NAEPSDP Annual Conference Proceedings
November 28 – December 1, 2022

REIMAGINING
Extension

Conference Committee- 2022 NAEPSDP Conference

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NAEPSDP
National Association of Extension Program & Staff Development Professionals

SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE

Monday, November 28

3:30-6 p.m.	Registration – Penthouse Floor - Foyer
4-5 p.m.	NAEPSDP Board meeting Penthouse Floor – Horizon 1, 2, 3
5-6 p.m.	New Member and First-time Conference Attendee Reception – Penthouse Floor Infinity Ballroom

Tuesday, November 29

7:30-8:30 a.m.	Breakfast – Penthouse Floor – Horizon 1, 2, 3
8 a.m.	Registration open – Penthouse Floor - Foyer
8 a.m.-8 p.m.	Silent Auction & Exhibits – Penthouse Floor
8:45-9:45 a.m.	Welcome and Introductory General Session - Penthouse Floor – Infinity Ballroom
10-11 a.m.	Keynote, Shannon McKain – Penthouse Floor – Infinity Ballroom
11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Concurrent Session 1 – Ground Floor
12:15-1:15 p.m.	Lunch - Penthouse Floor – Infinity Ballroom
1:30-2:30 p.m.	NIFA AFRI Conference Grant supported General Session: Grassroots Engagement and Social Justice through Cooperative Extension, Nia Imani Fields - Penthouse Floor – Infinity Ballroom
2:30-2:45 p.m.	Break
2:45-3:45 p.m.	Concurrent Session 2 – Ground Floor
3:45-4 p.m.	Break
4-5 p.m.	Concurrent Session 3 – Ground Floor
5-5:15 p.m.	Break
5:15-6:15 p.m.	Poster Session – Penthouse Floor – Foyer
6-8 p.m.	NAEPSDP President's Reception (refreshments provided, cash bar available) – Penthouse Floor – Foyer

Wednesday, November 30

7:30-8:30 a.m.	Breakfast – Penthouse Floor – Horizon 1, 2, 3
8 a.m.	Registration open – Penthouse Floor – Foyer
8 a.m.-6 p.m.	Silent Auction - Penthouse– Horizon 1,2 3, & Exhibits Penthouse– Foyer
8:45-10:15 a.m.	Roundtables 1 – Penthouse Floor – Infinity Ballroom
10:15-10:30 a.m.	Break
10:30-11:30 a.m.	Concurrent Session 4 – Ground Floor
11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m.	Lunch – Penthouse Floor – Infinity Ballroom
1-2:30 p.m.	NAEPSDP Annual Meeting, Awards – Penthouse Floor – Infinity Ballroom
2:30-2:45 p.m.	Break
2:45-3:15 p.m.	NAEPSDP Regional Meetings – Penthouse Floor
3:15-4 p.m.	Committee Meetings – Penthouse Floor – Infinity Ballroom
4-4:15 p.m.	Break
4:15-5:15 p.m.	Concurrent Session 5 – Ground Floor
6 p.m.	Silent Auction ends (*check-out Thursday morning*) & Exhibits close
6 p.m.	Dinner on your own – Regions Night Out

Thursday, December 1 --- Wear your Land-Grant University's attire or colors today!

7:30-8:30 a.m.	Breakfast – Penthouse Floor – Horizon 1,2,3

NAEPSDP
National Association of Extension Program & Staff Development Professionals

7:30-8:30 a.m.	2023 NAEPSDP Board Meeting – Penthouse Floor – Infinity Ballroom
8:45-9:45 a.m.	NIFA AFRI Conference Grant supported General Session: Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI): Applications for Extension, John Diaz - Penthouse Floor – Infinity Ballroom
9:45-10 a.m.	Break
10-11:30 a.m.	Roundtables 2 – Penthouse Floor – Infinity Ballroom
11:30 a.m.-12 p.m.	Closing General Session – Penthouse Floor – Infinity Ballroom

1

Competencies Essential for Florida Early Career 4-H Agent Success

Andrew Toelle

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Abstract

Cooperative Extension to give non-formal, research-based education to the people. Cooperative Extension has been a partnership between the federal, state, and county government and the state land- grant universities. 4-H has been the youth development arm of the Cooperative Extension System and has been housed in Florida at the University of Florida.

4-H agents, at the University of Florida has developed many different approaches for preparing 4-H agents early in their careers for success, including mentoring, professional support, and professional development opportunities. These supports have been based on the competencies, knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics needed for outstanding performance. Many competencies have been identified for agent job success in Florida (Brodeur et al. 2011; Harder, 2015). However, the competencies required for Florida early career agent success had not been identified.

The purpose of this study was to identify the competencies essential for Florida early career 4-H agent success. The objectives of the study were to:

•Describe the demographic characteristics of each Delphi panel

•Identify the essential competencies for Florida early career 4-H agent success in years one and three, as perceived by entry-level 4-H agents

•Identify the essential competencies for Florida early career 4-H agent success in years one and three, as perceived by agent mentors

•Identify the essential competencies for Florida early career 4-H agent success in years one and three, as perceived by RSAs

This Delphi study asked three expert panels to identify the competencies required for Florida early career agent success in years one and three. The panels were entry-level 4-H agents, 4-H agent mentors, and 4-H Regional Specialized Agents. Each panel independently identified competencies essential for Florida early career agent success. The panels identified 55 year-one and 67 year-three competencies that fall into 15 competency areas.

Results of this study helped to establish the essential competencies for Florida early career agent success in the first and third year of employment. These competencies can be used to develop professional training programs to meet the needs of these early career agents.

2

Reimagining Extension by Leveraging University Expertise Beyond Colleges of Agriculture

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Abstract

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Engagement of universities in community settings is increasingly valued and expected (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Land-grant universities (LGUs) have traditionally conducted their community engagement through the Cooperative Extension service, simply known as Extension (Rasmussen, 2002). Some universities have tried innovative models of intercollegiate engagement, which is consistent with calls for Extension to engage with the entire university more fully ([Blinded reference]; 2021; King, 2018). Intercollegiate Extension programs can be defined as long-term programs that involve collaboration between colleges of agriculture and other colleges. There are documented examples of LGUs across the U.S. successfully using intercollegiate partnerships to achieve its mission but there are limited studies that attempt to understand the innerworkings of these partnerships.

The Burke and Litwin (1992) Organizational Change model was used to guide data collection, analysis, and interpret the findings. The Organizational Change model (Burke & Litwin, 1992) is comprised of transformational and transactional factors. The five transformational factors were described as primary catalysts for organizational change: (a) External Environment, (b) Mission and Strategy, (c) Leadership, (d) Culture, and (e) Individual and Organizational Performance. Conversely, the five transactional factors have typically been short-term exchanges among people: (a) Management Practices, (b) Structure, (c) Systems (policies and procedures), (d) Work Unit Climate, (e) Task and Individual Skills, (f) Motivation, and (g) Individual Needs and Values (Burke & Litwin, 1992). The Organizational Change model (Burke & Litwin, 1992) helped frame the discussion of external or internal forces that would create opportunities or barriers for intercollegiate Extension.

Guiding Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of faculty involved with intercollegiate Extension programs?
2. How are intercollegiate Extension programs influenced by transformational and transactional organizational change factors?

Methods

A qualitative descriptive phenomenological research design was used which is a holistic approach that seeks to connect personal experiences with the real-world context in which they occurred (Thompson et al., 1989). A purposive sampling technique was used to select eight

participants for one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Of the eight participants, seven participated in their one-on-one interviews via Zoom and one met via phone. All eight participants were employees at different 1862 LGUs with R1 research status (Carnegie Classification of Institutions, 2018). These intercollegiate programs covered topics related to a wide range of community-driven challenges: (a) public policy, (b) technology for community development, and (c) business development and rural revitalization.

The Organizational Change model (Burke & Litwin, 1992) was used to guide the interview protocol creation which was approved by [University] institutional review board. The interview was comprised of 15 main questions along with six probing questions. Data were analyzed using a qualitative thematic analysis technique (Brooks et al., 2015) which was combined with the constant comparative method (Saldaña, 2016). Member-checking was performed after transcriptions were complete (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) followed by two peer debriefings with an Extension faculty member not involved in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results

Study participants identified four transformational and four transactional themes relevant to the success or failure of intercollegiate Extension programs. Regarding the four transformational factor themes, participants explained that soft funding was oftentimes the catalyst for getting these programs started, but the ideal funding source was having intercollegiate Extension programs as a line item in a budget. Participants explained that successful intercollegiate Extension programs must support LGUs' higher education mission through experiential learning and programs must serve public needs. Participants believed intercollegiate Extension programs at their LGUs had been successful because leaders recognized the potential for these programs to improve the reputation and visibility of the university as a whole. Participants expressed that intercollegiate Extension programs were less likely to succeed if main campus faculty were unaware of Extension best practices regarding interactions with the public and stakeholders were not familiar with the program topics. Regarding the four transactional factors, participants shared sub-themes related to how the organizational structure of their LGUs impacted their intercollegiate Extension programs such as how leveraging the county-based infrastructure improved intercollegiate Extension programs and autonomy from agricultural colleges created a more intercollegiate environment. Participants felt faculty involved with intercollegiate Extension programs should be skilled in viewing the larger picture beyond siloed disciplines, and applying concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI). Lastly, professional recognition was described as a powerful tool for incentivizing faculty to engage with intercollegiate Extension programs and a way of communicating the importance of intercollegiate programs to stakeholders.

Recommendations

LGUs should encourage research which identifies commonalities between community needs and concepts students need to learn. Intercollegiate Extension programs should design a marketing campaign for LGU administration which clearly communicates how these programs will improve the LGU's reputation and visibility. We recommend that safeguards be developed which prevent main campus faculty involved with intercollegiate Extension programs from damaging relationships between LGUs and the public. Also, it is recommended that Extension stakeholders become familiar with intercollegiate Extension program topics and have a base-level knowledge of why the program topics are important.

Clear guidelines developed by departments beyond agricultural colleges may be useful in the tenure and promotion evaluation process for faculty engaged in Extension efforts. Furthermore, the structure of LGUs may be used to support intercollegiate Extension programs by utilizing the county-based offices (Lyons & Mann, 2018) and clear operating procedures may need to be implemented so that university faculty understand how Extension offices can and cannot be utilized. Moreover, successful intercollegiate Extension program employees possessed the skills necessary to implement DEI practices into their work ([Blinded reference]).

Because many factors influence the success or failure of these programs and no two programs are exactly alike it is impossible to provide a formula for intercollegiate program best practices. However, based on these findings, those interested in creating or improving intercollegiate Extension programs should consider all eight themes which emerged from this research. The 21st century has presented unique challenges which were unheard of in 1914 when Extension was established. LGUs must reimagine Extension if the organization aims to remain relevant.

References

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3

Program Planning Frameworks for Programs Serving Farmers with Disabilities: Lesson Learned from AgrAbility

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Abstract

Introduction

Offering disability-inclusive programs will improve the social, environmental, and economic conditions. In turn, it has the potential to accelerate efforts to achieve social justice across varied environments and contexts. The study explored AgrAbility as an agricultural assistance program serving farmers with disabilities. A mixed-method approach (survey and interview) was employed to explore and aggregate frameworks used by different AgrAbility states for planning assistance programs. Three integrated planning models (the Targeting Outcomes of Programs [TOP] model, Sork's planning domains, and Cervero and Wilson's planning model) were used as a conceptual framework to guide the study questions. I suggested integrating three planning development models to understand different AgrAbility programs' planning frameworks used to serve farmers who live with disabilities. I also sought to integrate the models to grasp how democracy and social justice occur in AgrAbility's planning frameworks. However, the TOP model extensively offered a detailed technical step-by-step planning process. A step focused on valuing social justice was absent in this model. In this regard, Sork's planning domains (ethical, social-political, and technical) and Cervero and Wilson's planning model (power, interests, negotiation, and responsibility) helped us understand the underpinning social-political and ethical domains in the ongoing planning process within the technical stage.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What program planning approaches and frameworks are used for planning AgrAbility programs?
2. How, if at all, is the ethical-social-political domain (i.e., power, interests, negotiation, and responsibilities) addressed or enacted within AgrAbility's planning frameworks?

Methods

An explanatory sequential design (a quantitative approach, a survey followed by a qualitative approach, an interview) was followed to explore AgrAbility program planning frameworks to understand the program planning process technically and deeply through an ethical and social-political lens. The study context was the AgrAbility, which currently exists in 28 states. I collected data from 16 states; 16 states completed planning surveys, and seven states agreed to

participate in a follow-up interview. The survey questions focused on AgrAbility program planning from the technical stance (i.e., need assessment, program participants, collaboration, and resource allocations); questions consisted of close and open-ended questions. However, interview questions focused on understanding program planning from an ethical and social-political stance. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science Research (SPSS) software and ATLAS.ti software.

Results and Conclusions

The planning survey findings revealed that arthritis, back impairments, and visual impairments were the three most types of disabilities served by all 16 AgrAbility states. Changing AgrAbility participants' skills was highlighted by the majority as the core focus of programs, followed by changing their knowledge. Thirteen states chose social and economic information as the first two crucial pieces of information to understand the participants' current gaps, followed by historical, educational, and emotional information. While environmental information, geography, infrastructure information, and political and legal structure information were the least highlighted needed information. Respondents selected the survey, direct observation, and focus group methods to assess gaps, potential participants' characteristics, and potential participants Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Aspirations [KASA] needs.

Also, time to conduct a need assessment was the top challenge/constraint faced when conducting a needs assessment and assessing participants' KASA gaps. Money availability was the second choice when conducting need assessment generally; however, the level of staff expertise ranked as a second constraint in assessing participants' KASA gaps. Financial resources and Support from outside donors (private and public) were the first two constraints resources selected by most respondents when preparing resource mobilization plans. Lastly, 13 respondents mentioned that program participants are involved in the planning process and other stakeholders. In addition, the lack of members' participation in the discussion was the first challenge highlighted by 13 respondents when engaging program participants. Some participants are much more vocal than others, and participants do not quickly generate quantities of ideas.

The significant themes generated from analyzing the seven interview transcripts were (1) AgrAbility program planning: Capacity-building, (2) AgrAbility program planning: Approaches promote social justice, and (3) AgrAbility program planning: Challenges influencing the ongoing planning process. The first theme focused on the competencies, partnerships, and different alternative funds needed for planning programs serving people with disabilities.

The critical factors from the first theme that guide planning programs serving people with disabilities were (1) understanding farming and disability backgrounds, (2) being trained to deal with several types of disabilities, (3) acquiring communication skills, (4) knowing farmers' culture and lifestyles, (5) being an advocate for farmers, (6) being aware of available resources, (7) looking up at the latest research and trends related to agriculture and disabilities, (8) customized assistance and services, (9) selecting program teamwork, (10) acquiring case management skills, (11) tracking case's progress and program progress, (12) networking with different entities, and (13) securing alternative funds.

Outreaching to target different venues and engaging program participants with a wide range of inclusion and diversity considerations was the second theme's focus. Lastly, the main challenges raised by interviewees that influenced the ongoing planning process were time issues, shortage of AgrAbility staff numbers, farmers' disability stigma, farmers never asking for help, accountability issue, agencies' processing system, and financial issue.

Recommendations and Application

The study covered the technical side of planning assistance programs for people with disabilities. Also, the study helped understand to what extent ethical and social-political stances are addressed or enacted within the ongoing planning process. The planning survey and interviews helped underline the important factors integrated into a framework. The framework could guide planning programs serving people with disabilities, focusing on ethical and social-political stances. Also, the framework could guide evaluators in assessing how programs promote social justice considering the highlighted factors. The study findings offered several venues for future implications, specifically for people planning and evaluating programs serving people with disabilities in agriculture. The framework based on various state planning approaches can be used as a catalyst reflection. It may help program staff understand what they might need to consider enhancing program planning effectiveness (from a technical side) and what program staff might need to consider promoting social justice (from social, ethical, and political sides).

Keywords: Disability, Program planning, Farmers, Social justice, Mixed methods

4

Improving Attitudes Through Interventional Strategies in Youth Development Programming

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Abstract

Introduction / Theoretical Framework / Review of the Literature

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) supports the least restrictive environment for youth with special needs to meet their potential. While negative perceptions of persons with disabilities exist, there are also opportunities for inclusive practices to break down prejudices and biases. Youth with and without disabilities can benefit from inclusion programs when support is offered within certain settings and environments (McDougall et al., 2004). Using one or more interventions, such as exposure to persons with disabilities, promoting active engagement situations, peer mentoring, peer teaching, and providing opportunities to interact with persons with disabilities outside of school can lead to positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities (Moore & Nettlebeck, 2013; Woodgate et al., 2020). Peer teaching models increase opportunities for youth to gain leadership, independence, communication, decision making, and problem-solving skills and when youth are involved in teaching, they take on the responsibility to be a positive role model for other students (Smith, 2014).

Research/Guiding Questions

In order to address this issue of concern, a study was conducted to determine if adolescent attitudes towards persons with disabilities can change after exposure to working with youth with disabilities. The study was mixed methodology and designed to answer the following questions: RQ1) Do interventions improve the attitudes and perceptions of adolescents towards persons with disabilities and RQ2) What is the effect of exposure to youth with disabilities on the attitudes and perceptions of adolescents.

Methods and/or Data Sources

The program utilized the Soccer for Success healthy living curriculum, paired with the Teens as Teachers leadership development initiative, 12 youth with Down syndrome and 6 adolescent teens participated in an 8-week program through the UF/IFAS 4-H Youth Development Program.

Quantitative data was collected from adolescents (aged 14-17) using the CBAD-12A instrument, a questionnaire created by Álvarez-Delgado et al. (2020) that measures three factors through the use of 12 Likert-type items. Qualitative data was collected using photovoice methods and through group interviews. Adolescents took photographs during each session they volunteered, captioned the photographs, and shared a PowerPoint presentation on their experience.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

Overall, the quantitative data is inconclusive to answer RQ1 as to whether the intervention improved the attitudes and perceptions of adolescents towards persons with disabilities because of the low data set and the high summative data of positive attitudes captured in the pre-survey. One counselor in particular showed an attitudinal shift from feeling uncomfortable beside a person with a disability before the intervention to feeling comfortable beside a person with a disability after the intervention.

Overall, the qualitative data addresses RQ2 in the effect of exposure to youth with disabilities on the attitudes and perceptions of adolescents shows that opportunities to support engagement and relationship building has the potential to influence a change in attitudes (Grutter et al., 2017). Themes that emerged through qualitative data analysis of the group interview transcript included opportunities for adolescents to recognize socialization, teamwork, belonging and mastery of skills for the youth with disabilities. Adolescents recognized that they did not have an awareness of these capabilities for youth with disabilities prior to this experience. These were consistent with the presentation transcripts and the captions adolescents used to label their photographs, such as “Goal” and “Team” and the photovoice presentation analysis. Adolescents used the words fun, happy, excited and joy to describe the expressions they captured of the youth they worked with through photovoice techniques. Data concurs that the nature of the contact with persons with disabilities will influence the effect on attitudes with non-superficial cooperative activities, such as those promoted in the Soccer for Success program, being the most impactful (Schwab, 2017). Peers provide opportunities to model positive behaviors while teaching new skills to others (Chang & Locke, 2016), as observed in this program. The program was structured to be non-competitive, encourage teamwork, and provide an adequate quantity and quality of interactions which influences positive attitudes towards those that are different (Thomas & Rose, 2020).

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

Peer teaching models in which adolescents are able to work with peers with disabilities increases their tolerance for those that have disabilities (Bosseart et al., 2011). The results of this study provided preliminary data that programs that foster inclusive practices using a teen as teacher model can be effective to positively effect adolescent attitudes towards persons with disabilities.

Within the disability community, supporting inclusion requires people to have a positive attitude toward those that are different. Inclusive settings promote and initiate contact for persons with disabilities to be with their peers to reduce bias and stereotypes (Barr & Bracchitta, 2015;

Wickline et al., 2016). Inclusion supports a more equitable environment and can raise awareness of persons with disabilities when combined with educational intervention programs that support one or more of the elements of theories that involved contact with people with disabilities (Lindsay & Edwards, 2013; McDougall et al., 2004; McKay, 2018; McManus et al., 2021; Pousoon et al., 2017; Rademaker et al., 2020).

Families and parents are always looking to find ways to engage their youth (with and without disabilities) in activities that promote a sense of belonging and independence. Out-of-school time programs that promote Positive Youth Development and encourage youth leadership, can benefit communities. Future programs should target opportunities for youth to engage with one those that are different from them in order to have a greater understanding and awareness of the disability community.

References

none

5

Extension Programs for Changing Audiences: Exploring the Educational Interests of [State] Residents

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Abstract

Introduction/ Theoretical Framework/ Review of the Literature

Extension must continue to meet the changing needs of residents to fulfil the land-grant mission (Henning et al., 2014). While community-based needs assessments enable responsive program plans, an area of concern for Extension is steady participant recruitment given changing societal needs. It is important to identify innovative ways of attracting new audiences. Understanding residents' interests and preferences for information and education can lead to successful participant recruitment and development of relevant programming (Bull et al., 2004; Narine et al., 2020). However, a formal needs assessment alone may not always be sufficient in revealing individuals' preferences (Malmsheimer et al., 2002).

With a limited body of literature examining residents' preferences for educational topic areas, this study examined the educational interests of [State] residents. It explores opportunities for future programming based on residents' preferences for specific topic areas. This study used a preferences assessment format to develop an exhaustive list of educational topic areas as described in the methods section.

Research/ Guiding Questions

This study sought to describe [State] residents' level of interest and information-seeking behaviors for selected topic areas. Guiding questions were (a) how interested are (rural, urban, and suburban) residents in educational topic areas, (b) what topics are younger and older residents interested in, and (c) how interested are residents in participating in educational workshops or courses. Findings can inform development and implementation of relevant Extension programs that *appeal* to residents.

Methods and Data Sources

This research followed a descriptive design and relied on primary data from [State] residents in June 2021. The target population was residents over the age of 18. The sample size was 668 individuals (*n* = 668), and data were gathered using a convenience sampling technique. The iterative proportional fitting method was used to weight the sample data to reflect target population characteristics. Sample data was weighted based on age, sex, and county population size using estimated 2019 census data. Data collection was facilitated by Qualtrics after approval from [State] University Institutional Review Board.

A closed-ended questionnaire was used to gather data from the sample. The three Program Directors of [State] University Extension provided feedback to create a pre-defined list of topic areas. Then, an internal survey was administered to Extension faculty to corroborate and expand upon the existing list of topics. Directors recruited ten faculty each from their respective departments to complete the internal survey (n = 30). Content analysis was used to generate a complete list of topic areas based on responses from the faculty survey. The final residents' survey consisted of a list of 71 topics.

In the final survey, [State] residents were asked to indicate, (a) their level of interest for each topic, and (b) how often they self-searched for information on the topic. For interest, response anchors were as follows: *Not Interested* = 1, *Hardly Interested* = 2, *Somewhat Interested* = 3, *Interested* = 4, and *Very Interested* = 5. For information-seeking behaviors, response anchors were as follows: *Never* = 1, *Yearly* = 2, *Monthly* = 3, *Weekly* = 4, and *Daily* = 5. Descriptive analyses were conducted in SPSS.

Results/ Products

Overall, the top three topics of interest were strengthening family relationships, emergency preparedness, and mental health. On average, individuals searched for information on these topics monthly. Residents also searched monthly for information on healthy couples' relationship, home gardening, nutrition education, and financial planning.

With respect to objective (a), results indicated strengthening family relationships was of highest interest to rural and suburban residents, and mental health was highest for urban residents. Home gardening and food preservation both were of high interest to rural and suburban residents. Financial literacy and nature and outdoor education were of high interest to urban residents. Individuals searched monthly for information on these topics.

For objective (b), results showed strengthening family relationships and mental health both were of highest interest to individuals between the ages of 18-34 and 35-54. Residents over the age of 54 was most interested in emergency preparedness and food storage. While younger residents searched for information on most topics monthly, older residents searched infrequently for information, except for nutrition education. Younger residents also showed higher interests in financial topics compared to middle-aged and older residents, who had greater interest in home gardening and landscapes.

Looking at the interaction between age and area of residence on interest levels, results showed rural and suburban residents between the ages of 18-34 and 35-55 were most interested in strengthening family relationships, while rural and suburban residents 55 years or older were most interested in emergency preparedness. Urban residents between the ages of 18-34 and 35-54 were most interested in mental health, while urban residents older than 54 years were most interested in emergency preparedness.

With respect to objective (c), residents preferred online only participation or a mix between online and face to face programs, with a greater online component. Most rural and suburban residents of all age groups preferred to participate in online courses or workshops only. Urban residents between the ages of 18-34 preferred a hybrid between online and face-to-face learning, with a greater face-to-face component. Older residents (>54 years) were less likely to participate in any educational course.

Recommendations/ Implications

Findings indicated [State] residents were interested in a wide variety of topic areas. Topics such as family relationships, emergency preparedness, and mental health had reliable levels of interest across all audiences. Since online programming was most preferred, Extension professionals in [State] University Extension can expand virtual short courses for existing programs in these topic areas of interest. By identifying audience segments and employing a targeted marketing approach, Extension faculty can engage in deliberate efforts to attract and retain new and existing audiences.

Given the broad range of programming across land grant institutions, Extension organizations could employ a similar approach used in this study to assess residents' interests, information seeking behaviors, and participation preferences. Targeting resources to develop or restructure existing programs in important topic areas will assist in recruiting and retaining program participants, especially given changing societal trends.

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6

Reimaging Extension's Centering of COMMUNITY in Its Existence, Moving Forward: A Needed Detail in What Community Means for Today's Times

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Abstract

Community has been at the heart of Extension's work and existence, mainly focused upon communities of practice, interest, and place. In looking at recent shifts in society and social movements in the United States, we add communities of action and circumstance to the important roles Extension will bring in American cultures and lived experiences from here forward (Feverbee, 2014). A reframing of what community is will allow for a reimagining of Extension that is both needed and necessary if our state agencies, considering our 1862,1890, and 1994 land grant act purposes, are to fulfill their promise of serving the American people. Including four identified stages of developing true authentic community: pseudocommunity, chaos, realization, and true authentic community (Peck, 1987) can be a key to the realities of servicing the needs of people who are not in true community yet feel and act as if they are. Exploring elements of effective community in the diverse types of community in which Extension now exists is also of great assistance (Gardner, 1990). These elements include: wholeness incorporating diversity, a shared culture, good internal communication, caring, trust, and teamwork, group maintenance and governance, participation and shared leadership tasks, development of young people (or new members), and links with the outside world. Incorporating and successfully navigating the plethora of identities community members hold as their own is an excellent tool of anyone within Extension. Adding a set of community building principles can also be of value (Gudykunst, 1991). These include being committed, mindful, unconditionally accepting, concerned for both self and others, understanding, ethical, and peaceful.

Our conference presentation delivery plan is in two phases. Phase 1 includes a mini-session on personal identities and biases, including personal sharing and a deeper dialogue among participants; Phase 2 focuses upon detailed reflection and dialogue on what community is for today's time (defined based in what has been shared in this abstract, thus far), a look at how people seek community in today's time, and how Extension may elevate these components in its day-to-day existence, planning models, and focused work to best serve the diversity of clientele in the years ahead.

Our hope is that session participants will be able to utilize all content and exercises, internally with staff and externally with stakeholders, upon completing this presentation experience. We note that we do not demonize people for their beliefs, paradigms, perspectives, and/or lived experiences, but rather, invite all to the table for an energized exercise of envisioning a better world through our work and a mindfulness of "who WE are" as a wider collective in

communities, inclusive of both rural and urban settings. This engaging and thought-provoking session is best delivered as a workshop because of content, activities, and amount of time required to ideally walk participants through it as planned. It could be scaled down for a concurrent presentation, if necessary.

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7

Evaluating Medium-and Long-term Outcomes of a Remote Work Extension Program

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Abstract

Introduction

In an age of greater governmental accountability and oversight, the Extension system must document program effectiveness (Baughman et al., 2010; Carman et al., 2008; Gagnon et al., 2015). Extension professionals cannot infer program impact or the value of their programs without evaluation (Rennekamp & Arnold, 2009). Chazdon and Paine (2014) explained that Extension demonstrates its public value to stakeholders by evaluating programs for long-term impact. Long-term impacts are assessed over time and ideally should be informed by a comprehensive needs assessment (Narine & Ali, 2020). Legislatively funded, [State Extension Program] is a capacity building program with the overall goal of strengthening the economies of rural [State] communities. This program supports the results of a 2019 statewide needs assessment which found that well-paying and steady jobs were top needs in rural [State] counties (Narine, 2019).

The [remote work] course is part of the [State Extension Program]. It provides [State's] rural workforce with training for online opportunities in remote employment. The course is hybrid distance consisting of self-paced and structured components. When evaluating programs to demonstrate public value, it is common to assess short-term outcomes (Narine et al., 2021), usually determined by the end of an intervention. However, assessing medium- and long-term outcomes require follow-ups with participants over time (Mertens & Wilson, 2018). For the [remote work course], both short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes followed Rockwell and Bennett's Targeting Outcomes of Programs (TOP) model (Rockwell & Bennett, 2004). While short-term outcomes assessed changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations toward finding remote employment (Hill et al., 2021), medium-term outcomes assessed participants' engagement in remote work opportunities and job placements upon course completion. Long-term outcomes focused on anticipated earnings and reduction in commute times via increased employment opportunities in rural [State] due to participants' adoption of remote work practices. Results from this study support the requirements of [State] funding and reporting.

Research

This study assessed the medium- and long-term outcomes of [remote work course], i.e., seeking and securing remote employment, and economic (anticipated income increases) and environmental (reduction in carbon emissions) conditions. Guiding questions were:

1. How many course graduates found remote jobs?
2. How confident were course graduates in their ability to find remote employment?
3. What are the longer-term economic and environmental benefits of remote employment?

Methods

This study used a descriptive design to collect data on medium- and long-term outcomes. Annual surveys were administered to all course graduates. For 2019, the survey was sent to 568 course graduates enrolled between October 2018 – October 2019 (N = 568). Given a 36% response rate, the sample size for the 2019 annual survey was 206 graduates (n = 206). For 2020, the survey was sent to 517 graduates enrolled between November 2019 – August 2020 (N = 517). With a response rate of 38%, the sample size for the 2020 annual survey was 196 graduates (n = 196). For 2021, the survey was sent to 369 graduates enrolled between September 2020 – June 2021 (N = 369). With a 25% response rate, the sample size for the 2021 annual survey was 93 graduates (n = 93).

Although surveys were sent yearly, the results reported are collective for the period October 2018 – June 2021 for all 1,454 course graduates (N = 1,454). With a response rate of 34%, the sample size was 493 graduates (n = 493). To gather data on medium-term outcomes, graduates were asked about their remote work status, and for those who did not find remote employment, their confidence in gaining remote employment. For long-term outcomes, graduates were asked about the value of the course, anticipated income, and changes in commute times. Frequencies and descriptive statistics were used to report results.

Results and Conclusions

Twenty-two percent (22%) of graduates paid roughly $50 to enroll in the course. Most (61%) respondents indicated that, on average, the course was worth 58% more than what they paid. This suggests that graduates who paid for the course believed the personal benefits of completing the course outweighed the registration cost.

About 25% of the sample found remote work (120 graduates), and took, on average, two months to do so. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the sample did not yet find remote employment (368 graduates). However, most (87%) of those who did not find remote work indicated they were confident in their ability to do so. Overall, a graduate who found remote work experienced a 40% increase in median salary. Total salaries across all graduates who found remote work increased by 37%.

Roughly 62% of those who found remote work believed their median salaries would likely increase by 20% over the next year. When asked about commutes, 84% of respondents said they drove to a physical workplace before finding remote work. Since finding remote work, only 34% indicated they still drove to a physical workplace. The decline in graduates who commuted to work resulted in a 74% reduction in total miles driven per month across all respondents who found remote work. This translated to a 74% decrease in fuel expenses per month across all those who found remote work. This further resulted in a total reduction of 6.04 metric tons of carbon emissions per month (carbon emissions were computed using a car carbon footprint calculator).

Based on the results, graduates who found remote work benefitted from reduced commutes to a physical workplace, increases in personal savings due to lower fuel expenses each month, and increases in median salary. The reduction in carbon emissions due to reduced commutes further support [State's] clean air and quality activities.

Recommendations and Implications

The evaluation process applied in this study holds implications for Extension professionals evaluating medium- and long-term outcomes of their own programs. Extension professionals could consider Rockwell and Bennett's (2004) TOP model for planning and evaluating non-formal educational capacity-building programs in their own communities. While this study used annual follow-up surveys to collect medium- and long-term data, Extension professionals could also consider follow-up interviews for a mixed methods approach. By following a structured approach that details medium- and long-term outcomes, Extension professionals can successfully report on these measures to funders.

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Do Extension Undergraduate Apprentices Demonstrate Critical Thinking via Reflective Journaling?

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Abstract

John Dewey (1910) recognized that reflection is a critical component of experiential learning. While experiential learning approaches such as apprenticeships, field placements, and internships, allow students to gain concrete experience and active experimentation, we know experience alone is not a good teacher and does not automatically translate to learning (Conrad & Hedin, 1990). For students to truly learn from these experiences, they must critically reflect upon and think abstractly about the experience.

The Mississippi State University (MSU) Extension Undergraduate Apprenticeship Program gives undergraduates an opportunity to explore Extension-related careers while participating in integrated research and experiential learning opportunities that directly benefit Extension scholarship and outreach to local stakeholders. Each apprentice is paired with an Extension mentor who facilitates the research process and its extension application at a regional or statewide level. The authors developed a framework for the apprenticeship program rooted in the principles of mentoring adult learners in an organizational context that integrates Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Model and the DEAL Model for Critical Reflection (Ash & Clayton, 2009). The latter is a structured three-stage critical reflection model that requires students to critically reflect rather than merely reporting on the activities in which they engaged (Barry, 2016). This model "is a process that scaffolds learners as they describe, examine, and articulate learning" (Denny & Hardman, 2020, p.88).

There was a primary guiding question for this study: Do students participating in the Extension Apprenticeship Program demonstrate learning and critical thinking, as defined by Ash and Clayton (2009), via written reflective journaling? An ancillary line of inquiry was to understand if the Program influenced students' knowledge about Extension and future career and/or educational decisions.

Twenty-four apprentices from three summer cohorts (2018 through 2020) completed an online reflection journal entry each week during their respective apprenticeship. While the 2018 apprenticeships lasted 12 weeks, modifications to the program logistics resulted in a reduction to only 10 weeks – and thus 10 journal entries – in 2019 and 2020. Reflection journal entries were prompted by four questions that addressed the Articulate Learning component of the DEAL model: "What did I learn?"; "How, specifically, did I learn it?"; "Why does this learning matter?"; and "In what ways will I use this learning?".

The authors used the DEAL Model Critical Thinking Rubric to assess students' critical thinking and learning as articulated in their reflective journal entries. Modified by Ash, Clayton, and Moses (2009) from Paul and Elder (2001), this rubric identifies several intellectual standards that determine the quality of students' reasoning: relevance, accuracy, clarity, precision, depth, breadth, logic, significance, fairness, integration, and writing quality. For this study, the critical thinking principles included in the reflection journal analyses were relevance, clarity, precision, depth, logic, significance, fairness, and integration. The rubric outlines four levels of mastery relative to each principle (Ash & Clayton, 2004): 1 (completely lacking), 2 (under-developed), 3 (good), or 4 (excellent). Half-points were used when scoring the reflection journals to indicate instances when journal entries fell between two score categories on the rubric. This method allowed for more precise scoring.

A deductive approach to qualitative analysis was used to analyze data. Data were analyzed in Microsoft Excel. The responses to the four articulate learning questions were assigned a score for each of the critical thinking principles. Those scores were then averaged to provide a composite mean score for that week's reflection. These weekly composite scores were again averaged for each apprentice to determine a composite score across the entire 10- or 12-week apprenticeship. The composite scores for each apprentice were combined to create a composite mean score for each cohort and an overall composite score for all apprentices from all years.

Based on average composite scores across all weeks and all cohorts, apprentices demonstrated both learning and critical thinking. Looking more closely at each of the critical thinking principles, apprentices scored lowest on clarity and precision and highest on logic. One explanation for this is that apprentices might have already developed a strong foundation in principles that are broader in scope, such as integrating their experience and learning, and need to further develop the principles that seem to expand on the broader principles by providing examples or defining terms (i.e., clarity) or by providing specific supporting information (i.e., precision).

Average composite critical thinking scores across the cohorts did not significantly differ. Despite this, individual responses could still be categorized into three levels of quality of critical thinking -- high, medium, and low. A high-quality response provided in-depth explanations for the learning described, clearly explained how the experience connects to the learning, and discussed how the learning connects to future goals and endeavors. A low-quality response did not expand on the student's learning nor mention any application of how the learning can be used outside of a particular experience.

Interestingly, the standard deviations of average scores differed across apprentices. It is possible that if an apprentice receives rigorous feedback from their mentor that effectively scaffolds their process of reflecting on their learning, they might use this feedback to adjust their future reflections, leading to greater variance around the mean.

Future studies should examine the level of critical thinking skills that students possess prior to entering similar programs so that researchers can assess the degree to which similar programs facilitate development of critical thinking skills. Furthermore, using multiple reviewers to score reflection journals may increase reliability. For practitioners, providing mentors with specific training on how to guide students to complete their reflection journals is recommended to facilitate higher levels of quality in students' reflections.

Because a primary purpose of the Undergraduate Apprenticeship Program is to bridge the gap between research and practice, thereby advocating for Extension professions, the DEAL model is an excellent tool to assist students in processing the connections between their experiences, what they have learned from the experience, and their future goals. Using reflection journals to collect qualitative data can offer insight into students' satisfaction and growth over time, as well as formative and summative feedback to improve both the program process and outcomes.

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Keywords: critical thinking; reflection; experiential learning; apprenticeship; undergraduate

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The impact of demographic variables on the use of ICTs; Evidence from the rural agricultural communities in Pakistan

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Abstract

The present study was designed to investigate the impact of farmers' demographic characteristics on the use of ICTs. Pakistan is an agro-based country, it's economy mainly relies on agricultural products and by-products. The major part of the agricultural sector in Pakistan is operated by small landholders and unfortunately, they have a low literacy rate. Due to the low literacy rate, they are unable to adopt modern agricultural inputs for agricultural advancement like ICTs. Greater production in the agriculture have positive impact on economy and food security (FAO, 2019) Mainly Pakistan's economy getting considerable progress but still, there is a gap between the actual and possible potential yield. Therefore, there is a dire need for the use of technologies in this sector. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are considered an innovative way for agricultural development. ICTs can improve the farm productivity and livelihoods of small farmers having larger family sizes due to the joint family system in the rural areas of Pakistan (Govt. of Pakistan, 2021). Anastasion et al (2017) found that ICTs worked as a catalyst for the traditional extension system to boost its process of information delivery. In the developing world, the adoption of ICTs is a complex and critical process because there are various affecting factors for its adoption. Among these factors, the demographic profile of the frames is the prominent factor (Chhachhar et al, 2018). Previously many studies reported that demographic profile is the major factor for the adoption behavior of farmers.

This research study was conducted in the Punjab province of Pakistan which is known as the breadbasket of the country. The study entailed a cross-sectional, descriptive, and survey research design. These research designs have already been used in various research studies in Pakistan (Muhammad, Idrees & Lodhi, 2003) (Siddiqui, 2006). The multistage sampling design was used for this study, out of 36 districts of Punjab two districts Rahim Yar Khan and Muzaffargarh were selected randomly; from each district, two tehsils were selected, and then five villages were selected from each tehsil based on simple random sampling technique. From each selected village 20 farmers were selected through a random sample selection technique. A total sample of 400 respondents was selected on a random basis. Farmers were the key stakeholders in this study; therefore, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the help of pretested and validated questionnaire. Data analysis was carried out by using the SPSS software and applying a descriptive statistic model and linear regression were used for this study. Pearson correlation test was used for calculating the associations.

Demographic attributes of the farmers' community showed that 44.5% of respondents belonged to the age group of 35 years, which was the prominent age group, while 31.2% of respondents fell in the age category of 36-50 years. Only One-fourth of respondents (24.3%) were aged more than 50 years. This implies that young age respondents were a prominent constituent of the entire sample of the total respondents. This healthy participation of young ones is also a notion towards mainstreaming agriculture across the country.

According to many researchers, age has an important role to play in the adoption and diffusion of innovations. Further reported that, adoption and diffusion process is more rapid among the young farmers as compared to the old farmers (Habib et al, 2018). The educational level of the farmers in the research area was; 55% literate while 45% have no formal education. Among literate respondents greater than one-tenth of respondents had the highest level of education while 12% had a primary level of education. Involvement of young aged and educated individuals in farming is a positive gesture toward profitable farming. This uneven situation of education implies that respondents may not be able to understand the complexities of the latest farming technologies, so it may cause the low adoption of technologies. Data also depicted that majority of farmers involved in this study were small landholders (90.3%) while the share of medium and large farmers was nominal. In the study area farming under 12.5 acres was dominant (95.3%) followed by 3.3. and 1.5% of respondents who were practicing farming on more than 12.5 acres of land. These results reflect that farming is the baseline for farmers in the study area. Regardless of age, education, and land size, they are involved in farming to generate income. This involvement in farming urges easy access to information to bridge knowledge gaps among farmers.

Pearson correlation coefficient shows a highly significant and positive relationship between age and the use of radio/FM for obtaining agricultural information. It means the Aged farming community was having more use of radio for obtaining agricultural information. While young farmers were using advanced ICTs for getting agricultural information like the internet, websites, and mobile phone. In the case of education, results showed a positive relationship. It may be concluded that farmers with high education, were more inclined to use TV, Internet, computer, mobile phone, social media, landline phones, and Agri. helpline and Agri. websites for obtaining agricultural information as compared to illiterate farmers. Furthermore, according to the correlation test landholding and area under cultivation have a positive relationship with the use of advanced ICT tools for getting agricultural information. According to the future preference of farmers for getting agricultural information, the majority of the farmers prefer mobile phones, internet-based sources, and TV, because these are the more convenient and quick, and authentic sources for the farming community.

Based on the above results it is highly recommended to the policy institutes and government to increase the level of education among the farmers because education is a very important indicator of development. Government should also introduce STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) technology at the school level to create awareness about modern technologies like ICTs for increasing the adoption rate. Moreover, most of the farmers incline towards the use of the mobile phone for getting information and also show a preference for future use, government should use the ICTs in an innovative manner for agricultural development.

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10

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) New Agent and Specialist On-boarding Program

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Abstract

The VCE Organizational Effectiveness Plan (2021) recommended the development of "on-boarding and training programs using appropriate pedagogy, to ensure new employees understand their job expectations and are supported through their transition to their new careers (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CWZAOW2yTVnNNutT83HTCVZVBXykoXeA/view, 2.5.2, p. 3). Development of the plan is being co-led by two VCE Administrators, the Associate Director for Field Operations and Administration and the Specialist for Continuing Professional Development. Initial data informing the process included interviews with key personnel overseeing existing onboarding activities for agents and specialists, a system-wide VCE On-boarding survey (Vines, et al., 2021b), data collected in a series of focus groups with Extension agents and professionals four to seven years into their careers (Vines, et al., 2022a, 2022b) as well as an earlier study (Vines, et al., 2018, 2021a) and listening sessions (Vines, 2020) with early career employees. This is being approached as a participatory project, using an engaged program planning approach (Vines, 2019). The committee was carefully selected to represent diverse roles, responsibilities, and tenure within the VCE organization and appointed by the VCE Director of Extension (VT) and the VCE Extension Administrator (VSU). The committee is comprised of six Specialists, one Human Resources Specialist, five Agents, four District Directors. VCE Locations represented include the VT Campus, VSU Campus, Community-based offices, Agriculture Research and Extension Center (AREC), and District Offices. During this presentation we will talk about the process that has been used in developing the plan and share insight into the draft plan as it has developed. This work is based on the career stages (Benge et al., 2011; Rennekamp and Nall, 1994). One new aspect of the program is that the onboarding plan is being developed to support agents and specialists at both the 1862 and 1890 universities in Virginia collectively as a cohort to increase cohesion and consistency across the system.

The committee participated in a series of visioning sessions to identify desired characteristics and content of the new onboarding program. Recommendations were that the onboarding program:

- be a stand-alone event not connected to other events or training,
- have clearly defined expectations and timeline shared at the onset with the new employee,
- be cohort-based, and occur over a period of time
- incorporate mentoring and shadowing,

- use both formative and summative evaluation be used,
- be flexible to accommodate prior experience, multiple roles and individual competencies,
- include a formal graduation,
- introduce new faculty to different VCE facilities around the state, and
- serve as a connector to the promotion and tenure processes.

Recommended program content areas include Extension Organization, Employee Expectations, Networking Relationships, Professionalism, and the Programming Process.

A draft plan has been developed and vetted by the committee. It is being released to a select group of people in leadership positions related to agent and specialist roles. Once their feedback is received it will be incorporated into the plan. At that point we anticipate forming focus groups to further scrutinize and strengthen the plan. We anticipate submitting the plan to administration for their review in July 2022. If approved, the plan will be implemented in January 2023.

The process used to develop the plan significantly increases input of Extension faculty across the organization in guiding organizational change. The purpose of this approach is to identify challenges of new employees in different roles and be responsive to their needs while helping to strengthen organizational community and culture. While this program focuses on early career employees, it is also working to develop employees in the later stages of career development in the organization by encouraging them to take ownership and leadership in the success of VCE. This is important in providing a workforce that can work to insure the long-term viability and resilience of communities in Virginia.

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11

An assessment of knowledge and research priorities is a key to identifying training needs regarding wheat post-harvest losses in Pakistan

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Abstract

Introduction

In Pakistan, the wheat crop is still the major source of food for the people of all classes. It is also fulfilling the food requirements of those people who cannot afford such foods that are high in fiber. Among other cereal crops, it is a widely grown cereal crop in all provinces of the country. The present study was to assess the training needs of farmers to lesser the post-harvest losses of wheat. Wheat is a key crop for humans as well as a major shareholder in any country's economy. (Yu et al, 2017). Wheat flour is the most important food for Pakistani people and it is enriched with nutritional value and energy. It supplies 72 percent of daily caloric energy. In Pakistan, the estimated consumption of wheat flour is 124/kg/capita which is the highest amount all over the World (Rashid & Ayaz, 2015). Major losses are estimated in food grains during management decisions of harvesting the wheat, traditional storage practices or lack of drying knowledge. Heavy losses of food production occur in different stages due to poor harvesting and transportation, marketing channel, and middleman monopoly of prices ups and downs at the selling and buying time (Khan, 2017).

Methods

The study was conducted by employing multistage sampling technique. At the first stage, three districts were selected i.e., Faisalabad, Okara and Chiniot on the basis of random sampling. At second stage, six rural tehsils (two from each district) were selected through random sampling. Then twelve villages from each tehsil were selected randomly. From the twelve selected villages in third stage, respondent farmers were selected on the basis of proportionate sampling in fourth stage. Therefore, a sample of 400 farmers (about 25% of the total farmers) was constructed by selecting a proportionate number of farmers from each of twelve villages. A well-structured close-ended interview schedule was used for data collection. For the survey of four hundred household face to face interviews were conducted. Data analysis was performed using descriptive as well as inferential statistics by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results

Knowledge, behavior, and attitude are important factors to change any perspective. Harvesting techniques and harvest time have a major impact on crop yield. Results shows that respondents having 4 years and less experience were 10.0%, more than one-fourth (15.3%) of respondents had farming experience of 5 to 9 years, about one-third respondents (30.8%) had 10-14 years of farming experiences, 15.5% of respondents had experience of farming between 15 to 19 years, and about one-third (28.5%) respondents had 20 years and above farming experience. These results show that the respondents of this study were experienced persons regarding farming. Respondents' distribution regarding the purpose of wheat cultivation shows that farmers might have more attention towards wheat cultivation if they cultivate wheat for business purposes and their production level may increase in comparison to other purposes. For threshing and harvesting, combine harvester and thresher are generally used. Combine harvester is positively associated with the farming experience. This is important for a society where the majority of farmers have small landholdings. In such scenarios, farmers are less likely to use combined harvesters or new technologies due to fewer resources and small landholdings. So, having knowledge about combine harvester can lead a person to get awareness and practice of new technologies.

An experienced person is better on loss management. it is concluded that greater the experience of wheat harvester, lesser the wheat post-harvest losses. Transport system is an important step while moving wheat from farm to the market place or to storage place. If the system is not up-to-the mark, losses are supposed to occur. So to avoid wheat losses, vehicles and transportation system must be improved. This is only possible if the farmers use mechanized grain storage methods.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A majority of farmers cultivated wheat with the purpose of household consumption. A large number of rural farmers have sufficient knowledge of cutting time of wheat, but they do not practically use knowledge of cutting, they prefer to hire labour for cutting their crops. Present study explains that majority of farmers have knowledge of combine harvester but practically only a few are using it. The main reasons behind the use of combine harvester are grain scattering and wasting of husks because most of the respondents have livestock on a large scale and they need husks for their animals. Resultantly, farmers have awareness about new technologies of wheat post-harvest but few of them use practically. It is concluded that farmers have less access to extension worker and their services. Reducing post-harvest losses leads to an important way of increasing food availability without additional requirements of food. It is a sustainable solution for the reduction of poverty and increase the development of rural people by improving the agri-business of farmers. On the basis of this study, it is recommended that training programs should be started after an appropriate needs assessment. Training programs should be started from household level to curtail post-harvest loss. Due to cultural constraints, separate training programs should be started from men and women.

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12

Language Access in Federally Assisted Extension Programs

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Abstract

Jessica Creighton, Acting Director of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights, will discuss the requirements for language access and meaningful access for individuals with limited English proficiency in federally assisted programs and activities. The presentation will explain the inclusion of limited English proficiency under Title VI protections via Executive Order 13166. It will also cover how to create a language access plan utilizing a four-factor analysis, and best practices for providing interpretation and translation services.

References

Executive Order 13166

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and USDA's implementing regulations for that title at 7 CFR 15

Relevant case law

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Incorporating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Competencies into Onboarding

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Abstract

Onboarding of new employees is critical in equipping them with an understanding of the Extension system, their duties, and how to navigate successfully in their communities. Many educators come in without the complete skill set or understanding of Extension, lacking the ability to fill this critical role at the local level. (Ensle, 2005; Myers, 2011) Martin (2011) noted during the first 2 years of employment is the period in which employees have the greatest intention to leave. He also notes that this is also the time when intentional efforts like onboarding and mentoring can decrease turnover in the organization.

Oklahoma State University (OSU) Extension previously had a new employee orientation which was held periodically when there was a substantial group of new employees. The orientation was 4 days on campus. The staff development specialist's retirement and a new Extension director provided an opportunity to rewrite the staff development position. I was selected to fill the position and one of my first tasks was to research and propose new systems for onboarding and mentoring.

OSU Extension launched a new onboarding program in January 2021. The program is called STEP: Supporting and Training Extension Professionals. The goal of the program is to provide base line training for the three program areas -- Ag/NR, FCS, 4-H – and non-subject matter training related to OSU Extension's core competencies. While the content included is working well, there is still one important piece missing that needs to be incorporated into the program: diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Extension's focus on this topic has increased over the years, but still fall shorts in developing culturally relevant programming to reach diverse audiences. (ECOP, 2002; Fox et al., 2017) While some Extension programs have positions dedicated solely to DEI, OSU Extension does not. OSU Extension has a state team of 5 members who participated in Coming Together for Racial Understanding. I am a member of that team and we are working to fulfill the obligations of this program focused on effective dialogue. This, however, is not the place to begin with new employees to equip them to embrace diversity, develop skills in inclusivity, and create opportunities for diverse audiences to engage in Extension programs.

This roundtable will provide an overview of the current STEP onboarding program and the content covered. The questions below will guide discussion around how to effectively incorporate DEI into onboarding and beyond.

- In general, what is the expectation for DEI training in your state?

- What DEI topics/programs are your states using in your onboarding program?
- Is there professional development certifications or trainings that would be helpful in equipping PSD staff or other Extension professionals to provide training for new employees in DEI?
- If time allows, besides CTRU, what other DEI offerings has your state provided to all employees or mid- and advanced-career employees?

Key takeaways for participants include rich discussion and resource sharing of ways to address DEI core competencies. Participants will also gain understanding of how OSU Extension is addressing onboarding currently.

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14

Designing a diverse and inclusive new program and organizational development unit with impacts in mind

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Abstract

Introduction / Theoretical Framework / Review of the Literature

Delivering high quality, locally relevant, and research-based educational programs is the central mission of Cooperative Extension (Extension). For over 100 years, Extension in the United States has served the communities all over the country. Extension has used several program development models including program planning, design and implementation, and evaluation that involves stakeholders in the process (Forest & Baker, 1994; Franz & Townson, 2008; Heckel, 2004; Franz et al., 2015). The program development models have gone through several changes as well (Rennekamp & Arnold, 2019). The ability of the Extension educators to plan, implement, and evaluate a local program is inherent to the success of that program (Cooper & Graham, 2001; Radhakrishna, 2001). Evaluation Competency Building (ECB) has consistently proved that competent Extension professionals are critical for the future of the organization and its program development model (Dias et al., 2020). Extension can be strengthened by improving the competency and skills of the educators who develop different programs (Extension Committee on Organization and Policy, 2007; Seevers & Graham, 2012; Rios et al., 2021). The preparation of Extension professionals to accomplish their roles through professional development is essential to the development of quality Extension programs (Garst, Baughman, & Franz, 2014).

However, the professional qualifications, capabilities, and trainings of the educators vary widely across states, programs, and career stages. The need of a "new" educator will be entirely different from an educator in their mid-career. Hence, designing professional development paths is rarely straightforward, rarely measured for effectiveness, and the impact is rarely demonstrated (Rienties, Brouwer, & Lygo-Baker, 2013). In addition to building competency, the educators need to be in compliance with the jurisdictions and society that they navigate around. Hence, they should be well-equipped to adopt the changing societal scenario. For example, even though Extension prides itself with being diverse and inclusive, educators should be well-equipped to intentionally design programs with the core values of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Respect (DEIR) from the inception of their program development process.

In order to establish program development and evaluation competencies among the educators of an institution, an establishment of a Unit focused on this work is important. In this presentation, we describe the processes that we followed to establish a new Program and Organizational Development Unit (POD), within the University of Maryland Extension (UME).

Research/Guiding Questions

1. How to develop an inclusive POD unit to address the varied needs of different faculty (vary in competency level, program, rank, years of service, gender, age, professional training, educational background)?
2. How to integrate DEIR values into programming?

Methods and/or Data Sources

Initial deliberations: The senior leadership team at UME decided structurally to create a POD Unit in 2020 and hired several positions over the years. After the Unit took shape, different methods of data collection were employed to strategically design a plan for building a meaningful and inclusive unit.

- Informal interviews with key personnel at UME: We conducted informal interviews with the key personnel at UME to understand the needs of the program as well as educators.
- Literature/website review: A thorough review of the POD units across the nation was carried out to see the different components of the unit and how they function.
- Discussing with our peers around the country: We conducted peer discussions with various land grant Extension programs around the nation to gain their perspectives on best practices.
- Educators' needs assessment survey with: We conducted a needs assessment survey with all the UME educators to learn about their needs.
- DEIR deliberations: A taskforce was created to understand and design a DEIR strategic plan to implement and goal track over the years.
- Entry level competency assessment: The incoming educators took a 36-item competency assessment survey to understand their competency level and provide support accordingly.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

The literature review, informal interviews, peer-discussions, needs assessment survey, DEIR deliberations, as well as the entry level competency assessment gave us ample of data to make our unit functional. We have come up with the strategic plan for our unit and are in the process of establishing an Extension Academy. As part of the academy and in order to make our educators competent in program development and evaluation, as well as to streamline the onboarding process, we have offered the incoming educators a 6-month program development series to get them started in their work. Commitment to DEIR has been a core value of Extension and now we are making deliberate attempts to include the learning outcomes in all the programs.

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

The results from our study will be very valuable to Extension programs that are trying to establish or enhance a POD Unit or approach.

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15

Knowledge Level of Extension Agents on Nutrition-Sensitive Extension Services to Rural Communities in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Poverty, hunger and hidden hunger have been identified as major problems that affect developing countries in the world, hence the need for a holistic solution in order to alleviate the nutrition anomaly (Suresh et al. 2016). According to key findings of WHO, UNICEF and WB (2021) and the FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2019), it was stressed that about 820 million people globally are still plagued by hunger, a situation which poses a stumbling block to achieving the SDG 2030 target of zero hunger while stunting in children under the ages of 5 was still prevalent. Moreover, more than 2 billion people globally face a severity of food insecurity and the inability to attain the required access to sufficient and nutritious food by these populations exposes them to a risk of malnutrition and unhealthiness. While the level of hunger and malnutrition is of little significance (8%) across Europe and Northern America, the scourge is concentrated primarily in low and middle income countries, with higher rate among women group than men (Grosso et al. 2020). It is also on record that one out of every three persons in sub-Sahara Africa is undernourished (Akerele et al. 2013) and for this reason, Matemilola and Elegbede (2017) argued that there is a dire need to reduce the nutrition inadequacy while ensuring a healthy and sustainable economic development in Africa (Nigeria inclusive).

Elsewhere, the World Bank (2021) posited that agriculture has the capacity of improving food and nutrition and reducing poverty for about 75% of the poor people in the world who reside in rural areas and whose main activity is farming. Despite the prevalence of agricultural production in rural areas, FAO (2015) had stressed that many rural people are poor, with the manifestation of food insecurity, under-nutrition, and little access to markets and essential services. The need to bridge the nutrient deficiency gap through agriculture however led to Nutrition-sensitive agriculture (Thompson and Amoroso 2011), an approach that is based on the production of nutritious, affordable, safe and culturally appropriate foods in the required quantity and quality; in order to meet the dietary requirements of the growing population in a way that will, not only ensure sustainability, but alleviate micronutrient and malnutrition deficiencies (FAO 2014).

Nandi et al. (2018) sees agricultural extension and advisory workers as best remedy source to ensure the attainment of nutritional education by farmers and rural people through convergence of actors, farm schools, and participatory methodologies. It has equally been established that extension agents play significant roles in the lives of farmers in rural communities through the dissemination of valuable information that can improve their production and enhance their

livelihoods. Dia (2018) also advocated for the integration of nutrition education into agricultural training institutes with the belief that extension and advisory workers are important agents in transmitting agricultural knowledge to farmers and rural people. However, the competencies of extension agents and their knowledge level in the dissemination of nutrition-sensitive extension services to rural people remain largely undefined in certain parts of Nigeria. It is against this background, that this research sought to investigate the knowledge level of the extension agents in the delivery of nutrition-sensitive extension in Kwara State, Nigeria, the sources of information of the extension agents on nutrition-sensitive extension and to determine the constraints faced by the extension agents in the delivery of nutrition-sensitive extension. The study also explored the relationships that exist between extension agents' socioeconomic characteristics and their knowledge level in nutrition-sensitive extension delivery.

Methods

The study was carried out in Kwara State, Nigeria with a population of 3,192,893 (NBS, 2017). The State is located between latitude 7° 45`N to the south, latitude 2° 45`E to the west, and longitude 6° 40`E to its south-eastern part. About 80% of the population of the state lives in rural areas, the majority of whom are farmers (Yusuf et al., 2016). Crops largely grown in the state include yam, rice, cassava, maize, beans, sugarcane, vegetables, and fruits. The study population comprised all extension agents (EAs) currently serving under Kwara State Agricultural Development Programme (KWADP). All 120 EAs in all the four zones of KWADP were selected for this study. A structured questionnaire, using face and content validity to determine the appropriateness of the instrument, was used to elicit information. Test re-test method was used to verify the reliability of the instrument while descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages and means) was used to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of the extension agents. Inferential (regression analysis) statistics were used to analyze the determinants of the extension agents' knowledge on nutrition-sensitive extension.

Findings showed that the majority (66.7%) was of the male gender, and also 92.5% were married with an average farming families of 6,096 covered by each agent. A substantial (48.3%) part of the agents have 6-10 years working experience; their major sources of information on nutrition were from personal experience, agricultural extension institutes, friends and colleagues, fortnight training meetings, seminars/workshops. They have more knowledge on protein foods, calcium foods, cassava processing and vitamin supplements, but little knowledge on nutritious food preparation, sources of iodine, and cheap protein and vitamin D sources. They were highly constrained by insufficient number of EAs, inadequate staff mobility, poor EA-Nutrition expert linkage, poor access to information on nutrition, and lack of training incentives. At P=0.05, age was a basic determinant of their knowledge on nutrition.

The study concluded that the agents have a high knowledge level of foods rich in protein, calcium and vitamin. They are equally well conversant with the processing of cassava into nutritious varieties; however, little knowledge about food sources of iodine, vitamin D, cheap protein sources were recorded. Hence, this study recommended that the agricultural research institutes should introduce and add courses on nutrition education for EAs to be adequately trained on effective nutrition-sensitive extension delivery.

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16

A Process to Determine Functional Competencies for Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Personnel in Mississippi

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Abstract

Introduction

Core values and foundational competencies, such as teamwork, initiative, and professionalism, guide Extension personnel regardless of institution (Lakai et al., 2014). However, program area-specific competencies – often referred to as functional competencies – may differ based on the needs of the individuals and communities being served. Functional competencies, then, are specific knowledge or skills that relate to successful performance in a job (Newman, 2010; Taylor & Neimeyer, 2022).

Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Extension personnel often obtain specialized degrees yet are expected to do outreach to clientele on a variety of topics (Berven, et al., 2020). In 2017, the University of Tennessee developed a comprehensive competency framework for their FCS Extension personnel (Franck et al., 2017; UT, 2017). The framework is based on four knowledge areas: consumer economics, health and safety, human development, and nutrition and food safety. Within each knowledge area, related competencies were placed in groups known as concepts.

The dynamic nature of social and public health issues in Mississippi necessitates that Extension identify targeted functional competencies and train FCS Extension personnel accordingly. This ensures that agents have the required baseline knowledge to address the needs of the residents in the communities they serve. Using the UT competency framework as a starting point, the MSU Extension research team developed a plan to investigate the relevancy of those competencies to FCS personnel in Mississippi.

Guiding question

Are the FCS knowledge areas, concepts, and competencies identified by the University of Tennessee relevant to and inclusive of the current FCS priorities and client needs in Mississippi?

Methods

The MSU Extension FCS list of functional competencies was developed through a participatory approach involving subject matter experts (SMEs) within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at MSU. These SMEs consisted of faculty, Extension specialists, and Extension Associates in Human Development and Family Science, Food Science Nutrition and Health

Promotion, and Agricultural Economics. A total of 18 SMEs were identified and assigned to one of the four knowledge areas.

The project consisted of three distinct phases. In Phase 1 (summer 2020), four surveys were developed, one for each knowledge area, and distributed electronically via Qualtrics to the 18 SMEs. These surveys included the concepts and competencies developed by UT, and the SMEs were asked to define each concept, add new competencies, and decide if any existing competencies should be moved under a different concept.

In Phase 2 (summer 2021), data from the Phase 1 surveys were used to inform four in-person focus groups with the SMEs. Participants were given the updated list of competencies for their respective knowledge area, and a student researcher facilitated a discussion to gain consensus on the new and updated competencies. At this stage, we also solicited input from participants on a definition of the specific knowledge area to which they were assigned.

Phase 3 took place in the fall of 2021. The student researcher compiled the final list of concepts and competencies for each knowledge area and shared them with the respective SMEs via Office 365. The SMEs were asked to provide final feedback on the list of concepts and competencies, including definitions, to ensure that their input from previous phases was accurately captured.

Results

The study began with four FCS knowledge areas: consumer economics; human development; nutrition and food safety; and health and safety. Based on the divergent organizational structure and responsibilities of specialists in nutrition and food safety at MSU, that particular knowledge area was ultimately split into two separate knowledge areas. Experts defined consumer economics as practices to protect a consumer and improve their financial well-being. This knowledge area originally had 10 concepts and 43 competencies. The final list consisted of 11 concepts and 74 competencies. The human development knowledge area was defined as the evolution of an individual’s development (physical, cognitive, social, and emotional) within physical, social, familial, and cultural contexts/environments across the lifespan. While there was no change in the total concepts, the final list of competencies increased from 22 to 37. SMEs defined food safety as practices to prevent food borne illness. The list ended with the same two concepts but increased from six to nine competencies. Focus group participants did not come to consensus on a definition for the health and safety knowledge area, due to time limitations. There were significant cuts to both the concepts and competencies, from 11 to seven concepts and 49 to 34 competencies.

Implications/Applications

While the list developed from each focus group was reviewed for accuracy by the participants, there is room to further refine the list for the consumer economics knowledge area. Given that there were only two specialists at MSU at the time of the focus group, there was a lack of consensus regarding many of the concepts and competencies. Future input from additional experts may be necessary. The reduction in the list for the health and safety knowledge area reflects a lower priority for housing concepts in current FCS program efforts in the state. The creation of a fifth knowledge area – nutrition – for MSU Extension will require further investigation into the concepts and competencies for agents and other FCS educators in the state. This was outside the scope of the focus groups conducted in 2021.

This study reveals that competencies for FCS Extension professionals are highly context-specific and should be based on the unique needs and programming in the state. Extension personnel should be involved in the development and modifications of competencies to ensure that the priorities of the state are being met. Further research is planned to create assessments to measure agents' competence, which will be used to shape future training for FCS agents.

Competencies provide personnel with a clear understanding of the preferred practices and level of performance expected in order to achieve the desired programmatic outcomes (Stone & Bieber, 1997). Establishing a baseline of functional competencies can enable Extension personnel to successfully align the skills, capabilities, and knowledge of current and future educators with local and statewide program area priorities and subsequent professional development, resulting in organizational improvement and efficiency.

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Keywords: competency; focus groups; assessment

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Myers-Briggs Type Indicator: A Resource for professional communication self-efficacy enhancement among early-career professionals in Virginia Cooperative Extension

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Abstract

Rural communities increasingly face challenges related to drug addiction, food insecurity, socioeconomic unrest, racial equity and more, new Extension professionals are tasked with being agents of change and civic leaders not imagined a decade ago. Addressing multi-faceted needs in increasingly diverse communities demands both interpersonal competency and technical skill. Empirical evidence with extension professionals shows that poor communication skills and low professional self-efficacy among early-career agents / educators can lead to burnout and departure from Extension. However, studies show that increased self-efficacy related to communication techniques can positively impact job performance, satisfaction, and career advancement. Using parallel sequential mixed research methods framework this investigation will examine the relationship between new professionals in Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) to understand of individual Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality preferences and utilizing their 20 facet preferences to enhance professional communications self-efficacy.

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Navigating the World of Scholarly Publishing in Extension: Strategies for Success

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Abstract

Introduction

Common perceived constraints, such as a lack of research output and time for writing, may hinder some Extension professionals from having a more robust publication record (Loveridge, 1998). However, re-framing the approach to scholarship to include aspects of Extension work beyond basic research is one strategy to work smarter when it comes to maximizing one's publishing potential. By publishing the science behind Extension practice – including program planning, evaluation and assessment, applied research outputs, and useful tools and technologies – Extension professionals can contribute to a body of knowledge that others can use and build upon. Additionally, having one's work critically reviewed by peers can improve and validate that work while contributing to career advancement.

To be a successful writer there are key points to consider throughout the writing process, including determining a topic, determining the correct publication type and venue, selecting an article category (if applicable), writing the manuscript, and making manuscript revisions. The actual writing itself is important because, as a previous Journal of Extension editor pointed out, "bad writing can obscure good work" (Hoelscher, 2006, para.4).

Guiding Question

What are the strategies for success to balance doing quality Extension work with publishing the process and/or impact of that work?

Methods

This workshop will dive into publishing benefits, obstacles, and myths. Participants will learn five simple tips to get prospective authors moving toward the sometimes-daunting process of writing an article. First, the workshop will start with the question, "You have an idea/program/assessment that you want to share with others. Now what?" Next, participants will learn briefly about the difference between books, journal articles, internal one-pagers, reports, and other written formats. From there, the workshop will focus on journal articles, specifically, and the presenters will walk participants through the purpose and content of each section in a standard journal article format. Laying out research in this manner can make things easier to write and easier to read. Participants will get an overview of the process from submission to publication, specifically for the Journal of Extension, so they will know what to expect.

Presenters will use PowerPoint slides to review knowledge-based content and practical strategies. They will also engage learners in several experiential activities to help

- Generate ideas with publication potential.
- Match publication ideas with the appropriate journal category.
- Review format and academic style guidelines, including strategies for overcoming writing challenges and common mistakes made in the writing process.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

Focusing attention on these key topics of idea generation, appropriate publication categories, and formatting guidelines will help first-time writers or those with limited journal publication experience avoid publishing pitfalls and increase their likelihood of success. Participants will leave with a packet that includes activities and resources to jumpstart or improve their scholarship. The packet includes a writing plan template, a "framing your scholarship" exercise, and an abstract writing activity. Participants will receive handouts that outline key points they can refer to when considering their next writing project.

Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

Writing is a skill needed by Extension professionals now and in the future. Publishing in journals provides an opportunity to share "intellectual and creative work that enhances and advances the profession of Extension" (Arnold, 2018, para.1). Publishing in a peer-reviewed outlet is valued for annual reviews, promotion and tenure, and professional development. Stronger written communication skills will also support more effective communication with stakeholders, partners, and colleagues across the Extension system.

How this Workshop Differs from a Presentation

For many Extension professionals the scholarly publication process can seem overwhelming, and just the thought of it is enough to bring on writer's block. This hands-on workshop will set participants up for success as authors by reviewing publication opportunities, the writing process, and how to overcome common mistakes. By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to

- Identify common publishing benefits, obstacles, and myths.
- Recognize the standard article components and what reviewers are looking for.
- Explain the publishing process for the Journal of Extension.
- Identify and correct common errors made in the writing process.

Participants also will take part in hands-on exercises to generate publication ideas and correct common writing errors. These exercises include

- Completing a "Getting Started" worksheet to generate ideas and match ideas to article categories
- Identifying common citation mistakes, according to APA guidelines
- Identifying elements of good scholarly writing
- Correcting common scholarly writing mistakes

Keywords - scholarship; publishing; writing; journals; Journal of Extension

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CAPABILITY OF EXTENSION PRACTITIONERS IN PROMOTING GRASSLAND INTENSIFICATION FOR PASTORALISTS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Introduction

Extension practitioners in this study are individuals, most of whom are starters, mid-level or end of career people; functioning in different specializations related to agricultural, livestock, and environmental extension in public and private extension offices. The nature of grassland anticipated in the study is guided by intensification of Napier grass cultivation for feeding cattle. This initiative is relatively new to the system of cattle rearing as well as livestock extension services in Nigeria. Thus, it is of paramount importance that evaluation of capability of extension practitioners must be known to inform future professional development efforts towards Napier grass cultivation.

Literature Review: The goal of agricultural extension is to disseminate useful knowledge, skills and information to farmers (Sennuga et al., 2020). Grass still remains one of the cheapest high-quality feed sources for efficient ruminant meat and dairy production while the intensification of grassland through cultivation of local grass is becoming an emerging issue (Van Den Pol et al., 2018). Some studies have addressed aspects of multi-functionality of grasslands for (semi)-natural grasslands (Bengtsson et al., 2019), native grasslands (Jaurena et al., 2021) and permanent grasslands (Schils et al., 2022). The present study looks into cultivation of grassland intensification through the cultivation of Napier grass. Napier grass (Pennisetum purpureum) is a fast-growing perennial grass native to Sub-Saharan Africa and is widely grown across the tropical and subtropical regions of the world (Paul et al., 2020). It is a multipurpose and one of the most important tropical forage crops, primarily used to feed cattle in cut, dry and carry feeding systems (Muktar et al., 2022).

Theoretical framework: The study is premised upon the Model of Effective Job Performance (MEJP) and Competency model. The model of effective job performance was postulated by Boyatzis (1982) and competency model was developed by The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD). The model is used for training and development in formal professions in which extension service profession is included (Rothwell, Arneson and Naughton, 2013).

Research Questions and Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of awareness and capability/skillfulness of extension practitioners in promoting grassland intensification for pastoralists in Northern

Nigeria. The study is guided by the following questions: (i) what is the awareness level of extension practitioners on grassland cultivation? and (ii) what is the capability level of extension practitioners to disseminate information on Napier grass cultivation practices to pastoralists for feeding cattle and promoting grassland intensification? The study tested the assumption that; there is no significant relationship between awareness level and capability of extension practitioners to disseminate information on Napier grass cultivation practices to pastoralists for feeding cattle and promoting grassland intensification.

Methods

The study was carried out in the North-Central zone of Nigeria. The zone is one of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. States of Nigeria which are generally referred to as belonging to the North Central are: Benue, Plateau, Niger, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). It covers latitude 00'- 30' North of the equator and longitude 00'-00' East of the Greenwich meridian.

This study employed two (2) stage sampling technique to select respondents. The first stage involved a random selection of 2 states. Selected states were Niger and Kwara States. The second stage involved a random selected of 100 practitioners from each state. The selected institutions where extension practitioners were drawn were largely public extension agencies and include: State Agricultural Development Project, State Ministry of Agriculture, State Ministry of Environment and Private Extension Organizations. Percentage ratio of selection was 70:10:10:10 respectively. The choice of higher percentage selection from the State Agricultural Development Project (ADP) offices was because the institutions are known to employ majority of the agricultural extension expertise with the widest extension coverage in each state. This is because the Nigerian extension service remains largely a public business. A total of 200 extension practitioners were selected for the study.

A questionnaire which was subjected to a content validity and reliability (Cronbach alpha coefficient = 0.71) test was used to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire was structured according to stated objectives and measured thus: Awareness: aware=1, not aware=0. Capabilities/Skillfulness to promote Napier grass cultivation: highly skilled=2, moderately skilled =1, not skilled=0. Data collection started in December, 2021 and ended in February, 2022 with the help of 3 research assistants who have been trained on the content of the instrument before embarking on field survey. Primary data collected was analyzed using frequency, percentage, means, and ranks. The stated hypothesis was tested using Pearson Products Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis.

Results

The results showed that although the extension practitioners were fairly aware of Napier grass cultivation for grassland intensification (mean= 3.7), they however rated their capability to disseminate the Napier grass cultivation for grassland intensification high (mean=17.7); whereas ability to share information on extension methods (mean=2.66), ability to share information on technology transfer (mean=2.55), and ability to guide through the cultural practices such as weeding (mean=2.53) were ranked first, second and their positions of capabilities respectively. The least capability of the extension practitioners was their ability to speak language of the agro-pastoralists, which is liable to slow down their effectiveness to promote Napier grass cultivation among the pastoralists. PPMC analysis established a positive and significant relationship ($r = 0.279$; $p < 0.01$) between awareness of Napier grass cultivation practices to feed cattle and capability level to promote grassland intensification through Napier grass cultivation.

Recommendations/Implications

Based on findings in this study, it was recommended that government at all levels and other concerned private agencies should design relevant capacity building programs that will increase the skills of extension practitioners on Napier grass cultivation with special focus on developing their ability to speak language of the agro-pastoralists.

Practical Implication: The identification of the topmost areas of capabilities of the extension practitioners on Napier grass cultivation has far-reaching implications for curriculum innovation in developing training that will enhance their knowledge, capacity and effectiveness in the dissemination of grassland intensification practices to pastoralists.

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Using videos to disseminate information to Extension agents

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Abstract

Introduction

A vital part of academia is sharing research and evidence-based practices with the public. Extension has historically and is presently a translator of information for many different audiences. With this role, it is essential that Extension agents or Extension educators stay up to date on evidence-based practices, new research findings, the best ways to communicate or translate these findings to their audience, and ways to evaluate their efforts in sharing this information with their public. This is a lot to ask an agent to do in addition to providing programming and completing their other job duties. This requires the agents to consume a lot of research, analyze it, digest it, and be able to use the information to create content for their programming or work with the public to keep up with this ever-changing information. We address this challenge in the area of conducting surveys and analyzing data for program planning and evaluation by developing a series of "bite-sized" videos for agents to use.

Review of Literature

Right now, most of this information is shared with Extension agents or educators via writing either through peer reviewed academic journal articles or through shorter write ups of practices in practice journals or databases. This relies on the agent having to find the information and then read it, which can be time consuming. There also has been a decline in the amount of time a person will read in a day. The U.S. of Bureau of Labor Statistics found that in 2020, people between the ages of 15-44 in the U.S. read on average about twelve minutes each day. This means that people are more likely to read headlines, two or three sentences, short emails, or PowerPoint slides when looking to get information rather than reading longer journal articles (Gabielkov et al., 2016; Gann et al., 2013; Gelles-Watnick & Perrin, 2021). Expecting Extension agents to be very different from the average person by wanting to and actually reading lots of work material is unrealistic and unsustainable. If Extension agents are not obtaining the information they need from research, this can help lead to more of a gap between research and practice (Hirschkorn & Geelan, 2008; Spoth et al., 2020). That is why it is crucial to find different avenues to share the information with Extension agents and the public as well (Hirschkorn & Geelan, 2008). There are already continuing education sessions and webinars given by many organizations throughout the year. However, these often can cover large content areas, range in time from an hour to days long, and may or may not be available for the agent to find and watch whenever they need resources. Having resources that the agents can go to whenever they want, that are short, and specific to one concept might be a good tool to use when communicating with agents especially when it comes to best practices or how to complete something.

Guiding Question

What methods and avenues should be used to share research, best practices, and other needed information with Extension agents?

Methods

PowerPoints were created to present Qualtrics to Extension agents and for use in the Savvy Survey Series UF EDIS publication. After being reviewed for content validity, voice recordings were added to the PowerPoints with live examples.

Product

This presents work at the University of Florida aimed at helping agents and specialists use Qualtrics or create surveys. A series of short videos was recorded using PowerPoint presentations and associated examples in Qualtrics and Excel as resources for agents to view when they want.

Recommendations and Application

It is believed that these videos covering one or two topics related to surveys or Qualtrics will provide bite-sized information that agents will use to obtain the information they need, and in turn, build better programs for the public. Evaluation of this method of information sharing needs to be studied to understand the impact it has on agents. If the results are positive, then it is recommended that other content area in Extension be offered with this method. This method would be suited for best practices, how to do something, and other information that does not change frequently or is not relatively new research.

Keywords: Translating, Extension, Practice Research Gap

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The Role of Relationship Architects in Extension Grants

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Abstract

Many NAEPSDP members are uniquely positioned in their organizations to play a valuable role on grants as relationship architects bridging the gap between Extension specialists on campus in academic units and field faculty/staff. This roundtable discussion will start with the definition of a relationship architect and an example of a structure at the University of Georgia Extension that has been successful to incorporate a faculty member from the Office of Learning and Organizational Development in the role of Relationship Architect as a Co-PI on grants from a tenure track content specialist where the specialist is working with county agents/educators to implement programing. Discussions will include how this role might work in different program areas and different Extension structures across multiple states.

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N/A - new innovative idea not in literature yet

22

Professional Development for Latino Cultural Competency at [State] University Extension

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Abstract

Introduction/Theoretical Framework Review of Literature

In 2020, the Latino population reached 62 million, representing nearly one-in-five people in the U.S. (Pew Research Center, 2021). Latinos are the largest minority in [State], comprising 14% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). While [State] University Extension provides a wide range of educational programs to address issues such as health and wellness, personal financial management, and positive youth development, Latino participation in Extension programs is low compared to other racial groups (Wille & Garcia, 2017).

Research suggests that low participation may be due to the lack of culturally relevant programming (Diaz et al., 2021). Hobbs (2004) indicated a culturally responsive approach to programming can lead to an increase in participation from diverse groups in non-formal education. Therefore, Extension educators must become culturally competent to provide responsive and effective programming that addresses the needs of the Latino population (Guion & Brown, 2010). Therefore, [State] University Extension implemented a professional development series to improve the capacity of Extension educators to implement programs targeted to Latino populations.

Research/Guiding Questions

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the outcomes of the Latino Cultural Competency Professional Development (LCC-PD) series at [State] University Extension. The desired short-term outcome of the series was to increase the *cultural competency* of Extension professionals, and the medium-term outcome was to facilitate *implementation* of programs to Latino audiences in [State] University Extension. Short-term outcomes data were gathered during LCC-PD series between 2017 and 2019, and medium-term data were gathered in 2021.

The LCC-PD series was first implemented in 2017 for [State] University Extension professionals. The first session targeted Extension faculty and staff working in counties with a Latino population of 8% or higher. The second session targeted 4-H and youth development professionals. The third session, was offered in 2018 to all other Extension faculty and staff and new hires. Finally, two half-day workshops were offered in 2019 for the SNAP-Ed and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) teams at [State] University Extension.

Methods and Data Sources

The LCC-PD evaluation followed a mixed retrospective design and focused on short-and-medium-term outcomes. The major short-term outcome was competency to engage with Latino audiences, and the main medium-term outcome was implementation of Latino programs. A total of 186 [State] University Extension professionals were trained between 2017 and 2019, and short-term outcomes data were gathered from in-session activities and exit surveys (N = 186). During the workshops, participants; (a) completed a self-assessment to determine their current cultural competence level; (b) attended presentations on cultural values and best practices; (c) conducted community mapping activities to assess resources of Latino communities; (d) completed a SWOT [Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats assessments] group activity, and; (f) completed an exit evaluation. A follow-up evaluation was conducted with a sample of participants (n = 57) in 2021 to gather data on medium-term outcomes.

Results and Products

In 2017, a total of 52 participants completed the first LCC-PD workshop in [County] (n = 52). Feedback from participants was gathered using open-ended questions from an exit survey. One participant stated "Awesome workshop, I learned so much. I am completely new to any of this so it was a real eye opener." Another said, "Good discussions with others in my county about what we can do to increase Hispanic participation." Evaluation data gathered from the 4-H component in 2017 indicated 78% of participants were confident in their ability to integrate Latino outreach strategies in their 4-H programs (n = 17). One participant stated "I would really like a follow-up webinar session. Love the toolkit that was provided at the training."

In 2019, workshops tailored to the SNAP-Ed and the EFNEP teams in 2019 were well-attended; 76 Extension staff and nutrition paraprofessionals responsible for nutrition education programs participated in two half-day LCC-PD sessions. Based on the exit evaluation survey (n = 39), results show 87% of participants agreed they can survey and map their Latino community assets, resources, and gaps; 86% had a better understanding of the Latino community culture and values; 89% were confident in their ability to engage with Latino audiences, and; 89% had an increase in their cultural competencies to serve Latino populations in their communities.

In 2021, medium-term evaluation data was gathered via a Qualtrics survey from participants who attended at least one of the LCC-PD sessions. The sample consisted of 57 past participants (n = 57). The follow-up evaluation assessed the extent to which the LCC-PD series motivated Extension faculty to develop and implement programs to reach Latino audiences. Results showed about 52% of Extension professionals who attended at least one LCC-PD workshop have engaged in some form of Latino programming. In addition, over half the number of participants in the series were engaged in program planning activities, implemented educational programs, or developed resources for Latino audiences.

Recommendations/Implications

Developing Latino cultural competency through professional development is an effective strategy for building the capacity of Extension faculty to engage with Latino audiences. To keep momentum, it is important that efforts to build cultural competency are integrated into standard onboarding of new Extension faculty, as results indicate PD sessions are critical to improving the knowledge and skills needed to plan and implement educational programs for Latino audiences. For example, [State] University Extension plans to provide training to new 4-H program coordinators on cultural competency to engage with Latino youth, and incorporate Latino program ideas into onboarding. Implementing other strategies like diverse hiring from within the target audience, specialized training, and internal funding support, can further facilitate long-term growth and expansion of Extension programs for Latino communities. As we move towards diversity, equity and inclusion, Extension must continue to build the cultural competence of professionals to engage with Latinos, the fastest growing diverse population across the country.

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Assessing Mentorship Needs of Early-Career UF/IFAS Extension Agents

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Abstract

Introduction/Theoretical Framework/Review of Literature

Being new to a job can be a frightening, yet necessary experience in an individual's career path. Extension professionals commonly experience issues relating to high workload and work-life balance (Strong & Harder 2009). These challenges can seem even more daunting at the early-career phase. The [State] Extension Mentoring Program serves as a tool to develop partnerships between a mentoring agent and their protégé, a new agent in their first year of employment (Author, 2019). Mentorship programs within Extension offer many benefits to both the mentor and the protégé, including reduced stress and increased productivity (Place & Bailey, 2010). By assessing the needs of early-career agents on a regular basis, the mentorship program can continue to improve and promote successful, beneficial mentor/mentee relationships.

The functions of a mentor are career and psychosocial focused (Kram, 1983). Career development functions include sponsorship, exposure-and-visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions include role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling, and friendship. Role modeling can be perceived as its own function of mentorship, separate from psychosocial support (Scandura & Ragins, 1993).

Mentors connect with their protégés through effective counseling, nurturing creativity, corrective action, fostering growth and development, sharing past experiences, and friendship (Balu & James, 2017). Successful mentoring relationships promote a healthy, professional environment between two individuals to develop trust, define roles and responsibilities, establish goals, and problem solve (Byington, 2010). Past research on mentoring in Extension has found early-career agents view their mentors positively when it comes to role modeling (Harder et al., 2021), and there is a strong need for mentorship and training for newly hired agents (Denny, 2016). Early career agents in Florida previously identified a lack of official mentorship as a challenge (Benge & Beattie, 2021).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to assess specific mentorship needs among early-career [State] Extension agents. The objectives were to determine what factors contribute to a satisfactory mentorship experience as well as describe areas of work where early-career agents need the most support.

Methods

Needs were identified through a nominal group technique (NGT) conducted with newly hired agents, as well as through responses collected from mentoring agents in a Qualtrics survey. The NGT (Bammer et al., 2022) was conducted at the [State] Extension Faculty Development session on March 1, 2022. Nine newly hired agents in their first year of employment collaborated to answer the question, “In an ideal world, what does your mentor do to support you?” This small group represented all early-career [State} Extension agents, with participants ranging from several months to several weeks of employment.

A Qualtrics survey was distributed to 127 agents from March 23, 2022, through April 14, 2022. The frame was determined using a database of which agents were serving as formal mentors. From this population, 52 responses were collected. The survey included summated rating scales and open-ended response items. Data collected from the open-ended response portion identified mentors’ perceptions of the areas in which proteges need the most support. Six responses to the Qualtrics survey were discarded due to the ineligibility of respondents, reporting they were not currently serving as a mentor within the program. The remaining 46 responses were reviewed for similarities using the constant comparative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) of data analysis.

Results and Conclusions

Thirty needs were identified by participants of the NGT when asked to identify the ideal things a mentor would do to support them. Eight items were recognized as high priority needs following the voting phase. These were:

- Networking and connecting with stakeholders through professional activities such as advisory meetings and co-leading programs.
- Guidance on reporting and collecting data.
- Mentorship is provided on first day of hire.
- Scheduled, regular check-ins with the mentee.
- Assistance with Report of Accomplishment.
- Assistance with developing mentee’s first program.
- Emphasize time-commitment in the mentorship process.
- Review and provide constructive feedback on professional activities.

The mentors who responded to the Qualtrics survey tended to indicate their newest protégés needed professional support. Frequently mentioned areas included education on data reporting, managing work-life balance, assistance with developing programs, volunteer management, and evaluating impact. For example, one mentor stated “Knowing when it’s okay to say no. And drawing lines between personal and professional life” were needs of early career faculty being mentored.

Findings from both methods indicated early career agents needed professional support with items such as program development, data reporting, and navigating Extension. Similar results have been found in past studies (Benge et al., 2020; Benge et al., 2021). The identified needs found in both methods indicate a strong emphasis on the career development functions of the mentor (Kram, 1983; Scandura & Ragins, 1993). Protégés are looking to their mentors for guidance, feedback, and advice on progressing within their career.

Implications & Recommendations

Further improvement of the mentorship program is needed to foster successful relationships between mentors and proteges and build a strong foundation for early-career agents. Mentors and early-career agents agreed on the need for career development functions in mentoring relationships, but past research found mentors were perceived to be the strongest in role modeling (Harder et al., 2021). Mentors need guidance to improve their abilities to help their protégés advance in their own careers.

Based on data collected from participants, it is recommended that the mentorship training program emphasize both protégé and mentor accountability and responsibilities. An emphasis on time-commitment should be expressed regarding mentoring, noting that mentorship is part of the experienced agent's career role and being present in the relationship is part of providing psychosocial support (Scandura & Ragin, 1993). Supplemental tools should be provided to the mentor throughout the mentoring process to ensure their protégé is staying on track for career success. A follow-up study should be conducted to determine if mentors lack knowledge of career advancement topics (e.g., planning programs, building networks, evaluating programs) and/or if they lack confidence to teach those topics. The strategies used to improve the mentorship program should be adjusted as more is learned about the root cause(s) of the observed need.

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Using the Big Five Assessment to Match Mentors in OSU Extension's MINE Program

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Abstract

The premise of the topic

In August 2021, Ohio State University Extension rolled out a new mentor program, MINE: Mentor. Impact. Network. Excel. The Big Five Assessment has been utilized since then to match trained mentors and new mentees across the state. These metrics can help new staff feel more supported based on the similarity-attraction paradigm (Menges, 2016). The traits of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism can be used as the framework for understanding personality (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). Analyzing those factors and mentoring relationships together can be used to help improve outcomes for new mentees (Huggett, Borges, Blanco, Wulf, & Hurtubise, 2020).

Nearly 100 pairs were hand-selected based on the values of these characteristics. Of the matches made utilizing the Big Five Personality Assessment, high-level conscientiousness and open-mindedness individuals were matched with those of similarly high levels. People with high levels of neuroticism, agreeableness, and extraversion were matched with those who had lower levels.

At the 3-month point of assigned relationships, 81% of respondents indicated they were compatible or somewhat compatible with their mentor/mentee. At the 9-month halfway point of the assigned relationships, 100% of respondents indicated they were compatible or somewhat compatible with their mentor/mentee.

How participants will be involved in active and scholarly discussion

Participants will discuss and share what method/s have been used to match mentors and mentees in their organizations. An additional question for discussion is how to measure mentor and mentee relationship quality, matches, and outcomes.

Key takeaways for participants

The Big Five assessment can be a useful tool in matching trained mentors with new mentees based on personality. This is not a method that has been widely used and there is room for further research.

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NAEPSDP
National Association of Extension Program & Staff Development Professionals

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A Retrospective on 2022 Reporting in NRS: Developing Best Practices

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Abstract

Each land grant institution is required to submit an annual report to NIFA that shows the impact of research projects and Extension programs funded by 1890 Extension Capacity, Evans-Allen, Hatch, and Smith-Lever dollars. The reporting system used by the states to meet this requirement has been undergoing changes for the past few years, generating many questions about best and/or common practices for reporting. This presentation (roundtable) is designed to inform those who compile the federal report about how other states compile their reports. Using data mined from the most recent Annual Report (AR) and Plan of Work (POW), the presenters will provide descriptive summary statistics, including number of results (i.e., impact statements), number of critical issues, number of Extension programs, etc. Data from a new survey of NIFA reviewers, many of whom are new due to the move to Kansas City, MO and resulting high turnover, will also be presented. The post-review survey will focus on the NIFA reviewers' assessments of the reports submitted for the most recent cycle (i.e., 2022 AR and the 2023 POW, if available) and implications for developing best practices, particularly for impact statements. As the NIFA Reporting System (NRS) continues to be developed and expanded for Extension programs, each institution is evaluating their current reporting methodology or structure and how best to modify it for the new system. Faculty and staff who use NRS can use the information and data provided in this presentation (roundtable) to help inform those decisions in their own states. Discussion generated from participants will help NIFA begin to draft and/or modify some best practices and guidelines.

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none

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Redefining the Onboarding Experience for Extension Board Members

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Abstract

Introduction

Extension board members are essential advocates for the county-based Extension system. Board members ensure the needs of communities are being served by the local extension office and they work with elected county/state officials to ensure local offices have the resources they need. Research suggests an effective onboarding experience should cover topics such as the mission and vision of the organization; current board direction and goals; culture of the board; governance structure and decision-making process; organizational performance measures; and basic dos and don'ts for board members (Teuteberg & Brandt, 2018). The goal of onboarding should focus on highlighting how Extension fits into the community and how board members fit within Extension. Research conducted by Farris et al. (2009) suggest that county Extension Board members may not be fully aware of the scope of Extension services offered within their community before becoming a board member. Therefore, it is important to include this in board member onboarding. Having a supported, trained, and knowledgeable Extension Board will enhance the effectiveness of county-based Extension.

Situation

To onboard new extension board members, Nebraska Extension had relied on binders and presentations, which local staff needed to deliver to new members. The information provided in both onboarding resources aligned with the suggested onboarding topics that Teuteberg & Brandt outlined, but local staff were often not using the standard onboarding resources, or were spending additional time editing said resources. A state-wide team of Engagement Zone Coordinators wanted to create a streamlined onboarding experience to provide all new members with the same content, while simultaneously reducing the workload of local Extension staff.

Methods

The overarching goal of the new onboarding experience was to increase the value stakeholders place on their relationship with Nebraska Extension, contribute to extension excellence, partner with resources, and champion extension's people and programs.

Objectives include, Extension Board members:

- are able to explain Extension's history, partners and funding.
- are able to explain Extension's role in the Land Grant University.

- are able to identify their role as board members and fulfill specific duties.
- can describe Extension program impacts locally and regionally.
- gain leadership skills and apply those skills to other organizations or community activities.
- serve as advocates for Extension with Elected Officials.

To ensure access and consistency, Engagement Zone Coordinators created an annual, statewide, virtual onboarding training open to all new and existing members. The onboarding was composed of four five- to ten-minutes videos (https://extension.unl.edu/extension-board-annual-training), and a 90-minute interactive virtual training. Video topics covered content which would not change frequently, including Extension & Land-Grant History, Extension Law & Funding, Understanding the Role of Extension Board Members, and Extension Board Meeting Basics. Videos were recorded and placed on the Extension Board member section of the Nebraska Extension website for easy access.

The virtual training was hosted by Engagement Zone Coordinators and provided a balance of both content and participant interaction. Content covered included mission, vision, and values; organizational chart; roles of specific members within Extension; and information on the Nebraska Association of County Extension Boards. Other topics discussed included basic parliamentary procedure and how to be an effective board member. The interactive strategies used included pausing for discussion throughout the presentation, role playing a board meeting, and utilizing an interactive slide for the group to share ideas.

The onboarding was piloted with board members of the Nebraska Association of County Extension Boards and was then offered to Nebraska Extension staff. New and existing Extension Board members had nine opportunities to participate throughout the month of January 2022.

Results

There were 91 extension board member who participated in one of the nine onboarding opportunities. 33 participants from 27 of the 93 counties in Nebraska completed the formal training evaluation. Participants were asked to complete four retrospective pre-post questions. Questions asked were:

Before/after the training I was able to…

- Explain the history of Extension.
- Describe how Nebraska Extension fits within the University system.
- Describe Nebraska Extension’s current programming efforts impacts locally and regionally.
- Identify my role and responsibilities as an Extension Board member.

On average, 38% of the participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed to the four questions asking them to assess their knowledge before attending the training. Whereas on average less than 1% of participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed to the four questions asking them to assess their knowledge after attending the training.

The results of a paired t-test for each evaluation question indicated that there is a significant difference between the before and after results for each response. Following the onboarding training, one board member said "As a new board member, it is refreshing to have so much attention placed on educating board members on our purpose, role, and responsibility. Starting with a strong foundation will allow me to better advocate for Extension and better fulfill my role."

Implications

Initial data from the first year of the virtual onboarding highlights the impact an organized state-wide virtual extension board training can have on the system. By providing a unified and intentional onboarding experience for new board members, Nebraska Extension can cultivate better equipped board members. To continue to support board members, Engagement Zone Coordinators plan to develop short, interactive modules which can be completed at board meetings to complement and scaffold on the content introduced in the virtual training. To help measure this long-term goal, all extension board members will have the opportunity to complete an additional evaluation survey in the fall to measure their understanding of local and regional impacts of Nebraska Extension, their willingness to advocate for Nebraska Extension, and assess their leadership skills gained by being a board member.

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Keywords: extension board, board onboarding, training

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Don't Wait, Vaccinate: A Case Study of How Evidence-Based Assessment Guided Program Development and Evaluation

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Abstract

There are many opportunities for Reimagining Extension, among these are opportunities for partnerships among Extension Services at the state and national level, creating new initiatives by building on established program platforms, and reaching those previously underserved in our communities. Effective strategies for doing so include utilizing assessment and evaluation to make evidence-based programming decisions. West Virginia's "Don't Wait: Vaccinate!" program offers a highly illustrative case study of how evidence-based assessment has guided program development and implementation of an initiative focusing on both short-term priorities in COVID-19 vaccination education and longer-term outreach efforts to educate and inform targeted populations about adult immunization and vaccinations for various diseases and conditions. West Virginia's program is part of a national initiative sponsored by the Extension Foundation in coordination with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, called the Extension Collaboration on Immunization Teaching and Engagement (EXCITE).

Since the emergence of COVID-19, health educators and related personnel have increasingly partnered with Extension systems to address vaccine hesitancy and barriers to vaccine uptake in general. This collaborative effort becomes more critical in West Virginia because of its high ranking in the nation for chronic diseases. According to the WV Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) data, a lower percentage of seniors have received COVID-19 vaccines when compared to other age groups in the state. Given that a subset of seniors in West Virginia is grandparents raising their grandchildren, relevant knowledge about vaccines, in general, is important to decrease vaccine hesitancy among this population. Targeting these grandparents with the knowledge and resources necessary will also help them make informed decisions about their grandchildren's health.

West Virginia University and West Virginia State University partnered to decrease vaccine hesitancy among Grandparents raising their grandchildren through the "Don't Wait, Vaccinate!" Program. Due to limited resources, the priority population for our program was narrowed down using four variables: health outcome index, pandemic vulnerability index, poverty level, and minority population data. This process streamlined our program focus to Clay, Kanawha, Mercer, and McDowell counties. We were able to see the intersection of the four variables in the four counties. As part of our program development efforts, we conducted a rapid assessment of grandparents' perceptions of COVID-19 vaccines using the Health Belief Model (Rosenstock, 1974) as a guiding framework. The Health Belief Model is one of the most extensively used psychological models regarding health behaviors. Boskey (2022) described the model as a

method that scientists use to understand people's attitudes toward health issues and the resulting influence of their attitudes on health-related behaviors. Several studies have used the model to predict health behaviors and evaluate the effectiveness of health interventions (Jones et al., 2015; Masoudiyekta et al., 2018; Shao et al., 2018). We used the health belief model to:

1. Explore grandparents' perceptions about COVID-19 vaccine confidence, benefits, harm, and trust before program implementation.
2. Assess grandparents' knowledge of the COVID-19 vaccine, their level of comfort in vaccinating their grandchildren, and vaccine concerns after program implementation.

We found that most grandparents had high overall vaccine confidence. However, their perception of whether COVID-19 vaccines are harmful was in the mid-range. Participants increased their knowledge of the COVID-19 vaccine and reported that they were comfortable with getting their grandchildren vaccinated against COVID-19. This preliminary effort indirectly reached 141 grandchildren who now benefit from their caregivers' knowledge of vaccines.

This presentation is especially relevant to Extension professionals in that it can offer insights on tools and resources to utilize evidence-based knowledge to 1) learn more about topics and issues where Extension is called to serve, such as public health emergencies and priorities, 2) determine the feasibility and need for new program efforts in communities and among populations, 3) and understand the importance of systematic data gathering and continuous assessment to guide program development, delivery, and outcome assessment.

As has been noted by others, a key element in transforming Extension programming in the 21st century is the adoption of evidence-informed approaches that will value local knowledge and experience while also incorporating systematic approaches that are accepted in theory, policy, and practice among expert communities and authorities (see, for example, Spoth, 2021; Hill and Parker 2005).

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Implementing a Needs Assessment to Evaluate Extension Agent Onboarding and Training

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Abstract

Introduction

Within Oregon State University (OSU) Extension, content and objectives of training and onboarding are determined by state program leaders, thus creating a decentralized onboarding and training protocol (L. Shirley, personal communication, February 6, 2019). After talking with state program leaders, we observed inconsistencies in the depth, length and content that is covered during the trainings. The program areas in OSU Extension either did not have a solidified onboarding process or onboarding was scant as a result of minimal the budget or personnel to conduct trainings (S. Angima, personal communication, March 6, 2019; R. Riportella June 2, 2019; J. Davis, personal communication, January 22, 2020). Yet, orientation and continued training for new, and veteran professionals, is necessary for success in the field (Bulut & Culha, 2010; Holton, 1990; Swart et al., 2014). The discrepancy between training literature and the lack of training in OSU Extension resulted in our research team conducting a needs assessment on training and onboarding on OSU Extension agents.

Research Questions

We employed Witkin and Altschuld's (1995) practical NA model for conducting an exhaustive investigation of the training and onboarding of OSU Extension agents. We sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What professional development competencies are accessible to agents under the current training and onboarding procedures?

RQ2: What professional development competencies do agents believe are missing under the current training and onboarding procedures?

Methods

To address the research questions, we administered a survey instrument to all OSU Extension agents. This research did not seek generalizable information as it was a state-specific study; however, we sought a census in hopes of a large sample size and robust understanding of the discrepancies within the training and onboarding protocols (Ary et al., 2002). The developed questions and competencies included in the instrument were based on a combination of Extension competency findings, employee training literature from the fields of Personnel Psychology and Human Resource Development, and relevant needs assessment research. The developed instrument was vetted for content and face validity by administering a pilot survey to

Extension agents outside of Oregon. Additionally, the instrument was reviewed by expert faculty in Agricultural Education and Extension, graduate thesis committee members, and doctoral graduate students for additional checks for validity.

The instrument included four sections. The first section included ten introduction questions. The second section asked specific questions about 20 competencies identified by past research (Knight et. al, 2019), and validated by Extension professionals. The 20 competencies were: (a) Communicating research, (b) Communications, (c) Conducting needs assessments, (d) Conducting applied research, (e) Ethics, (f) History of Extension, (g) Leadership, (h) Learning theories, (i) Marketing, (j) OSU Extension organizational leadership, (k) Professionalism, (l) Program development, (m) Program evaluation, (n) Risk assessment, (o) Teaching methods, (p) Teaching techniques, (q) Technology, (r) Theories of human development, (s) Volunteer management, and (t) Volunteer recruitment. The third section of the instrument included additional training questions and included some open-ended questions, and the fourth were demographic questions. The survey instrument was sent out to all OSU Extension agents (n = 165) on an all-agent list serve. The survey was open for 20 days. The raw data collected in the instrument was exported from Qualtrics Survey Software to Microsoft Excel. There were 60 usable responses resulting in a 36% response rate. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 26) to address the research questions for this study. To report the findings of our research questions, frequencies and descriptive statistic were used.

Results

Over half of the participants (63%, n = 38) identified they received training during their first year of employment, 55% (n = 33) identified they received training during their second through third years of employment, and 31% (n = 19) identified the training they received during their first through third year was mandatory. The second section of the instrument narrowed the focus of training and onboarding to twenty Extension-related competencies (Knight, et. al, 2019). Of the 20 competencies, 15 competencies had a higher frequency of agents *who did not* receive training than those *who did* receive training on the competency. A higher number of respondents reported being trained on Ethics, Leadership, Marketing, and Extension organizational leadership than had not been trained. Further, in the open-ended responses we received many comments about the lack of training that was received and how training was not relevant to many of the job requirements/expectations of the profession.

The data revealed over half of OSU Extension agents do receive training, however, a higher frequency of respondents indicated they had not received training in 75% of the competency areas, compared to those reporting to have received training in those areas. It is important to bring attention to the gap between these two variables. While we can conclude that agents are receiving training, the data revealed the training in which they are participating does not align with what past Extension scholars have published as being critical to success in Extension.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Considering the results of our data, we recommend for OSU Extension Service to create consistent onboarding training materials to be used by all program areas, at least partially eliminating the problem of decentralization. Beyond that, we recommend OSU Extension establish a centralized training model to be implemented. We recognize this study is state specific, yet, we affirm there are considerations that go beyond our state. We invite the entire Extension community to critically examine training and onboarding in your own states. Does it align with Extension competency literature? Is it effective in meeting Extension competencies needs? Perhaps a NA should be conducted to address these questions in other states. Highly qualified agents are in demand across the US and successful organizational training has impacts on socialization, organizational commitment, and employee turnover (Holton, 1996, Somers, 1995; Wanous, 1980 as cited in Bulut and Culha, 2010). We encourage the profession to consider how training can truly support agents and the work of Extension broadly.

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Enticing Employees to Stay in Extension Organizations

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Abstract

According to the Gallup (2021) organization, “48% of America’s working population is actively job searching or watching for opportunities.” This is true for workers across many job categories and sectors. Cohen and Roeske-Zummer, (2021), in Harvard Business Review, reported that in the months of April, May, and June 2021, “11.5 million workers quit their jobs,” according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Ohio State University Extension is also experiencing higher-than-average turnover across multiple job categories. Exit interview data are not available to tell us why these employees are leaving. In addition, even if we had exit interview data, Flowers and Hughes (1973) say that it has two major disadvantages: 1) it only tells you about the employees who have left the organization, and 2) employees leaving jobs does not always mean they were dissatisfied with their jobs.” They recommend that employers look at why people stay in their jobs. Despite the higher-than-average turnover in the OSU Extension workforce, there is a large percentage of employees who have chosen to stay with the organization.

Rather than trying to understand why people are leaving, we chose to investigate the conditions that lead employees to stay. We conducted over 20 key informant interviews with Extension instructors with five or more years of experience to ask them questions about why they continue to stay with OSU Extension, what might entice them to leave, and other questions that could help us understand main motivators and how we could improve conditions that would ultimately lead to reduced turnover, more employee satisfaction, and effective engagement strategies.

Survey questions were developed from the work of Finnegan (2015) and Raison (2022) and pilot tested. The study was approved by the OSU Institutional Review Board. This session will present the questions used, how interviewees were selected, our initial findings, what we would do again, what we would not do again, and strategies to increase employee satisfaction and engagement.

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NAEPSDP
National Association of Extension Program & Staff Development Professionals

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Digital Accessibility in Microsoft Word: More Than Meets the Eye

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Abstract

Introduction

Nearly one in four adults in the United States have some type of disability. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, September 2020) That's 61 million adults! 4.6 percent of people with a disability have a vision disability with blindness or serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, September 2020) Related to these statistics, the Commission on Access, Diversity, and Excellence, a standing commission of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), has a goal of promoting access, not as an option for public land-grant universities, but as a requirement for all member institutions to broaden the path of access and opportunity (APLU, n.d.).

In its desire to be inclusive, Iowa State University ISU) Extension and Outreach has created and implemented an eAccessibility (digital accessibility) initiative that includes hands-on how-to workshops to create MS Word documents which will reach audiences that have typically been underserved. These actions are congruent with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) passed in 1990 and the aforementioned requirements of the APLU. They are also in alignment with goal 3 of ISU Extension and Outreach's strategic plan; enhance efforts in programming, operations, and staffing to reach diverse and underrepresented populations. (Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, 2017).

Methods

After conducting research into related, existing curricula, it was decided to create materials in-house. This decision was due in part to our desire for creating a more robust and comprehensive curriculum than what we were finding. The research-based workshop curriculum, *Creating Accessible Digital Documents in MS Word*, was first created in late 2018. Processes included in the curriculum were vetted by clients of the Iowa Department of the Blind. The material went through the ISU Extension and Outreach Program Development and Curriculum review process and was also peer reviewed. The materials were piloted over the first year and updated accordingly based on feedback. The curriculum is updated on an annual basis to keep up with changes in software.

Educational Importance/Benefits:

Research demonstrates that as the population ages and becomes increasingly diverse, the need for resources and programming to accommodate individuals with vision or hearing impairments or limited English proficiency will continue to grow (Angima, Etuk, and Maddy, 2016). Research also demonstrates that most faculty members are not adequately prepared to effectively implement inclusive instruction, and many remain uninformed regarding the functional impact of specific disabilities on educational progress (Hsiao, Brugstahler, Johnson, Nuss, and Doherty, 2019). This would include extension educators and support staff. This breakout session will move the needle of extension professionals' knowledge on document best practices that support inclusivity.

In our mission to serve all Iowans, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach offers the workshops to 1) Educate employees on the work flow process necessary to create digitally accessible documents; 2) Create and sustain an organizational culture which includes those with visual impairment; and 3) Further the ISU Extension and Outreach Strategic Plan to build capacity and strengthen professionals' competencies in working with diverse and underserved audiences. When presented at the conference, this workshop will allow participants dedicated time to learn techniques and skills that can be implemented right away in MS Word. The techniques and concepts used is this workshop are transferrable to other MS Office products like Excel and PowerPoint. Beyond the breakout session, learn about the next steps you can take to become more inclusive in your Word, PowerPoint, and Excel documents.

Workshop Information

This hands-on session will help participants to become more intentional about creating (and modifying) Microsoft Word documents so that they are more easily read by those with vision impairments, including the use of assistive technology - like screen readers. Participants can download and install the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach eAccessibility ribbon onto their machines. The session will be hands-on, how-to use the ribbon for functions such as using styles, headings, alt text, and the accessibility checker. A practice document will be provided.

Internet access is required during the breakout to download:

- A Microsoft Word eAccessibility ribbon for ongoing use during the breakout session
- A practice documents
- Instruction manuals

Participants are encouraged to bring:

- Samples of their own MS Word documents for practice in using the accessibility checker and a screen reader (transfer of knowledge and learning)
- Earbuds or headphones for use with a screen reader

Prerequisites:

- Participants must have Office 2016 or 365 installed on their computer to actively participate in the hands-on learning. Those that do not have Office 2016 or 365 installed can still learn the concepts to become more inclusive but may not be able to complete the step-by-step instructions as provided.
- Participants should have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on their computer.

Keywords: digital, accessibility, eAccessibility, civil rights, diversity, equity, inclusion

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Developing Middle Managers in Extension through a Shadowing Program: Creating a Model for Your State Extension Leaders

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Abstract

Introduction / Theoretical Framework / Review of the Literature

Across all industries, organizations are experiencing a higher than usual rate of retirements and resignations (Fuller & Kerr, 2022). Extension is no exception and will need to be strategic and intentional in preparing rising leaders to step into new roles as more seasoned leaders retire. Traditionally, Extension organizations have prioritized training for onboarding new professionals entering the system yet the literature shows there has been minimal focus on mid-career leadership development toward succession planning and retention (Harder, Hodges, & Zelaya, 2017). Public education organizations are known to have barriers to succession planning (Fusarelli, Fusarelli, & Riddick, 2018). These barriers include financial limitations and resource allocations, leadership reluctance to take on the task, lack of clear understanding on how to frame the plan, and how to tackle succession planning in a constantly changing political environment.

As a forward-thinking strategy to develop leaders for the future, University of Georgia (UGA) Extension leaders have recognized the challenges of succession planning. In response, UGA Extension began to allocate resources for training for middle manager roles, one program being in the form of an experiential shadowing program for District Extension Directors (DEDs). The program is designed with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory as a foundational premise for the learner to be directly in touch with the realities (Kolb, 2015) in addition to considering the Center for Creative Leadership's 70/20/10 learning framework that posits 70% of training should be on the job training experiences and stretch assignments. Experience-driven development opportunities such as shadowing leaders provides future leaders with unique opportunities to learn and grow both of which are essential to engagement, career success, and staying with the organization (Gurvis, McCauley, & Swofford, 2016).

Research/Guiding Questions

- How can Extension intentionally plan for and develop leaders to fill middle manager roles?
- What does a successful middle manager shadowing program entail?

Methods and/or Data Sources

UGA Extension developed a District Extension Director's (DED) Shadowing program designed to build a broader, more diverse pool of DED candidates as current leaders in these positions retire. Extension professionals within the Office of Learning and Organizational Development along with the most senior, experienced DED, developed a framework for the shadowing program. The program has since completed two cohorts under two DEDs immediately prior to their retirement. The program utilized a range of experiences related to financial management, human resource management, mentoring and promoting agents, district office day-to-day, and other ad-hoc experiences. In the first cohort, there were eight participants. Cohort 2 consisted of five participants. Participants had to apply to participate. To apply, applicants were required to be at the Public Service Associate or Senior Public Service Associate (equivalent to an Associate Professor or Full Professor) rank. The program cohort experiences ranged from five to seven months. Post program evaluations were conducted.

For our workshop, participants will learn about the UGA Extension framework that was used and develop a framework for their own state's middle manager shadowing program. Specifically, participants will brainstorm the types of activities and job responsibilities they may include in a program, consider a potential timeline for a program, and identify key Extension professionals that need to be engaged. The workshop will allow for participants to learn from UGA's experiences, brainstorm ideas from other participants, and develop a state specific model for their extension system.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

In the UGA Extension DED Shadowing program, participants experienced a variety of DED job responsibilities by doing activities related to annual raises, writing dossier cover letters for promotion packets, writing and delivering annual performance reviews, difficult people human resource scenarios through role play, reviewing district budgets, and reviewing the hiring process. Through these experiences, all (n=8) participants reported they had a better understanding of the DED role and they would be more likely to advocate for the DED to their peers in the future.

Participants in the workshop will:

- Learn about the UGA Extension DED Shadowing Program including how it was developed, what experiences were included, who was involved and their roles in the program, and lessons learned
- Collaborate with other workshop participants to develop a broad framework that can be shared broadly across Extension
- Develop a framework for a middle manager shadowing program for their own state extension system

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

Across all industries, organizations are experiencing a higher than usual rate of retirements and resignations. Extension is no exception and will need to intentionally prepare rising leaders to step into new roles. Extension systems should develop a range of experiences, such as shadowing programs, to allow for current employees to learn about and from their current leaders. Succession of leaders has to be planned for well before current leaders announce their retirements or resignations. While all participants in these programs may not pursue a formal administrative leadership role, succession planning can also focus on developing advocates and strong supporters of their administrative leaders through their understanding of the roles and building of empathy for leaders that have to make difficult decisions in their roles. This workshop will benefit others by sharing lessons learned and providing an opportunity for participants to collaboratively develop a model that can be modified to fit their own needs in developing future middle managers in their extension systems.

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University Involvement in the Community – A Discussion on Defining Related Terms and How Outreach, Engagement, and Extension Show Up in Institutions

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Abstract

Topic Premise

In the mid 1990’s the Kellogg Commission delivered a report that discussed the nature of the university involvement with communities. The intention of the report was to enhance university involvement in the community and focused on meeting the needs of the community (Gavazzi & Gee, 2018). The report introduced the term engagement to replace the existing term ‘Extension services’ due to declining public perceptions around the term Extension as it was viewed as stereotypical of limiting the involvement to a strictly agricultural audience.

“Employment of the term ‘engagement’ was both new to and inclusive of both the land-grant institutions and the other public universities, and it also seemed to satisfy the need to make room for more urban-involved efforts. It was the right issue at the right time, expanding the notion of Extension so that it could become something much, much bigger (Gavazzi & Gee, 2018).” As the community engagement model becomes more prevalent in a broader university context, Extension organizations are likely to continue to wrestle with public perceptions of what Extension means (Pruitt, 2022).

In looking at the literature it appears there is no consensus on the terms we use to address the university involvement in the community. Outreach, Engagement, Extension, or variations of these, have been regularly employed as broad descriptors of this interaction. Often, they are used synonymously which can generate confusion among roles and responsibilities of those doing or receiving the work in addition to confusion of funding sources and structures of how the work is happening. This is a very broad topic and difficult to nail down specifics due to the individualized nature in how institutions choose to house, fund, and staff their multiple outreach and engagement functions. The Southern Region Extension directors are in discussions to coalesce around definitions for these terms.

Engagement of Participants

This round table discussion will engage participants around the following questions:

How do we define the functional and interactive nature of the dissemination of research knowledge to the communities we serve? What factors at universities impact how the terms are used and what they mean? In what ways has Extension evolved since the delivery of the Kellogg

Report? What does the broader community involvement model look like at various institutions? How might this lack of clarity be affecting Extension's future?

Thoughts generated from this conversation will be shared with the Southern region directors and inform a journal article that is in progress looking at how the terms are used in practice in university institutions and specifically within Extension organizations.

Key Takeaways for Participants

Participants will take away knowledge of the greater movement of university involvement in communities as ignited through the Kellogg Commission report on engagement. They will also contribute to a broader conversation and feel that their voices have been included.

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Re-Imaging the Role of Extension in Promoting Latino Immigrant Health: A Case Study of an Interdisciplinary Partnership Between Extension and Medicine in Florida

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Abstract

Introduction

The United States (US) is home to approximately 25 million immigrants, or foreign born, workers, comprising over 16 percent of the total labor force (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2013). These immigrants are predominantly employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing, construction, manufacturing, and service occupations and are exposed to a wide array of safety and health hazards (BLS, 2013; McCauley, 2005). Existing evidence suggests that immigrant workers suffer excess occupational injury, morbidity, disability, and mortality compared to US-born workers (Brunette, 2004; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2009; Zhang et al., 2009).

Relatedly, Latinos encompass approximately half of this immigrant worker population in the US (BLS, 2013; McCauley, 2005) and are especially represented industries such as construction and agriculture (Richardson et al., 2003). The high risk nature of their work, results in higher rates of morbidity, disability, and mortality compared with native-born and other immigrant workers (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2009). Moreover, because many Latino workers are undocumented, the tentative nature of their work arrangements renders them highly susceptible to safety and health hazards (McCauley, 2005).

The issue of immigrant health is particularly salient in the state of Florida where in 2018, 4.5 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 21 percent of the population (United States Census Bureau, 2020). Of this larger immigrant population, the largest segment of immigrants come from Latin American where Spanish is their native language. To address this issue in Florida, The Coalition of Florida Extension Educators for Latino Communities (UF-IFAS CAFÉ Latino) has partnered with the University of Florida College of Medicine to create, implement, and evaluate a community-based medicine and health literacy initiative. The intention of this effort is to create an interdisciplinary team that integrate the two organizations and create opportunities for faculty and students to engage with immigrant communities. The initiative is focused on developing and enhancing local health networks to address the multiple facets of workplace and public health issues among this population. It represents an opportunity for Extension professionals to provide leadership as community facilitators and health workers and leverage their trusted community connections to mitigate issues of mistrust and health hesitancy and improve the odds for the College of Medicine and its health professionals to provide health quality care to these communities.

Purpose

The purpose of this presentation is to provide a case study of the work being conducted in Florida and demonstrate the opportunities to transfer any best practices or lessons learned to other systems. The work of this partnership is guided by the overall question, "How can Extension and Medicine partner to address the health needs of the Latino immigrant population in Florida, holistically?"

Methods/Educational Activities

The partnership between Extension and the College of Medicine originally initiated in November of 2020. Strategic plans were developed to advance community coalitions and local cooperators in selected areas in the state, to ensure sustainability of efforts and continuity of care for the individuals served. Initial efforts focused on developing community-based health events that brought together community partners with a broad set of services in addition to health screening and care. Integrated into these efforts were associated data collection efforts to simultaneously develop a progressive understanding of the community's needs.

The initial educational activities were delivered in the form of health fairs that coupled health and wellness diagnoses with health literacy efforts. Additional efforts were developed from this partnership including student and faculty cultural competency/service-learning trips to Latin America, professional development efforts for community members and extension educators, developing a Latin American global health network, facilitating policy discussion a state and national level, to name a few. All efforts are focused on improving the health outcomes of the Latin American immigrant population.

Data/Results

The partnership initial efforts focused on the development, implementation, and evaluation of 13 health fairs in Alachua, Hillsborough, and Hardee Counites. Three of the health fairs focused specially on Latin American agricultural workers, while the other 10 were provided for Latin American immigrants and community members. The initiative helped to either build or strengthen connections among local cooperators and collaborators through initial community development efforts. Associated asset mapping exercises and facilitated discussion were conducted to ensure that community capitals were effectively recognized and leveraged. These cooperators included such organizations as Beth-El Farmworker Ministry, The Redland Christian Migrant Association, County Extension, County Health Departments, Rural Health Clinics, social services non-profits, and others. through the health fair providing a range of services from social, financial and health-based services.

A total of 494 The median age of the individuals engaged was 38 and 56% were male. Fifty-three percent of the individuals seen did not have medical insurance. While there was a broad representation of countries of origin in the general immigrant population, the farmworkers predominantly represented Mexico (66.6%), Guatemala (21.2%), and Honduras (4.5%). In addition, most of the farmworkers arrived in the United States between 2015 and 2021.

Of the individuals screened and care for by the College of Medicine faculty or students, there were significant new diagnosis among many including:

- 39.3% with new diagnosis of hypertension,
- 18.1% with new diagnosis of pre-diabetes or diabetes
- 36.3% with electrocardiogram abnormalities placing them at-risk for heart disease
- 22.7% with PHQ-9 score of 5 or more indicating risk of Major Depression
- 1.5% screening positive for Chagas disease (1.5%)

Once diagnoses were made, extension educators, physicians and students worked to educate the individuals on their conditions and connected them with the local partners that were available to setup follow-up visits.

Educational Importance and Implications

The partnership between Extension and medicine represents an opportunity to re-image the possibilities to serve and promote healthy communities for all. The efforts to leverage an interdisciplinary approach that capitalizes on trusted local connections holds promise for addressing immigrant health disparities and promote advancements in health literacy among this underserved audience.

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Evaluation capacity building: a tiered pathway approach

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Abstract

Introduction

Evaluation capacity building (ECB) is an ongoing need within Cooperative Extension. Taylor-Powell and Boyd (2008) introduce a three-component framework for building evaluation capacity within Extension organizations; professional development, resources and supports, and organizational environment. In [State] Cooperative Extension the last decade has focused ECB primarily on short-term professional development opportunities and building an organizational culture of evaluation. [State] Cooperative Extension has less than 1 FTE available to support the needs of individual programs and personnel despite annual staff development needs assessments regularly indicating program evaluation as a top need.

To address the lack of resources and support a new ECB approach was launched in the spring of 2022. The Evaluation Pathways professional development program provides new resources and support to increase evaluation capacity across the system. Franz and Archibald (2018) note that one size ECB work rarely fits the needs of the diversity of programs and personnel across Extension. The Evaluation Pathway program's goal is to increase evaluation capacity by meeting individual agents and specialists where they are to increase individual evaluation skills and evaluation thinking.

Program Description and Guiding Questions

The Evaluation Pathway program provides three paths for developing individual program evaluation skills. It is open to all agents and specialists who have completed the basic program development institute and been employed in Extension for at least one year. Interested participants can apply to start at any of the three pathway levels.

The first pathway is a six-month introductory level training and the second pathway is a six-month advanced level training. The third pathway is the Evaluation Fellows program, a one-year program that immerses participants in evaluation theory and practice. Fellows will be paired with a district program leadership team to provide training and individualized support at the district level.

The guiding questions for the Evaluation Pathway program are;

1. Does a resource-intensive self-selected model of training increase individual evaluation skills?

2. To what extent are agents and specialists willing to continue building their evaluation skills?
3. Does the development of a fellowship program increase the evaluation capacity across the system?

Methods / Data Sources

The introductory pathway focuses on the development of basic evaluation skills including understanding the role of evaluation in program development, developing logic models, program pathways or theories of change, designing evaluation questions, and developing an evaluation plan. The advanced pathway focuses on evaluating complex programs such as state-level or program team programs. The evaluation fellows will be immersed in evaluation theory and practice.

The first guiding question will be measured through pre and post self-assessments of evaluation competencies and skills will be administered to the introductory and advanced path participants. Additional feedback will be gathered from the district directors on the improvement of evaluation reporting and impact statements. The self-assessments include items from the Evaluative Thinking Inventory (McIntosh, Buckley, & Archibald, 2020) and from the Evaluation Capacity Assessment Instrument (Taylor-Ritzler et al., 2013). These items focus on attitudes towards, motivation around, and knowledge of evaluation concepts and activities.

Tracking of agent and specialist advancement through the pathways will be used to answer the second guiding question.

Increasing evaluation capacity across the system will be examined in several ways. First, it is anticipated that the number of agents and specialists indicating program evaluation as one of their top two core competency needs will decrease over the next three years. Additional measures of systemic capacity include the number of evaluation fellows supporting the evaluation work of colleagues. Finally, Interviews with key stakeholders responsible for reporting evaluation outputs and outcomes will be used to assess the level of evaluation capacity within the system.

Results

At the time of the presentation results of the first cohort of the introductory evaluation path will be available. Presenters anticipate sharing data on changes in the self-assessments of evaluation skills and competencies as well as data on participant intentions to join the advanced path.

Recommendations and implications

Adapting a tiered approach to building evaluation capacity allows the evaluation specialists to provide training tailored to individual needs. Following the recommendations of Taylor-Powell and Boyd (2008), this ECB effort focuses on linking additional resources and supports to individual, team, and program change. Specific lessons learned and programmatic recommendations based on the experience of the first introductory cohort will be available at the time of the presentation.

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Digital Accessibility Roundtable Discussion

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Abstract

Premise

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has provided mandates that ensure equal access and opportunities to people with disabilities - a civil rights act that applies to educational providers (Gordon & Keiser, 1998). Personal responsibilities and experience working on our organization's digital accessibility initiative (launched in 2018) has revealed that other higher education institutions are new to navigating these waters as well. There is merit in creating scholarly dialogue to learn from and to support one another. Sweden's approach to this type of discussion and support is proving to provide many benefits where, "A culture of sharing is strongly present to optimize the use of resources in a national context," (Dafgård & Hemmingsson, 2021).

Engagement and scholarly discussion

This discussion will focus on what Cooperative Extension systems are doing to address digital accessibility at the organizational level. Guiding questions: Does your organization have a digital accessibility policy? Are there any staff leading others on digital accessibility? What is being done to support the implementation of digital accessibility practices? What is working and what hurdles are you encountering? Join the discussion and learn about a small national group that has started meeting virtually, every quarter to discuss all things digital accessibility.

Key takeaways

- Hear what other cooperative extension systems across the country are doing to address digital accessibility at the organizational level
- Glean digital accessibility ideas from counterparts
- Create a network of people to share ideas and resources related to digital accessibility
- Continue the discussion by joining the group, virtually every quarter

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Organizational Volunteer Retention during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a dramatic shift in how organizations function, and in how individuals work and volunteer. The rise of teleworking and video conferencing present a feasible alternative to previous forms of employment and organizational structure (Bojadjiev & Vaneva, 2021) and change the way organizations communicate and engage with their volunteers. One of the major groups affected by the changes in organizational structure and communication are university Extension services. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the way Extension programming and services are provided to the public (Narine & Meier, 2020). Extension educators have been forced to adapt the way they provide information to clients, moving largely to web-based delivery, limiting their ability to conduct community needs assessments and communicate directly with clients especially in rural areas. Because of this, during the pandemic, Extension services are more reliant on community volunteer leaders to assist with the communication of important information within their communities and the implementation of Extension programming (Geis, 2021; Jamison, 2021).

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

Due to the relationship between volunteer management practices and volunteer/employee satisfaction (Henderson & Sowa, 2019), several volunteer satisfaction instruments apply the communication practices of volunteer management to improve volunteer/employee satisfaction, and in turn, retention. In the context of volunteers, the relationship between organizational communication and volunteer management is more apparent when examining the most widely used volunteer management models where aspects of effective organizational communication are prevalent. This study used two such volunteer management models, ISOTURE (Boyce, 1971) and GEMS (Culp, III et al., 1998). In ISOTURE and GEMS, each step from the onboarding process onward involves utilizing organizational communication best practices, (e.g., providing important job-related information, training volunteers, providing clear and concise directives and feedback, and recognizing volunteer efforts). This study examined the importance of these best practices in volunteer retention in the context of the changing organizational landscape created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Objectives

This study was guided by two research objectives:

1) Describe importance of organizational volunteer retention and organizational volunteer communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2) Describe to what extent importance of organizational volunteer retention can be explained by the organization's leader's perceptions about organizational communication during the pandemic.

Method

The quantitative study utilized an online survey administered via Qualtrics. The target population for the study was 696 nonprofit organizational leaders in [County], [State]. The study used a census approach following Dillman et al. (2014) online data collection techniques. We received 74 complete responses (10.6% response rate).

We developed the one-item Importance of Organizational Volunteer Retention During the COVID-19 Pandemic Scale measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). The other variable of interest was the 21-item Organizational Volunteer Communication during the COVID-19 Pandemic Scale developed using current literature specifically both the ISOTURE and GEMS models (Boyce, 1971; Culp, III et al., 1998) and with specific scale items adapted from the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977). This scale was also measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). Data was analyzed using SPSS® v.26 with Importance of Organizational Volunteer Retention During the COVID-19 Pandemic as the dependent variable and Importance of Organizational Volunteer Communication During the COVID-19 Pandemic as our independent variable. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the first research objective. For research objective two, we used a linear regression analysis to describe to what extent the Importance of Organizational Volunteer Retention During the COVID-19 Pandemic can be explained by Importance of Organizational Volunteer Communication During The COVID-19 Pandemic.

Results/Findings

Surveyed nonprofit leaders indicated high Importance of Organizational Volunteer Retention During the COVID-19 Pandemic with over 80% of participants classifying it as "very important" or "extremely important". Similarly, surveyed nonprofit leaders placed a high level of Importance of Organizational Volunteer Communication During the COVID-19 Pandemic, with particular importance placed on specific best practices including, "Listening and paying attention to volunteers" and "promoting accurate and free-flowing horizontal communication between employees/volunteers". Study findings also indicated that Importance of Organizational Volunteer Communication During the COVID-19 Pandemic explained 63% of the variance in Importance of Organizational Volunteer Retention During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Importance of Organizational Volunteer Communication During the COVID-19 Pandemic was also a significant predictor of Importance of Organizational Volunteer Retention (β = .794; p-value = .000).

Implications and Recommendations

The study makes a unique contribution to the community development and nonprofit leadership field by examining the extent to which nonprofit leaders' perceptions about volunteer communication explain the importance of volunteer retention during times of uncertainty or crisis. The current study adds to existing Extension literature describing the importance of organizational communication practices with organization volunteers during non-crisis periods and suggests that the importance of effective organizational communication during crisis.

In practice, it is important therefore that Extension and outreach leadership educators play an integral role in educating nonprofit leaders on effective communication practices during times of uncertainty, specifically with respect to creating an atmosphere of receptive volunteers to evaluation and feedback, applying different communication techniques, and utilizing different mediums to engage volunteers, and offering guidance and support to empower volunteers. Extension and leadership educators should implement the findings from this study while developing Extension leadership program for volunteer coordinators and Extension educators who managing volunteer programs.

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NAEPSDP National Association of Extension Program & Staff Development Professionals

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Farmers' Quality of Life and their Leadership Competencies

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Abstract

Introduction

Farmers today must have the ability to manage large groups of employees, navigate complex production and distribution markets, and deal with constant pressure to innovate and adapt to new technology (Ulvenblad & Björklund, 2018). Leadership competency has been shown to effectively reduce and manage work stress (Thompson & Gomez, 2014), which negatively impacts an individual's quality of life (Greenhaus et al., 2003). However, limited research directly discusses the relationships between farmers' quality of life and farmers' self-leadership and ability to lead others' competencies. Hence, this exploratory study investigates [State] farmers' perceptions of their quality of life and analyzes its relationships with farmers' self-leadership and ability to lead others' competencies.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This study utilized the American quality of life framework, which focuses on an individual's subjective quality of life/well-being (Campbell et al. 1976). Based on the subjective well-being approach, which refers to an individual's perceptions of their life and work (Coughenour & Swanson, 1988), we characterized the quality of life as an individual's judgment of their standing in life based on their culture, values, expectations, aspirations, and concerns (Rejeski & Mihalko, 2001; Whoqol Group, 1995). We applied Harder and Narine's (2019) definition of competencies as a set of "knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with professions" (p. 224). Specifically, Day (2000) described leader development as developing intrapersonal or self-leadership skills that are characterized through competencies such as self-awareness (self-confidence, emotional awareness, accurate self-image), self-regulation (personal responsibility, trustworthiness, self-control), and self-motivation (initiative, commitment, optimism). The ability to lead others' competencies, including being inspirational, considerate, and having strong values, is associated with higher work-life balance among individuals within an organization (Corrigan et al., 2000; Suratno et al., 2018).

Purpose and Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between farmers' quality of life, farmers' self-leadership, and the ability to lead others' competencies. Two research objectives guided this study:

1. Describe farmers' self-leadership and ability to lead others' competencies and farmers' quality of life.

2. Explain the relationship between farmers' quality of life and farmers' self-leadership and ability to lead others' competencies.

Methods

This research utilized the open web page questionnaire method to collect data from [State] farmers. We utilized convenience, self-selecting, and chain-referral sampling approaches. Respondents were recruited through various organizational web platforms. The final data set included responses from 59 farmers. We developed the self-leadership and the ability to lead others' competencies scales using existing literature related to intrapersonal and interpersonal leadership competencies. These two scales were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) - 5 (strongly agree). We used the Farmers' Quality of Life scale (Author et al., 2016) to measure farmers' perceptions about their quality of life. The scale was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) - 5 (very satisfied). We used SPSS® version 25 to conduct data analysis for our study.

Findings

The first research objective was to describe farmers' perceptions of their self-leadership competencies, ability to lead others' competencies, and farmers' quality of life. Surveyed farmers indicated greater needs in several self-leadership competencies: farm work-life balance, handling stress, quickly making decisions, and prioritizing tasks during the busy season. Among the ability to lead others' competencies, farmers indicated greater needs in effectively engaging in difficult conversations with farm employees, managing people at the farm, delegating tasks, and effective oral communication skills. Finally, regarding perceived quality of life, farmers reported that while generally satisfied with their work and overall health, they were less satisfied with their hours of sleep, managing farm work and family life, and work hours during their busy season.

The second research objective was to explain the relationship between farmers' perceptions of their quality of life and self-leadership competencies and their ability to lead others' competencies. Application of the Pearson correlation coefficient showed a significant positive association between self-leadership competencies and ability to lead others' competencies ($r = .55$, $p = .001$), farmers' self-leadership competencies and quality of life ($r = .63$, $p = .001$), and ability to lead others' competencies and quality of life ($r = .24$, $p = .013$). The results also indicated that a significant proportion of the total variance in overall farmers' quality of life was predicted by farmers' self-leadership and ability to lead others' competencies $F(2, 54) = 20.60$, $p < .001$. Multiple $R2$ indicated that approximately 43% of the variation in overall farmers' quality of life could be explained by farmers' self-leadership and ability to lead others' competencies.

Implication and Recommendations

This study makes a unique contribution to the research in the field of individual's quality of life in relationship with intrapersonal and interpersonal leadership competencies. The results of this study indicated that farmers generally have a high perception of their leadership competencies. The study results indicated a greater need among farmers for improved work-life balance, which is consistent with previous studies that reported an individual's ability to balance work and personal family life is a significant factor related to their perceived quality of life (Greenhaus et al. 2003). Another reported area of need among farmers was the ability to have difficult conversations with farm employees. This supports previous research that emphasizes the leaders' challenge in having difficult or awkward conversations with their employees (Angelo, 2019; Bradley & Campbell, 2016). The study results suggest that greater leadership skills, self-leadership, and the ability to lead others, correspond to greater perceived quality of life.

It is important to note that based on the nature of the study, it is difficult to assess the applicability of the results outside of farmers in [State] or the specific programmatic needs of different state Extension services. However, study results suggest targeted leadership programming is necessary to address identified areas of need among farmers. The general leadership education currently provided by the [State] Extension service is insufficient to address the observed farmer leadership needs in the study. Consideration should be given to developing specific farmer leadership development programs in the following two areas, work stress and conflict resolution/management, both of which would help address key leadership competencies and quality of life.

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Extension 2.0: Creating a Consumer-Centered Extension

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Abstract

Introduction / Theoretical Framework / Review of the Literature

Extension has repeatedly been referred to as "a best-kept secret." As a national network of institutions with a mission to provide non-biased, researched-based information to the public, we no longer want to be a best-kept secret. Nationwide Extension services have a responsibility and obligation to provide the factual information the public so desperately needs. Extension's information is constantly being drown out by louder and more consumer-friendly, for-profit companies and influencers. Utah State University (USU) Extension took on the challenge to create a plan to increase visibility and awareness to make sure Extension's voice is heard in a noisy marketplace.

Research/Guiding Questions

USU Extension began to notice the increase in personal blogs and social media accounts with self-proclaimed experts providing information that, in some cases, was misleading. The main difference observed was how the content was being packaged and delivered. In most cases, Extension materials looked very plain and institutional, whereas blog and social media content looked more colorful and engaging. According to Doyle, M., & Briggeman, B. (2014) creating "eye catching" social media content is key to engaging your audience. USU Extension was losing its market share to bloggers and influencers.

Methods and/or Data Sources

USU Extension met with family and consumer sciences faculty from around the state and created a plan to compete with bloggers and influencers. The decision was made to hire a part-time blogger who would package Extension content in a way that was appealing and digestible to consumers. The Live Well Utah blog was created, and faculty contributed to the blog on a regular basis. USU Extension decided to involve key faculty as influencers in three program areas: Amanda Christensen, the Utah Money Mom, populated a blog and social media feeds promoting family finance; Dave Schramm, also known as Dr. Dave, promoted healthy relationships on Facebook and YouTube and also populated the Utah Marriage Matters blog; and Jerry Goodspeed, Sheriden Hansen, and JayDee Gunnell, the Garden Guys and Gal, had a social media and YouTube following that promoted gardening. The public responded favorably to these influencers and resonated with their messaging.

USU Extension also rolled out social media platforms with more consumer-based information and has one of the largest Extension social media followings in the nation with more than 37,000 Facebook followers and nearly 7,000 Instagram followers. Social media is a valuable method for

communication since posts including events and resources can easily be shared and can reach audiences who may be unfamiliar with Extension. (Cornelisse et al., 2011). USU Extension began to use Facebook in a variety of ways. According to Hill, P. (2014), Facebook should be used as a tool to promote Extension websites and share research-based information, events, and answer questions. In addition to static posts on Extension Facebook pages, USU Extension experimented with Facebook Groups and Facebook Live. USU Extension grew its Utah Gardening Experts Facebook group to more than 17,000 members in just a few years. Extension faculty are interviewed every Friday on Facebook Live. USU Extension also has strong followings on Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and most recently, TikTok. “How to” videos on the USU Extension YouTube channel have been well received by its 35,000 subscribers. In 2021, there were nearly 1.5 million views, totaling 97,000 hours of watch time.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions
USU Extension has learned to adapt to consumer wants and needs by pivoting to repackage institutional-looking, research-based information to be more consumer friendly in a blog format. Extension influencers were introduced to create content for social media, blogs, and YouTube videos. USU Extension hired a social media marketing manager to plan and implement social media strategy. Dozens of email lists were created for niche topics of audience interest. There are almost 60,000 email subscribers, and USU Extension sends a weekly email on timely topics to consumers. USU Extension would like to share how these successful strategies came together and help propel the resources and expertise of Extension services nationwide.

Keywords: social media, strategy, planning, marketing, technology

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4-H Volunteer Leaders' Turnover Intention

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Abstract

Introduction

Volunteers play a major role in the delivery and functioning of Cooperative Extension's 4-H Youth Development program. 4-H volunteer leaders serve in various capacities (Radhakrishna & Ewing, 2011), including running 4-H clubs, organizing educational clinics for youth members on various topics, and assisting with educational events and camps. Despite volunteers' integral role in maintaining the 4-H program, we learned that [University] Extension has not recently examined 4-H volunteer leaders' satisfaction, reasons for volunteering, and turnover intention. Results of this study will help improve [State] Extension's 4-H program's service for volunteers and enhance volunteers' effectiveness in [State] Extension 4-H program and clientele satisfaction.

Literature Review

In this study, existing volunteer management models (ISOTURE (Boyce, 1971), L-O-O-P (Penrod, 1991), GEMS (Culp, et al., 1998)) were reviewed from the perspective of 4-H volunteer satisfaction, reason for volunteering, and volunteer turnover intention. Positive organizational climate and task assignments impact volunteer satisfaction (Nencini, et al., 2006; Hobson & Heler, 2007). Volunteers who are more satisfied are more likely to continue contributing to the organization (Adams et al., 2016; Breslin, 2013; Janisse & Weese, 2010). Volunteer satisfaction is linked with youth success in the 4-H program (Anderson, et al., 2017). Reasons for volunteering have been highlighted in the literature. Based on Jung's (1978) definition of motivations, "the causes or reasons that underlie a given behavior," we found both "motivations" and "reasons" for volunteering used interchangeably in the literature. Saitgalina (2018) found that volunteers volunteer in order to socialize and to work with a team toward a common goal. Volunteering can also be motivated by a desire to help marginalized groups and to gain knowledge (Jones, 2016). Flynn and Feldheim (2003) identified enjoyment working with people as a top reason for volunteering. Turnover intention has been a variable of interest for past volunteer management studies. Positive staff and volunteer interactions are critical to foster volunteer retention (Hobson & Heler, 2007; Nencini, et al., 2015). In a 4-H setting, White and Arnold (2003) found the top three reasons of volunteers' turnover intention were: volunteers' children no longer involved in 4-H club activities, volunteering requires more time, and other responsibilities demand more time.

Purpose and Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to investigate the satisfaction with volunteer leader experience, reasons for volunteering, and turnover intention among Penn State Extension 4-H volunteer leaders. Four research questions guided this study:

1. What is the level of satisfaction with 4-H volunteer leaders' experience?
2. What is the level of turnover intention among 4-H volunteer leaders?
3. What is the relationship between 4-H volunteer leaders' satisfaction with experience and turnover intention?

Method

We used online survey methodology to collect data for the study. The sample for this study was [State] Extension 4-H volunteer leaders who attended the [State] Extension Annual 4-H Leader Forum. After removing responses with missing data, the final data set included responses from 147 volunteer leaders for a participation rate of 81.6%. Findings apply only to those who completed the survey questions.

We developed a questionnaire using three existing instruments that had been used in previous research. We also included five demographic questions. We adapted Arnold et al., (2009) and White and Arnold's (2003) studies to develop the satisfaction with volunteer leader experience scale. The Satisfaction with Volunteer Leader Experience scale was comprised of 18 items and measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale. The reliability coefficient of this scale was .922. We utilized Terry et al., (2013) turnover intention scale from their volunteer retention study. The three-item Volunteer Leaders Turnover Intention scale was measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale. The reliability coefficient was .823. We adopted Radhakrishna and Ewing's (2011) scale to assess reasons for volunteering. Reason for volunteering was measured with one question "What caused you to become a 4-H community volunteer leader in your county?", where participants could select more than one reason for volunteering for 4-H Extension. Specifically, we used a paper and pencil questionnaire to collect data. The SPSS® v.24 (2016) software was used for statistical analysis.

Results

Most volunteer leaders were female (86.1%), the average age of participants varied between 35-54 (51.4%), and 48.9% had a university degree. 4-H volunteer leaders worked across different 4-H project areas, namely, agronomy and natural resources, 4-H youth development, animal systems, community development, food, family, and health, food safety, and horticulture. The overall mean summative score for satisfaction with experience was 4.09 ($SD = .57$, $n = 147$). Overall, 4-H volunteer leaders were satisfied with their volunteer experience. The mean summative score for turnover intention was 4.40 ($SD = .77$, $n = 143$), which indicated that participants like to remain or continue as volunteer leaders of 4-H clubs. Results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there was a significant low positive association between volunteer leaders' satisfaction with their experience and turnover intention ($r(143) = .167$, $p = .048$).

Implications

The results of this study can have implications for other 4-H and similar organizations looking to investigate volunteers' satisfaction and intention to remain in 4-H. Providing professional development for 4-H volunteer leaders is essential in order for the 4-H program to continue to have educational impact. Often times, 4-H youth spend the majority of their 4-H careers with volunteers rather than paid staff. Further studies of volunteer experience are vital to ensure 4-H youth have a positive learning environment. Understanding how to maintain volunteer satisfaction will better inform volunteer management trainings and materials for 4-H county volunteer resource managers to perpetuate successful 4-H programming. The instruments used in this study can serve as a tool for youth volunteer resource managers in programs beyond 4-H. However, other types of programs within volunteer management should first review the literature specific to their area to develop more relevant instruments specific to their organizational contexts. It is important to study other factors that might affect 4-H volunteer leaders' turnover intention. Again, in the case of national organizations, assessments should be conducted on a state-by-state basis to ensure relevance as well.

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The Theory of Self-Leadership and Applying it to Extension Work

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Abstract

Introduction / Theoretical Framework / Review of the Literature

Leadership theories and research have spent a great deal of time focused on how leaders influence followers (Stewart et al., 2011). However, a different perspective, called self-leadership was introduced over 30 years ago (Manz & Sims, 1980) which focused on how people lead themselves. The exploration of self-leadership opened new ways of thinking about informal leadership (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003) and how in organizations individuals can be empowered to make their own decisions about tasks and implementation of the task (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Self-leadership suggests that while there are external forces at work, ultimately people control themselves, their actions, and their behaviors (Manz & Neck, 2004). Manz (1992) stated self-leadership is an influence related process in which people navigate, motivate, and lead themselves towards achieving desired behaviors and outcomes. Neck and Houghton (2006) suggest as self-leadership continues to show it has a purpose, everyone in organizations will need to take increased responsibility for their jobs and work behaviors.

Research/Guiding Questions

If self-leadership truly is the process of motivating and navigating oneself to desired behaviors (Carmeli et al., 2006) then Extension employees using self-leadership strategies could be beneficial to the individual and the organization.

Our rapidly changing world and increasing organizational challenges makes the need for self-leadership more important than ever (Furtner et al., 2012). Today's need in organizations for autonomy and self-direction by employees shows the need for strong self-leadership skills (Wood, et al., 2004). Evidence exists for the need of self-leadership and "lies in the increasing examples of personal failures due to relationship challenges, the desire for power, financial impropriety or poor leadership" (Browning, 2018, p. 14). Carmeli et al., (2006) states that in order for organizations to improve they will need to invest in developing self-leadership in employees not only for overall functioning but because it is a key ingredient to shared leadership. These self-leadership skills are needed at the "individual level (i.e., self-organization), at the group level (i.e., self-managed teams, shared leadership) and at the organization level (flat hierarchies, performance-oriented culture)" (Furtner et al., 2012, p. 299).

According to Neck and Manz (1996) people can be trained to adapt and enhance their self-leadership skills. "Leaders must care for and nurture their personal lives by devoting more energy into developing their self-leadership skills" (Browning, 2018, p. 14).

Methods and/or Data Sources

Self-leadership involves specific sets of strategies designed to enhance individual performance. Three categories of self-leadership strategies influence outcomes. They are grouped into; behavior focused, natural reward strategies and constructive thought pattern strategies. Behavior focused strategies are those aimed at increasing self-awareness and include self-observation, self-goal setting, self-reward, self-correcting feedback and practice. Natural reward strategies emphasize the enjoyable aspects of given tasks and activities and are when incentives are built into the task and a person is motivated by them, increasing competence, self-control, and purpose. Constructive thought pattern strategies are patterns of habitual thinking that includes evaluation and challenging of irrational beliefs, mental imagery of successful future performance and positive self-talk.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

The outcomes of those who utilize self-leadership as identified by Neck and Houghton (2006) include commitment, independence, creativity, innovation, trust, potency, positive affect, job satisfaction, psychological empowerment, and self-efficacy. A growing body of research shows a positive connection between self-leadership and work outcome (Carmeli et al., 2006; Stewart et al., 2011). Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) also say that employees utilizing self-leadership are better adjusted and are more confident which results in more success for them. Research shows that self-leadership is the most effective way for improving employee productivity, is a primary mechanism to empowerment it has also been shown to result in greater career success for employees. Job satisfaction, self-efficacy and mental performance are all outcomes of effective self-leadership practice.

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

Extension relies on its employees to take on responsibility for their jobs and work behaviors to have employee and organizational success. Employers prefer employees who can make "effective decisions on their own and are able to influence themselves to work effectively" (Browning, 2008, p. 18). Browning (2018) also states that in collaborative, decentralized, workplace environment, which describes Extension, "training people to become self-leaders who set priorities, take initiative and solve problems is more important than ever" (p. 15). Due to the autonomy, independent nature, and expectations in Extension roles, as Neck and Houghton (2006) suggest self-leadership continues to show it has a purpose and it means everyone in organizations will need to take increased responsibility for their jobs and work behaviors to be effective. Self-Leadership allows for employees to take greater responsibility for their own work and actions (Pearce & Manz, 2005) and that is what Extension asks of its employees.

(Workshop Only) Explain how your workshop will be different than a presentation (up to an additional 500 words)

This session will explore self-leadership, understand what it is and how it can be used in our Extension roles. The specific strategies will be all be introduced, discussed and practiced. Sharing and brainstorming on how participants already use these strategies, how they can incorporate them more and how they can help build these into their programs to help others gain these skills will be discussed. The benefits are more recognition of self-leadership as a theory but also the understanding of the practical application that can utilized in our work and personal lives.

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Towards an Evidence-Based Programming: Preliminary Results of an Extension Summer Reading Program

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Abstract

An end of the school year assessment revealed that only 24% of fourth-graders in WV were proficient in reading (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Low-income children are at particular risk for limited academic achievement compared to children from middle- and upper-income families (Alexander et al., 2007). This discrepancy is attributed to learning loss during the summer months, referred to as the summer slide (Alexander et al., 2007), and limited exposure to high-quality literacy interventions (Byington & Kim, 2021). Out-of-school reading interventions for low-income children often focus on providing books to their homes (Kim & Guryan, 2010).

Access to books increased reading engagement but may not increase reading comprehension among low-income children (Kim & Guryan, 2010). To increase reading proficiency among low-income children in WV, WVU Extension developed the Energy Express (EE), a 6-week summer reading program for children living in rural, low-income communities. Children who completed grades K-3 participated in the program. Children were placed in groups of eight, led by a mentor. The mentors were AmeriCorps summer volunteers, and most were college students. The mentors were trained in creating a welcoming environment that promotes reading, writing, and art; providing activities that help kids to read and to understand what they read; and managing young children in a group setting. The EE program is widely known and has been implemented in WV for more than 20 years. In 2021, we sought to:

1. Assess the extent to which children who participate in EE maintain or increase reading achievement over the summer.
2. Assess parents' perceptions about their child's interest in reading before and after EE program.
3. Explore unintended outcomes of EE program on participants

To measure objective 1, we used Woodcock-Johnson Test of Individual Achievement – III (2001 Edition) to measure reading achievement. Two reading subtests were administered, Letter/Word Identification, and Passage Comprehension. Cronbach's Alpha scores were 0.91 and 0.83, respectively. A Broad Composite Score was generated using the three subtests to determine overall reading comprehension. To measure objective 2, a parental survey was distributed to parents and guardians of EE participants during the last week of the program. The survey asked parents to report how many days of the week their child was interested in reading before and

after the EE season. Objective 3 was measured using the same parental survey through an open-ended question.

Results indicated that 75% of children in EE maintained or increased their reading comprehension over the course of the program ($p < .05$). Furthermore, 69% of children showed reading growth of at least 1 month. On average, children's interest in reading increased by one day per week. Interest in reading was defined as the number of days per week a child reads independently or brings a book to an adult. This increase in one day shifted the distribution from the majority reporting in the 0-3 days per week before EE program to 4 –7 days post EE program. Parent survey results revealed that EE program had other impacts on participating children including an increase in participants' pro-social behaviors. Pro-social behaviors evident in participants include making new friends, valuing teamwork, increasing interpersonal confidence, and openness to teamwork, among others.

Our preliminary evidence suggests that EE program is reaching its intended outcomes and other unintended outcomes. We are currently implementing a 3-year evaluation plan that employs a randomized control experimental design. Through this work, we are developing best practices and tools for measuring literacy outcomes in extension programming. This would allow Extension professionals to assess literacy outcomes in their reading programs.

Extension has widely documented non-academic outcomes as impacts of youth programming. The measured outcomes of EE program suggest that Extension has a role to play in not only increasing non-academic outcomes but also academic outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children. To situate Extension as an active contributor in advancing academic outcomes, we need to be able to tell our impact stories with compelling data. To achieve this, Extension professionals need to employ best practices in research and evaluation that will position them to acquire grants, develop, and implement evidence-based programs. Using an evidence-based approach, Extension can help bridge the academic achievement gaps between disadvantaged children and their counterparts.

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Reimagining Extension Through the Lens of an Evaluation of the Impact of Food loss on Smallholder Farmers in Nigeria

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Abstract

Introduction

The world experienced a plethora of unprecedented shocks at macro and micro levels when the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic struck (Udmale et al., 2020). However, agricultural and extension educators are deemed to be front liners with the inherent capacity to grow, reimagine and improve their work in extension by taking knowledge gained in research to the people who need it the most (Elliot et al., 2022). Kopp (2021) elucidates that the intersection of research, education, and extension has historically advanced, local, national, and global agricultural systems, particularly through land-grant universities. However, there is an urgent need to develop a holistic relationship between how networks share local lessons on a global scale to better integrate scientific research and real-life situations capable of addressing short- and long-term challenges sustainably (Kopp, 2021).

Jayne and Sanchez (2021), have identified that African farmers need to do things differently to achieve higher agricultural productivity compared to the amount of arable land and natural resources present in most African countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). One such crucial area needing integrated transformative innovation, and agricultural extension education to drive engagement and dialogue is to reduce the magnitude of food loss and waste termed food wastage globally (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO] et al., 2019).

In Africa, specifically Nigeria, about 32 million tons of food is wasted annually (Centre for the Promotion of Imports Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). Food wastage has attendant implications on food insecurity, increasing environmental footprint, accentuating socio-economic burden, and spillover effects globally (Irani et al., 2018). Sound extension education and advisory resources, access to credit, cooperative membership, farm size, and experience are potential influencing factors of farmers' decisions to use flood strategy to combat food loss (Enete et al., 2016).

It is imperative to provide evidence-based research on national and international agricultural research and development to advocate for investments that focus on improvement of the operational performances of agricultural research and development and extension among government, institution, and organizational stakeholders (Jayne & Sanchez, 2021).

Research Questions

Our study aimed to understand if there was an educational gap in the use of practices that can attenuate food loss among Nigerian crop farmers. Do farmers adopt technology and innovation which are economically profitable, socially acceptable, and technologically feasible? Furthermore, how is food loss as a dependent variable predicted based on farmers' demographic profiles such as age, gender, education level, years in practice, and the crop they farm? Finally, is there a linear relationship between food loss and specific variables? Our study was conducted using a social media platform as a novel tool for engagement in line with reimagining new ways for delivery of research, teaching, and extension.

Methods

Our study was approved by the University Institutional Review Board. We developed our instrument as a survey with 31 open and closed-ended questions. It was a valid and reliable instrument reviewed by research, teaching, and extension experts for content validity before use. It was administered through Qualtrics over a two months period between the years 2021 and 2022. A purposive sampling method was used to identify 6 social media groups and thereafter a social media post was initiated containing the survey link. The survey had no personal identifiers and participation was voluntary. A total of 54 respondents participated in our study. A statistical hypothesis was determined at an a priori alpha level of .05. The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25) and content analysis.

Results

Seventy-two percent of participants reported owning their farms while 28% worked on a lease contract. Twenty-two percent had 1-10 years and 21-30 years of farming experience respectively while a higher 44% had been farming for 11-20 years. Our participants were from 6 different geopolitical zones in the country. More than 50% reported losing a lot of crops in the previous year's cycle while about 2% did not lose any crop. Fifty-six percent was lost before harvest while 34% was attributed to post-harvest losses. Sixty-eight percent reported a significant decrease in revenue compared with the previous year which compares relatively with 78% of farmers reporting they have never received agricultural training nor extension education on food loss prevention.

The mean age of farmers was ($M = 44.94$, $SD = 12.58$) with 88% being male farmers and 12% female farmers. Their mean score for hours worked on-farm is ($M = 32.08$, $SD = 20.12$), years of farming ($M = 10.12$, $SD = 8.93$) and farm size in acres was ($M = 35.15$, $SD = 69.13$). There was 38% literacy competency demonstrated with completion of high school while 36% had completed university. A combination of factors reportedly caused their food losses and are current challenges they face. Seventy-two percent attributed their loss to pest and disease attacks, closely followed by weather disruptions at 62% and finally theft at 55%. Other factors impacting food loss were limited access to capital, and markets, poor road transportation network, insurgency, banditry, cattle grazing activities, and the coronavirus pandemic. Mechanization was minimal with less than 30% having access to tractors or any on-farm equipment.

There were no statistically significant relationships between hours worked, years of farming, farm size on the amount of food loss. The correlations for significant relationships between hours worked, years of farming and farm size on the amount of food loss also was performed which showed positive but negligible associations.

Recommendations/Educational Importance

Our survey findings show that social media can be further explored as a tool for extension education to address agricultural productivity gaps, particularly food loss among SSA farmers. There is a need for prioritizing and coordinating efforts across multiple platforms and levels, for farmer education and private sector engagement to establish mechanisms of best practices to improve agricultural productivity and close food loss gaps (Irani et al., 2018; Segre et al., 2014).

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Utilizing Gallup Strengths as a Framework for Coaching Extension Staff

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Abstract

Introduction

Continuous improvement and the development of Extension team members is essential to the success of any county-based Extension system. Engaged employees who understand how to best utilize their strengths have increased work satisfaction and strengths serve as a guide to a common language when celebrating accomplishments and addressing poor performance. Research suggests that workplace coaching and performance feedback are important in employee motivation and work attitudes.

Both leaders' supervisory coaching and performance feedback are important in activating employees' external and internal motivation and shaping employee work attitudes (Chin Chin Lee, 2019).

Nebraska Extension leadership determined that by training supervisors and providing them with the opportunity to become Certified Gallup Strengths Coaches it would provide a framework from which to add coaching into the supervisory processes that have long been a structured performance feedback process. Gallup research has identified that almost seven in 10 employees strongly agree that when their manager focuses on their strengths or positive characteristics, they are more engaged and have better employee experiences (Brim, Gallup)

In a recent Gallup Report-State of the American Manager it states.

- Talent is the most powerful predictor of performance.
- Managers with high talent place more emphasis on employees' strengths than their weaknesses. Gallup has found that a strengths-based approach is associated with greater levels of employee engagement and well-being and team productivity and profitability.
- The single most important factor in building a successful team is the quality of the manager. Through their strengths, their own engagement and how they work with the team everyday accounts for 70% of the variance in team engagement.

Research/Guiding Questions

As Nebraska Extension transitioned to the Engagement Zone Model, it allowed supervisors to be much more engaged in the daily work of faculty statewide. This opened the door for opportunities to provide coaching for individuals and teams between performance conversations.

Currently, 25 Extension leaders are certified Gallup Strengths coaches. Employees are now able to request one-on-one coaching sessions, county-wide team coaching sessions and strengths coaching as a part of professional development. In a more organic process than with requested coaching is the shared knowledge and language of Gallup Strengths that is now utilized to address successes and challenges. As a result, we have been asking and plan to evaluate.

Will the use of Gallup Strengths base coaching in the Nebraska Extension system help build a culture of employee engagement and satisfaction in their work?

Methods

The guiding principles of Strengths-Based Development: Themes are neutral, themes are not labels, lead with positive intent, differences are advantages, and people need one another. These guiding principles provide the reason to work together as a county-based team and how to strengthen the team for the betterment of all. When working with a county on interpersonal relationship building, the Gallup Strengths team grid is one example of how to address opportunities and differences in a positive way. Some of the steps in our overall implementation process are included.

- Research coaching opportunities
- Identify funding for certification
- Complete Certification process
- Moving from a boss to coach in mentality and approach
- Embed the taking of the assessment into a new employee's first few weeks.
- Ensure the rest of the faculty/staff have taken the assessment and know their top 5 strengths.
- Share Gallup Strengths with statewide team and share coaches available
- Coach individuals and county teams
- Integrate Strengths language into communication with Extension staff
- Evaluate coaching success
- Re certify coaches as needed
- Identify how to structure coaching fees when requested internal vs. external

Keys to our process continue to be, using consistent language, availability of coaches, utilizing champions, identifying where and when to utilize with individuals and teams.

Results

We are within the first two years of adopting strength-based coaching. Our current results include.

- 25 coaches
- Almost all extension employees have completed the Strengths Assessment, every new employee receives a code within the first few weeks of the new job.
- We have numerous coaching examples of how each coach is using the material (one-on-one, county, teams)
- Strengths Team Workshop Testimonials:
    - "The team-based training Megan delivered for the Saline County Extension Office was embraced by our personnel. It has already brought a better understanding and respect for each individual and is increasing our connection as a team. We are excited to use the strengths of everyone collectively and strategically for all-hands type events like the Fair."
- Gallup states, Organizations benefit when even one person -- or one team -- knows and uses CliftonStrengths, but Gallup research has shown that the benefits significantly increase when organization-wide strengths interventions (including education and coaching) are deployed.
- Our next steps will be to continue to ensure all coaches are using the material to allow us to evaluate our process in the upcoming year.
- We will continue to use Gallup research - FIVE STEPS TO BUILDING A STRENGTHS-BASED CULTURE 1. Start with the CEO or it doesn't work. 2. Require every employee to discover their strengths. 3. Build an internal network of strengths coaches. 4. Integrate strengths into performance management. 5. Transform your learning programs.

Educational Importance

Today's employees want a coach, not a boss. Moving your managers from boss to coach not only increases employee engagement and improves performance, but it's also essential to changing your culture. The single most important factor in building a successful team is the quality of the manager. Managers — through their strengths, their own engagement and how they work with their teams every day — account for 70% of the variance in team engagement.

This workshop will share additional Gallup research associated with strengths-based coaching as it relates to the manager and the employee. We will highlight the decisions made to utilize Gallup Strengths in Nebraska Extension and discuss the many ways it is being utilized across our system with our certified coaches. We will share certification and training information and brainstorm with the group ways that strength-based programming can be used with or without strength coaches in your organization.

Keywords: coaching, strengths, managers, engagement

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Reimagining Local Foods: Extension's role in communicating about local foods

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Abstract

Introduction

COVID-19 changed consumers' shopping patterns, resulting in more customers shopping online and getting their groceries delivered at home. Similarly, the closure of restaurant and food service businesses during the shutdown phase changed consumers' food consumption patterns. An increased number of individuals were consuming home-cooked meals and the need for fresh fruit and vegetables expanded. The media reported many consumers prioritized local food markets for fresh farm products prior to the pandemic. Increased health concerns of COVID-19 also raised the need for safe and fresh farm products, which acted as a driving force for increased shopping from local and regional food systems. A USDA report (2021) stated that local businesses such as cooperatives, farmer's markets, and community-supported marketing rose in popularity. However, there is limited data on the opinion of producers/suppliers and consumers' use of local food systems during the pandemic. This research aims to explore the perception of producers and consumers regarding the adoption of local and regional supply chains during COVID-19.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Roger's diffusion of innovation theory to understand how producers and consumers perceived different factors that affect the adoption of local and regional supply chains. Roger (1983) asserted that "the characteristics of innovations, as perceived by individuals, help to explain their different rate of adoption" (p. 15). The author identified five innovation characteristics that affect innovation adoption which include relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability, and trialability. Using these innovation characteristics producers' and consumers' willingness to adopt local and regional food systems was evaluated.

Literature review

Local and regional food systems refer to the system where food is sold either by farmer's market, farmer's cooperative, community supported agriculture, or roadside market, which reduces the distance between food producers and consumers. In short, local and regional food refers to food grown nearby near where it is sold. According to the Farm Bill (2008) products transported up to 400 miles from their production site are considered locally or regionally produced. Studies showed that local food systems retain wealth and support local economies. These also generate local employment opportunities. A report prepared by the USDA (2021) stated that local and

regional food systems better deal with market shocks. The local and regional systems are more resilient and sustainable.

Research/Guiding Questions

1. What are producers and suppliers' perceptions about the adoption of local and regional food supply chains during COVID-19?
2. What are consumers' perceptions about adopting local and regional food supply chains during COVID-19?

Methods

Two surveys were used to collect data in this study: 1) a survey of producers and suppliers and 2) a survey of consumers. Both surveys used an online survey methodology using Qualtrics. The producer and supplier survey was implemented across three USDA megaregions in the United States. This study focused on the megaregions of the Great Lakes, Southern Florida, and Southern California. Data were collected from February 1 to April 15, 2021. There were 875 usable responses for the entire survey, but only 537 respondents were open during COVID-19 and able to respond to supply chain questions. Participants were recruited through state university Extension systems, partnering farm and producer organizations, partner farmer's markets and restaurant associations, transportation associations, and state agencies. The survey was open to any individual or business who was a part of the food supply chain in the U.S.

For the consumer, Qualtrics was consulted to obtain participants across the United States (Seattle, WA) during the months of July and August 2021. Participants were 18 years of age or older and the sampling was stratified over income, race, and region of the U.S. The final sample contained 1,004 participants. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 28 and consisted of descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, percentages).

Results and Conclusions

According to 53.5% of producers and suppliers, the local and regional food supply chains are compatible with them and their business for selling their products, but only 19.9% reported these systems were easy to use. However, 43.1% reported these have a relative advantage over traditional markets during COVID-19. Results from the consumer survey showed that 58.4% of the consumers said the local and regional food supply chains were compatible with their values and 46.7% of the consumers said this was an easy way for them to shop. About 54.8% of the consumers found the local and regional food supply chains have a relative advantage over traditional supply chains because they consider it safer for themselves and their families. From these findings, we can conclude that producers and suppliers consider it difficult to shift from traditional to local and regional food supply systems. However, consumers looking for safe and fresh produce are likely to use shorter supply chains, particularly in a pandemic as these are viewed as safer.

Recommendations, and Implications

Communicators and Extension professionals should consider developing resources for producers and members of the supply chain on how to convert all or a portion of their business to local regional supply chains during a crisis. Communication can be used to influence how stakeholders interpret a crisis and the industry in crisis. Extension can play a role as an opinion leader to diffuse information to producers and suppliers, however, because commodity organizations were top opinion leaders in this study, Extension should collaborate with commodity organizations to increase the spread of information. To help farmers shift to local supply chains, Extension educators should work on making the process easier to adopt by developing training, fact sheets, and resources. Encouraging consumers to shop from local and regional markets even during non-crisis times can also foster this behavior during regular and crisis times.

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Connecting Intended Outcomes to Learner-Centered Teaching

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Abstract

Introduction

Extension professionals often have the knowledge and experience developing logic models, but may not have the skills and resources to effectively develop and facilitate learner-centered educational programming (Smith et al., 2017; Wise, 2017). Limited support for Extension professionals in developing evidence-based educational programming may result in the overuse of lecturing as a teaching strategy (Strong et al., 2010). Though this more passive strategy is simpler to implement than more active forms of learner-centered instruction, recent research has illuminated that interactive teaching approaches that increase learner engagement are key in fostering higher levels of knowledge retention (Deslauriers et al., 2011).

Guiding Questions

To date, there has been a lack of practical guidance for educators to progress from a logic model, or other sources of learning outcomes, to teaching plans that support learners in achieving the desired changes in their lives. The questions that focused this resource development included:

- What tool type of tool can enable Extension professionals to have more impact through educational programming with their communities? How can an Extension context-specific tool guide educators in the application of learner-centered teaching approaches?
- How can this tool assist educators in gaining the confidence to teach and engage learners in new ways?

Methods

Employing an intentional and constructivist-based approach to instructional design allows educators to more effectively support adult learners in co-creating new knowledge through contextually relevant experiences (Knowles et al., 2015; Linderman, 1926). Resources created utilizing this perspective result in participants having the opportunities to engage in active and reflective forms of learning and provide educators the opportunity to serve as both teachers and facilitators of learning. By fostering a climate of connection and trust with and between the learners, Extension professionals can increase the achievement of intended outcomes.

The Facilitating Extension Teaching and Learning Template was initially created for use in collaborative community-driven projects to support Extension professionals in designing empowering outcome-based education programs (Halbleib et al., 2021). The template assists Extension professionals and others in increasing active learning within their programs by

providing them with the structure and guidance needed to maximize engagement, attention, and knowledge retention.

The template begins with a purpose statement, followed by instructions for the four steps, and guidance for estimating time plus instructional design tips. An example Extension education program design is included as a completed template and is followed by a blank copy of the template for the educators to use in creating their design. The four learner-centered teaching planning steps that each align with the intended learning outcomes include:

1. Generating the program segments, such as welcoming the learners, introductions, setting the vision, acknowledging life experience and activating existing knowledge, knowledge sharing, giving feedback, and reflection. Then explain the purpose for each segment to make sure that this block of time will make a difference for the learners.

2. Describing the specific learning activity for each program segment. This step allows for authentic and relevant learning experiences that mirror the lives of the learners to support them in achieving the intended learning outcomes. Learning activities can be done by individuals or in pairs or groups. Instructors need to develop and provide clear instructions for each activity.

3. Identifying the roles of the instructor(s) and learners for each activity. Example roles include welcoming, listening, asking questions, acknowledging, engaging, teaching, facilitating, and discussing.

4. Determining the time that is necessary for each activity, and then calculating the total time and comparing this to the total time allocated for the program. The template includes guidance for estimating time and recommends leaving buffer time in every program to allow for overages.

When instructors are clearly able to see how time is allocated in an educational program, they can then make better decisions about what is included that will directly contribute to achieving the learning outcomes and what will be left out. Also, making the roles of the learners and educators explicit can support Extension professionals in trying new approaches in their teaching. Ultimately, educators can be supported through having a structured planning process that considers the purpose of what is included in a program, the alignment of each activity with the outcome(s), dynamic teaching and learning roles, and the allocation of time that best supports the learners.

If the template is being utilized within a professional development program, it can be useful to allow time for the Extension professionals to share their designs, provide feedback, and ask reflective questions to increase co-learning and confidence in using this tool. This tool is applicable to in-person and online Extension programming and was recently expanded to allow for its use either in an educational program for educators or as a standalone program design resource that does not require prior training (Halbleib, 2021).

Conclusions

There is a need to more effectively support Extension professionals by translating the relevant and research-based science of teaching and learning into actionable information. Enabling educators to employ an evidence-based tool to plan their teaching increases the opportunity for learners to transfer new knowledge that can contribute to solving the challenges in their lives. If Extension professionals are doing this work on their own it is suggested that these individuals connect with others to serve as reviewers to get feedback to improve their teaching plans. This template may also be employed outside of formal capacity-building experiences by Extension-led teams or community partners to co-create educational programs that are directly linked to the intended learning outcomes and the learners' lives.

Recommendations

Research indicates that Extension programming capacity and professional growth are key competencies of interest for Extension professionals throughout their careers (Brodeur et al., 2011). There is a clear opportunity to better equip these educators in supporting their clientele by improving the ways in which critical information is disseminated within communities. Providing empowering, context-specific, and tested resources is an effective way to assist these professionals in streamlining the development of experiences that make a difference in the communities Extension serves.

Keywords: learner-centered teaching, facilitation, active learning, constructivism, learning outcomes

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Using a regional evaluation capacity building model to strengthen evaluation practices: Experiences from Western Regional Evaluation Network

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Abstract

Limited availability of evaluation resources is a significant challenge for communicating Extension's impacts. To address this challenge, Extension Directors of the Western US region and territories formed Western Regional Evaluation Network (WREN) in 2018 to initiate a regional Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) model. WREN, which consists of representatives from 11 states and territories, was charged with assessing the existing situation and developing a plan to accomplish the ECB goal across the region.

Despite their prevalence, extension programs seldom have the opportunity to be rigorously evaluated. The quality of evaluation is impacted by the limited resources extension programs dedicate to evaluation, and the small number of knowledgeable personnel about evaluation methodologies and planning. This problem is common in many states and territories (Koundinya, Klink, Deming, Meyers, and Erb, 2016). Not every state has a unit dedicated to ECB of its Extension professionals, which makes it difficult to report Extension's outcomes and impacts, which can be critical in demonstrating the value of Extension programming. To overcome this challenge, Extension Directors in the Western Region decided to create an evaluation network as one of the strategies to offer evaluation quality services despite the limited resources (Holz-Clause, Koundinya, Glenn, & Payne, 2012); it facilitates better coordination of resources and uniformity and consistency of services (Miller, 2006).

Our regional team used a systematic process to design our strategies using Preskill and Boyle's model (2008) for Evaluation Capacity Building. The model reimagines the process by proposing that both the organizational factors and teaching-learning processes influence the success of ECB. We developed the team's mission, guiding principles, working structure, and plan of work and formed subgroups to work on the topics identified as priority areas for the region.

WREN team members work in a collaborative and participatory manner. The team consists of three subgroups working on (1) program development and evaluation, (2) impact assessment and storytelling, and (3) reviewing the products developed by the team or within the individual states and territories. They create and share existing evaluation tools, training materials, and needs assessment materials developed among the network members. The reviewing committee

provides peer review services for evaluation, needs assessment reports, and other products developed by the team members. Network specialists also established a long-term plan to develop educational materials, including ready-to-use survey templates, educational videos that demystify evaluation terminologies for extension practitioners, and tutorials on developing an Evaluation starting with the planning phase and ending with reporting the results.

How Participants Will Be Involved in Active and Scholarly Discussion

During this roundtable, team members will present how WREN used Preskill and Boyle's ECB Model and a participatory approach to design our ECB endeavor. The team will also share resources (needs assessment and annotated bibliography; survey design and impact writing training PowerPoints; and demystifying evaluation video) developed for the region. We will invite participants' feedback on our strategies and products and encourage them to share their ECB experiences. We anticipate generating lively discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of our model and how other Extension regions or multi-state teams can adapt it to reimagine Extension ECB.

The round table discussion will explain the network experience explicitly as a model. We hope that driving these discussions about our ECB model will encourage more evaluation specialists from other states to carry this model to their networks and help us as specialists benefit from others' experiences to develop this model. We anticipate that our strategies and resources can benefit other Extension regions with similar resources and capacity. The regional approach to addressing ECB has implications for designing professional development broadly in Extension and similar non-formal educational settings.

Key Takeaways for Participants:

1. Understanding of our regional ECB model
2. Evaluation products developed thus far
3. Potential collaborative opportunities with the western region and other regions
4. Opportunity to leverage some of the WREN resources

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Disruptive events for early career Extension agents: Good and bad, COVID-19 and its impacts

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Abstract

Introduction

Disruption and resulting stress often create opportunities for or demand organizational or individual change. Extension has a long history of responding to disruptions at local and broad levels. Natural disasters, drought, flooding, or traumatic community events cause Extension professionals and systems to rapidly shift priorities and develop new methodologies to address emergent and urgent issues. In some cases, these disruptions impact Extension professionals in their personal lives; increasing stress, reducing job satisfaction, and limiting personal success. Alternatively, response to these disruptions can result in creativity, innovation, and increased job satisfaction.

Review of the Literature

Extension has a long history of addressing disruptions in communities. Kerr, et al. (2018) commented that "few organizations are as well-positioned as Extension to assist affected communities with long-term disaster recovery." Others recognize that when emergent opportunities are not urgent or disruptive, Extension is hindered by its bureaucracy and historic programming momentum (Franz & Cox, 2012; Gaolach, Aitken, & Gromko, 2018). Disruptions with urgency create challenges and opportunities for Extension. Iverson Hitchcock (2021) identified how educators in formal settings had to pivot during COVID-19 disruptions. Grattan, et al. (2020) identified how challenging natural disasters disrupt professional and personal lives; recognizing that one year after a major hurricane, Extension agents had increased depression symptoms "as well as the use of negative disengagement coping strategies for which stability of the work environment was protective" (pg. 1). Randall, et al. (2021) recognized that seeking personal well-being and life satisfaction can be challenging endeavors even in the best of times. Adding a global pandemic to this set of challenges can make these pursuits even more daunting, particularly as it relates to adjusting to changes in both work and personal life. (pg. 2)

Research Context

This qualitative research explored the lived-experiences of county-based Extension professionals (agents). This phenomenological research (Patton M. Q., 2015) explored agents' perspectives and experiences during the first 17 months of COVID-19 restrictions. More specifically, the research explored their professional and personal reactions and attitudes during the disruption that was COVID-19.

Methods

Twenty-five interviews with 22 agents were conducted between March 23, 2020 and August 27, 2021. These interviews were part of a larger longitudinal study. Interviews represented newer agents with nine months of experience (7), 18 months of experience (5), and with 36 to 38 months of experience (13). Semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually via WebEx. Interview questions pursued the agents' perspectives on the Extension profession, their recent experiences on the job, and their interactions with people throughout Extension and their communities. Interviews lasted 25 to 50 minutes.

Ongoing thematic analysis is being utilized to identify commonalities in the interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The following analytical phases as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) were utilized to develop categories, or themes: 1) familiarization with the data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, and 5) refining themes and naming them. This process was flexible and recursive in process (Patton M. Q., 2015). During preliminary analyses, each interview transcript was individually coded in its entirety, and 109 preliminary codes were developed. Upon completion of three iterative processes, five themes were developed with three to 10 sub-themes each. Experience-based themes focused on respondents' qualities as an individual, how they interact with others, and how they approach the profession practically and philosophically.

Results

Preliminary analyses indicate that agents experienced positive and negative situations during COVID-19 restrictions. CES Extension's responses included many new opportunities to connect with peers via web meetings. One three-year agent demonstrated sub-themes of gratitude and teamwork when she observed "I feel that I understand Extension a lot more. And have more ideas as far as where this program can go, based on what I've learned from other people". Another experienced both positive and negative personal results when she talked about parenting better when working from home during school closures, then struggling when returning to the office with children fending for themselves at home. Becoming more focused on others was identified when one agent observed "that people were asking each other how they were doing at the beginning of a phone call or a web meeting in a way that was very human. Like 'how's it going in your community, how are you doing?' And they wouldn't have asked those questions if the COVID wasn't there, so it felt nice in terms of connecting as a human before the topic was work." Agents who had family living far from location felt guilt and pressure to be closer to family members during travel bans, especially when family members were infected with COVID-19.

Implications

Disruptions in personal and professional lives provide both positive and negative experiences for Extension professionals. Extension leadership has the opportunity to recognize the positive experiences during disruptions like a pandemic. Agent successes in difficult times are valuable to build trust with Extension's clientele and amongst our professionals as people thrive through difficulty. Administration's willingness to recognize rapid professional adaptation or growth and the associated skills, creativity, or sacrifices may raise morale. Extension leadership can also identify and recognize the impacts of negative experiences and pressures and provide support and scaffolding to ease those stresses in a person's professional and personal life. Giving Extension professionals permission address their personal priorities and find balance with their professional roles may be the type of reassurance people need to remain successful and dedicated to their profession and employer.

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Utilizing the Share Fair Model to Enhance Program and Outreach Initiatives through Collaboration

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Abstract

Agents are an important role to fulfilling the outreach mission of the land-grant system. They must continue to learn and evolve to stay up-to-date and connected with faculty and units at the University to bring the latest research the communities they serve. The University of Georgia Extension hosts a biennial professional development conference for Agents that is traditionally packed with workshops on relevant content led by State Specialists to keep Agents up to date on the latest research and techniques. In 2022, collaboration across the university, was the focus of the conference with the theme of "We Are UGA". To enhance collaborations a Share Fair was added to the agenda. The purpose of the Share Fair was to showcase collaborative partners with UGA Extension and allow Agents to engage with faculty, schools, colleges across the University of Georgia to enhance their programs and outreach initiatives in their communities. The Share Fair was designed as an event where Agents could go from station to station to interact with representatives from various schools, colleges, and units across the university. The event was deemed a success with 70 percent of both new and seasoned Agents participating in the conference rating it as excellent. Evaluation comments from participants after the event indicated they saw it as a valuable use of their time and expressed a desire for the conference to include Share Fairs at all future conferences.

Research Base of Program/Event/Activity:

Cooperative Extension was established in 1914 by the Smith-Lever Act to deliver research-based information from land-grant colleges and universities to all Americans. The appropriation for funding Extension was unique as it was a partnership among the federal, state and county levels of government for support. Just like the name states, "extension" is designed to extend the reach of the universities. The organization has a long-standing history of helping improve the lives of Georgia residents. Local Extension offices are located all throughout the state in all 159 counties. Local Extension offices are staffed with a combination of employees who specialize in agriculture and natural resources, youth development, family and consumer sciences or a combination of each area. These individuals are responsible for providing the most recent, research-based information in a manner appropriate for the community in which they work. Extension has taught life skills and lessons to millions of young people through caring adult leaders who have invested in their future. When Extension was established programs centered around farmers and homemakers. Today, Extension is a dynamic organization that addresses a wide variety of needs. To keep up with the variety of needs, Agents attend many trainings throughout the year and are continuously learning. A part of this education is attending a required event every other year at Rock Eagle 4-H Center, Winter Conference. Winter Conference is a time for agents to engage in hot topics within each program area. In 2022, the conference theme WE ARE UGA emphasized the importance of togetherness and collaboration.

Share Fair, sometimes also referred to as a knowledge fair, is a participatory event designed to showcase information about an organization or topic for many to consume at their own speed. According to Reid (2003), knowledge sharing creates opportunities to maximize organization ability to meet the needs and generates solutions or more effective programming. The structure of share or knowledge fairs allow participants to focus specifically on topics of interest, get immediate answers to specific questions, and establish contacts for further exploration of potential collaborations. Furthermore, knowledge fair sharing can be viewed as an organizational improvement innovation that has the ability to generate new ideas or business opportunities or enhance current initiatives (Darroch & McNaughton, 2002).

Program Evaluation of Program/Event/Activity:

The purpose of the Share Fair was to provide an engaging environment for collaborative partners and UGA Extension to come together. The share fair was positioned in the schedule to flank the allotted time for lunch. The participants were split into two groups and rotated when they attended. As an incentive, participants were given a passport that listed the stations which included an opportunity to be entered into a drawing for prizes upon meeting a minimum number of connections. The Passport encouraged participants to move through the Share Fair earning a sticker at each station. Some of the prizes included: Weekend getaways, signed athletic memorabilia, Georgia grown items, and themed gift baskets. Prizes were donated by UGA departments and individual employees. Winners were drawn at the closing session of the conference a day after the share fair.

To evaluate the success of the program, a Qualtrics survey given to all participants at the conclusion of the event coupled with the larger conference evaluation. Participants were asked to rate the excellence on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. 70 percent of the participants rated the Share Fair as a 4 or 5 on the scale. Participants were also given the opportunity to provide open comments about their favorite part of the conference and specific comments about the Share Fair. We received comments such as “Excellent share fair. The best interaction I have seen in a long time!”, “Excellent event that offered meaningful networking opportunities”, and “I liked the variety of contacts that I made!”.

Targeted Outcomes/Objectives:

This poster will share the overview of planning, implementation, and outcomes of our share fair event at the University of Georgia Extension Conference. Participants will learn how and why we conducted this event and how to hold one of their own on any scale in their organizations or with their communities.

Program Application:

This program is easily replicable and scalable to meet a variety of needs. To hold at an organizational level, buy-in from leadership is crucial to ensure participation. The materials needed such as space, tables, signage, prizes, etc. are unique to the specific goals of the group. These events can be as simple or as complex as you want to make them.

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Understanding Organizational Conflict Styles of Extension Volunteer Coordinators and County Extension Directors

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Abstract

Introduction / Theoretical Framework / Review of the Literature

Conflict is inevitable and a healthy sign of productivity in the workplace. Rahim (2002) describes conflict as an “interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities” (p. 207). Harder et al. (2010) identified competencies needed of a qualified Extension professional which include a group of core interpersonal skills comprised of problem-solving, interpersonal skills, and self-management. When in an academic setting, future Extension professionals are often trained in program development and teaching pedagogy leaving a gap of interpersonal skills needed to navigate the day-to-day interactions, and occasional conflict, with others (Argabright et. al, 2019). Extension professionals, such as those coordinating volunteer programs (i.e. 4-H and Master Gardener Volunteer programs) and County Extension Directors (CEDs) interact with a wide variety of stakeholders (Seevers & Graham, 2012) requiring them to navigate numerous relationships on a day-to-day basis, and these relationships inevitability involve conflict.

Rahim (1985) posits that organizations must be able to differentiate between the quantity of conflict and the styles of conflict used. This allows organizations to identify how close they are to an ideal amount of conflict for organizational efficiency. We used the Dual Concern Model of the Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979) to help Extension understand conflict within the organization. The model differentiates handling conflict on two dimensions: concern for self and concern for others. The first dimension, concern for self, “explains the degree (high or low) to which a person attempts to satisfy his or her own concern” (Rahim, 2002, p. 217), whereas the second dimension attempts to satisfy their concern for others. Additionally, there are five distinct styles for handling potential conflict: Integrating, high concern for self and others; obliging, low concern for self and high concern for others; dominating, high concern for self and low concern for others; avoiding, low concern for self and others; and compromising, mid-range concern for self and others (Rahim, 2002).

Research/Guiding Questions

The purpose and objective of our study was to identify the conflict styles used by County Extension Directors, 4-H professionals, and Master Gardener Volunteer coordinators.

Methods and/or Data Sources

The target population for our study were County Extension Directors, 4-H professionals, and Master Gardener Volunteer coordinators due to their consistent interaction with agents they supervise and volunteers. We targeted the following six states to participate in our study due to the lead researcher's work relationships and convenience: Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, and Mississippi. The total population for our study was 776 professionals.

We utilized a descriptive quantitative design for our study using survey methodology to gather the data. We used the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory–II, Form B (ROCI) instrument, and we modified the instrument by removing the term "subordinate' and use the terms "those I supervise" and "volunteers" to fit the Extension context. The ROCI consists of 28 statements and respondents are asked to indicate how they handle their disagreement or conflict on a 5-point Likert scale. The response options were: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Somewhat disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Somewhat agree, and 5 = Strongly agree. The five conflict styles measured include integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. We also asked five demographic questions relating to the respondents' birth year, years of Extension Experience, state of employment, and gender.

Using Dillman's Tailored Design Method (Dillman et al., 2009), we sent a pre-notice, an invitation, and two follow-up emails our target population. A total of 283 complete and usable surveys were completed, yielding a 36.47% response rate. Nonresponse error was guarded against by comparing early to late respondents on the five constructs of interest as recommended by Lindner et al. (2001). Results of a series of independent t-tests indicated no differences on the ROCI styles between early and late respondents.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions

County Extension Directors indicated the conflict handling style they gravitate to was the integrating style (M = 4.36, SD = .45), followed by the compromising style (M = 3.85, SD = .62), obliging style (M = 3.53, SD = .57), avoiding style (M = 3.12, SD = .79), and dominating style (M = 2.52, SD = .75). 4-H professionals and Master Gardener Volunteer coordinators indicated their conflict handling style similarly, with integrating style (M = 4.40, SD = .45) being the most used, followed by the compromising style (M = 3.90, SD = .57), obliging style (M = 3.61, SD = .55), avoiding style (M = 3.43, SD = .73), and dominating style (M = 2.63, SD = .80). No differences statistically significant differences existed between the respondents' Extension roles and states.

Recommendations, Educational Importance, Implications, and/or Application

Building relationships is a central need for all Extension professions and programs, yet the process of building and having relationships with others isn't always neat and tidy. Since relationships are crucial, and conflict is inevitable, we sought to understand the conflict handling styles of Extension professionals. Our study results demonstrate that Extension professionals tend to lean with the integrating style of handling conflict, regardless of their roles as a CED, 4-H professional, or Master Gardener Volunteer coordinator, with the least being the dominating style. Within the conflict management theory and models, neither one side is more beneficial than another; instead, each conflict style has tangible benefits that Extension professionals can use in specific situations or when there is power involved. Extension professionals must be able to solve problems and work with others (Harder et al., 2010) to affect change in their communities, and being able to handle conflict appropriately is crucial while working in Extension.

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Implementing the civil rights compliance cycle: Best practices on improving organizational processes and increasing efficiencies

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Abstract

The premise

At the 2020 NAEPSDP meeting, civil rights compliance reporting systems became the primary topic during and after the oral presentation by Arkansas, California, Georgia, and Wisconsin Extension professionals, Adapting our Reporting Systems Amidst a Global Crisis. At the 2021 Western Region Administrative Officer's meeting, this conversation continued with presentations from Nevada and Hawaii on their training, data collection, and statewide analysis efforts. Civil rights compliance continues to be an ongoing topic in national Extension conversations and due in part to the increased emphasis in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts as well as from increased clarity in expectations from the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA NIFA). Extension professionals have convened around improving organizational processes and building statewide capacity around civil rights compliance. This proposed roundtable discussion would provide an opportunity to further this dialogue with even more specificity on statewide civil rights compliance procedures and data analysis.

USDA NIFA describes civil rights compliance as a cycle that includes documentation of who Extension serves, identification of barriers to reaching residents that represent the population, development a corrective action plan, implementation of the plan, and assessment the outcome. The co-authors of this proposal seek to understand how this cycle is implemented in other states. In California, Extension agents are responsible for implementing the cycle in their individual county programs and as such, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion conducts analysis and assigns a unique parity and compliance status to each of the 160 academics. In other states, are Extension agents implementing the civil rights compliance cycle for their individual programs? Are the steps, analysis, and compliance statuses coordinated at a larger programmatic or statewide level? Are there opportunities to improve organizational processes and increase the efficiency of these efforts?

NAEPSDP members are the organizational and program development professionals, evaluators, reporting system managers, and software developers that are key to delivering the Extension mission and complying with federal policies and USDA NIFA's expectations. They have the shared knowledge and context to help each other solve problems, reflect, and build the capacity

to adapt and grow. This roundtable topic, while very focused on specifics of the civil rights compliance cycle, will hopefully be a relevant and useful experience for those who attend.

How participants will be involved in active and scholarly discussion

Participants would be asked to respond to the following questions about civil rights compliance procedures.

1. Does your state assign parity and civil rights compliance statuses as the individual Extension agent/academic level, or at a broader statewide/program level?
2. What are the pros and cons of assigning statuses at the individual and broader statewide levels?
3. Who develops baseline data for parity analysis in your state and how?
4. Please describe any experiences and lessons learned your state has had in increasing administrative efficiencies related to implementing civil rights compliance procedures.
5. How has your state communicated the value and importance of civil rights compliance? How have the processes and data been used, if at all, beyond civil rights compliance (e.g., to reach organizational goals around inclusion)?

Key takeaways for participants

Participants would have the opportunity for reflection on civil rights compliance procedures in their state, learn best practices from and build connections with professionals in other states, and share resources and ideas for improving efficiencies.

References

None provided; administrative topic.

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Engaging Talent, Stakeholders, and the Future

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Abstract

Introduction

Like many land-grant systems, Nebraska Extension's management structure was divided into large regions with administrators who could not be effective because they managed too many people, offices, and stakeholders. To address this systemic issue and to bolster capacity to lead the University engagement initiative (University of Nebraska-Lincoln Strategic Plan Strategy Team, 2020), Nebraska Extension launched a new employee and stakeholder management model, designed to strengthen organizational priorities. Eleven Engagement Zone Coordinators (EZCs) were hired as a cohort to lead multi-county Engagement Zones across Nebraska. Engagement Zones are intended to be employee- and stakeholder-centric and defined by creating a culture of trust, integrity, equity, excellence, and employee and learner success.

Guiding Questions

The Engagement Zone Model (EZM) was one of the most significant structural changes in the history of Nebraska Extension. The new model was designed to strengthen the strategic priorities of staff, stakeholders, and University engagement. Within the new model, EZCs focus on

1. Fostering talent among Extension professionals to achieve excellence in developing and delivering high-impact, learner-centered educational programming on priority issues for Nebraskans,
2. Strong stakeholder connections that value their relationship with Nebraska Extension, contribute to our excellence, partner with resources and champion our people and programs, and
3. University engagement that leads to collaborative relationships with local leaders to produce university-community initiatives that generate mutual benefit to all parties.

Methods

The EZM focused proactively responding to the needs which had arisen within the organization.

Fostering Talent

Need: Increased employee turnover warranted enhanced supervisory relationships. New Extension professionals were seeking more attention and stronger coaching from their respective

supervisors. To be an employer of choice it was essential to develop and nourish workplace culture.

Solution: Redesigning the supervisory model reduced the number of direct reports and prioritized better equipping supervisors with coaching and management skills. The coordinator fosters employee commitment to excellence in Extension programming and Extension best practices. Attracting, hiring, coaching, developing, and retaining talent is a key role of coordinators. The EZC fosters an inclusive culture in which all contributions are appreciated and recognized, collaboration and innovation are encouraged, and the abilities of all are engaged to fully realize the potential of the team and each contributor.

Stakeholder Connections

Need: Local staff with limited training and competing priorities were responsible for managing stakeholder relationships within their county or program focus which could lead to reactive interventions by supervisors.

Solution: EZC are prepared to provide effective communication, identification of shared interests, and opportunities to collaborate through their local presence with elected officials, county government, Extension Boards, and advisory groups (business, industry, non-profit, etc.). They are also able to coordinate strong public relations and program marketing initiatives that represent Extension and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) relative to issues, needs, and opportunities in the region.

University Engagement

Need: As part of the 2025 strategic plan, UNL has a strategic goal of broadening engagement in community, industry, and global partnerships.

Solution: EZCs are well positioned to help lead the University engagement efforts. This renewed commitment to the land-grant mission involves connecting university faculty, staff, and students with local leaders encouraging them to collaborate on solutions to critical issues leading to significant positive impact. It also includes establishing working relationships with local leaders, businesses, industry, and organizations defined by clear outcomes, shared responsibilities, and necessary resources. Coordinators are continually examining emerging engagement opportunities for relevance and priority.

Results

Success of the EZM has been realized in several ways during the first two years of operation. Milestones included both development of people and processes associated with a new management structure, and the response from internal and external stakeholders.

- A cohort of eleven EZC positions were onboarded simultaneously that included both internal and external candidates, with various levels of administrative experience. The diversity of talent intentionally hired into these management positions set-the-stage for unique views, rich conversations, creative solutions.

- Communication and connection among the EZC cohort has been tremendous. The cohort routinely meets with Extension administration and as a group to discuss both strategic and tactical topics. This distributed group of administrators utilizes a variety of online communication tools to connect virtually synchronously and asynchronously.
- Professional development and training have played an important part in the success of the EZCs. Too often higher education administrators are not offered nor prioritize assistance in learning leadership and management roles. The EZC cohort has embraced the opportunity to grow and develop into highly effective leaders and managers.
- As the EZC cohort has developed, they have identified and provided leadership for priority projects. Such projects include Extension board member training, onboarding Extension board members, redesigning lead educator training, supporting the Nebraska Association of County Extension Boards (NACEB), and contributing to employee performance management tools.
- Greater employee engagement during the height of the pandemic proved to be an important early success of the EZM. Employees generally reported greater connection with their respective supervisors. Establishing strong connections and relationships with employees and local county partner stakeholders was a cornerstone of maintaining Extension's momentum during this unique era.
- One year into the EZM the University of Nebraska embarked on a campaign to renew formal inter-local partnership arrangements with all 93 counties. These interlocal agreements articulate the funding, personnel, and programming relationship between UNL and each county. Early conversations with County partners regarding these renewals have exceeded expectations with little resistance and clear interest in continuing this long-term relationship.

The EZC cohort has been resilient in navigating continual organizational change. Experiential learning is an important contributor to developing administrative management and leadership skills. The collective experiences of the cohort are leading to greater confidence and more consistent Extension administration acumen which underpins a strong and engaged Extension system.

Implications and Recommendations

A forward-thinking strategic approach to garnering greater connection with employees and clientele is paramount to the future of land-grant institutions. The EZM has quickly proven that it is designed to navigate adversity and position the organization for future successes. Investing in management talent and reimagining a legacy system management structure is clearly returning dividends.

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So, What's Working? Outcomes of Conducting Interviews at the 6-Month of Hire Mark to Identify Successes, Barriers, and Challenges of New Extension Professionals

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Abstract

Introduction / Theoretical Framework / Review of Literature:

Extension agents serve a critical role in the land-grant mission as they disseminate research to local clientele in the form of educational programs (Seevers & Graham, 2012). However, Extension agents face a myriad of challenges, evaluation and reporting, policies and procedures, and work-life balance (Benge & Beattie, 2021). Additionally, County Extension Directors (CEDs) and mentors serve in leadership roles to assist new Extension professional hires, help them learn the ropes, and provide programmatic direction and guidance (Benge & Beattie, 2021; Kram, 1985). Extension organizations should have continual focus on new hires to understand 'what's working' and 'what isn't working', and use that information to guide further support and reexamine policy and processes that might be detrimental to the early success of new Extension hires.

I used the Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Herzberg, 1968) and Kram's (1985) mentoring framework to guide our study. Herzberg theorized that specific challenges employees faced can influence their feelings of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. Internal factors, or motivational factors, can lead an employee to increase their motivation or job satisfaction such as achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth (Smerek & Peterson, 2007). External factors, or hygiene factors, can lead an employee to negative experiences or feelings toward the job (job dissatisfaction). Examples of hygiene factors are company policy and administration, supervision, relationship with supervisor, work conditions, salary, relationships with peers, personal life, relationships with subordinates, status, and security (Smerek & Peterson, 2007). Regarding mentoring, Kram (1985) conceptualized that mentoring consists of the behaviors between a mentor and mentee that define the relationship: (a) career development, (b) social support, and (c) role modeling. Kram (1983) theorized that if all three mentoring behaviors exist with the mentor-mentee relationship, the mentee's job satisfaction and organization will increase, and turnover would decrease.

Research/Guiding Questions:

The purpose of conducting the 6-month interviews was to understand the successes, barriers, and challenges of new Florida Extension professionals. The specific guiding questions of my study were: (1) How are the new Extension professional's County Extension Director and mentor supporting them? (2) What are the early successes that new Extension professionals are

experiencing with their job? (3) What are the challenges and barriers new Extension professions are experiencing with their job?

Methods and/or Data Sources:

The target population for my study were Florida Extension agents who had been on the job for six months (*N* = 31). The UF/IFAS Business Service Office provided me with a list of new agents every month, and at the agents' six-month mark I emailed them asking if they would participate in an interview. I used a phenomenological qualitative design utilizing one-on-one interviews view Zoom to understand their experiences of being a new Extension professional related to the support they had received from their CED and mentor, their successes, and challenges. I created a semi-structured interview guide consisting of seven questions with multiple follow-up questions to help me understand the experiences of new Extension professionals. Example interview questions were (1) who makes up your support system?, and (2) Have you had any challenging or stressful experiences since being in your position? I obtained approval from the University of Florida Institutional Review Board prior to conducting our study. Out of the 31 new agents in the target population, 18 new agents agreed and completed an interview.

I conducted interviews over a six-month span to capture new agent experiences at their six-month of hire, ranging from 19 to 31 minutes in length. I audio recorded and transcribed interviews verbatim, and organized, coded, and analyzed the data using the phenomenological reduction method by Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen as modified by Moustakas (1994). I used five strategies to maintain credibility of study, as Eisner (1991) stated that establishing credibility within qualitative research "allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations, and conclusions" (p. 110). These strategies include investigator triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, thick and rich descriptions, and clarifying researcher bias.

Results, Products, and/or Conclusions:

The new Extension agents felt varying levels of support from their CED and mentor. Regarding their CED, 61% (*n* = 11) of the new Extension agents felt supported by their CED. Micah, a new agent in an urban county, expresses that she did not feel supported by her CED, that they had met only once during her first six month, and "we haven't been meeting monthly, she checks in on me every once in a while, mostly just like how are you doing, do you feel okay? It's like five minutes and then she's off to the next thing." Regarding their mentor, 44% (*n* = 8) felt they were supported by their mentor and 33% (*n* = 6) did not have a mentor yet. Regarding new agent challenges, there were four common challenges indicated by most participants: financial management policy (*n* = 7), the yearly reporting system (*n* = 7), identifying community needs (*n* = 4), and demonstrating program impact (*n* = 3).

Recommendation, Educational Important, Implications, and/or Application:

Conducting the interviews at the six-month mark allowed for an important insight into the support system, successes, and challenges new Extension agents experience. Extension administrators and staff development specialists can use this information to help guide their own state's onboarding process. The lack of appointed mentors for new agents, as well as some agents feeling weak support from their CED, is worrisome, and new agents are missing out on key benefits such as career development and social support (Kram, 1985). Additionally, the challenges of the financial management policy and yearly reporting system are causes for concern for the organization, as both are considered hygiene factors that increase job dissatisfaction, and likewise lead to an increase in organizational turnover (Herzberg, 1968). Extension administrators can lean on the solutions to potential burnout and hygiene factors produced by Benge et al. (2015).

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Utilizing Asset-Based Community Development, Leadership Development and Participatory Community Building to Maximize Extension's Impact

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Abstract

Introduction

This presentation will explore how Extension practitioners are utilizing asset-based community development, leadership development and participatory community building as strategies for county agents to engage in local relationship building and understand of strengths, gifts, and assets as techniques for building community development in rural Arkansas communities.

The role of a county agent is integral to the development of rural communities across Arkansas. Agents work tirelessly around the clock—delivering trainings, conducting site visits, and building relationships to help cultivate thriving communities. In roles like these, it's common for Agents to experience burnout. County agents report decreased attendance and retention among community members leading to low morale among county agents and extension staff.

Many county agents have expressed their desire to raise the visibility of Extension work in their local community by partnering with organizations with similar missions and by reaching segments of the population they have not traditionally been reached. While burnout may be a part of every job, there are ways to minimize the type of burnout county agents experience by leveraging an asset-based approach to community development. By utilizing this approach, county agents can lay the foundation for Extension work by understanding the different talents, strengths, and passions, of the various residents and organizations. This relationship building process not only helps raise visibility of Extension but also provides information necessary to build quality programs and experiences that align with the community members themselves. An asset-based approach to community development has the potential to improve the effectiveness of all program areas, strengthen the reputation of Extension work in the community, and ultimately energize participation in Extension programing and community building efforts.

Guiding Questions: How can we meet we meet new employee needs? How can we help new employees develop as individual professionals? Moreover, how can we help them develop their Extension Councils and community members as a whole? This presentation aims to explore the question of burnout among county agents. Building on the work of the Jeder Institute and Asset-based Community Development Institute of DePaul University, asset-based community development and participatory community building together form an approach to community development grounded in relationships, the associations people have with one other in community, and investment in human capacity. There are key principles to asset-based community development (ABCD) principles, grounded in the work, Building Communities from the Inside Out, by John McKnight and Jody Kretzman. Every person has unique gifts. ABCD works best when everyone in the community draws upon their gifts; identifies and mobilizes the assets of individuals especially marginalized members; builds relationships among community members especially mutually supportive relationships and associations; and gives community members more roles and power in their local institutions. At its heart, ABCD is a person-centered approach to development and community vitality.

The principles of asset-based community development and participatory community building complement the Cooperative Extension's community development focus because of its relational nature. In a Southern, rural state, grounded in agriculture, youth development, family and consumer sciences, and the community vitality of place, our agents are focused on people and on understanding relationships in the community. Therefore, the two are a good sync for building greater community investment in the work of Extension agents.

Methods: To address these internal issues of burnout and low morale in conjunction with the external issues related to low program attendance and the lacking perception of Extension as a unified entity in counties among community members, the CPED team infused the ABCD approach into various activities, exercises, and trainings. Bringing together county agents from two counties in a series of virtual and in-person meetings, the CPED training team aimed to create a peer group/community of practice where agents could brainstorm, identity shared challenges and share best practices. Additionally, these trainings acted as strategic planning and leadership development spaces where agents could explore what it takes to manage change among community members, Extension Councils, and colleagues. The help of support staff (communication/IT) helped both Extension offices explores ways to unify their work in a brand that aligned with the cultural context of their specific counties and extended beyond the siloes of 4-H, FCS, and Agriculture. Elements that focused on demographics assessments, data walks, asset, and stakeholder mapping further amplified their understanding of the different populations that comprised their counties. This knowledge of different populations also catalyzed the recruitment of new Extension Council members making their committees and priories more representative of the county as whole. In summation, these activities equipped the county agents with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to recruit new Extension Council members, assess community priorities and develop programming that more closely aligned with the population of each county all the while raising visibility and building collaborative partnerships.

Results: During the session, researchers will explore the preliminary findings about research questions outlined above regarding burnout, employee support and community engagement. Ultimately, through modeling strategies in this peer community, the CPED team—in collaboration with Extension support staff and external stakeholders—helped equipped county agents with the tools necessary to better understand their own strengths, assets, and talents and how they could make a bigger impact as individuals and a team. Moreover, these participants gained a more comprehensive understanding of their communities' assets and how they could use this understanding to help set program priorities that more closely aligned with the passions and talents of existing organizations and residents.

1. Mississippi/Crawford County--Coordinated Extension team to address issues related to strategic planning, program development, stakeholder engagement and marketing through the lens of ABCD.
2. Organized and re-centered program priorities based on community voice
3. Extension 101—Utilized Extension in-service with 13 agents to deepen community engagement in programs and services offered by agents.
4. Kick Start Cleveland County—Worked with a local community resident to increase community engagement in the revitalization process and draw on resident's skills and gifts rather than relying on external resources for change.

Recommendations

- Greater community investment locally
- Less burn-out by Extension leaders and residents
- Greater investment in county agents and citizen-led solutions

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Understanding the Trustworthiness and Relevance of Urban Extension Programs Using the Credible Evidence Concept

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Abstract

Introduction

Considering changing demographics and societal changes, Extension needs to put more emphasis on how it can serve better urban and suburban populations in addition to traditional rural populations (Webster & Ingram, 2007; Young & Jones, 2017). The extension needs to identify its unique niche in urban and suburban contexts considering the population shifts to these areas over the last few decades. Urban and suburban contexts have a unique set of issues as these audiences are comprised of diverse backgrounds, ethnicity, race, and many other identities. In such a scenario, Extension needs to explore how to plan relevant programs for the audiences in these contexts that address their needs and interests, as the current curricula and delivery methods in urban Extension programs are mostly adapted from rural experiences (Ruemenapp, 2017).

Credible evidence might be a useful concept to help Extension enhance planning and evaluating programs in urban and suburban contexts. Credible evidence is the evaluation evidence produced by Extension programs that are relevant and trustworthy to the associated program stakeholders (Donaldson et al., 2015). Criteria for credible evidence include evidence-based practice, evaluation designs, and the utility of data for all stakeholders of programs. These criteria are overlooked as the process for disseminating science, delivering programs, and generating evidence for program effectiveness are not well-understood by the stakeholders or even by many Extension personnel themselves (Silliman and Cummings, 2019). However, diversity of disciplines, contexts, resources, program strategies and objectives, and diverse stakeholders in urban and suburban contexts might create a different understanding of the meaning of credible evidence (Donaldson et al., 2015).

Considering these needs, this study explores how the concept of credible evidence looks like in practice in terms of selected Extension programs and seeks further implications on how the urban Extension programs need to be planned, designed, delivered, and evaluated to generate credible evidence for the associated stakeholders.

Research questions

This study addresses the following questions:

1. What are urban and sub-urban stakeholders' perceptions of the credibility of Extension program evaluation evidence?
2. What is counted as credible evidence considering the diversity of disciplines, contexts, resources, program strategies and objectives, and diverse stakeholders?
3. What are the prerequisites for Extension program delivery and evaluation to generate evidence which is considered credible by urban and sub-urban stakeholders?

Methods

The study uses the case-study approach, which refers to an in-depth analysis of a case situated in a particular setting (Yin, 2015). In this study perspective, cases refer to the selected urban Extension programs. The identified two Extension programs are [Program A] and [Program B] situated in [County] of [State]. The key informants of these programs have been identified through the [State] Extension County staff directory and suggestions from [State] Extension assistant directors. The key informants included both internal (who are positioned in the program boundary with some form of power over the programs) and external (anybody who has a vested interest in the program and is not part of the [State] Extension) stakeholders.

Semi-structured interviews have been conducted to collect data from these internal stakeholders. Purposive and snowball sampling has been used to identify the interviewees. The study interviewed not only internal stakeholders but also the external stakeholders of the identified programs- who are the participants, volunteers, fund providers, or partners of these two programs. The interviews with internal stakeholders primarily addressed their perception of credible evidence in terms of evaluation results they develop. The interviews with external stakeholders addressed what they expect from these programs if the programs are serving their needs, what they want to be evaluated or what needs to be developed to make these programs more relevant and trustworthy to them. The data have been analyzed using thematic analysis, where initial overarching themes were identified from the transcripts, later themes were compared between two groups of stakeholders (internal and external), and finally, the final themes were arranged and described according to the study purpose and research questions.

Initial findings/results

Since the study team is collecting data currently, the findings are still in the initial stage. Particularly, interviews with external stakeholders are not conducted yet. Still, the collected data is rich and valuable in exploring the concept of credible evidence in terms of Extension programs' evaluation. Almost all the internal participants agreed that the credibility of evaluation results is not always a priority for the programs. Evaluation of programs mostly focuses on attendance and satisfaction of participants instead of the change the program might be able to make among its participants. Ease of time and effort is a priority while planning for evaluation design as most educators do not get sufficient time to plan and implement a thorough program evaluation process and program delivery. Besides, many positions in Extension with designated responsibilities of need-based program development remain vacant for a long time due to the ongoing pandemic and other reasons. In the absence of a thorough and purposeful evaluation plan, associated stakeholders of the programs do not get sufficient opportunities to get involved in program evaluation. As a result, the programs produce insufficient and irrelevant evaluation results that are not connected to the needs and interests of the target audience. Even though many interviewees posed that there is a trusting relationship with the partners of these programs, the appearance of this relationship was not very satisfactory.

Implications

The major implication of this study is to explore the application and practice of credible evidence while understanding the need for and importance of the concept. The study will initiate thoughts on the need for a trusting relationship among the program partners in addition to the trustworthiness and relevancy of Extension programs. Finally, the study findings will act as an outline to improve program delivery and evaluation designs, which are more relevant and impactful, addressing the needs and interests of urban or suburban audiences.

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Challenges Faced by Extension Professionals in Designing, Delivering, and Evaluating Programs in Urban and Suburban Contexts

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Abstract

Introduction

The current population shift to urban and suburban areas from the rural areas of the United States requires Extension to rethink its efforts in serving the urban and suburban communities in addition to rural communities because traditional rural programming approaches are not efficient and impactful in urban settings (Ruemenapp, 2017; Warner et al., 2017). Besides, many Extension educators have almost no experience working in urban and suburban contexts (Webster and Ingram, 2007; Young and Jones, 2017).

Urban and suburban areas include communities of diverse needs, interests, and political and religious beliefs, including but not limited to diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, there are multiple religious faith-based, non-governmental, and other agencies that exist in these contexts, and their mission and vision overlap with Extension programs' goals and objectives (Beaulieu & Cordes, 2014; Gaolach et al., 2015). The extension needs to understand how program planning and implementation might address the needs and interests of these diverse urban and suburban communities. To make a difference in urban and suburban communities, a deeper understanding of what unique challenges faced by Extension professionals in urban and suburban contexts while planning, implementing, and evaluating Extension programs. Considering this need, this study aims to explore the challenges urban and suburban Extension professionals experience in designing, delivering, and evaluating Extension programs and what solutions they suggest overcoming these challenges in urban and suburban contexts.

Research questions

This study will address the following questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by urban and sub-urban Extension professionals in designing, delivering, and evaluating Extension programs in urban and suburban areas?
2. What suggestions or strategies do Extension professionals suggest for overcoming the challenges?

Methodology

A three-round modified Delphi study is conducted to collect data. Delphi technique "allows the researchers to establish a systematic process to achieve consensus through a series of

questionnaires among a systematically selected expert panel for an issue that is relevant to a specific audience dispersed across a large geographic area" (Chaudhary et al., 2020, p. 3). In the first round of the survey, the Delphi panel of Extension professionals lists the challenges and potential solutions they face in urban and suburban areas while planning, implementing, and evaluating Extension programs in these contexts. The challenges and solutions they suggest will guide the second and third rounds of the study. In the second round, the Delphi panel will be provided with the themes from the first round, and the panel will be asked to rate the challenges considering the efforts of Penn State Extension and the feasibility of each solution to overcome the mentioned challenges. In this round, the participants will also be asked if they want to add any new challenges or solutions that were not on the list of challenges and solutions from the first round. In the final round, the panel will be asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the results from the second round.

The collected data will be analyzed by the constant comparative method, where the themes in the first round will be analyzed and compared to each other to develop final themes representing the challenges and solutions suggested by the Delphi panel in the first round. Finally, the results of the final round will be summarized using percentages and frequency.

Initial findings/results

The study team has sent out the first round of the survey and currently waiting on the responses from the participants. Therefore, the findings are not reportable yet for this abstract. However, the study team will present the findings at the conference if this abstract is accepted.

Implications

The primary implication of this study is to understand the challenges or barriers Extension professionals experience while planning, delivering, and evaluating programs in urban and suburban areas. At the same time, this study explores the professionals' thoughts on what would be the potential solutions to overcome these challenges. Even though the study collected data from Extension professionals within [State], the study findings have the potential to provide better support to Extension professionals all over the United States related to programming in urban and suburban settings. Finally, by outlining the main challenges that urban and suburban Extension professionals face and possible recommended solutions, we hope to spark a meaningful policy discussion among Extension leadership to better position these professionals for success.

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Trends and issues impacting Extension through 2028

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Abstract

Trends and issues impacting Extension through 2028

This roundtable will identify and explore the potential trends and issues that Extension may face through 2028. Participants will work individually and as a team using the following steps:

General introduction/overview of session.

> -Quick review of issues Extension faced in the last 10 years. This helps to see what change has occurred and how well Extension predicted the changes. We will specifically look at the Extension Foundation's 2016 Horizon report and the more recent technology forecast.
>
> -Rapid individual and small ideation to identify issues.
>
> -Sharing and discussion.

A handout will be used to help lead the process and provide information. Participants will be encouraged to use the DEGEST framework for ideation. DEGEST is an acronym for:

-Demographics - population related trends

-Economy - economic trends

-Government - issues or actions taken by the government at multiple levels

-Environment - impacts of climate change, drilling, etc.

-Society - trends in society like diversity

-Technology - technologies of various scales that may impact Extension

All ideas will be collected and shared with participants in real time via a Google Doc.

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Application of Food, Energy, and Water (FEW) Nexus to Extension Programming

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Abstract

Food, energy, and water are the necessary resources for the survival of human beings and sustainable development. It is expected that the demand for food, energy, and water is expected to increase by 35%, 50%, and 40%, respectively by 2030 (US NIC, 2012) due to increasing population, climate change, urbanization, changing diets, different societal and cultural beliefs, changing governance, changing policies, industrial development, transforming agriculture, and evolving technology (UN FAO, 2014). With the increase in demand for resources, there would be increasing competition among different sectors, e.g., agriculture, transport, mining, etc., for food, energy, and water systems, and due to their interconnectedness, the change in one system would produce far-reaching impacts on other systems, which will significantly influence the environment, livelihood, ecology, economy, and political climate (Hoff, 2011; UN FAO, 2014).

Considering the above concerns, the concept of food, energy, and water (FEW) "nexus has emerged as a useful concept to describe and address the complex and interrelated nature of our global resource systems, on which we depend to achieve different social, economic and environmental goals" (p. 8, UN FAO, 2014). The FEW nexus strive to achieve sustainable development by linking and balancing the goals of users from different sectors (Endo et al., 2017, UN FAO 2014). In conjunction with the FEW nexus, there is a greater concern among the public related to climate change, water quality, food safety and security, and energy challenges in the context of agriculture and natural resources disciplines (Loizzo et al., 2018). Currently, in the informal and non-formal educational contexts including cooperative Extension, the awareness and application of the FEW nexus are limited, which requires more discussion on the FEW nexus concepts. Considering the need for discussion, an emergent transdisciplinary community of educational researchers and educators titled "The National Collaborative for Research on Food, Energy, and Water Education (NE-FEW)" has been created with the support of the National Science Foundation (NSF). The NC-FEW nexus focuses on both educational research and educational programming in K-12, postsecondary, and informal and non-formal educational contexts. Specifically, the non-formal and informal group of the NC-FEW collaborative is trying to define FEW nexus in non-formal (e.g., cooperative extension) and informal (e.g., museums) contexts and identify and share emerging applications of FEW nexus to educational programming including evaluation to promote sustainability, environmental justice, and science learning.

In the round table discussion, we will describe the FEW nexus, its potential application to Extension programming, and how Extension professionals can engage with the NC-FEW community to learn about emerging methods and models of the FEW nexus. We will engage

with roundtable participants to learn their understanding including how they define FEW nexus, its application to Extension programming, potential challenges, and how its applications would save time and resources while addressing the FEW challenges together.

Upon attending this roundtable session, the participants will learn about FEW nexus and its significance to Extension programming, and hear from other participants regarding their viewpoints on integrating FEW nexus concepts in Extension programming including how programs can be developed and evaluated considering FEW nexus. Finally, participants will learn about the newly emerging community of professionals, NC-FEW, how they can engage with this group, and what benefits would be to participants as a part of the NC-FEW community.

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Stakeholder Analysis: An Approach and Tool Promoting Robust Extension Programming

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Abstract

The premise of the topic

Public participation has become an essential component in solving a complex set of issues as decision-makers attempt to understand who will be affected by the decisions and how a sustainable change will happen as a result of the decisions taken. Specifically, the Extension program development and evaluation is benefitted by deeper understanding and engagement of relevant stakeholders. As such, stakeholder analysis is a vital step in any participatory process including Extension programming since it has the potential to include voiceless stakeholders, avoid biased results and ensure the long-term effectiveness of the process (Reed, 2009). Stakeholder analysis is a systematic process to understand a system, assess the impact of changes to that system, identify the key stakeholders and assess their respective interests while developing and/or implementing a policy or program (Gimble & Chan, 1995; Grimble, 1998; Grimble & Willard, 1997; Schmeer, 2000). In the stakeholder analysis process, stakeholders are actors who have interests in the issue, who affect the issue or are affected by the issue, or who have some form of role in the decision-making or implementation of any decision regarding the issue (Varvasovszky and Brugha, 2000).

Since stakeholder analysis provides valuable insights on different dimensions of an issue and enhances understanding of the issue (Hermans et al., 2017), researchers identified different steps for the stakeholder analysis process to apply to a broad spectrum of issues situated within different areas of interest. The most commonly used steps are: a) identifying stakeholders, b) differentiating between and categorizing stakeholders, and c) investigating relationships between stakeholders.

However, even though stakeholder analysis is widely adopted in diverse disciplines, a robust and practical approach to the process does not exist (Wang & Aenis, 2019) that is concerned about the identification of marginalized and voiceless stakeholders of the identified issue. In any context, some stakeholders might be historically and contextually marginalized and are not considered while planning management decisions (Daniels and Walker 2001; Grimble and Wellard 1997; Stringer et al. 2006). Instead, decision-makers usually focus on powerful stakeholders who affect the decision rather than the marginalized stakeholders, who are affected by the decision.

In such a scenario, a well-defined and holistic process of stakeholder analysis is required that can thoroughly and inclusively understand stakeholders' views regarding the identified issue. The

members of this roundtable discussion addressed this need and suggests a new set of steps that might be able to include marginalized stakeholders in the stakeholder analysis process. The proposed steps are: a) identifying an issue, b) identifying stakeholders, c) categorizing stakeholders, and d) identifying interrelationships among the stakeholders through a communication pattern. Even though some of these steps overlap with the existing literature, the insight on how these steps will be approached is new and inclusive of many discrete concepts.

To identify the issues for programming and identify and engage stakeholders in programming, the Extension commonly uses needs assessment. Even though needs assessment provides a good understanding of context and stakeholders, there is limited application of stakeholder analysis by Extension professionals to take a deeper dive to understand the issue and identify stakeholders including their roles, interests, power, and social networks related to the identified issue. To explore the application of proposed revised steps to Extension programming, two issues will be presented in the roundtable discussion. The two identified issues are food insecurity in [City] and sustainable agriculture in urbanized landscapes.

How participants will be involved in the active and scholarly discussion?

Roundtable participants will be involved in the discussion to talk about their awareness and understanding of stakeholder analysis, how stakeholder analysis can complement the traditional needs assessment efforts, how power and marginalization look like in the issues presented, and how to address the need to include marginalized stakeholders in the stakeholder analysis process. The participants will be asked to share how they see the power and marginalization in the process of the stakeholder analysis and its implications for Extension programming. In addition, they will be asked to share ideas/steps to measure these aspects. Participants will be asked to share the potential challenges they face in stakeholder identification through traditional needs assessment and how stakeholder analysis can address these challenges. A thorough discussion on the ways of addressing these challenges in stakeholder analysis will be conducted. Particularly in urban areas like [City], an issue is a combination of multiple issues that are not separable from each other. In such a complex scenario, power and marginalization are situated implicitly and require researchers to shed light on these topics through scholarly discussions including clear identification and categorization of stakeholders. To facilitate the discussion, the research team will present the experiences from two stakeholder analyses conducted by the team for the two issues mentioned above.

Key takeaways for participants

1. Understanding and application of stakeholder analysis
2. Tools to conduct the stakeholder analysis
3. New steps for conducting the stakeholder analysis
4. Sharing experiences of conducting stakeholder analysis from the two projects

5. Application of stakeholder analysis to Extension program development and evaluation and how stakeholder analysis strengthens the traditional needs assessment efforts

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Starting with Evaluation Leads to a Happy Ending

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Abstract

This presentation will focus on lessons learned from evaluating a $40M regional community and economic development effort. The presenter will explain how she and her colleague organized their efforts, built trust with a 50+ member team, created a tracking system, and produced monthly, biannual, and midpoint and final impact analysis reports for the five-year Wabash Heartland Innovation Network (WHIN) initiative funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc. in 2018. This cohesive approach enables project storytelling and highlights the counterfactual result of an effort (for instance, “If Not for WHIN...”).

The presenter will demonstrate how to turn any project’s scope of work into a metrics structure and those metrics into an evaluation process. She will lead participants in recreating the process she used, including: 1) crafting questions that encompass the metrics, 2) including team members as “reporters” and training them to leverage the tracking system in a sustainable way, and 3) demonstrating impact through deliverables. The presenter will conduct an application activity in which the participants consider a project they are working on and how they could implement this type of “multiple reporter, multiple county/region” evaluation technique. She will also leave time for Q&A regarding pitfalls to avoid and overall keys to success.

With all of the federal funding being deployed for community and economic development initiatives, this skill-building session will help Extension educators to be successful by engineering an evaluation process before new initiatives are even launched. The session reflects on lessons learned from this five-year grant assessment process, reconnects Extension educators to fundamental principles of good community development, and equips us all to do great work with renewed energy and inspiration.

The key messages:

Scope: By demonstrating the "triple helix" concept for community economic development, this presentation will help attendees understand how their work on multi-county/regional projects fits into the larger Extension system and mission

Storytelling: By utilizing the strategies for measuring and reporting impact shared by the presenters, Extension educators/specialists who attend this session can replicate the evaluation process developed for the WHIN initiative

Significance: By leveraging the storytelling strategies shared in this session, Extension educators/specialists can effectively communicate value to regional, state and federal funders/stakeholders

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Ripple Effect Mapping: A "Radiant" Way to Capture Program Impacts

Debra Hansen Kollock,Washington State University, Lynette Flage, North Dakota State University Extension, Scott Chazdon,University of Minnesota Extension, Nathan Paine, University of Minnesota https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/joe/vol50/iss5/33/

Using Ripple Effect Mapping to Evaluate Program Impact: Choosing or Combining the Methods That Work Best for You

Mary Emery, South Dakota State University, Lorie Higgins University of Idaho, Scott Chazdon, University of Minnesota, Debra Hansen, Washington State University Extension https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/joe/vol53/iss2/36/

A Field Guide to Ripple Effects Mapping Scott Chazdon, Mary Emery, Debra Hansen, Lorie Higgins, and Rebecca Sero https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/190639

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Southwest Florida Small Farmer Network; A Model for Farmer Peer-To-Peer Learning

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Abstract

The Southwest Florida Small Farmers Network (SWFSFN) is a regional network of farmers in diversified and small operations. The network and meetings are facilitated by UF/IFAS Extension agents in the SW Florida region. The network addresses priorities and needs identified by farmers. The audience includes small and mid-size producers interested in evaluating alternative enterprises. The goal is to develop a regional network of peer-producers. Membership includes specialty crop growers, livestock producers, beekeepers, nursery and cottage food operators and more recently school food providers and community non-profits.

Method: Meetings include an on-farm, farmer-led tour, and discussion topics pre-selected by membership and facilitated by UF/IFAS Extension. Members from FDACS, local and state agencies also attend to discuss regulation updates and cost-share programs. Meetings include a producer-focused discussion facilitated by Extension to address farmer concerns. Each networking meeting includes time for participants to socialize, discuss business opportunities and exchange seeds.

Results: Data collected between 2016-2022 (181 attendees, 7 meetings) focused on topics such as food production models, pest management, agritourism, farm food safety, regulations, and how to access science-based and industry resources. 100% (n= 87) of attendees stated knowledge gain; 60% stated skills gain; 83% planned to adopt at least one best management practice within 1 year. 100% made a new connection and plan on following up. In a small follow-up survey, 100% (n=8) applied knowledge gained and 100% adopted practices as a result of the meeting. Success stories include new market opportunities and food coordination during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion: Through the model of farmer-to-farmer exchange, information gained by producers is beneficial to their operations by providing both peer and research based best management practices. In addition to knowledge and skill gain, the SWFSFN meetings builds a social network of peers and service providers that act as a sounding board to reduce risk, improve business practices and create business partnerships. Rotating meetings between counties highlights different farming techniques and reduces the travel burden for farms farthest away. Due to need, SWFSFN will continue to offer networking sessions and gather impact data to our expanding membership.

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