

energized education in the 80s

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The basic role of Extension education in the 1980s is to energize people. Energizing people means to have them understand, accept, and participate in the multitude of available educational opportunities. Through these opportunities people solve problems, but at the same time create new ones. And, because of this problematic dilemma, the 80s will offer many exciting challenges for Extension workers. What's accomplished through the learning process will be limited only by the myopic interpretation of our own roles and goals.

In the 1980 decade, Extension education must develop a human energy system. Energized people involvement will constitute a vital part of future funding, programming, managing, and accounting of Extension education. As professionals, we constantly should remind ourselves that the program base for Extension is determined, implemented, evaluated, and financed by and with people who are our ultimate employers. Programs should be developed around their needs and concerns.

The Four E's

Based on current economics and social forecasts, people concerns will cluster around four important "E's"—economy, energy, environment, and electronics.

Economy

The first E, economy, currently and on into the 80s will almost be synonymous with "inflation." Experts predict an average inflation rate of 7% a year, or a doubling of prices in 10 years. The pocketbook dollar today will be a 50-cent piece then; a \$5,000 car will cost \$10,000, a \$100,000 home

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\$200,000. If a family of 4 now spends \$80 a week at the grocery store, the same food will cost \$160, and a gallon of gas at least \$2. But all is not lost.

Though inflation won't be stopped, it can be slowed, and Extension must develop programs that will help people fight the battle against inflation by teaching them how to make the most of their shrinking dollar.

Energy

Closely allied with economy is our second E, energy. Experts indicate no great change in the traditional energy sources. Coal, oil, and natural gas will still be our major sources of heat and power. This dependency will produce soaring costs, a continuing search for new deposits of these fuels, and serious attempts to conserve. Extension must help disseminate new programs and new techniques developed around fuel costs and fuel conservation.

Environment

Nothing affects the quality of life more than one's environment. The beauty of the home and its surroundings will always be an important E in Extension education programs. People will also want to learn about conserving, preserving, and beautifying the nation's natural resources. They need to learn how to reduce rubble and residue, the bottles, boxes, cans, plastics, scrap metals, mine debris, slag, manure, and pesticides that generated nearly five billion tons of solid waste last year. Clear air and pure water are other healthful environmental musts in the 80s.

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Electronics

How can we help people with what they want to know about the economy, energy, and the environment? The models of Extension teaching and learning in the 80s will be exciting. That brings us to our fourth E, electronics. Computer systems, self-directed learning, "Plato," and TV will have a revolutionary effect on Extension methodology and results. Witness, for example, the tremendous changes brought about already by Virginia's International Computerized Management Network, Kentucky's Green Thumb, Indiana's FACT, Michigan's TELNET, and Nebraska's AGNET in the areas of farm and home management and in human and animal nutrition.

Extension is both innovative as well as on the cutting edge of this micro-technical explosion. It's currently faced with the pleasant pandoric task of tackling insurmountable educational opportunities brought about by this explosion.

Working with and through others by way of electronics, Extension audiences will experience a renewal in the method and content of Extension's learn-by-doing education, whether operating at the individual, family, community, national, world, or even planetorial levels. Moreover, what new electronic avenues await us in the areas of personal development, leadership, and citizenship, as well as in volunteerism and group skills? The bottom line remains that a new wholesome and healthy human energy source will result—both for the person and society.

1980s Learning

Based on these four E's, what's going to be the subject matter or learning content of Extension education in the 80s? Chances are it will be multidisciplinary in terms of human development, technology, management, productivity, and energy use and generation. Extension must find ways to infuse our specializations, expertise, and segmented interests into the whole concept of lifelong learning. Population characteristics identified as rural-urban, the aged, handicapped, low-income, sex, and race will determine how subject-matter or learning content is used. In keeping with the basic democratic principles, this will happen when the people and Extension faculty sit down and plan together.

The Other "E"

There's an "e" Extension should avoid. These are the excuses that argue about the value of lifelong learning extended from the land-grant system through Cooperative Extension funding. John Gardner reminds us that neither our pipes nor philosophies will hold water unless both our plumbers and philosophers continue to learn. This tells us that Extension must stay on the offense and minimize its defense. An accountable Extension will be judged largely by its national, statewide, and local audiences and the value placed on its educational efforts.

Summary

The 1980s will center on changes brought about by people themselves, sometimes encouraged and at other times motivated by Extension professionals and paraprofessionals. The methods will be innovative and diverse, but always backed by sound research, know-how, and experiences. Our decade goal—through Extension education to solve problems generated by the four E's, realizing that for every problem solved new ones are created.