New Model for Effecting Change

Philip R. Brereton, The University of Wisconsin

Brereton states that the conventional Extension program planning model tends "to ignore the client's behavior in the program development process" and focuses too much on the behavior of the program developer. This results in educational programs failing to cause client change. He proposes a new model which combines Rogers' theory of human behavior in the diffusion process with Lewin's disequilibrium theory. Critiquing a case study, he demonstrates how the new model can be used for more effective programming to bring about behavioral change. Does it look useful to you?

Program development is and remains the mainstream activity of Extension. In the quest for improved programs with greater client acceptance and increased impact, the search continues for more effective strategies to guide program development. This article suggests a new program development model which focuses on the behavior of the client in the change process. In addition, the application of the model to an Extension program development situation will be illustrated with a case study and critique.

Where Are We Now?

Before proposing a new program development model, we should briefly examine present strategies for program development in the Extension setting. By and large, Extension programs are intended to cause people to adopt new ideas and practices to increase their effectiveness in their various life roles of person, parent, worker, and citizen. To develop programs that accomplish this goal, Extension personnel go through a process of need determination, objective setting, program design, implementation, and evaluation. This process is usually described in a circular form as shown in Figure 1.

This type of model is a useful guide to the program developer, as it identifies key stages in program development. The model also suggests an ongoing process; the final step, evaluation, should produce new needs that regenerate the cycle to produce new programs.

The unfortunate aspect of the
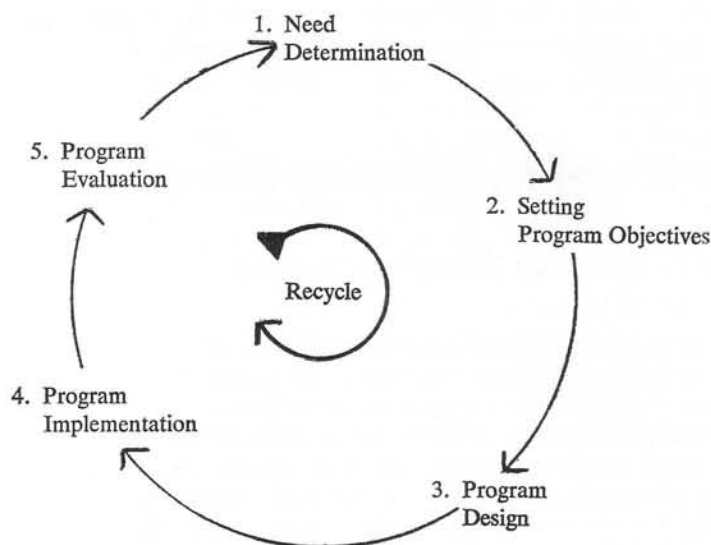
Figure 1. **Conventional program planning model.**

conventional model is that it excludes a key consideration—the process by which people adopt new ideas or practices. It emphasizes steps the program developer should take, but doesn't describe the behavior of people who must undergo the change— the recipient of the program. While the process that people undergo in adopting new ideas may be implicit in the conventional model, it's not explicit. As a result, there's a tendency to ignore the client's behavior in the program development process. The outcome of such a program often fails to cause client change. In the face of such an unfortunate event, there's usually a great deal of discussion about better need determination, improvement of content, better implementation, etc.

Rather than pursue these avenues toward program improvement, it would be more useful to move toward a program development model that's built around the factor missing in the more conventional model— human behavior in the adoption process. Such a behavioral model focuses on the behavior of the people under change, not exclusively on the behavior of the program developer.

A Behavior-Orientated Program Development Model

In trying to effect change in a technical system, the first requirement is a knowledge of how the system functions, the interrelationship between parts, etc. Then we can develop rational procedures to bring about change based on this knowledge of the system. If we fail to do this, we end up "tinkering" with the system by trial and error.

Likewise, with social systems, unless we understand the processes of human behavior, and specifically, the process by which people change behavior, our attempts to change behavior become "tinkering" rather than well-planned efforts that have a good chance of succeeding.

Therefore, a program development model should have as its backbone a description of the process people undergo in adopting new ideas or behavior. Figure 2 illustrates this model which draws on the literature on diffusion of innovations and disequilibrium. These two theories make up the model's conceptual backbone.

The diffusion process, as described by Everett M. Rogers,[1] puts order to the process of how an individual adopts a new idea or practice. This process consists of five steps:

1. *Awareness* — the individual learns of the existence of the idea or practice, but has little knowledge of it.
2. *Interest*—he develops interest in the idea, seeks more information, and considers its merits.
3. *Evaluation*—he makes mental application of the idea, weighs its merits for his own situation, and decides to try it.
4. *Trial* — he tries out the idea, usually on a small scale. He's interested in minimizing risk at this stage as well as evaluating the results of the trial for an adoption decision.
5. *Adoption*—if the idea proves acceptable on a small scale, it's adopted for full scale use.

The diffusion process takes place within a setting of a social system; that is, a community, an organization, or a voluntary group. The social system has a marked effect on the behavior of the individual. Ignoring this effect often leads to developing programs that urge the individual to change without considering the situation in which he lives and the effect of that situation on the new behavior he's being pressed to adopt.

Therefore, it's essential that a thorough analysis be made of *both* the individual and the social system. Security, anxiety, personal values, social status, norms on innovativeness, mental abilities, and conceptual skills are individual characteristics that should be analyzed.

Social system characteristics include norms on innovativeness, economic constraints and incentives, social constraints and rewards, and task characteristics of a group. The purpose of the analysis is to develop a complete diagnosis of the situation to help determine appropriate program development strategies.

The second theory is Lewin's notion of disequilibrium.[2] He suggests that before change can take place, the person to be changed must be out of equilibrium—he must be dissatisfied with his present state of affairs. Therefore, a change process must start with a condition of disequilibrium—a situation where current behavior is unfrozen. The condition of disequilibrium may be induced by the program or it may already exist. Lewin's second stage moves the individual toward new be-
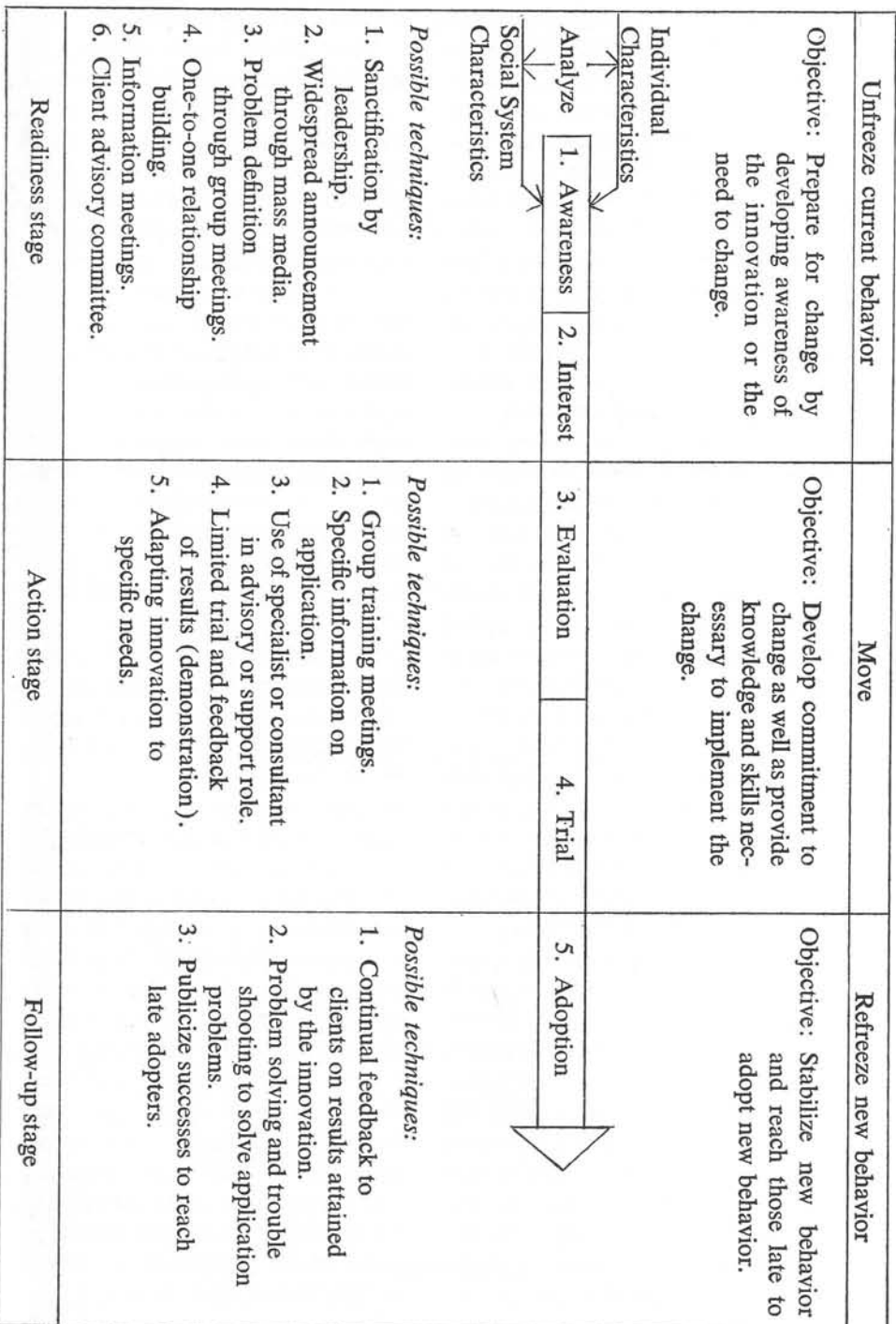
Unfreeze current behavior	Move	Refreeze new behavior
Objective: Prepare for change by developing awareness of the innovation or the need to change.	Objective: Develop commitment to change as well as provide knowledge and skills necessary to implement the change.	Objective: Stabilize new behavior and reach those late to adopt new behavior.
Individual Characteristics Analyze 1. Awareness 2. Interest **Social System Characteristics**	3. Evaluation 4. Trial	5. Adoption
Possible techniques: 1. Sanctification by leadership. 2. Widespread announcement through mass media. 3. Problem definition through group meetings. 4. One-to-one relationship building. 5. Information meetings. 6. Client advisory committee.	*Possible techniques:* 1. Group training meetings. 2. Specific information on application. 3. Use of specialist or consultant in advisory or support role. 4. Limited trial and feedback of results (demonstration). 5. Adapting innovation to specific needs.	*Possible techniques:* 1. Continual feedback to clients on results attained by the innovation. 2. Problem solving and trouble shooting to solve application problems. 3. Publicize successes to reach late adopters.
Readiness stage	Action stage	Follow-up stage

Figure 2. A client behavior orientated extension development system.

havior that resolves the disequilibrium. Finally, the refreezing stage stabilizes the new behavior to gain the payoff — the final resolution of the disequilibrium or a new state of equilibrium.

Combining Rogers' diffusion process and Lewin's disequilibrium theory into a single model produces a useful description of the way people functioning in a social system adopt new behaviors. The final product of the model is the three program stages: (1) readiness, (2) action, and (3) follow-up. Each stage has a specific role to play in a change program.

1. *Readiness:* Preparing for change by developing awareness of the innovation or the need for change is the objective of this stage. This stage may also serve a catalytic function by creating disequilibrium.
2. *Action:* This stage has a double objective: (a) to develop commitment to the innovation and (b) to provide knowledge and skills necessary to implement the innovation.
3. *Follow-up:* Stabilizing new behavior and continuing the diffusion process to reach those who haven't moved to this stage are the major objectives of this stage. This stage should also develop a base for continuing innovation by the clients.

A final feature of the model are some techniques that are appropriate at each stage. While the lists are by no means inclusive, they represent commonly recognized and used techniques in Extension work.

Applying Model to A Case Study

A short case study of an actual Extension program should show how the model can be used as a program development tool.

CASE: For some time, the retail council of the Chamber of Commerce of a medium-sized city had been concerned about the deteriorating retail situation in the downtown area of its city. During the past several years, retail stores in the downtown area had failed to keep abreast of new retailing trends and were steadily losing customers to the new shopping centers being built on the fringes of the city. The results were store closings, empty buildings, and a general economic blight. As a consequence, people in the central city area had fewer shopping facilities available to them.

The chamber came to University Extension for help. After some discussion, the chamber agreed to sponsor a retail survey conducted by Extension to try to discover the reason for customers leaving the older retail establishments. The survey technique had been used successfully by Extension in other cities.

The retail survey was a success. The customers graphically described the horrible treatment they received from many of these merchants. They indicated clearly their dissatisfaction and their reasons for shopping at the new shopping centers.

To present the results of the survey, an open meeting was held for all city retailers in a large auditorium. A summary of the survey and tape recordings of several interviews were presented to the group. The impact was obvious. Many of the retailers were shocked and incredulous at what they learned.

Shortly after the meeting, Extension offered a series of programs designed to deal with the issues raised by the survey. Resource people were brought in, retailers were invited to small meetings to work with both the issues and the resource people.

The results appeared to be less than satisfactory. The meetings were sparsely attended, the retailers who were there were defensive, and the retailers who appeared to be in real trouble weren't there. After the series of small group meetings was completed, the entire effort ended because there was no client interest.

Critique

Why did this program fail to encourage adoption of new retailing practices? The retail survey was carried out effectively and specific needs of the clients were identified. The group meetings were well advertised through newspapers and brochures. By conventional standards, the program should have succeeded.

The answer lies not with the individual performance of the Extension personnel involved, but with the program development model. The conventional model describes what the Extension worker does, not what the client does, in a change process. Using the behavioral model as a guide (Figure 2) to focus on client behavior, let's work through the case.

The first step in the behavioral model is the analysis of the characteristics of the client group. This step is critical because the entire program will be developed on the basis of this analysis. Rogers[3] suggests the value of a categorization of adopters to help the Extension professional evaluate the client group. He identifies five categories that fit a normal distribution curve.

1. *Innovators*—often regarded as deviants, they're venturesome and gain their interpersonal security from new ideas brought in from outside the social system.
2. *Early adopters*—often opinion leaders who are respected by their peers, they provide a validation of views held by members of the same social system.
3. *Early majority* — a cautious group who waits for early adopters to prove an innovation successful, they enhance their security by much deliberation before adoption.
4. *Late majority* — a skeptical group who must be convinced by a legion of their peers, they wait for ideas to become somewhat traditional before adopting.
5. *Laggards*—deviants who derive their security by resisting innovation. Their dominant value

is tradition and the stability of tried and true ways.

Entire social systems may also be categorized according to receptivity to change. Rogers suggests there are two types, traditional and modern. A social system distinguished as having modern norms is more technologically advanced, cosmopolite, literate, rational, and empathetic. The traditional system is less technologically advanced, uses few ideas from the outside, and relies on past practices as a guide to the future. The norms of the social system affect the innovativeness of the individual within it; that is, an individual's innovativeness varies directly with the norm of his social system on innovativeness.

An evaluation of the situation that existed in the case study suggests a traditional group of retailers who are slow to adopt new ideas and who derive their security from using tested ideas. Their present predicament of poor business success is a result of their lack of innovativeness. However, because of their reluctance to change, they require extra effort and time to prepare them to change. A rather extensive readiness program is indicated in this case. The retail survey was an attempt to unfreeze current beliefs and create a readiness to change. Unfortunately, it ended up antagonizing this traditional group. What was really missing was an effective relationship between the Extension professional and the client group.

Havelock,[4] in his studies of innovation in education, describes an effective client-change agent relationship as having the characteristics of openness, reciprocity, a minimum of threat, and realistic expectations by both parties. Subsequent experiences with this type of program suggest that a retail survey is more useful when the Extension professional has worked with the clients individually, visited their establishments, and is generally viewed as someone who's there to help, not meddle or cause embarrassment to the client. The retail survey becomes a valid and acceptable part of the program when such a relationship exists before conducting a survey.

The result of the survey might have been used to develop the subsequent group meetings through an advisory committee made up of downtown merchants, especially those who are opinion leaders and who would help to encourage the rest of the group to participate in these meetings. These strategies are all aimed at creating a readiness to change.

The action stage of the program, small group meetings dealing with specific retailing techniques, can be an effective way to move the group toward new practices. In addition, it might be well to encourage the client to go to trial—trying out specific techniques on a small scale. Such trials are useful, as they encourage clients to adapt innovations to specific situations and try them out without incurring large risks.

The final stage of the model, follow-up, suggests a continuing relationship with the client that lasts beyond the end of the conventional

program. Unless this relationship continues, adoption and the continuance of the new behavior tends to become a chance event entirely in the hands of the client. Also, the client continues to need help and support in evaluating the outcome of his attempts to try out new behavior and practices as well as help in modifying the innovation to suit his circumstances.

A final concern is that the follow-up stage creates a base from which to repeat the change cycle. Watson and Glaser, citing their experiences in planning organizational change, observe that following any important change comes a period during which the equilibrium is being stabilized.[5] They suggest that it's from this plateau that the cycle of change can be again launched.

So, it's intended that the follow-up stage of the model should develop a self-renewal capacity on the part of the client; i.e., he should have a positive attitude toward change, he should develop an active inclination to seek outside resources as well as develop a perspective on the future which includes the prospect of change.

Unfortunately, the events in our case study came to a close before these objectives were achieved. If the action stage had succeeded, the Extension professional would have been able to continue his relationship on a one-to-one basis until a self-renewal situation had been reached.

Some Final Thoughts

The model doesn't deal with a specific time reference as each situation operates in a time reference of its own depending on the individual characteristics of the change program. However, one of the aims of the model is to increase the predictability of the Extension professional in regard to planning and implementing the events of a given program. A model that focuses on the behavior of the client enables the Extension professional to reduce the trial and error aspect of the program implementation and predict responses of the client group at each stage of the program. That, in itself, reduces the time and resource expenditures in program development and implementation.

Finally, the model is intended to be a practical tool for the program developer. Hopefully, it bridges the gap between what we know about human behavior in the change process and the techniques used to change behavior. The model is intended to put this knowledge into a form that maximizes effectiveness in applying it to a practical program development problem.

Footnotes

1. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York, New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962).
2. Kurt Lewin, "Frontier in Group Dynamics," *Human Relations,* I (1947), 5-42. For a brief description of the "quasi-stable equilibrium" theory, see Leonard R. Sayles and George Strauss, *Human Behavior in Organization* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966).

3. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovation*.
4. Ronald G. Havelock, *Guide to Innovation in Education* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, Center for Research on Utilization of Scientific Knowledge, Institute for Social Research, 1970).
5. Goodwin Watson and Edward M. Glaser, "What Have We Learned About Planning for Change," *Management Review* (November, 1965), 34-46.