

## *Research in Brief*

MASON E. MILLER, *editor*

### TRAINING NEEDS

Accurate assessment of training needs for Extension personnel is a continuing concern to Extension. This study used the critical incident technique to try to identify agent training needs, possible differences in training needs, and job requirements according to the position and tenure of incumbent agents. Four hundred and forty-four critical incidents were collected from 74 subjects in 23 small meetings. These incidents were then classified into a performance category system set up at the beginning of the study.

Teaching and communicating incidents were most often reported as critical, followed by organizing, conducting programs, administering, program planning, and evaluating in that order. Teaching and communicating proved to be the most frequent critical performance category for home economists and agricultural and natural resource agents. But 4-H youth agents most frequently reported "organizing" incidents. Agents of different tenure reported incidents with similar frequency in all categories except "evaluating." Inexperienced agents very infrequently reported incidents in that category.

When incidents were analyzed for what agents felt competent in, agricultural and natural resource agents and home economists most frequently reported "teaching and communicating" competencies, while 4-H youth agents most frequently reported training needs in the "teaching and communicating" category. Agents generally attached much greater importance to the competencies they possessed than to their needs for training.

Overall agents' ratings of the importance of incidents gave the following ranking of categories, from most important to least: organizing, conducting programs, program planning, evaluating, teaching and communicating, and administering. Home economists ranked "organizing" first in importance, while 4-H youth agents ranked "conducting programs" first, and agricultural and natural resource agents ranked "evaluating" first. Experienced agents reported "program planning" as most important, whereas inexperienced agents gave top importance to "organizing."

Agents generally reported less difficulty performing tasks in which

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they possessed competencies. Overall ranking was: evaluating, organizing, administering, program planning, teaching and communicating, and conducting programs.

Fred J. Peabody, "An Analysis of Critical Incidents for Recently Employed Michigan Cooperative Extension Agents with Implications for Training," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 1968. From author abstract.

#### DISTRICT EXTENSION HOME ECONOMIST ROLE

This study attempted to get at perceptions of what is, and what should be, the role of the district Extension home economist. Mail questionnaire respondents were Kansas district Extension home economists, district Extension supervisors, and county Extension home economists.

Respondents rated fifteen selected functions of the district home economist according to the *present* and *desired* emphasis for each. The five most important functions desired by the three groups were: keeping up-to-date, training agents, coordinating county work with specialists, programming, and counseling on professional problems. County and district home economists were in highest agreement throughout the study. Least agreement was between the county home economists and the district supervisors.

Although there was general agreement among the three groups on what the present emphasis is, there was even better agreement among them on the desired emphasis. As a group, the district home economists were the least satisfied. They felt they should be giving more emphasis to keeping up-to-date and evaluating staff performance.

Mary Doris Schroeder, "The Role of the District Extension Home Economist in Kansas," unpublished Master's thesis, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, 1968. From author abstract.

#### JOBS AND NONCOLLEGE PRONE RURAL YOUTH

This research was concerned with the educational and job plans of rural high school juniors and seniors in 31 rural schools in eight widely scattered Illinois counties.

Most young people in this study who were not going on to college wanted more education beyond high school. They wanted training for clerical, sales, service, craftsman, foreman, agriculture-related, operative, and skilled jobs. Farming was a choice of only 5 per cent. Most students, especially the noncollege prone, reported they had little knowledge about their choice of job.

Higher proportions of the college prone went to teachers and high school counselors for information and advice. They felt that their teachers were of help by making them feel wanted, making them want to learn, and understanding their strong and weak points. However, many

noncollege prone indicated that teachers gave preferential treatment to the college prone.

Most students preferred working with people and ideas rather than tools, machinery, plants, and animals. This was true particularly for the college prone. Higher proportions of the noncollege prone were primarily concerned with salary, security, and good relations with co-workers in their future jobs. Most of the college prone preferred challenging work and a chance for self-expression.

The author discusses the results from the view of ways a person can help the noncollege prone prepare more adequately for life after high school.

D. E. Lindstrom, "Factors Related to the Education and Job Plans of Rural Youth," *Illinois Agricultural Economics* (January, 1967).

#### EVALUATIONS OF LISTENING GROUPS AS AN EDUCATIONAL TECHNIQUE

This dissertation examines the hundreds of explorations of listening group projects conducted in over 30 countries in the past 45 years. A listening group project is one where a group of adults meets together on some regular basis to discuss radio or television programs. This is usually done under the leadership of a lay person—sometimes with the assistance of supplemental printed materials and with arrangements for two-way communication between listeners and broadcasters.

The study's conclusions are that listening groups can spread the learning of factual material efficiently on a mass basis, promote the development of desired attitudes, increase popular interest in public affairs and other areas, significantly affect motivation toward group and individual action, and contribute to a movement toward more direct democracy in an age of pervasive mass media.

Other tentative conclusions are that listening group projects need a substantial staff of paid field organizers and that groups attract clientele of lower education and economic attainments than typically engage in adult educational activities.

John Funnell Ohliger, "The Listening Group in Adult Education," unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, California, 1966. From author abstract.

#### QUALITY OF EVALUATIVE RESEARCH

This study evaluated the quality of reported research dealing with the evaluation of adult education, including the Cooperative Extension Service. Two hundred and twenty evaluation research studies from Cooperative Extension, University Extension, evening colleges, community or junior colleges, public schools, and the Great Books Foundation were reviewed.

Conclusions were that most studies were highly localized and valuable

only to the program studied. Many were severely limited by weakness of design and sampling, inadequate data and inadequate analysis of the data. About 20 per cent yielded findings that are generalizable. About 20 per cent might serve as direct or slightly revised models for evaluative research in adult education. Not over 15 per cent make a fundamental contribution to the general theory of adult learning behavior and its evaluation.

Elizabeth W. Sutton, "Analysis of Research on Selected Aspects of Evaluation in Adult Education," Florida State University Project No. S-449-64, Tallahassee, Florida (October 1, 1964, to June 30, 1965), in cooperation with Office of Education, HEW.

#### HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM EVALUATION

Even among highly motivated community leaders, there'll be a difference in what they get out of a training program. This was shown by selected community leaders in Nebraska who took part in pilot sessions in basic human resource development.

Material was taught from six leaflets, "Developing Human Resources for Economic Growth," supplemented by state and county data. Teaching methods included lecture with use of slides and overhead projector, followed by question-answer sessions and small group discussion periods. The population studied was 81 selected community leaders from 25 different occupations. Sixty-one of the respondents were male.

The higher the education level, the more points of knowledge that were gained by the leaders between a test given before and after the session. Most gain was by those with education beyond high school. Also, those in the high occupational status category achieved significantly higher scores than those in the low category.

No significant differences in attitude score were observed. Participants' ratings did reveal a deep interest in the topics discussed and a willingness to further disseminate the information to other community members.

Duane E. Loewenstein and Susan S. Lewis, "Development of Human Resources," Cooperative Extension Service, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1965. From author abstract.

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