

EXPERIMENTS IN POLICY EDUCATION

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Many different experiments in policy education are being conducted around the country. By experiments, I mean different approaches to teaching or encouraging others to engage in policy education.

These experiments can be placed into one of two groups. In the first group are those aimed at Extension professionals. Examples include the Policy Education Project, the Conflict Management Training by the North Central Community Development Center, Michigan's Policy Education Program, and Minnesota's "Your Food" program.

The second group is aimed at citizen-activists, designed to make them more effective in public affairs. Some examples are the leadership development programs initiated jointly by Extension Services in Michigan, Pennsylvania, California, and Montana, together with the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and Purdue's leadership development program aimed at agri-business people.

My comments will be directed towards the Policy Education Project where the target audience was 50 Extension professionals, mainly field staff, from six Western states.

The Policy Education Project was born out of a persistent frustration among members of the Western Public Policy Education Committee (WPPEC). They were frustrated because while many issues deserved educational attention, few people attended public policy discussions. Public policy specialists were specializing on issues to gain depth and credibility. Some were concentrating on natural resources, some on agricultural policy, some on public finance. The Policy Education Project was an attempt to avoid this dilemma, bringing more Extension resources into policy education and organizing joint efforts for greater effectiveness.

WPPEC proposed a special project to ES to train Extension field staff in public policy education. The Western Community Resource Development Committee (WCRD), the Western Rural Development Center (WRDC), and the Extension Directors of Oregon, Washington, Montana, and Idaho supported the proposal. ES approved the training phase with Idaho as recipient of the grant.

An advisory committee was formed to guide the project. A project director was chosen, and a working staff was formed to plan the program. The working staff included experts with assignments in the following areas: (1) public affairs, (2) community development and communications, (3) technical information on land use, (4) audio visual technicalities, and (5) project evaluation.

The advisory committee and project director made a few key decisions that made this effort unique. Philosophy and methods would be taught by case example, and an issue common to all states, land use, was chosen as the vehicle to make policy education methods more tangible.

The workshop was held September 20-30, 1976, for 50 Extension field staff. Policy specialists from each state were present to share in the training and assist participants. Thirty different people appeared as resource people. Several of these persons were involved in National Science Foundation sponsored research on land policy at Oregon State.

The program had three parts: (1) philosophy and methods of policy education, (2) technical information about land use, and (3) planning post-workshop educational activities on whatever issue the participant selected.

The post-workshop educational activities fell into six categories with distribution as follows:

Land Policy 34

Food Policy 7

Water Policy 4

Air Quality 1

School Finance 1

Disadvantaged Women 1

Two of these case studies are now discussed by participants in this conference.