

International Extension Education:
Policies and Graduate Study

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There are millions of people living in the rural Third World who face a variety of constraints related to health, nutrition, marketing, and technology. In order to better the condition of life for these people, the ultimate goals would be to alleviate rural poverty, promote rural development, and improve farming systems and practices. To achieve these goals, rural people should be provided with education through which "community members come together to identify their problems and needs, seek solutions among themselves, mobilize the necessary resources, and execute a plan of action or learning or both" (Compton & McCluskey, 1980, p. 229). The premise of this article is that the Extension Organization could provide the rural Third World with information regarding social, economic, cultural, and human needs of people and then assist them to utilize the information in order to achieve community education for development and make life better for themselves.

Purpose

This study was designed to describe extension education as perceived by educators and international students of extension education and determine the topics which should be provided in a graduate program.

Methodology

The research was a descriptive survey in the form of a national census study.

Subject Selection

The directors of Cooperative Extension Services in the 50 states identified a total of 27 universities, as of the winter of 1982, in their states offering graduate programs in extension education. The 27 schools served as the frame of the investigation with 26 of the schools participating in the study. The two populations in the study were extension educators (n = 108) and graduate international students of extension education (n = 115), as of fall of 1982. This was a census study of both populations.

Instrumentation

Two, five-part survey instruments, one for the educators and one for the students, were developed by the researchers. Parts one and two for both groups were related to college preparation programs in extension education. Parts three and four for both groups contained selected characteristics, policies, and responsibilities of the Extension Organization in the context of the Third World. The last part gathered demographic data about the respondents and was different for each group. A panel of experts examined and approved the content validity of the instruments. The first four parts of the instruments were pilot tested in order to test their reliability. The pilot test data attested to the reliability and internal consistency of the four parts of the instruments which were designed to measure the perceptions of the respondents regarding international extension education (Cronbach's Alpha = .93). A four-point Likert-type scale, four being the highest and one being the lowest, was used for this study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this study were collected through the use of a mail questionnaire. After conducting a series of follow-up procedures (Dillman, 1978), 93.5% (n = 101) of the educators and 85.2% (n = 98) of the students completed and returned the questionnaire to the researcher. A 10% random sample of the nonrespondents was interviewed by telephone. No significant difference between the respondents and nonrespondents was observed. Therefore, findings of the study were generalized to the populations. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and interpret the data.

Results

Profile of the Extension Educator Group

There were 101 extension educators who participated in the study. The age of the educators ranged from 29 to 66 years; the average age was 47 years. The majority (91.1%) of the educators were male. More than half of the educators (53.5%) had professional rank. The average educator had 15 years of work experience in extension education with a range from zero to 41 years. Years of teaching extension education courses, as reported by the educators, ranged from zero to 30 years, with 7.7 years as the mean. The majority of the educators (53.5%) had some kind of overseas experience; however, only 29.7% had work experience in extension education outside the United States. Less than half (41.6%) of the educators had some proficiency in a foreign language.

Profile of the Graduate International Student Group

There were 98 graduate international students from 33 countries who provided data for the study. Fifty-one percent of the students were from Asia, 37.7% from Africa, and 13.2% from South America and Latin America. The age of the students ranged from 24 to 46 years, with 33 as the average age. The majority (90.8%) of the students were male. Sixty of the students (61.2%) were in master's programs while 38 (38.8%) were in doctoral programs. The number of years studying in the United States ranged from one to eight years, with 3.1 years as the mean. While 73.5% of the students had work experience in extension education in their home countries, only 21.4% were found to have had practical training in the United States; 88.3% of them indicated a willingness to acquire work experience while studying in the United States. The majority of the students (89.8%) reported being satisfied with their academic programs in the United States.

Program Development Processes

Five processes related to extension education program development (Lawrence et al., 1974) were included in the first part of the instruments and respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance of each of the processes (Table 1).

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations for Extension Education
Program Development Processes*

Process	Educators (n=101)		Students (n=98)	
	Mean*	S.D.	Mean*	S.D.
1. Developing an instructional framework for program development	3.86	.35	3.89	.32
2. Documenting the extension program (program determination)	3.96	.20	3.96	.20
3. Developing an annual plan of work	3.92	.27	3.75	.48
4. Implementing the program	3.78	.41	3.50	.60
5. Evaluating the program	3.82	.40	3.80	.43

Note. 4=very important; 3=somewhat important; 2=slightly important; 1=not important

Course Topics in Extension Education

In the second part of the instruments, both populations were provided with 20 course topics related to extension education and asked to indicate their level of necessity for graduate international students of extension education in order to assist them in learning and performing the foregoing processes. Table 2 shows the mean scores for the course topics.

Table 2

*Mean Scores for the Extension Education Course Topics**

Course topics	Educators (n=101)	Students (n=98)	Combined (n=199)
	Mean	Mean	Mean
1. Program planning and development	3.93	3.88	3.90
2. Evaluation of extension programs	3.84	3.87	3.85
3. Administration and supervision of extension programs	3.55	3.73	3.64
4. Teaching methods and techniques	3.61	3.60	3.61
5. Diffusion of information on agricultural technology	3.37	3.60	3.48
6. Extension methods for third world countries	3.49	3.42	3.45
7. Adult learning theories	3.41	3.46	3.43
8. Use of visual materials in communication of agricultural concepts	3.30	3.50	3.39
9. Research methods and design	3.17	3.52	3.34
10. Staff development	3.20	3.44	3.31
11. General statistics; analysis and interpretation of data	3.12	3.41	3.26
12. Educational programs in agriculture for third world countries	3.26	3.27	3.26
13. Rural community development	3.00	3.48	3.24
14. Internship in cooperative extension service	3.20	3.23	3.21
15. Education for rural development	2.97	3.39	3.17
16. Agriculture in third world countries	2.93	3.10	3.01
17. Concepts and theories in rural sociology	2.82	3.10	2.96
18. Youth program management	2.81	3.05	2.93
19. World food and population problems	2.84	2.81	2.82
20. World food economics	2.63	2.68	2.65

Note. 4=essential; 3=desirable; 2=optional; 1=not needed

Policies and Characteristics

The third part of the instruments was comprised of selected policies and characteristics of the Extension Organization as related to the Third World (Axinn & Thorat, 1972; Rogers, 1971); the respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement regarding each one.

Both populations agreed that Extension can assist the entire rural social system (production, supply, marketing, governance, research, and education/extension) to develop by providing more attention to the producers, marketers, and suppliers of the rural social system. Both populations strongly agreed with the concept that a combination of the sponsor and the clientele should establish the policies for agricultural extension programs and a combination of "top-down" and "bottom-up" program development should be used in the Extension Organization. While the educators disagreed with the notion that the sponsor (e.g., ministry of agriculture) should establish the policies for agricultural extension programs, the students agreed with the notion. Both populations disagreed with "top-down" program development and agreed with "bottom-up" program development. Both populations agreed that highly successful extension programs result when the a) cost of recommended practices to farmers was low, b) recommended practices were relatively simple, c) benefit to farmers was immediate, d) benefit of recommendation to farmers was high, and e) local people selected front line agents. They also agreed that the success of an agricultural extension program in any particular locality tends to be directly related to the extent of personal contact between the people of that locality and the staff of the Extension Organization.

Educational Needs of Rural People

There were seven educational needs of rural people (Coombs & Ahmed, 1978) included in the fourth part of the instruments and the respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the concept that the Extension Organization could fulfill the listed educational needs. Both populations agreed that the Extension Organization could fulfill the educational needs of rural people in the following areas: a) application of new production inputs, b) food storage, processing, and preservation, c) knowledge and skills for family improvement, d) civic skills, e) supplementary skills for farm maintenance and improvement, and f) farm business management. While educators disagreed that the Extension Organization is responsible for providing rural people with general or basic education, the students agreed that such education should be provided.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although the results of this investigation were only generalized to the two populations of the study, other professionals interested in

international extension education could also benefit from the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

1. Graduate international students of extension education should be provided the opportunity to learn the knowledge, develop the skills, and adopt the practices related to extension education program development. Taking classes regarding the course topics identified in this study could assist the students in reaching that end.
2. The components of a typical rural social system (production, supply marketing, governance, research, and education/extension) should be perceived as the subsystems of the system which are dependent upon each other; attention should be given to all of them.
3. Community participation should be considered as a vital factor in the success of any rural community development project. This study found that a combination of the sponsor and the clientele should establish the policies for agricultural extension programs.
4. Community development projects should be directed toward groups rather than individuals in order to simplify many of the related tasks (e.g., reaching all farmers; reducing inequity; alleviating logistical problems; and providing social interaction).
5. The educational needs of the rural Third World should be fulfilled in order to assist people in raising their level of consciousness, becoming active agents rather than passive recipients, breaking away from traditional fatalism, and transforming their world. The extension educators could play a crucial role in achieving such a noble task.

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