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# The Policy Education Project — A Final Evaluation

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The increasing involvement of Extension educators in issues and policies of public concern makes the competence of the educators an important matter. Several training efforts, including the Policy Education Project (PEP) have been organized to teach the methods and strategies of policy education. In this paper, the approach and content of PEP are reported and the consequences are evaluated utilizing a components/impacts model developed by Joyce and Showers. Conclusions should be interesting and useful to others who are planning training activities for Extension personnel.

In 1978, WAEA presented its Certificate of Merit for the outstanding extension program to the staff and advisors of the Policy Education Project. The authors were among the recipients of that award — House as project director and Trock as evaluator. This project and one with similar objectives, Michigan's PACE project [Shaffer], appear to have changed the course of policy education. Since they started, five others with similar goals have been initiated and at least one more is proposed. Kentucky's PACE project began in 1977. Northeastern states held a workshop in 1979. The Southern Public Policy Education Workshop was held in May of this year. The north central states held a workshop on policy education in 1978 and a Coping with Conflict workshop in 1977. Federal Extension began bringing policy specialists from across the nation to Washington D.C. for training in policy making in January 1979. Presently a southwestern policy education project is proposed. Most of these projects drew on the Policy Education Project and PACE for ideas and resources.

As a consequence of these training ac-

tivities, and because of new interests in issues of policy, policy education has changed. Where it had been "educational territory" worked almost exclusively by university economists, it has become an activity of other Extension personnel, including county agents. Of significance are new "hybrid" policy specialists with titles like home economics/public affairs specialist, and community development/public affairs specialist. Correspondingly, greater numbers of Extension personnel are involved in policy education. No count is available, but it would not be unrealistic to suggest that FTE's in policy education have doubled.

We believe that policy education by agents and other Extension personnel should be encouraged, but it is essential that these people have good training in methods and strategies of policy education.

This paper should be useful to the many people now planning or providing in-service training in the philosophy and methods of policy education. In it there is reported the carefully planned and executed program of education for the Policy Education Project and an evaluation of the results of the project via a model developed by two educators, Joyce and Showers. Emphasized are the components of training and their importance to application of learned theories, methods and skills. Our evaluation of the Policy Edu-

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cation Project using the components/impacts model leads us to strongly suggest that a combination of components will be most effective in producing desired results.

### **Educational Content of the Policy Education Project**

The Policy Education Project was instigated by the Western Public Policy Education Committee with support from several other extension organizations. An advisory committee drawn from these organizations organized the project into a series of three events: (1) an intensive ten day training session which came to be known as the Otter Rock workshop; (2) an eight month practicum; and (3) a short conference in Boise for review and feedback. The target audience included 50 extension educators, mostly county agents, from six states (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and Montana). The evaluation included three timely surveys of the target audience. The three educational events and three surveys are highlighted in Figure 1.

Upon approval and funding of the Project, the working staff undertook a survey of state-designated participants. Its purpose was the identification of participant characteristics — their educational backgrounds, employment, Extension assignments, activities in policy education and other experiences and activities. The biographical data proved useful in determining the content of the workshop and in evaluating results of the education effort. We knew who we were working with and we could relate accomplishments to levels and kinds of education and experiences.

The workshop was organized to provide for development of educational process, illustration of methods, practice with methods and procedures, and evaluation of experiences throughout the workshop.<sup>1</sup> A vehicle issue,

land use in communities and areas, was employed to give realism to the instruction and to provide for practice with the methods. Lectures, discussion groups, games, case studies and reports of personal experiences were all used as components of the workshop. As a concluding exercise, participants wrote a plan of work for policy education in their own states and communities.

After the Otter Rock Workshop participants returned to counties, areas, and states from which they came and for eight months they "practiced" what they had learned. Their activities in policy education varied considerably, as was revealed by their activity reports. This was a consequence of different job assignments, various interests in issues of policy, unequal levels of confidence in personal capacities for policy education, and varying degrees of encouragement and support from specialists and administrators at home. During this period, Trock received activity reports and plans of work from participants and reported significant events and accomplishments to all via a monthly newsletter.

The Boise conference provided an opportunity for additional training and a sharing of experiences among participants. Content of this meeting was determined largely by a survey of participants, which revealed their felt needs for training, support and encouragement. Considerable time was given to reports of programs and activities of agents. Such sharing was quite supportive of further participant efforts in the training activity.

For almost a year and a half beyond the Boise conference, Trock received activity reports and plans of work from agents and fed this information back to all participants. In the period, some attrition of participants occurred, as a result of retirement, transfers to other jobs and places, and resignations. A few agents disappeared from the "roles" because of lagging interest in or ability to de-

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suggestions to the staff during the Otter Rock training and, second, by inviting in peers and administrators to observe the Boise conference. The risks were worth taking.

<sup>1</sup>The educational staff exposed themselves fully to the risks of evaluation, first by setting up a committee of participants to discuss and transmit any problems or

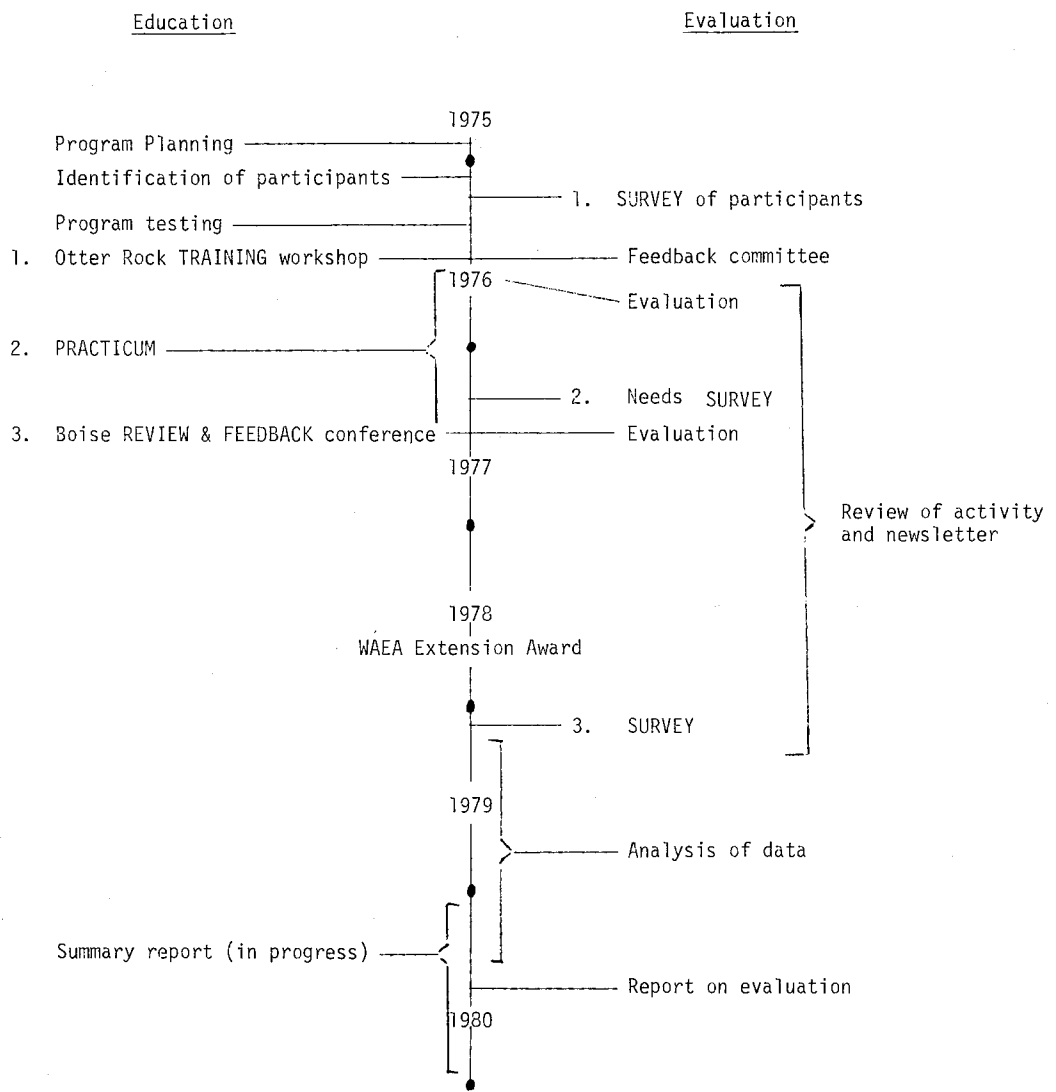


Figure 1. Main Education and Evaluation Events of the Policy Education Project, 1975 to Present

velop educational programs. But some outstanding activities were reported, a few of which were recognized at the National Policy Conference in 1978.

A final survey of participants was completed in 1978 as project funds ran out and newsletters were terminated. The results will be published in a final report, but some data are recorded later in this paper.

### The Training Components/ Impacts Model

Bruce Joyce is a writer and a researcher in education at Palo Alto, California. His educational impact model was discovered by House in the journal *Educational Leadership* and application of it was discussed in a conversation with Joyce late in 1979. Because Joyce's model is not widely known, it is reproduced in brief form below.

*Levels of impact.* "...the outcomes of training can be classified into several levels of impact: awareness; the acquisition of concepts or organized knowledge; the learning of principles and skills; and the ability to apply those principles and skills..."

1. *Awareness.* At the awareness level, we realize the importance of an area.
2. *Concepts and organized knowledge.* Concepts provide intellectual control over relevant content.
3. *Principles and skills.* Principles and skills are the basis for action.
4. *Application and problem solving.* We begin to use what we have learned.

"Only after this fourth level has been reached can we expect impact on education of our (students). Awareness alone is an insufficient condition. Organized knowledge that is not backed up by the acquisition of principles and skills and the ability to use them is likely to have little effect." [Joyce and Showers, p. 380.]

*Components of training.* The following training components contribute to the impact of a training sequence or activity:

1. Presentation of theory or description of skill or strategy;

2. Model or demonstration of skills or models of teaching;
3. Practice in simulated and classroom settings;
4. Structured and open-ended feedback;
5. Coaching for application.

Joyce and Showers thus provide a model including levels of impact and a sequence of training components. Their research yields measures of relationships between these two variables as shown in Figure 2.

The numbers indicate few people can make the transition to application directly from theory. Only a few more can apply what they learned when taught models and given practice. And less than one-third can use their training when feedback is added. But performance leaps when coaching is added to the training package. Then 75 percent apply what was taught.

This research is at once insightful and disturbing. It helps us understand what components might improve the effectiveness of training. It is disturbing when we recognize that coaching demands more time, talent and budget than is usually available.<sup>2</sup>

### A Re-evaluation of the Policy Education Project

Application of the Joyce model to the Policy Education Project involved (1) fitting the components of the training effort to the teaching inputs on the vertical axis in Figure 2 and (2) estimation of the effects of the various training components and their relationship to educational objectives, on the horizontal axis in Figure 2. This is accomplished in the following recapitulation of activities.

The Otter Rock workshop was initiated by discussions of perspective and philosophy in public policy education and process and methodology in policy education. These two presentations fit within the model in the

<sup>2</sup>In academia, we see coaching available mostly in 4-H, introduction of agricultural technology, and, obviously, sports.

		OUTCOMES OF TRAINING			
		Awareness	Conceptual-ization	Principles & Skills	Application in Problem Solution
COMPONENTS OF TRAINING	Theory				10%
	Models				10 -15%
	Practive				20%
	Feedback				90% can, 30% will
	Coaching				75%

**Figure 2. Relationships Between the Outcomes of Training and Training Components (Numbers are Tentative).**

“teaching a theory” input category. They were necessary to development of “awareness” of public affairs and the “conceptualization” such that theories and concepts are internalized. These are the initial objectives of a training activity, as specified in the Joyce model.

The third presentation was concerned with a significant public issue, i.e., land use. It was followed by group discussion of the issue as it is experienced in the communities of the participants. The presentation fits the “models and examples” input category, as it illustrated a public affair or concern and suggested appropriate educational programs.

Following the discussions of theory and concepts and the introduction of the vehicle issue was “practice with theory” via group participation with “Trade-Off” - Oregon’s land use game. This activity provided experience with theories and concepts as they apply to land use issues, as the players interacted to make decisions and solve problems. This element in the training effort fits the “models and examples” and “practice with theory” input categories and begins the development of a “capacity for application” of

theories, concepts and methods to real life problems.

The program for the workshop then called for participants to return to the “teaching a theory” input. The rationale for public intervention into a problem situation was developed with respect to the vehicle issue and legal/economic concepts of private property and externalities were introduced. These were followed by case studies which illustrated the concepts and provided for further examination of the issue. These elements of instruction fit the “teaching a theory” and “models and examples” input categories. They provided for improved understanding of concepts, “conceptualization,” and expanded “capacity for application.”

Throughout the workshop, this pattern of presentation of theories, illustration of theories and concepts via models and examples, and practice with theory via games was repeated. Understanding and appreciation of relevant concepts and theories was developed and the capacity of participants to apply them was refined. To a limited extent there was feedback and “integration of feedback” within the workshop. Participants, in-

dividually and through their committee, commented on the teaching methods, the resource persons and materials and other aspects of the learning experience. Staff responded with changes in format, new or special sessions and additional resources as possible within the workshop situation. It was through this "integration of feedback" that "capacity for application" was enhanced.

After the Otter Rock workshop, participants returned to work locations and began the "application" of the learned theories, concepts and methods in their real life situations. They wrote or revised plans of work to include public affairs education and they got involved with problems and issues through educational programs. With this change in their professional activities, the "application" objective of the model was reached. Project inputs after the workshop were largely limited to "coaching," via the newsletter, personal contact with the working staff and support of activities by policy specialists within participant's states.

The follow-up workshop at Boise provided opportunity for infusion of more inputs. According to the perceived needs of the participants there was further "teaching of theory" by staff, presentation of "models and examples" by participants in review of their experience as special sessions were developed in response to requests. The Boise workshop was basically an opportunity to share experiences, to report successful "application" of concepts and methods, to strengthen participants' "capacity for application." It was instructive, informative and supportive, for both participants and staff, as it permitted re-entry into the training model, infusion of needed inputs and reinforcement of educational objectives.

Communication among participants, directly and through the newsletter, was maintained after the Boise workshop. The newsletter was continued through December 1978, then terminated for lack of funding. About a quarter of the original 50 participants maintained correspondence with the evaluator through 1978, reporting plans of

work and activities. About one-half responded to a final, concluding survey. The evaluation is terminated with this final activity analysis.

### Some Measures of Impact of PEP

Framing the components of the Policy Education Project and the resulting impacts on participants' programs in the context of the Joyce model makes evident the thoroughness, or "intensity of educational effort," of this training effort. There was content in the training process that provided for all the inputs that Joyce deems necessary to bring about application of new ideas. There was project direction that provided for progress through the range of educational objectives to and including application of things (theories, concepts, methods) learned.

Analyses of the project not reported here show a continuous relationship of half the participants to the project (reports, plans of work response to surveys, etc.) and significant development of teaching activities in public policy education among approximately one-quarter of participants. Attrition in numbers of participants through retirement, reassignment and resignation has been important to outcome or results of the project. Failure of technical and administrative support has also been significant to activity. We interpret this as a shortage of coaching. The Joyce model of in-service training is useful as both a planning and evaluative tool and it provides useful insight into the judgment of the Policy Education Project.

How do our results compare with Joyce's research results? In a word, satisfactorily. Joyce's research indicated that 75 percent would apply their training if all components were used in combination. Our findings are that 62 percent of our participants were applying their training based on pre- and post surveys. Comparison of plans of work prepared at or after the Otter Rock training with those prepared a year later indicated 88 percent of the participants planned policy education in the second year.

Such data are not as "firm" as we would like to have had. While it would be fun to say we exceeded the average, etc., the most we can say is that we were "in the ball park." But that's not bad because, for us, this was the world series.

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