

The Professional and His Journal

This *Journal* can impart ideas and developments in a relatively new and different type of education unique to Extension

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ON THE DAY this first edition of the *Journal of Cooperative Extension* rolls off the press, the Cooperative Extension Service will be taking a giant step forward on the road toward recognition as a distinctive type of professional endeavor.

This *Journal* represents the culmination of years of visionary thinking, planning, and effort by many dedicated Extension workers. We now have a medium, as does every true profession, through which all Extension personnel may keep in close touch with research developments in the field of Extension education, with innovative programs and procedures developed by fellow workers, and other matters which might improve the individual's professional competence. Such a journal can contribute much to professionalism in Extension.

Extension workers already have legitimate claims to professionalism. Among our ranks are economists, agronomists, entomologists, engineers, home economists, and many other groups with recognized professional status. We might also be classified as professional educators, representing as we do an integral part of great educational institutions.

Extension's claim to professionalism, however, stems from more than the mere fact that we represent a blending of many professional competencies. The field of Cooperative Extension education is emerging as a distinctive, well defined, and legitimate area of professional endeavor in its own right.

Webster defines a profession as "a calling in which one professes

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to have acquired some special knowledge used by way of either instructing, guiding or advising others, or serving them in some act." Such a definition certainly characterizes the work of Cooperative Extension—the use of special knowledge in instructing, guiding, advising, or serving others. Cooperative Extension workers are concerned with at least three distinctive types of "special" knowledge.

Subject Matter

First, we must be masters of the subject matter we propose to teach. The rapid development of new knowledge in all fields and the demands for more specialized assistance emphasize the absolute necessity for maintaining high levels of professional competence in subject matter. This will require higher levels and more specialized formal training, along with never-ending study and self-improvement. The professional journals of our many disciplines are vital in helping us maintain or improve this subject matter competence.

The *Journal of Cooperative Extension* is not intended to serve this particular need. Instead our journal will focus upon two other areas of specialized knowledge—the communicating of ideas and a distinctive type of problem-solving process.

Communication

Communicating information and ideas to others is not an easy task. It is not uncommon for a person with a high level of technical training to be relatively ineffective in imparting his knowledge to others. While it may be true that some teachers are "born not made," it is equally true that any teacher can benefit greatly from the rapidly growing body of knowledge about effective teaching tools and techniques.

This need is particularly acute among Cooperative Extension workers. We are engaged in an informal type of education which is unique in many respects. Consequently we must use methods and techniques often quite different from those employed in more formal types of education. Furthermore our clientele represents anything but a captive audience. Skilled teachers must use the best techniques to attract and maintain interest. The *Journal of Cooperative Extension* can impart to the Extension worker new developments and ideas to help him improve his professional competence in this very important area.

Knowledge of subject matter and skill in imparting this knowledge to others are basic to any type of education. However, a third area of competence is truly distinctive to Extension.

Problem-Solving

The unique feature of Cooperative Extension work is the manner in which knowledge is applied directly to solving problems—using education to help individuals, families, businesses, or even communities solve problems which may be limiting the achievement of their goals. This involves the process of helping people to analyze problems, to consider alternative ways of dealing with them, decide on programs of action, and finally carry out such programs.

Such a process involves much more than merely imparting knowledge to others. In many instances it is necessary to help people identify the true nature of their problems and to motivate them to act in solving them. Extension workers often need to help people organize for a concerted attack on problems which require group action. Such efforts in organizing, motivating, and planning for action represent the basic elements of Extension's program development process—which is becoming somewhat of a science in itself. It requires many special techniques and skills. The *Journal of Cooperative Extension* can serve as a much needed instrument for continuing self-improvement in this area.

Yes, Extension workers require much "special knowledge"—one of the hallmarks of a true professional. The fact that Extension is pioneering in a relatively new and different type of education emphasizes the importance of a journal in which this "special knowledge" can be shared with all members of the profession. The challenges we all face are much the same. From the most remote corners of Rio Arriba County in the Indian lands of New Mexico to urban Nassau County in the shadows of New York City, Extension teaching methods hold to the same basic principles. By sharing our common problems, perhaps we can find some uncommon solutions.

Your special knowledge of teaching techniques, your understanding of how to motivate and use leadership, your interpretation of research findings, all may contribute to the professional growth of other Extension workers. We hope, therefore, that you not only read the *Journal* but that you share your experiences and "special knowledge" with colleagues through it.

Often it seems that a great deal is expected of the Extension worker—not only professional competence in his own field but the highest standards of ethical conduct, self-discipline, and public service. This is not easy to live up to. But our professional journal will serve as a constant reminder that attaining these standards is not necessarily a lonely pursuit—that others are struggling too and that they will likely have helpful ideas.

This journal will be only as good as we make it. It should receive our continuing, enthusiastic support.

SUMMARY

Although representing a blending of many professions, melded to form a unique idea in education, Cooperative Extension is emerging as a distinctive profession in its own right. The *Journal* can help us develop more fully those concepts and techniques which are special to Extension. It will complement other professional journals as we constantly strive to increase our competence in both specialized fields of subject matter and in Extension methodology.