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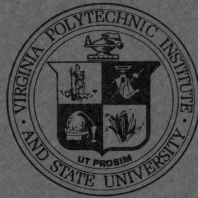
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AN EXTENSION EDUCATION APPROACH TO COMMUNITY
RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT: IMPLICATIONS FROM
VIRGINIA'S TITLE V RURAL DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM

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"Staff papers are not subject to formal review within the Department
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AN EXTENSION EDUCATION APPROACH TO COMMUNITY RESOURCE
DEVELOPMENT: IMPLICATIONS FROM VIRGINIA'S TITLE V
RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM*

by
Marilyn H. Grantham and Dennis K. Smith**

Abstract

A cooperative community resource development research and extension education program was initiated in July, 1974 in a rural region of Virginia. A comprehensive economic base study has been completed and an extensive extension education program has been developed and implemented. Implications from the program call for more involvement of both area citizens and local extension agents in problem definition and program material review. It appears that many extension agents require more in-service training to allow better use of the educational materials. It is also questioned whether social scientists have an adequate body of theory and tools to deal effectively with the full range of community resource development problems.

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Introduction

Before one can begin to discuss a program of extension education in community resource development, one must understand the basic concepts of community resource development and their origin.

The terms "community," and "development" have different meanings to different people. The concept of community can mean a specific geographic area, a social system, or a set of shared cultural values. However, in community resource development as it is practiced in extension programs, a community is defined by the issue(s) or concern(s) which a group of people have in common.

Development can be described as the process of progressive change in attaining individual or community goals. It can occur through increased knowledge, understanding and skills, through additional resources, or a better allocation of existing resources.

The Community Resource Development Process

The attainment of community resource development (CRD) goals involves an open system of decision making, whereby those who are part of the community, use democratic and rational means to arrive at group decisions and to take action to enhance the social and economic well-being of the community. The CRD extension education process involves

several assumptions: (1) people are capable of rational behavior; (2) significant behavior is learned behavior; (3) significant behavior is learned through interaction; (4) people are capable of giving direction to their behavior; and (5) people are capable of creating, reshaping, and influencing much of their environment.

In practical terms, the extension professional's role in the CRD process is primarily to help the community identify its problems and more clearly define its goals and therefore, have an improved opportunity to achieve those goals. By working directly with a community's citizens and public officials on their concerns, the extension professional starts by developing a climate where local people can interact and deal effectively with local issues and concerns. Step by step, the process includes identifying community problems and goals, collecting and analyzing facts, studying alternatives, selecting an agreed-upon course of action, and implementing this course of action.

The intermediate steps, those of collecting and analyzing facts and studying alternatives, are those where local people through extension professionals need to call for help from professional researchers. This has been the case in Virginia's 12th Planning District where under the auspices of Title V of the Rural Development Act of 1972 a pilot cooperative research and extension CRD program has been underway since mid-1974. It is the purpose of this paper to outline the CRD research and extension approach used in Virginia's Title V Rural Development Program and to assess the approach in terms of its applicability to other CRD programs and in terms of implications for improvement of the effectiveness of the approach.

Characteristics of Virginia's Title V Program Region

Virginia's Title V Rural Development Program initially concentrated on the State's Twelfth Planning District which is also known as the West Piedmont Planning District (WPPD). The WPPD is made up of the four counties of Franklin, Henry, Patrick and Pittsylvania, the two independent cities of Danville and Martinsville and the town of Rocky Mount. The WPPD is located in south-central Virginia, bordering on North Carolina. At the time the Title V research was initiated, WPPD residents were aware of several local socioeconomic problems and had expressed a need to explore them and to take local action to attempt to solve these problems.

A community resource development Problem and Leader Identification Survey, completed in January 1975, served to further identify and delineate the extent of the District's problems in terms of the concerns of local people who are recognized by their peers as community leaders.

The District's residents expressed a need for improved opportunities for upgrading the educational and skill levels of adults, as well as opportunities for improving employment and incomes. Other community problems that concerned District residents included rising demands for local government services which were resulting in rising costs of providing local government services and consequently, in rising local tax levels. Maintaining the quality of their physical environment by planning land use and avoiding air, water and solid waste pollution was also expressed as an important concern by District people.

The District's problems are inter-related and can be attacked successfully only in a comprehensive manner--both in terms of economic study and in terms of coordinated community action programs making use of the understanding gained from the research results.

Virginia's Title V Research Program

From July 1974 to June 1975, a research team from the Department of Agricultural Economics at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University carried out a comprehensive economic development study of the West Piedmont District. The results of the study are reported in a series of eight publications under the general title: An Economic Analysis for Development of the Counties, Cities and Towns of the West Piedmont Planning District. The subtitles of the publications are:

1. "Comprehensive Analysis, Summary, and Implications" (Conner, et. al.)
2. "An Economic Profile of the District" (Pendse, et. al.)
3. "A Social Indicator Profile" (Shabman and Pratt)
4. "Industrial and Commercial Development Problems and Opportunities" (Bird, Mazzi and Samli)
5. "Agriculture and Forestry Adjustment Opportunities" (Buck, et. al.)
6. "Tourism: Facilities, Impacts and Potential" (Batie, et. al.)
7. "An Analysis of Community Service Expenditures" (Smith and Pendse)
8. "An Economic Analysis of Interindustry Relationships" (Conner, Pendse, and Pratt)

These reports were published by the West Piedmont Planning District Commission under a technical assistance project grant from the Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. The reports

were released on December 18, 1975, and are being distributed on request. To date, there has been wide circulation of the reports and the local news media has reported on several aspects of the study's results.

A brief summary of the research information indicates that although population growth in the District had varied greatly between its jurisdictions, it had been much slower for the District as a whole than for Virginia. Many of the District's young people had to leave the area in order to find skilled employment and higher pay than was available locally.

Although industrialized, the District continued to retain its rural character with the majority of its residents living outside city limits. The District's industry was largely textile and furniture manufacturing--low-skill, low-wage employment offering little opportunity for skill or income improvements. Re-training for adults in higher-wage skills was largely non-existent in the District and adult educational levels were well below State averages. Average wages per person were also much lower than for Virginia as a whole and many local workers commuted outside the District to jobs elsewhere.

Although cropland acreage had remained fairly stable in the District in recent years, crop yields were under State averages and the value of farm products sold per farm and net returns to operators were well below State levels. The majority of the District's farmers were nearing retirement age and many farmers supplemented their farm incomes with off-farm jobs.

The business and industry picture revealed very little new industrial growth in the District in the last 10 years. Business and industrial executives cited such problems as lack of industrial diversification, technical training, skilled labor, inadequate low and middle income housing, poor access to air transportation, inadequate transportation and communications systems and community services in some rural parts of the District, and lack of downtown parking, traffic congestion and decay in urban areas.

An input-output analysis of the District's economy further illustrated the extent of the area's problems. Manufacturing accounted for a major part of total sales of goods, services and labor in the District. However, due to absentee ownership of much of the District's large businesses and industries and the need for raw materials not available locally, much of the receipts from sales in the District is respent outside the area. The effect of respending on local economic activity is dissipated and does not benefit the District's residents in terms of personal income.

The future for the District's economy was examined in terms of what is likely to happen to tourism, agriculture and forestry, industry, employment and community services.

The conclusions about tourism in the District were that local citizens should give serious thought to what they want--tourism or recreation for local people--and in what proportions, and that they should weigh all the advantages and disadvantages of expanding and promoting

tourism before proceeding to take any action. They also should keep in mind that much of the economic effect of tourism depends on the type of tourist activity and is diluted by respending--the leakage of sales income outside the District for goods, services and labor not available locally.

The District's agriculture in the future is likely to produce more of most present products and at higher yields, releasing more marginal land for other uses. Mechanization of flue-cured tobacco harvesting is likely to proceed rapidly in the next few years.

Forestry prospects are heavily dependent on regional and national trends and therefore, difficult to project. However, with most of the commercial forestland in private hands, the District's potential is doubtful because landowners have few economic incentives to upgrade the quality of existing stands of timber.

Recent industrial growth in Virginia points to future expansion in the District in fabricated structural metals, paperboard containers, industrialized homes, clothing manufacturing, building and construction, and amusement and recreation. In order for the District to hold its own in maintaining population growth at present rates, over 5000 new jobs and \$185 million worth of additional production from local industry, old and new, would be needed by 1980. Making it possible for everyone in the District to stay there and find jobs (zero out-migration) would require about 14,000 new jobs by 1980.

Although new industry and new jobs would bring in more local tax revenues, the extra funds may barely keep up with local government services if per capita expenditure levels are maintained. Demands

for community services have been rising locally and are likely to rise even faster in the future.

Given the above summary of the Title V research program in the WPPD, the next question to be explored is the translation of the research fundings into an "effective" CRD extension education program.

Extension CRD Program Purposes

The long-range CRD program purposes in the WPPD were defined to include:

1. To improve the social and economic environment of the District.
2. To improve per capita (or family) income.
3. To provide an opportunity for skilled, high-wage employment.
4. To raise the level of education.
5. To help provide for a diversification of industry to retain young, college-trained manpower.
6. To provide for effective, comprehensive planning and implementation so that orderly growth may take place.
7. To improve the standards of family living.
8. To improve the availability of essential community and public services to the citizens.
9. To allow farmers to make profitable use of their available resources through increased knowledge of farm business management principles and skills.

These purposes are to be accomplished by involving local citizens through county-wide meetings, interested groups, and study committees in (1) achieving awareness of the social and economic development potential of the District, and (2) considering alternative courses of action on local community problems of concern to local citizens.

Extension CRD agents will attempt to sponsor these meetings and seek the cooperation and assistance of other local, State, and Federal agencies, industries, local governments and organizations and key individuals in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs.

The instructional materials developed for the use of extensions CRD agents in presenting the research results to local citizens are a series of slide/tape presentations and an accompanying series of extension publications, both of which will convey the research results in laymen's terms. The first slide/tape presentation, entitled "Preparing for Change: Economic Development in the West Piedmont District," is intended to: (1) Present an overview of the Title V research results--the District's economic characteristics, potentials, and problems; (2) make local residents aware of the role of extension in CRD--education; and (3) motivate local residents to become actively involved in the District's economic development process. (Grantham and Smith)

Seven additional slide/tape presentations cover specific economic development subjects in more depth. The subjects are:

1. Changing Economic and Social Conditions
2. Economic Feasibility of the Mechanical Harvesting of Flue-Cured Tobacco
3. Agricultural and Forestry Resources and Income Potentials
4. Tourism Facilities, Income Potentials and Impacts
5. Industrial and Commercial Problems and Potentials
6. Changing Local Government Community Service Expenditures
7. Interindustry Relationships and the Impacts of Economic Change

These presentations have been presented and explained to all local extension agents in the District as they have been developed. In addition, an advisory committee of extension agents representing the five local extension units have served as a board of review during the preparation of the scripts.

The extension publications parallel the subject matter of the slide/tape presentations. Their purpose is to reinforce the material presented in the slide/tape presentations and to provide more detail for those interested and motivated to learn more about the subject matter. Under the general title "Preparing for Change: Economic Development in the West Piedmont District," the titles of the CRD extension bulletins are:

1. Highlights: An Introduction and Summary
2. The People's Concerns
3. An Economic Profile
4. A Comparison of Social and Economic Characteristics
5. Mechanical Harvesting of Flue-Cured Tobacco
6. Agricultural Resources and Potentials
7. Forestry Resources and Potentials
8. Tourism Facilities, Potentials, and Impacts
9. Industrial and Commercial Problems and Potentials
10. Local Government Community Service Expenditures
11. Interindustry Structure of the District's Economy
12. Economic Growth Potentials and Impacts

The use of the slide/tape presentations and distribution of extension bulletins by local extension agents to local citizen's meetings and groups is the way in which the research results are being made available to the public in the West Piedmont District. The overview slide/tape presentation was first shown to the West Piedmont Planning District Commission in a public meeting, then to the various county Boards of Supervisors. These showings have, in turn, led to requests for showings by local planning commissions, chambers of commerce, civic associations and other interested local groups. Each showing generally has generated more requests for showings before other organizations or groups.

Implications

During 1976-77, a new research and extension program will be initiated in the 14th Planning District of Virginia, the Piedmont District. Because of this new CRD thrust, it is imperative to consider how the program in the 12th Planning District could be improved. The implications for improvement fall into three areas--clientele, local extension staff, and research.

Improvements that could be made in the program at the "grassroots" level are a more democratic approach to initiating the program, by putting more effort into helping local people define their problems and become more involved in development of CRD programs tailored to their needs and goals. The implication for educational program development is to prepare materials that will more fully aid local

people in understanding CRD and their role in it, as well as research results which are intended to help them make informed decisions. In turn, this emphasis should help in motivating clients to rise the information in a positive way for community betterment.

The same encouragement of the democratic process must also be applied to local extension staff personnel if they have the responsibility of carrying out and integrating CRD programs into an on-going extension education program. As the professional local staff is motivated, they should see the need for more knowledge and expertise in CRD and behavioral techniques--therefore, more short-term, in-service training is needed at the local level, involving CRD specialists at the extension, district and university levels.

The implications for research are that the need for it should logically and democratically arise out of the preceding "grassroots" process of community involvement which by defining problems reveals the need for additional information. But the question facing researchers in the social sciences is "do we have the research knowledge and analytic tools to deal with local government problems?" As an example, a common complaint of local people getting involved in their community's development is the lack of communication with and responsiveness of elected officials at all levels of government. As a result, incumbent county supervisors and the like frequently find themselves turned out of office in mass. But for a researcher, how does one define and measure lack of communication, and as social

scientists, what kind of expertise do we have to analyze problems of this nature? But these are some of the critical questions asked in this area of research and the challenge ahead is to find new ways to meet these research needs.

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