

## Research in Brief

MASON E. MILLER, *editor*

### DISAGREEMENT ON EXTENSION'S ROLE AND CLIENTELE

County commissioners and county agents seem to see eye-to-eye on objectives and program areas of Extension. However, there is a significant difference in their perception of the various roles county agents should perform and the clientele with which they should work. These were major findings in a study conducted in the Southern Extension District of Utah, with 54 county commissioners and 34 county Extension agents participating.

In viewing the ranking of objectives by the commissioners and agents, the researcher observed a considerable difference between the two groups. Commissioners felt more importance should be given to providing direct help to those engaged in agricultural production and marketing and to providing help and guidance in community improvement. Extension agents, on the other hand, placed greater emphasis on working with youth and teaching families how to better manage their resources.

There was also a significant difference between the two groups in their perception of the role of Extension agents. County commissioners placed greatest importance on Extension's role in providing information on specific farm and home problems. Extension agents, however, felt it was more important to train local leaders who in turn provide information to others.

Concerning clientele to be served by Extension agents, both groups ranked the families on average-sized farms as Extension's most important clientele. Otherwise there was considerable difference in the ranking. County commissioners saw Extension's clientele as "farm" rather than "nonfarm," while Extension agents placed more value on working with both groups.

This study indicates that county commissioners still view some phases of Extension as a program for rural people, while county agents are more oriented to the newer, broader scope of Extension—to try to meet the needs of all the people.

Ralph H. Horne, "County Commissioners' and County Agents' Perception of the Utah State University's Extension Services." Unpublished M.S. thesis.

MASON E. MILLER is Director, Institute for Extension Personnel Development, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48823.

Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, 1966. Brief prepared by Evelyn Lawrence, Assistant Extension Editor, Utah State University.

#### AG—BUT NOT ON THE FARM

With fewer and fewer farmers, what's the prospect for agricultural-trained youth finding a job that will use their "ag" competencies? Pretty good—at least according to the results of a study in New York state.

Talking with employers from 541 businesses in 16 school districts, researchers found some 213 different jobs requiring ag competencies. Interviews were conducted by agricultural teachers in each district during the 1963-64 school year. The 16 districts were a stratified random sample of 260 school districts offering instruction in ag that year. However, the sample did not cover urban districts and so is not generalizable at this point to the entire state.

Some of the findings:

1. Workers in jobs requiring ag competencies averaged 83 per cent of their work time on tasks requiring these competencies. The range was from 15 to 100 per cent.
2. Projecting from the 16 districts to the 260, there were an estimated 28,685 persons employed full-time in off-farm agricultural occupations, and 16,841 employed part-time.
3. Estimates were that by 1969, these districts would need almost 6000 more full-time workers and over 2000 part-time workers in off-farm ag occupations.
4. Thirty-one per cent of the full-time off-farm ag workers were in farm supplies and equipment, 27 per cent in agricultural service, and 17 per cent in farm machinery sales and service. Among the part-time workers, 64 per cent were in crops marketing and processing, 16 per cent in ag services, and 6 per cent in wildlife and recreation.
5. Employers felt a high-school education was sufficient for the vast majority of these positions. However, they reported 17 per cent of such positions required more than that educational level. Of course, some jobs such as county agricultural agent, teacher of agriculture, and veterinarian require advanced training if the person is to obtain the job in the first place.

Results from the 16 districts are compared with two districts in the Adirondack area. Total study results are used to suggest implications for the agricultural training programs of the schools in those areas of New York.

#### *Evaluation*

Although this reviewer found some parts of the report hard to follow, and some data and information apparently missing, the study is sugges-

ive of how other areas could carry out a similar study and how they might analyze the results and draw implications. Certainly this study makes the future look favorable for certain types of agricultural training.

Harold R. Cushman, Virgil E. Christensen, and Garry R. Bice, "A Study of Off-Farm Agricultural Occupations in New York State." Agricultural Education Division, Rural Education Department, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, January, 1965 (mimeographed).

#### AN "EXTRA HAND" FOR EXTENSION?

Some local-government agencies do little and have little reason for being. Yet such agencies have potential influence for one simple reason—they exist. They have an address people can write to, a role people can challenge as long as it's vague. Can Extension "make use of" such groups by forcing them to coordinate or promote certain programs?

One example of such an agency is the *study group*, set up by a mayor or board of supervisors to analyze local conditions. Maniha and Perrow studied such a group in detail.

#### *The "Study Group" Phase*

The group under study, a Youth Commission, included nine private citizens appointed by the mayor of a college town of 70,000. The commission's original aim was to study youth problems and recommend possible solutions. The city felt it had few youth problems, so public interest in the group was not high.

The first chairman (principal of the city's only public high school) urged caution. He and the local YMCA director (another key commission member) both represented agencies anxious to avoid criticism. Little happened during much of the group's first year.

The 29 agencies working with local youth feared the commission at first, feeling that it might be a sort of spy from city hall. The feeling of threat ended, however, when the commission's first annual report praised local youth and youth groups.

#### *The "Action Group" Phase*

Two events finally made the commission more than a study group. First, a respected physician became the second chairman. He belonged to no local youth agency whose interests and reputation forced him to be cautious. Second, the commission was forced to "stand up and be counted" on a controversial issue. This episode went roughly as follows:

1. A juvenile brawl in the area stirred the city attorney to draw up a strict antibrawling ordinance.
2. The mayor and council felt that the ordinance, with its possible invasion of civil rights, was "too hot to handle." So they sent the or-

dinance to the commission for study as a sort of delaying tactic. This put the commission on the spot. "We have to recommend the ordinance," said the YMCA director. "If we don't and it's not passed, we'll be blamed for any disturbance that might occur."

Thus the commission was forced to act. And immediately other agencies and groups saw the commission as a way to get done the things they wanted done. They soon made demands the commission couldn't shrug off as outside its "study group" role. For example, the local United Fund group offered to help sponsor a seminar on youth problems—a move the commission reluctantly supported. And the probate court got the commission involved in studying the need for a protective service for juveniles.

#### *Implications for Extension*

Many of the commission's activities forced the 29 youth-serving agencies to at least take account of each other's existence. This in itself seems important in counties where dozens of youth-related groups go their separate ways. Such interorganization cooperation is one goal Extension often attempts to reach.

Extension may also get some direct help from dormant local agencies—"extra hands" to help put across its programs. This, in a sense, is the way the Youth Commission was used.

The problem for the Extension worker in these cases, then, is: How can such rather inactive agencies be placed in a position where they will become active and committed to programs Extension sees as desirable?

Abstracted from John Maniha and Charles Perrow, "The Reluctant Organization and the Aggressive Environment," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, X (September, 1965), 238-57. Prepared by Kenneth H. MacLaury and Hugh M. Culbertson.

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IT WOULD SEEM that an effective consumer education program for low socioeconomic groups should combine an awareness of the culture of the group, an understanding of the part values and goals play in consumer choices, a knowledge of how to get the greatest total family satisfaction from limited resources, and a positive outlook—a belief that each family has an opportunity to achieve a more pleasant, more comfortable home; an adequate diet and suitable clothing; better health; and independence and a better life for themselves and their children.

— MARGARET C. BROWNE