MATERIALES DE ENSEÑANZA EN EXTENSION

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EXTENSION IS NOT A PANACEA

by

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EXTENSION IS NOT A PANACEA

Joseph Di Franco

An Extension Service has proven to be a very useful and effective way to help rural people increase agricultural production, increase net incomes and raise levels of living. It is an effective process in developed countries. Because it has proven effective in developed areas there is a strong feeling, and in fact many claim, that this is the best way to achieve agricultural development. Unfortunately, the Extension process* is not a panacea nor is it always effective. At best it is only a contributing factor in a total national effort. It can be a decisive factor in the total plan. It can also be the deciding factor in achieving national goals, but it can never of itself accomplish what agricultural leaders, researchers, professors, politicians and even rural people themselves hope to accomplish.

Many individuals have determinedly and hopefully supported, promoted and worked for the extension scheme. Some do so idealistically; others, as a last resort. Still others in sicere belief. Too many have become disillusioned. Many former supporters have become critics and even foes of Extension because it did not work miracles.

* Agricultural Extension is an educational process for rural people that aims at helping them acquire and apply the knowledge necessary for more efficient agriculture, increase incomes and improve their welfare.

We cannot, in all fairness, point a finger at these critics because many professional extension persons are guilty of creating the idea that the extension process is the answer for agricultural development.

The prestige and laurels acquired by Extension in advanced agricultural areas of the world has overshadowed the significance or relative place of the extension education process in the total effort. Certainly, it did contribute and certainly Extension made possible the goals necessary for increased agricultural production which paved the way for advancing rural welfare. Read the history of these countries analytically and carefully. You will find it was only one of the contributing factors. Read the total story of agricultural development and it becomes evident that there were other factors necessary for development and in fact made it possible for the extension process to contribute so much.

What then are some of these necessary contributing factors? The author's opinion is that there are five basic requisites. There may be more.

1. A generally accepted philosophy that education for all is essential for national progress.
2. A strong developing faculty of agriculture.
3. A strong, dynamic agricultural research program.
4. A strong belief that one can improve himself.
5. A universal attitude that there is dignity in labor and pride in accomplishment.

It becomes evident that these pre-requisites are important factors for progress and national welfare in any nation. Extension education can be a significant stimulus and catalyst within this supporting philosophy.

1. Extension is an educational process, but all levels of society must believe in education.

2. Faculties of agriculture are necessary to train the personnel needed for extension, research, agricultural organizations (i.e. credit, markets, cooperatives), ministry of agriculture, etc.

3. Research in agriculture and research related to agricultural enterprises must be an integral part of any education and development efforts. It is necessary also to provide the new knowledge necessary for the culture, soil, climate, needs of the people and national welfare.

4. A strong favorable attitude that individuals can improve themselves. That education is fundamental to all. Not only for the fortunate or city dweller; the bankers or merchants; politicians or professional services, but for all levels of society. Without this not much can be expected of an extension service staffed by the élite, sponsored by the politician and partially understood by the public. Extension is an educational process not a service organization.

5. Hand-in-hand with the need for a favorable national attitude toward education is the need for a strong national attitude toward labor or working with one's hands. Pride in accomplishments and dignity in labor can lead to agriculture becoming a prestige profession. It can be a way of life by choice. Choice because it is not considered degrading or the last rung in the social ladder only above the lot of beggars or relief categories. Working with ones hands in agriculture is no different than those who work with their hands in other professions, such as the cabinet maker, the artist, writer, engineer, etc.

Too many extension workers do not work well with farmers because they think of the rural people as a lowly social class. They never can be helpful to those they hold in low esteem or lower than themselves in society. But the whole society, including the farmer, must project a belief in the importance of farming in national welfare.* Pride in labor should be the attitude if one is to work at the job he likes in the best way he can. In other words, be productive.

With these attitudes and beliefs accepted as part of the national scene - extension too, becomes a prestige profession to bridge the gaps between education and ignorance; urban and

* The progress of such nations as Israel in recent years is an example of pride in labor and self-initiative.

rural welfare; production and commerce; research and application; labor and capital.

The human and national resources can then be effectively used in the direction the nation wishes to go.

The extension process is a very useful part of this movement and can be effective in speeding up the wheels of progress. Certainly, it cannot do it of itself or as the total effort.

Along with extension work, serious attention should be directed to the promotion of the other requisites fundamental for national development; a strong national education system; dynamic research institutions, built upon a universal philosophy of education for all; belief in dignity of labor; and pride in accomplishments.

PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS

1. Extension Philosophy
2. Evaluation in Extension
3. Subject matter specialists in Extension roles, problems and adjustments
4. Extension organization: for administration and for program development
5. Elements that contributed to the success of the United States Cooperative Extension Service.
6. Local leaders in Extension
7. A collection of principles and guides
8. Pre-requisites to progress in agriculture: Land, Labor, Capital and Knowledge
9. Coordination - the key to successful extension education service
10. The U. S. Cooperative Extension SErvice
11. Program building: part of the process of extension
12. Differences between Extension Education and Community Development
13. Agrarian Reform and Extension Education
14. The Nature of Extension - to change people
15. Teaching vs. Learning
16. Steps in organizing rural youth in Extension
17. Some factors that do not contribute to efficient or effective extension work in Latin America
18. Adults responsibility to youth
19. Importance of using rural people as leaders in rural development
20. A job to be done
21. The essence of extension education

22. Leadership vs. Administration

23. Facts are the best antidote for rumor

24. Social Science - a necessary ingredient in rural development

25. Extension Methods