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Quantitative Objectives: Boom or Bust. In the program development process, problems and opportunities are tackled by Extension staff. *Objectives* are determined, clientele are provided with learning situations, and then evidence of accomplishments is sought. The *objectives* are the primary key in the search for results: evaluation is observing the image of the *objectives*.

The demands to show impact and the pressure of accountability may tempt program leaders to call for quantitatively measurable objectives in individual plans of work. Pressure to express both objectives and results in numbers may have negative effects on agents and organizational accomplishments. Here I want to raise the red flag of caution.

One axiom relating to administrator/agent behavior suggests "you get when you inspect." If quantifiable individual program objectives are requested and "inspected," staff will prepare quantifiable objectives. But at what cost?

There's a distinct possibility that agents will aim their objectives to safely meet administrative expectations and commitments they made in stating program objectives. The requested standards would be met, but the cost would be a retreat to safety inadvertently caused by the quantitative requirements. And, the rewards would be few.

It's assumed that Extension professionals get their rewards and job satisfaction from clientele. A recent Ohio study showed that clientele were far more concerned with information received, methods used, and the character of the agent than with program objectives.

A call for quantitatively measurable objectives would be seen as a signal of change in organizational attitude. Such a move, from low organizational structure to greater structure, would induce rigidity, feelings of confinement, and loss of autonomy in program planning. This rigidity could be perceived as a mechanism of control.

Major problems include: (1) the tendency to neglect aspects that aren't easily quantifiable, (2) placing too much emphasis on measurable results, and (3) encouraging the covering up of poor performance, actual falsification of data,

or the setting up of low goals because of overemphasis on measurable factors.

Research has shown that organizations with low structure permit self-control and encourage individual initiative in planning. Quantitative objectives would improve the analytical abilities of the organization at the expense of individual imagination.

Specific objectives and the search for *specific* results appear to be the most practical approach. Contrasted with quantitative objectives, specific objectives don't necessarily contain numbers or amounts, but provide goals. They give direction, characterization, and visibility; they're concrete and definitive. Most important, they identify action as evidence that clientele have achieved the objective.

Specific objectives are logically defensible when they answer the question, "What do you want to happen?" This doesn't appear to be too much to ask. Making goals more specific was found to be positively related to performance in 80 studies.

Although quantitative objectives may have negative effects in program planning, they must be used to some extent in evaluation. Many times agents can easily provide quantitative data for program measurement—such as dairy herd improvement, EMIS, weight reduction, EFNEP, and 4-H leadership impact.

A directive forcing Extension program plans to contain quantifiable and measurable objectives would probably have a negative impact on productivity. Program aims would be lowered to provide a margin of safety. Objectives stating direction and outcome give agents more flexibility—and results can often be documented quantitatively.

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