

The Challenge—The Specialist's Part in Program Planning

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The state Extension specialist is often forgotten when discussion is held on Extension program planning. This author-specialist tries to identify a model for use by all specialists in developing state-level programs. The model was developed specifically for textiles and clothing; however, it identifies implications for total state Extension program planning. How do you think this model supports or inhibits program planning by county Extension professionals?

Program planning is an annual event in the life of an Extension professional—even though it should be a continual process. As state Extension specialists prepare suggestions for the county staff, the could-be challenge often becomes a tedious chore.

I felt that somehow all the energy expended in this effort could result in better program suggestions and include other benefits as well. This was the challenge I faced as a state Extension specialist in textiles and clothing.

I realized that a model for program development could give direction to program planning. So, I defined my philosophy and beliefs involved in program planning, including the idea that a

model could contribute to a more efficient operation, minimize piecemeal decisions, and lead to more overall program consistency.

Before the Model

Before the present model was developed, the majority of new programs in textiles and clothing (T & C) came from specialist initiation. Considering current research and field staff requests, the specialists developed programs that were offered in a state home economics program suggestion book.

Some programs were first piloted in a county. Some were requests from county Extension home economists (EHE). Here

the specialist worked with the county personnel to define and meet the specific needs expressed in the request. In some instances, these programs became available to the entire state when the needs were viewed as statewide.

Some programs were initiated through direct contact with the specialist by an agency, special interest group, or interdisciplinary group of Extension specialists. In this case, the specialist worked with the requesting group to identify the needs and develop the program.

Task Force Organized

With a reorganization of clientele needs and program priorities, the Extension home economics administration felt that the basic human needs should first be considered separately and then integrated into other programs when overlaps occur. From this, textiles and clothing task force was established.

This task force included two Extension specialists in textiles and clothing, two Extension home economists, and three members of the textiles and clothing department teaching staff.

The group met once to review existing programs and once to consider program needs. The specialists developed the program needs into objectives and program descriptions that were mailed to the task force members for reactions before revision. Very little

revision was suggested and the programs were submitted to the Extension home economics staff for review, for possible integration with other programs, and, finally, for printing in the program suggestion book to be used by county EHE's.

The task force involved other people in the planning process. However, no audiences were represented. The main contribution of the task force was the determination of needs and it wasn't directly involved after that point. No framework was used to get the desired audience participation throughout the program development.

Developing the Model

In hopes of developing such a framework for program planning, I began a survey of theory applicable to program development in adult education.

Major Dilemma

I found that one of the major dilemmas of adult education is whether the audience should be involved in program planning and, if so, to what extent. Dutton, who favors involvement of the audience, describes adult education that's successful in effecting behavioral change as being a result of a program that's designed to meet the needs, interests, and desires of the audience it serves.¹ Without audience involvement, these three

factors would be unknown to the educator.

In a construct for social change developed by Beal and Bohlen, involvement of the audience is an integral part of successfully achieving social action.² If the behavioral objectives in teaching are meant to effect change in the individual, we could align the audience involvement in education with the construct for social change.

In developing this model, I incorporated audience participation in the determination of needs with the task force considering the total textiles and clothing Extension program. Then, when specific programs are being developed, a greater participation of the audience involved occurs in sub-task forces.

Another aspect of program planning apparent in the literature was that the program be based on both audience needs and current subject-matter content.

In describing concepts to implement the education of adults, Bergevin stresses the importance of considering audience needs.³ He describes three types of needs. Symptomatic needs are those considered to be a genuine need but are in reality an indication of something else. Felt needs are those considered necessary by the individual concerned. Real needs are those a learner lacks and can acquire through a learning situation. Involving the audience in determining needs may

not result in defining the real needs. Therefore, it's important that individuals with knowledge of the current research and development in the subject-matter area be a part of the need determination phase.

The process for translating needs into objectives does not automatically occur. Knowles organizes this process into three stages.⁴ First, the needs are categorized and put into a priority system. Then, they're screened through filters. This involves questioning their place in the purpose and philosophy of the organization, their feasibility, and the amount of interest of the audience. Finally, the remaining needs are translated into program objectives.

The model proposed here involves the major textiles and clothing task force in the categorizing of needs and the formulation of priorities. This task force also begins filtering the needs by questioning the purpose and feasibility in Extension programming.

The sub-task forces then approach each program need idea as more of a specific audience critique. Here the interest and felt needs are explored. The Extension specialist has a better understanding of where the audience interest and comprehension is in light of the expressed needs. The results are translating the remaining needs into objectives that have undergone a filtering

process and have been geared directly at the behavioral change of the intended audience.

In moving from the program objectives to designing a program, Schmidt and Svenson discuss the steps in developing an adult learning experience.⁵ Their stated progression of ideas are incorporated into this model. The planning action steps are: (1) assessing the stated objectives, (2) identifying available resources and their limitations, (3) selecting the sources of ideas, (4) developing the general design, (5) selecting the learning opportunities that will best enable the objectives to be accomplished, and (6) incorporating evaluation into the program design.

Feedback and Revision

Continual feedback and revision are cited as important concerns in program planning. Alan Knox brings out a series of important ideas dealing with evaluation.⁶ He says the purpose of evaluation is to improve the educational program. If the program is to be successful, feedback and revision must occur at all stages of development. Waiting until after the program is implemented weakens the program development effort. This proposed model makes use of the major task force for total program evaluation and use of the sub-task forces for specific feedback in the phases of refinement of needs

and program design. This feedback is received continually throughout the development so that program revision and refinement can be made.

Built-in feedback and revision doesn't eliminate evaluation after the program is implemented. Knox again points out that feedback must reach those to whom it will make a difference.⁷ In this case, the EHE and the Extension specialist directly receive the feedback. They're the carriers of the feedback to the other groups and individuals involved in program planning and design.

Major Ideas

Therefore, major ideas that have been incorporated into the model proposed here were drawn from a variety of sources and experience in planning and implementing programs. They are:

1. Audience involvement in need determination and specific program planning.
2. Program planning based on audience needs and current subject-matter content.
3. Development of behavioral objectives.
4. Program design giving consideration to objectives, resources, priorities, methods, and evaluation.
5. Continual feedback and revision.
6. Built-in program evaluation with feedback into the system.

Description of the Model

Considering references in the program development area and experience in program planning, the following framework, consisting of 11 phases, was developed (see Figure 1).

Phase 1: Formulating Data Base

This provides the basis for making decisions about program needs and priorities. The task force members contribute subject-matter information, an understanding of audience needs, and program requests. The Extension specialists receive inputs from university and industrial research, the national clothing specialist, and direction from other states and agencies.

Other task force members contribute from their experiences as home economists, members of the research and teaching staff, and audiences we're trying to reach.

Phase 2: Determining Program Needs and Priorities

Provided with the data base information, the textiles and clothing task force is responsible for determining program needs and priorities. The task force consists of the two Extension specialists in textiles and clothing, two Extension home economists, two members of the textiles and clothing resident teaching and research staff, and two representatives of the Extension audience.

The audience representatives are selected as people who can speak for viewed needs of community members other than themselves. One of the Extension specialists chairs the task force and directs the group in considering all aspects of the data base in determining program needs and priorities.

Phase 3: Filtering Interdisciplinary Program Needs and Priorities

The Extension specialists from textiles and clothing meet with the other home economics subject-matter specialists and the other state Extension home economics staff to share the program needs and priorities of each of the subject-matter task forces. The total state staff determines which program needs had interdisciplinary possibilities.

A sub-task force for each of the possible interdisciplinary areas is established, consisting of the subject-matter specialists involved, a coordinating state program leader, and appropriate audience representatives.

These sub-task forces proceed through the same phases that are to follow, with the chairperson following the role outlined in this model for the textiles and clothing Extension specialist and the state Extension home economics staff taking the place of the textiles and clothing task force for these interdisciplinary programs.

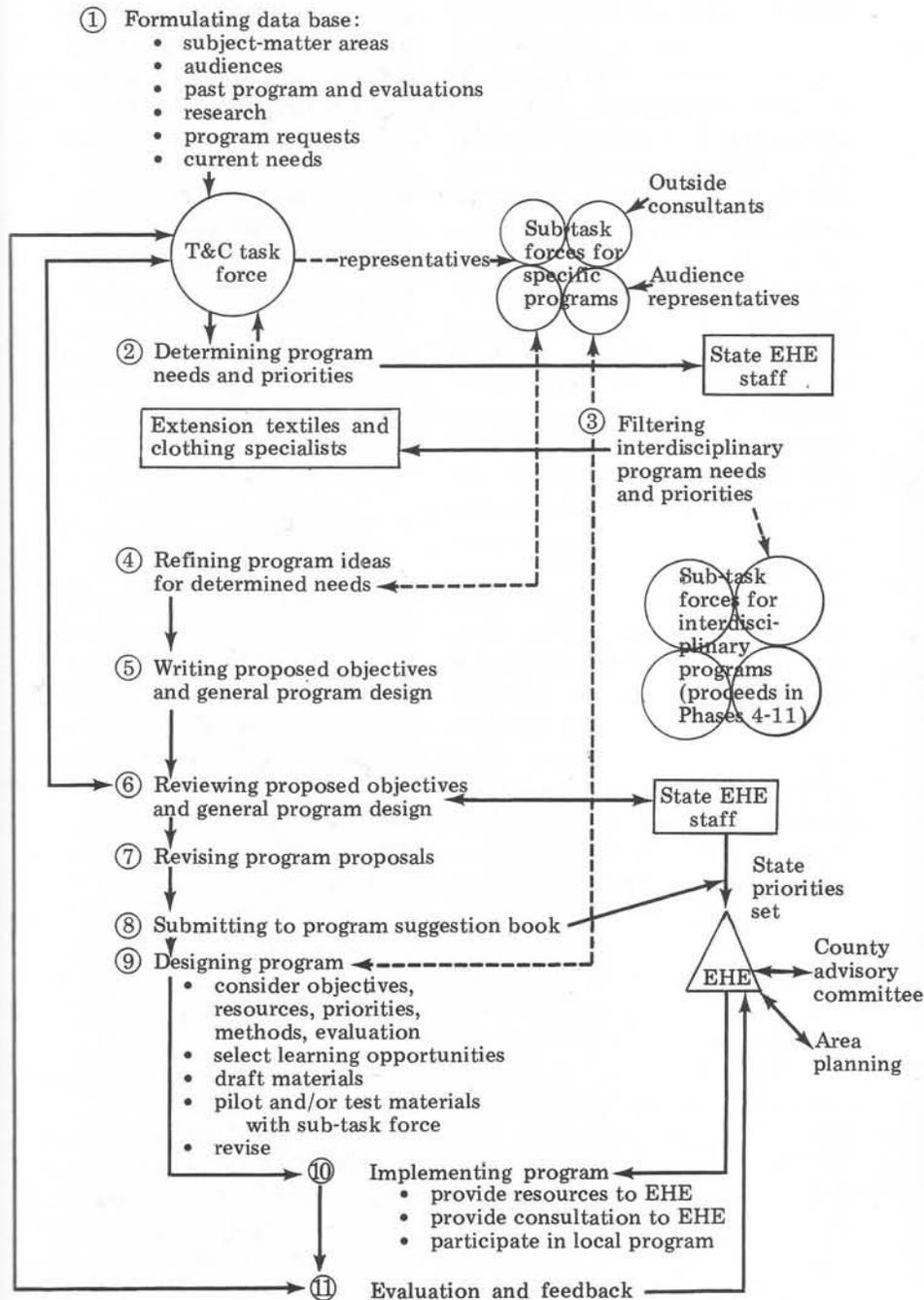


Figure 1. Program development in Extension textiles and clothing.

Phase 4: Refining Program Ideas
for Determined Needs

Given the program needs and priorities from the task force, the Extension specialists begin refining each idea by consulting a sub-task force. The needs are divided by the two specialists. Each member of the major task force is on at least one sub-task force group, preferably one related to their own interests and experience. Outside consultants directly related to the program need and specific audience become the important part of each sub-task force.

Phase 5: Writing Proposed Objectives
and General Program Design

By working with the sub-task groups, specialists are able to formalize the ideas developed into program objectives and a brief description of the program design.

Phase 6: Reviewing Proposed Objectives
and General Program Design

All of the program needs now in the form of objectives and descriptions of program design are taken back to the task force committee of the whole for review and suggested revision.

During this same period the state home economics staff, of which the specialists are a part, meet to review the proposed programs of all of the home economics subject-matter task

forces and the interdisciplinary sub-task forces. Suggestions for revision and integration with other home economics programs are made at this time.

Phase 7: Revising Program Proposals

The suggestions from the major textiles and clothing task force and the state home economics staff are incorporated into the final program objectives and design by the specialists.

Phase 8: Submitting Program
to Suggestion Book

The program objectives and design are submitted for printing in the program suggestion book for Extension home economics.

This book is a program planning aid for each EHE. She works with a county advisory committee and a member of an area home economics staff to consider the total program for the coming year and decide what programs will be implemented in the county and area.

Phase 9: Designing Program

The specialists now begin designing the programs.

Each program is developed considering the desired outcome of objectives, the resources available, the priority of that particular program in reference to allocation of resources, the methods used to best transfer the know-

ledge, attitudes or skills, and the evaluation integrated into the total program. The learning opportunities are selected and the materials drafted. At this point, a complete pilot may be done or the materials could be piloted with the sub-task force. The program is then revised.

The sub-task force may be called together several times during this development to share in the planning. The specialist should keep the system open as plans develop for input by the sub-task force members.

Phase 10: Implementing Program

The program is now ready to be implemented. A request comes to the specialist from the county EHE.

Implementation can take place several ways. The Extension specialist can provide the resource materials prepared to the EHE for her use, the Extension specialist may supply consultation to the EHE to carry out the program along with program resources, or the specialist may participate in the local program.

Phase 11: Evaluation and Feedback

The evaluation that was built into the program is administered or observed and the results come back directly to the EHE and the specialist. The EHE takes this to her county advisory committee and the area home economists

to help in future planning. The specialist takes this to the textiles and clothing task force through the data base information for help in future program planning.

The specialist may see need for refinement in the program as feedback comes in. She may wish to call the sub-task force together for modification and revision of Phase 8.

Implications

With a growing trend in Extension to integrate the subject-matter specialists into their respective departments, there's some concern of fragmented programming. This integration is necessary for Extension to keep current with research and for the teaching research staff to keep aware of public needs and concerns. However, more of an effort must be made to provide program ideas that meet the needs of individuals as they exist—not as we've divided them into subject-matter areas. Implementation of this model will allow for subject-matter exploration and then integration as it relates to individual problems in Phase 3.

This model was designed to be a guide for the textiles and clothing specialists as they relate to the total Extension program. However, obvious implications exist if all subject-matter areas would follow the suggested phases. Departmental soul-searching is

necessary. For many departments, the involvement of teaching and research staff on a task force of this nature could be the beginning of greater cooperative efforts among the teaching, research, and Extension components of each department.

Committees designated to determine audience needs and establishing program priorities often don't have representation from the specific audience involved. There are many rationalizing reasons for this. The feeling that the audience representatives may be inhibited by the presence of professionals is one reason. Another is that it's difficult to find a representative sample of the audience. And, of course, the time involved is often an uncited, but well-recognized, factor.

Audience involvement at the beginning stages with articulate representatives of the people is part of this model. The most important audience contribution then comes at the sub-task force stage when members of the particular audience to be reached are actively involved in the development of the program, giving it the people orientation so important to its success.

If implemented throughout the Extension system, this model could result in: improved department and Extension integration, interdisciplinary Extension programs, and programs that effectively reach the intended audiences because of the people involvement in the planning stages.

Footnotes

1. Donnie Dutton, "Should the Clientele Be Involved in Program Planning?" *Adult Leadership*, XIX (December, 1970), 181-82.
2. George Beal and Joseph Bohlen, *How Social Action Takes Place* (Ames, Iowa: Cooperative Extension Service, 1969).
3. Paul Bergevin, *A Philosophy for Adult Education* (New York, New York: The Seabury Press, 1967).
4. Malcolm S. Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* (New York, New York: Association Press, 1970), Chapter 6.
5. Malcolm S. Knowles, ed. *Handbook of Adult Education in the United States*, (Chicago, Illinois: Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., 1960), Chapter 7.
6. Alan Knox, "Continuous Program Evaluation," in *Administration of Continuing Education*, Nathan Shaw, ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Association for Public School Education, 1969).
7. Knox, "Continuous Program Evaluation."

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