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Oral Presentations

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Networks of Influence: Characteristics and Behaviors of Central Actors Providing Social Support

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Abstract

The dynamics of Extension work lend it to be a high-stress environment even without inserting requirements for change. The research findings here were derived from the hypothesis that an informal network of social support exists as a way for employees to cope within this environment. Specifically, that there are individuals positioned centrally within these networks who have a degree of influence of which they may not even be aware they hold. The exploratory look into this network and its utility spur the conversation on how to effectively engage and support individuals through change within Extension organizations.

Human issues are central to today's change management practices. The failure many organizations experience when implementing organizational change is not typically a result of technical issues, but human issues instead (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Schein, 2010). An understanding of informal networks and psycho-social dynamics playing out in the organization provide leaders knowledge that can increase the success of change efforts. When confronted with change, individuals seek to find solutions to overcome anxieties, and they typically look to those around them for support. Finding ways to address the anxiety and stress of individuals involved in the changes has been a commonly overlooked practice by change leaders amid the routine complexities that accompany change efforts.

In addition to reducing anxieties, the connections within the support networks have been examined showing evidence that supportive relationships within networks influence individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Valente, 2010). The position typically wielding more power to influence the behavior of others is that of the central actor (Valente, 2010). Central actors in a social support network are not only plugged in to the dynamics of the informal organization but they also wield an influence through the support they provide.

"Centrality is the extent to which a person inhabits a prestigious or critical position in the network"(Valente, 2010 p.16) and also denotes a greater number of connections. In many cases, centrality is equated with popularity, thus also perceived as opinion leaders. Opinion leaders are those individuals who provide legitimacy to change efforts and act as role models for behavior change (Valente, 2010). Research conducted in the public health discipline supports utilizing opinion leaders as an effective tactic for behavior change (Valente, 2010). Kotter and Cohen (2002), learned over their decades of studying organizations and change, "people change less because they are given analysis that shifts their thinking than because they are shown a truth that influences their feelings" (emphasis original)(p.1).

The purpose of this study was to discover the informal network of social support, highlighting the non-supervisory relationships, within an Extension organization. I further examined the individuals positioned centrally in regard to their collective characteristics, behaviors, traits, and attributes as well as the manner in which they are perceived to influence the behavior of those in their networks. The specific objectives of this research study were to: (1) Explore key network characteristics to describe the non-supervisory network of social support in OSU Extension (2) Describe the central actors in the non-supervisory network of social support, and (3) Explore the perceived influence of central actors on behavior of ties. This study employed a mixed-methods approach starting with a quantitative network analysis employing survey methodology to obtain sociometric data to establish the network composition and identify central actors. This was followed by a qualitative examination of the central actors' characteristics and influence through a survey approach obtaining both central actor and tie perspectives.

Findings from this study showed a sparse network with informal social support actor-tie connections generally existing in close physical proximity supporting the preference of in-person interactions. Central actors were described as being older, more experienced, and possessing attributes and characteristics of: accessibility, positivity, listening, open-mindedness, encouragement and coaching, being a role model, an altruistic service orientation, building relationships, being a connector, relevant experience and knowledge, and inclined to provide instrumental assistance. An interesting finding included an element of motivation among central actors reflecting that of self-actualization and spirituality.

Central actors were perceived to hold influence on behaviors of ties. Eighty-four percent of ties reported that their perceptions changed as a result of interactions with the central actors. Actions reported as contributing to the central actors influence included: providing aid to navigate organizational practices, empowerment through positivity, encouraging a work-life balance, and enhancing competencies of ties. Interestingly, central actors were, in this case, passive leaders, as they saw evidence of changes in tie behaviors yet did not perceive themselves as influential in that change.

Implications of this study are to encourage others to think about organizational change differently and be encouraged to engage in social support behaviors, and for leaders to create an environment where supportive behaviors are encouraged, developed, and rewarded for the sake of building capacity for change. Extension has always been slow to change. Investigating alternative modes of implementing change and/or strategically providing coping mechanisms during times of change has the potential to revolutionize the way Extension approaches organizational change.

The goal of this session will be to share this research and its potential contributions to leveraging human capital in our organizations. Through a presentation and interactive discussion, participants will: (1) learn about informal networks of social support and change, (2) learn about central actors characteristics and influence, (3) have an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas, and (4) take home ideas on how they can leverage informal networks in their organizations.

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Florida's Early Career Extension Agents' Knowledge and Behavior Regarding Design Principles to Communicate Messages

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Matt Benge
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University of Florida

Abstract

Introduction/Theoretical Framework

One of the many job duties expected of Extension agents is to communicate with the audiences they serve (Oakley & Garforth, 1985; Rasmussen, 1989; Seevers & Graham, 2012). Harder, Place, and Scheer (2010) found communication to be a competency entry-level Extension educators must possess. The use of design principles can be used to visually communicate messages with an audience more effectively (Kirkpatrick, n.d.; Pettersson, 2012; Prairie Magic Design, 2016). The theoretical framework used to guide this study is Rogers' (2003) innovation-decision process which includes five stages (i.e., knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation). Identifying where Extension agents are in their understanding and adoption of design principles will better aid Extension training and development professionals to more adequately develop and plan effective communication training for early career Extension agents.

Purpose/Objectives

The purpose of this research is to understand Florida's early career Extension agents' experience of learning and using design principles as a tool to aid communication efforts in their Extension programs following Extension Faculty Development Academy (EFDA). The objectives of this study were:

1. To understand Florida's early career Extension agents' knowledge regarding design principles.
2. To understand Florida's early career Extension agents' adoption of design principles in their communications work.

Methods

Florida EFDA is a professional development training program for early career Extension agents. This study focused on the 14 EFDA participants in the spring 2019 cohort. A survey was developed to determine Extension agents' thoughts as they relate to the topics covered over the course of the EFDA. A component of this survey asked about the Extension agents' ability and intent to use design principles. The Extension agents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert-type scale to the following five statements: prior to the presentation, I had considerable knowledge about design principles, after the presentation I had considerable knowledge about design principles, after the presentation I understand design principles better, I can now use design principles more effectively to communicate about my

Extension program, and I plan to implement content from the presentation into my personal and professional life. The following real limits of the scale were used to interpret the mean scores and standard deviation: 1.00 - 1.49 = *strongly disagree*, 1.50 - 2.49 = *disagree*, 2.50 - 3.49 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 3.50 - 4.49 = *agree*, 4.50 - 5.00 = *strongly agree*. The survey was developed in Qualtrics and disseminated via email. Thirteen Extension agents completed the survey for a 93% response rate.

Telephone interviews were conducted with EFDA participants. The follow-up interviews were approximately 15-20 minutes in length and conducted four to five months after completion of EFDA. The interviews were semi-structured in nature, and an interview guide was developed to guide the conversation. Topics included in the guide included: Extension agents experiences with design before becoming an Extension agent, how Extension agents used design principles or put their knowledge of design principles to use, how Extension agents used their knowledge of design principles to better communicate their messages, and barriers and successes experienced with using design principles. Seven of the 14 participants agreed to participate for a 50% participation rate.

Results/Conclusions

Based on the survey results immediately following EFDA, the Extension agents perceived they *neither agreed nor disagreed* they had considerable knowledge about design principles prior to EFDA (M = 3.00, SD = .91). After EFDA, Extension agents *agreed* they had considerable knowledge about design principles (M = 4.00, SD = .71). Additionally, the participating Extension agents *agreed* they had a better understanding of design principles (M = 3.77, SD = .73), they can now use design principles more effectively to communicate about their Extension program (M = 3.69, SD = .85), and they plan to implement content from the presentation into their personal and professional lives (M = 3.92, SD = .86).

Based on the interviews four months following the EFDA, the Extension agents had some level of knowledge of design before EFDA, but most of their knowledge was with Microsoft Office programs to design work. Some Extension agents have continued to use Canva, an online design program introduced at EFDA. However, most Extension agents indicated not being able to practice their learned design skills because of the little amount of time on the job. Many expressed these design skills were presented too early in their jobs to be able to use and practice them most effectively. Unanimously, the Extension agents reported the knowledge and use of design principles is valuable in their work. The Extension agents did indicate they plan to use some of these skills as their jobs are becoming busier with workshops, courses, and programs. The few agents who have been able to practice their design skills did indicate they have received positive feedback on the communication disseminated.

The Extension agents' attitude towards the use of design principles was extremely favorable as all agents thought learning design principles was valuable. All participants have at least attempted to engage in some form of using design principles in their work; however, very few have actually implemented the use of design principles in their work due to time limitations. Overall, the beginning Extension agents participating in the spring 2019 EFDA are in between the decision and implementation stages of adoption of design principles in the innovation-decision process (Rogers, 2003).

Recommendations/Application

The Extension agents consistently expressed the educational importance and value of learning design principles to aid their communication efforts in their programs. However, the most consistent recommendation was to offer design principle training further into agents' careers as they felt it was more important to learn four to five months into the job rather than right away. Additionally, the Extension agents expressed needing more time to practice and/or more training in design principles to fully be able to implement design principles in their work. More extensive and hands-on design principles training could be added to the offered professional development trainings for Extension agents to practice and further develop these desired skills.

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USDA's Plan of Work System Redesign Update and Implementation

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Abstract

Integration of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) reporting systems into one platform and streamlining grantee reporting requirements is well underway. The presenters will provide updates on the changes that have been completed and implications for grantees and system administrators. We will also preview changes to come, anticipated timelines, and how NIFA will communicate those changes. These changes largely affect the Plan of Work tool through which Land-Grant Institutions report on research and extension activities. We will leave ample time to answer questions.

Agent Mentoring and Confrontation: Cultural Implications

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Abstract

Introduction/Theoretical Framework/Review of Literature

Formal mentoring programs often demonstrate positive outcomes in employee satisfaction, skill, productivity, retention, and promotion (Rogers, Monteiro, & Nora, 2008) by enabling new hires to benefit from the knowledge and experience of more experienced employees (Smith, Hoag, & Peel, 2011). However, there are often intangible issues within mentoring contexts that challenge the success of the mentor-mentee relationship because traditional mentoring practices may come with assumptions about knowledge and power (Darwin, 2000; Hansman, 2009). The Mississippi State University (MSU) Extension Agent Mentor Program attempted to address this by training agent mentors to recognize the need for honest, direct communication. Both parties in the mentoring relationship have a responsibility to define openly and clearly their roles, goals, and expectations, but doing so can be difficult, especially early in the relationship, until there is an element of trust (Bokeno & Gantt, 2000; Cohen, 1995; Hansman, 2009).

The MSU Extension Agent Mentor Program is grounded in the concepts of adult learning (Kolb, 1984) and critical reflection (Ash & Clayton, 2009), with the premise that Extension is a learning organization and its personnel are adult learners (Denny, 2016). Agent training focuses on (a) understanding the characteristics and motivations of adult learners and (b) applying adult learning theory in the context of mentoring adult learners. This theoretical application is realized in the form of six desired behaviors of mentors of adult learners: relationship building, information sharing, facilitation, confrontation, modeling, and visioning (Denny, 2017).

Research or Guiding Questions/Need

Pre- and post-comparisons of the Assessment of Mentor Functions for Extension Professionals disseminated to trained mentors in 2015 and 2016 indicate strong relationship building, information sharing, modeling, and visioning behaviors, but inadequate facilitation and confrontation skills. Informal communication with mentors revealed challenges to approaching the mentoring relationship, specifically with regard to the mentor behavior of confrontation, because mentors must challenge the beliefs and assumptions of the mentee in an attempt to initiate rational discourse (Mezirow, 1991). We hypothesized that while this particular behavior of confrontation is critical to transformative learning in the context of the mentor-mentee relationship, it conflicts with the current social and cultural norms of the organization. As such, there was a need to modify the agent training and mentor program framework to overcome this barrier.

Methods and/or Data Sources

The first step in modifying the program was to think differently about the agents being selected to be trained as mentors. Supervisors were asked to identify agents who excelled programmatically but also would have the personality and willingness to have “difficult conversations” with colleagues and hold

new agents accountable. Agent mentor training in 2019, while maintaining the foundational lessons on adult learning and mentoring, focused more on agents understanding and becoming comfortable with the concept of confrontation. Using critical reflection questions and role-playing exercises, the agents received a much more in-depth and hands-on learning experience than those in 2015 and 2016. Programmatically, one of the four Extension regions is piloting the idea of group mentoring, rather than one-on-one mentoring. Finally, both mentoring formats have been provided additional resources not available to the 2015 and 2016 mentors that should facilitate the mentoring process and make confrontation an easier behavior to accomplish successfully.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

Initial feedback from the 2019 agent mentors reveal an appreciation for the comprehensive training and a sense of accomplishment for being hand-selected to serve as mentors for what is typically identified as a 'trouble-maker' attitude (P. Vandevere, personal communication, July 18, 2019).

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

It is possible that time and further development of the mentor-mentee relationship may facilitate the transformative learning process, but efforts to integrate opportunities for a "transformative-learning-theory-to-practice" approach in all aspects of professional and leadership development for Extension professionals will be necessary for long-term, sustainable change. Additionally, rational discourse, driven by objectivity and focused on promoting mutual understanding, needs greater emphasis in the re-framing of the culture of Extension as a learning organization.

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Undergraduate Apprenticeships: Opportunities for Enhancing Awareness of Extension

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Abstract

Introduction/Theoretical Framework/Review of Literature

Extension personnel qualified in the technical subject-matter relevant to the identified needs of respective stakeholders are essential (Cooper & Graham, 2001). Studies in the for-profit sector indicate it may cost as much as six to nine months of a new employee's salary for orientation and training (Bliss, n.d.). The Mississippi State University (MSU) Extension Undergraduate Apprenticeship Program was developed to introduce undergraduate students to Extension's integrated research and outreach approach, while raising their awareness of potential Extension careers, since "apprentices learn in contexts very similar to situations they seek for further activity or employment" (Sadler, Burgin, McKinney & Ponjuan, 2010, p. 236).

Cohen (1995) identified mentees in the workplace as adult learners. Within a learning organization, such as Extension, employees have an opportunity to build capacity and change behavior (Garvin, 1993; Senge, 1990). Mentoring programs that encourage continuous learning and risk taking (Buck, 2004; Denny, 2016) support these efforts, and learning is most successful when mentors engage their mentees in critical debate, open discourse, and reflection and analysis of personal assumptions and actions (Cranton, 1996; Denny, 2016; Mezirow, 2000).

The MSU Extension Apprenticeship Program is rooted in the principles of mentoring adult learners in an organizational context. Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Model and the DEAL Model for Critical Reflection (Ash & Clayton, 2009) serve as the conceptual framework for the program. Kolb's theory utilizes a holistic perspective on learning which incorporates experience, perception, cognition, and behavior. The DEAL Model for Critical Reflection promotes and assesses student learning in applied and experiential learning approaches via a process that scaffolds learners as they describe, examine, and articulate learning.

Research or Guiding Questions/Need

The MSU Extension Apprenticeship Program aims to raise students' awareness of Extension and Extension careers; positively influence students' decision to pursue graduate studies and/or enter a career field that ultimately benefits Extension; enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills; and garner support for Extension's mission as a non-biased, research- and evidence-based source of information. All apprentices are expected to achieve certain student-centered learning outcomes. As a result of participating in this program, they should be able to:

- summarize the significance of research-based outreach and education;
- give examples of how their work contributed to the Extension mission;

- demonstrate the way(s) in which target clientele can use/benefit from the research conducted during their apprenticeship experience; and
- evaluate the effectiveness of a particular educational activity or tool as part of a larger Extension program.

Methods and/or Data Sources

In order to evaluate the success of the program as well as the student-centered learning outcomes, several formative and summative assessment methods were employed. Mentors conducted and submitted feedback on four guided reflective conversations with their apprentice over the course of the apprenticeship. Apprentices submitted weekly online reflective journals, guided by critical thinking prompts, and these were qualitatively analyzed for changes in attitude, learning, and critical thinking. Apprentices also had to develop and present at least one poster or oral presentation based on their respective research project and develop or contribute to an Extension publication or other non-formal learning tool. Finally, mentors evaluated their apprentice on certain performance criteria at the end of the apprenticeship, and apprentices completed a retrospective survey assessing their attitudes and expectations about the program and their learning experience.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

Data from years 1 and 2 of the program have been collected and analyzed. Data from year 3 is currently being collected. In collaboration with their respective mentors, apprentices from years 1 and 2 produced fourteen poster presentations and six Extension publications, gave eight oral presentations at professional conferences (one international), and co-authored two journal manuscripts. Fifty-three percent (n=9) will “likely” pursue an Extension career as a result of their experience as an apprentice. Sixty-eight percent (n=13) reported that they are “likely” or "extremely likely" to pursue an Extension-related graduate degree as a result of the apprenticeship.

Students agreed or strongly agreed they had an increase in: knowledge of their discipline of study (74%, n=14), ability to interact and work with people of different disciplines (79%, n=15), and skills in critical thinking (63%, n=12), problem-solving (84%, n=16), teamwork (74%, n=14), written (63%, n=12) and oral (74%, n=14) communication. To date, three (38%) of the seventeen students have chosen to pursue an agriculture- or extension-related graduate degree as a direct result of their apprenticeship experience.

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

From a practical perspective, the integrated approach of the MSU Extension Undergraduate Program of engaging students in the various aspects of Extension research, program planning and development, implementation via outreach, and evaluation embody Nancy Franz’s Engaged Scholarship Model (2009). The six leverage points of the engaged scholarship model are reflected in the program. Extension administrators expressed a desire to improve awareness of Extension and recruitment of potential candidates for Extension careers at MSU, after noticing a growing trend of higher turnover and fewer applicants for open positions. The initial design of the overall program was proposed with the intent to address this issue, by allowing undergraduates to engage in integrated research and outreach projects which result in *discovery of new knowledge*. A U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Education and Literacy Initiative (ELI) Research and Extension Experiences for Undergraduates (REEU) Fellowship Program grant enabled the *development of new knowledge* via the implementation of the apprenticeship program. The tangible outputs developed by the students in the form of journal manuscripts, scientific posters, Extension publications, and direct teaching based on related research represent a *dissemination of new knowledge*. Finally, the program evaluation data has revealed a significant *change in learning and behavior* among the undergraduate apprentices. Ideally, at the conclusion of the funding we will begin to see a *change in condition* (i.e. more individuals applying for Extension positions and less turnover). This program can serve as an example for other Extension systems seeking buy-in from Extension faculty and other personnel to support and engage students in undergraduate research and develop a new cadre of stakeholders that understand and value the Cooperative Extension system.

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Developing a Culturally Responsive Extension Organization

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Abstract

Introduction

As immigration continues to expand and shape the changing demographics in the United States (U.S.), Extension clientele are becoming more diverse. According to the Pew Research Center (2019), there were a record 44.4 million immigrants living in the U.S. in 2017 that accounted for 13.6% of the nation's population. This represents more than a fourfold increase since 1960, when only 9.7 million immigrants lived in the U.S., accounting for just 5.4% of the total U.S. population (Pew Research Center, 2019).

These immigration trends are expected to continue in U.S. with Hispanics accounting for the largest proportion of growth. The U.S. Hispanic population reached a record 59.9 million in 2018, which was 1.2 million more than the previous year and up from 47.8 million in 2008 (Flores, Lopez, & Krogstad, 2019). Hispanics accounted for 52% of all U.S. population growth from 2008 to 2018 (Flores, Lopez, & Krogstad, 2019). While the South saw the largest population growth among Latinos at 33%, states like North Dakota (135%) South Dakota (75%), Montana (55%) and New Hampshire (50%) also experienced rapid growth during this period, demonstrating the extent of this paradigm (Flores, Lopez, & Krogstad, 2019).

The large Hispanic population in the U.S. represents a significant challenge for Extension educators to utilize culturally responsive teaching (CRT) so Cooperative Extension can provide culturally relevant programs. CRT is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including student's cultural identities in all aspects of learning and empowers them socially, intellectually, politically and emotionally (Gay, 2002; Banks & Banks, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2007). Experts assert that show how programs that do not consider the cultural differences of Hispanic students are frequently less effective (Gay, 2002; McGee & Banks, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2007). A gap currently exists between wanting to educate diverse audiences and being prepared to do so. According to Geneva Gay (2002), "too many teachers are inadequately prepared to teach ethnically diverse students" (p. 106).

The aforementioned challenge is particularly salient in the state of Florida that ranks third in Hispanic population at approximately 5 million (Pew Research Center, 2019). As a result, Extension professionals came together in 2017 to develop a service organization named the Coalition of Florida Extension Educators for Latino Communities (CAFE Latino;web citation) to help to ensure that the University of University of Florida - Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension (UF-IFAS Extension) had the competency and capacity to serve this growing clientele group. This organization adopted a new approach that extends beyond what traditional affinity groups do, which is typically focused on community building, to provide much needed services to its educators.

The chair of CAFE Latino facilitated strategic planning to develop a program plan that utilized data from a comprehensive needs assessment of its educators and was grounded in Geneva Gay's (2002) framework for CRT. The program is specifically designed to achieve the following tenets of CRT among Extension educators including: (1) understanding cultural characteristics and contributions, (2) developing cultural responsive curriculum designs and instructional strategies (3) creating classroom climates that are conducive to learning for ethnically diverse students, and (4) promoting cross-cultural communication. CAFE Latino created services specifically to meet the educators' needs in adherence with the framework including: (1) cultural competency and program development and evaluation training, (2) Spanish translation, (3) educational curricula and material development (4) educational collaboration and (5) general inquiries. CAFE Latino's evaluation framework is connected to the organization's program plan and ability to achieve a culturally responsive system where Hispanics feel like they belong.

Research/Guiding Questions

The purpose of this presentation is to share best practices and lessons learned from the CAFE Latino program. The presentation will structure by the guiding question, how can an Extension service organization enhance the capacity and competency of Extension educators to provide culturally responsive program?

Data Sources

The presentation will present data from both formative and summative evaluations that were leveraged to assess the efficacy of the CAFE Latino program. In addition, program tracking data will be presented to outline the number of service requests submitted and the extent of the service needs. Meeting notes will be utilized to provide insights and clarity into programmatic decisions, the influence of organizational structure (i.e. committees) and functionality on the program outcomes. These data will be presented in a manner to provides clear insights into organizational and program design.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

Since its inception, CAFE Latino has recruited 32 members across all Extension program areas to assist in providing services to UF-IFAS Extension educators. Since the group was formalized with its strategic plan in 2018, there have been over 100 requests for the services of CAFE Latino that resulted in 6 statewide trainings, 7 article translations, 4 dual language educational videos and the full translation of the Homeflow curriculum, with a 98% satisfaction rate for services rendered. Evaluation data from trainings show that educators (n = 57 trainees) are building relevant cultural competencies as demonstrated by their agreement (% of respondents that selected strongly agree or agree) with the following statements: (1) I have a framework to help me understand cultural differences (100%), (2) I can identify values from my culture (100%), (3) I understand how understand how culture affects participation in program and services (100%), (4) I can identify strategies to work with cultural guides in order to better inform my program planning and implementation (92%), (5) I understand barriers to intercultural communications (100%), (6) I understand the concepts of privilege, power, and oppression (100%), (7) I understand how to select instructional strategies based on cultural characteristic (92%).

Educational Importance and Implications

It is important that Extension organizations are proactive in developing a strategy for addressing the growing diversity in their states. Sharing lessons learned from the CAFE Latino program provides an opportunity for others to create a similar program in their state that may be applied to diverse audiences to develop culturally responsive educational programs. Using CAFE Latino as a model, there is the opportunity to help Cooperative Extension serve all people and remain relevant in the 21st Century.

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Expanding Evaluation Competency Research: Exploring Competencies for Program Evaluation Using the Context of Non-formal Education

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Abstract

Introduction / Theoretical Framework / Review of Literature

Cooperative Extension competency models include program evaluation as a core competency for Extension agents (Brodeur, Higgins, Galindo-Gonzalez, Craig, & Haile, 2011). These professionals are expected to conduct meaningful evaluations to measure the success of their educational programs allowing for data-driven programmatic improvements and the demonstration of impact.

Competency models were first popularized when psychologist David McClelland (1973) challenged the idea of using intelligence tests. Ghere, King, Stevahn and Minnema (2006) developed an initial competency model for evaluators that was later adapted by Rodgers, Hillaker, Haas and Peters (2012) specifically for Cooperative Extension. The model outlines 41 specific program evaluation competencies for Extension agents ranging across three domains including situation analysis, systematic inquiry, and project management.

According to Lamm, Israel, and Diehl (2013), underdeveloped evaluation competencies influence the evaluation activities conducted in Extension. In their national study, they found most Extension agents only administer post-test following an educational activity, focused on measuring participation and customer satisfaction. Agents' lack of expertise limits their ability to measure long-term impacts and demonstrates a significant need related to evaluation planning, data collection and analysis (Lamm et al., 2013).

So in 2018, Drs. John Diaz, Anil Kumar Chaudhary, and Jay Jayaratne created the first evaluation competency model for Extension educators that utilized national consensus among Extension evaluation specialists (Diaz, Kumar Chaudhary, & Jayaratne, in review). This model was developed based on the contextual factors of Extension and considering that evaluation was only part of the Extension educator's job portfolio. The model was used to inform the development of a 12 module Program Planning and Evaluation Certificate program that online certificate program designed to develop evaluation competencies among Extension educators. The certificate program was launched in July of 2018. It is completely asynchronous, so agents can complete the certificate program at their own pace.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this presentation is to share the functionality of Program Planning and Evaluation Certificate Program as well as evaluation results related to evaluation competencies.

Data Sources

The data that will be shared in this presentation comes from the evaluation of the certificate program. We utilize a pre-test, module assessment and activities to measure the participants ability to identify key concepts and put them to practice.

Results and Conclusions

To date, 42 Extension and non-formal education professionals have enrolled in the program. UF-IFAS Extension professionals make up the majority of participants, professionals from US Department of Agricultural National Institute of Food and Agriculture, The University of Maryland, Tuskegee University, and Southern Region Extension Forestry are some additional organizations represented. Evaluation data shows that there is a 100% increase in the participants ability to identify key concepts and 100% success rate in being able to successfully apply concepts to such exercises as: (1) developing a logic model, (2) developing measurable objectives (3) developing an evaluation plan, (4) developing evaluation instruments and (5) developing outcome and impact statement.

In addition, we held a focus group with 7 participants that completed the program. All 7 explained how useful the program was and their continued engagement with the materials following completion. They all denoted being extremely satisfied with the program and extremely likely to recommend the program to their colleagues.

This demonstrates that the certificate program meets a significant need for Extension educators, as program evaluation expectations continue to increase. The flexibility of the program allows the professionals to complete the program within a busy schedule and increases their access to training.

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The Change Model: A Model to Elicit Clientele Change

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Abstract

Introduction

William C. Ashley and James Morrison (1995) stated that change is no longer a characteristic of organizations; change is the essence of the organization. Extension is an organization that attempts to elicit change in clientele. In today's educational environment, Extension educators must effectively anticipate new programming efforts. Specifically, they must shift from being reactive to proactive, prioritize issues, deploy educational resources in a timely manner, and provide educational interventions that result in specific clientele change. Clientele change is often evident in behavior change or adopting technology or best practices that affect program impacts in terms of economic returns or social or environmental impacts.

For many decades, Extension has utilized a systematic approach to develop programs. The communities that Extension educators live and work in today are extraordinarily different from the communities they worked 15 to 20 years ago. While technological advancements and the demographics of clientele have undeniably changed the Extension educational landscape, there is a need for a new program development process. A program that enables Extension educators to rapidly plan, implement, evaluate, and interpret educational programs that result in change.

Therefore, we suggest a new clientele change model, The PIE Program Change Model for program development. This model embraces fundamental elements of program development-Plan, Implement, and Evaluate, and represents the characteristics of excellence. Characteristics include: 1) issues defined at the local level and will involve the anticipation of and response to on-going and emerging issues. 2) Committees, coalitions, task forces, leadership advisory boards, and 4-H and youth boards are involved in the process. 3) Educational programs will result in clientele change. 4) Extension educational programs will effectively serve culturally diverse audiences.

A Unique Model

This new model is a unique contribution to the area of Extension because it makes the process of developing programs straightforward. Using a plan, implement, evaluate mindset, we aim to help Extension educators decipher between stages of development and streamline the process. Specifically, to ensure usability of this model, we created the model to promote clientele change, and be easily understood and executed by Extension educators, and understood by volunteers. Ultimately this model helps Extension educators develop effective programs to move clientele from obtaining knowledge to taking action in order to change behavior, adopt new practices, or adopt new technology that results in economic, social, or environmental impacts.

Method of the Model

The PLAN Phase:

1) Recognize and define the need for clientele change. Identify the issue or problem by using appropriate sources such as leadership advisory boards, program area committees, coalitions, 4-H and Youth Development boards, commodity groups, Extension specialists, state or federal mandates, elected officials, and Texas Community Futures Forum data. It is critical for Extension educators to clearly define the situation in terms of its scope and severity, as well as its social, economic, or environmental impact. A formal or informal needs assessment to determine baseline data is essential.

2) Establish goals and objectives for change. Develop measurable objectives that will provide a programming “roadmap” that results in clientele behavior change and adoption of best practices. After developing measurable objectives, the Extension educator should: develop a realistic vision for what can be accomplished, select content to teach, select appropriate intended change indicators to use in program evaluation, and convey to internal and external funding sources the intended change resulting from the programming.

3) Diagnose relevant factors. Diagnose all factors that contribute to planning and developing an educational program. Specifically, identify and describe the following: target audience, current practices, and current conditions.

The IMPLEMENT Phase:

4) Plan and select appropriate change techniques and methods. Develop a series of sequentially organized educational events that build on previous knowledge and skills to realize clientele change. During this process, Extension educators should consider the factors that affect the rate of adoption. The goal is the outline of an entire educational program from beginning to end.

5) Deploy program marketing strategies. Marketing educational programs is critical to program attendance. Promotional materials create visibility for the programs, inform the public about the program and encourage them to seek more education about the topic.

6) Implement educational events/activities focusing on clientele change. Effective educational programs produce clientele change when the program is well-planned, organized, and delivered. Delivery methods appropriate for a specific educational purpose can help accomplish an educational objective. Proper delivery methods depend on the target audience, educational objectives, type and context of the instructional information being presented, delivery methods, the sequence of educational events, and ability to measure outcomes. It is imperative for Extension educators to consider which delivery methods (e.g., individual, group, or mass media) aligns best with their target audience’s learning style and the program’s educational objective. Educational events should be presented in a sequential manner designed to build on the previous event, and ultimately sequenced in a logical order to enable clientele to build on an educational continuum from basic concepts to more complex ones.

The EVALUATE Phase:

7) Evaluate the degree of change. Extension educators must identify the degree of clientele change. Collect and analyze data to determine whether the program has achieved the intended clientele change outlined in the program’s educational goals and objectives. Extension educators should use appropriate

data collection methods (e.g., surveys, existing records, questionnaires, pre/post-tests, direct observations, interviews, focus groups, or individual measurements).

8) Interpret evaluation results. Interpreting program evaluation results is a high priority organizes data into a concise narrative. Extension educators can effectively report evaluation results by clearly communicating the change that stemmed from the series of educational interventions conducted.

9) Tell story to stakeholders. An essential part of Extension is to create an effective report and communicate those results to stakeholders (e.g., program area committees, leadership advisory boards, 4-H and youth boards, coalitions, and task forces) Doing so gives these groups information to help Extension map out future programming efforts and ensure Extension's relevance. Therefore, it is important to use the evaluation results to refocus future programming efforts.

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The Path from Old to New: Implementing organizational change through adapting a new agent mentor program

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Abstract

Introduction

The core mission of Extension holds to the principle of outreach efforts driven by community needs. Pressing societal demands are complex and workforce compositions are constantly evolving. However, organizational change is essential when histortical methods do not meet current needs. Like other transformational innovations, institutionalizing change requires integrating the new way of doing and thinking with existing organizational priorities, resource allocation, structure, and culture to be able to change daily routines and systems in sustainable ways (Holland, 2005). Changing the ways in which people within an organization think is an adaptive challenge, and any adaptive challenge must be addressed in order to reach desired levels of institutionalization. Adaptive challenges do not have straightforward solutions but are systematic and involve multiple stakeholders (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001). Such challenges require changes in behaviors and thinking because they cannot be solved by expertise or technical solutions alone (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004).

Employee retention and training are critical aspects of organizational sustainability. Cooperative Extension, similar to other organizations, need to onboard agents in ways that achieve strong, long lasting employees. A sustainable workforce is essential to maintain an organization's productivity, staff's commitment, and employee retention and recruitment (Tunwall & Stuntzman, 2012). Within the scope of Cooperative Extension, many new Extension agents lack career competencies (application of knowledge, technical skills, personal characteristics leading to outstanding performance) and must develop skills quickly to a level in which they can perform their work efficiently and effectively (Cummings, Andrews, Weber, & Postert, 2015).

Research shows an effective mentoring program can help improve employee retention (Godwin et al., 2011; Place & Bailey, 2010). Stress can intensify, work-group cohesion can suffer and productivity can be limited when new hires are not provided guidance when they enter new positions, environments, and complex organizations, such as Extension. According to Strong & Harder (2009), agents identified a mentoring program as a critical piece in employee retention. Mentors can offer strategies to create manageable schedules to handle stress, balance work-family demands and ultimately result in job satisfaction.

This presentation will share the journey Universtiy of Gerogia (UGA) Extension took to reimagine a new agent mentor program. The redesigned mentor program will be shared, but the session will focus on the process of acknowledging the need for change, strategic steps that led to a redesign that aligned with an organizational paradigm shift, the use of a multidymentional evaluation of the mentor/mentee interaction and how a priority on the employee not the program elevated outcomes. Participants are

invited to explore the application of the findings as they may be transferable to other program redesigns.

Guiding Questions

- When do you know change is needed in an existing program?
- How do you build on institutional knowledge and practices, while revamping a program in response to a changing workforce?
- How can you measure success of an organizational paradigm shift through implementing a new version of a program?

Identifying the Need for Change

Three methods guided needs assessment: agent surveys, agent focus group and exit interviews. Results showed:

- The growing workforce demanded an increased number of trained mentors
- Some mentees felt like longstanding mentors were disconnected from the experiences of new agents or that their mentors were disingenuous
- One mentor did not always have the capabilities to respond to the full scope of a mentee's needs
- Mentor personalities or conflicting priorities could impede the mentor/mentee relationship
- Employee support and onboarding efforts needed to be focused on the first three years of employment. (The organization recognized a benchmark for long-term employee retention was tied to an employees willines and ability to stay with Extension for at least three years.)
- Mentors requested additional training and support

Meeting the Needs of Changing Workforce

UGA Extension Mentor Program Taskforce:

- Assessed the existing program using evaluation data
- Identified gaps in existing program in comparison to emerging needs
- Created a new UGA Extension mentor program
- Devised an implementation plan
- Defined measurements of success and evaluation method

Measurement of Success

Data suggested that ongoing support and feedback from mentees and mentors were key to program sustainability. Indicators were established to assess the progress of the paradigm shift:

- Level of needs being met for mentors and mentees
    - Co-created the new program with representation from all levels of the organization to include a variety of perspectives
    - Set-up mechanisms to meet needs of new agent in a more prompt and accurate manner
- Sustainability within the organization
    - Utilized technology to create accountability
    - Adjusted the workload of the program implementation to fit roles

Conclusion

Overall, findings indicated that the new mentor program is meeting the professional needs of UGA Extension's changing workforce. Mentees feel more supported and mentors feel more equipped compared to their experience in the previous version of the mentor program. District level administration has real-time feedback and can customize the mentor teams to respond to the unique needs of each agent. State level management support and customized engagement plans support steps towards an organizational paradigm shift. The intentionallity of creating buy-in, inherit flexibility in the program design and constant flow of feedback were positive steps towards the organizational adoption of paradigm shift, as well asbetter supported mentors and mentee to address the constantly changing and complex needs of the workforce and society.

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Assessing Perceived Competency Improvements of Participants in the Rural Online Initiative of Utah

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Abstract

Introduction/Literature Review/Conceptual Framework

Remote employment opportunities have increased 159% since 2005 (Reynolds, 2019). Consequently, Brotherton (2012) indicated there was a 10% decrease in employees working in traditional workplaces such as offices. While Utah had overall positive economic growth, many rural counties experienced increasing unemployment rates; some rural counties faced 20% to 35% layoffs in 2017 (Burkitt, 2017). As a remedy, the Utah Legislature appropriated funds to Utah University to implement the Rural Online Initiative Pilot Program (ROI) in 2018 (Noel & Hinkins, 2018). Housed within Utah University Extension, the ROI developed the Master Remote Work Professional (MRWP) certificate course. The MRWP course aims to provide educational training and services to the [State's] rural workforce and businesses on remote employment, freelance work, and e-commerce (Reese, Hill, & Swadley, 2018). Thus, the ROI seeks to equip the rural populations of Utah with the competencies needed to find and secure remote employment opportunities.

The ROI team of Utah Extension adopted a competency approach to guide the MRWP curricula (McClelland, 1973). In designing the MRWP, the competency-based model allowed program planners to target competencies most relevant to searching and attaining remote employment. Competencies are the skills and abilities needed to successfully perform in a job position (McClelland, 1973). Some competencies addressed in the MRWP course are described in the Competency Dictionary by Harvard University (Harvard Human Resources, 2016). Relevant competencies needed by rural populations for success in remote employment were identified as work-life balance, productivity, problem solving, digital communication, online technology, teamwork, and career management. This study sought to assess participants' perceptions of their ability to perform competencies needed for success in securing remote employment after completing the MRWP certificate course.

Methods

This study followed a descriptive design and attempted a census of participants from the May and June 2019 cohorts of the MRWP course (N = 365). Given a response rate of 40%, the sample size was 145 participants (n = 145). Participants were asked to complete a close-ended questionnaire after completion of the MRWP certificate course. The Tailored Design Method informed questionnaire design (Dillman, Smith, & Christian, 2014), and a panel of experts reviewed the instrument for construct validity. The questionnaire assessed seven competency areas as identified above. Each major competency area included a list of individual competency items, and participants were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert-type scale how much they believed they improved on each item after completing the course. For data analysis, frequencies were presented for each competency item, and an overall mean was presented for each major competency area. Only the highest ranked item within each competency area were discussed due to the word limit; all items will be discussed if accepted for

presentation. Mean interpretations were: 1.00 -1.49 = much worse, 1.50 - 2.49 = somewhat worse, 2.50 - 3.49 = stayed the same, 3.50 - 4.49 = somewhat better, and 4.50 - 5.0 = much better (Scales, Terry, & Torres, 2009).

Results

For the competency area of work-life balance, 51% of participants perceived they had somewhat better skills to manage their personal commitments. On average, participants perceived they had somewhat better competencies relating to work-life balance after completing the MRWP course (M=4.02; SD=0.65). For the competency area of productivity, most participants (52%) thought they had somewhat better abilities to identify habits or activities to increase their productivity. On average, participants perceived they had somewhat better competencies relating to productivity after completing the course (M=4.21; SD=0.60). For competencies relating to problem solving, 48% perceived their ability to take time to search for solutions to their problems was somewhat better after the MRWP course. Overall, participants perceived they had somewhat better competencies relating to problem solving after completing the course (M=4.10; SD=0.62). Results for competency items of digital communication showed 57% thought they had much better abilities to communicate through video conferencing. On average, participants perceived they had somewhat better competencies relating to digital communication after completing the course (M=4.02; SD=0.61). For online technology, 49% of participants perceived their ability to use team messaging software (e.g. Slack) to communicate was much better after completing the course. Overall, participants perceived they had somewhat better competencies relating to the competency area of online technology after completing the MRWP course (M=4.00; SD=0.65). For the competency area teamwork, 53% thought they had somewhat better abilities to give constructive feedback to their team members after the course. On average, participants perceived they had somewhat better competencies relating to teamwork after completing the MRWP course (M=4.07; SD=0.65). For items of the competency area career management, 45% of participants thought they had somewhat better abilities to plan their career after the course. On average, participants perceived they had somewhat better competencies relating to the area career management after completing the MRWP course (M=4.12; SD=0.68).

Conclusions/Recommendations/Implications

Preliminary results from this descriptive study provided evidence supporting the effectiveness of the MRWP course at improving participants' competencies for success in remote employment. On average, participants had high overall mean scores for all competency areas of work-life balance, productivity, problem solving, digital communication, online technology, teamwork, and career management. These results indicated participants perceived their abilities in each of these competencies was somewhat better after completing the MRWP course. This study recommends continued evaluation to identify areas of improvement of the ROI program, and follow-up evaluation procedures to measure participant's success in securing remote employment. An assessment of medium-term outcomes such as gaining meaningful remote work, and long-term outcomes such as job satisfaction and improved quality of life can provide the information needed for program expansion to other rural communities. This descriptive study on participants' competency improvements indicate initial program effectiveness and probable program impact on empowering rural communities with remote work. The study also provides a rationale for evaluating participants' competency gains in Extension programming. By isolating the competencies most relevant to the program's curriculum, program planners can assess desired competencies as an outcome indicator in Extension program evaluation.

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Enhancing Extension Employee Productivity and Contribution Through International Experiences

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Abstract

Internationalizing Extension has been a tenant of many land grant institutions work for many decades. A number of land grant institutions have international programming units or dedicated faculty who coordinate outreach opportunities to teach. Most of the work is programmatically focused and a teaching role for faculty or sharing a new practice is principled in the relationship. What may be less an area of focus is the affect the experience has on the individual faculty member. Although there have been some studies that will ask faculty their perspective of how they may have changed as an individual, there has been perhaps less focus on how international experiences can be used as a strategy within the organizational and staff development circles to improve productivity and contribution by faculty and staff members. This presentation will review the benefits of international experience for individuals as well as the implication on Extension programs as a whole. Furthermore, a proposed research study will be shared which will include the areas of premise used as key highlights resulting from a literature review of theoretical benefits which served as a guiding outline for the presentation. The goal of the presentation will be two- fold: to highlight the known benefits of international experiences and secondly to share how offering these opportunities can benefit the larger Extension system. A quick internet search focused on benefits of international experiences on employees and companies will yield a summary of generally accepted outcomes. The outcomes include improved communication skills by employees and greater empathy and acceptance of fellow employees and customers. Companies find the international experiences of employees to put them at a competitive edge and the life experience of employees who have lived or traveled overseas creates a well-rounded individual. Companies have reported that the competitive advantage they gain with internationally experienced employees enhances Shareholder acceptance as the financial benefits to the stockholders are readily seen (Carpenter, Sander, Gregersen,. 2000). Employees with international experiences results in an appreciation for cultural diversity and many companies favor applicants who have overseas experiences. Jack Welch, famed CEO of General Electric (GE) is known to have stated the next CEO of GE must be more culturally aware than he was if GE was to continue to be relevant into the future (Ludwig,1999). Extension systems should assume that investing in faculty development via international experience will enhance the quality of their Organizations. There is some theory that mid or later career employees often feel validated for their years of contribution when an international opportunity is made available to them. Not only does the employee see it as a reward, but the Organization will benefit from an employee who is more productive, happy, and energized. Furthermore, there is theory that the employee may feel a psychological contract with the Organization to enhance their work and contribution when they return because of the investment that was made in them (Welch,2003). Studies done by Extension researchers have yielded information that further validates the wisdom of investing in overseas experiences for employees. Of employees and constituents surveyed following international travel, in general, participants found the experience to enhance their world view and influenced many of them to stay internationally engaged at some level. Commissioners and Extension funders also commented that the experience helped them better understand their own county's Extension program and state's contribution and therefore resulted in increased funding for Extension (Place, Vergot, Dragon. 2005). Furthermore the researchers found that those who have an opportunity to have an active learning experience in another country not only contribute to their own personal and professional development, but they also contribute numerous spill-over benefits back in their home

unit. Globally competent Extension professionals, students and local official that are committed to Extension and its overarching mission result from effective international programs. Extension faculty in 4-H youth development are well served to have an international experience as well. Today's youth are members of the "Linkster" generation, so named because " no other generation has ever been linked to each other and to the world through technology (Newman, 2019). As such, youth development educators who have a conceptual but more importantly practical global experience can better relate to their 4-H members.

While the advocacy through the presentation is for a physical international experience some research by Extension demonstrates that the probability of the offering may be limited. Barriers such as financial cost, time commitment, as well as work and family obligations were perceived to negatively influence an Extension workers ability to travel internationally (Harder, Lamm, Vergott. 2010). Noting these concerns, there is some advocacy to enhance the number of employees who have international experiences by including that as a pre-employment preference within position announcements. Globalization and diversifying communities in the United States mandate internationally minded Extension professionals and programming (Lockett, Moore, Wingenbach. 2014). As such, some colleges are investing in deliberate study abroad programs within their Extension Education degree focus so there are potential hires who come to Extension with the skill sets and attitudes that international experiences bring.

Among some, international travel experience are seen as frivolous when there is so much work to be done at home. These experiences are viewed by some to be nothing more than a personal vacation for the employee on the college's dime. Some people are challenged to see the cross cultural competencies that are realized as well as human capacity being built. However, as administrators and managers involved in supervision and hiring, a deliberate investment in international programming can serve as a valuable tool to enhance productivity and contribution and keep Extension competitive in a global setting.

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Succession Planning: Developing Today's Extension Leaders for Tomorrow's Opportunities

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Abstract

Succession planning includes the process of identifying the critical roles within an organization and developing action plans to prepare individuals to fill the positions. This increases the availability of and access to highly skilled employees who are prepared to assume such roles. As it is common practice for businesses to set goals for succession, universities, colleges and particularly state Cooperative Extension systems seldom adhere to similar practices to attain viability (Davis, 2008; Lindner, 2001; Luna 2012). Extension Colleagues from the Southern Region led an evaluation assessment to determine the level of succession planning taking place within Extension systems. This project aimed to gather information on succession planning to learn more about what Extension systems across the country are doing to prepare individuals for future leadership roles. A survey was designed to gather feedback from Extension administrators to assess the level at which state Cooperative Extension systems are preparing for administrative leadership changes.

A total of 12 states shared pertinent information pertaining to succession planning. These data revealed that all institutions can utilize better strategies when preparing for the future. The presenters of this presentation will share these findings, which provide insight on the successes and challenges associated with retaining top talent and mentoring potential leaders for success. The presenters will also inform attendees of the competencies and skills expected of today's Land-grant/Extension leaders. Lastly, there will be a discussion on alternative ways Extension systems with less robust succession plans can still prepare potential leaders with the capacity to serve as effective administrators.

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Impact of Changing a County Impact Reports

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Abstract

Extension has continued to struggle with conveying the true impact of our programs and efforts at all levels of institutions. All those in accountability relate to need to "slaying the dragon of resistance" put up by Extension faculty and staff related to the creation of impacts (Franz & McCann, 2007). In response to this resistance, the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension has been struggling with creating a process and system for creating effective impacts to be shared with stakeholders, both local and state level.

In 2011, Arkansas added the requirement for each county to submit at least one impact report for each program area, along with all the standard end of the year reporting requirements. Each program area had its own PDF template in which county staff would enter in various impact data, including quantitative figures (educational contacts, volunteer time, evaluation data), qualitative pieces (pictures, participant quotes, observations), and a blended quantitative/qualitative impact store with relevance, response, and results outlined. The PDF was beneficial in providing a visually appealing end product that could be shared with Quorum Court members (county officials), as well as used by state level faculty to create state wide impacts. It had its own set challenges as well, including not being in compliance with accessibility standards if posted online, as many of the county offices were doing more and more.
In response to the needs of county staff, another process was needed to create a more user-friendly process that would create a visually appealing, yet accessible end product that could be viewed online, as well as used as a printed document. In Summer 2019, a collaborative team with members from Information Technology, Communications and Program & Staff Development came together to create a web based impact report form. Six online trainings were conducted in August and September to orient county staff to the new process and to go over the content needed to complete an impact report. Completed impacts were submitted to the online accountability system by the October 5th end of the year reporting deadline for review and publishing to the web. Feedback from end users and supervisors will be collected during and after the impact creation process.

The session will cover:
-Process for transitioning from fillable PDF form to an interactive webform for impact report creation.
-Training opportunities and methods offered to county staff for creating impact reports.
-Reactions from users about the new format for impact reports.
-Lessons learned and steps going forward.
-Discussion and questions related to experiences related to impact writing in other states.

Beyond Borich: Testing a Contemporary Method to Assess Professional Development Needs

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Abstract

Introduction/Theoretical Framework/Review of Literature

In 1980, Borich argued for using Kaufman's (1972) concept of needs as a gap between present and desired states as the foundation for identifying training needs. Borich (1980) adapted Kaufman's work to define a training needs "as a discrepancy between an educational goal and trainee performance in relation to this goal" (p. 39). Borich suggested using competency statements as the foundation of needs assessment instruments. Participants could then rate the relevance of each competency to their job functions and to what level they had attained each competency, ultimately allowing for the calculation of what Borich called mean weighted discrepancy scores (MWDS). The MWDS of all assessed competencies could be rank-ordered to determine priority training needs. The Borich model has often been applied within agricultural and extension education (e.g. Conner, Dev, & Krause, 2018). Limitations of the Borich (1980) model exist despite its popularity within the literature. The Borich model relies upon the calculation and use of means based on single Likert-type items. Though generally accepted during the time period during which Borich developed his approach, contemporary scholars (e.g. Bishop & Herron, 2015; Boone & Boone, 2012) have repeatedly raised concerns about the use of parametric statistics for handling single Likert-type items. More practically, the Borich method is not complicated but data analysis is time intensive; researchers need to painstakingly enter dozens of formulas into Excel, or use custom calculators, such as the one developed by McKim and Saucier (2011) for use in Excel. A better method to assess organizational training needs is desirable.

Research/Guiding Questions

An exploratory study was conducted to evaluate the appropriateness of two different data analysis approaches for use with self-report data, the traditional Borich method and a newly proposed method. Specifically, the objectives were to identify the priority training needs using each data analysis technique, and to compare the priority training needs resulting from the application of each approach.

Methods and/or Data Sources

This study used existing data from a professional development assessment of Utah State University Extension agents. Data collection occurred in April 2019 using Qualtrics, and the sample size consisted of 87 faculty (n = 87). Data were gathered from a closed-ended questionnaire consisting of Extension competency items found in the literature. The response options followed the Borich (1980) framework. On a 5-point Likert-type scale, respondents were asked to rate (a) their perception towards the importance of each competency i.e. perceived importance (I), and (b) their perception of their ability to perform the competency i.e. perceived ability (A).

The traditional method of calculating mean weighted discrepancy scores described by Borich (1980) was followed. Then, the proposed Rank-Order approach was applied to the same data set. The same survey instrument was used for either method.

In brief, the proposed contemporary Rank-Order approach to identify priority competencies for professional development follows three steps. The first step requires the researcher to perform the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test to determine number of occurrences when: (a) respondents' perceived ability (A) exceeds a competency item's perceived importance (I), (b) A equals I, or (c) I exceeds A. The second step is to convert the number of occurrences within each category into a percentage. The third step is to assign a relative weight to each category. Weights were selected based on three assumptions: (a) professional development training is necessary when A < I, (b) training is not required when A > I, and (c) professional capacity is sufficient or at equilibrium when A = I. The use of weights allows a weighted Rank-Sum Score (RSS) to be calculated for each item. The RSS is a standardized ranking of professional development needs that ranges between -100 to 100, with lower scores indicated a greater priority for professional development. An in-depth description of the analytical steps will be provided if the abstract is selected for presentation.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

For Objective 1, the highest priority needs according to the Borich approach were (a) develop measurable teaching objectives (MWDS = 3.52), and (b) create an online course for clients that can lead to certificates, badges, or Continuing Education Unit (MWDS = 3.10). In contrast, the highest needs using the Rank-Order approach were (a) develop measurable teaching objectives (RSS = - 60), and (b) apply teaching and learning principles to ensure participants understand the topic (RSS = - 53). Regarding Objective 2, both methods yielded the same highest priority competency for professional development. However, while the second highest priority differed by method, they were still identified as priorities in each approach. Similarly, both methods indicated "use presentation tools such as PowerPoint", and "conduct a lecture" were not priorities for professional development. Findings indicated some consistency in results across the Borich method and Rank-Order approach.

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

Replications of the contemporary approach should be conducted to provide additional evidence regarding its suitability for assessing professional development needs. Preliminarily, the contemporary approach offers hope that the essence of the Borich (1980) model can be maintained while overcoming some of the concerns associated with the traditional Borich analysis method. If validated, the contemporary approach will make it easier and faster to accurately diagnose the professional needs of Extension agents and specialist clientele, enabling organizations to more efficiently utilize an evidence-based approach to staff development.

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Competencies for Civil Rights, Diversity, and Multiculturalism in Extension

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Abstract

Introduction and Conceptual Framework

Cooperative Extension is subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2005). This means all Extension employees are responsible for ensuring equal access to Extension programming. Therefore, it is critical for Utah State University Extension, a recipient of federal funds, to maintain civil rights compliance. Extension personnel must have the knowledge and skills needed to ensure equal access to all programs in order to maintain civil rights compliance. Similarly, Guion and Brown (2005) described the need for cultural competencies for civil rights compliance in Extension. The literature highlighted the importance of using a competency-based model to increase the professional capacity of Extension personnel (Harder, Scheer, & Place, 2011; Liles, 2004; Suvedi & Kaplowitz, 2016). This model provides a framework to train and equip Extension personnel with the most relevant competencies to respond to clientele's changing needs. In brief, competencies are the knowledge and skills needed to effectively perform in a given role (McClelland, 1973). This study evaluates priority competencies for civil rights compliance at Utah State University Extension.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to assess priorities for professional development training on competencies related to civil rights compliance in Utah State University Extension. Objectives were to (a) explore latent factors of competencies related to civil rights compliance, and (b) rank competencies according to their priority for professional development training.

Methodology

This study followed a descriptive design and attempted to collect data from a census of Extension faculty at Utah State University Extension. The population size was 134 Extension faculty (N = 134), and with a response rate of 65%, the final sample size consisted of 87 Extension faculty (n = 87). A list of competency items was identified for civil rights compliance based on an extensive literature review. Using a 5-point Likert-type scale, respondents were asked to rate (a) their perception towards the importance of each competency to effectively conduct their job (i.e. perceived importance), and (b) their perception towards their ability to perform the competency (i.e. perceived ability). The Tailored Design approach informed questionnaire design (Dillman, Smith, & Christian, 2014) and the instrument was reviewed by a panel of experts for validity. For objective (a), a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to explore latent factors of the core competency area. Latent factors were referred to as Professional Development Themes. For objective (b), a series of paired t-test were used to rank competencies for professional development training. Priorities were based on a comparison between respondents' overall perception towards the importance of the competency and their ability to perform the competency.

Findings

The PCA revealed two underlying Professional Development Themes related to competencies of civil rights compliance, these were (a) Partnerships and Effort, and (b) Monitor and Respond. Partnerships and Effort related to those competencies needed to collaborate with underrepresented population groups and efforts to ensure inclusive and accessible programming. In contrast, the Professional Development Theme of Monitor and Respond referred to the ability to keep up-to-date records on civil rights compliance and monitor compliance goals. Priorities for professional development training were identified for both underlying themes. Within Partnerships and Effort, the top three highest ranked competencies for professional development training were (a) work with minority organizations to plan programs targeted to socially disadvantaged groups ($t = 6.97$, $p < 0.001$), (b) keep records related to All Reasonable Efforts ($t = 6.93$, $p < 0.001$), and (c) work with minority organizations to assess community needs ($t = 6.53$, $p < 0.001$). For the Professional Development Theme of Monitor and Respond, the top three highest ranked competencies for professional development training were (a) maintain an updated Public Notification Plan ($t = 6.95$, $p < 0.001$), (b) monitor program parity ($t = 6.58$, $p < 0.001$), and (c) maintain an updated record of all civil rights related documents ($t = 6.42$, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusions/Recommendations/Implications

Extension core competencies are the knowledge and skills employees need to succeed professionally. These core competencies are revised based on the needs of changing environments. Significant demographic changes across the U.S. have prompted the need to prioritize and strengthen Extension professionals' competency on civil rights, diversity and multiculturalism. Findings revealed professional development needs related to competencies within two themes: Partnership and Efforts, and Monitor and Respond. This study provides Extension administration with direction for formulating specific responses to address performance gaps related to civil rights compliance. Relevant professional development training can be incorporated into face-to-face onboarding sessions with new faculty, and also as part of periodical professional development efforts through in-service trainings, and regional and state Extension meetings.

Given the changing demographics, Extension should be committed to equipping employees with competencies to work with diverse and multicultural audiences since these are critical to Extension's future and its ability to remain relevant among growing minority populations. This study recommends Utah State University Extension administration provide learning opportunities to faculty and agents on facilitating inclusive Extension programming. Educational efforts can focus on creating partnerships with minority-led organizations, and effective recording-keeping to demonstrate program parity and overall civil rights compliance. Consistent with Guion and Brown (2005), professional development opportunities can also include topics related to cultural competencies such as human diversity, engaging with people of different backgrounds, promoting multicultural understanding. These can be critical to civil rights policies and procedures. Utah State University Extension can further support these efforts by making content available via online training, books, videos, webinars, diverse programming funding opportunities, recognition, and any other institutional resources readily available for enabling faculty to meet the mandate of equal access to all to Extension programs.

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Onboarding and Rebuilding: An Investment in 4-H Youth Development Professionals

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Abstract

Introduction

In the last year, Arizona 4-H underwent significant change. The hire of a new state program leader, county agents, and state staff exposed a dearth of onboarding tools and processes across both Cooperative Extension and the 4-H program specifically. One recent hire shared that she didn't know "things that could get her fired". This valid concern underscored the need for onboarding. Additionally, we saw it fit to ensure that our work go beyond basic rules and procedures to support success of early career professionals and lead to retention of quality 4-H staff.

We addressed this challenge by developing tools and processes for welcoming and developing new staff. Due to the limited resources and small county-based 4-H staff numbers we turned to existing resources and processes used by our counterparts in other states as a foundation for tool and process development.

Theoretical Frameworks

Our framework for developing onboarding relied on the Four C's (Bauer, 2015). Compliance, the first C, refers to the lowest level focused on learning basic rules, policies, and completing paperwork. Clarification refers to the new employee learning their roles and responsibilities. Culture is understanding how to get things done and where she or he fits within the larger organization. The final C, connection, happens when new employee builds relationships with coworkers and begins to feel like a contributing team member.

We also borrowed from situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Situated learning suggests that learning is built within relationships and connecting prior knowledge to the context of those relationships. We thus recognized the unintended learning that occurs within the natural working relationships and make it relevant within the onboarding process.

Methods

The process for developing a 4-H onboarding system began with recruiting a cross-section of experienced 4-H agents who worked in rural and urban counties, delivered different modes of 4-H programming, and served geographically and culturally diverse clientele. The committee was comprised of four 4-H agents across Arizona with one Full Agent (35 years), 2 Associate Agents (25 and 18 years), and one Assistant Agent (14 years).

Next, we assessed other states' materials and processes. Each committee member selected an Association of Public & Land-Grant University region from which to solicit on-boarding materials and curriculum via email and follow-up phone calls. The materials gathered from responding states were cataloged and analyzed for thoroughness, effectiveness, and applicability to Arizona 4-H. We began with individual members first reviewing and selecting tools from their solicitations which stood out as potentially valuable and matched the four C's. Then as a group we reviewed the selections of the team selecting the tools to emulate and alter. We next identified all areas of shared products that did not fit the Arizona 4-H system and added components central to the needs of our organization such as specific youth development models and program development processes.

Finally, the team developed the necessary face to face components of the plan; cohort meetings and work group. It was important that the on-boarding process was a situated learning model with a series of continuous steps where new staff will be supported in learning about their community and work culture through active engagement.

Results

The three products are an onboarding calendar, 4-H agent/staff workbook, and in-person training components of cohort meetings and working groups.

The Calendar details benchmarks for the first day, week, month, three months, six months, and year. Specifically, the calendar includes: 1) formal visits by new 4-H staff to visit two other county 4-H programs, 2) invitations for new staff to join statewide professional development and statewide event opportunities, and 3) to have the County Extension Director (CED) find and appoint a mentor.

The workbook is designed as a tool to assist the new employee engagement in their learning about the organization rules, policies, community characteristics and needs, and programming expectations including:

4-H Policy & Procedure Manual and Leaders Certification Manual

Volunteer Management Policy

Extension Policies

Logic Model Basics.

- 4-H Enrollment Management System
- The Confluence, U of A webpage, and 4-Honline.
- Pyramid of Youth Program Quality
- Thrive Model
- 4-H Life Skills Wheel
- 4-H Essential Elements

The calendar and workbook support compliance and clarification within a particular timeframe. The calendar and workbook can help introduce the culture of an organization by informing the new employee of key norms of the organization. The new employee should understand the schedule, job duties, roles, and responsibility of the position within the organization.

The face-to-face components are to build relationships fulfilling the culture and connection needs of onboarding. Participation in regular Zoom calls will be an opportunity to connect to other 4-H staff. These meetings are focused on Arizona 4-H issues to ensure that there is peer-driven knowledge within cohort meetings that help new employees understand their role in the organization. Secondly, new 4-H staff will create cohort working groups to develop a grant or write a publication. These working groups help ensure that new employees are developing relationships within the natural work environment.

Assumptions

The assumptions tied to our objective suggest that new staff will:

- build strong positive support among 4-H professionals.
- know their communities better.
- know their colleagues, campus resources, and how to access them.
- demonstrate their skills and dispositions in real working spaces.

Next Steps:

The next step for this project is its implementation. Current plans are set for 2020 implementation with a cohort of new and recent employees.

Additional implications for future exploration:

This process exposed a few unintended implications. The tools and process we developed may support supervisor monitoring and co-worker re-orientation.

- Supervisor (e.g. County Extension Director) will know the employee and the 4-H program more thoroughly.
- A supervisor can assess how engaged and committed the new employee will embrace the position.
- Co-workers may reaffirm their understanding of the work community and culture as they engage in structured work with new staff.
- Co-worker relationships and networks may be improved with the structured engagements.

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Program Development for Youth - Training and Recruiting Future Employees

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Abstract

Introduction/Theoretical Framework/Review of Literature

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture had the unique opportunity through some one-time funds in 2019 to deliver two youth development programs. The two programs focused on youth development, with the additional goal of training and recruiting future employees. Based on the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), these projects focused on developing interest in careers in agricultural Extension and research. Derived from Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, the SCCT focuses on the influences that help an individual develop interest in a specific career field (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 2002). The two separate programs were aimed at two different target groups:

- RockCity Hacks Hackathon (RCHH) - High School Students
- Arkansas Future Ag Leaders Tour (AFALT) - College Juniors and Seniors Research/Guiding Questions

RCHH - In 2015, Arkansas' Governor announced the implementation of the state-wide Computer Science Initiative. The state allows computer science to count towards a graduation credit, in lieu of math or science. As a result, of this new initiative, nearly 4,000 students have enrolled in computer science classes, with 550 students taking more than one course. Within the first academic year, Arkansas public schools saw an enrollment increase of 260% for computer science classes.

Hackathons build a bridge to the developer community. For companies whose competencies lie in providing technology solutions, hackathons help establish two-way conversations between those that develop the technology and the people that use them. Hosting a hackathon is an efficient way to increase awareness about an organization to a prime, target audience, and increase brand exposure in the tech world. Hackathons are good tools to generate creative and problem-solving ideas of student-developers. Unlike day-to-day where risk-taking may be frowned upon, hackathons offer a low cost of failure. The time limit in a hackathon forces participants to distil their visionary concepts down to actionable solutions. Hackathons foster problem-solving and risk-taking in a casual environment. The diversity of participants guarantees a multitude of perspectives.

Goals for the program included education, learn from knowledgeable technology practitioners, a great place to learn from both experienced mentors and peers, meet a diverse group of high-schoolers interested in technology, stretch skills and imagination, and pushing participants to achieve what they never dreamed to be possible.

AFALT - The Arkansas Future Ag Leaders tour was a five-day professional development opportunity for undergraduate juniors and seniors enrolled in any one of six Colleges of Agriculture across the state of Arkansas, or are pursuing agriculture related majors across the state. Agriculture and agriculture related professions are the number one employer in the state. This one-week experience will enhance students' leadership and employability skills, provide firsthand networking opportunities with potential employers, and highlight the vast resources, services, and careers available through Arkansas's agriculture industry. five-day state-wide tour for undergraduate students who are in their junior and senior year of college. The call for applications will go out to all colleges with agriculture-related academic departments. Institutions with agriculture departments will be guaranteed a set number of seats, if they designate participants by a specified date. Following the initial application deadline, the remaining unfilled seats will be open to any interested applicants, regardless of institutional affiliation.

Goals included increase participant's employability in agricultural careers, acquaint participants with the vast resources, market segments, and services available through Arkansas's number one industry, provide participants with a "bird's eye view" of current employment opportunities in the Arkansas agriculture industry, increase student's options and opportunities by networking with future employers.

Methods and/or Data Sources

RCHH - A hackathon is an overnight competition where teams identify and solve problems using technology. Students arrive Saturday morning, and depart on Sunday afternoon. A hackathon does not necessarily have anything to do with breaking (hacking) into computers by using code, but revolves around building a finished product that could be used and distributed. Hackathons are great networking and socializing opportunities as there will be games and workshops to help participants get to know each other as well as meet others in the tech field. While the experience, competition, learning, and networking are all benefits of participating in a hackathon, the culture of hackathons and their value are strongly linked to the awards involved. There are often smaller prizes available for micro-components of the competition, and a grand prize for the overall winners. For future marketing and credibility within the hacking community, the awards are vital to success. Our hackathon encourages the next generation of hackers and coders, and our mission is to inspire students of all academic backgrounds to participate with our education-themed hacking experience. This project likewise will introduce Arkansas students to future career opportunities with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and the breadth of the organization's work.

AFALT - Participants engaged in leadership and team building activities to get to know each other and the coordinators. Participants also participated in professional development activities related to networking, key tips for snagging the job of their dreams, and career advancement strategies. Each day, participants traveled across the state to pre-arranged tour sites to visit facilities and network with professionals. This allowed students to experience first-hand the diversity of opportunities within Arkansas's agriculture industry. Growers, producers, processors, manufacturers, educators, and research facilities will host students across Arkansas.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

Hackathon

- 91% of students voluntarily attended the educational workshops.
- 91% of students felt the agriculture-based use cases were the appropriate level of difficulty.
- 100% of teachers plan to bring students again next year.

Ag Leaders Tour

- 86% of participants reported that participating in the tour changed or expanded their career options.
- 100% of participants made new networking connections.
- 93% of participants agreed that their knowledge of agricultural job opportunities in Arkansas increase a lot or a great deal.
- Two tour participants have applied for positions with Extension.

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Creating Community through Cohort Learning: A preferred model of training for youth development professionals

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Abstract

Staff development often consists of limited, procedural onboarding training (Hill, Connolly, Akiva, & McNamara, 2017) that lacks opportunities to engage with a sustained community of practitioners where reflection, leadership, and improved practices are continually challenged (Hill, et al., 2017). To combat this norm, and to build relationships for staff who feel isolated in their remote office locations (a unique variable for many Extension workers), University of Minnesota initiated a learning cohort for their local youth development professionals, 4-H program coordinators (PCs) to fulfill a need to better support staff beyond onboarding. The Youth Development Learn and Lead (YDLL) cohort is grounded in integrative leadership and influences professional relationship building through the sharing of applicable skills and theory across hierarchical boundaries while providing a community of practice to discuss ideas and share resources. The cohort has positively impacted employee engagement and has shown impressive results around networking, relationship building, and learning objectives. The YDLL cohort has been deemed an essential training by CYD, and has been replicated internally to encompass a larger audience with unique staff development needs.

Overall, the YDLL Cohort has shown impressive results: (N=37, 88% of all participants from 2015-2018; post-cohort online evaluation); 97% of participants felt the cohort enhanced colleague relationships and fostered a learning community through networking and collaborative activities.100% of participants say the cohort led to heightened employee engagement through relationship building and the sharing of applicable skills, theory, and by providing a community of practice to test knowledge, discuss ideas, and share resources. 95% of participants felt they received relevant and research-based YD content. 100% of participants believe the cohort positively influenced their overall engagement in CYD- N=14, data collected in 2018 only.

This session will discuss the importance of building relationships through cohort learning as it relates to employee engagement and retention in the field of Extension, and will provide innovative tips on how to engage staff in cohort learning, even when budgets are limited.

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Growing the Connection between Formal and Informal Educators through Extension Programming

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Abstract

Introduction/Theoretical Framework/Review of Literature

An article written in 1994 stated that "For the first time in our history, a vast majority of the population is more than one generation removed from production agriculture. No longer do children have a grandparent or close relative who is a farmer or rancher." In the 24 years since that article, little has changed. Another survey found that less than 2% of Americans were actively involved in food production, and 72% reported knowing nothing or very little about farming or ranching (Orr, 2012). As the disconnect between consumers and agriculture widens (Specht, McKim, & Rutherford, 2014), efforts have been undertaken to increase agricultural literacy among youth. While agriculture is the primary industry in the State, few youths understand food and fiber systems or their importance.

A recent review of curricula revealed that while there are numerous lessons on agriculture available to formal K-14 educators from national clearinghouses, none aligned with state standards which is imperative if formal educators are to incorporate agricultural literacy lessons into their classrooms. At a time when testing is the driving force determining how class time is allocated, ag literacy advocates must provide relevant materials that can be easily incorporated and yield increased knowledge gains on standardized testing. Furthermore, increased focus on standardized testing in schools has made it increasingly difficult for informal educators (Extension Agents) to introduce traditional Extension programming into the K-14 classroom. Through a newly developed program entitled, From Micro to Macro: Growing Ag Literacy, new connections were formed between formal educators (K-14 educators) and informal educators (Extension Agents), to bring hands-on agricultural literacy to the classroom.

<u>Overview:</u>

According to Rahman (2017), education can be defined as the sum of all activities and procedures that are carried out to bring the desired changes and mold human behavior according to the need. For most of us, education has been a standardized process, whereby the teacher instructs students in a traditional classroom. Formal education is traditionally provided within the four walls of a teaching institute. Conversely, informal education is taught outside the four walls of formal education, but teaching is carried out in an organized and systematic manner. Formal education includes programs offered for credit, and informal education includes programs offered for non-credit. Integrating formal and informal education provides avenues to help learners gain, build, and maintain productive skills. Albert Einstein stated, "Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think."

Keeping the distinction between formal and informal education in mind, researchers looked for ways to bridge the gap between formal and informal paradigms. The result was a curriculum consisting of seven units rooted in the philosophical framework of John Dewey's learning by doing the constructivist approach. The lessons focused on real-world application with practical hands-on activities. Each lesson was written using the five stages of David Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning: experience, share, process, generalize and apply. According to Kolb & Fry (1975) as cited in Specht, McKim, & Rutherford (2014), "Kolb's model is based on the premises that people learn best by doing, rather than by rote memorization and regurgitation of facts."

This curriculum enabled teachers to build much-needed connections to local Extension resources while also connecting state standards to the 4-H Common Measures 2.0 framework. In this session, presenters will showcase From Micro to Macro: Growing Ag Literacy curriculum to demonstrate the connections that have been made with Educators, Extension Agents, and Master Gardeners.

Research/Guiding Questions

Can Extension Agents create a professional connection with K-14 educators using a standards-based curriculum?

Are Extension Agents able to translate informal educational approaches into the formal classroom?

Does providing formal educators with informal learn by doing lesson plans, increase agricultural literacy among teachers?

Methods and/or Data Sources

This program utilizes the RE-AIM evaluation framework to conduct a formative (reach, adoption, and implementation) and summative (effectiveness and maintenance) evaluation. To date, K-14 educators and Extension Agents have completed a pre-test at the start of the two-day immersive training on the curriculum and a posttest after the training to assess knowledge gained on the program outcomes. These program outcomes include: (1) increasing Extension Agents ability to relate agricultural concepts to the K-14 classroom and (2) increasing agricultural literacy among educators who are tasked with teaching the standards associated with Life Science and Photosynthesis.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

The immersive training allowed K-14 educators and Extension Agents to learn from Extension Specialists who also serve as mentors and provide resources to support the participants during the implementation of the program. Many educators did not realize the resources that were available to them through the Extension Service. K-14 educators and Extension Agents will take the curriculum and implement it in both formal and informal educational settings in their county beginning in the Fall of 2019. In this session, participants will discover the lessons learned from the development of the curriculum, alignment of standards, and the results of the evaluation data collected during the immersive training. This unique contribution of blended formal and informal paradigms will enable participants to understand the barriers formal and informal educators face when creating professional connections to disseminate Extension programming.

<u>Learning Objectives:</u>

1. Participants will examine the relationship between standards (state, national, NALO, and 4-H Common Measures 2.0) and how to integrate them into the development of a lesson.
2. Participants will create a storyboard based on lesson one of the curricula (photosynthesis).
3. Participants will program their storyboard using the Scratch Jr app.

4. Participants will reflect on best practices for aligning formal and informal educational materials to meet the needs of their audiences.

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2019

Roundtables

NAEPSDP

Using Microsoft Teams to Enhance Extension Team Collaboration and Communication

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Abstract

The importance of communication and collaboration among researchers and Extension professionals in building successful teams is well documented (Bitsch & Thornsbury, 2010; Kelbaugh & Earnest, 2008; Radhakrishna, Tobin, & Foley, 2014; Strieter & Blalock, 2006; Warner, Hinrichs, Schneyer & Joyce, 1998). Of 25 indicators of Extension program success identified, Kelbaugh & Earnest (2008) found that "[an] established process for communication among team members that allows for efficient and open information sharing in a timely manner" was in the top four. A recent study by Vines et al. (2018) highlighted the difficulty early-career agents have in finding other agents to work with when developing programs.

While the need for internal communication and collaboration in Extension is clear, the literature and studies described above do not discuss the tools or software used to encourage or support this activity. A successful team project at Washington State designed to increase the number of peer-reviewed journals did mention the use of Microsoft SharePoint but no details (Chalker-Scott, Daniels, & Martini, 2016).

The business world is becoming more and more like Extension in that employees are spread out and not housed in a single location. As a result, technology companies are building new and innovative products to meet those needs. Collaboration software, such as Slack and Microsoft Teams, is a fast-growing industry (Bridgewater, 2019). Only two years old, Teams has surpassed Slack in the number of users (13 million vs. Slack's 10 million) and is Microsoft's fastest growing business application ever (Foley, 2018). Most universities use Microsoft Office 365 and Teams is included in that subscription. Based on data collected from [Institutaion] IT staff, 31 land-grant universities have deployed Microsoft Teams. But, a small sampling of Extension colleagues found no evidence that Teams is being used or even an awareness of its existence or availability to them.

Presenter will describe the recent implementation of Microsoft Teams for University of [Institution]'s [Instituation] issue-based teams of research faculty and Extension professionals and discuss lessons learned. Participants will learn how the [Institution] team sites are structured and the apps (tools) available through Teams or SharePoint. This use case example, along with the knowledge of whether their institution has deployed Microsoft Teams, will help participants decide if Teams is a product worth considering.

Presenter will also demonstrate the use of Microsoft Forms as a quick way to create a mobile-friendly app to collect information about clients and partners. Broader applications of Microsoft Forms, such as shared statewide surveys, will be discussed.

Other Extension organizations that are using Microsoft Teams are encouraged to attend this presentation and contribute to the discussion by providing their own use case and experience with Teams.

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Utilizing the Community Action Leadership Development Model to Teach Soft Skills

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Abstract

The late twentieth century experienced a philosophical shift in community-based leadership development that emphasized bottom-up transformation, shared power, and community building (Huey, 1994) via the concepts of shared leadership, leadership as relationship, and leadership in community, promoting a model based on values such as trust, commitment, sharing, and ownership (Sandmann & Vandenberg, 1995). In response to this shift, a conceptual framework for community action leadership development was developed specifically for Cooperative Extension (Sandmann & Vandenberg, 1995). At its core, four methodological principles " Facilitation; Learner Focus; Leadership Focus; and Issue/Action Focus " and two content principles "Non-Prescriptive and Process as Content" guide its application. To that end, a half-day leadership workshop developed for Wildlife Services National Training Academy employees that utilized the Community Action Leadership Development framework to teach the concepts of emotional intelligence, power and influence, and conflict management.

Despite its development for Cooperative Extension, the Community Action Leadership Development model is relevant to most public sector organizations. In public sector organizations, employees may experience reduced frustration, increased motivation, and strengthened commitment if they perceive personal and meaningful contributions to an organization that performs a valuable service (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Romzek & Hendricks, 1982). There is empirical support for community-based action leadership development efforts that highlight to those public employees the significance of their role in the organization and gives them the opportunity to enhance their learning (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2009).

Competencies selected for the Wildlife Services National Training Academy training included emotional intelligence, power and influence, and conflict management. Emotional intelligence has to do with the interactions of affective and cognitive domains (Northouse, 2013). Broadly defined, emotional intelligence is the ability to manage one's emotions and the emotions of others. Power and influence refers to French and Raven's (as cited in Levi, 2014) power bases including expert, referent, information, legitimate, reward, and coercive, which describe sources of a person's power. Additionally, Yulk's influence tactics (as cited in Levi, 2014) can be applied in an attempt to change a target's beliefs or behaviors. An understanding of appropriate application of influence tactics can be useful for employees in communicating with stakeholders and clientele, particularly if there is the potential for conflict or miscommunication. Finally, conflict management approaches were identified as useful and practical techniques to implement in combination with emotional intelligence and power and influence.

Seventeen participants, including wildlife technicians, biologists, specialists, program leaders, and supervisors, engaged in lecture, discussion, and hands-on activities on the topics of emotional intelligence, communication through power and influence, and conflict management. On a scale of 1 to 5 (Poor to Excellent), the overall assessment of the session was rated 3.85 (n = 13). Respondents were asked reflective pre- post knowledge gain on a 5 point scale (0 = no knowledge, 5 = knowledgeable). Participants' mean prior knowledge of "the importance of understanding Emotional Quotient (EQ) and how it relates to better leadership and resolving conflict" was 2.85, with the majority of respondents indicating "some knowledge". After the session, participants reported mean knowledge of 4.31, a 51 percent increase. Written comments revealed an appreciation for learning new approaches and perspectives for handling and resolving conflict. The inherent nature of many professionals in a range of wildlife, natural resources, and agricultural fields is to be introverts and work independently. As such, this type of leadership and communication training could be significant when these professionals encounter conflict or difficult situations with both the public and colleagues.

While in general, the workshop participants were engaged and cooperative, it is the authors' opinion that the training could have been more effective. Additional feedback indicated that participants were not notified about this addition to their two-day training; this lack of advance communication may have created a feeling of intrusion and unrelatability. Unfortunately, we did not have access to the APHIS crisis scenarios the participants used throughout the rest of the training. These scenarios could have served as a useful tool to not only establish instructor credibility and enhance relatability but also help the participants better make connections between the content and its applicability to their work environments. Finally, in order to optimize the effectiveness of this training with similar stakeholders in the future, at least a full day should be scheduled to allow for more hands-on activities and critical discussion. Participants indicated a desire for more time to practice the competencies taught.

This workshop format provides a framework for a leadership development training that others can modify and apply for their own purpose. It offers flexibility in choosing relevant leadership concepts that can be taught in various contexts for a diversity of audiences or stakeholders. Finally, this may be particularly relevant for those considering how to address leadership development needs in various organizations.

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Mining an Accountability System for County Agent Performance Indicators: A Deep Dive is Necessary

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Round Table Explanation

Cooperative Extension has been collecting and analyzing quantitative data on County Extension Agent productivity since the development of SEMIS (State Extension Management Information System) in the early 1970's (Lutz & Swoboda, 1972). The [Institution] has been collecting accountability data electronically since 2003. This data has been invaluable for state and federal reports but has only been selectively mined for County Agent performance indicators. A review of the literature has revealed numerous studies on performance appraisal instrument critiques (Kuchinke, Correthers, & Cecil, 2008) (Patterson, 1987)and Extension Agent's feelings on the process (Donaldson & French, 2013). Very little evidence of using accountability system metrics for performance appraisal was found. We feel that with careful consideration of program area differences that a series of quantitative metrics can be mined to establish a range of expectations for new or seasoned County Agents.

Participants in the session will look at performance data of agents by program area and discover trends in the data. An open conversation about what data might serve as good indicators of County Agent performance and which indicators may not tell the complete story.

Evaluation Capacity Building of Extension Professionals Through an Evaluation Competency Model: Voices of Extension Educators and Extension Administrators

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Round Table Explanation

To maintain a competitive workforce and to further enhance human resources, organizations including Cooperative Extension often reply on competency development models (Brodeur, Higgins, Galindo-Gonzalez, Craig, & Haile, 2011). Multiple studies over the past decade identified program evaluation as core competency required by Extension professionals to systematically document the impact of their educational programs (Suvedi & Kaplowitz, 2016). Multiple evaluation competency models were developed in the past decade by various evaluation associations and evaluation researchers. One major challenge with all these models was that they were developed for full-time evaluators, with limited applicability to professionals who employ evaluation as one part of their job (e.g., Extension educators). Cooperative Extension organizations across the United States struggled with usability of existing evaluation competency models because Extension professionals are not full-time evaluators. To overcome this challenge, in 2018, we conducted a Delphi study with evaluation specialists representing different Cooperative Extension Systems across the United States to identify core evaluation competencies required by Extension professionals. Even though as a result of our national Delphi study we developed an evaluation competency model (a list of 36 competencies) for Extension professionals, we have limited knowledge about applicability and implementation of this model because these competencies were perceived important from the perspective of evaluation specialists. To overcome this limitation of our newly developed evaluation competency model, we are conducting focus groups with Extension educators and Extension administrators representing six states located in four census regions of the United States. From both Extension educators and administrators, we are seeking their views and comments regarding the newly developed evaluation competency model along with feedback on the implementation of this model. Currently, we are finishing up our focus groups across six states. In this round table session, we will share findings from our focus group interview with Extension educators and Extension administrators regarding the improvement of our previously developed evaluation competency model along with ideas for implementation. In addition to sharing the findings from our study, we will promote a national discussion in our round table session to seek views and comments regarding the improvement and implementation of our evaluation competency model. We believe that a refined evaluation competency model along with ideas for its implementation holds promise for onboarding of new Extension professionals and systematic professional development sessions addressing program evaluation challenges of Extension professionals. This refined model will enhance the relevance of evaluation which may address increased turnover rates of Extension professionals.

Identifying key constructs and measurements to assess the situation analysis reports (SARs) of Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)

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Abstract

Every five years, local city and county units in Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) must submit a situation analysis report (SAR). The purpose of the SAR is to identify the current issues at the local level in order to develop future educational programs. A comprehensive SAR is required for priority setting and helps identify program focus. Therefore, it is critical that the SARs are of high quality and identify the most critical needs. There was a concern that the 2013 situation analysis reports were not very reflective of local needs. Therefore, leading up to the submission of the 2018 SARs, numerous professional development activities were provided for VCE faculty to aid them in conducting quality situation analyses. Thus, the primary research question of this study was: What are the key constructs and measurements that can be used to assess VCE situation analysis reports (SARs)?

We did not find any established methodology for the assessment of SARs in a review of the literature. Therefore, we developed a methodology using the Evaluation Plan Rubric (https://core.human.cornell.edu/documents/evalplanrubric.pdf) developed by Cornell Office for Research on Evaluation & Developmental Systems Science and Evaluation Research Lab as a conceptual framework for our study. The primary objective of this study was to develop a methodology that could be used by Extension practitioners to assess the quality of SARs. Therefore, in the long run, Cooperative Extension Systems could able to assess the actual needs from the field level efficiently. We also believe that our effort will help to ensure proper program planning, implementation, and reduce the waste of resources for inappropriate programming.

We initially studied SARs submitted in 2013 by agents from different unit offices of VCE. We thoroughly reviewed 102 SARs (n=102) to understand the style, contents, similarities, and dissimilarities of the format of SARs. Then we developed a draft rubric to use to assess the SARs based on the previously identified constructs. These include style, contents, and formats of SARs such as overall writing style, preliminary materials of the report, introductory section, unit profile, community perspective or methodology, identified priority issues, and references and appendices. We then sent the rubric to VCE leadership, including the middle managers who directly oversee the work of the counties, for internal review. After obtaining feedback from VCE leadership, we finalized the rubric and assessed the 2018 SARs submitted by the local city and county VCE offices.

Thus far, we have analyzed 94 of the 2018 SARs. We found that 23.40% of the SARs obtained 75 points or more out of 100, and 72.30% of the scores ranged from 51 to 75 points, and4.30% of the scores ranged from 26 to 50 points. No reports received scores lower than scored less than 25 points. The average score for the submitted SARs was 66.12 with standard deviation, and the coefficient of variance was 12.31 and 18.61, respectively.

We conclude that the proposed rubric to assess the SARs is an innovative tool that can be used effectively to evaluate the quality of SARs. Other Cooperative Extension Systems may adopt or modify this rubric to assess their SARs. Data from this study has been shared with VCE District Directors for their use in the future training of their agents. This assessment will also be used to evaluate training provided to agents between the 2013 and 2018 submissions.

Problem-based Learning in webinar trainings: Military Families Learning Network (MFLN) Family Resilience Series

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Abstract

Many positive outcomes have been associated with Problem-based Learning (PBL). Over three decades ago, PBL approaches to education gained popularity in medical and health science education (Savery, 2015) to assist in bridging gaps between theory/content knowledge, skills and practice. PBL continues to show effectiveness in retention and application of knowledge (Yew & Goh, 2016), and best practices in andragogy promote problem-centered application (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). The PBL instructional method utilizes facilitated problem solving to help students learn both content and thinking strategies (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). PBL is a method that promotes connections: connections between content and application, connections between different approaches to a problem, and connection between learners through collaboration.

As technology increases, it expands possibilities not only for innovative learning approaches but it also widens potential reach for human service professionals to gain access to valuable professional development that can enhance knowledge, skills and awareness. Technology also provides a unique opportunity for participants to engage with a diverse group, often geographically dispersed, to discuss content, share experiences, and consider educational strategies. With this in mind, presenters developed a three-part webinar series incorporating a problem-based learning approach. However, most examples of PBL in an online learning environment engaged cohorts over multiple meetings (Sendag & Odabasi, 2009). The presenters wanted to test whether a single PBL case story activity carried across a three-part online webinar series would be effective.

In this presentation, presenters will share information about the process of designing a one-time, online PBL activity for a a diverse audience. Presenters will talk about which PBL characteristics they wanted to emphasize and which characteristics were de-emphasized due to constraints. They will also share the experience of producing a webinar series for military family service professionals that featured three pre-eminent resilience theorists/researchers sharing insight on addressing barriers, identifying various systems and promoting protective factors to support individual, family and community resilience. Presenters will outline the format of the webinar series and describe how the PBL component was incorporated into the webinar series design.

The presenters will demonstrate how the webinar audience participants were able to practice resilience thinking through a problem-based learning format. Presenters will also provide outcome data (webinar analytics, participant evaluation feedback, qualitative themes, etc.). The presenters will discuss what went well, areas of development for future trainings, and implications for incorporating PBL into other types of online trainings involving human service professionals.

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Exploring the Value of Extension Connections through a Cohort-Based Leadership Professional Development Experience

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Abstract

Introduction/Theoretical Framework/Review of Literature

Extension professionals need to be good at what they do to make positive impact. Their work requires them to have expertise in a subject, continually assess needs of stakeholders, and take on leadership roles in their communities. It is important they participate in learning opportunities that require them to grow their understanding of their unique roles, broaden their competencies in their chosen fields, and extend their leadership capacities. Employees who are adept in technical, human, and conceptual skills are able to thrive in the workplace (Benge and Sowick, 2018).

Extension professional development is offered in a variety of ways. Traditional in-person and online professional development opportunities often do not encourage relationship building or making connections among participants. These models focus heavily on change in knowledge and become content-centric. Baker and Hadley (2014) found that Extension professionals in [State] believed networking opportunities were the most valuable experiences gained from professional development. Networking opportunities lead to relationship building. Further, study results indicated Extension professionals desired to be a part of a community of practice, where they could gain support and learn from peers (Baker and Hadley, 2014).

Learning circles, which are small groups of learners who gather in regular intervals over time, make connections, and support each other in their quests for attaining new knowledge and developing skills, may be one way to provide meaningful professional development in Extension. They use a cohort-based approach to professional development: participants work together, encourage each other, and members are simultaneously developed (Chairs et al., 2002).

Research/Guiding Questions

The purpose of our action research project was to explore the experiences of learning circle members in an Extension organization. The objective of our project was to determine in what ways Extension Leadership Circle experiences are valuable to second-year members. This project explored the categories of value for members, which were 1) components of Circle meetings and 2) anticipated outcomes of participation in Circle meetings.

Methods/Data Sources

A descriptive research design with a survey method was selected to collect data. An electronic questionnaire included four questions. The first question focused on the various components of the Leadership Circle meetings and included rating-scale questions for topics (i.e., meeting format, learning environment, and educational model). The second question focused on anticipated outcomes for participants and included rating-scale questions for topics (i.e. personal and professional growth, leadership capacity, and confidence in leadership abilities). The rating-scale questions used a slider bar for participants to select the extent of value, and “0” represented low value and “10” represented high value. For each topic, the mean and standard deviation were calculated. The questionnaire also contained two open-ended questions that focused on personal value. For the purposes of this project, value was defined as “importance, worth, or usefulness.” The questionnaire was sent to 13 second-year circle members. Nine (n=9) circle members responded to the questionnaire, and the response rate was 69%.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

The questionnaire responses indicated Leadership Circle participants valued components of the learning circle experience. Participants highly valued a skilled facilitator, with a mean of 9.78, and the safe and trusting meeting environment, with a mean of 9.67. Participants were fairly consistent in their valuation, which was evidenced by low standard deviations of 0.42 and 0.67, respectively. Further, the community-based approach to professional development, with a mean of 9.33, and a discussion-based learning model, with a mean of 9.22, were viewed favorably by participants. It can be concluded the participants were in strong agreement about these components of Leadership Circle meetings.

The questionnaire responses also indicated participants valued the potential outcomes of the learning circle experience. Participants highly valued personal growth, with a mean of 9.89. Participants were fairly consistent in their valuation, which was evidenced by a low standard deviation of 0.31. It can be concluded the participants were in strong agreement about this anticipated outcome of Leadership Circle meetings.

The open-ended questions provided supporting data for the participants’ valuation of Leadership Circle. Participants value Leadership Circle because it supports their development of personal and professional skills. Further, participants value Leadership Circle because concepts addressed are applicable to real life situations and there is an opportunity to foster connections with colleagues. Compared to other professional development opportunities, the Leadership Circle experience encourages participants to blend personal aspects of their lives with their professional experiences. It can be concluded that participants view the experience favorably, and when compared to traditional professional development opportunities, Leadership Circle experience allows members to develop the whole self through a holistic approach.

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

Second-year members highly value their Leadership Circle experiences. A professional development model like a learning circle may be valuable for Extension professionals who want to increase their understanding of concepts and grow their skills. The experience blends personal and professional aspects of participants’ lives and allows them the freedom to explore concepts from either lens. Further, the model encourages relationship building, reflection, and relevant discussions.

The results of our project align with Baker and Hadley's (2014) study of [State] Extension professionals. Leadership Circle participants favorably viewed the community-based approach to professional development. Further, Ricketts et al. (2012) explored how Extension professionals motivate themselves to be successful. Leadership Circle participants favorably viewed growing their capacity to lead as a potential outcome of participation in a learning circle. They also favorably viewed their competence in leadership concepts and confidence in their abilities to lead as potential outcomes of participation in a learning circle.

The results from our project provide critical information about a unique professional development model. Although the context of our project should be considered in regards to transferability of the conclusions and recommendations, Extension human resources directors and supervisors with responsibilities of leading or encouraging professional development opportunities for Extension professionals should explore the learning circle model. It is vital Extension professionals participate in learning opportunities that require them to grow their understanding of their unique roles, broaden their competencies in their chosen fields, encourage connections with their colleagues, and extend their leadership capacities.

Workshop Explanation

In our roundtable, we will engage participants through peer learning, facilitating active discussions, and fostering connection-building - much like how our Leadership Circle program is delivered. In our experiences, we have found that offering time in professional development sessions for making connections creates a richer, more meaningful experience for participants and for us as discussion facilitators. Participants can expect to leave our roundtable with an understanding of how Leadership Circle has been working in our organization and ideas for practical application of our model in their organizations.

As presenters, we have dynamic delivery styles, and we complement each other's personalities and approaches to direct education. Participants in our past workshops have described our teaching as engaging and edutaining (educational + entertaining). We pride ourselves in creating learning environments that are inclusive, reach different learners in different ways, and, most importantly, fun.

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Leading Positive Change by Shifting Attitudes in a Connected Rural Collective

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Abstract

When we look at rural America today, we can picture overgrown grass and caked-on rust around dilapidated houses, bare and ignored store fronts, streets with little attention and infrequent traffic, and a loss of will and drive among our local citizens. We can just as easily paint a picture similar to Norman Rockwell's captured moments; of bustling holiday streets, local festivals, larger-than-life civic engagement, maintained infrastructure including sidewalks and side streets, and a sense of "WE" in ownership of our collective attitudes, our neighborly interests, and our connected co-identity. Which is our future in rural America, and can we drive positive change by introducing leadership development techniques in rural communities?

In a further line of questions: Can our rural future look as positive as a nostalgic past in small towns across the country? Can awareness of current situations and action-oriented leadership tools lead to positive outcomes through a shift in attitudes? Can we create an energy with a pioneering, entrepreneurial spirit, with a focus on better days ahead than lay behind?

By bringing local folks together, with intentional leadership development techniques, a new inclusive and collective identity, with a path to rural prosperity, can be discovered.

Driving positive change in today's time is both a performance art and a science. Changed demographics, disengaged and siloed citizenry with a lack of hope and vision, deficit mindsets, choosing nostalgic paralysis over results-driven response to current realities, and underutilization of local capitals lead to disillusioned attitudes, and a "giving up" at a local level. This can be turned around through an intentional, guiding leadership-focused intervention.

Molding mindsets centered in possibility and creating increased positive, collective action in an engaged rural citizenry, with an honest and evidence-based awareness of their current situation(s), can result in an attitudinal shift that stimulates vision, innovation, and visible steps to a brighter future. Positive change builds increased positive change upon itself.

Providing local citizens with a foundational knowledge of social change theories and models for increased inclusion, appreciative inquiry techniques, skills in deliberative dialogue, asset-based community development practices, and servant leadership mindsets can lead to better equipped collective visioning and outcomes-driven leadership. Whether this be through implementation of a longer-term leadership development workshop series or one-time, customized leadership development facilitation, sustainable driving forces for change can be nurtured while mitigating resisting factors.

Showcasing leadership development practices that have been implemented in rural communities, with demonstrated results, will provide workshop participants a personal feel for what is possible, and how best to replicate these in ways that will work in their area, region, or state.

Leadership development is practical at all levels in cooperative extension work. There is great need for engaging leaders who can collaborate with others, while working through current realities.

Workshop Explanation

This workshop will be engaging, thought-provoking, and extremely hands-on. Participants will:

Engage in rural mind-mapping through personal reflection and group work,
Explore leadership development activities that are attitude-shifting and result in strategies for positive change,

Dialogue throughout the processes in this workshop, creating a collective energy in the room, with increased capacity for possibility and positive change (witness the methods and processes at work),
Define next steps in implementation of showcased activities and methods.

Benefits:
This workshop will be engaging, thought-provoking, and extremely hands-on.

Participants will:

- Engage in rural leadership mind-mapping through personal reflection and group work,

- Explore leadership development activities that are attitude-shifting and result in strategies for positive change with a focus on social change, group dynamics, and inclusion,

- Dialogue throughout the processes in this workshop, creating a collective energy in the room, with increased capacity for possibility and positive change (witness the methods and processes at work),

- Define next steps for implementation of showcased activities and methods.

Benefits:

Workshop participants will increase knowledge in social change theory and models for inclusion, identification of local capitals, visioning and strategic planning, questioning methods that lead to positive attitudinal shifts, motivation techniques, group dynamics, and needs-based leadership development facilitation.

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2019

Posters

NAEPSDP

The HappyHealthy Social Marketing Campaign as an Organizational Innovation

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Abstract

Extension has a history of providing nutrition and healthy lifestyle education. In many states, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) is implemented through Extension and is part of Extension's approach to providing nutrition education to low-resource individuals and families. SNAP-Ed has typically provided health education through individual and group-based classes, but it is currently being encouraged to implement social marketing as a way of influencing population-based behavior change (United States Department of Agriculture, 2019). Social marketing is a broad-based approach to nutrition education that can increase the number of positive messages about and images of healthy eating [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013).

In 2018, Mississippi State University Extension Service (MSU Extension), Office of Nutrition Education (ONE), launched a statewide social marketing campaign targeting SNAP-eligible individuals and families. The campaign was branded HappyHealthy and is the most widespread social marketing campaign undertaken by MSU Extension. HappyHealthy has four target behaviors - increase physical activity, shop for healthy foods on a budget, prepare meals at home, and have pride in food and family. Messages related to these behaviors are delivered through five delivery channels: mass media, web and social media, printed materials, teaching and presentation resources, and nutrition education reinforcement items. MSU Extension staff, particularly those affiliated with ONE, is partially responsible for implementing HappyHealthy through the distribution of printed materials, through social media efforts (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), and by dissemination of promotional media (e.g., nutrition education reinforcement items, such as recipe cards).

At the organizational level, HappyHealthy is an innovative way for MSU Extension to promote healthy food and lifestyle choices. Successful implementation of the campaign somewhat depends on whether MSU Extension staff disseminate HappyHealthy messages and materials with low-resource audiences. When conceptualizing HappyHealthy as an organizational innovation, Roger's diffusion of innovation theory (2003) could help explain the speed and extent of the innovation's diffusion. Roger states that "innovation goes on all the time in organizations" but employees' adoption of an innovation is not guaranteed (Rogers, 2003; p. 405). Rather, adoption could be affected by an employee's perception of the innovation's attributes. Specifically, the perceived relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability could determine the adoption of the innovation (Rogers, 2003).

A process evaluation with select MSU Extension staff was conducted to assess the following evaluation questions.

- What are perceived attributes of the HappyHealthy campaign?
- How are those perceived attributes contributing to the adoption of HappyHealthy as an organizational innovation?

As part of this evaluation, staff perceptions of the campaign's relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability were explored.

In the early stages of the campaign, external evaluators conducted in-depth interviews with MSU Extension staff members (n = 17). Interviews were conducted by a trained evaluator and digitally recorded to ensure that all comments were completely and accurately captured (Walker, Hofer, Woloshin, & Wolford, 2018). Recordings were transcribed and analyzed in accordance with the perceived attributes defined by Rogers.

After the campaign had been active for several months, the same external evaluators developed a web-based survey instrument for administration with MSU Extension staff. The evaluation survey included primarily closed-ended questions and took approximately 20 minutes for respondents to complete. A total of 54 surveys were completed by Extension agents (n = 14), nutrition educators/community wellness planners (n = 35), and regional registered dieticians (n = 4) (Walker, Hofer, Woloshin, & Wolford, 2018). Survey responses were interpreted in accordance with Roger's perceived attributes of an innovation.

In general, the social marketing campaign was well received by participants. In the words of one key informant, "I think everyone is buying into it, everybody getting excited, following the plan, doing the recipes, just keeping on those positive messages." As related to relative advantage, interviewees believed that HappyHealthy provided a unified social media presence for ONE, something that had not previously been available. Additionally, interviewees thought the campaign offered a "positive" and "catchy" way to recruit future program participants and to continue to engage with past program participants.

Regarding compatibility, informants believed their promotion of HappyHealthy was compatible with more traditional job responsibilities. The campaign materials and messages were consistent with nutrition content delivered through SNAP-Ed nutrition programs. Similarly, survey respondents agreed (60%) or strongly agreed (29%) that HappyHealthy reinforced lessons taught in nutrition education classes, and 83% felt the campaign contributed to adult participation in nutrition education.

Concerning complexity, most key informants were aware of their responsibilities related to HappyHealthy and felt that the training they had received on the campaign implementation was "about right." Some survey participants, however, were not completely comfortable promoting HappyHealthy. Most surveyed agents (64%) felt "somewhat confident" promoting HappyHealthy, while most nutrition educators/community wellness planners (57%) and the majority of regional dietitians (75%) were "completely confident" in their ability to promote the campaign. Some key informants recommended additional training on campaign implementation and increased accessibility to the current materials.

Comments and findings related to trialability were consistent across interviews and the survey. Informants indicated that they were distributing print campaign materials more frequently than sharing campaign messages on social media. This could suggest that staff were trying some aspects of the campaign before adopting other aspects, and therefore, might relate to trialability. Similarly, 86% of survey respondents distributed recipe cards, while just over half the participants (51%) distributed social media cards. Because staff enjoyed using the campaign materials and received positive feedback when sharing the materials with participants and community partners, many survey respondents requested additional materials.

The concept of observability was not observed. This could be because the campaign, once launched, became part of staff job responsibilities.

Roger's model is useful in understanding how the perceived attributes of HappyHealthy contribute to its adoption as an organizational innovation. These findings could inform other state's development and implementation of a social marketing campaign. Specifically, these findings suggest it is important that campaign messages and materials align with and enhance other Extension staff members' job responsibilities. And, it is important that campaign messages are consistent with other education being delivered. It might also be advantageous to allow staff to try or to get familiar with some campaign materials before they are responsible for using all campaign materials.

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Behaviors and Needs of Trained Extension Mentors

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Abstract

Introduction/Theoretical Framework/Review of Literature

Assessing the needs of mentors is a valuable component of any formalized mentoring program. Theoretically, the UF/IFAS Extension mentoring program subscribes to the tenets of the Mentoring-Empowered model (Selke & Wong, 1992), which asserts that mentors have five functions that extend out from a nurturing foundation: counselor, role model, encourager, teacher, and sponsor/socializer. These functions occur within a context of communication, trust, openness, acceptance, and growth. The UF/IFAS Extension system periodically conducts a needs assessment of individuals known to be serving as formal mentors for agents who have not achieved permanent status. Though undergirded with the philosophy of the Mentoring-Empowered model (Selke & Wong, 1992), the needs assessment is operationally aligned with topics covered in the online mentor training including program planning, program evaluation, and teaching and learning. In an ideal situation, mentors apply the best practices covered in the mentor training, leading to positive outcomes for their protégés, the organization, and themselves.

Mentoring has been extensively covered in the Extension literature; an excellent meta-analysis was provided by Denny (2016). Denny (2016) noted, "There is a distinct lack of research on the relationship between mentors and mentees as adult learners and effective behaviors of mentors of adult learners" ("Conclusion and Recommendations," para. 5). The research reported in this abstract helps to address the latter issue by providing insight into the actual behavior of Extension mentors.

Research/Guiding Questions

The purpose of this research was to describe the self-reported behavior and practices of Extension mentors when working their protégé.

Methods and/or Data Sources

An online census of UF/IFAS Extension mentors was attempted in April and May 2019 using Qualtrics software. Survey questions aligned with best practices and behaviors outlined in UF/IFAS Extension's official mentor training. All potential participants had completed the mentor training. The study frame was provided by the Program Development and Evaluation Center, which maintains a historical database of trained mentors. According to that list, there were 88 potential respondents, all of whom received a personalized invitation to participate in the needs assessment survey. After two reminders, responses were received from 59 individuals for a 67.0% response rate. Eleven individuals reported they were not currently mentoring anyone; by design, they did not complete the remainder of the survey questions. In Florida, mentors are required to submit formal paperwork at the beginning of a new mentoring relationship but there is no

process for updating records when a relationship ends. Therefore, limitations of the research include the accuracy of the mentor database and the use of self-reporting. The IRB Board at University of Florida determined the research fit in the exempt category.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

In Florida, most mentors are assigned to new agents. This was true for the responding population as well, with 65.12% of mentors reporting having been assigned to their protégé. Mentors reported e-mail, face-to-face contact, and phone calls as the most commonly used methods for supporting their protégé in the month prior to the survey. Mentors indicated they often spoke to their protégé about developing reports of accomplishment (ROAs) and common program practices, policies, and procedures. Conversely, they infrequently or never spoke with their protégé about developing advisory councils or volunteer management.

In the area of program development, most mentors (>70%) reported sharing program materials with their protégé, sharing program evaluation tools, and working with their protégé to develop at least one of his/her programs. However, only 34.88% of mentors had shared a logic model with their protégé. In the area of teaching and learning, 82.22% of mentors reported sharing their knowledge and 65.91% of mentors had watched their protégé teach. Similarly, 68.89% of mentors invited their protégé to come watch them teach.

Mentors felt the most commonly occurring area in which their protégé needed support was time management. This was expressed directly, but also described as having trouble managing multiple priorities, balancing personal and professional schedules, and how to organize the day. For themselves, mentors most commonly reported a desire for more standardized tools they could provide as resources to their protégé and checklists that they could themselves follow to ensure they were on track with their responsibilities.

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

Future research should examine the effects of assigned mentors to chosen mentors on the quality and outcomes of the mentoring relationship. Some literature (e.g. Sosik, Lee, & Bouquillon, 2007) suggests better results may occur in informal mentoring relationships rather than formal relationships. Practically, this may be difficult given the challenges of getting to know potential mentors who are geographically dispersed across a state as opposed to within one business or complex. That same geographic dispersal is also likely to blame for e-mails being the most frequently reported means of communication between a mentor and a protégé. While convenient, e-mail has limits as a communication method and may impede the development of trust necessary for a successful mentoring relationship.

In general, mentors reported practicing the behaviors promoted within the mentor training course at an acceptable rate, which is to say most mentors reported doing the right things most of the time. The one notable exception was the lack of sharing a logic model with a protégé; it would be useful for the mentors to have their logic models reviewed by a program evaluation specialist. This would ensure the logic models are good examples and that mentors could be confident in sharing them as such. Similarly, PSD staff and specialists are encouraged to provide mentors with more structured tools and checklists for themselves and their protege. UF/IFAS Extension relies on an asynchronous online training program which does contain many of these resources but adding an annual in-service training to ensure mentors know how to use them may be worth the investment and should be explored. Reducing the complexity of the mentoring role will enable experienced agents to devote more time to successfully executing the functions of the Mentoring-Empowered model (Selke & Wong, 1992).

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Exploring FCS Competencies as a Framework for Targeted Professional Development

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Abstract

Introduction/Theoretical Framework/Review of Literature

Competency models have been widely used in Extension to determine existing competency levels of personnel so that staff development needs can be identified and professional development targeted toward those needs. Stone (1997) described competencies as the application of knowledge, technical skills, and personal characteristics that reflect the abilities individuals need to effectively perform their job. A review of literature demonstrates that Extension personnel have identified and measured competencies across multiple domains (i.e. knowledge of Extension, subject matter expertise, program planning and delivery, professionalism) viewed as central to the success of Extension work (Lakai, Jayaratne, Moore, & Kistler, 2014; Scheer, Cochran, Harder, & Place, 2011). Competencies directly affect performance of Extension educators (Stone & Bieber, 1997) and are typically addressed after agents are hired (Brodeur, Higgins, Galindo-Gonzalez, Craig, & Haile, 2011).

The body of knowledge from which the profession of Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS; formerly home economics) draws is broad (Nickols, et al., 2009) and encompasses a single integrated whole of subjects involved in family and home management (Walsh, DeFlorio, Burnham, & Weiser, 2017). "Over the years, however, these subjects became more complex as new knowledge was generated through research and through changes in society and technology" (Walsh, et al., 2017, p. 46). As such, the discipline of FCS became splintered as the sub-programs became more specialized (i.e. human development, nutrition, fashion merchandising) and emerged as self-contained disciplines (Walsh, et al., 2017). This resulted in the decline of comprehensive FCS academic programs. Therefore, many agents hired to deliver FCS programming have specialist degrees rather than generalist FCS degrees, meaning they may lack academic preparation across all the FCS knowledge areas. Recognizing this, University of Tennessee (UT) Extension developed a framework to bring agents to basic competency in all FCS knowledge areas (Franck, Wise, Penn, & Berry, 2017).

Research or Guiding Questions/Need

In 2019, Mississippi State University Extension staff development and evaluation specialists adapted the UT Extension FCS competencies with the intention to explore the following questions:

- Is there a difference between FCS agents' and specialists' prioritization of FCS competencies relative to agents' success on the job?
- What is FCS agents' self-reported level of knowledge of FCS competencies?

Methods and/or Data Sources

The UT Extension FCS competency assessment tool identified four knowledge areas – Financial Education; Health & Safety; Human Development; and Nutrition & Food Safety (University of Tennessee, 2017). Each of these areas are comprised of concepts, which are divided further into 140 total competencies. We developed two surveys that were adapted from the UT Extension FCS competency assessment tool to help prioritize and understand Mississippi State University Extension personnel's knowledge of FCS related professional competencies. The first survey was distributed to Extension agents, instructors, associates, and specialists with FCS responsibilities. The survey was comprised of 31 sets of competencies that reflected the concepts within each knowledge area. Extension personnel were asked to rank each set of competencies based on the competencies' priority for success as an FCS educator. The second set of surveys was distributed to Extension agents in a series of three in order to assess agents' perceived knowledge of each competency. We randomized the order in which the agents received these three surveys in order to reduce respondent fatigue. Descriptive statistics were used to describe responses from the first survey, and chi-square tests were used to compare ranked responses between specialists and agents. We conducted t-tests of the responses from the second survey.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

Respondents consisted of 35 agents, five Extension associates, and 10 Specialists. Years in Extension ranged from one year to over 30 years with an average of 13 years. Respondents reported an average of 8 years in their current position, with five years being the most common response. For the sake of simplifying categories, Extension associates and faculty specialists were combined into one category ("Specialists"), while Extension agents comprised a second category ("Agents"). Extension associates and specialists both have state-wide programmatic responsibilities, while agents have local/county-level programmatic responsibilities. Across all content areas and competencies, there was little difference in perceived priorities between Specialists and Agents. This is a positive finding, as it indicates overall agreement regarding the competencies that are a priority for FCS agents. However, there was a significant difference between how Specialists and Agents prioritized competencies within Child Development ($p=.035$), Family Stress and Crisis ($p=.037$), Relationship Building ($p=.06$), and Housing Care & Maintenance ($p=.116$). This illustrates misalignment in prioritization of competencies within three of the five Human Development concepts as well as one of the Health and Safety concepts. There also were differences in Specialists' and Agents' identification of their second priority in Family Stress and Crisis ($p=.013$), Child Development ($p=.035$), Money Management ($p= .149$), and Basic Health Knowledge ($p=.178$). Again, this indicates a misalignment in prioritization of competencies within two of the five Human Development concepts, one of the Financial Education concepts, and one Health & Safety concept. We elected to use an alpha of 0.20 rather than the traditional alpha value of 0.05. This is to accommodate for the smaller sample size but also reflects a natural breaking point in the data set wherein the other p-values were significantly higher than those presented here. There was some variability in agents' responses of their perceived knowledge of the competencies on the second survey.

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

Since self-reported ratings of knowledge is generally higher than actual knowledge levels (Kruger & Dunning, 1999), we anticipate following up with an assessment of agents' actual knowledge of the competencies. However, we believed it was important to begin by assessing agents' self-perceived competence to introduce them to the process of competency assessment before formally assessing their actual knowledge, which can be intimidating. Data from both surveys likely will affect how specialists plan and implement competency-based in-service training for FCS agents in the future. This initial study will inform future research with all agents and specialists at Mississippi State University to determine subject-matter specific competencies for educator success and related in-service training opportunities. This process could easily be adapted for other Extension systems.

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Evaluation and Evolution of New Educator Training at Purdue Extension

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Abstract

Training of newly hired educators is critical to offering high-quality programs by Purdue Extension. In this presentation, we share the structure, coordination, and evaluation of a hybrid approach to training; demonstrate lessons learned in five years of implementation based on activities, implementation issues, and evaluation data; and share how the program has evolved based on our experiences and findings.

Since 2015, Purdue Extension has developed and implemented a hybrid approach to training new educators in program planning. The six-month program combines face-to-face training, bi-weekly online learning modules, and online discussions among educators and the leadership team, via Blackboard (a web-based server software for virtual learning management). The training is organized into 12 online modules using *Planning Programs for Adult Learners* (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). The program is ongoing, with a new cohort of educators formed every three months. Program leaders, assistant program leaders, district directors, and county extension directors interact with the cohorts during face-to-face, on-campus sessions to launch the training and via Blackboard online discussions.

Program evaluation was initiated to determine the effectiveness of the online approach, level of comfort using the technology, sense of connection with others while participating, effect of online engagement on knowledge gained, and educator application of knowledge gained to their job. Evaluation activities included three surveys for educators: 1) a formative survey about comfort with the technology and training approach at two months, 2) a summative survey about knowledge and connection with other educators in the cohort at six months, and 3) a follow-up survey about application of learning and adoption of practices three months after program completion. Also, two surveys, completed in March and September annually by the leadership team, are implemented to capture their comfort with technology and engagement in the online discussions and activities. Additionally, analytics about educator activation in Blackboard are gathered on the number of posts made in the online discussion and the number of hours online. Finally, two assignments completed by educators, a logic model and a survey, are assessed using a 3-point rubric.

Since 2016, there have been 66 educators in 12 training cohorts, and 10 leadership team members active in the cohort training. Educators reported: 1) being engaged in reading the training materials, completing module questions and assignments, posting responses to discussion questions, and viewing training videos/recorded presentations, 2) positive interactions with the technology, including being able to post discussion question responses, and respond to posts from other educators, and 3) that they felt the training modules helped them understand their role as an educator and the process of program planning. Educator online activities included a total of 1,830 posts, with an average of 28 posts per educator. Average online time across cohorts ranged from 9

to 26 hours per educator. Assessment of educator assignments showed educators had better rubric scores on their evaluation survey compared to their logic model assignments.

The leadership team was comfortable using the technology to locate, view and respond to the online discussions. They found this training via Blackboard to be effective for educators to learn new information/content, understand the role of an educator, and learn how to do program planning. The leadership team reported their engagement as reading educator posts to discussion questions for the modules assigned, posting supportive comments to the educators, and posting constructive advice to the educators.

Based on findings and experience, the evolution of the program has been: 1) adjusting the hire date and training start date coordination for educators from bi-monthly to every three months, 2) adding more face-to-face training at the beginning of the job before starting online training, 3) eliminating the direct on-campus participation of the County Extension Directors (immediate supervisors of educators), and 4) covering administrative task training first, then launching the program planning training with a two-day on-campus session at about three months of their hire. These actions have strengthened the training of new educators for their role in Purdue Extension.

What participants will take away from this session

Participants will learn about a hybrid approach to program planning training for new educators.

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Implementation of a Nutrition and Physical Activity Education Program: Implications for Program Development and Evaluation

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Abstract

Introduction/Theoretical Framework/Review of the Literature

Program evaluation is an integral component of extension educational process (Ghimire & Martin, 2011; Koundinya & Martin, 2013). While programs are evaluated for various purposes such as program improvement, outcomes measurement, impact assessment, and accountability, this pilot study evaluated the outcomes and lessons learned about nutrition and physical activity education. A 10-month pilot integrating Bailoterapia dance exercise classes into a USDA funded Healthy Living program was completed in one rural county in partnership with the Family HealthCare Network (FHCN) and a Family Resource Center (FRC).This pilot study utilized the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) Evaluation Framework that provides a menu of outcome and impact indicators across multiple levels of the Socioecological Model.

Evaluation/Research Questions

The following evaluative questions corresponding to SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework guided this pilot study:

1. To what extent does the Nutrition and Physical Activity Education program improve participants' nutrition and physical activity knowledge, skills, attitude, and behaviors?

2. To what extent does the Nutrition and Physical Activity Education program and community partners facilitate access and create appeal for improved nutrition and physical activity choices in the setting where education is provided?

3. To what extent is the Nutrition and Physical Activity Education program and community partners collectively impacting lifelong healthy eating and active living in limited resources communities?

4. To what extent do community-level obesity prevention strategies impact the participants' priorities, lifestyle choices, and values for healthy living?

Methods and/or Data Sources

A qualitative research design and focus group data collection method were used to evaluate the outcomes of this pilot program. Focus groups were the appropriate data collection methodology with the target audience because they are best suited to collect information from a homogenous group that have a common interest (Grudens-Schuck, Allen, & Larson, 2004). The Institutional Review Board of the university approved this study. Two focus groups were conducted with program participants (n=13) and

key community partners (n=7) to understand the outcomes and lessons learned from implementing and integrating Bailoterapia dance exercise classes into the Nutrition and Physical Activity Education Program. All program participants were female and predominantly Spanish speaking. The focus group with key stakeholders was conducted in English by the PI and Co-PI, whereas the one with program participants was facilitated in Spanish by a native speaker who is a trained bilingual nutrition educator with the state's Cooperative Extension. The focus groups were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Independent coding and member checking were utilized to establish the credibility and trustworthiness of results.

Steps to ensure trustworthiness included member checking and triangulation (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2009). The coding process included multiple steps (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2009). The two coders (PI & Co-PI) independently read each transcript and identified a set of codes. Coders reached agreement on each code/theme through verbal consensus. The slight disagreement that occurred in naming the codes was resolved by discussion. The two coders modified and refined the overlapping codes. Finally, the two team members who did not initially code the transcripts verified that the themes were supported by quotations.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

At the individual level, four themes emerged from the evaluation data. The results indicated improvements in participants' and their family members' food and physical literacy and behavioral changes such as improved physical activity in daily routines, reading food labels when shopping for food, and buying more fruits and vegetables and less junk food. Motivators for participants to attend the program included exercising and learning in a group, free classes with childcare, and free health screenings. Sustainability plans included exercise with a friend or family member, participants taking ownership to continue the dance exercise classes even if the organizational support doesn't exist, and a promotora (community health volunteer) leading classes.

At the environmental level, five themes emerged from the evaluation data. The evaluation results indicated organizational motivators to promote this program such as recognizing the need for a health promotion class and existing capacity of each organization. Program development and evaluation themes indicated regular meetings and communication, access to physical space and child care, decisions on class timings, integrating spotlight nutrition education sessions with physical activity programming, free health screenings, promotora model, utilizing various methods for program promotion, and evaluation considerations. Unanticipated outcomes included observational learning for children and child socialization benefits. Program sustainability indicated a promotora model, community health benefits, inter-organizational/sector collaborations, and long-term public value of the program to participants and the community. Program success theme indicated a participant driven approach that is sensitive to the needs of the participants; awareness of what works with participants such as the class timings, parents' work schedule, holiday season, cultural-social norms and values; and what motivates participants to take ownership to lead a healthy lifestyle.

To conclude, the evaluation results indicated that Bailoterpia dance exercise program was effective in achieving the desired short-, medium- and long-term outcomes for both the participants and key partners. While the participants indicated that they improved their knowledge, skills, and behaviors as a result of attending this program, key partners came together to support this pilot program bringing individual strengths with an understanding of the public value impact which results from long-term community health benefits (e.g. reduced obesity rates leading to decreased public health costs).

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

Implications/Recommendations: There are implications for program development and evaluation. It is imperative that the evaluator understands the existence, resources, and contributions of diverse stakeholders invested in Nutrition and Physical Activity Education programs, as well as the benefits of the evaluation results to key stakeholders (Rossy, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004) and public value of the program (Franz, 2013).

Educational importance: Evaluation results informed important strategies for obesity prevention and program sustainability in rural, limited resource communities such as child care accessibility and availability, group sessions to participate in a nutrition and physical activity program, awareness and sensitivity of the cultural norms and values of participants, and partnerships for program sustainability.

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Using a Statewide 4-H Camping Evaluation to Drive Program Direction

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Abstract

Introduction/ Theoretical Framework/ Review of Literature

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) owns a premier camping facility on the shores of Lake Tahoe. Nevada 4-H administers the property on behalf of UNCE to conduct overnight camping programs for Nevada youth. The current structure of 4-H camps at the facility requires each camping group to plan and conduct its own educational program while using the facility. The three 4-H camps at the facility have been planned and conducted by staff and volunteers appointed by local county groups (currently by region: Western, Central, and Southern). Additionally, some counties choose to conduct 4-H camps in other facilities throughout the state.

Theoretically, 4-H camps should have similar goals and objectives. They should promote opportunities for Positive Youth Development (PYD) (Bean, Kendellen, & Forneris, 2016; Feenstra, 2015; Sibthorp, Browne, & Bialeschki, 2010; Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, & Henderson, 2007), and provide opportunities to create lasting relationships with others (Arnold, Bourdeau, & Nagele, 2005, Garst, Gagnon, & Whitington, 2016; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2019). Prior to the 2018 camping season, no systematic evaluation was conducted on all Nevada 4-H camps to measure consistency among the camps. In 2018, all Nevada 4-H campers took a similar version of the 4-H Common Measures 2.0 4-H Experience survey.

In late 2018, the Nevada 4-H Director hired a statewide camp education program coordinator to help ensure all 4-H camps in Nevada work toward the same goals and objectives in a consistent manner. A graduate research assistant tasked with coordinating statewide 4-H program evaluation efforts developed an evaluation tool to distribute to all 4-H campers in 2019. The results will help evaluate differences in program objective achievement among the 4-H camps in Nevada and provide information to help make more informed decisions about the direction of the statewide 4-H camping program.

Research/ Guiding Questions

We began by developing an overarching research question to guide our survey development: “Why do campers return to 4-H camp?”

The survey developed for the first research question was administered to attendees at all Nevada 4-H camps in order to answer another research question: “How does the camp attended affect overall camper outcomes?”

Methods and/or Data Sources

We developed an evaluation of the 4-H camping experience survey tool using reliable and valid surveys like the 4-H Common Measures 2.0 evaluation tool (4-H experience scale adapted for camp use), the camp connectedness subscale from the Camp Youth Outcomes Battery (American Camp Association, 2011), and the 4-H Thriving Model Evaluation Instrument (Arnold & Gagnon, 2018). Additionally, we developed questions to assess conflict at camp. Our independent variables were gender, number of years attended 4-H camp, age, and camp attended.

We developed the survey in a pencil and paper format to be distributed at five camps planned by 4-H staff in [State]. Surveys were returned from four camps (one planned camp was canceled) and data was entered into the Qualtrics survey application for compilation and analysis.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

As of the proposal deadline, only a preliminary data analysis had been completed. Initial results suggest that there are differences in outcomes depending on the camp attended. This is not surprising as camps vary by many different factors including length, program priorities, staff, and even facilities. Data analysis will look at differences in outcomes by all independent variables. We expect to see differences by gender (Arnold et al, 2005) and age (Sibthorp et al, 2010) in addition to the differences by camp attended. Differences by number of years attended may (Wilson & Sibthorp, 2019) or may not (Gagnon, Garst, & Townsend, 2019) be evident from this data set.

The answers to the first research question (Why do campers return to 4-H camp?) will provide data that can be used to develop a set of objectives for all 4-H camps in Nevada.

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

Results of this study will provide evidence for potential changes to how 4-H camps are administered in [Nevada]. Additionally, the current study will provide baseline data to track the effect of future changes on program outcomes.

It is important to illustrate positive outcomes from a consistent 4-H camping program because the barriers to attendance (i.e., cost, distance, narrow programming window) are currently limiting program participation (all but one camp in 2019 were under capacity). Providing evidence that independent programming efforts are not having similar results justifies efforts to provide a consistent 4-H camp program to all youth in Nevada regardless of the region in which they live.

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Mentoring in Action Model: Exploring Mentorship in a State Extension Organization

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Abstract

Mentoring is a method Extension organizations may use to orient new professionals to their roles and responsibilities. As a mentee, new professionals can gain valuable knowledge about the organization itself, building relationships with important clientele, developing plans of work, and reporting monthly and annual accomplishments (Place & Bailey, 2010). Despite the promising implications of mentoring, Denny (2016) concluded that existing research on mentoring in Extension is focused primarily on assessing perceived efficacy. There is a distinct lack of research on mentoring relationships and the behaviors of mentors and mentees.

The purpose of my study was to explore the mentoring process for new Extension professionals. A new employee, as defined by my organization, has been with the organization less than three years and has not gone through the promotion process. I hosted two focus groups with six total participants, and I asked a series of questions about mentoring, using a semi-structured interview approach. I recorded and transcribed discussions, and I analyzed transcriptions and my research memos through the generation of codes, categories, themes, and a central phenomenon. Through constant comparative analysis, I created codes to represent new ideas, and I identified themes by grouping codes that were similar. The participant' descriptive and illustrative accounts of their mentoring experiences provided the basis for the theoretical framework of my study. I developed the Mentoring in Action model, which explains the mentoring process in my organization. In the center of the model are the two mentoring structures: formal mentoring and informal mentoring. A double-sided arrow shows both structures are present and occur simultaneously. The characteristics of effective mentoring relationships are shown in the outside circle, and they are timeliness and compatibility. Arrows represent the holistic nature of these characteristics in an organizational mentor program. The Mentoring in Action model provides understanding for how mentoring occurs in my organization. The context of my study should be considered in regards to transferability of the implications.

Professional development faculty and staff should explore the mechanism for mentoring in their organizations. Organizational decision makers should consider gaps within their formal mentor program that may be complemented by informal mentoring processes. New employees, on their own, may seek the guidance and counsel of colleagues. Further, organizational decision makers may consider that effective mentorship relies on relationship characteristics like timeliness and compatibility. Although understanding Extension and work roles takes time for new employees to understand, their need for assistance and support is evident at the start of their employment. For the assistance and support to be valuable, they need people with whom their personalities fit. Professional development faculty and staff should recognize the likelihood of informal mentoring within their organizations. Informal mentors may lack training in and understanding of the significant roles in which they can play in new employees' experiences. Professional development for informal mentors may be a way for organizations to increase capacity and prioritize connection making. Exploring informal mentoring, both concept and interpretation, in Extension would increase understanding of a process that is likely happening already in many organizations. My study has added to the knowledge base for mentorship in Extension, and the

Mentoring in Action model may be explored further and lead to the development of additional theories for mentoring in Extension organizations. The model may be used to inform new employee development practices and lead to future research regarding important practical implications for Extension.

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Examining Utah Residents' Patterns of Social Media Use to Inform Extension Program Delivery

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Abstract

Introduction

Changing online communication trends can provide opportunities for Extension to connect with audiences (Gharis, Bardon, Evans, Hubbard, & Taylor, 2014; Moore, Meyers, Irlbeck, & Burris, 2015). There are several examples of effective social media campaigns in Extension programming (Brinkman, Hart, Olinsky, & Merkowitz, 2011; Martinson, Skelly, & Fisher, 2011). Although roughly 90% of U.S. adults actively use the internet (Pew Research Center, 2019), changing demographics affect the popularity of existing social media platforms (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). This would likely influence Extension's ability to capitalize on innovative ways to reach various audiences. However, Extension professionals understand the importance of online communication (Campbell, Shaw, Rao, & Klink, 2019). Thus, there is an opportunity for Extension to monitor trends in social media use to ensure appropriate channels are selected to communicate with target audiences.

Purpose

This paper sought to assess Utah residents' preferred methods to access the internet and their patterns of social media use. Objectives were to (a) describe the devices used by residents to access the internet, (b) describe residents' major sources of information, (c) describe various social media platforms used by residents, and (d) compare the most preferred social media platforms used by residents based on selected demographic variables. Results of this paper can help Extension design online marketing strategies to effectively communicate with target audiences.

Methods

This research follows a descriptive design. Primary data were collected from adult Utah residents. Using convenience sampling and Qualtrics Panels, data were gathered from 1043 respondents (n = 1043). The raking method was used to weigh the sample data to reflect population characteristics of sex, age, and county of residence (Cohen, 2011; Lamm & Lamm, 2019). An online questionnaire was the primary instrument for data collection via Qualtrics. Questionnaire development followed the Tailored Design Method (Dillman, Smith, and Christian, 2015) and was reviewed by a panel of experts for validity. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. First, respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert-type scale how often they used different devices to access the internet and their sources of information. After, they were asked to indicate on a three-point scale how often they used different social media platforms. The distribution of descriptive frequencies was used to calculate an ordinal standardized score for all items. This score was referred to as a Comparative Index (CI) and ranged from 0 - 1. It was primarily used to rank devices by their level of usage, the most preferred information source, and the most used social media platform. The CI was divided into five equal categories and interpreted as follows; 0 - 0.20 = Never, 0.21 - 0.40 = Rarely, 0.41 - 0.60 = About half the time, 0.61 - 0.80 = Frequently, 0.81 - 1.00 = Always.

Results

For objective (a), results indicated Utah residents used their smartphones frequently to access the internet (CI = 0.67). Additionally, they used a desktop or laptop to access the internet about half of the time (CI = 0.58). However, respondents rarely used a Tablet to access the internet (CI = 0.28). With respect to objective (b), an assessment of the most used information source showed residents frequently used search engines such as Google to get general information (CI = 0.77). Following, they turned to family, friends, and neighbors about half the time to get information (CI = 0.43). In contrast, residents rarely used television, radio, newspapers, and magazines/newsletters as an information source.

For objective (c), a descriptive analysis of residents' social media use indicated residents frequently used Facebook (CI = 0.69) and YouTube (CI = 0.65). However, respondents rarely used Instagram (CI = 0.36), Pinterest (CI = 0.33), and Twitter (CI = 0.21). Residents generally never used Snapchat (CI = 0.20), LinkedIn (CI = 0.19), WhatsApp (CI = 0.06), and Tumblr (CI = 0.05). For objective (d), the top three social media platforms used by residents were examined based on selected demographic variables. Results indicated rural and suburban residents frequently used Facebook. In contrast, residents in urban areas frequently used YouTube. With respect to social media use by sex, males frequently used YouTube, while females frequently used Facebook. An assessment of social media use by age indicated Facebook and YouTube were frequently used by those 18-34 years old and 35-54 years old. However, those older than 55 years used Facebook and YouTube only about half the time. While Instagram was only rarely used by most sub-groups, it appears to be more popular among females and residents between the ages of 18-34 compared to others.

Conclusion/Implications/Recommendations

This study assessed Utah residents' patterns of social media use. Results highlighted residents used their smartphones to access Facebook and YouTube. Further, it demonstrated residents' preference for finding information online. Clearly, people are spending increasingly more time online (Pew Research Center, 2019). This suggests the need for Extension to foster a strong online presence. Building a solid online presence must be intentional; this can start with an understanding of how Extension clients spend their time on various social media platforms. Designing effective online marketing strategies should focus on serving the target audience with relevant content native to the specific platform.

Results highlighted several opportunities for Utah State University Extension to reach target audiences via social media. For example, Extension professionals can consider establishing an online presence through partnerships with Google to facilitate online programs. Additionally, Extension websites must be smartphone-friendly since residents often used their mobile devices to look for general information. Based on residents' patterns of social media use, there is a need for Utah State University Extension to build a solid social media presence on Facebook and YouTube to reach most demographic groups. Still, Extension should consider Instagram as a platform to communicate especially with younger, female audiences. Extension's objective should be to reach people in the most convenient manner. However, an effective social media presence should not be confused with posting content frequently. Well-crafted and curated content will not be effective until Extension understands the context in which the targeted audience interacts with online content. Context before content; reaching a target starts with engagement (Vaynerchuk, 2013).

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A Synthesis of U.S. County-Based 4-H Professional On Boarding Curriculum

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Abstract

Introduction

Extension is only as effective as its people in delivering knowledge to clientele. Extension professionals experience many challenges, such as stress, long hours, and turnover. These factors can result in burnout (Ensle, 2005). High-quality Extension professionals are leaving the Extension system due to organizational factors, such as a lack of professional development opportunities and adequate training (Kutilek, Gunderson, & Conklin, 2002). Training is important including at the beginning with onboarding (Benge, Harder, & Goodwin, 2015). Additionally, Extension professionals enter the organization with diverse preparation experiences, thus many professionals are unclear as to the skills, competencies, and expectations needed to be successful in the organization (Elliott-Engel & Westfall-Rudd, 2019).

Arnold (2007) stated “the ability to retain long-term, high-quality professionals is a direct reflection of a successful organization and must be a priority for Extension to remain a viable educational outreach system” (p. 18). Organizational efforts need to be directed at understanding the retention of Extension agents to reduce the cost of turnover the highest turnover rates within an organization are among newly hired employees (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). A systematic review of 4-H Extension professional onboarding curriculum across the country was conducted to inform the development of an onboarding process in Arizona. The onboarding processes is being emphasized to ensure county-based 4-H Extension professionals in Arizona Cooperative Extension are effectively supported as they become important contributors to the organization.

Framework

The Motivation-Hygiene Theory explains the motivating factors of an employee’s level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the job they are performing (Herzberg, 1968). Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction function separately (Herzberg, Mausner, & Synderman, 1959). Motivating factors influence employees more than maintenance factors (Herzberg et al.1959). Motivating factors are characterized by achievement, receiving recognition, nature of the work, responsibility, advancement, awards, and individual development (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Herzberg, 1968). When support towards personal growth are met, the employee will demonstrate improved work performance. Job dissatisfaction results from factors affecting the context of the workplace, these are Maintenance factors. Maintenance factors affect job dissatisfaction and are characterized by the employee’s position, company’s policies and administrative practices, physical working conditions, employment, income, and benefits (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Herzberg 1968). An organization must focus attention on its

employees' maintenance factors in order to decrease turnover (Herzberg, 1968). Onboarding can be used to direct an employees' Motivating factors and prepare an employee with coping mechanisms for Maintenance factors.

Methods

4-H Extension employee onboarding materials from each state were solicited. Requests were sent to the State 4-H Program Leader in each state. A review of the 1862 LGU websites for onboarding materials with an emphasis on 4-H specific onboarding materials was conducted. The research-team reached out to professional contacts in states when those two efforts did not generate results. Materials were reviewed to ensure they were intended to onboard county-based 4-H professionals. The researchers received two instances of either a University level policy or a county-specific material and these are excluded from this review because they did not meet the expectations of 1) the 4-H county-based professional or a systematic approach. Three states had password protected resources for their employees and we were unable to review the resource.

Twenty-six states responded and provided some form of onboarding materials. Twenty-two states had 4-H specific materials.

Most materials developed were for all county-based professionals in the Extension organization. When asked for 4-H materials the researchers received materials with a wide array of intended audience. We have a large non-response rate which means we are unsure if there are additional materials that we were unable to access.

Results

Components included Agent Policy Handbook, Onboarding Calendars, a guide for Onboarding by Supervisors, a Website with resources for Onboarding; Videos to conduct onboarding training; Workbook; a mentorship component; Face-to-face training for new employees.

Eleven states have a 4-H Policy Handbook and referred to it during their onboarding process (North Central (n=6); South (n=2); West (n=2); Northeast (n=0)).

Seven states have an Onboarding Calendar describing when a new employee should have accomplished specific activities throughout their new tenure (North Central (n=4); South (n=2*); West (n=1); Northeast (n=0)).

Three states have a Supervisors Guide for onboarding new Extension professionals (North Central (n=2); South (n=1); Northeast and West (n=0).

Thirteen states have a website resource to support new employee onboarding (North Central (n=8); South (n=4); West (n=1); Northeast (n=0). Three states had a password protected website for new employee onboarding.

Four states use videos on the website to support educational effectiveness of onboarding curriculum (North Central (n=3); South (n=1); Northeast and West (n=0).

Five states use a checklist to convey a list of tasks needing to be completed during the onboarding process (North Central (n=3); Northeast (n=1); West (n=1); South (n=0)).

One state used a workbook to support new employees understanding of their community and the organizations resources.

Two states utilize an assigned mentor and referred to this assignment in their curriculum (North Central (n=3); Northeast (n=1); West (n=1); South (n=0)).

Two states utilize a cohort approach to support onboarding of their employees (North Central (n=0); Northeast (n=0); West (n=0); South (n=0)).

Four states have their new 4-H employees meet face-to-face for onboarding activities (North Central (n=4); Northeast (n=0); West (n=0); South (n=0)).

Four states provided University-wide onboarding materials that we removed from the scope of this synthesis.

Implications

Based on the review of curriculum components very few states have robust support for onboarding of county-based professionals and there are even fewer 4-H professional onboarding materials. This systematic review exposes that most Extension organizations are either not doing onboarding efforts or it is happening informally. An onboarding approach has at least two dimensions: guides to expectations and policy; and interpersonal engagement with colleagues. Looking at the onboarding approaches offered for 4-H professionals across the country, a successful onboarding should include aspects of both. The guides to policy and expectations reduce the effect of Maintenance factors (Herzberg, 1968) while the relational approach of cohorts, mentors, and face-to-face training helps enhance Motivating factors. Next steps for this research is a content analysis of curriculum.

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