

## *Coordinating Extension*

**The great expansion of continuing education programs emphasizes the necessity for effective coordination within a state**

**E. T. YORK, JR.**

*A number of schemes for coordinating or merging extension functions within the Land-Grant institutions have been proposed or tried. On the premise that some means of association or coordination must be achieved between Cooperative Extension and other off-campus educational activities, the author proposes alternatives for coordination within and among universities in a state.*

THE EXPANSION of adult or continuing education throughout the nation is inevitable. We know that many institutions of higher learning will help meet these needs. But Land-Grant Universities have a rather specific commitment of service to the state—to serve, truly, as the “people’s university” by extending the resources of the university to all the state. This is a responsibility which has, at best, been met only in part.

In a significant position paper presented in 1963, at a national seminar on agricultural administration in the Land-Grant system, a committee of Land-Grant University presidents stated:

With history of success (of the Cooperative Extension Service) in mind, we make a proposal of policy that the extension idea be broadened and extended to include more of the university structure—perhaps all of it.

The environment in which the university serves is such and the adult education needs of the nation are so great that it is logical to assign these greater responsibilities to the extension arm of the university. In the period ahead the nation will be better served if the Land-Grant system has an organized way to focus its intellectual resources on problems and needs of a developing society in a world setting.

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Just how this is to be accomplished is a matter of decision for each university in accordance with what it considers appropriate. It seems, however, that some means of association or coordination should be attained between Cooperative Extension Service activities and the other off-campus and extension teaching activities of the institution, whether these activities be classified as university extension, general extension, continuing education, or by some other name.<sup>1</sup>

This statement appears to be a clear enunciation of the inevitable. The following conclusions, then, drawn from this statement might be made:

1. The "extension idea" will undoubtedly be broadened and extended to include the entire university structure.
2. Some means of association or coordination must be achieved between Cooperative Extension and other off-campus educational activities.
3. The pattern of organization will vary from state to state.

Action already taken by some states is completely consistent with these conclusions.

#### COORDINATION WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

We must accept the premise that some means of association and coordination must be achieved between Cooperative Extension and other off-campus educational activities. Let's examine, therefore, some alternative approaches to effecting this coordination both within the university and among universities in a given state.

The first alternative within the university would appear to be a merger or amalgamation of Cooperative and General University Extension, a move some states have already made. It appears that the experience with such an amalgamation has been generally favorable—the best experience apparently being in those states which have a single state university or only one major university concerned with general extension. This first alternative provides certain problems in states with more than one university offering extension programs. Although not an insurmountable problem, such an amalgamation also poses certain difficulties because of restrictions imposed by law in the use of federal funds by Cooperative Extension.

<sup>1</sup> *The Century Ahead*, proceedings of a seminar on Agricultural Administration in the Land-Grant System, June 16 to 19, 1963, Fort Collins, Colorado (Ames: Center for Agricultural and Economic Development of Iowa State University), pp. 13-14.

A second alternative would be to effect close coordination between Cooperative and General Extension programs within the institution, with clearly delineated responsibilities for each. This would appear to provide greater flexibility and to have possibilities for more universal application than the first alternative.

It does not appear feasible to divide responsibilities between Cooperative and General Extension on the basis of either geography or subject matter. Delineation by the form or type of educational work carried out by the two organizations would provide a more appropriate basis.

One of many possible approaches would be to have Cooperative Extension represent the total university in the conduct of most educational programs of an *informal* nature—expanding in scope a type of effort which is uniquely identified with and, in fact, sponsored by Cooperative Extension. Major emphasis would be focused upon the community, the people, and their problems, concentrating upon the solution of those social, economic, and institutional problems confronting the community.

With this approach, General Extension would continue to provide more formal educational programs to those not in residence at the university. In addition to credit courses, this might include workshops, short courses, conferences, etc., directed toward the general education and cultural enlightenment of the individual. Such efforts would in many cases complement the work of the Cooperative Extension Service as it focuses upon community problems and needs.

There appears to be much logic for broadening the scope of Cooperative Extension to serve as the educational arm of the total Land-Grant University in carrying out informal educational programs similar to those already underway in agriculture and home economics. Even now, Cooperative Extension needs additional subject-matter resources of the total university to deal adequately with the broad problems in agriculture and home economics. Furthermore, there is no sharp dividing line separating the problems of agriculture and rural people from those of other segments of our society. And finally, Cooperative Extension represents an organization of demonstrated effectiveness which with minor restructuring could serve as the vehicle for carrying out these broadened responsibilities. Let's look for just a moment at how this might be accomplished.

The increasing complexity of farm technology and other problems associated with commercial agriculture demand a better trained, more highly specialized type of Extension agent. There is

already a major trend toward the employment of this type of specialized agent operating within a multi-county area. In some instances specialized personnel operate within the boundaries of a single county.

Such a system of "local" subject-matter specialists will likely continue to call for a leader or director for the program in each county. He will be a specialist in organization, group dynamics, communication skills, and educational methodology. Such a person would serve as liaison between the people and their problems and the educational resources of the university which might be brought to bear on these problems. This is a role in which county agents have already developed a high measure of proficiency.

A move toward this organizational pattern will likely be made even with no appreciable change in Extension's present responsibilities and scope of operations. If Cooperative Extension's role were to be enlarged as we have suggested, this type of organizational structure would effectively serve this broader need. To implement this enlarged responsibility, subject-matter specialists would be added from other parts of the university as dictated by the problems and needs of the people.

This approach would not dilute the support currently given commercial agriculture. To the contrary, by drawing upon the resources of other parts of the university, Cooperative Extension could much more effectively deal with the problems of agriculture and the rural community. As resources permitted and experience justified, Cooperative Extension could begin to deal with problems and needs of other segments of society, as well.

Such an organizational structure would provide a maximum degree of flexibility in programming and would enable each state to focus on problems of paramount local importance. In a predominantly agricultural state, the extension program would likely have an agricultural orientation. In an industrial or urban state, the university would have a vehicle for concentrating its resources on the problems of an urban and industrial society. Flexibility in developing a "program mix" to fit varying conditions is essential.

#### COORDINATION AMONG UNIVERSITIES

In many states there will be a growing problem of coordination of extension programs among universities. Since there is a Cooperative Extension program in each state, this problem immediately focuses upon the manner in which the activities of the Cooperative Extension are coordinated with the General Extension programs in other institutions.

We can assume that no state can afford the luxury of major overlapping and duplication of program effort—and that attempts must be made to coordinate the extension educational programs among institutions of higher learning. If we start with this premise, how can such coordination be effected?

The programs of Cooperative Extension reach into nearly every county within the state. It is highly doubtful whether any state can develop parallel networks of extension personnel providing the broad geographical coverage achieved by Cooperative Extension. It seems much more logical, therefore, to follow the pattern that I have already suggested for coordination within a Land-Grant institution. *This would involve assigning to the Cooperative Extension service the major responsibility for the type of distinctive informal, problem-solving and development-oriented education with which it has been associated.* The local extension program would be guided by a broadly representative extension council—so that the total continuing needs of the area or county might be appropriately selected. Responsibility of the county or area extension director would be to mobilize local leadership in helping to put together a local extension program for his area—drawing upon educational resources wherever they existed to assist in achieving the desired goals. Some—perhaps many—of the resources could come from Land-Grant institutions. However, if other institutions had capabilities and interests in a given field, they could and should be brought fully into the program.

Basically, what I am suggesting is an approach which would take advantage of an existing state-wide system of Extension agents who are already knowledgeable in the area of organizing and working with local people, helping them to identify problems and the educational resources needed to deal with these problems. The actual educational assistance needed could be provided by the organization or institution having the interest or capabilities to render such assistance. This would, of course, require close cooperation between Cooperative Extension and the other resource institutions. However, there is a considerable amount of this type of cooperation already in existence.

#### CONCLUSION

The great expansion in programs of continuing education—including those being initiated through new federal legislation—emphasizes the necessity for developing effective means of coordinating those programs both within and among universities in each

state. This need becomes particularly acute when programs of community development and improvement are involved.

Certainly the opportunities for service—the needs for continuing education programs—are virtually unlimited. This type of education can and will continue to serve the nation in helping people deal with serious social and economic problems which limit the achievement of their goals and aspirations. Extension or continuing education programs can effectively complement other forms of education—all of which are aimed at developing our greatest resource, the human mind.

Someone has very appropriately said, "Our physical resources are limited, but we have never yet really discovered the power of the human mind. We can only cultivate it, train it, educate it in a continuing expansion of the one resource on which God has put no limit."

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THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE is now doubling every 10 years and research results are doubling every seven years. This all adds up to the fact that we don't have to travel in time—even the length of one lifetime—to become an "old fogey." It's really not very comforting to know that one can become obsolete in his thinking—not once—but five or six times during the course of one's lifetime. At the present rate of technological development and progress, it is no problem at all to become a "very young old fogey." Our first responsibility always is to be current in our information and to see to it that wise and effective use is made of new knowledge.

—HENRY L. AHLGREN.

TO GET RESULTS, responsibility must be personal and individual. The instant responsibility is divided it ceases to be effective. Someone once said that if you have five men available for ditch digging, you can get more work done in less time by appointing one man foreman and letting four dig, than you can by asking all five to dig without a leader. In one case you can hold one man responsible for results, and you can get results; in the other case all five will be equally responsible—and also equally irresponsible. Buck passing is the by-product of divided responsibility. The most efficient business organizations are those where duties are exactly known, and where responsibility is definitely fixed. We need groups for deliberation and individuals for action.

—WILLIAM FEATHER.

THE AMERICAN FARMER'S ABILITY to adapt new methods and increase his efficiency has freed most of us from the labor of tilling the soil for our daily bread. The labor force released has been basic to our being a leader among modern nations in reaching for the stars.

—JOE POW.