenced by particular business and middle-class groups, such as bankers, building developers, realtors, good-government activists, and environmentalists (Dutton & Northrop, 1978; Svara, 1990).

Reformism in municipal government is related to functional specialization. Researchers trying to determine whether functional specialization, in turn, reduces taxing and spending have had conflicting results (Dye & Garcia, 1978; Lineberry & Fowler, 1967; Morgan & Pelissero, 1980; Stumm & Corrigan, 1998). Reformism has also been credited with reducing the responsiveness of municipal governments to the influence of social and ethnic minorities and strengthening the influence of the middle class (Lineberry & Fowler, 1967).

Research indicates, however, that reformism does *not* necessarily encourage economic development policies and unreformed cities may be *more* likely to make use of economic development policies. Politicians operating in unreformed cities may have powerful incentives to promote economic development policies that allow them to take credit for investments that benefit either local interests or a wide range of the populace (Feiock & Clingermayer, 1986). The

outcomes of the reform movement had varying impacts on cities with dissimilar forms of government.

Variations among cities. One of the most difficult aspects in determining what it means to be an effective elected representative is that there is so much variation among municipalities. Svara (1990) observed that differences in region and political culture are less important than differences in the governmental institutions used, noting that "there are distinct opportunities and constraints for officials in cities with mayor-council and council manager government" (p. ix).

Form of government. In council-manager cities, a city manager is appointed and functions as the chief executive officer. The council-manager city "promotes the integration of authority (rather than separation of powers), breadth of accountability for the city manager, provisions for democratic leadership, and potential for professional contributions to policy making and administration" (Svara, 2001, p. 28). Many mayor-council cities also have an appointed administrator, the city administrator. The mayor is the chief executive officer and this form of municipal government reflects separation of powers with checks and balances (Svara, 1999).

Most cities with one of these two charter forms display some features of the other type. Because of this crossover, it can be too simplistic to categorize cities just by their charter type. Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood (2004) described three types of municipal government structure:

- Political, the traditional mayor-council form
- Administrative, the traditional council-manager form
- Adaptive, a combination of features from political and administrative.

Political cities typically have a mayor-council charter form, direct popular election of the mayor, no chief administrative officer, and district election of council members. Adaptive cities have a statutory charter form (either mayor-council or council-manager), a mayor either directly elected or selected by the council, a chief administrative officer, and a council elected by district (at-large or mixed). Administrative cities have a council-manager form, a mayor who has no executive powers or is selected from the councilmembers, a full-time professional administrator—city manager, and most councilmembers are elected at-large (Folz & French, 2005, p. 19).

Range of services provided. While some cities provide a narrow range of services, others offer comprehensive amenities. This range of service areas is affected by "the structure of municipal government, the demands placed upon local government, and their policies, especially taxing and spending levels" (Dye & Garcia, 1978, p. 103). Traditionally, older, larger eastern cities have higher taxes and spending and greater dependency on federal revenue than new, smaller or medium-sized western cities. Manager cities are more specialized than mayor cities, with the manager form of government accounting for the functional variance between reformed and unreformed cities (Dye & Garcia).

Roles of councilmembers. Prewitt and Eulau (1969) reported that representation involves two relationships. First, representation is the relationship between an individual who is represented and another individual who is the representative (an inter-individual relationship). Second, representatives are also considered as a group who represent a community as a whole (an inter-group relationship). The councilmember's job is complex and Svara (1990) suggested that the councilmember has multiple roles, serving as a representative (speaks for and acts on

behalf of the people), governor (legislates, gives direction, formulates and oversees policy), supervisor (appoints staff and reviews staff performance), and judge (settles disputes) (p. 123).

Roles of councils. In addition to the individual representational role of councilmembers, they have a second representational role; representatives are also considered as a group who represent a community as a whole (Prewitt & Eulau, 1969). Thus, representation must go beyond individual relationships and become

> a public, institutionalized arrangement involving many people and groups, and operating in the complex ways of large-scale social arrangements. What makes it representation is not any single action by any one participant, but the over-all structure and functioning of the system, the patterns emerging from the multiple activities of many people. (Pitkin, 1967, pp. 221-222)

Councils, therefore, may consider the views and wishes of the public, or councils may act in response to ad hoc issues and groups, or councils may have their own idea of what the community needs and may or may not act in the interest of the community (Prewitt and Eulau, 1969).

Svara (2002) identified five models of council roles. These models are based on a dominant characteristic that describes the council's orientation to policy making, representing citizens, and administration.

- The *board of trustees model* relies on strict separation of politics and administration. The council decides policy but is not involved in administrative activities and remains distant from citizens. Council members use their own judgment about what is best for the city and do not consider themselves to be delegates of the constituents. This model embodies

the dichotomy of council/manager roles and may be criticized for providing too little leadership.

- The *board of directors model*, in contrast, may provide too much leadership. This model allows the council to direct every aspect of city government and views the city manager as the council's assistant. There is limited use of this model; however, councils may occasionally adopt this model when they try to dominate the manager on a particular issue and intervene in the administrative operation of the city.
- The *board of delegates model* is more common in mayor-council cities and may be indicative of the wrong kind of leadership. Councilmembers defer to the executive for policy innovation and act as ombudsmen in addressing citizen complaints. In this model, councilmembers are placed in a reactive role and act as their constituents prefer.
- The *board of governors model* is the typical model in council-manager cities and is often viewed as ideal leadership. The council shapes goals, reviews and adopts proposals from the manager, and oversees administrative performance. The roles of the council and manager overlap and are complementary.
- The *board of activists model* is an emerging model. Councilmembers are activists who deal with current problems and advocate policies; they are less involved with setting goals and strategies. The council is rarely cohesive because councilmembers have their own separate agendas. Councilmembers may act as ombudsmen, speaking for and representing citizens and resolving their complaints. In this model, the manager may need to initiate policy goals and projects and advise the council. (pp. 6-11).

Most councils include a mixture of these orientations. Svara (2002) suggested that municipal governments should foster a composite model for councils, an activist-governor

model, in which activism "is incorporated into council behavior without producing dissension and undermining cohesion" (p. 19). In cities where activism splinters the council's unity, a mayor can provide council leadership and promote teamwork and cohesion. In the activist-governor model, the council may decide to focus on the most important policy areas and monitor oversight in the most critical areas. The council, thus, strives to achieve a balance between being responsive to citizen needs and providing direction for the city.

Certainly, as Svara observed (2002), structure and performance interact. The form of municipal government and the method of electing the mayor and councilmembers may determine which representational roles are available to councilmembers. Both the attitude and behavior of councilmembers, however, have a powerful effect on their actual performance and the roles that they choose to fill.

Types of Political Structures That Affect How Office Holders Perceive Their Responsibilities

The method of electing municipal officials often determines which representational roles are available to them. Cities may hold at-large or ward elections, or a combination of both election types. Elections may also be partisan or nonpartisan, which affects voter turnout and council diversity. The form of government and size of the city also impact the representational roles available to the elected officials.

At-large v. ward elections. "Representativeness is largely a product of electoral institution, insofar as council composition is related to structural, as opposed to demographic or mobilization factors" (Svara, 1990, p. 61). About two-thirds of council manager cities and almost half of mayor-council cities use at-large elections, but the association between form of government and at-large elections is diminishing (Folz & French, 2005; Svara, 2001, 1990). The

educational level of councilmembers is higher when elections are at-large. At-large elections also enhance the election of women (Bledsoe & Welch, 1985; Svara, 1990; Welch & Bledsoe, 1988), particularly in larger city councils. Smith, Reingold, and Owens (2012) reported that women are also more likely to be elected to the office of mayor or city council in more liberal cities and in cities where women have available considerably more personal and professional resources (p. 321). In contrast, district elections are more likely to benefit Black men and Latinos. Black women and Latinas, however, are disadvantaged by districts (Trounstine & Valdini, 2008). Overall, district elections favor individuals with lower income and less formal education and facilitate the election of spatially segregated minority groups. District elections promote more opportunities for candidates with lower incomes and minority status to be elected, which can facilitate greater diversity of backgrounds on city councils (Bledsoe & Welch, 1985).

Partisan v. non-partisan elections. Partisan elections typically have higher voter turnout, particularly among those who have less education and lower income, and are likely to over-represent the majority party. When elections are partisan and at-large, candidates may represent a wider range of citizens and produce a more diverse council. Because council-manager cities are more likely to use non-partisan and at-large elections, plus have smaller councils, there may be less socioeconomic, geographic, and ethnic diversity of the councils (Folz & French, 2005; Svara, 2001, 1990).

Impact of form of government on councils. However they define their representational role, all councilmembers serve as a link between citizens and city government. How well councils perform their representational, governing, and supervisory roles also varies with the form of government (Svara, 1990). In the strong mayor-council form, members emphasize their representational role, especially in allocating resources and service responsiveness. Svara also

noted the effect of the strong-mayor council form on mayors. Mayors support this orientation, damaging the councils' governance role. Reactive policy decision-making merely supports the mayors' initiatives. Mayors can also limit the councils' access to information and expertise. Councils cannot select, evaluate, or suggest corrective action for an elected mayor. Their role is lessened because an elected mayor has greater power.

In the council-manager form, councils typically enjoy a stronger and more secure position. These councils have greater access to information and staff expertise. They also have greater potential for oversight, evaluation, and handling complaints. The greatest difference is that the council has the power to appoint and evaluate the performance of the city manager. Yet, even with greater potential for success, city councilmembers are sometimes wrongly viewed as extensions of the professional staff. In these cases, councilmembers may need to strengthen their representational roles (Svara, 1990). Differences in council-manager relations are likely to be more dependent on the behavior and attitudes of the council than on those of the manager. Svara (1986) recognized that the manager is guided by professional standards, as well as by the council's hiring and performance appraisal. The council, however, determines its own direction and sets its own rules. In both major forms of municipal government, it is vital to improve the performance of the council.

Key Areas of Requisite Knowledge for Municipal Elected Officials

However they are elected, councilmembers are often characterized as having a good education, adequate income, a professional or business occupation, and strong motivation. Their motivation is usually based on personality traits and personal interests, such as their degree of personal ambition or their preference for volunteerism or activism (Svara, 1990). No matter what motivates them, elected city officials have the responsibility to determine the mission of the city

(Svara, 1985, 1986). While the city manager may determine what the city *can* do, councilmembers determine what the city *should* do.

Local government, however, is not the place for unprepared local elected officials. Vogelsang-Coombs and Miller (1999) determined that local elected officials must learn the following in order to do their jobs:

1. Practical knowledge based on "contemporary" and "quotidian" situations;
2. Skills that facilitate consensus decisions;
3. Techniques for power-sharing and coalition building;
4. A recognition of their duties in the democratic political system; and
5. A philosophy that expresses the political relationship between citizens and representative local government (p. 201).

While there is no one source listing everything city councilmembers need to know, the following subjects have been identified: leadership development; capacity-building; budgeting; long-range planning; team-building; decision-making; problem-solving; coping with change; conducting meetings; goal-setting; evaluating performance; and, establishing priorities (Burks & Wolf, 1981; National League of Cities, 1980; Sweetwood, 1980). Several of these potential training needs are often referred to as soft skills or personality-based skills that are less tangible and harder to quantify. Other training essentials focus on public administration subject matter content.

Once elected, local officials usually discover they need additional knowledge and job skills to be effective. Representative democracy requires that decisions made by elected officials are honored. Well-managed council-manager government works well in some cities because the appointed managers understand that "the powers of the local government *belong to the elected*

governing body" (Hansell, 2001, 43). Because individuals with diverse backgrounds have served well in local government, it is often "difficult to reach any consensus on the body of knowledge required to practice successfully as a local government administrator" (Hansell, 2002, p. 182).

General Information and Practical Knowledge

Several studies reveal knowledge, behaviors, and skills that local elected officials need to be successful in their political careers. Paddock (1996) identified three broad areas of training needs: general information that includes legal and statutory information and budgeting processes; technical training in municipal services; and, policy making and team building.

Jacobson and Warner (2008), from the School of Government (SOG) at the University of North Carolina, studied the training needs of local government elected and appointed officials. Research conducted in 2002 and 2003 indicated a gap in recently elected officials' understanding of what it means to lead and govern their jurisdictions (Jacobson &Warner, p. 153). Based on the findings of these studies, the SOG changed its training focus from management to leadership.

Ziegler, Kirwan, and Smeltzer (2012) identified five characteristics or tenets of community leadership: transformation, communication, collaboration, planning, and integrity. The authors recognized that "regardless of how well community leaders communicate, collaborate, plan, or desire to be transformational, without integrity and ethics, long-term progress is impossible….Honesty and transparency give leaders credibility and help develop trust in local partnerships" (p. 124).

Leader credibility. One of the most important characteristics of government leaders is that citizens can believe what elected representatives say. Vogelsang-Coombs (2001) reported that credibility occurs when "citizens trust the decisions of leaders on a range of community issues, including the routine, the controversial, and matters of life and death" (p. 4). While

credibility includes envisioning the future and inspiring others, credibility also includes following through with the implementation of new ideas and reforms. Although divisiveness on city councils receives much media attention and research focus, research indicates that city council members often keep their differences to themselves and differences that do surface do not negatively impact managerial innovation (Ihrke, Proctor, & Gabris, 2003).

Credibility is also linked to the ethical leadership of local elected officials. When community needs outnumber resources, local officials may find themselves saying yes to one set of needs while denying others. Decisions should reflect shared values or widespread norms. Recognizing multiple viewpoints allows elected officials to diffuse emotions, show that there is more than one right way to respond to a community need, indicate that several officials may see the same issue differently, check their assumptions, and realize that some differences may be negotiable (Vogelsang-Coombs, 2001). "Credible leaders know how to generate reasonable decisions with enough consistency and flexibility to earn the ethical respect of council colleagues and constituents while maintaining self-respect" (Vogelsang-Coombs, p. 7).

Measuring service performance. Citizens expect local elected officials' collective decisions to produce several outcomes: "an array of municipal services; the protection of people, property, and the environment; prohibition of certain types of behaviors; a local economy that attracts and retains residents and businesses; and plans for the future (Vogelsang-Coombs & Miller, 1999). This focus on outcomes has led to recent efforts in measuring service performance because, as Folz and French (2005) observe, "what gets measured is what gets done" (p. 87).

The four most frequently used forms of benchmarking in public administration are continuous process improvement, performance targets, corporate style, and comparative performance statistics (Ammons, 2001; Folz & French, 2005; Kelly & Rivenbark, 2003).

Continuous process improvement enables city officials to compare their city's performance over time, using the same measures. Performance targets let cities compare their performance with similar cities. Corporate style compares city services with high-performing similar services and allows a city to identify and adopt the best practices of other cities. The comparative performance statistics method is the result of a joint endeavor by several cities who agree on shared performance metrics and processes for collecting, authenticating, and distributing performance data on a limited number of services (Coe, 1999; Folz & French, 2005).

At the national level, the International City/County Management Association Center for Performance Analytics collects performance information from more than 200 cities and counties on 18 service areas (International City/County Management Association, 2016b). The National League of Cities (2009) recognized that training in results-based government and service outcomes would benefit most elected officials. Educational sessions on the value and use of outcome information should include: "what it is; how it can be obtained; how its use can be of value to elected officials in meeting their responsibilities, such as in budget, program, and policy decisions; and how elected officials can use results information in communicating with their constituents" (p. 2). The NLC acknowledged that "in recent years more governments have begun to collect and report such information on a regular basis, but elected officials need to better utilize this readily available information" (p. 1).

In addition to results-based outcomes and benchmarking reports at the national level, many states are coordinating performance measurement studies of their local governments (Ammons, 2012). Examples of state municipal benchmarking projects include the North Carolina Benchmarking Project (Ammons & Rivenbark, 2008; University of North Carolina. School of Government, 2016), the South Carolina Municipal Benchmarking Project (University

of South Carolina. Governmental Research and Service, 2005), and the Tennessee Municipal Benchmarking Project (University of Tennessee. Municipal Technical Advisory Service, 2015a).

Budgeting. Most newly elected local officials receive some training, either in-house or through their state municipal league. This training often emphasizes municipal budget processes (Vogelsang-Coombs & Miller, 1999). Adopting and maintaining a budget is a major responsibility of local elected officials (Utah League of Cities and Towns, 2013). Hattery and Lindstrom (2010) agreed that planning and budgeting for capital improvements and learning how to calculate the cost of services should be very important to elected city officials. Budgeting and finance is the one of the most critical areas of training for newly elected officials orientation offered by California's Institute for Local Government (2013).

In summary, researchers have identified a wide range of skills, knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes that local elected officials should possess. The majority agree that leadership and credibility are the most important (Jacobson & Warner, 2008; Paddock, 1996; Vogelsang-Coombs, 2001; Ziegler, Kirwan, & Smeltzer, 2012). Following closely in importance are skills related to measuring service performance and budgeting (Ammons, 2012; Folz & French, 2005; Hattery & Lindstrom, 2010; Institute for Local Government, 2013; Kelly & Rivenbark, 2003; National League of Cities, 2009; Paddock, 1996; Utah League of Cities and Towns, 2013; Vogelsang-Coombs & Miller, 1999).

Governance Education

One way to help city councils govern better is through governance education. Vogelsang Coombs (1997) draws from the writings of Dewey to bridge the fields of education and democratic philosophy and provide foundational literature for governance education. Governance education should be pragmatic (Dewey, 1916, 1954), connecting what city councils

learn with what they do as governing bodies (Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997). Governance education should also provide on-the-job learning. Through their life experiences, city councils learn to reinterpret the meaning of events and political controversies (Dewey, 1957) and use this new knowledge to inform their decision-making (Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997).

Governance education, with its framework that supports competent group action, is on-the-job learning for city councils. As a specific form of adult education, governance education has the objective of facilitating councils in learning how to learn. A governance educator can teach councils the necessary skills to facilitate each stage of the learning sequence so that council members can do it themselves. Eventually, city councils should view governance education as indispensable to their operation as a governing body (Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997). The task of educating city councils in governance demands the coordinated efforts of colleges and universities, cooperative extension, the philanthropic community, and good government organizations.

Organizations That Educate City Councilmembers

In 2004, the Public Leadership faculty of the University of North Carolina School of Government (SOG) created an executive leadership academy for city and county managers. In 2006, the faculty developed a model to give appointed and elected officials a foundation in core concepts and principles. The model acknowledges that local government elected and appointed officials still need training on the technical aspects of their work. According to Jacobson and Warner (2008), the new model "helps to place the technical and skill-based training into context and provides new meaning and perspective for their work" (p. 158). The SOG launched a Local Elected Leaders Academy for municipal and county elected officials in 2008. The academy contains programs at three levels to help officials develop their skills in the areas of collaboration

and strategic thinking. The new training model recognizes the shift from governing to governance, which "is marked by a transition from traditional hierarchy and control to collaboration and empowerment as the means for getting things done" (Jacobson & Warner, p. 158). Evaluations of the first classes revealed several learner preferences. Participants indicated that elected officials want to learn about best practices, what other local governments are doing, as well as what works. Experiential learning is used throughout the programming. Jacobson and Warner reported that "SOG experiences have revealed that elected officials and managers see themselves as experts, with a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with others. They view their experiences and insights as valuable as the instructor's knowledge" (pp. 166-167).

There are several other training programs for local government elected officials. In 1993, the Local Officials Leadership Academy was launched in Ohio, with the mission of giving local elected officials (LEOs) the leadership skills necessary for building governance teams. The University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service (2015b) provides two levels of an Elected Officials Academy. Level I covers five topics:

- Foundations and structure of municipal government
- Introduction to charter, code and open records law
- Municipal finance overview
- Ethics and open meetings
- Council at work.

Participants in the second level choose any five courses from the following: economic development; fire review; human resources; police review; public works; municipal risk management; and water and wastewater operations (University of Tennessee. Municipal Technical Advisory Service, 2015b).

Training Outcomes

An organization's educative environment impacts the quality of adult learning. A high-quality physical environment, congenial interpersonal relations, and a democratic philosophy are essential in creating an organizational climate that is conducive to learning (Knowles, 1990). The implication is that group-learning processes are vital in changing the predispositions of city councils.

One expression of group learning is collaborative learning. Collaborative learning "refers to people jointly engaged in multiple ways of knowing for the purpose of creating new ways of going on together, individually and collectively. The knowers involved are groups as well as individual members of groups" (Peters & Gray, 2005, p. 17). Collaborative learning involves *group learning*, which Peters and Gray differentiate from just learning *in groups* (p. 19).

When applied in the context of group learning, an adult-learning model assumes that "it is cognitions and emotions, not only overt behavior patterns, that are learned" (Schein, 1991, p. 174). The emotions of the group members affect how the group learns new behaviors. Governance education recognizes that council members are impacted by both their emotions and intellect as they analyze politics and policy. Incorporating affective-development activities allows councils to explore their problematic decision-making behaviors in a safe environment (Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997). Because adult education theory connects learning to organizational development, organizational change theories may also be applied to governance education. By including organizational development processes in adult education, city councils learn to act on, rather than react to, their outside environments (Knowles, p. 17). Universities with a public service mission, like those in North Carolina, Ohio, and Tennessee, are leading governance education for their state's local elected officials. The reported positive impact of these leadership

training and governance education programs indicate that local elected officials benefit from specialized, focused training that incorporates adult education principles and techniques.

Municipal elected officials are selected from among average citizens in a community and rarely come to the job with the necessary knowledge and skills. While researchers have identified a wide range of skills, knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes that municipal elected officials should possess, most agree that leadership and credibility are the most essential, followed closely by measuring service performance and budgeting. Several universities, states, and good government organizations recognize the importance of governance education for their local elected officials. The reported results of governance education are positive. In addition to learning leadership skills and ethical behavior, local elected officials who participate in governance education build social capital and are highly likely to be re-elected by their constituents (Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997). Universities with a public service mission are particularly well-suited to develop and lead governance education for their state's local elected officials. Unfortunately, obstacles to learning and avoidance behavior cause many officials to avoid training and learning situations.

Potential Barriers to Learning

Several adult learning scholars have addressed obstacles that hinder or prevent adults from participating in learning activities. Johnstone and Rivera (1965) categorized barriers to learning as either situational or dispositional. Situational barriers are beyond the learner's control and include: cost; location; and course offerings. Dispositional barriers, which are related to a person's beliefs, values, and attitudes, include: lack of motivation; fear of failure; and feelings of unworthiness. In a later study, Cross (1981) added institutional barriers as a third category. Institutional barriers are those that prevent or discourage a learner from taking part in organized

educational undertakings. Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) developed the *Deterrents to Participation Scale* and conducted a study that identified six aspects of non-participation among adults. These factors included: lack of confidence; lack of course relevance; time constraints; low personal priority; cost; and personal problems. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) reported that adults identify lack of time, lack of money, and family responsibilities as common barriers to participating in learning activities.

Although Tough's (1971) original study did not include a discussion of barriers to learning encountered by his learners, several of the verification studies examined obstacles to learning. Lack of time was cited as a major obstacle to learning in 75% of Coolican's (1973) participants; 67% of Kelley's (1976) participants; 42% of Fair's (1973) participants, and 26.4% of Field's (1977) participants. In addition to lack of time, Coolican's participants also listed little energy; lack of quality childcare; financial pressures; motivation; and fear of failure as primary barriers to learning. Participants in the studies by Peters and Gordon (1974), as well as Benson (1974), had difficulty in acquiring assistance from subject experts. Identifying what to learn and deciding how to begin impacted both Fair's (1973) and Kelley's (1976) participants. Lack of resources presented the greatest difficulty for almost half of Field's (1977) participants.

Paddock (1996) addressed some of the obstacles to learning that local officials may encounter and cautioned that attempting to provide comprehensive training for local government officials may be an impossible task:

> The paucity of information on training needs, and the scarcity of training programs for local officials, may be a reflection of the incredible diversity which characterizes local governments, and thus the difficulty of meeting elected executives and legislative bodies [sic] needs. Greater turnover in membership of councils and boards at the local level also

> makes it more difficult to develop and maintain a long-term, comprehensive training effort. The challenge of training local officials effectively, given their lack of previous experience in government, the diversity of issues they face, the limited time they have available to devote to training, and some natural resistance to "training" also work against focused and sustained efforts at developing training programs. (p. 703)

Vogelsang-Coombs and Miller (1999) expressed concern that many local elected officials are deliberately choosing not to develop their capacity for governance due to lack of time, the technical complexity of some training, and because most elected officials receive some basic training through their state municipal league.

City councils govern by shaping and sharing policies and political power. Power-sharing necessitates that city councils participate in vigorous debate and then coalesce around problematic policy goals. Because political decisions rarely please everyone, local elected officials are called on to manage political conflict; and, to do that, these officials need leadership skills that will enable them to bring a variety of people together to support their policies and allocation of resources. Certainly, most researchers agree that it is possible to teach local elected officials the political leadership skills that are required for effective governance (Lindblom, 1968/1980; Svara, 1990; Vogelsang-Coombs & Miller, 1999). Unfortunately, political conflict makes many local elected officials uncomfortable and likely to avoid related decision-making and learning opportunities (Lasswell, 1967; Vogelsang-Coombs, 1997; Vogelsang-Coombs & Miller, 1999). Thus, city councils become experts at avoiding learning, when they are the ones who need learning the most (Argyris, 1993).

This chapter reviewed foundational literature in adult learning culminating with Tough's (1971) learning projects study and included the verification studies that resulted from his

research. In addition, this chapter reviewed research studies on the education and training of local government officials, literature that addresses what it means to be a municipal elected representative, and types of political structures that affect how office holders perceive their responsibilities. The need to know how municipal elected officials are learning about the topics and skills needed for their jobs that are not addressed by training; how much they are involved in their own learning projects; and what obstacles to learning they encounter have led to the decision to revisit Tough's (1971) original study. Chapter 3 outlines the method used for this study and includes a discussion of the population and sample, instrumentation, procedure, and data analysis used for this study.

Chapter 3

Method

This chapter outlines the method used in this research study. It includes information on the population and sample, the concept of municipal elected officials as elite interview subjects, instrumentation, revision of the interview schedule, pilot testing, human subjects and the institutional review board, procedure, and a description of the data analysis.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of the municipal elected officials in one geographic area of a state in the southeastern United States. This geographic area was chosen for a number of reasons. First, the 111 cities in the region encompass large urban, suburban, town, and rural populations. A limitation of several early studies (Allerton, 1974; Johns, 1973; Johnson, 1973; McCatty, 1973; Tough, 1971) was that the population under study was located in large metropolitan areas. Large urban centers usually have reasonably adequate resources for learning. Johns (1973) noted that a study of populations in smaller cities and communities was needed to determine whether "learning is hampered by locale, resources or other factors" (p. 77). Several forms of municipal government were found in this area: general law manager commission, general law mayor-alderman, general law modified manager-council, home rule, and private act. Finally, reducing the geographic area to approximately one-third of the state made it more practical for the interviewer to travel to conduct the interviews.

Within the 111 cities, there were 598 elected mayors and city councilmembers. The researcher contacted a state governmental consulting agency for municipal officials to recruit participants. In order to select a sample of elected officials that was representative of the elected officials in the region of the state in the study, the researcher considered the seven population

groups that the agency uses in its survey research, as seen in Table 1. Of the 111 cities under consideration, 45% had populations of less than 2,000; two-thirds had populations less than 5,000; and 84% had populations of fewer than 10,000 people. Because this area of the state had such a large proportion of small cities, the researcher chose to use stratified sampling to give more weight to the responses of elected officials from the large number of small cities. Certainly, the population size of cities has been an important consideration in other studies related to the training of local government officials and employees (Paddock, 1996; Slack, 1990). The researcher used a random number generator to select one city each from population groups one through four, two cities from population groups five and six, and four cities from population group seven to create a stratified sample and give more weight to the responses of elected officials from smaller cities. There were 68 elected officials within the 12 cities in the stratified sample, plus two vacant positions. An attempt was made to contact all 68 of the mayors and city councilmembers in the sample.

Table 1
Number of Cities and Elected Officials in the Population and Sample

Population Groups	Population Ranges		Number of Cities in Population	Number of Cities to Survey	Elected Officials in Population	Number of Officials to Survey
I	>100,000		2	1	21	10
II	50,000	99,999	2	1	11	5
III	25,000	49,999	5	1	32	5
IV	10,000	24,999	9	1	49	5
V	5,000	9,999	19	2	112	11
VI	2,000	4,999	24	2	130	10
VII	<2,000		50	4	243	24
		Totals	111	12	598	70

The rationale for selecting a small sample size was based on three premises. First, Tough's experience in conducting comparable research indicated that a pattern of learning projects for a specific group of participants seemed to be established after about 25 interviews, and this pattern did not change much with the inclusion of more interviews (Coolican, 1973; Kelley, 1976). Second, because of the intensive, probing nature of this interview schedule, the researcher conducted all the interviews herself to provide consistency. Thus, error due to variation in interviewer-respondent interaction and in asking questions and recording data was minimized. Finally, the geographic area under consideration was large and could have resulted in the researcher traveling as many as 3,600 miles to conduct the interviews. Considering these factors, 25 to 30 interviews should have been sufficient for determining a pattern of learning activities. Several of the verification studies, however, had a sample size of approximately 40 participants (Armstrong, 1971; Fair, 1973; Harrison, 2010; Johns, 1973; Johnson, 1973) and that became the target number for this study.

The emphasis of this investigation was not on all the learning projects of individuals, as had been the case in earlier studies, but rather, the intent was to focus on the work-, vocation-, or practice-related learning projects of one professional group. The motivation was to prompt the generation of new hypotheses for further research into either a larger randomized sample of elected officials or a comparative analysis among other professional groups to obtain broader distribution evidence of the basic categories and relationships examined in this exploratory study of learning activities that centered around the elected role of the participants.

Municipal Elected Officials as Elite Interview Subjects

Because the participants, in their roles as mayors and councilmembers, are prominent, influential people in their communities, they are sometimes considered to be "governmental

elites" (Van der Wal, 2013, p. 749). Their interviews were what Dexter (1970) described as "elite interviews" and the participants received "nonstandardized treatment" (p. 5). By nonstandardized treatment, Dexter suggested that the interviewer allow the participant to introduce his or her own notions of what content is relevant, rather than completely rely on the interviewer to guide the direction of the interview. As Dexter perceived elite interviewing, the interviewer should be willing to allow the respondent to teach him or her about the issue, problem, or question being investigated. In this study, the participants were the experts about what they need to know to perform their governmental roles well. Folz (1996) suggested that in a case where the purpose of research is to explore a complex issue and there are too many options to be adequately expressed by a set of mutually exclusive categories in a response set, a semi-structured or focused interview may be necessary.

Prior to the interview of elites, Roulston (2010) recommended learning as much as possible about the participants. Not only should the interviewer review publicly available information about the interviewee, e.g., newspaper reports, websites, and publications, but also be familiar with background information and "the contexts in which they live and work, becoming familiar with the expressions and terms that they regularly use, and learning about the local norms for the kinds of questions that might be asked and topics that might be discussed" (Roulston, p. 103). Mikecz (2012) also recognized "the significance of the researcher's knowledgeability and positionality in eliciting useful and trustworthy information from elite interviewees" (p. 482). The experiences of qualitative researchers indicate that the interviewer's knowledge of the research topic, as well as the interviewee's background, career, culture, and preferences, helps the researcher gain access to elites, acquire their trust, and establish rapport (Mikecz, 2012; Ostrander, 1995). Pre-interview preparation can also "significantly increase the

success of interviewing elites by decreasing the status imbalance between researched and researcher" (Mikecz, p. 483).

Because elite interviewees are influential and powerful people, a common assumption is that their position is more powerful than that of the interviewer. The researcher appears to gain the most from the interview because the elite interviewee grants the researcher a favor by participating (Dexter, 1970; Mikecz, 2012). Power struggles between elite participants and the researcher may occur. It is often difficult to contact and arrange interviews with elites. Then, during the interviews, respondents may take control by limiting their available time, refusing to have their interviews recorded, allowing interruptions and multi-tasking during the interview, promoting their own agendas, and refusing to answer some of the questions. Ostrander (1995) used the physical placement of her audio recorder to control where in the room she sat and to establish control over the interview situation. When interviewing elites, there is less need to protect elites from the power of the researcher (Conti & O'Neil, 2007; Hertz & Imber, 1995; Mikecz, 2012). Kezar (2003), however, suggested that the interviewer is likely to be in the position of privilege "because most faculty come from middle- or upper-middle-class backgrounds and are still predominantly White" (pp. 405-406). Such privilege could facilitate the interviewer's connection with the elites.

Where an interview takes place affects the degree of formality or informality of the interview, which, in turn, may shape the content of the interview (Hunter, 1995). Ostrander (1995) suggested that interviews take place in neutral locations, such as public places. Mikecz (2012) advised against having the interview in a person's office because an office may reflect "the bureaucratic position and the power of elites" and influence the interviewee's responses to reflect a more official or public relations version (p. 483). Elites are more likely to have frequent

interruptions while in their office, either by someone entering the room or from a phone call (Harvey, 2011; Odendahl & Shaw, 2002). Sometimes, however, it is useful to listen to participants' stories in their own environment. If the interview does take place in the participant's office, Mikecz cautioned the interviewer not to behave like a guest. In this study, most of the interviews took place in the city hall or municipal building.

Instrumentation

The preparation of the interviewer should culminate in an interview guide that includes the subjects and questions to be discussed (Folz, 1996). Tough acknowledged that the part of his work that was the most recognized was the interview schedule (Donaghy & Tough, 2005). A copy of Tough's (1975) original interview schedule is included in Appendix A. This schedule has recently been updated (Harrison, 2010; Davis et al., 2010) to reflect changes in technology, but no overall evaluation of the schedule has occurred since its publication. In this study, the research interest is on the learning projects of elected officials that are related to their role as an elected official; thus, the decision was made to modify the interview schedule to narrow its focus. Instead of asking the participants to recall every learning activity they have participated in during the previous year, they were asked to identify only those learning projects that relate to their role as an elected official.

This study utilized a revised and updated version of Tough's *Learning Projects Interview Schedule* (1975). The complete survey instrument consists of two parts: an interview schedule and a demographic questionnaire. The interview schedule employs a semi-structured interview format and the demographic questionnaire uses a structured format. The interview schedule makes use of a standardized interview protocol with a number of prompts to help participants recall their learning projects. Tough (1971) believed that previous studies of adult participation

in learning activities did not detect many learning projects because those studies uncovered only the learning efforts that the participants could remember quickly and easily. Instead of asking only general questions, Tough used long lists of subject matter and learning methods to help the respondent recall additional projects.

Many of the previous learning projects researchers revised the interview schedule for their individual research needs. In 2008, technology changes motivated a research team at the University of Tennessee to modify and update the interview schedule; led by Dessa Beswick, the team included Ralph G. Brockett, Megumu Doi, and John Harrison. They noted that the wording of the original schedule reflected the culture of the time and was not representative of current language usage. In 2009, a second research team, as part of a doctoral seminar, made additional revisions to the interview schedule as part of a study of learning projects among graduate students in education and nursing. This team was led by Amelia Davis and included Carrie Bailey, Tracy Rees, Mary Nypaver, and Ralph G. Brockett.

In 2011, the current researcher contacted Allen Tough about conducting a learning projects study with elected municipal officials and received permission to use and adapt the instrument. Their email correspondence is found in Appendix C. The researcher revised the prompt sheet to reflect topics related to municipal government and updated the resource section to include sources more likely to be used by elected municipal officials. These modifications to the survey provided targeted information about the learning projects and the resources used by mayors and city councilmembers while pursuing their learning activities.

Revisions to the Interview Schedule

A copy of Tough's (1975) original interview schedule, which included nine questions, may be found in Appendix A. After introductions, the researcher explained the interview process

to the participant. Using Tough's definition, the researcher described a learning project and helped the participant formulate a list of potential learning projects. During this process, Tough intended that three prompt sheets be used, Sheet 1, Sheet 2a, and Sheet 2b from the Interview Schedule (Appendix A).

Because the content of Sheet 1 is so dated, the researcher revised the prompts to be more current and with a concentration of some topics that elected officials might reasonably encounter in the course of their work (See Participant Sheet 1a in Appendix B.) The content for Sheet 1a was compiled from a variety of sources (International City/County Management Association, 2016a; Lazenby, 2009; University of Tennessee. Municipal Technical Advisory Service, 2015b) and provided examples of subject areas for learning projects that municipal elected officials might undertake (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 1a).

Next, the interviewer gave Participant Sheet 1b to the participant. This sheet is a combination of two prompt sheets from the original interview schedule (Sheets 2a and 2b in Appendix A). Participant Sheet 1b was modified to accommodate changes in technology, provide examples of resources that elected officials might use in their learning activities, and identify places where learning may have taken place (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 1b).

After the participant identified several learning projects, the interviewer asked the participant to consider the first learning project identified. The next step was to determine how much time the participant spent in planning, carrying out, and evaluating the learning project. In the original version, the participant used Sheet 3, Item 2 to determine how much time to assign to the learning project (Appendix A, Sheet 3). To estimate the number of hours in the revised schedule, the participant used Participant Sheet 2, Item 2A (Appendix B). In the revised

schedule, the participant was asked how important the learning effort was at the time of the interview (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 2, Item 2B).

In both versions, Item 3 asks how actively the researcher is engaged in the learning activity at the present time. (Appendix A, Sheet 3; Appendix B, Participant Sheet 2, Item 3). Responses in both versions are:

A. Not active

B. Definitely active

Item 4 asks how much the participant learned during the learning project. In the original version (Appendix A, Sheet 4), Item 4 reads:

> Please think for a moment about how <u>much</u> 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. Would you say that altogether:
>
> A. you learned a large amount or changed a great deal;
>
> B. you were about halfway between (A) and (C); or
>
> C. you just changed or learned a little.

Item 4 has both a double-barreled question and response set. Rewording the question corrects the problem. The revised Item 4 (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 3, Item 4) reads:

> A learning project can impact you in many different ways. You might gain knowledge, information, and understanding as a result of this one learning project. You might notice an improvement in your skills and habits. You may notice that your attitudes or sensitivity changed. Please think for a moment about how much you learned as a result of this one learning project. Would you say that altogether:

1. you learned nothing
2. you learned a little
3. you learned a moderate amount
4. you learned a large amount

The participant's enthusiasm level for the learning project is collected in Item 5, with the wording of the original question (Appendix A, Sheet 4, Item 5) as follows:

How enthusiastic have you been about having this new knowledge and skill?

F. very enthusiastic
G. quite enthusiastic or fairly enthusiastic
H. not especially enthusiastic

The revised version of Item 5 (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 3, Item 5) clarifies the question and corrects the response set to be mutually exclusive, balanced, and symmetrical.

How enthusiastic have you been about having this new knowledge, skill, or understanding? Would you say that altogether:

1. You are not enthusiastic.
2. You are a little enthusiastic.
3. You are somewhat enthusiastic.
4. You are very enthusiastic.

The broader scope of the original interview schedule is evident in Item 6 (Appendix A, Sheet 4, Item 6), which reads:

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.

To what extent did the knowledge and skill you gained provide some benefit to people other than yourself?

J. To a fairly large extent;

K. Medium (about halfway between J and L);

L. Only to a small extent.

In the revision (Appendix B, Participant Sheet3, Item 6), the focus of the question was narrowed to learning projects related to the participant's elected role. The response set was corrected to be mutually exclusive, balanced, and symmetrical.

Let's set aside your own benefits for a moment and look at any benefits for other people. Your new knowledge might have been of some benefit to your city, your field, or even to people who live in other places.

To what extent did the knowledge you gained provide some benefit to people other than yourself?

1. Not at all
2. To a small extent
3. To a moderate extent
4. To a large extent
5. Don't know/not sure.

Determining whether credit was part of the respondent's motivation for undertaking the learning project is covered in Item 7. Extreme wordiness made the original version confusing

(Appendix A, Interviewer Page 4). The revised version (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 3) was reduced to:

Item 7. Was academic, continuing education, or licensure CREDIT any part of your motivation?

NO YES.

One of the most interesting questions to those studying self-directed learning is Item 8, which asks about the responsibility for planning the learning project. Some explanatory material (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 4) was added to the original question (Appendix A, Sheet 5). This additional material should help the participant better understand the question.

Only a brief verbal prompt (Appendix A, Interviewer Page 5) cued the participant to identify the resources used during the learning project: "Also record the major source of the subject matter. That is, what resource provided most of the content?" The researcher rewrote the verbal prompt for added clarification (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 5).

> During your efforts to learn, you probably used a variety of resources. Some of these resources may have been people who helped you in some way, perhaps by giving advice or suggestions, or by encouraging you. Others may have recommended or provided materials or equipment for you. Resources are often the materials you need for your learning, such as books, supplies, electronic resources, and the equipment involved in the project. What were the resources—both human and non-human—that you used in this project?

The new verbal prompt is accompanied by a list of examples of likely resources, which the participant might have used (Appendix, Participant Sheet 5, Item 9). Participant Sheet 5 includes a list of resources that was updated by consulting previous learning project studies and local government subject areas (Davis et al., 2010; Harrison, 2010; International City/County

Management Association, 2016a; University of Tennessee. Municipal Technical Advisory Service, 2015b).

After collecting information on all a participant's learning projects, the researcher asked about barriers or obstacles the participant may have faced while conducting learning activities (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 6, Item 10). To help with recall, the participant reviewed examples of problems and obstacles listed on Participant Sheet 6, which was adapted from prior research on learning projects (Peters and Gordon, 1974; Benson, 1974; Harrison, 2010). The interviewees had the opportunity to share their experiences with obstacles and barriers to learning.

Finally, demographic information was collected (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 7), including the elected office held by the participant, the terms in current office, the years in current office and the participant's gender, age, ethnicity, race, and level of education. The data sheet was kept with the interview schedule for further analysis.

Pilot Testing

The interview schedule underwent pilot testing with several staff members from the state governmental consulting agency. These consultants have regular contact with the elected officials in the sample. Performing pilot interviews assisted the researcher in identifying any problems with the wording of interview questions; improving interviewing techniques and time management of the interview; and learning about any known issues in the twelve cities. Conducting pilot interviews allowed the researcher to discover whether the interview questions generated the expected kind of data and whether any questions needed to be reworded (Colton & Covert, 2007; Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). Roulston (2010) suggested that pilot

interviews allow researchers to learn about their own assumptions, discover topics they may have overlooked, and correct any design issues.

Human Subjects and Institutional Review Board

The Institutional Review Board at the University of Tennessee regulates all research activities involving human subjects on the Knoxville campus and assures that Knoxville campus researchers operate within the provisions of the Federalwide Assurance (FWA) for Protection of Human Subjects filed with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). This study was considered under expedited research, because the participants were elected officials, the study made use of an interview as a form of educational testing, and permission to audio record the interviews was requested. No known harm should come to the participants who take part in the study. Hutchinson, Wilson, and Wilson (1994) listed several potential benefits from participating in research interviews, including: catharsis, self-acknowledgement, sense of purpose, self-awareness, empowerment, healing, and providing a voice for the disenfranchised (pp. 162-164). Tough (1971) and Johnson (1973) found that the respondents were eager to talk about their learning projects and Tough hypothesized that individual learners rarely have the opportunity to discuss their learning efforts with an interested listener. Both Tough (1971) and Johns (1973) noted that participants had a tendency to play down the importance of what they had learned.

Procedure

Initial contact was a letter from the researcher to the city manager, chief administrative officer, or mayor of the 12 cities. Accompanying the researcher's letter was a letter from the Executive Director of the state governmental consulting agency, indicating the agency's support of the study. When cooperation from the city administration was received, letters from the

researcher and agency were sent to the 68 elected officials in the sample. Of the 68 mayors and councilmembers who were contacted, 41 agreed to be interviewed. Participation was strictly voluntary and the participants could withdraw at any time. Then, the researcher contacted each potential participant with a telephone call to set up an appointment time and location for the interview. As often as possible, the researcher scheduled the interview at the city hall/municipal building.

During a face-to-face meeting with the participant, the researcher asked semi-structured questions and recorded quantitative information. Although participants might describe many facets and details of their learning projects, the researcher recorded the time spent on the learning project, the subject matter of the project, the amount learned, the primary planner, resources used, and challenges or obstacles the participant encountered. Tough's revised interview schedule, with its targeted prompts, helped the participant recall learning activities conducted over the past 12 months; plus, the quantifiable assessment let the researcher collect and analyze data from the learning projects. Other advantages and limitations associated with Tough's interview schedule are considered in Chapter 1.

Each interview began with the researcher setting a relaxed tone for the exchange of information. When greeting the participants, the researcher began the process of helping the interviewees feel comfortable by asking general questions about how long the elected officials have lived in the community and what led to their interest in running for office. Prior to beginning the actual interview, the researcher asked each participant to sign an informed consent form. The researcher had requested permission of the institutional review board to audio record the interviews but decided not to record the interviews to insure confidentiality. Next, the researcher conveyed to the participants the importance of their response and offered to provide

each participant with a copy of the final document or a synopsis of the findings. To protect the participants, no identifying information was collected. Then, the interviewer assured participants that their responses would be kept confidential and that no names would be used in this study. Because anything said by these elected officials is subject to an open records request, great care was taken to disassociate the content of the interview from the participant's name. At this point, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and its objectives and introduced the research by reading the introductory text, which follows.

My research is about what local elected officials learn in order to fulfill their governmental role and how they go about learning it. Everyone learns, but different people learn different things—and in different ways.

I'm interested in listing the things you have tried to learn during the past year, particularly in your role as an elected official.

When I say "learn," I don't just mean learning things that people learn in schools and colleges. I mean any deliberate effort at all to learn something or to learn how to do something. Perhaps you tried to get some information or knowledge, or to gain new skills or improve your old ones, or to increase your sensitivity or understanding or appreciation.

Can you think of any efforts like this that you have made during the past 12 months?

After this introductory statement, the interviewer paused and allowed the participants to reflect and recall their learning activities during the past 12 months. Accordingly, the initial questions were designed to let the participant generate a list of learning projects or activities. Because the participant may not immediately recall learning efforts that are deemed unimportant, in-depth questioning was used to probe the participant's memory and increase recall. At this time, the researcher suggested that the participant consider more potential learning projects.

Think back over the past 12 months, all the way back to (name of month) last year. I am interested in any deliberate effort you made to learn anything at all related to your role as an elected official. It does not matter if it was easy or difficult, big or little, important or trivial, serious or fun.

It doesn't matter if it was in a class or outside of a class, with others or on your own, or even when your effort started, as long as you spent at least a few hours at it since last (name of month).

We want to get as complete a list as possible because we think that people make far more attempts to learn than anyone realizes. We can include any sort of information (knowledge, skill, or understanding) that you have tried to gain, as long as you spent at least a few hours at it sometime during the past 12 months. What else do you recall?

The interviewer paused and recorded responses and then gave Sheet 1a to the participant. The content for Sheet 1a was compiled from a variety of sources and provided 44 examples of subject areas for learning projects that municipal elected officials might undertake (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 1a). As the prompt sheet was given, the researcher stated:

Here is a list of things that municipal elected officials might learn. It may remind you of other things that you have tried to learn during the past 12 months. Take as long as you want to read each word and to think about whether you have tried to learn something similar.

Then, the interviewer gave Sheet 1b to the participant (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 1b). This sheet is a combination of two prompt sheets from the original interview schedule. Sheet 1b was modified to accommodate changes in technology and provided examples of resources that elected officials might use to learn and places where learning may have taken place. After recording any additional learning projects that the participant recalled, the interviewer stated:

OK, thank you. That gives me a fairly complete list. If you suddenly think of something else you have learned, though, please tell me.

Next, the researcher informed the interviewee that, from this point forward, the information collected would come from each individual learning project (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 2, Item 2a). Working together, the researcher and participant considered the first learning project identified. By asking the responder to think in terms of the number of hours spent in learning, either per day, per week, per month, or for the whole year, the researcher assisted the participant in estimating how much time was spent on each learning project. If the project was less than seven hours, the inquiry stopped and moved to the next learning project.

After determining the number of hours spent on the project, the researcher asked the participant to assign the level of importance placed on the learning activity (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 2, Item 2b). The respondent chose from among four levels of importance:

ANSWER #1 UNIMPORTANT. You do not believe that it was of value (you have not retained the information or you do not see value in the learning effort).

ANSWER #2 NOT VERY IMPORTANT. You believe that it had a little value (you retained bits of information and see a little value in the learning effort).

ANSWER #3 SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT. You believe that it had some value (you retained some information and find value in the learning effort).

ANSWER #4 VERY IMPORTANT. You find a great deal of value in this project and the information learned (you retained most of the information and find great value in the learning effort).

Question three was about the current state of activity for each project (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 2). The participant was asked to choose between two levels of activity:

ANSWER #1 NOT VERY ACTIVE. You have dropped it or completed it, or you have set it aside for a while (or you are spending much less time at it than you were before);

ANSWER #2 DEFINITELY ACTIVE. You are definitely continuing this learning activity right now and you are spending about as much time as ever at it.

Next, the researcher asked questions four, five, and six, which cover the participant's perceived amount of knowledge, skills, or attitudes gained; enthusiasm for attaining new knowledge, skills, or attitudes; and the benefits that other people may receive based on what the participant has learned (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 3).

Question seven asked the participant to determine whether obtaining academic credit, certification, license, or proficiency was any part of the participant's motivation for the learning project (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 3).

Question eight related to who was the primary planner of the learning project. The researcher assisted the participants by stating:

With this learning project, try to decide who (or what) was the planner. Who decided what you would learn, how you would learn, and when you spent time trying to learn? Does this learning project fit into any of the four types of planners on this sheet?

First, the researcher asked the participant to review Participant Sheet 4 (see Appendix B, Participant Sheet 4), which introduced the four types of planners. Planner types include a group, a one-to-one situation, a non-human resource such as the Internet, blog, wiki, or a language lab, and the learner. A group can plan a learning project by taking direction from a leader or instructor or by incorporating input from each group member. A one-to-one situation occurs when the learner relies on an instructor, teacher, expert, friend, or family member to provide leadership and structure for the learning project.

After introducing the types of planners, the interviewer helped the participant identify the primary planner of the learning project. The primary planner is the person, group, or non-human resource responsible for most (51% or more) of the planning for the learning activity. If there was no one primary planner responsible for 51% of more of the project planning, then the researcher recorded the planning as having "mixed" responsibility for planning. Mixed planning became a residual category for any project in which two or more types of planners were used and none of them was clearly dominant. If, however, the primary planner was a group or its instructor, the researcher asked for more information:

> Now, please choose one of two possibilities. The first possibility is that this group was a council, board, commission, or committee. Did the learning activity have an instructor, leader, or professional person who was in charge of the group's learning? The second possibility is that this group was a council, board, commission or committee that met as a group of equals and various members of the group may have helped plan the group's learning activities. Which was your group?

A second option for the planner was "one-to-one." In this instance, the researcher tried to establish whether the planner was someone who undertook the responsibility either as part of his or her job or served as a planner on a voluntary basis.

> Now I will suggest two possibilities, and I want you to tell me which one is correct. One possibility is that the one person who helped you was paid to do so, or the person was doing so because this was a definite responsibility for him or her, or part of his or her job. The other possibility is that the person was helping primarily because he or she was a friend or relative. Which was the case for <u>your</u> learning project?

After determining the primary planner, the researcher gave the interviewee Participant Sheet 5 (see Appendix B, Participant Sheet 5) and helped the participant identify resources used for the learning project. Participant Sheet 5 included a list of 22 potential resources the participant might use to complete a learning project. This list was updated by consulting previous learning project studies and local government subject areas (Davis et al., 2010; Harrison, 2010; International City/County Management Association, 2016a; University of Tennessee. Municipal Technical Advisory Service, 2015b). The participants were also encouraged to identify additional resources they used that were not on Participant Sheet 5.

The researcher repeated the interview process for each learning project that the participant identified as being important and taking seven or more hours to complete. After collecting information about each identified learning project, the interviewer asked the respondents to think about any obstacles or barriers to learning that may have impacted them during the past 12 months.

To learn more about the problems and obstacles that the participant may have encountered, the researcher gave the interviewee the following prompt from Peters and Gordon's (1974) study that was later modified by Harrison (2012):

> Many adults describe problems and obstacles that they have faced while conducting certain learning activities. Of all the activities that have been mentioned, think about the major problems you have had to resolve. Please identify obstacles that you have faced while conducting your learning efforts in the past 12 months.

The interviewees then had the opportunity to share their experiences with obstacles and barriers to learning. In order to assist with recall, the participant reviewed the 21 examples of problems and obstacles listed on Participant Sheet 6, which was adapted from prior research on

learning projects (Peters and Gordon, 1974; Benson, 1974; Harrison, 2010). The researcher continued, stating:

> Now, here are examples of obstacles people face. It may remind you of other obstacles that you have experienced during the past 12 months. Take as long as you want to read each example and to think about whether you have encountered something similar.

The interviewer recorded the obstacles that the participant identified on Participant Sheet 6 (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 6). The researcher recorded any additional obstacles mentioned by the interviewee on Participant Sheet 6.

At the end of the interview, the researcher asked the participant to complete a demographic data sheet (Appendix B, Participant Sheet 7). The demographic data sheet asked for information such as the elected office held by the participant, the terms in current office, the years in current office and the participant's gender, age, ethnicity, race, and level of education. The data sheet was kept with the interview schedule for further analysis. When exiting, the researcher thanked the elected official for participating. Finally, the interviewer offered a business card and invited the participant to contact her with any questions or additional information for the study.

Following each interview, the researcher reviewed the data sheets and coded all the responses. The researcher also noted any additional subjective observations, including a description of the interviewee's general attitude and the conditions in which the interview took place. Names of participants were disassociated from the data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The method of reporting data was determined by the usage of Tough's revised interview schedule and

related research studies. Through the use of frequency and percentage distribution, these studies allowed for the accumulation of information about the subject of the learning project, the resources used, the obstacles encountered, the number of learning projects, the hourly investment of time in pursuing the learning projects, and the primary project planner. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean, standard deviation, and other descriptive information from the data collected. Previous research also collected information about the learning projects, such as: the importance of the study to the participant; whether the participant was still actively learning about the project; how much the participant learned; the participants' enthusiasm for their projects; whether the learning project benefited others; whether the project was undertaken for credit; and the type of primary planner used. One objective of these previous studies was to discover tendencies in learning activities among distinct demographic variables.

In addition to descriptive statistics, several demographic characteristics of the sample were selected for further analysis. They are: population of city; whether or not the participants served in cities with a city manager or chief administrative officer; the participant's elected office (mayor, vice-mayor, or councilmember); gender; age range; race; ethnicity; level of education; term of office; and years in office. Using independent samples *t*-tests, the researcher ascertained the degree of association between the mean number of learning projects conducted, as well as the mean time spent on each learning project with gender, city manager status, and grouped years in office. One-way ANOVAs were used to analyze the mean number of learning projects with the participants' elected office, terms of office, years in office, and city size. One-way ANOVAs were also used to analyze the mean number of hours spent in each learning project with the participants' age range, elected office, terms of office, years in office, educational attainment, and city size. Cross-tabulations were used with primary planners and a

variety of demographic data, including gender, age range, elected office, term of office, years in office, grouped years in office, educational attainment, city manager status, and size of city. Table 2 indicates the statistical analysis methods used to address each of the study's research questions.

Table 2
Statistical Analyses of the Research Questions

Research Question	Statistical Analysis
1. What was the number of learning projects conducted by elected municipal officials during the past 12 months?	Mean, Std. Dev., *t*-test, One-way ANOVA
2. What was the thematic content of the learning projects?	Freq. Dist.
3. How much time was spent on learning projects?	Mean, Std. Dev., *t*-test. One-way ANOVA
4. Who was the primary planner of the participants' learning projects?	Freq. Dist., Cross-Tabulation
5. What resources were used during the learning projects?	Freq. Dist.
6. What barriers or obstacles were encountered while engaged in learning projects?	Freq. Dist.

This chapter outlined the method used in this study. It included information on the population and sample, the concept of municipal elected officials as elite interview subjects, instrumentation, revision of the interview schedule, pilot testing, human subjects and the institutional review board, procedure, and a description of the data analysis. Chapter 4 covers the data analysis and is organized into two sections to present the findings from the data collected: the sample and demographic profile of the participants and an analysis of the data collected related to the six research questions.

Chapter 4

Analysis of Data

The purpose of this research study was to examine the learning projects related to the governmental role of a selected sample of municipal elected officials over a 12-month period. A revised and updated version of Tough's learning projects interview schedule was used to collect data from 41 individuals. Each participant who started the interview process completed the process. There were no missing data. The data were analyzed to answer six research questions. This chapter is organized into two sections to present the findings from data collected: the sample and demographic profile of the participants and an analysis of the data collected related to the six research questions.

Sample and Demographic Profile

Study participants completed a demographic data sheet (Participant Sheet 7 in Appendix B) indicating their gender, age, ethnicity, race, and level of education. In addition, the form included questions related to the participants' elected office, term of office (including the current term), and years in current office (including the current year). The data collected from these questions served as a basis for better understanding the participants and the nature of their learning efforts.

Of the participants (N = 41), 73.2% (N = 30) were men and 26.8% (N = 11) were women. Additional demographic data are found in Table 3. Most of the participants (87.8%, N = 36) were age 50 or older. The greatest number (N = 15), or 36.6% reported being in the 60-69 age range, while 26.8% (N = 11) reported being in the age range of 50-59 and 24.4% (N = 10) reported being age 70 or older. The age ranges of 29 or younger and 40-49 each had one participant.

Table 3
Demographic Profile of Participants

Interview Item	Response	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	30	73.2
	Female	11	26.8
	Total	41	100.0
Ethnicity	Hispanic	1	2.4
	Not Hispanic	40	97.6
Race	Black	2	4.9
	White	38	92.7
	Mixed	1	2.4
Age Range	29 and Below	1	2.4
	30 to 39	3	7.3
	40 to 49	1	2.4
	50 to 59	11	26.8
	60 to 69	15	36.6
	70 and Above	10	24.4
Level of Education	Some high school	1	2.4
	High school/GED	4	9.8
	Some College	10	24.4
	Associates	1	2.4
	Bachelors	13	31.7
	Masters	8	19.5
	PhD	0	0.0
	Professional	4	9.8
Role	Mayor	11	26.8
	Vice Mayor	8	19.5
	Councilmember	22	53.7
Terms of Office	1 term	15	36.6
	2 terms	12	29.3
	3 terms	6	14.6
	4 or more terms	8	19.5
Years in Current Office	1-2 years	12	29.3
	3-4 years	9	22.0
	5-6 years	7	17.1
	7-8 years	5	12.2
	9-10 years	3	7.3
	11 or more years	5	12.2

The racial makeup of the study population was not closely representative of the region from which they were drawn, being disproportionately White. Whites represented the largest group of participants at 92.7% with Black or African-Americans at 4.9% and Mixed Race at 2.4%. Participants who reported Latino or Hispanic ethnicity represented 2.4% of the sample.

Level of education was assessed with responses ranging from some high school to holding a professional degree or the equivalent. Nearly two-thirds of the participants (61%, *N* = 25) responded that they held a bachelor's degree or higher. Having an undergraduate degree (*N* =13) represented the highest percentage (31.7%) of the total responses, while having some college was second at 24.4% (*N* = 10). Of those remaining, 2.4% (*N* = 1) reported having some high school, 9.8% (*N* = 4) reported they were a high school graduate or had a GED, 19.5% (*N* = 8) reported having a master's degree, and 9.8% (*N* = 4) reported having a professional degree.

Three questions were asked about the participants' experience as an elected official. Slightly more than half of the participants in the sample (53.7%, *N* = 22) held the office of councilmember, alderman/alderwoman, or commissioner. Mayors (*N* = 11) represented 26.8% of the sample and Vice-Mayors and Mayors Pro Tem represented 19.5% (*N* = 8).

More than one third of the respondents (36.6%, *N* = 15) were in their first term of office. Elected officials in their second term accounted for 29.3% (*N* = 12), while those in their third term made up 14.6% (*N* = 6). Those who have served the longest, at 4 or more terms, made up 19.5% (*N* = 8).

Term lengths can vary among cities, and even within cities; therefore, participants were also asked about the number of years they had held their current office. The greatest number were in their first or second year of service (29.3%, *N* = 12). Twenty-two percent (*N* = 9) had served three to four years, and 17.1% (*N* = 7) reported serving five to six years. Those serving

seven to eight years represented 12.2% (*N* = 5) of the sample, as well as those serving 11 or more years. Only 7.3% (*N* = 3) served nine or ten years.

In addition, the population size of the city and whether or not the city has a city manager were considered important, both to understanding the participant and also the learning projects they identified. The stratified sampling method was selected to better represent the population groups of the cities in which the participants reside. Seven populations groups were represented, with the largest having a population of more than 100,000 and the smallest cities having populations of less than 2,000. One city was selected from each of population groups one through four, two cities from each of population groups five and six, and four cities from population group seven to reflect the population of cities in the geographical area that was considered. The participants from each population group are as follows: Group I (17.1%, *N* = 7), Group II (7.3%, *N* = 3), Group III (7.3%, *N* = 3); Group IV (4.9%, *N* = 2), Group V (12.2%, *N* = 5), Group VI (17.1%, *N* = 7), Group VII (34.1%, *N* = 14). For purposes of analysis, population groups were sometimes combined as follows: large cities consisted of population Group I, with a population of greater than 100,000. Medium-sized cities were made up of population groups II and III with populations between 25,000 and 99,999. Small cities were those between 5,000 and 24,999 in population (Folz, 2005) and included population groups IV and V. Very small cities were those in population groups VI and VII with populations under 5,000.

Whether or not the elected officials in the sample serve in a city that has a city manager, town manager, city administrator, or town administrator was also reported. Of the 12 cities considered, 58.3% (*N* = 7) had a city manager form of government. The participants were similarly distributed, with 51.2% (*N* = 21) serving in cities with a manager and 48.8% (*N* = 20) serving in cities that did not have a manager or administrator.

Analysis of Research Questions

This study explored the learning projects of elected municipal officials by posing six research questions. The following summary addresses each question by presenting data collected using Tough's revised and updated interview schedule. All analysis was based on the responses of the 41 research participants.

Research question one: *What was the number of learning projects conducted by elected municipal officials during the past 12 months?*

This question was addressed by analyzing the number of projects conducted by each participant in order to identify the mean, standard deviation, and range. The 41 participants interviewed reported that they conducted a total of 274 learning projects. The mean number of their learning projects was 6.68 projects with a standard deviation of 2.95. The number of learning projects conducted by individual participants ranged from a minimum of two to a maximum of 16. Table 4 includes data on the overall number of learning projects.

The results of analysis on the number of learning projects conducted by male and female elected municipal officials over a one-year period is displayed in Table 5. Men (N = 30) conducted a total of 201 learning projects (M = 6.70, SD = 3.15). The male participants conducted a minimum of two and a maximum of 16 learning projects with a range of 14. Women (N = 11) conducted a total of 73 learning projects (M = 6.64, SD = 2.46). Female participants conducted a minimum of four and a maximum of 12 learning projects with a range of eight. The median number of learning projects was 5.50 for men and 6.00 for women. An independent samples t-test revealed that the difference in the mean number of learning projects conducted by men and women was not statistically significant, $t(39) = 0.06$, $p = .952$.

Table 4

Number of Learning Projects Conducted during a 12-month Period

Number of Projects	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
274	2	16	6.68	2.95

Table 5

Comparison of Means for Number of Learning Projects by Participants' Gender

Gender	Frequency	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Mode
Male	201	2	16	6.70	3.15	5.50	5
Female	73	4	12	6.64	2.46	6.00	5

Table 6 illustrates the age ranges of the participants and the mean, standard deviation, and range of the learning projects that the elected officials conducted. Participants in their fifties reported the lowest number of learning projects (M = 5.55, SD = 1.97), while participants in their thirties reported the highest number (M = 7.33, SD = 2.08). Those who were 70 and above reported a mean of 7.20 learning projects (SD = 3.01) and those in their sixties reported a mean of 6.33 learning projects (SD = 2.82). There is an insufficient representation for two categories of age ranges, thus, conclusions may not be drawn for those categories.

The analysis of learning projects by participants holding different elected offices is illustrated in Table 7. Mayors reported the lowest number of learning projects (M = 5.91, SD = 2.64), while Vice Mayors and Mayors Pro Tem reported the highest number (M = 8.50, SD = 3.63). Councilmembers, aldermen, alderwomen, and commissioners reported a mean of 6.41 learning projects (SD = 2.70). A one-way ANOVA revealed that the elected office of the participants had no significant effect on the number of learning projects the participants conducted at the $p < .05$ level [$F(2, 38) = 2.10$, $p = .137$].

Table 8 displays the number of learning projects conducted by participants in different terms of office. Newly elected officials in their first term of office reported a mean of 6.00 learning projects (SD = 3.19). Those in their second term of office reported the highest number (M = 8.00, SD = 3.16). The elected officials in their third term of office conducted a mean of 6.83 learning projects (SD = 1.84). The most experienced elected officials in their fourth or more term of office reported the lowest number of learning projects (M = 5.88, SD = 2.59). A one-way ANOVA revealed that the term of office had no significant effect on the number of learning projects the participants conducted at the $p < .05$ level [$F(3, 37) = 1.30$, $p = .290$].

Table 6

Comparison of Means for Number of Learning Projects by Participants' Age Range

Age Range	Participants.	Projects	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
29 and younger	1	16	16	16	16.00	N/A
30-39	3	22	5	9	7.33	2.08
40-49	1	8	8	8	8.00	N/A
50-59	11	61	2	9	5.55	1.97
60-69	15	95	3	12	6.33	2.82
70 and above	10	72	4	14	7.20	3.01

Table 7

Comparison of Means for Number of Learning Projects by Participants' Elected Office

Elected Office	Participants	Projects	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mayor	11	65	2	10	5.91	2.63
Vice Mayor	8	68	5	16	8.50	3.63
Councilmember	22	141	3	14	6.41	2.70

Table 8

Comparison of Means for Number of Learning Projects by Participants' Term of Office

Term of Office	Participants	Projects	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	15	90	3	16	6.00	3.19
2	12	96	4	14	8.00	3.16
3	6	41	5	10	6.83	1.84
4 or more	8	47	2	10	5.88	2.59

The learning projects of municipal elected officials were also analyzed according to the number of years the participants had held their current office. Differentiating between term of office and years in office was necessary because someone in his or her first term of office might be in year six of that first term. Table 9 displays the number of learning projects conducted by participants according to their years in office. Newly-elected officials in their first or second year of office reported the fewest learning projects (M = 6.00, SD = 1.76), along with their most experienced peers in their eleventh or more years of office (M = 6.00, SD = 2.56). Those in their third or fourth years of office reported the most learning projects (M = 7.78, SD = 3.93). Elected officials in their fifth or sixth year of office conducted a mean of 6.86 learning projects (SD = 3.81). Those in their seventh or eighth year of office were involved in a mean of 6.40 learning projects (SD = 3.78). Participants in their ninth or tenth year of office reported a mean of 7.33 learning projects (SD = 0.58). A one-way ANOVA revealed that the number of years the participants had held office had no significant effect on the number of learning projects they conducted at the $p < .05$ level [$F(5, 35) = 0.44$, $p = .818$].

Because the learning experiences of newly elected officials are of particular interest to organizations who conduct governance education, the number of learning projects of participants in their first two years of office were compared to the number of their more experienced colleagues. The number of projects that the newly elected officials (N = 12) undertook was a mean of 6.00 (SD = 1.76), as compared to their more experienced colleagues (N = 29), who undertook a mean of 6.97 (SD = 3.31), as seen in Table 10. An independent samples t-test revealed that the difference in the mean number of learning projects conducted by participants in their first two years of office and by the more experienced participants was not statistically significant, $t(39) = 0.95$, $p = .347$.

Table 9
Comparison of Means for Number of Learning Projects by Participants' Years in Office

Years of Office	Participants	Projects	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1-2	12	72	4	9	6.00	1.76
3-4	9	70	4	16	7.78	3.93
5-6	7	48	3	14	6.86	3.81
7-8	5	32	2	12	6.40	3.78
9-10	3	22	7	8	7.33	.58
11 or more	5	30	3	10	6.00	2.55

Table 10 *Comparison of Means for Number of Learning Projects of Newly-Elected Participants with More Experienced Participants*

Years of Office	Participants	Projects	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1-2	12	72	4	9	6.00	1.76
3+	29	202	2	16	6.97	3.31

The number of reported learning projects conducted by the elected officials were analyzed according to their educational attainment, as seen in Table 11. Those completing high school or acquiring a GED reported the fewest learning projects (M = 5.75, SD = 0.96), as did those with a professional degree (M = 5.75, SD = 2.22). College graduates completed the most learning projects (M = 7.23, SD = 2.83), while those with some college took part in an average of 6.90 learning projects (SD = 4.01). Elected officials with a master's degree reported a mean of 6.50 learning projects (SD = 3.25). There is an insufficient representation for two categories of educational attainment, thus, conclusions may not be drawn for those categories.

The learning projects of elected municipal officials were analyzed based on whether or not their city employed a city manager or other chief administrative officer, such as a town manager, city administrator, or town administrator. Table 12 illustrates the difference between the means of those two groups. Participants in cities with city managers reported fewer learning projects (M = 6.50, SD = 3.09) than did the elected municipal officials in cities without city managers (M = 6.86, SD = 2.89). An independent samples t-test revealed that the difference in the mean number of learning projects conducted by participants in city manager cities and by participants in cities without a city manager or CAO was not statistically significant, $t(39) = 0.38$, $p = .704$.

The learning projects of municipal elected officials from different population groups were analyzed based on whether the elected officials governed in a large, medium, small, or very small city. Table 13 illustrates the differences between the means of those four groups. Participants in large cities reported conducting the most learning projects (M = 8.86, SD = 3.19), while those in medium-sized cities took part in the fewest (M = 5.50, SD = 1.52).

Table 11

Comparison of Means for Number of Learning Projects by Participants' Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Participants	Projects	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Some High School	1	5	5	5	5.00	N/A
High school graduate/GED	4	23	5	7	5.75	.96
Some college	10	69	3	16	6.90	4.01
Associate Degree (AA, AS)	1	8	8	8	8.00	N/A
Bachelor's degree (BA, BS, AB)	13	94	4	14	7.23	2.83
Master's Degree (MA, MS, MEd, MBA, MAcc, MSLS	8	52	2	12	6.50	3.25
Professional Degree (MD, DO, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)	4	23	3	8	5.75	2.22

Table 12

Comparison of Means for Number of Learning Projects Undertaken by Elected Officials in Cities with or without City Managers

City Managers	Participants	Projects	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Have Managers	20	130	2	16	6.50	3.09
Do Not Have Managers	21	144	3	14	6.86	2.89

Table 13

Comparison of Means for Number of Learning Projects Undertaken by Elected Officials in Different-Sized Cities

Grouped Population	Participants	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Large	7	5	14	8.86	3.19
Medium	6	3	7	5.50	1.52
Small	7	4	11	6.71	2.63
Very Small	21	2	16	6.29	3.09

In small cities, the elected municipal officials completed a mean of 6.71 learning projects (*SD* = 2.63). Municipal elected officials from very small cities completed a mean of 6.29 learning projects (*SD* = 3.09). A one-way ANOVA revealed that the size of the city in which the participants lived had no significant effect on the number of learning projects they conducted at the $p < .05$ level [$F(3, 37) = 1.82$, $p = .161$].

Research question two: *What was the thematic content of the learning projects?*

Earlier studies of adult learning projects included personal learning projects as well as work-related ones. In this study, only those projects that were related to the governmental role of the elected municipal official were considered. Respondents first generated a list of their own projects and were then shown a list of potential learning projects to prompt their memories (Appendix A, Participant Sheet 1b). Learning about the city's budget was the most frequently undertaken learning project. More than two-thirds (*N* = 29, 70.7%) of the participants emphasized how important learning about the budget was to them; budget-related learning activities accounted for 10.6% of all the learning projects. Almost half (*N* = 20, 48.8%) of the elected officials agreed that economic development created important learning opportunities for them. Learning activities centered on economic development accounted for 7.3% of their learning efforts. Learning about topics centered on parks and recreation was reported by 41.5% (*N* = 17) of mayors, vice-mayors, and board members and comprised 6.2% of their total learning projects. More than a third of the participants described projects in planning and zoning (*N* = 15, 36.6%) and water and wastewater (*N* = 14, 34.1%). Planning and zoning learning activities accounted for 5.5% and water and wastewater issues comprised 5.1% of the subjects of the 274 learning projects. Table 14 includes the frequencies of subject matter that participants described in their learning projects.

Table 14
Frequencies of Subject Matter of the Learning Projects

Subject of Learning Projects	Frequency	Percent of Persons Who Learned about This Topic	Percent of Total Projects
Budget	29	70.7	10.6
Economic development	20	48.8	7.3
Parks & recreation	17	41.5	6.2
Planning & zoning	15	36.6	5.5
Water & wastewater	14	34.1	5.1
Citizen participation	10	24.4	3.6
Community vision/mission	10	24.4	3.6
Financial analysis	10	24.4	3.6
Capital improvement planning	9	22.0	3.3
Charters & codes	9	22.0	3.3
Ethics	8	19.5	2.9
Legislative issues	8	19.5	2.9
Police	8	19.5	2.9
Elections	7	17.1	2.6
Public works	7	17.1	2.6
Human resources	6	14.7	2.2
Purchasing	6	14.7	2.2
Open meetings	5	12.2	1.8
Parliamentary procedure	5	12.2	1.8
Public-private partnerships	5	12.2	1.8
Strategic planning	5	12.2	1.8
Coping with difficult people	4	9.8	1.5
Decision making	4	9.8	1.5
Fire	4	9.8	1.5
Internal control & auditing	4	9.8	1.5
Conflict management	3	7.3	1.1
Facilitating council effectiveness	3	7.3	1.1
Festivals	3	7.3	1.1
Foundations of municipal government	3	7.3	1.1
Media relations	3	7.3	1.1
Public safety	3	7.3	1.1
Building trust	2	4.9	.7
Cell tower construction	2	4.9	.7
Creativity & innovation	2	4.9	.7
Interpersonal communication skills	2	4.9	.7
Open records law	2	4.9	.7
Politics	2	4.9	.7

Table 14 (continued)

Subject of Learning Projects	Frequency	Percent of Persons Who Learned about This Topic	Percent of Total Projects
Volunteers	2	4.9	.7
Zip code changes	2	4.9	.7
Animal control	1	2.4	.4
Animal shelter	1	2.4	.4
Delegation skills	1	2.4	.4
Diversity	1	2.4	.4
Erosion	1	2.4	.4
Food trucks	1	2.4	.4
Homelessness	1	2.4	.4
Neighborhood meetings	1	2.4	.4
Risk management	1	2.4	.4
Streaming council meetings on city website	1	2.4	.4
Transportation	1	2.4	.4
Total	274	100.0	100.0

Elected municipal officials reported that 86.9% of their learning projects are very important to them. Of the projects described, most (96.7%) were described as being "very active" with elected officials currently participating in the project. In the majority of instances (56.2%), participants stated that they "learned a lot" during their learning projects. Participants expressed a high degree of enthusiasm (69%) for the new skill, knowledge, or behavioral change gained as a result of their learning projects. In 84.3% of the learning projects, participants reported that they believed the project benefited others, such as the citizens of their municipalities, to a large extent. Only 2.9% of the learning projects were taken for credit. Table 15 presents additional information on the learning projects in these response categories.

Table 15
Additional Data for Learning Projects

Survey Item	Level	Frequency	Percent
Importance of Learning Project	Unimportant	1	.4
	Not very important	9	3.3
	Somewhat important	26	9.5
	Very Important	238	86.9
Current Effort	Not very active	9	3.3
	Definitely active	265	96.7
How Much Learned	Learned nothing	17	6.2
	Learned a little	40	14.6
	Learned a moderate amount	63	23.0
	Learned a lot	154	56.2
Enthusiasm Level	Not enthusiastic	5	1.8
	A little enthusiastic	23	8.4
	Somewhat enthusiastic	57	20.8
	Very enthusiastic	189	69.0
Benefit of Learning Project to Others	Not at all	1	0.4
	To a small extent	8	2.9
	To a moderate extent	29	10.6
	To a large extent	231	84.3
	Don't know/Not Sure	5	1.8
Taken for Credit	No	266	97.1
	Yes	8	2.9

Research question three: *How much time was spent on learning projects?*

As in most of the earlier learning project studies, a minimum of seven hours had to be devoted to the learning project to be included in this study. Recalling the exact number of hours spent per project was difficult for the participants. Many, therefore, estimated the number of hours per month that they devoted to a learning project and then multiplied that number by 12. Table 16 includes information on the time the participants reported that they spent on their 274 learning projects. The participants spent 40 or more hours on the majority (52.6%) of their learning projects. They spent between 20 and 39 hours on an additional 23.7% of their learning efforts and the remaining 23.7% required between seven and 18 hours.

The results of analysis on the time male and female elected municipal officials spent on their learning projects during a one-year period is displayed in Table 17. The men reported that they devoted fewer hours (M = 75.26, SD = 124.75) to each of their learning projects than did the women (M = 81.03, SD = 85.18). The median number of hours spent in learning projects was 40.00 for men and 60.00 for women. An independent samples t-test revealed that the difference in the mean number of hours that the male and female participants spent on their learning projects was not statistically significant, $t(272) = 0.365$, $p = .716$.

Table 18 illustrates the time spent on learning projects by the participants' age range and indicates that those age fifty and older spent more hours on individual learning projects than their younger colleagues did. Within age ranges, those participants who were ages 60-69 spent the most hours (M = 102.66; SD = 128.39) per project, and the time they devoted to all their learning projects accounting for 46.3% of the total hours. A one-way ANOVA revealed that the age ranges of the participants had no significant effect on the mean number of hours they spent on individual learning projects at the $p < .05$ level [$F(5, 268) = 2.05$, $p = .071$].

Table 16
Hours Dedicated to Individual Learning Projects Conducted during a 12-month Period

	Total Hours	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
Project Hours	21,043	7	1,000	76.80	40.00	20	115.42

Table 17
Comparison of Means for Hours Dedicated to Individual Learning Projects by Participants' Gender

Gender	Total Hours	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
Male	15,128	7	1,000	75.26	40.00	20	124.75
Female	5,915	8	480	81.03	60.00	60	85.18

Table 18
Comparison of Means for Hours Dedicated to Individual Learning Projects by Participants' Age Range

Age Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percent of Total Sum
29 and younger	13	200	40.75	45.29	3.1%
30-39	12	150	60.18	41.26	6.3%
40-49	9	25	13.63	6.00	0.5%
50-59	8	500	63.08	98.88	18.3%
60-69	8	700	102.66	128.39	46.3%
70 and above	7	1,000	76.80	135.30	25.5%

The analysis of hours spent in learning projects by participants who hold different elected offices is illustrated in Table 19. Mayors reported spending the most hours per learning activity (M = 119.74, SD = 152.89), while Vice-Mayors and Mayors Pro Tem reported spending the fewest (M = 36.77, SD = 43.57). Councilmembers, aldermen, alderwomen, and commissioners attributed a mean of 76.59 hours (SD = 113.21) to each learning project. The percentage of hours spent by councilmembers, aldermen, alderwomen, and commissioners is slightly more than half (51.1%) of the total hours. The percentage of hours reported by mayors is 23.7%, with vice mayors and mayors pro tem accounting for 25.2% of the total hours devoted to learning projects.

A one-way ANOVA showed that the effect of elected office on the mean number of hours spent conducting each learning project was significant at the $p < .05$ level for the three conditions, [$F(2, 271) = 9.17$, $p < 0.001$]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated three significant pairwise comparisons. First, mayors devoted significantly ($p < .001$) more hours (M = 119.74, SD = 152.89) per learning project than did vice-mayors (M = 36.77, SD = 43.57), 95% CI [37.30, 128.64]. Mayors also spent significantly ($p = .029$) more hours (M = 119.74, SD = 152.89) per learning project than did councilmembers (M = 76.59, SD = 113.21), 95% CI [3.49. 82.80]. Finally, councilmembers spent significantly ($p = .043$) more hours (M = 76.59, SD = 113.21) per learning project than did vice-mayors (M = 36.77, SD = 43.57), 95% CI [0.96, 78.69].

Table 19
Comparison of Means for Hours Dedicated on Individual Learning Projects by Participants' Elected Office

Elected Office	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percent of Total Sum
Mayor	8	1,000	119.74	152.89	23.7%
Vice Mayor	8	300	36.77	43.57	25.2%
Councilmember	7	700	76.80	113.21	51.1%

When considering the number of terms of office that participants have held, those in their first term of office accounted for more than one third (36.3%) of the hours that all participants devoted to their learning projects as seen in Table 20. Those in their second term accounted for another 27.5% of the total time. Participants in their third term comprised 17.3% and those in their fourth or more terms of office accounted for 18.9% of the total number of hours devoted to learning projects.

First term elected officials spent an average of 84.94 hours (*SD* = 144.82) on each learning project, as illustrated in Table 20. Those in their second term spent the fewest hours per learning project (*M* = 60.18, *SD* = 60.70), while participants in their third term devoted the most hours to each learning project (*M* = 88.95, *SD* = 121.53). Elected city officials in their fourth or more term of office spent a mean of 84.55 hours (*SD* = 130.90) on each of their learning projects. A one-way ANOVA revealed that the participants' term of office had no significant effect on the number of hours spent per learning project at the $p < .05$ level [$F(3, 270) = 1.04$, $p = .377$].

Table 21 displays the number of hours dedicated to learning projects by participants according to the number of years they have held office. Newly-elected officials in their first or second year of office reported a mean of 79.88 hours (*SD* = 153.26) per learning project. Those in their third or fourth years of office reported a mean of 71.19 hours (*SD* = 105.68). Elected officials in their fifth or sixth year of office conducted a mean of 78.58 hours (*SD* = 67.04). Those in their seventh or eighth year of office reported a mean of 69.63 hours (*SD* = 51.63). Participants in their ninth or tenth year of office reported the fewest hours (*M* = 29.73, *SD* = 16.61) for each of their learning projects. The most experienced elected officials in their eleventh or greater year of service reported the most hours (*M* = 121.83, *SD* = 164.49) dedicated to each of their learning projects.

Table 20

Comparison of Means for Hours Dedicated to Individual Learning Projects by Participants' Term of Office

Term of Office	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percent of Total Sum
1	7	1,000	84.94	144.82	36.3%
2	8	300	60.18	60.70	27.5%
3	8	600	88.95	121.53	17.3%
4 or more	9	700	84.55	130.90	18.9%

Table 21

Comparison of Means for Hours Dedicated to Individual Learning Projects by Participants' Years in Office

Years of Office	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percent of Total Sum
1-2	7	1,000	79.87	153.26	27.3%
3-4	9	600	71.19	105.68	23.7%
5-6	10	300	78.58	67.04	17.9%
7-8	8	200	69.63	51.63	10.6%
9-10	12	80	29.73	16.61	3.1%
11 or more	10	700	121.83	164.49	17.4%

Participants in their first or second year of office were responsible for the highest percentage of hours (27.3%) devoted to learning projects, as illustrated in Table 21. Those in their third or fourth year accounted for 23.7% of the total number of hours. Participants in their fifth or sixth year reported 17.9%, while those in their seventh or eighth year reported 10.6% of the total hours. Those in their ninth or tenth years reported the lowest percentage with 3.1%. Those with the most years of experience in their eleventh or greater years in office accounted for 17.4% of the hours that elected municipal officials devoted to learning projects during a 12-month period. A one-way ANOVA revealed that the number of years in office had no significant effect on the number of hours spent per learning project at the $p < .05$ level [F (5, 268) = 1.74, p = .126).

The number of hours spent on individual learning projects for participants in their first two years of office was then compared to those of their more experienced colleagues. The newly elected officials spent more hours (M = 79.87, SD = 153.26) per learning project than their more experienced colleagues (M = 75.70, SD = 98.96), as seen in Table 22. An independent samples t-test revealed that the difference in the mean number of hours that the newly elected officials and their more experience peers spent on individual learning projects was not statistically significant, $t(272) = 0.263$, $p = .793$.

Table 22
Comparison of Means for Hours Dedicated to Individual Learning Projects of Newly-Elected Participants with More Experienced Participants

Years of Office	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percent of Total Sum
1-2	7	1,000	79.87	153.26	27.3%
3+	8	700	75.70	98.96	72.7%

The educational attainment of the elected officials was analyzed according to the number of hours they reported spending on their learning projects. Table 23 displays the number of hours dedicated to learning projects by participants according to their level of education. Participants who completed some high school reported a mean of 32.60 hours (*SD* = 24.82) conducting each of their learning projects. Those completing high school or acquiring a GED reported a mean of 41.85 hours (*SD* = 54.82) per learning project. Elected officials with some college devoted a mean of 74.77 hours (*SD* = 92.22) to each project. Participants with an associate's degree spent the fewest number of hours (*M* = 25.00, *SD* = 21.37) on each learning activity. College graduates spent the most hours (*M* = 97.76, *SD* = 167.88) during each of their learning projects. Elected officials with a master's degree reported a mean of 90.06 hours (*SD* = 73.38) per learning activity. Participants with a professional degree expended a mean of 50.65 hours (*SD* = 33.18) in each of their learning projects.

Participants with a bachelor's degree accounted for 43.7% of all the hours spent pursuing learning projects. Those with a master's degree comprised another 22.3% of the hours. Officials with some college made up 19.9% of the total hours. Participants with some high school, those who completed high school, plus those who held an associate's degree or a professional degree accounted for the remaining 14.1% of hours spent conducting learning projects, as seen in Table 23. A one-way ANOVA revealed that the level of education had no significant effect on the number of hours spent per learning project at the $p < .05$ level [F (6, 267) = 1.86, p = .088].

The number of hours that elected municipal officials devoted to their learning projects was analyzed based on whether or not their city employed a chief administrative officer (CAO), such as a city manager, town manager, city administrator, or town administrator. Table 24 illustrates the difference between the means of those two groups. In cities without city managers,

Table 23

Comparison of Means for Hours Dedicated to Individual Learning Projects by Participants' Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percent of Total Sum
Some High School	8	68	32.60	24.82	0.8%
High school graduate/GED	7	300	41.85	54.82	6.6%
Some college	8	480	74.77	92.22	19.9%
Associate Degree (AA, AS)	8	80	25.00	21.37	1.3%
Bachelor's degree (BA, BS, AB)	8	1,000	97.76	167.88	43.7%
Master's Degree (MA, MS, MEd, MBA, MAcc, MSLS	8	300	90.06	73.38	22.3%
Professional Degree (MD, DO, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)	12	150	50.65	33.18	2.3%

Table 24

Comparison of Means for Hours Dedicated to Individual Learning Projects Undertaken by Elected Officials in Cities with or without City Managers

City Managers	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percent of Total Sum
Have Managers	8	600	62.18	87.03	38.4%
Do Not Have Managers	7	1,000	90.00	135.02	61.6%

the elected municipal officials expended a mean of 90.00 hours (*SD* = 135.02), nearly 28 hours more than their peers in city manager cities (*M* = 62.18, *SD* = 87.03), in each of their learning projects. The majority of hours (61.6%) dedicated to learning projects were conducted by participants in cities without a city manager. Participants in cities with a city manager accounted for 38.4% of the total hours dedicated to learning projects. An independent samples *t*-test revealed that the difference in the mean number of hours that participants in city manager cities and participants in cities without a CAO spent on individual learning projects was statistically significant, $t(246.93) = 2.05$, $p = .042$, $d = .25$, 95% CI [1.04, 54.60], with participants in city manager cities spending fewer hours on individual learning projects than participants in cities without a city manager. Levene's test indicated unequal variances ($F = 5.11$, $p = .025$); therefore, degrees of freedom were adjusted from 272 to 246.93.

The number of hours municipal elected officials from different population groups spent on their learning projects was analyzed based on whether the elected officials governed in a large, medium, small, or very small city. Table 25 illustrates the differences among the four population groups with respect to the mean number of hours the participants devoted to each learning project. Participants in large cities reported spending the most time per project (*M* = 99.40, *SD* = 117.57). Those in medium-sized cities reported a devoting a mean of 67.33 hours (*SD* = 59.84) to each learning project. In small cities, the elected municipal officials expended a mean of 84.17 hours (*SD* = 127.39) during each learning project. Municipal elected officials from very small cities dedicated the fewest number of hours (*M* = 65.92, *SD* = 119.79) to each of their learning projects. A one-way ANOVA revealed that city size had no significant effect on the number of hours spent per learning project at the $p < .05$ level [$F(3, 270) = 1.33$, $p = .266$].

Table 25
Comparison of Means for Hours Dedicated to Individual Learning Projects Undertaken by Elected Officials in Different-Sized Cities

Number of Hours	Number of Projects	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percent of Total Sum
Large	62	8	700	99.40	117.57	29.3%
Medium	33	15	250	67.33	59.84	10.6%
Small	47	8	600	84.17	127.39	18.8%
Very Small	132	7	1,000	65.92	119.79	41.4%

Research question four: *Who was the primary planner of the participants learning projects?*

The primary planner of almost a third of the learning projects in this study was the learner at 32.1%, as seen in Table 26. Peer groups, often the council, board, or commission were the primary planners in 20.1% of the learning projects. A group with a professional was the primary planner in 19.3% of the learning projects. A mix of planners had the primary planning responsibility in 13.9% of the projects. The primary planner was one-to-one with a professional in 12.0% of the learning projects. Less frequently used primary planners were an object or non-human resource as planner (1.5%) and one-to-one planning with a friend or relative (1.1%).

There were some gender differences in the use of primary planners for the learning projects as illustrated in Table 27. The learner was the primary planner in 33.8% of learning projects conducted by men and in 27.4% of learning projects conducted by women. Women were twice more likely (20.5%) to use a professional planner than men (9.0%) in a one-to-one relationship with a professional, but not in a group relationship with a professional at 17.8% for women and 19.9% for men. Men were more likely than women to make use of a mixture of primary planners with 14.9% for men compared to 11.0% for women. Both genders used peer groups as planners with 19.4% of men and 21.9% of women. Neither men nor women made much use of planning by a one-to-one friend or relative or an object or non-human resource.

Table 26

Primary Planner of Individual Learning Projects Conducted during a 12-month Period

Primary Planner of Learning Projects	Frequency	Percent
Learner (self-planned)	88	32.1%
Peer group	55	20.1%
Group with professional	53	19.3%
Mixed	38	13.9%
One-to-one professional	33	12.0%
Object (non-human resource)	4	1.5%
One-to-one friend or relative	3	1.1%

Table 27

Cross-Tabulation: Primary Planner of Individual Learning Projects by Participants' Gender

Gender		Primary Planner of Learning Projects							Total
		Group w/prof	Peer group	1-to-1 prof.	1-to-1 Friend/Rel.	Object	Learner	Mixed	
Male	Freq.	40	39	18	2	4	68	30	201
	%	19.9%	19.4%	9.0%	1.0%	2.0%	33.8%	14.9%	100%
Female	Freq.	13	16	15	1	0	20	8	73
	%	17.8%	21.9%	20.5%	1.4%	0.0%	27.4%	11.0%	100%

Analyzing the primary planner by the age range of the participants indicated that for most age ranges, the learner was primary planner of the learning projects, as seen in Table 28. The learner was the primary planner more than 40% of the time in the 29 and under (43.8%) and the 30-39 (40.9%) age range. The 60-69 age range reported the learner as primary planner in 34.7% of their learning projects, while the 50-59 age range indicated the learner was primary planner in 31.1% of their learning efforts. The 70+ age range reported a lower instance of the learner as primary planner at 27.8% and the highest percentage of a group with a professional (33.3%) as the primary planner of their projects. The highest percentage of a one-to-one with a professional (50.0%) as the primary planner occurred in the 40-49 age range, a group that reported no occurrences of the learner as primary planner. The 29 and under age range reported the highest percentage of object or non-human resource (18.8%) as the primary planner for their learning projects. Participants in the 30-39 age range made the most use of mixed planners (31.8%) when conducting their learning projects. Additional data on the primary planners of learning projects by age range may be found in Table 28.

Analyzing the primary planner by the elected office the learners held indicated that mayors reported the largest percentage (30.8%) of their learning projects were conducted in a setting where the group with a professional was the primary planner as seen in Table 29. The learner was the primary planner for 29.2% of the mayors, for 27.5% of vice-mayors and mayors pro tem, as well as for 32.1% of councilmembers, aldermen/alderwomen, and commissioners. Vice-mayors also reported a high percentage (29.0%) of their learning took place when a peer group was the primary planner, as did the councilmembers (20.1%). Table 29 contains additional data on the primary planner of learning projects cross-tabulated with the elected office of the participants.

Table 28

Cross-Tabulation: Primary Planner of Individual Learning Projects by Participants' Age Range

Age Range		Primary Planner of Learning Projects							Total
		Group w/prof	Peer group	1-to-1 prof.	1-to-1 Friend/Rel.	Object	Learner	Mixed	
≤29	Freq.	0	0	5	0	3	7	1	16
	%	0.0%	0.0%	31.3%	0.0%	18.8%	43.8%	6.3%	100%
30-39	Freq.	3	3	0	0	0	9	7	14
	%	13.6%	21.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.9%	31.8%	100%
40-49	Freq.	1	3	4	0	0	0	0	8
	%	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
50-50	Freq.	17	13	5	1	0	19	6	61
	%	27.9%	21.3%	8.2%	1.6%	0.0%	31.1%	9.8%	100%
60-69	Freq.	8	16	16	1	1	33	20	95
	%	8.4%	16.8%	16.8%	1.1%	1.1%	34.7%	21.1%	100%
70+	Freq.	24	20	3	1	0	20	4	72
	%	33.3%	27.8%	4.2%	1.4%	0.0%	27.8%	5.6%	100%

Table 29

Cross-Tabulation: Primary Planner of Individual Learning Projects by Participants' Elected Office

Elected Office		Primary Planner of Learning Projects							Total
		Group w/prof	Peer group	1-to-1 prof.	1-to-1 Friend/Rel.	Object	Learner	Mixed	
Mayor	Freq.	20	9	6	0	0	19	11	65
	%	30.8%	13.8%	9.2%	0.0%	0.0%	29.2%	16.9	100%
Vice-Mayor	Freq.	11	20	8	0	3	19	8	69
	%	15.9%	29.0%	11.6%	0.0%	4.3%	27.5%	11.6%	100%
Council-member	Freq.	53	557	33	3	4	88	38	140
	%	19.3%	20.1%	12.0%	1.1%	1.5%	32.1%	13.9%	100%

Analysis by cross-tabulation of the primary planner of the learning projects and the term of office of the participants yielded a few differences as seen in Table 30. The learner as the primary planner was indicated in 32.2% of the learning projects conducted by elected officials in their first term of office, as well as in 39.6% of the learning projects of those in their second term, and in 34.1% of those in their third term. For officials in their fourth or more term of office, the learner was the primary planner in only 14.9% of their learning projects. Officials in their fourth or more term of office made the greatest use of group with professionals and peer groups as the primary planners, reporting each of these two primary planners to be responsible for 36.2% of their learning activities. Groups with a professional planned 39% of the learning projects of those in their third term of office. Table 30 provides a cross-tabulation of all primary planner data collected within terms of office.

Examining the primary planner of learning projects by years in office indicated that elected municipal officials with five to six years in office reported that the learner was the primary planner for half (50.0%) of their learning projects. As seen in Table 31, for those with 11 or more years in office, the learner was the primary planner for 36.7% of their learning projects. The learner was also the primary planner for those in their first or second year of office, planning 29.2% of their learning projects, for those in their third or fourth year of office, who planned 27.1% of their own learning projects, and for those in their seventh or eighth year, who self-planned 31.3% of their learning projects. Elected officials in their ninth or tenth year reported that 45.5% of their learning projects were planned by a group with a professional and 40.9% were planned by a peer group. A group with a professional was the primary planner for a third (33.3%) of those with 11 or more years in office. More results may be viewed in Table 31.

Table 30

Cross-Tabulation: Primary Planner of Individual Learning Projects by Participants' Term of Office

Terms of Office		Primary Planner of Learning Projects							Total
		Group w/prof	Peer group	1-to-1 prof.	1-to-1 Friend/Rel.	Object	Learner	Mixed	
1	Freq.	12	14	16	2	4	29	13	90
	%	13.3%	15.6%	17.8%	2.2%	4.4%	32.2%	14.4%	100%
2	Freq.	8	20	12	1	0	38	17	96
	%	8.3%	20.8%	12.5%	1.0%	0.0%	39.6%	17.7%	100%
3	Freq.	16	4	3	0	0	14	4	41
	%	39.0%	9.8%	7.3%	0.0%	0.0%	34.1%	9.8%	100%
4+	Freq.	17	17	2	0	0	7	4	47
	%	36.2%	36.2%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	14.9%	8.5%	100%

Table 31

Cross-Tabulation: Primary Planner of Individual Learning Projects by Participants' Years in Office

Years in Office		Primary Planner of Learning Projects							Total
		Group w/prof	Peer group	1-to-1 prof.	1-to-1 Friend/Rel.	Object	Learner	Mixed	
1-2	Freq.	10	15	11	1	1	21	13	72
	%	13.9%	20.8%	15.3%	1.4%	1.4%	29.2%	18.1%	100%
3-4	Freq.	10	18	13	1	3	19	6	70
	%	14.3%	25.7%	18.6%	1.4%	4.3%	27.1%	8.6%	100%
5-6	Freq.	8	5	1	0	0	24	10	48
	%	16.7%	10.4%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	20.8%	100%
7-8	Freq.	5	4	6	1	0	10	6	32
	%	15.6%	12.5%	18.8%	3.1%	0.0%	31.3%	18.8%	100%
9-10	Freq.	10	9	0	0	0	3	0	22
	%	45.5%	40.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	13.6%	0.0%	100%
11+	Freq.	10	4	2	0	0	11	3	30
	%	33.3%	13.3%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	36.7%	10.0%	100%

The primary planners of the learning projects for participants in their first two years of office were then compared to those of their more experienced colleagues as shown in Table 32. For both groups, the learner was most often the primary planner. Within the group of newly-elected officials, the learner was the primary planner in 29.2% of their learning projects. For the more experienced group of elected officials, the learner was the primary planner in 33.2% of their learning projects. Both groups made frequent use of their peer group for planning their learning projects, accounting for 20.8% of the newly-elected officials' learning projects and 19.8% of the projects of the more experienced participants. The learning activities of the experienced officials were more often planned by a group with a professional (21.3%) than were those of their less experienced peers (13.9%). The learning projects of the newly-elected officials were more apt to be planned one-to-one with a professional (15.3%) than were the learning activities of the group with more years of experience (10.9%). The use of mixed planners was observed more frequently in the learning projects of newly elected officials (18.1%) than in those of their experienced colleagues (12.4%). Neither group made much use of one-to-one friend or relative or objects as primary planners, as seen in Table 32.

Table 32
Cross-Tabulation: Primary Planner of Individual Learning Projects of Newly-Elected Participants with More Experienced Participants

Years in Office		Primary Planner of Learning Projects							Total
		Group w/prof	Peer group	1-to-1 prof.	1-to-1 Friend/Rel.	Object	Learner	Mixed	
1-2	Freq.	10	15	11	1	1	21	13	72
	%	13.9%	20.8%	15.3%	1.4%	1.4%	29.2%	18.1%	100%
3+	Freq.	43	40	22	2	3	67	25	202
	%	21.3%	19.8%	10.9%	1.0%	1.5%	33.2%	12.4%	100%

Examining the primary planner of the learning projects of elected officials by their educational attainment revealed that learners from several educational levels self-planned their learning projects as seen in Table 33. Those with a Master's Degree reported being the primary planner in half (50.0%) of their learning activities. Those with some high school were the primary planner in 40% of their learning projects. College graduates were the primary planner in 35.1% of their learning projects. Elected officials with some college as well as those with a professional degree were the primary planner in 30.4% of their learning efforts.

Peer groups as planners accounted for 40% of the learning projects of participants with some high school. For high school graduates, their peer groups were the primary planner for 51.5% of their learning projects. Peer groups were also important to those with an associate's degree, accounting for 54.5% of the planning of their projects. Those with an associate's degree also relied heavily on planning by groups with a professional (45.5%), while elected officials with a professional degree used a mix of planners in 43.5% of their learning projects. Additional data is cross-tabulated by educational attainment in Table 33.

Table 34 illustrates the impact of whether or not the participants served in cities with a city manager on the primary planner of the participants' learning projects. In both cases, the learner was the primary planner, with 32.6% of learner-planned projects in cities without a manager and 31.5% of learner-planned projects in cities with a city manager. Participants were more likely to use a peer group as primary planner (24.6% of their projects) in cities with a manager than in cities without a manager (16.0% of their projects). Additional data on the primary planner is cross-tabulated by city manager in Table 34.

Table 33
Cross-Tabulation: Primary Planner of Individual Learning Projects by Participants' Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment		Primary Planner of Learning Projects							Total
		Group w/prof	Peer group	1-to-1 prof.	1-to-1 Friend/Rel.	Object	Learner	Mixed	
Some High School	Freq.	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	5
	%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	100%
High School GED	Freq.	9	17	3	0	0	3	1	23
	%	27.3%	51.5%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	3.0%	100%
Some College	Freq.	11	0	14	0	4	17	10	56
	%	19.6%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	7.1%	30.4%	17.9%	100%
Assoc. Degree (AA, AS)	Freq.	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	11
	%	45.5%	54.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Bach. Degree (BA, BS, AB)	Freq.	17	20	10	2	0	33	12	94
	%	18.1%	21.3%	10.6%	2.1%	0.0%	35.1%	12.8%	0.0%
Master's Degree (MA, MS, MEd, MBA, MAcc, MSLS)	Freq.	5	9	6	1	0	26	5	52
	%	9.6%	17.3%	11.5%	1.9%	0.0%	50.0%	9.6%	100%
Prof. Degree (MD, DO, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)	Freq.	5	1	0	0	0	7	10	23
	%	21.7%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	30.4%	43.5%	100%

Table 34
Cross-Tabulation: Primary Planner of Individual Learning Projects Undertaken by Elected Officials in Cities with or without City Managers

City Manager		Primary Planner of Learning Projects							Total
		Group w/prof	Peer group	1-to-1 prof.	1-to-1 Friend/Rel.	Object	Learner	Mixed	
No	Freq.	25	23	18	3	1	47	27	144
	%	17.4%	16.0%	12.5%	2.1%	0.7%	32.6%	18.8	100%
Yes	Freq.	28	32	15	0	3	41	11	130
	%	21.5%	24.6%	11.5%	0.0%	2.3%	31.5%	8.5%	100%

Table 35 illustrates the effect of city size on the primary planner of the participants' learning projects. In large cities, the learner was the primary planner in half of the elected officials' learning projects. In small cities, the learner was the planner in about a third (34%) of the learning projects. In medium-sized cities, a group with a professional accounted for 36.4% of the learning projects of mayors and board members, while the learner was the primary planner in a third of the learning projects. In very small cities, the peer group was the primary planner in 24.2% of the learning projects and the learner was the primary planner in 22.7% of the municipal officials' learning activities. Additional data may be found in Table 35.

Table 35
Cross-Tabulation: Primary Planner of Individual Learning Projects Undertaken by Elected Officials in Different-Sized Cities

Size of City		Primary Planner of Learning Projects							Total
		Group w/prof	Peer group	1-to-1 prof.	1-to-1 Friend/Rel.	Object	Learner	Mixed	
Large	Freq.	9	4	7	1	0	31	10	62
	%	14.5%	6.5%	11.3%	1.6%	0.0%	50.0%	16.1%	100%
Medium	Freq.	12	5	0	0	0	11	5	33
	%	36.4%	15.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	15.2%	100%
Small	Freq.	8	14	8	0	0	16	1	47
	%	17.0%	29.8%	17.0%	0.0%	0.0%	34.0%	2.1%	100%
Very Small	Freq.	24	32	18	2	4	30	22	132
	%	18.2%	24.2%	13.6%	1.5%	3.0%	22.7%	16.7%	100%

Research question five: *What resources were used during the learning projects?*

The participants first generated a list resources on their own during the interview. When they could no longer think of new resources, they were shown Participant Sheet 5. After viewing the list of potential resources, only a few participants added items from the list to the resources they had already itemized on their own. Each participant listed several resources for most individual learning projects. Resources were a mix of people, organizations, and objects. Participants identified 190 different resources that they consulted or used during their learning projects. A frequency count was used to determine the most often used resources, as identified by the participants in describing their learning projects for the past 12 months. Table 36 demonstrates the resources that were most often acknowledged. Conversation was the most frequently reported resource and was identified by participants in 47 of the 274 learning projects (17.2%). The second most used resource was the board or council of the city with 34 occurrences (12.4%). City managers and other chief administrative officers garnered third place, being consulted in 29 learning projects (10.6%). Department heads and the state governmental consulting agency tied for fourth place with each being identified as a resource for 27 of the 274 (9.9%) learning projects. Slightly over half (*N*= 98, 51.6%) of the 190 resources were unique to one particular learning project. Additional data may be seen in Table 36.

Table 36
Resources Used in Individual Learning Projects

Resource	Frequency of Occurrences
Conversation	47
Board/Council	34
City manager or chief administrative officer	29
Department head	27
State governmental consulting agency	27
Internet/Websites	17
Management consultant	16
Citizens/citizen concepts/constituents	15
City attorney/law department	15
Other cities	14
Mayor	13
Professional staff	13
Thinking	13
Chamber of Commerce	12
Police chief	12
Budget workshop	10
Charter & codes	10
Planning commission	10
Finance consultant	9
Non-profits	9
Engineering department/Professional engineer	8
Reading material/targeted resources	8
Board or council meeting	7
Elected officials academy	7
Budget, previous	6
City recorder	6
City staff	6
Commissions	6
Finance director	6
Fire chief	6
Lawyer	6
Parks & recreation director	6
Personal history/business background	6
State annotated code	6
Animal control board	5
Councilmember/alderman/commissioner	5
Election commission	5
Lobbyist	5
Roberts Rules of Order	5
Auditors	4

Table 36 (continued)

Resource	Frequency of Occurrences
Bookkeeper	4
Committee meeting	4
Council retreat	4
Media/press, national	4
Parliamentary procedure class	4
Police officers	4
Subject expert	4
U. S. Representative	4
Budget director	3
Building inspectors	3
Businesses	3
Chief policy officer	3
County sheriff	3
CPA	3
Development district	3
Fire department staff	3
Forums with citizens	3
Governing magazine	3
Mayors in other cities	3
Media/press, local	3
Neighborhood meeting/community meeting	3
Postmaster	3
Public meetings	3
Public services director	3
State environmental conservation department	3
Blue Book	2
Chief financial officer	2
City audit personnel	2
Civic club	2
Class	2
Councilmember/alderman/commissioner, Former	2
County official	2
Developers	2
Economic development director	2
Federal departments	2
Government documents	2
Insurance companies	2
Learn by experience	2
National League of Cities Congress of Cities	2
Parks & recreation board	2
Parks & recreation commissioner	2

Table 36 (continued)

Resource	Frequency of Occurrences
Planning and zoning board	2
Project facilitator/project manager	2
Public works director	2
Purchasing department	2
Regional planning commission	2
Regional real estate magazine	2
Reports and studies	2
School officials	2
Soil conservation board	2
State legislators/representatives	2
Survey via emails, telephone calls	2
Tennessee Valley Authority	2
Transit authority	2
Transportation planning organization	2
U. S. Department of Agriculture	2
Volunteer fire department	2
Work session	2
Appraisers	1
The Atlantic online journal	1
Banks	1
Better cities & towns	1
Big businesses	1
Bike club	1
Board of zoning appeals	1
Business acquaintances	1
Business alliance	1
Business solutions online	1
Certified finance officers	1
Citizen advisory board	1
Citizens with technical knowledge	1
City business liaison	1
Communication staff	1
Community action committee	1
Community college	1
Community design non-profit	1
Community development director	1
Comptroller	1
Conference	1
Construction company	1
Construction journals	1
Contractors	1
Contracts	1

Table 36 (continued)

Resource	Frequency of Occurrences
Convention center staff	1
Council lawyer	1
County economic development council	1
County extension	1
County mayor	1
Creative individuals	1
District attorney	1
District human resource board	1
Elected officials from other cities	1
Employee handbooks	1
Engineering firms	1
Environmental grants	1
Environmental groups	1
Facilities planning consultant	1
Family member	1
Federal Aviation Administration documents	1
Firefighters, volunteers	1
Flyers	1
Focus groups	1
Governor	1
Hazmat printed information	1
History committee	1
Homeless evaluation/report	1
Housing authority/Community development corporation	1
Industrial board	1
Job fair for city services	1
Kitchen board	1
League of Women Voters	1
Learn from others' mistakes	1
Local village plan	1
Mayor, Former	1
Mayor's budget hearing	1
Mayors Conference on Entrepreneurship	1
Media, news	1
Meetings with potential businesses	1
Mentor	1
Nature center board	1
NBC-LEO Conference	1
Neighborhood coordinator	1
Neighbors	1
Newspaper	1

Table 36 (continued)

Resource	Frequency of Occurrences
Permitting office	1
Planning director	1
Police advisory review committee	1
Police chief ride-along	1
Police chief, former/retired	1
Police consultant	1
Police internal affairs	1
Policies	1
Professional consultants	1
Public defender's office	1
Public works staff	1
Purchasing cooperatives with other cities	1
Realtors, Association/Board of	1
Regional economic development partnership	1
Regional experts	1
Regional librarian	1
Regional quality growth director	1
Regional utilities	1
Salary review	1
Salary scales	1
School board	1
Sewer engineer	1
Sewer line analysis/report	1
Smart cities council	1
Social media	1
Speeches/orations	1
State Bureau of Investigation	1
State department of transportation	1
State economic development staff	1
State governmental consulting agency attorney	1
State librarian	1
State municipal league	1
State municipal league conference	1
State open records counsel	1
State university	1
Strategic solutions facilitator	1
Surveyors	1
Sustainability director	1
Tax professional	1
Technical staff	1

Table 36 (continued)

Resource	Frequency of Occurrences
Tourism board	1
Traffic engineer	1
Travel experience in foreign cities	1
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers	1
Utilities	1
Utility district	1
Vendors	1
Water board	1
Water commission	1
Water department staff	1
Water providers, other	1
White House	1
Workshop on how to read the budget	1
Young families	1
Zoo board	1

Research question six: *What barriers or obstacles were encountered while engaged in learning projects?*

The participants first compiled a list barriers or obstacles to learning on their own during the interview. The participants itemized several barriers or obstacles for most individual learning projects. Barriers and obstacles to learning were a mix of people, organizations, and objects. When the interviewees could no longer think of new barriers or obstacles, they were shown Participant Sheet 6. A few participants added items from the list of potential obstacles or problems to the barriers or obstacles they previously itemized on their own. Participants identified 100 different obstacles or barriers to learning that they encountered during their learning projects. A frequency count was used to determine the barriers or obstacles to learning that they faced most often, as identified by the participants in describing their learning projects for the past twelve months. Table 37 shows the most commonly encountered obstacles or barriers to learning.

Participants identified lack of time as the most frequently encountered obstacle or barrier (75 occurrences) when they were engaged in the learning process during their 274 learning projects. Family obligations and work obligations tied for second place with 65 occurrences each. For 59 learning projects, participants indicated that they did not encounter any barriers during their learning activities. Several participants stated that it was up to them to solve any barriers or obstacles that they might otherwise encounter. Almost two-thirds (N = 65, 65%) of the 100 barriers or obstacles identified by individuals were unique to one learning project and appeared only once in the frequency table.

Table 37
Barriers or Obstacles Encountered while Engaged in Learning Projects

Barrier or Obstacles to Learning	Frequency of Occurrences
Lack of time	75
Family obligations	65
Work obligations	65
None	59
Lack of available resources	28
Cost of resources	27
Social obligations	27
Technology	25
Cost of programs	23
Financial obligations	21
Health issues	21
Inconveniently scheduled courses/programs during workweek	20
Lack of available programs	19
Location of class	15
Unable to identify learning needs/Don't know what I need to know	12
Amount of time required to complete a program	10
Politics	7
Complexity of issue/huge learning curve/lots of layers/no overlap/no standalone issues	6
Legislative issues	6
Lack of industry-specific programs or resources	5
Lack of money	5
All white male council/lack of diversity, other opinions, other perspectives	4
Terminology/technical jargon/difference between private sector and government/acronyms like TIFs and PILOTS	4
Culture and customs of geographical area/history I don't know about	3
Misinformation	3
Topics require a continual learning process for the individual learner	3
Competition with other locations/confidential recruitment	2
Government operates at a glacial pace/time it takes to complete process makes it hard to remember the original agreement	2
Lack of commitment/motivation to pursue additional learning opportunities	2
Lack of departmental performance metrics	2
Need comparable zoning codes/information	2
Need more information on bond process/need municipal bond online course	2
Public perception of local government/skepticism of public	2
Reluctance of people to change/adapt	2
Sunshine Law impact/Absence of collegial time to solve problems	2
Abuse of open records requests	1

Table 37 (continued)

Barrier or Obstacles to Learning	Frequency of Occurrences
Afraid of being embarrassed or doing something wrong and being punished for it	1
Budget cutbacks limit travel to state legislature	1
Bureaucracy	1
Caption bills	1
Citizens want things that are unrealistic or illegal	1
City has plenty of programs but no facilities.	1
Closemindedness of people	1
Code changes	1
Competing interests	1
Confidential issues	1
Conflicting messages about what people want	1
Cover-up activities	1
Expense of maintaining credentials	1
Fear of criticism in government	1
Federal & state guidelines are complex	1
Getting accurate cost estimates	1
Getting information from state and county	1
Government is too rigid	1
Government is unwilling to take risks	1
Have to fight for open government all the time	1
Hostility	1
How people think about the future	1
How to get the human touch during the election process	1
How to weigh personal opinions versus a vote representing the citizens in district	1
Ignorance of others	1
Individual neighborhoods can be silos of information	1
Lack of accessibility of some professionals	1
Lack of detail in financial reports	1
Lack of good best practices	1
Lack of information on a newly-recruited business	1
Lack of information on grant funding	1
Lack of respect from people	1
Lack of staff time	1
Lack of technical information/details	1
Lack of trust	1
Lack of vision by citizens	1
Law is vague	1
Laws seem to be in conflict	1

Table 37 (continued)

Barrier or Obstacles to Learning	Frequency of Occurrences
Lot of opportunity for abuse rather than ethical behavior	1
Member of minority party, which makes it hard to get information	1
Multiple authorities over the same entities	1
Need comparison data to other cities	1
Need philosophies of neighboring towns	1
Need practical applications	1
Need salary information from neighboring towns	1
No learning plan in place	1
Not all councilmembers were present for training	1
Not timely	1
Oddball issues	1
People don't want to be quoted	1
Personnel block information	1
Process for running for election is very different from the process of governing	1
Risk management officials	1
So much money is thrown at issues	1
Social media—how to use it	1
State and county medical directives	1
State regulatory authority rate increases	1
Struggle to see other viewpoints and opinions	1
Takes a year to learn your job—makes it hard to do strategic planning	1
Technical expertise needed	1
Tedious process to figure out what is in each account of the budget	1
Travel time	1
Trying to build consensus	1
Ulterior motives of other people	1

Chapter four presented the data collected during interviews conducted with 41 municipal elected officials. Data were categorized according to the research questions proposed for the study. Analysis of data about the participants, as well as for the participants' learning projects was reported. The following chapter will present a summary of the study and its main findings, a discussion of the results, implications from the data collected, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusions

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study of learning projects that elected municipal officials undertook to enhance their governmental role. This chapter is organized into five sections: 1) summary of the study; 2) major findings; 3) discussion of the results; 4) implications; and, 5) recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the learning projects of elected municipal officials. As part of the study, Tough's learning projects interview schedule was updated and revised to focus only on the learning projects related to the governmental role of the participants. The study contributes to both learning projects research and to an understanding of the professional development of elected municipal officials.

Understanding the learning projects undertaken by elected city officials provides insight into the value that local government officials place on the topics they choose to learn about, the planners utilized to accomplish their learning goals, the resources they tap most frequently, and the obstacles they encountered while learning. This research study provides information on a little-studied population in the field of self-directed learning.

An important part of this study was the revision and modification of Tough's interview schedule. As Coolican (1973) observed, one practical application is the potential use of Tough's interview schedule as "an effective planning tool for analyzing interests of adults. Adult educators could gain considerable insight into client interests and learning styles by interviewing representative adults of a target audience as to their learning activities during the past year" (p. 175). The intent of the revision was to provide a fresh approach to evaluating the work-related

learning projects of people who share a particular career or practice. Data limited to the governmental role of the participants were collected to assess the nature of the learning projects that elected city officials undertook with an emphasis on the subject matter of their learning projects, the resources they used, and obstacles or barriers to learning they encountered.

The researcher used stratified sampling to more accurately represent the many elected officials who serve in small and very small cities in a geographic division of a state in the southeastern United States. The executive director of the state governmental consulting agency in the state sent an introductory email to the 68 officials in the sample population. Two days later, the researcher sent a follow-up email, briefly describing the study and stating that she would telephone the mayors and councilmembers in the sample. She also sent copies of her email and the email of the executive director to the city manager or administrator for municipalities with that form of government. Several days later, the researcher attempted to reach those in the sample by telephone to answer any questions they had and to schedule a face-to-face meeting. In several municipalities, the city manager offered to assist in scheduling interviews. A total of 41 participants were interviewed in this study, with most of the interviews taking place in the participants' city halls. The time required to complete each interview ranged from 25 minutes to 165 minutes.

Data were collected around two research interests: demographic data and learning project information. Demographic data included the learner's elected role, gender, age, ethnicity, race, educational attainment, the term of office, the number of years in office, the population of the participant's city, and whether the participant's city had a city manager or chief administrative officer. Learning project information included the number of projects undertaken, time spent on each project, how important the project was to the learner, how much knowledge the learner

gained, how enthusiastic the learner was for the new knowledge, who the primary planner for the project was, whether credit was given for the learning activity, what resources the learner used, and what obstacles or barriers the learner encountered in the course of the learning project.

Data collected from city charters, population statistics, and during the face-to-face interviews were compiled into an SPSS database for analysis. SPSStext was utilized to analyze the thematic content of the learning projects, the resources the participants used, and obstacles or barriers that participants encountered. Descriptive statistics were derived from responses to questions on the interview schedule and included demographic information about the participants, as well as information about their learning projects. Frequency distributions and cross-tabulations were conducted to gain perspective on the data among several variables. One-way ANOVAs and *t*-tests were used to check for statistical significance with any differences.

Major Findings

This study produced the following findings based on the responses to demographic questions, information gathered from city charters and population statistics, and the six primary research questions:

1. Participants conducted a mean of 6.68 learning projects related to their role as an elected official with a range between 2 and 16 projects, during a 12-month time period. The 41 participants conducted a total of 274 learning projects.
2. The thematic content of the 274 learning projects included 50 distinct topics, with the most frequently identified topics being budgets, economic development, parks and recreation, planning and zoning, and water and wastewater.
3. Participants spent an average of 76.80 hours on each learning project, with a range of 7 to 1,000 hours per project. The 41 elected officials devoted a total of 21,043 hours

to their 274 learning projects, with each participant spending an average of 513.24 hours annually in learning efforts.

4. The learner was the primary planner in 32.1% of all learning projects. The peer group, in this case the city council, board, or commission, was the primary planner in 20.1% of all learning projects, followed by the group with a professional as primary planner in 19.3% of the learning projects.
5. The participants identified 190 resources that they used during their learning projects. Conversations with others was the most frequently cited resource, followed by a fellow board or council member, a city manager or other chief administrative officer, and a department head or the state governmental consulting agency.
6. The participants identified 100 obstacles or barriers to learning. The most frequently identified barriers to their learning projects were lack of time, family obligations, and work obligations. Participants reported that they encountered no obstacles or barriers to their learning in 21.5% of their learning projects.
7. Participants in cities with managers undertook slightly fewer projects and spent significantly fewer hours on their learning projects than did participants in cities without a chief administrative officer.
8. Most participants indicated that their learning projects were very important to them and were still active projects. The elected officials believed their projects benefited others to a large extent. The participants reported that they learned a lot in more than half of their learning projects and were very enthusiastic about what they learned in more than two thirds of their learning activities. Very few projects (2.9%) were taken for any kind of credit.

9. Elected officials in their first two years of office conducted fewer learning projects, but devoted more time to their individual learning efforts than did their more experienced colleagues. The learner was the primary planner in fewer of the learning projects for those in their first or second year of office than for those who had held office longer.
10. The learning project experiences of municipal elected officials differed according to their elected role of mayor, vice-mayor, or councilmember. During the previous year, vice-mayors conducted the most learning projects, but spent the least amount of time on their individual projects. Mayors conducted the fewest number of projects, but spent the greatest number of hours on them. Mayors reported that nearly a third of their learning projects were conducted in a setting where the group with a professional was the primary planner. The learner was the primary planner for almost a third of councilmembers, aldermen/alderwomen, and commissioners.
11. Elected officials in large cities reported conducting the greatest number of learning projects and spent the most time in those learning activities. The learner was the primary planner in half the learning projects of participants in large cities.
12. While male and female elected officials conducted a similar number of learning projects, female participants spent more hours in their learning projects. The learner was the primary planner in more of the learning projects conducted by men than in those conducted by women.

Discussion of the Results

Because this is an exploratory study based on a small sample, the findings are not intended to be generalizable. It is interesting, however, to compare the findings of this study with

those of earlier learning projects studies. In addition, the results may aid in postulating suggestions and ideas for future research studies with a comparable population.

The research results indicated that the municipal elected officials were extensively involved in deliberate learning efforts that contributed to their growth and development in their role as mayors, vice-mayors, and councilmembers. In the beginning of the individual interviews, the participants' responses did not initially reflect these findings. As noted in Johnson's (1973) study of adults who achieved a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate, many elected officials stated that they had learned very little during the previous year. During the early part of the interview, the researcher had to frequently direct the participants' attention to what they had learned, rather than what they had accomplished in the past twelve months. As in the research conducted by Denys (1973), respondents alluded to learning efforts that occurred several years ago and needed to be reminded of the 12-month time limit.

Nevertheless, at the end of the interview, many participants expressed their surprise and satisfaction from considering the actual extent of their learning efforts during the past year. Their positive response suggests one specific benefit of using the interview technique in this study. Tough (1971) also noted that the in-depth probing interview may have contributed to the interviewee's awareness and appreciation of the full nature and extent of their learning activities Positive responses by interview participants have been recorded in other learning projects research, as well (Kelley, 1976).

Participants conducted a mean of 6.68 learning projects related to their role as an elected official with a range between 2 and 16 projects, during a 12-month time period. The elected officials in Tough's (1971) study were involved in a mean of 6.7 learning projects with a range between 4 and 9 learning efforts. The 41 participants in the current study conducted a total of

274 learning projects. The mean number of learning projects that elected officials conducted is comparable with other learning projects participants: Coolican (1973), 5.8; Harrison (2010), 6.8; Kelley (1976), 7.9.

The thematic content of the 274 learning projects included 50 distinct topics, with the most frequently identified topics as follows: budgets (70.7% of participants, 10.6% of total projects), economic development (48.8% of participants, 7.3% of total projects), parks and recreation (41.5% of participants, 6.2% of total projects), planning and zoning (36.6% of participants, 5.5% of total projects), water and wastewater (34.1% of participants, 5.1% of total projects), as well as a wide range of additional projects that were of interest to individual participants. McCatty (1973) described similar findings, in which many learning topics were of interest to only one particular learner.

Participants spent an average of 76.80 hours on each learning project, with a range of 7 to 1,000 hours per project. The 41 elected officials devoted a total of 21,043 hours to their 274 learning projects, or an average of 513.24 hours per person annually. The median number of hours per project was 40.00, while the mode was 20 hours per project. Considering that many of the participants were also employed full-time, they devoted a sizable number of hours to learning activities that improved their governmental role. Interviewees spent the equivalent of 12.9 forty-hour work weeks annually in their learning efforts. In comparison to earlier learning project studies, however, the time elected officials spent in learning activities was about half that of participants in most previous studies. In Tough's (1971) study of the learning efforts of seven population groups, he found that the participants spent an average of 816 hours in their learning efforts; the elected municipal officials in his study, however, spent an average of 1,189 hours in their learning efforts. McCatty (1973) reported that 54 professional men spent an average of

1,240 hours per year, while the 39 pharmacists in Johns' (1973) study spent a mean of 1,046 hours per person annually. Because the study of the learning projects of elected officials focused only on those learning projects that were tied to their governmental role, it is understandable that they spent fewer hours in their targeted learning projects. Fair (1973), however, observed that the 40 teachers in his study spent 500 hours in the first 26 weeks of their careers. The 11 ministers in Allerton's study (1974) recorded a mean of 507.2 hours in a six-month timeline. It is certainly possible that the elected officials in the current study focused on describing the learning projects that were most important to them and did not attempt to identify every learning effort in which they were involved during the previous year. Advances and improvements in technology may have decreased the amount of time that learners need to spend in information gathering, as well.

The learner was the primary planner in 32.1% of all learning projects. The peer group, in this case the city council, board, or commission, was the primary planner in 20.1% of all learning projects, followed by the group with a professional as primary planner in 19.3% of the learning projects. Due to the particular group setting in which elected officials typically perform their duties, the findings of this study are different from many earlier learning projects replication studies, in which the learner was identified as primary planner in a majority of the learning projects: Hiemstra, (1975), 55%; Harrison (2010), 55.9%; Tough (1971), 68%; Peters and Gordon (1974), 76%. In Allerton's (1974) study of ministers, 28% of the learning projects were planned by a group, which included the congregation, committees, classes, family, and colleague groups. McCatty (1973) noted that a "considerable block of learning is apparently conducted in a particular kind of peer group—the committee" (p. 121). Certainly, the learning that participants in this study reported while in a peer group or a group with a professional impacted the number of instances that individuals were the primary planners of their own learning efforts.

Whether in a group or as an individual, the elected officials were still involved with the self-directed learning, "not the least of which is the responsibility that each of us has for our part of the experience and our relational responsibility to the group" (Peters & Gray, 2005, p. 19). Collaborative learners give equal value to what the group learns and what the individual learns—the self-directed learning of both the individual and the group. In this collaborative environment, the group members construct knowledge together that they could not create on their own. Peters and Gray observed that self-directed learners were likely to view collaborative learning as "a group-based activity that is *part* of their overall SDL experience" (p. 20) and that other people who are involved in the learning effort are not just resources but co-participants in the learning activity.

The participants identified 190 resources that they used during their learning projects. Conversations with others was the most frequently cited resource, occurring in 17.2% of the 274 (N = 47) learning projects, followed by a fellow board or councilmember in 12.4% (N = 34), a city manager or other chief administrative officer in 10.6% (N = 29), and a department head or the state governmental consulting agency in 9.9% (N = 27 each) of the learning projects. The elected officials in this study relied heavily on human resources, rather than on Internet resources, print materials, or non-print media.

Participants reported that they encountered no obstacles or barriers to their learning in 21.5% (N = 59) of their 274 learning projects. When elected officials did encounter obstacles to learning, the most frequently identified barriers to their learning projects were lack of time, which impacted 27.3% (N = 75), and family and work obligations, which each impacted 23.7% (N = 65) of their learning projects. Lack of time has consistently been reported as the primary

obstacle to learning by other learning projects' researchers (Allerton, 1974; Coolican, 1973; Fair, 1973; Harrison, 2010; Kelley, 1976).

The learning experiences of participants in cities with managers were different from those in cities without managers. Participants in cities with a city manager undertook a mean of 6.50 learning projects, while participants in cities without a city manager undertook slightly more learning projects (M = 6.86). In cities with a city manager, the participants spent a mean of 62.18 hours on each project, but participants in cities without a manager spent a mean of 90.00 hours, a difference of almost 28 hours per project. The majority of hours (61.6%) dedicated to learning projects were conducted by participants in cities without a city manager. Participants in cities with a city manager accounted for 38.4% of the total hours dedicated to learning projects. An independent samples t-test revealed that the difference in the mean number of hours that participants in city manager cities and participants in cities without a CAO spent on individual learning projects was statistically significant, $t(246.93) = 2.05$, $p = .042$, $d = .25$, 95% CI [1.04, 54.60], with participants in city manager cities spending fewer hours on individual learning projects than participants in cities without a city manager.

Most participants (86.9%) indicated that their learning projects were very important to them and were still active projects (96.7%). The elected officials believed their projects benefited others to a large extent (84.3%). The participants reported that they learned a lot in more than half (56.2%) of their learning projects and were very enthusiastic about what they learned in more than two thirds (69.0%) of their learning activities; their responses were very similar to those of the beginning elementary school teachers in Fair's (1973) research. As has been true in most learning projects research (Coolican, 1973; Fair, 1973; Harrison, 2010; Johns, 1973;

Kelley, 1976; McCatty, 1973), very few projects in the current study (2.9%) were taken for any kind of credit.

The experience of elected officials in their first two years of office was different from their more experienced counterparts, in that the newly-elected officials tackled fewer learning projects but spent more hours conducting those learning activities. Elected officials in their first two years of office conducted a mean of 6.00 learning projects, while those in their third or greater year of office conducted a mean of 6.97 learning projects. First and second year elected officials reported a mean of 79.87 hours per learning effort. Their more experienced peers reported a mean of 75.70 hours per project. The learner was the primary planner for those in their first or second year of office, planning 29.2% of their learning projects. For those in their third or greater year of office, the learner was the primary planner in 33.2% of their learning projects.

The learning efforts of municipal elected officials differed according to their elected role of mayor, vice-mayor, or councilmember. During the previous year, vice-mayors conducted the most learning projects with a mean of 8.50 activities, councilmembers reported a mean of 6.41 learning projects, and mayors reported a mean of 5.91 projects. When considering the number of hours that elected officials spent on their learning projects, mayors devoted the most hours per learning project with a mean of 119.74 hours per project, while the vice-mayors spent a mean of only 36.77 hours per project. Councilmembers were in the middle with a mean of 76.80 hours per learning effort. Mayors spent an average of 707.66 hours annually on their learning projects, while vice-mayors spent an average of 312.55 hours annually, and councilmembers spent an average of 492.29 hours annually on their total learning efforts. A one-way ANOVA showed that the effect of elected office on the mean number of hours spent conducting each learning project was significant at the $p < .05$ level, [$F(2, 271) = 9.17$, $p < 0.001$]. Post hoc comparisons using the

Tukey HSD test indicated three significant pairwise comparisons. First, the number of hours that mayors devoted to each learning project (M = 119.74, SD = 152.89) was significantly ($p < .001$) higher than the number of hours for vice-mayors (M = 36.77, SD = 43.57) with a 95% CI [37.30, 128.64]. Mayors also spent significantly ($p = .029$) more hours (M = 119.74, SD = 152.89) per learning project than did the councilmembers (M = 76.59, SD = 113.21) with a 95% CI [3.49, 82.80]). Finally, the number of hours that councilmembers attributed to each learning project (M = 76.59, SD = 113.21) was significantly ($p = .043$) higher than the number of hours that vice-mayors (M = 36.77, SD = 43.57) spent per project with a 95% CI [0.96, 78.69]. Mayors reported the largest percentage (30.8%) of their learning projects were conducted in a setting where the group with a professional was the primary planner. The learner was the primary planner for 29.2% of the mayors, for 27.5% of vice-mayors and mayors pro tem, as well as for 32.1% of councilmembers, aldermen/alderwomen, and commissioners.

Elected officials who serve in different sized cities reported differences in their learning project experiences. Participants in large cities reported conducting a mean of 8.86 learning projects. Those in medium-sized cities described managing a mean of 5.50 projects. Municipal officials in small and very small cities reported similar results, with a mean of 6.71 and 6.29 projects, respectively. Participants from large cities devoted a mean of 99.40 hours to each of their learning projects. Those in small cities stated they spent a mean of 84.17 hours per learning activity. Elected officials in medium and very small cities spent a similar amount of time with a mean of 67.33 and 65.92 hours, respectively, in each learning project. Participants in large cities spent an average of 880.68 hours annually on their total learning efforts. Those in medium-sized cities spent an average of only 370.32 hours during the year, participants in small cities spent an average of 564.78 hours, and those in very small cities spent an average of 414.64 hours annually

on their learning projects. The learner was the primary planner in half the learning projects of participants in large cities. In small cities, the learner was the planner in 34% of the learning projects. In medium-sized cities, a group with a professional was the planner in 36.4% and the learner was the primary planner in 33.3% of the learning projects. In very small cities, the peer group was the primary planner in 24.2% and the learner was the primary planner in 22.7% of the elected officials' learning projects. While none of these observed differences were statistically significant, some of the differences may be due to the presence or absence of a city manager, a resource who was identified in 29 of the learning projects. All of the medium and small cities in this study have city managers, as do one third of the very small cities. Only the large city and two thirds of the very small cities do not have a city manager or chief administrative officer.

The elected officials in this study indicated that they were the primary planner in 32.1% of their learning efforts, which certainly indicates that they are not completely autonomous learners. They used 190 different resources in their learning activities, primarily other professionals, which points to a desire for additional assistance with their learning projects and what Peters and Gray (2005) label "the proclivity of the self-directed learner to use other people as information resources" (p. 20). The participants also encountered 100 specific barriers or obstacles to learning, which may suggest that the elected officials could benefit from assistance in completing the various tasks that accompany planning, preparing for, and participating in their learning projects.

In this study, the elected officials made several recommendations for organizations that are charged with supporting their learning efforts. Because these learners identified lack of time as their primary obstacle to learning, they suggested that having online courses would be beneficial. They also expressed the need to consult with subject specialists in a timely manner

when they encounter a roadblock to subject-specific learning endeavors. These learners found value in the experiences of their peers in other cities and appreciated opportunities to interact with colleagues from similarly-sized municipalities to exchange ideas and share expertise. Their stated preferences were quite similar to the experiences of beginning teachers in Fair's (1973) research in which other teachers were a source of help in 74% of the learning projects and consultants provided assistance in 41% of the teachers' learning projects. Coolican (1973) described the need most learners have of assistance during their learning efforts as "one learner with many teachers rather than one teacher with many learners" (p. 172).

As Johns (1973) stated more than forty years ago, "educators need to look at their present systems of delivery and the basic content of courses. Neatly packaged content courses that are gathering dust in catalogs have no place in a society that has ventured into the marketplace to make its own choice" (p. 68). The current study supports the argument that more emphasis should be placed on learning from the learner's viewpoint (Moorcroft, 1975). The participants in this study identified specific content areas of particular interest to them. They also suggested that programs be practical, relevant, and timely to their learning interests and needs.

Many municipal elected officials noted the difference between running for elected office and holding office. Several recommended that an online course or a packet of information be developed, or that classes be held in several geographic regions of the state for those who are running for office. Those organizations with responsibility for governance education may wish to develop future course content with these observations in mind.

Technology. In 2010, two learning projects studies at the University of Tennessee updated Tough's original interview schedule, modifying it to include questions related to technology use. In the study by Davis et al. (2010), 41% of the participants, who were graduate

students in the schools of education and nursing, cited computer technology as their major source of information. The small business owners in Harrison's (2010) research reported using the Internet as a resource in 43.3% of their learning projects. In the current study, no questions directly asked the elected officials about their technology use. Contextually, however, the participants volunteered that they used the Internet/websites as resources in 17 of their 274 (6.20%) learning projects. Having issues with technology was reported as an obstacle or barrier in 25 (9.12%) of their learning projects. Overall, most participants seemed to use technology so seamlessly that it was almost second nature to them. During their interviews, they used smartphones to quickly take calls, send text messages, schedule meetings, and access Internet information with no difficulty.

Gender perspectives. Several previous learning projects studies have reported slight differences in both the number of learning projects that men and women undertake and the number of hours they spend on those learning projects, although none of the differences achieved statistical significance (Fair, 1973; Harrison, 2010; Hiemstra, 1975; Peters & Gordon, 1977). For the most part, there has been no clear indication of whether men or women conduct more learning projects or which gender spends more time on their individual learning projects.

In the current study, the experience of female politicians was different from their male counterparts. While male and female elected officials conducted a similar number of learning projects, with a mean of 6.70 for the men and 6.64 for the women, there was a larger difference in the number of hours they devoted to their learning projects. Female officials spent a mean of 81.03 hours and their male counterparts spent a mean of 75.26 hours per learning project. The median number of hours, however, was 40 for males and 60 for females. The learner was the primary planner in 33.8% of learning projects conducted by men and in 27.4% of learning

projects conducted by women. Women were twice more likely to use a professional planner than men in a one-to-one relationship with a professional at 20.5% compared to 9.0% for men.

At some point during the interview process, however, each female participant ($N = 11$) voluntarily commented that her experience as an elected official was different from that of her male counterparts. Many described feelings of isolation, of not having the same access to information as the men on the council, receiving less respect than the men, and having their questions and comments laughed at by the men on the council. In contrast, none of the male participants ($N = 30$) made any observations about what it was like to be a man on the city council.

Implications

This research has implications for organizations that have the responsibility to provide governance education. As a result of the findings, the researcher suggests the following:

1. Targeted experiences and resources for individuals who are running for municipal office as a means of preparing them to assume responsibility for holding office and their own continuing professional growth and development.
2. Learning opportunities designed for newly-elected mayors and councilmembers, addressing both their need for information around subject areas and their development as a learner, as well as their desire to network with their peers in other cities.
3. Classroom and online learning support for the professional growth of elected officials throughout their term(s) of office.
4. Facilitating elected officials' professional growth while adequately considering their individual interests, needs, and learning styles.

5. A variety of resources easily accessible to elected officials and relevant to their individual learning needs.
6. Encouragement and opportunities for interaction among other elected municipal officials. Allerton (1974) described a "colleague group" that could be organized in a local area and suggested that universities consider this concept for extension and continuing education programs (p. 62).
7. Encouragement and opportunities for women in local government to share their experiences as elected officials. Provide mentors, matching newly-elected women with women who have more experience in local government.
8. Opportunities for councils, boards, or commissions to experience and receive coaching in collaborative learning.
9. In addition to supplying subject specialists as a resource for elected officials, governance education organizations should provide general learning consultants, learning coaches, or learning mentors. Their expertise should be available to training institutes, cities, and individual learners. These coaches might assist municipal elected officials in preparing individual learning plans, as well as developing curricula and course or classroom materials. Learning coaches could be available to deliver training or instruction to individuals and groups as appropriate.

Future research is needed to determine the best means of planning and implementing governance education programs, both for elected officials and those running for office.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research has contributed to the development of a comprehensive view of elected municipal officials as adult learners. Specifically, it has provided an understanding to the nature

and extent of the learning efforts of mayors, vice-mayors, city councilmembers, aldermen/alderwomen, and commissioners in cities of different sizes. This study has also contributed to learning projects research and the field of self-directed learning, as well as provided additional insight to the ubiquitous phenomenon of deliberate learning in adulthood. In addition to having implications for good governance organizations, the results also suggest some areas for future research.

1. The revised interview is still lengthy. After the participants answered the items for three or more learning projects, most understood the structure of the interview schedule and began to offer responses before the prompts were read. Harrison (2010) observed a similar phenomenon. Future studies may examine further revisions to the interview schedule to shorten prompts, based on the level of the participants' understanding.
2. By modifying the prompt sheets, the revised interview schedule could be used with other individuals who share a particular career, vocation, or practice.
3. Conducting learning projects research with groups in conditions where the groups function as an individual self-directed learner.
4. Denys (1973) noted that one "of the more intriguing findings of [his] study is that some individuals may be described as 'delegate learners'" (pp. 127-128), such that it was part of their duties to learn on behalf of others. What are the learning experiences of elected officials as 'delegate learners' for the citizens they represent?
5. What different factors operate in small cities that are distinct from large cities and impact the learning of their elected officials?

6. Conducting learning projects research with city managers and chief administrative officers and comparing their experiences to that of their elected colleagues.
7. Additional learning projects research that centers on the experience of city department heads and administrative employees would provide the opportunity to compare and contrast their learning efforts with those of their elected colleagues. The results of such a study would allow governance educators to develop more targeted learning opportunities and resources that support those learning endeavors.
8. Applied research, such as experimentation with different learning locations and online course offerings, might yield improvements in training opportunities.
9. Applied research in the form of action research or pilot programs in the area of "train-the-trainer" programs would be of particular interest to organizations with the task of providing good governance education.
10. Observing, discussing, practicing, and reflecting are considered to be important learning methods for adults. Is there a correlation between the organizational learning climates of cities and the learners' choice of method and choice of planner?
11. The organizational structure and climate of the city is an important determinant of how much and what kind of learning elected officials engage in. Research studies centered on the impact of charter and organizational differences of cities on the learning efforts of elected officials would be beneficial to good governance organizations, as well as to colleges and universities who offer public administration curricula.
12. Further research is needed to determine why elected officials use the resources they do. Does proximity/convenience have anything to do with the resources used?

13. Because all learning influences individual growth, further research considering all types of learning could be important. In particular, a study of the extent of incidental learning would be of interest. Many participants in this research study, noted that they learned from the *process* of governing.
14. A few learning efforts were less than seven hours in duration and were not considered in this study, but may be significant and worthy of future consideration.
15. Further analysis of the data collected during the current study might include qualitative research on the subjects of the learning projects, the resources used, or the barriers/obstacles encountered by the learners.

Concluding Comments

When Tough (1971) launched the adult's learning projects research, many replication studies followed. If this line of research is to continue, it must be approached in fresh and innovative ways. The current study opens possibilities for researchers who wish to use the interview schedule to explore the workplace, career, or practice of adult learners. This study also draws attention to groups that learn collaboratively, or as self-directed units. The interview schedule is easily modified to accommodate almost any group of adult learners and was well-suited as a resource for exploring the learning activities of municipal elected officials.

In today's society, there are many factors that make it imperative for elected officials continue to develop professionally throughout their terms in office. The deliberate learning efforts of municipal officials contribute significantly to their professional growth and development. In addition to furthering their own professional development, the continued learning activities of mayors and councilmembers effect change and innovation in their respective cities and impact the daily lives of citizens. The overall learning efforts of municipal

elected officials may benefit their cities and citizens even more if these individuals are recognized and encouraged and their learning efforts are facilitated by organizations that share in the responsibility for their continuous educational growth.

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Appendices

Appendix A

An Interview Schedule for Studying

Some Basic Characteristics of Learning Projects

Allen Tough

1975

Interview Schedule for Studying Some Basic Characteristics of Learning Projects

Allen Tough

In 1969-1970, Allen Tough and others in the Department of Adult Education at OISE conducted a research project to study some basic characteristics of learning projects in several adult and youth populations. During further interviews over the years, the need for a few additional changes in the interview schedule became evident: those minor changes were incorporated in the present version.

The findings were reported in The Adult's Learning Projects. This is the interview schedule referred to at the beginning of chapter 3.

Each version of this interview schedule was produced by Allen Tough with very useful assistance from Jim Fair, Shirley Shipman, Vida Stanius, David Armstrong, Cressy McCatty, Annemarie Travers, and Barbara McIntyre.

The pages labeled "INTERVIEWER PAGE…" are for the interviewer's exclusive use. Each of the other sheets is handed to the interviewee at the appropriate time (or is read aloud if the person's reading skills are too low).

These questions may be used freely by other researchers. But I would be very grateful if you would let me know whenever you collect data with this interview schedule or a modified form of it. And please tell me about any papers or reports or theses based on such data, so that I can refer other readers to it in my future writing. Thanks very much. My address is Department of Adult Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Canada M5S 1V6.

INTERVIEWER PAGE 1

[Introduce yourself. If necessary, check that this person meets the criteria for this particular sample.] Our research is about what sorts of things people learn. Everyone learns, but different people learn different things—and in different ways. I'm interested in listing the things you have tried to learn during the past year. When I say "learn" I don't just mean learning the sorts of things that people learn in schools and colleges. I mean any sort of deliberate effort at all to learn something, or to learn how to do something. Perhaps you tried to get some information or knowledge – or to gain new skills or improve your old ones – or to increase your sensitivity or understanding or appreciation. Can you think of any efforts like this that you have made during the past 12 months? [Pause and record.]

Try to think back over all the past 12 months – right back to (month) last year. I am interested in any deliberate effort you made to learn anything at all. Anything at all can be included, regardless of whether it was easy or hard, big or little, important or trivial, serious or fun, highbrow or lowbrow.

[Pause and record.]

It doesn't matter when your effort started, as long as you have spent at least a few hours at it sometime since last (month). [Pause and record.]

We want to get as complete a list as possible, because we think that people make far more attempts to learn than anyone realizes. We can include any sort of information—knowledge—skill—or understanding at all that you have tried to gain – just as long as you spent at least a few hours at it sometime during the past 12 months. What else do you recall? [Pause and record.]

Now, I have a list of some of the things people learn. It may remind you of other things that you have tried to learn during the past 12 months. Take as long as you want to read each word, and to think about whether you have tried to learn something similar.

[Give sheet #1] [Introduce and use handout sheets 2A and 2B.]

OK, thank you. That gives us a fairly complete list. If you suddenly think of something else you have learned, though, please tell me

Now, I want to find out a bit more about each of your efforts to learn. Let's begin with the first one on the list. It was your effort to learn _____. This sheet will help us estimate the number of hours you spent at your actual efforts to learn this, plus the number of hours spent at planning and preparing for that learning.

[Hand out sheet #3. If possible, pin down and record just what the learning episodes were. For example, you could ask, "How did you go about learning this? What did you do? . . . Was there anything else you did to learn it?" Examples of the activities you might record are: watched a pro, listened to records, read . . ., practiced, attended . . . . This list of activities is primarily for your benefit in helping the person estimate time accurately: we do not need the data for other purposes.]

[If you are doubtful about any activities suggested as learning episodes, check whether the desire to gain and retain certain knowledge and skill was stronger than all the other purposes put together. For example, you might ask the following question: "In that activity or episode, was your desire to gain certain definite knowledge and skill, and to retain it for at least two days, stronger than all your other purposes put together?" Or, you could ask, "During that activity, how long did you want to retain what you were learning?"]

[Repeat for each learning project. Record the bottom question, too, on handout sheet #3.]

Now we return to that first learning project on the list. The knowledge and skill you gained in that one was_____. For that knowledge and skill, please tell me your answers to these questions. [Give handout sheet #4. Simply record the three letters for each learning project.]

In any of your learning efforts listed so far, was credit any part of your motivation? That is, did you hope to use any of your learning efforts for academic credit—towards some degree or certificate or diploma, for example? [Pause] Was any of your learning directed toward passing a test or examination, completing an assignment for a course, or producing a thesis? [Pause] Were any toward some license, or a driving test – or toward some requirement or examination or upgrading related to a job?

[Probe if there are any other learning projects in the list that you think might have been for credit.]

[For each learning project that he or she says was for credit]

Think of all your reasons for this particular learning effort. Was your desire for credit about one-quarter of your total motivation for learning, or about a half, or 90% -- or just what portion was it? [Record as "credit" if 30% or higher; and as "non-credit" if less than 30%.]

Now, we are going to think about each of your learning efforts in turn, and try to decide who or what was the planner. That is, who decided what you would learn—and how you would learn—whenever you spent some time trying to learn? The first learning effort in our list is _____ .Does it fit into one of the four types on this sheet? [Give time to read through handout sheet #5.]

[If no one resource was primarily (51%) responsible, classify that learning project as "mixed planner." If the person does not seem to understand, or you feel doubtful about the response, ask who the particular planner was. If the learner asks, or if you anticipate difficulty, say that we are interested in who the planner was for the past 12 months rather than earlier.]

[Repeat for each learning project. Do not bother asking for details about the particular planner or methods, but whenever these are mentioned please record them.]

[If the planner was a group, or the instructor in a group:] Now, I want you to choose one of two possibilities. The first possibility is that this group was sponsored by an educational institution, or it had an instructor or leader or speaker who was assigned in that group or was paid for this task. The second possibility is that it was just a group of equals meeting outside of any organized or institutional framework, and taking turns planning their own learning activities. Which was your group?

[If the learning project had a one-to-one planner:] Now, I will suggest two possibilities, and I want you to tell me which one is correct. One possibility is that the one person who helped you was paid to do so (paid by you, or by someone else), or the person was doing so because this was a definite responsibility for him or her, or part of his or her job. The other possibility is that the person was helping primarily because he or she was a friend or relative. Which was the case for your learning project?

[NOTE: Also record the major source of subject matter. That is, what resource provided most of the content? Examples: my brother; a pro ski instructor; Dr. Spock's book; several books; a parents' discussion group at the church]

[Record the appropriate demographic and personal data for this particular interviewee.]

Miscellaneous Notes for Interviewers

Do not interrupt the person's list of learning projects in order to ask criterion questions unless it is clear that the person is far off the track. Whenever there is a long pause, though, you may want to clarify the one or two or three possible learning projects that have just been mentioned. At this point, it might be very useful for you to check and jot down the person's highly intentional learning episodes, just to make sure that the criteria of a learning project are understood. Occasionally, too, at this stage you might want to check the number of hours to be sure the minimum is being met.

Use all your insight and questioning skill in order to understand just what the real focus was. Try to become precise about just what the person was trying to learn. Especially if the person selects one of the methods or subjects from our lists, try to get them to use their phrase rather than ours. Record the desired knowledge and skill, the task or responsibility, the question or interest, or whatever the focus was.

Do not quarrel with the person's decisions and data, but do sometimes make one or two attempts to check their understanding of the question or to clarify an answer. Record any doubts you have about the responses you get.

Whenever the person mentions some activity or some area of life that you think might have produced other learning projects, too, ask about this possibility.

Detailed definitions and criteria are presented in the book The Adult's Learning Projects. See especially Chapter 2 and Appendix A, and portions of Chapters 7 and 8.

DATA FOR ONE PROJECT

1.Desired knowledge and skill:

[Perhaps jot down some highly intentional learning episodes.]

2. Number of hours:

3. A B

4. A B C

5. F G H

6. J K L

7. Credit? NO YES (record percentage)

8. Type of planner (underline one):

group with professional

peer to peer

one-to-one professional

one-to-one friend or relative

object (nonhuman resource)

learner (self-planned)

mixed

9. Major source of subject matter:

10. Demographic and personal data:

Some things that people learn about

a sport or game; swimming; dancing; bridge
current events; public affairs; politics; peace; biography
sewing; cooking; homemaking; entertaining
driving a car
home repairs; woodworking; home improvement project; decorating and furniture
a hobby or craft; collecting something; photography
raising a child; discipline; infant care; child's education
nature; agriculture; birds
mathematics; statistics; arithmetic
speed reading; effective writing; public speaking; vocabulary; literature
science; astronomy; man in space
health; physical fitness; posture; clothes; appearance
history; geography; travel; some region or city or neighborhood
personal finances; savings; insurance; investing; purchasing something
psychology; effective relationships with other people; group leadership; social skills
typing; data processing; mechanical skill
some personal problem; mental health; an emotional problem; an illness or medical condition
various careers; choosing an occupation; finding a job
gardening; landscaping
something related to a job or responsibility or decision
musical instrument; singing; music appreciation
professional or technical competence; sales skills; how to teach or supervise
some aspect of religion; ethics; philosophy; moral behavior
current changes in society; the future; problems in cities; pollution; sociology
dating; relationship with the opposite sex; manners; marriage; relationships within the family
art; painting; architecture
business management; economics; business
sensory awareness; human potential; communication; understanding oneself; efficiency
new techniques; a new way of doing something; an innovation
English; French; some other language

Can you recall any other efforts to learn that were related to your home or your family? Anything related to your hobbies or recreation? Your job? Your responsibilities in various organizations, or clubs, or in a church or synagogue, or on a committee, or some other responsibilities? Anything related to some teaching, writing, or research that you do outside of your job?

Going right back over the past 12 months, can you recall any other times that you tried to learn something by reading a book? When you read newspapers or magazine, do you read certain topics or sections because you want to remember the content? Have you tried to learn anything else from booklets, pamphlets, or brochures? From memos, letters, instructions, or plans? From technical or professional literature? From material from a library? From workbooks or programmed instruction? From an encyclopedia or other reference work?

Have you learned anything at all from a medical doctor? From a lawyer? From a counselor or therapist? From a financial or tax adviser? From a social worker? From a coach? From a private teacher? From a specialist or expert? From individual private lessons?

Have you learned anything from documentaries or courses on television? From TV news or some other TV programs? From radio? In a theatre?

Have you tried to learn from conversations? Or from asking questions: that is, have there been any topics or areas that you have tried to learn about from your friends or other people? Have you deliberately sought to learn by seeking out stimulating individuals? Have you tried to learn anything from your parents or your spouse? From your brother or your sister? From a neighbor?

Perhaps you have learned something in some group or other? Perhaps in some meeting or discussion group? From attending a conference? From a retreat or weekend meeting? From an institute or short course or workshop? From a committee or staff meeting? From taking a course? From attending evening classes, or lectures, or a speech? From a correspondence course? From attending a club or association?

Perhaps tape recordings or phonograph records or "a language lab" helped you learn something during the past year?

Have you learned in a church or synagogue? In a college, university, or school? In some community organization? In a company or factory or office? In a government program? In an exhibition, museum, or art gallery? In some vacation program? In some extracurricular activity after school? In a club? At the "Y"? At a camp?

Can you think back to 11 months ago? Try to recall your main jobs, activities, and problems at that time. Were there any efforts to learn connected with these? How about six months ago?

2. We need your best guess about the total amount of time you spent at all aspects of this particular learning effort during the past 12 months.

Please include the time you spent reading – listening – observing – or learning in some other way – if your main purpose during that activity was to gain and retain certain knowledge or skill. In other words, we will include all the time during which at least half of your total motivation was to gain certain knowledge or skill, and to retain it until at least two days later.

In addition to the time you spent at the actual learning itself, please include all the hours that you spent, during the past 12 months, at deciding about the learning, planning the learning, and preparing and arranging for it. This can include any time spent at deciding whether to proceed with the learning – deciding what to learn – deciding how to learn – deciding where to get help – seeking advice about these decisions (from other people or from printed materials) – traveling to some of the learning activities, such as a meeting or practice session or library – arranging appropriate conditions for learning – choosing the right book or person for the actual learning – obtaining that book or reaching that person.

Of course, you cannot remember exactly how many hours, so just give your best guess.

3. Which of these two answers best describes this particular learning effort at the present time:

(A) NOT VERY ACTIVE – that is, you have dropped it or completed it, or you have set it aside for a while (or you are spending much less time at it than you were before);

(B) DEFINITELY ACTIVE – that is, you are definitely continuing this learning effort right now, and you are spending about as much time as ever at it.

4. 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.

Would you say that altogether:

(A) you learned a large amount or changed a great deal;

(B) you were about halfway between (A) and (C); or

(C) you just changed or learned a little.

5. How enthusiastic have you been about having this new knowledge and skill?

(F) very enthusiastic;

(G) quite enthusiastic or fairly enthusiastic;

(H) not especially enthusiastic.

6. 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.

To what extent did the knowledge and skill you gained provide some benefit to people other than yourself?

(J) to a fairly large extent;

(K) medium (about halfway between J and L);

(L) only to a small extent.

Planners

There are four different sorts of learning efforts, according to who plans them. That is, a person's efforts to learn can be classified according to who was responsible for the day-to-day planning. We have to look at who planned or decided exactly what and how the person should learn at each session. For example, who decided what the person should read or hear, or what else he or she should do in order to learn?

1. Some learners decide to attend a group or class or conference and to let the group (or its leader or instructor) decide the activities and detailed subject matter from one session to the next. A group may be of any size from five persons to several hundred.

2. In other learning efforts, the planning or deciding of the details is handled by one person, who helps the learner in a one-to-one situation. That is, there is one helper (or instructor, teacher, expert, or friend) and there is only one learner. These two persons interact face-to-face, or through correspondence or the telephone. Private music lessons, individual lessons from a golf pro, and being taught to drive a car by a friend are examples. Two or even three learners receiving individualized attention from one other person during the same session can be included here.

3. In some learning projects, most of the detailed planning regarding what to learn and do at each session resides in some object (some nonhuman resource). Examples of these are: a set of recordings, a series of television programs, a set of programmed instruction materials, a workbook or other printed materials, and a language lab. The learner follows the program or materials: they tell him or her what to do next.

4. In other learning projects, the learner retains the major responsibility for the day-to-day planning and decision-making. The learner may get advice from various people and use a variety of materials and resources. But he or she usually decides just what detailed subject matter to learn next, and what activities and resources to use next. Instead of turning the job of planning over to someone else, the learner makes these day-to-day decisions himself or herself.

Appendix B

Revised Interview Schedule for Studying Some Basic Characteristics of the Workplace Learning Projects of Municipal Elected Officials

Becky Smeltzer

Revised Interview Schedule for Studying Some Basic Characteristics of the Workplace Learning Projects of Municipal Elected Officials

In 1969-1970, Allen Tough and others in the Department of Adult Education at OISE conducted a research project to study some basic characteristics of learning projects in several adult and youth populations. During further interviews over the years, the need for a few additional changes in the interview schedule became evident; those minor changes were incorporated and reported in *The Adult's Learning Projects* (1971) and published separately in 1975. In 2012, the researcher updated and modified Tough's *Learning Projects Interview Schedule* (1975) to reflect changes in technology, to incorporate subject matter related to municipal government, and to limit the learning projects to only those related to the interviewee's role as an elected official.

The pages labeled "INTERVIEWER PAGE…" are for the interviewer's exclusive use. Each of the other sheets is handed to the interviewee at the appropriate time (or is read aloud if the person's reading skills are too low). These questions may be used freely by other researchers.

INTERVIEWER PAGE 1

Interviewer Instructions and Script

[Introduce yourself. If necessary, check that this person meets the criteria for this particular sample.]

ITEM 1 (Relative to Interviewer Page #7 and Participant Sheets #1a & 1b)

My research is about what local elected officials learn in order to fulfill their governmental role and how they go about learning it. Everyone learns, but different people learn different things—and in different ways.

I'm interested in listing the things you have tried to learn during the past year, particularly in your role as an elected official.

When I say "learn," I don't just mean learning things that people learn in schools and colleges. I mean any deliberate effort at all to learn something or to learn how to do something. Perhaps you tried to get some information or knowledge, or to gain new skills or improve your old ones, or to increase your sensitivity or understanding or appreciation.

Can you think of any efforts like this that you have made during the past 12 months?
[Pause and Record Responses]

Think back over the past 12 months, all the way back to (name of month) last year. I am interested in any deliberate effort you made to learn anything at all related to your role as an elected official. It does not matter if it was easy or difficult, big or little, important or trivial, serious or fun.

It doesn't matter when your effort started, as long as you have spent at least a few hours at it sometime since last (name of month).
[Pause and Record Responses]

We want to get as complete a list as possible because we think that people make far more attempts to learn than anyone realizes. We can include any sort of information (knowledge, skill, or understanding) that you have tried to gain, as long as you spent at least a few hours at it sometime during the past 12 months. What else do you recall?
[Pause and Record Responses]

[Instruct the participant to pick up and read Sheet 1a containing the learning activities prompts.]

Here is a list of things that municipal elected officials might learn. It may remind you of other things that you have tried to learn during the past 12 months. Take as long as you want to read each word and to think about whether you have tried to learn something similar.

[Instruct participant to pick up and read Sheet 1b containing prompt questions for additional learning activities.] [Pause and Record Responses]

OK, thank you. That gives me a fairly complete list. If you suddenly think of something else you have learned, though, please tell me.

[The researcher will inform the interviewee that, from this point forward, the information collected will come from each individual learning project. The researcher and participant will then consider the first learning project identified.]

ITEM 2a (Relative to Interviewer Page #7 and Participant Sheet #2, Item 2a) Estimate the number of hours in the learning project.

Now I want to find out a bit more about each of your efforts to learn. Let's begin with the first one on the list. It was your effort to learn _____. This sheet will help us estimate the number of hours you spent at your actual efforts to learn this, plus the number of hours spent at planning and preparing for that learning.

[Instruct the participant to pick up and read sheet #2, Item #2a]

[If possible, pin down and record just what the learning episodes were. For example, you could ask, "How did you go about learning this? What did you do? Was there anything else you did to learn it?" This list of activities is primarily for your benefit in helping the person estimate time accurately; we do not need the data for other purposes.]

Any project more than 7 hours will be subject to the full interview schedule.

ITEM 2b (Relative to Interviewer Page #7 and Participant Sheet #2, Item 2b) Characterize the importance of the learning project.

Think about the importance of this learning effort to you and rate it on the following scale: UNIMPORTANT, NOT VERY IMPORTANT, SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT, and VERY IMPORTANT.

ITEM 3 (Relative to Interviewer Page #7 and Participant Sheet #2, Item 3) Identify current level of involvement in the learning activity.

[Instruct participant to read and verbally answer item #3. Record the response to Item 3 about the level of involvement in this learning activity.]

ITEMS 4, 5, & 6 (Relative to Interviewer Page #7 and Participant Sheet #3, Items 4-6)

The knowledge and skill you gained in_____learning activity was _____. For that knowledge and skill, please tell me your answers to the following questions.

[Instruct participant to pick up sheet #3 and read item #4. Simply record the number for the answer to Item 4.]

[Instruct participant to pick up sheet #3 and read item #5. Simply record the number for the answer to Item 5.]

[Instruct participant to pick up sheet #3 and read item #6. Simply record the number for the answer to Item 6.]

ITEM 7 (Relative to Interviewer Page #7 and Participant Sheet #3, Item 7, concerning credit versus no credit)

Was academic, continuing education, or licensure CREDIT any part of your motivation?

[Pause]

ITEM 8 (Relative to Interviewer Page #7 and Participant Sheet #4, Item 8. Identify the primary planner(s) of the learning activity.)

With this learning project, try to decide who (or what) was the planner. That is, who decided what you would learn—how you would learn—and when you spent time trying to learn? Does this learning project fit into any of the four types listed on this sheet? [Instruct participant to pick up and read sheet 4. Give time to read through Item 8.]
(If no one resource was primarily (over 50%) responsible, classify that learning project as "mixed planner." If the person does not seem to understand or if you feel doubtful about the response, ask who the MAJOR planner was.
(If the planner was a group, or the instructor in a group, please clarify using the paragraph below and referencing participant sheet 4.)

Now, please choose one of two possibilities. The first possibility is that this group was a council, board, commission, or committee. Did the learning activity have an instructor, leader, or professional person who was in charge of the group's learning? The second possibility is that this group was a council, board, commission or committee that met as a group of equals and various members of the group may have helped plan the group's learning activities. Which was your group?

(If the learning project had a one-to-one planner, see paragraph below and refer to participant sheet 4.)

Now I will suggest two possibilities, and I want you to tell me which one is correct. One possibility is that the one person who helped you was paid to do so, or the person was doing so because this was a definite responsibility for him or her, or part of his or her job. The other possibility is that the person was helping primarily because he or she was a friend or relative. Which was the case for your learning project?

ITEM 9 (Relative to Interviewer Page #7 and Participant Sheet #5, Item 9, concerning resources.) [Instruct participant to pick up and read sheet 5. Give time to read through Item 9.]

During your efforts to learn, you probably used a variety of resources. Some of these resources may have been people who helped you in some way, perhaps by giving advice or suggestions. Others may have recommended or provided materials or equipment for you.
Resources are often the materials you need for your learning, such as books, supplies, electronic resources, and the equipment involved in your project. What were the resources – both human and non-human – that you used in this project? Refer to Participant Sheet #5 for examples.

ITEM 10 (Relative to Interviewer Page #7 and Participant Sheet #6, concerning obstacles to learning) [Instruct participant to pick up and read sheet 6. Give time to read through Item 10.]

Many adults describe problems and obstacles that they have faced while conducting certain learning activities. Think about the major problems that you have had to resolve. Please identify obstacles that you have faced while conducting your learning efforts over the past 12 months.

Now, here are examples of obstacles people face. It may remind you of other obstacles that you have experienced during the past 12 months. Take as long as you want to read each example and to think about whether you have encountered something similar.

ITEM 11 (Relative to Interviewer Page #7 and Participant Sheet #7) [Record the appropriate demographic and personal data for this particular interviewee.]

Miscellaneous Notes for Interviewers

Do not interrupt the person's list of learning projects in order to ask criterion questions unless it is clear that the person is far off the track. Whenever there is a long pause, though, you may want to clarify the one, two, or three possible learning projects that have just been mentioned. At this point, it might be very useful for you to check and jot down the person's highly intentional learning episodes, just to make sure that the criteria of a learning project are understood. Occasionally, too, at this stage, you might want to check the number of hours to be sure the minimum is being met.

Use all of your insight and questioning skill in order to understand just what the real focus was. Try to become precise about what the person was trying to learn. If the person selects one of the methods or subjects from our lists, try to get them to use THEIR phrase rather than ours. Record the desired knowledge and skill, the task or responsibility, the question or interest, or whatever the focus was.

Do not argue with the person's decisions and data, but do sometimes make one or two attempts to check their understanding of the question or to clarify an answer. Record any doubts you have about the responses you get.

Whenever the person mentions some activity or some area of life that you think might have produced other learning projects, too, ask about this possibility.

Detailed definitions and criteria are presented in the book *The Adult's Learning Projects*. See Chapter 2 and Appendix A, as well as portions of Chapters 7 and 8.

Participant Number _____ Project Number _____

DATA FOR ONE LEARNING PROJECT

ITEM 1: Desired knowledge and skill:
[Perhaps jot down some highly intentional learning episodes.]

ITEM 2a: Estimate the number of hours:

ITEM 2b: Circle Importance: UNIMPORTANT, NOT VERY, SOMEWHAT, VERY

ITEM 3: Circle Current Effort: NOT ACTIVE DEFINITELY ACTIVE

ITEM 4: How Much Learned: 1 2 3 4

ITEM 5: Enthusiasm Level: 1 2 3 4

ITEM 6: Benefits Others: 1 2 3 4 5

ITEM 7: Circle Credit: NO YES

ITEM 8: Type of planner (Circle ONE):

Group with professional (Group 1)

Peer group (Group 2)

One-to-one professional

One-to-one friend or relative

Object (nonhuman resource)

Learner (self-planned)

Mixed

ITEM 9: Major source (and source nature) of subject matter:

ITEM 10: List obstacles to learning projects
1._____

2._____

ITEM 11: Demographic and personal data sheet

ITEM 1a: <u>Some things elected municipal officials learn about</u>

- Budgets
- Building Trust
- Capital Improvement Planning
- Charters and Codes
- Citizen Participation
- Community Vision/Mission
- Conflict Management
- Contract Management
- Coping with Difficult People
- Creativity and Innovation
- Decision-Making
- Delegation Skills
- Diversity
- E-government
- Economic Development
- Elections
- Ethics in Government
- Facilitating Council Effectiveness
- Financial Analysis
- Fire
- Foundations of Municipal Government
- Grant Writing
- Human Resources
- Initiative and Risk Taking
- Internal Control & Auditing
- Interpersonal Communication Skills
- Legislative Issues
- Media Relations
- Mediation/Negotiation
- Open Meetings
- Open Records Law
- Parks and Recreation
- Parliamentary Procedure
- Performance Measurement
- Planning and Zoning
- Police
- Presentation Skills
- Public Works
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Purchasing
- Risk Management
- Strategic Planning
- Technological Literacy
- Water and Wastewater

ITEM 1b: Resources used and places learning may occur

Can you recall any other efforts to learn that were related to the categories on Sheet 1a?

Can you recall any other efforts to learn that were related to your role as an elected municipal official? Thinking back over the past 12 months, can you recall any other times that you tried to learn something by reading a book, newspaper, magazine, or articles on the Internet? Do you read certain topics or sections because you want to remember the content? Have you tried to learn anything else from booklets, pamphlets, brochures, memos, letters, instructions, plans, technical or professional literature, or material from a library? Have e-books, audio books, or digital resources helped you learn something during the past year?

Have you learned anything at all from a lawyer, a financial or tax adviser, a social worker, a specialist or an expert? Have you learned anything from documentaries or courses on television, the computer, or the Internet? Have you tried to learn from conversations? Have there been any topics or areas that you have tried to learn about from other people? Have you learned something in a meeting or in a discussion group? Have you learned from attending a conference, a retreat or weekend meeting, an institute or short course or workshop? Have you learned from attending a committee or staff meeting, taking a course, from attending evening classes, lectures, a speech, a club, or association?

Have you learned in a particular location, such as a college, university, school, community organization, company, factory, office, government program, exhibition, library, museum, art gallery, vacation program, club, or a camp? Think back to 12 months ago? Try to recall your main jobs, activities, and problems at that time. Were there any efforts to learn connected with these? How about six months ago?

ITEM 2a

We need your best guess about the total amount of time you spent at all aspects of this particular learning effort during the past 12 months.
Please include the time you spent reading – listening – observing – or learning in some other way – if your main purpose during that activity was to gain and retain certain knowledge or skill.
In addition to the time you spent at the actual learning itself, please include all the hours that you spent, during the past 12 months, at deciding about the learning, planning the learning, and preparing and arranging for it. This can include any time spent at deciding whether to proceed with the learning – deciding what to learn – deciding how to learn – deciding where to get help – seeking advice about these decisions (from other people or from resource materials) – traveling to some of the learning activities, such as a meeting or practice session or library – arranging appropriate conditions for learning – choosing the right materials or person for the actual learning – obtaining those resources or reaching that person.
Of course, you cannot remember exactly how many hours, so just give your best guess.

ITEM 2b

We need you to think about the importance of this learning effort to you and rate it on the following scale:
1. UNIMPORTANT – that is, you do not believe that it was of value (you have not retained the information or you do not see value in the learning effort).

2. NOT VERY IMPORTANT – that is, you believe that it had a little value (you have retained bits of information and see some value in the learning effort).

3. SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT – that is, you find some value in this learning effort (you have retained some information and find value in the learning effort).

4. VERY IMPORTANT – that is, you find a great deal of value in this project and the information learned (you retained most of the information and find great value in the learning effort).

ITEM 3

Which of these two answers best describes this particular learning effort at the present time:

1. NOT VERY ACTIVE – that is, you have dropped it or completed it, or you have set it aside for a while (or you are spending much less time at it than you were before);
2. DEFINITELY ACTIVE – that is, you are definitely continuing this learning activity right now and you are spending about as much time as ever at it.

ITEM 4

A learning project can impact you in many different ways. You might gain knowledge, information, and understanding as a result of this one learning project. You might notice an improvement in your skills or habits. You may notice that that your attitudes or sensitivity changed. Please think for a moment about how much knowledge, information, and understanding you gained as a result of this one learning project. Would you say that altogether:

1. you learned nothing.
2. you learned a little.
3. you learned a moderate amount.
4. you learned a very large amount.

ITEM 5

How enthusiastic have you been about having this new knowledge, skill, or understanding? Would you say that altogether:

1. you are not enthusiastic.
2. you are a little enthusiastic.
3. you are somewhat enthusiastic.
4. you are very enthusiastic.

ITEM 6

Let's set aside your own benefits for a moment and look at any benefits for <u>other</u> people. Your new knowledge might have been of some benefit to your city, your field, or even to people who live in other places.

To what extent did the knowledge you gained provide some benefit to people other than yourself?

1. not at all.
2. to a small extent.
3. to a moderate extent.
4. to a large extent.
5. don't know/not sure.

ITEM 7

Was academic, continuing education, or licensure CREDIT any part of your motivation?

NO YES

ITEM 8: PLANNERS

There are four different sorts of learning efforts, according to who plans them. That is, your efforts to learn can be classified according to who was responsible for the day-to-day planning. We will look at who planned or decided exactly what and how you should learn at each session. For example, who decided what you should read or hear, or what else you should do in order to learn?

1. Some learners decide to attend a group or class or conference and to let the group (or its leader or instructor) decide the activities and detailed subject matter from one session to the next. A group may be of any size from three persons to several hundred.

2. In other learning efforts, the planning or deciding of the details is handled by one person, who helps the learner in a one-to-one situation. That is, there is one helper (or instructor, teacher, expert, or friend) and there is only one learner. These two persons interact face-to-face (or via Skype, Google Hangouts, or Facetime), or through correspondence, or the telephone.

Private lessons in public speaking, individual lessons from a Spanish language instructor, and being taught to create a website by a friend are examples. Two or even three learners receiving individual attention from one other person during the same session can be included here.

3. In some learning projects, most of the detailed planning regarding what to learn and do at each session resides in some object (some nonhuman resource).

Examples of these: blog, wiki, audio or video recordings, television programs, computer based training, the Internet, or a language lab. The learners follow the program or materials, which they tell them what to do next.

4. In other learning projects, the learner retains the major responsibility for the day-to-day planning and decision-making.

The learner may get advice from various people and use a variety of materials and resources. But he or she usually decides just what detailed subject matter to learn next, and what activities and resources to use next. Instead of turning the job of planning over to someone else, the learner makes these day-to-day decisions.

ITEM 9

During your efforts to learn, you probably used a variety of resources.

Some of these resources may have been people who helped you in some way, perhaps by giving advice or suggestions. Others may have recommended or provided materials or equipment for you.

Resources are often the materials you need for your learning, such as books, supplies, electronic resources, and the equipment involved in your project.

What were the resources – both human and non-human – that you used in this project?

Examples of Resources

- Association website
- Book
- Chamber of Commerce
- Class or course
- Conference
- Consultant
- Conversation
- Government document
- Government website
- Instructional video recording
- Newspaper or magazine
- Library
- Municipal Technical Advisory Service
- Online course
- Professional journal
- Retreat
- Social networking site (Facebook or blog)
- Staff, committee, or professional meeting
- Subject expert
- Television program
- Wikipedia
- Workshop

- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

Item 10

Many adults describe problems and OBSTACLES that they have faced while conducting certain learning activities. Think about the major problems that you have had to resolve. Please identify obstacles that you have faced while conducting your learning efforts in the past 12 months.

Examples of Problems and Obstacles

1. Lack of time
2. Family obligations
3. Social obligations
4. Cost of resources
5. Cost of programs
6. Work obligations
7. Lack of available resources
8. Lack of available programs
9. Unable to identify learning needs
10. Issues with technology
11. Lack of industry specific programs or resources
12. Location of class
13. Inconveniently scheduled courses
14. Amount of time required to complete a program
15. Strict attendance requirements
16. Unwilling to attend classes full time
17. Lack of motivation to pursue additional learning opportunities
18. Financial obligations
19. Health issues
20. Not a high priority
21. Not comfortable with formal classes

Item 11

Let's Find Out More about You

Elected Office

- ○ Mayor
- ○ Vice-Mayor
- ○ Councilmember, alderman, board member
- ○ Other _____

Gender

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

Age

- ○ 29 or younger
- ○ 30 – 39
- ○ 40 – 49
- ○ 50 – 59
- ○ 60 – 69
- ○ 70+

Ethnicity

- ○ Hispanic or Latino
- ○ Not Hispanic or Latino

Race (check all that apply)

- ○ American Indian
- ○ Alaska Native
- ○ Asian
- ○ Black or African American
- ○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ○ White
- ○ Other _____

Level of Education

- ○ Some high school
- ○ High school graduate/GED
- ○ Some college
- ○ Associate degree (AA, AS)
- ○ Bachelor's degree (BA, BS, AB)
- ○ Master's degree (MA, MS, MEd, MBA, MAcc, MSLS)
- ○ Professional degree (MD, DO, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)
- ○ Doctorate degree (PhD, EdD, DMA)

Terms in Current Office (including current term)

- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4 or more

Years in Current Office (including current year)

- ○ 1 – 2
- ○ 3 – 4
- ○ 5 – 6
- ○ 7 – 8
- ○ 9 – 10
- ○ 11+

Appendix C

Correspondence

Email correspondence with Dr. Allen Tough about repeating the study with a group of municipal elected officials.

From: Smeltzer, Becky (Becky)
Sent: Friday, March 25, 2011 2:24 PM
To: allen333@ieti.org
Subject: to Prof. Tough via allentough.com--question about Adult's Learning Projects

Professor Tough,

I am interested in the adult's learning projects, particularly because one of the groups included was municipal elected officials.
I am a librarian at the University of Tennessee's Municipal Technical Advisory Service. Because I work with municipal officials in the state of Tennessee, I am interested in repeating this study with a group of our own municipal elected officials.
I am also a doctoral student, working with Dr. Ralph G. Brockett, in the University of Tennessee's Adult Learning graduate program.
I have begun a literature review and have not found any indication that another researcher has done a similar study using elected officials or local government officials since your original study.
Are you aware of any studies using similar population groups?
Thank you for your assistance,
Becky Smeltzer

Becky Smeltzer
Technical Services Librarian
The University of Tennessee
Municipal Technical Advisory Service Library
120 Conference Center Building
Knoxville, TN 37996-4105
Phone: (865) 974-9841
Fax: (865) 974-0423
www.mtas.tennessee.edu

From: Allen Tough [mailto:allentough@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, March 27, 2011 4:47 PM
To: Smeltzer, Becky (Becky)
Subject: adult learning

i do not know of anyone who has studied municipal workers. good topic! my book is online.

allen

From: Smeltzer, Becky (Becky)
Sent: Monday, March 28, 2011 8:03 AM
To: Allen Tough
Subject: RE: adult learning

Allen,

Thank you for responding to my email. I will pursue my project with municipal officials. I appreciate that you have made your book and other writings available online.

Your website is a wonderful resource!

Becky

Becky Smeltzer
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Vita

Rebecca Campbell Smeltzer is a native of Knoxville, Tennessee. She attended First Lutheran and Smithwood Elementary Schools and graduated from Knoxville Central High School. She attended the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she earned a Bachelor of Music in Music Theory, a Master of Music in Music Theory, and a Master of Science in Information Science. After a 27 year hiatus, she returned to school and was awarded a Master of Science in Instructional Technology. Most of her professional life has been centered in area libraries. She has held professional positions in Hoskins and Hodges University Libraries, the George F. DeVine Music Library, Knox County Public Libraries, and the Robert L. Watson, Jr. Research and Information Center. In her professional positions, she developed a passion for improving staff development programs to better serve her community. She has presented several times at the International Self-Directed Learning Symposium and the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education and published articles and book chapters on topics related to self-directed learning.