

## Points of View

### To Geoffrey Moss

Dear Geff:

Two reactions to your letter of June 10, 1968 (starting on p. 131 of the Fall issue of the *Journal*):

1. Can you describe for me in some detail a specific training program conducted in New Zealand that you would characterize as "training relevant to the work situation"? How was it conducted? For whom? For what purpose(s)? What evidence do you have of the results?

2. Would you describe in some detail what you mean, in referring to the development of junior colleagues, by "challenging tasks in fields that contribute to their knowledge and experience"? What is the nature of such tasks? How do they differ from what might happen in an "apprenticeship" as you refer to it?

I realize these are two reactions that may require some developing. Maybe you would choose to take them one at a time.

G. L. CARTER, JR.  
*Editor*

### To the Editor

Dear G.L.:

In my first letter, I said I believe extension principles are the same in any country. The same applies to training and development of staff. But how these principles are carried out will differ from country to country and in your case from state to state depending upon the needs of the people, just as extension services have evolved according to needs. Therefore I am loathe to give a straight answer to your questions.

New Zealand is an agricultural country. Unlike the United States, we depend on the sale of farm products for almost 90% of our overseas earnings. Our main extension service, the Farm Advisory Division of the Department of Agriculture, is production-oriented

and, I might add, is nonregulatory in function.

Several years ago, it became obvious that the old system of apprenticeship to a senior colleague was causing frustrations among some of our new graduates. It was also a slow and costly way of training as it reduced the effectiveness of the training officer in his normal job.

We also noted a big variation between training officers. Some were more effective than others. For too long we had assumed that because a man was good at his job he could train staff.

At first we considered the preparation of a training log. We would prepare a book setting out a list of training exercises and after the trainee had accomplished all the exercises, we could assume he was "trained."

But we soon came to the conclusion that each man's needs are different. Just as you and I have strengths and weaknesses, so has the new graduate. The key to training appeared to be to identify and strengthen these weaknesses. Before we start to develop new staff, and "develop" is a better word than "train," we must clearly set out our goals and objectives in a development plan. Next the new graduate must have a need to learn and be motivated to change.

Rather than tell future training officers how they were to go about their job, we ran a workshop for them to plan their own methods. We had previously carried out a survey among new graduates listing their frustrations and needs. We used students and new recruits as "guinea pigs" to discuss their expectations of a career in extension and tell of their frustrations.

Two of the principles which came out of these workshops were:

1. Training will be more meaningful if the trainee is challenged by activities that end in a sense of achievement and pride of accomplishment.

2. Training will be more effective if relevant to the work situation or past experiences.

Although we did not realize it at the time, these principles are in line with job-satisfying factors listed by Herzberg and his associates in *The Motivation to Work* (N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1959). Arranged in order of frequency with which people mentioned them, were: (1) achievement, (2) recognition, (3) the work itself (challenging, interesting, varied), (4) responsibility, (5) advancement.

We also recognized need for development of an early rapport between trainee and trainer with regular counseling. We realize that each new employee is a unique individual with different experiences, strengths and weaknesses, so training plans must be individualized and flexible.

In our scheme, each training officer, after discussions with the trainee, sets up a series of challenging assignments. If the first objective is to meet farmers and find out their views on certain questions, a questionnaire is prepared and the information is collected by the trainee.

If we want the new recruit to learn more about the district, we ask him to prepare a booklet for visitors. He is then making a worthwhile contribution while training.

If we want him to become an authority in a certain subject, we get him to research the literature, discuss the subject in depth and report on what farmers are doing. He should then give public talks or write articles about it as part of his assignment.

In each case, he prepares an objective report about the activity. At the same time, we encourage new recruits to help in the organization of community services, because this helps them to be accepted more readily.

These are just a few examples of the methods we use. The actual number of assignments depends on the length of the training period, and that, in turn, depends on the ability of the trainee. Exercises are planned and graded, each one becoming harder as the trainee gains confidence. They must be challenging and rewarding so there is a

sense of achievement and pride of accomplishment at the finish of each assignment.

You ask what evidence we have of results. Mr. R. H. Scott, the Director behind these activities is more than impressed with the results. The way today's graduates assume responsibilities in a much shorter time speaks for itself. I know that today's young men are doing a far better job than I did at their age.

As a last thought, I wonder how much talent we are wasting because of ineffective training methods that fail to challenge and stretch people to their ultimate potential—if there is such a potential as ultimate.

GEOFFREY MOSS

Wellington, New Zealand

### To Geoffrey Moss

Dear Geff:

Your most recent comment gets right to the point. The examples are excellent. This gets at the specifics and will convey your ideas very clearly I think. I was interested in the relationship you see between what you have been doing and the research findings of Herzberg and others. As you are probably aware, the Herzberg research and others related to it (some of which have been conducted with Extension personnel) have been published in previous issues of the *Journal*. You would find much of this in the Spring 1967 issue and the article by Clegg in the Fall 1963 issue.

In effect, what you are saying to me is that your new personnel are learning by their own "experiencing"—but such "experiencing" is carefully conceived, designed, supervised, and evaluated—not chance experiencing.

I have one more question: How do you manage to approach this direct experience-on-the-job learning in a more contrived situation—for example, when you bring a group of experienced personnel in for a training session (or if you prefer, a development session) how do you approach the direct experiencing as a basis for learning when the experience has to be created apart from the job?

G. L. CARTER, JR.  
Editor

**To the Editor**

Dear G.L.:

How do we manage to approach direct experience-on-the-job learning in one of our training sessions?

Basically, our technique is *theory, practice, evaluation*. For example, when we run an extension methods workshop, we start off dealing with a subject such as radio talks and discuss theoretical concepts and recommendations. Course members are then sent off to write a script and tape-record their talk. This is then evaluated by their peers, with professional evaluation if necessary. After this, headings are made and the talk is ad-libbed in a sound studio for broadcasting. So there we have combined a challenging situation and a learning experience.

Similar techniques are used for writing articles, columns for newspapers, and preparing TV shows; and in each case, we try to finish with a real assignment whenever possible.

In my previous letter I outlined how we have workshops and training sessions for the advisers who are going to train new advisers and how the participants themselves work out the plans for training new staff. Throughout all our training or development sessions, we encourage maximum participation.

In fact, participation is perhaps our most powerful tool in teaching. It can be used just as effectively when dealing with farmers as with staff.

In New Zealand, one of our extension success stories is the mushrooming of farmers' discussion groups. The term "discussion group" usually refers to a group of farmers who meet at fairly regular intervals to discuss common problems. They inspect farms, identify their problems, and discuss likely courses of action. Most groups have eight to twelve farmers and they meet informally to "talk shop" under the guidance of an adviser. Best results are obtained with younger farmers who are more easily motivated because of such factors as mortgages and needs of a young family.

One of the secrets of success of these discussion groups is that farmers can discuss problems worrying them at that particular time. These are immediately

relevant to their present needs and situation.

We also find discussion groups a very good way to help train new graduate advisers. At an early stage, a strong rapport is built up between the practical farmer and the scientifically trained adviser. This tends to narrow the gap that is often built up between adviser and farmer.

Discussion groups help the new adviser to gain confidence to face mass audiences. After hearing groups of farmers discussing their problems and inspecting their farms, he should be well informed on local problems and methods of overcoming them. Also, there is nothing like a group of farmers to bring an adviser "down to earth" if he puts forward any theory that they think impractical.

So you can see, discussion groups benefit both farmer and adviser. The farmer is motivated to learn because if he has identified his own problems, he is then ready to seek help to overcome them. Discussion groups benefit the adviser by establishing a close rapport with his clients and by helping him keep his finger on the pulse of these nucleus groups of farmers throughout his district. Surely this is an ideal training situation.

There is a tendency these days in extension work to spend a great deal of time studying theoretical subjects such as sociology and psychology rather than getting in and "mixing it" with clients. We must not forget practice and theory are complementary to each other. You can get by with practical experience and no theory, but it is a poor extension worker who tries to get by with theory and little or no practice.

GEOFFREY MOSS

Wellington, New Zealand

**Adaptability/Performance**

Edward Gassie's article "On Generalizing Research Findings" (Fall 1968, *Journal of Cooperative Extension*) was most interesting to me.

During 1965-66 I did a graduate program at the University of Maryland and conducted research in this same area. Dr. E. R. Ryden was the adviser for this project.

My sample was made up of 77 Extension agricultural agents in Virginia. One hundred twenty-nine independent variables in the general areas of adaptability, vocational interests, and academic accomplishments were correlated against two criterion variables, tenure and performance. The Adaptability Test was one of the instruments used. Also, performance was determined by use of the paired-comparison technique. The AT did not discriminate between the more effective and less effective Virginia Extension agricultural agents.

This was a very challenging and interesting study; however, there were more negative than positive results. I thought you might be interested in the result of using the AT.

D. J. MOORE

Abingdon, Virginia

#### Broadened Programs

Here are some ideas for your consideration:

1. Farm people have great need for adult education on subjects in addition to agriculture and home economics. We should be concerned with making it available.
2. The nature of "community" today is greatly different from the rural model of earlier generations. We need to "get with it" if our program is to be relevant.
3. There are large numbers of new clientele ready and anxious for involvement in learning that is community oriented, *if the Extension Service chooses to put emphasis there*. Officials of local government are one example.
4. There is a need and place in the Extension Service for staff members from a professional background other than agriculture and home economics. Some examples include civil engineering, urban planning, political science, cultural anthropology, and human development.
5. There is a need and a practical potential for new sources of financial support for innovative programs outside our conventional fields.
6. There is a need for new program development devices that are suited to the new program areas and new

clientele groups whom we choose to emphasize.

To amplify item 1 about adult education for farm people on a broader range of subjects, my point is that farmers as citizens today have the same range of responsibilities and concerns as any other citizens. In fact, it is pointless in many instances to draw a distinction between farm people and city people.

The farmer may work in town part of the year, or his wife may work there all the time, or the farmer may own city property as a sideline, or the farm may be a hobby of a city businessman. The churches, the bowling leagues, the square dance groups, even the country club may have mixed town and country membership. And both the farmer and the town dweller have similar concerns about the consequences of technological developments that affect them both. The increasing size of farms and the decreasing number of job opportunities on farms are coupled with the necessity for farm young people and some adults to seek employment elsewhere.

If we are going to provide broadened adult education for farm people, then our subject-matter resource base in our parent universities will have to include departments outside the school of agriculture. And we will somehow have to achieve legitimacy and acceptance in a broader role than many of our university colleagues now see for us.

What I have said about the mutual concerns of farm and town people is a base for my reference to a different nature of community today. The forces that are shaping local developments often lie outside our local political boundaries. The type of interaction among people that can lead to a workable consensus about a policy may require some quite new basis for getting people together for discussion. We are conscious of this in our own Corvallis area because of three developments that may be symptomatic of our times.

1. A new paper mill is being constructed some miles away, upstream from the intake where part of our municipal water is obtained. The plant is in another county, and we are not

the town closest to the site. Nevertheless, our community has been sharply divided between proponents who smell money from payrolls and opponents who smell anticipated air pollution and who fear probable water pollution as well.

2. A nuclear power plant is actively being planned by a municipal power company in an area not far from the paper mill. The problem of disposing of a large amount of hot water from the exhaust cooling system has generated visions of greatly expanded irrigation on one hand and visions of vast clouds of steam obscuring our landscape on the other.

3. A possibility for a combined community center involving both city and county governmental buildings has been under discussion in our area for many months, with one plan having been decisively defeated at the polls. The points of controversy are familiar ones—downtown location versus suburban, high-rise single unit versus several buildings, various proposed combinations of functions for maximum efficiency, and a question of whether two churches can be included in the community center area.

All of these issues involve the necessity for resolving conflicting viewpoints and achieving a workable arrangement based upon understanding. The potential role of the adult educator is obvious—if he has the courage to tackle it.

Perhaps I've elaborated enough of the ideas for now. If others are interested perhaps we can pursue the matter further at another time.

JEAN W. SCHEEL

Corvallis, Oregon

#### Adapting "Journal" Material

We are using the *Journal* more and more not only in course work but in training our staff here in Colorado. We are going through an identification of the power structure in the state and a number of the articles are certainly very useful. I am convinced at this point that the *Journal* will be used more often when people learn how to use it.

I have been developing instruments, check lists, etc., from some of the articles in a way that seems to help a new agent or even some of the older persons to find how they can adapt the material to their own situation. *Reader's Digest* and *Changing Times* seem to be able to use this approach quite effectively.

DENZIL O. CLEGG

Fort Collins, Colorado

#### Extension and Youth Commissions

The article "An Extra Hand for Extension" which appeared in your Fall, 1967 issue (page 189), should bring to our attention the need for a more aggressive role on the part of extension programs in helping local and state youth commissions.

The national interest and emphasis on the problems of juvenile delinquency and crime should alert us to the need for helping our community form citizen committees, community councils, or youth commissions to consider the problems of children and youth and particularly the problems of delinquency prevention and control. Most states have a governmental agency responsible for the coordination of services dealing with the problems of delinquency. Many cities such as Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Columbus have created youth commissions. Few extension programs have been coordinated or have served these youth commissions. Rural areas, where in some cases the increase in delinquency rate has been greater than in urban areas, could be served by extension programs.

The University of Missouri Extension Division at St. Louis, 8001 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, Missouri 63105, has been working with local youth commissions and the Central Region of the National Conference of Public Youth Agencies. NCPYA is a national body of local and state youth commissions. Information on the national organization is available from the St. Louis campus Extension office.

EUGENE P. SCHWARTZ

St. Louis, Missouri