

research in brief

Role of the Extension Leader

Turner asks, "What is the ideal role of an Extension leader?" He also asks whether there's a relationship between congruence of ideal role and actual role and performance of an Extension leader.

This study was done because of a change in the role of Extension leader position in the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, which occurred in December, 1970. At this time, the Extension leader was granted line authority over other members of the county Extension staff.

In early 1971, Extension leaders developed their job descriptions. These descriptions were discussed with the Extension leader's immediate supervisor and others and were approved as official guidelines for the Extension leader's

~~performance. A total of 95 descriptions were written to~~ permit item analysis. Job descriptions of 95 Tennessee Extension leaders were studied and divided into 39 item statements. Questionnaires were developed that contained ~~20 item statements~~. Analysis of data obtained from the completed instruments was used to determine how the ideal role was being carried out.

Turner's study supported the notion that if other variables are equal, the leader who can perform at the highest level is the one closely aware of expectations for his position by other staff members. Another important finding indicated that staff members feel that the Extension leaders should take more interest in what they're doing and exercise initiative in counseling with staff and implementing their assigned area of work.

Congruence of ideal and actual role as perceived by an Extension leader staff was correlated with performance. The greater the congruity, or the smaller the gap between ideal and actual, the higher the performance. Total actual score, which was a measure of actual performance, was more highly correlated with performance and congruent scores.

Based on these findings, the Extension leader who performs the role items in his job description at the highest level (as perceived by his staff) will also receive the highest performance rating and presumably perform at the highest level. High performance, in terms of the leader's job description, leads to a high performance rating.

"Tennessee County Agricultural Extension Leader Performance and Its Relationship to Role Expectations." Glen Turner. Ed.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1974.

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