

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS
OF COUNTY STAFF CHAIRMEN IN THE ARKANSAS
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Administration in large organizations occurs at several levels. Duties and responsibilities vary at each level and usually become more complex when moving from the first level of administration through middle management to the top administrative level.

Newman (14, p. 1) defined administration simply as: "The guidance, leadership and control of the efforts of a group of individuals toward some common goal," and went on to add, "to achieve the goals with a minimum expenditure of resources and effort with the least interference from other worthwhile activities."

The Cooperative Extension Service, which was established by the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, has as its primary mission to translate and disseminate agricultural and home economics research from the land-grant universities into a practical and usable form to assist the farmers, homemakers, lay and professional leaders, and other citizens of each particular state in solving their individual and group problems. Better administration toward accomplishing this mission with greater efficiency and expedition is what all Extension administrators at all levels strive to achieve.

"Administration is concerned with the 'what' and 'how' of government," according to Dimock (6, p. 31). He went on to explain, "the 'what' is the subject matter, the technical knowledge of a field which

enables an administrator to perform his task." For the Cooperative Extension Service, this too is true since it is cooperatively supported by three levels of government--county, state, and federal. Extension's "what" is the technical competence in the primary fields of agriculture and home economics that must be obtained as well as maintained before the organizational or individual goals can be achieved.

Dimock (6, p. 31) further explained, "The 'how' is the techniques of management, the principles according to which cooperative programs are carried through to success." Likewise, in Cooperative Extension the "how" is all of the methods, procedures, operations and programming necessary in conducting an efficient and effective Extension organization.

Finally, Dimock stated, "Each is indispensable; together they form the synthesis called administration" (p. 31).

In most states the organizational structure of the Cooperative Extension Service comprises three levels of administration--county, district, and state. Only in recent years have administrative duties been assigned to county positions. This change in organizational structure in the late 1950's and early 1960's was brought about by changing economic structure, rapid increase in technology, social mobility, changes in basic values, and proper regard for the art of human relations which required increased competence and specialization of the county extension staff member. Schabacker (20) states that as an organization makes changes, the organizational design must also be altered to meet changing conditions.

Thus, in Arkansas, the organizational structure of the Cooperative Extension Service at the county level currently identifies one position

with administrative responsibilities included in the job description. This position is termed County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman. It was established by the Director of Arkansas Extension, C. A. Vines, in a letter dated July 1, 1973. These administrative responsibilities are in addition to the program responsibilities which require the agricultural and home economics technical training.

For employment in the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service at the entry level, applicants are generally required to possess at least a bachelor of science or preferably a master of science degree in some area of agriculture or home economics. That degree must be from an accredited college or university, preferably from the land-grant university in the state. Since the nature of Extension work involves the planning, implementing and evaluating of programs in the primary areas of agriculture and home economics as well as in the areas of 4-H youth work and community resource development, it is appropriate to employ and maintain personnel formally trained in these two primary technical disciplines.

For the Arkansas position of County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman, an applicant must have a master of science degree from an approved college or university and three years experience in Extension programs at the local level. Persons seeking these positions have little opportunity to participate in administrative training sessions either as in-service training or as college credit courses. However, some County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen initiate the opportunity to participate in such training either as in-service training or as part of their professional improvement program.

Statement of the Problem

The role of a county extension administrator is multi-faceted. Not only must the person in that role possess skills and knowledge in various technical areas but also possess skills and competencies in administration, supervision, management, public relations and human behavior.

In the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, agents who have been selected to serve in the position of County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman were chosen for this administrative role on their prior performance and experience. Minimal or no in-service training has been available for Arkansas staff chairmen to help them perform these administrative responsibilities. County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen have either acquired the skills to perform their responsibilities through years of experience as a staff chairman or have obtained these skills through some non-extension source. Nevertheless, differences may exist in the skills level of County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen to perform their administrative responsibilities. Certain County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen may feel more competent in performing these administrative responsibilities than others. Some may perceive their administrative abilities as lacking and desire in-service training to help them feel more confident in performing these skills.

Agents who have accepted the assignment as a county extension administrator may perceive the importance of their administrative duties differently. Some may perceive them with a high level of importance while others perceive them with a low level of importance. Tenure, years of experience, courses in behavioral and social sciences, and size of county staff may contribute to these differences.

If the perceived level of importance that County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen place on their administrative skills and the level at which they perceive their performance of the skills could be identified, then an in-service training program could be developed to satisfy the need for training in areas of high importance and low performance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the importance and performance levels that Arkansas County Extension Agent - Staff Chairmen perceived themselves to possess in selected extension administrative skills and to identify areas in which future in-service training might be developed.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the perceived level of importance that County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen in Arkansas have placed on 50 selected administrative skills.
2. Determine the perceived level of importance that County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen have in performing the 50 selected administrative skills.
3. Compare the agent's perceived levels of importance and performance of the administrative skills by years of tenure, years of experience as a staff chairman, courses completed in behavioral and social sciences, and size of county staff.
4. Identify areas of training needs for which future administrative in-service training may be developed.

Rationale for the Study

In assessing the topic of this study, very few studies were found that dealt with the administrative role and function of the county extension administrator. None were found for the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. This intriguing fact led to this research study.

Even though the primary duties of the county extension agent are to disseminate and translate technical information, there still exists a need for one person on the county extension staff to perform in an administrative capacity. Since the early 1960's and even as late as July 1, 1980 the Cooperative Extension Service was making the transition to the organizational structure of county level administrators. So it is still a relatively new concept in extension organizational systems.

The person designated as a county extension administrator has usually been the county agricultural agent and more recently the county home economist. In either case, most agents had limited exposure to administrative duties. In Arkansas, which is primarily a rural agricultural state, emphasis has been on keeping up-to-date on agricultural research and other findings. Lesser importance has been placed on the administrative role of the County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman. Nevertheless, County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen must assume the administrative responsibilities that accompany the job whether or not they have had formal or informal training.

The researcher's intent was not to imply that the County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen in Arkansas have not been functioning well in their roles as county extension administrators but rather was an attempt to enhance and improve that function. Results of this study might be used

in planning in-service training for staff chairmen. In addition, the individual staff chairman might utilize this self-assessment to select areas for training in their personal professional development program.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made regarding the study:

1. The items in the questionnaire could be grouped under the six identified areas of administration.
2. The County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen understood the inquiries of the questionnaire and indicated their honest perceptions of each item.
3. The responses to the questionnaire were given in the manner in which the researcher had intended.
4. The data from this study would be relevant in identifying administrative training needs for county staff chairmen.

Limitations

The respondents were restricted to the selected items on the questionnaire and therefore the study was restricted to the scope of the questionnaire.

Scope of the Study

The population of the study included only the County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen in Arkansas since they hold the only county extension positions that involve administrative responsibilities. There are 75 county extension units in Arkansas but the questionnaire for the study was sent to only 73 staff chairmen. Two counties were excluded

from the study since one staff chairman position was vacant at the time the questionnaire was issued, and the researcher was serving as staff chairman in the other county. He did not complete the questionnaire since it could have affected the statistical analysis toward the researcher's bias concerning the study.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are furnished to provide, as nearly as possible, clear and concise meanings of terms as used in this study:

1. Cooperative Extension Service: The organization in each state established by the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 to translate and disseminate agricultural and home economics research from the land-grant universities to the citizens of each state for their use in improving their standard of living. It is a cooperative effort between the United States Department of Agriculture, the land-grant universities in each state, and the county governments. The term "Cooperative Extension," "Extension," "Extension Service" will also be used and are to be considered synonymous with the defined term. The letters "C.E.S." will also be used to designate this term.

2. County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman: The title given to the individual who has been appointed the person in charge of administering the county extension program. Other terms such as "county extension administrator," "staff chairman," or "county extension director" will also be synonymous with the definition of this term. The letters "CEA-SC" will be used to designate this term also.

3. Professional Development: Refers to the skills development that a county extension agent must achieve to become an effective

extension professional performing at the county level.

4. Office Management: Refers to the skills necessary for the daily operation and function of an efficient county extension office.

5. Personnel Management: Refers to the guidance, counseling and procedures for dealing with employees in the county extension office.

6. Financial Management: Refers to all matters involving monetary procurement and maintenance relative to county extension programs.

7. Communications and Relationships: Refers to all aspects of dealing with people on a personal basis as well as through mass media.

8. Program Planning and Development: Refers to the procedures involved in establishing, conducting and evaluating a county extension program.

9. In-Service Training: A term used to refer to training received while a person is employed for an organization, in this case the Cooperative Extension Service. This type of training deals with subject matter that is relevant to the day-to-day functions of the county extension agent.

10. Administrative Training: Training that will be concentrated in the six major areas as defined above.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In this chapter, a compilation of relevant literature in establishing a conceptual frame of reference as assessing the administrative skills of county extension administrators is to be presented and summarized. Deliberation was made in selecting the most appropriate materials to use in building a foundation for the study. Several sources were examined including: research studies, books, professional journals, manuscripts, bulletins, reports, periodicals, directives, notifications, and personal interviews.

Much information concerning administration, supervision, management, organizational structure, change process, administration within the Cooperative Extension Service, in-service training and professional training for extension agents was found by the researcher. However, in an effort not to overshadow the study, resource materials were narrowed to administration, supervision and management within the Extension Service that addressed training needs for county extension administrators.

Three computerized data base systems were searched for pertinent research. They were: ERIC - Educational Resources Information Center; AGRICOLA - citations from the National Agricultural Library Catalog;

and Dissertation Abstracts International. In addition, a manual search was made of Dissertation Abstracts, the Social Service Citation Index, the Bibliographic Index, and the Oklahoma State University and the University of Arkansas card catalogs.

A summary of the key word descriptors used in the computerized searches were:

1. Extension agent or extension personnel or county agent.
2. Extension administrator or extension director or county director.
3. The above descriptors in items one and two and: administrative role or administrative responsibility or administrative function.
4. The above descriptors in items one and two and: supervisory role, supervisor.
5. The above descriptors in items one and two and: manager or management.
6. The above descriptors in items one and two and: competencies or skills.
7. The above descriptors in items one and two and: training or in-service education or in-service training.

Only five of the 22 citations retrieved by the three computerized searches were relevant to this study and were reviewed. None were found that were related to the topic that were conducted in the State of Arkansas. The citations that were reviewed will be referenced in other sections of this chapter.

The author does not imply that the materials cited in this study were exhaustive to the topic but the intention was to present a

meaningful substantiation of the literature concerning the assessment of administrative training needs for county extension staff chairmen in Arkansas.

To facilitate presentation of the literature the following sub-headings have been identified:

1. Changing Organizational Structure,
2. Concept of Administration,
3. Need for In-service Training,
4. Related Research.

Changing Organizational Structure

As stated in the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 (22), the primary reason for establishing the Cooperative Extension Service was to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage the application of same.

Organizations in today's world often have a need to make changes in their structure to meet the needs of a changing society and rapidly advancing technology. Cooperative Extension is certainly no exception, for the areas of agriculture, home economics and related fields are constantly changing, thus causing program change. Also as the organization has increased in size and in scope, it has become necessary to make changes in the organizational structure.

Reiman (17) studied the impact of technology and environmental influences on organizational structure. He reported that the more rapid change in technological and market environment, the more flexible the structure tended to be. He believes that there is a relationship

between technology and work group structure and that as the task of the group becomes less routine, more certain, and/or more complex, its structure becomes more flexible with increased participation, autonomy, and informality for group members. He concluded that technology influences structure primarily at the organizational level at which it has the most direct impact in its requirement for coordination and control. With Extension's concern for changing technology, its organizational structure must be flexible to meet the needs of the extension agents to better serve the clientele.

Tosi and Carroll (23) discuss organizational change and development in a somewhat different framework. They discuss changing organizational structure and relate it to the contingency approach with consideration given to the growth of the organization, the external environment, and the internal characteristics of the organization. They then discussed changing people in organizations and discussed development techniques that can be used both on the job and off the job. As Extension has grown over the years, it has made changes in organizational structure to keep up with growth and influences from both inside and outside the organization.

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service has made organizational changes to keep pace with organizational growth, internal and external influences and changing technology, the environment and the clientele. The Arkansas Extension administration made the major organizational structure change under consideration in 1964 by appointing one county extension agent as the county administrator. But like other states who made the same change about that time, the county person selected had limited opportunity to perform administrative functions.

Concept of Administration

Many theorists have dealt with the concept of administration. Newman's and Dimock's definitions were presented earlier in Chapter I. Pfiffner and Presthus (15, p. 3) defined administration as "an activity or process mainly concerned with the means for carrying out prescribed ends." They emphasized the fact that organizations as a formal structure have vital use for administration. Power and skill must be organized and directed to achieve the ends of any organization.

White (28, p. 1) defined administration in broader terms as "consistent of all those operations having for their purpose the fulfillment or enforcement of public policy." He added that an administrator is one who directs, coordinates, and controls the activities of others to achieve some purpose or objective.

For the purpose of this study, Newman's definition of administration was perceived as the most pertinent since it involved guiding individuals toward common goals in an efficient manner. It gives more direct and comprehensive dimensions to the major administrative process in which all administrators in various organizations and at different levels are concerned with or are responsible for achieving.

Extension administration at all levels may be conceptualized by one of the earliest and most widely accepted analyses of the concept of administration. This concept was reported by Gulick and Urwick (10). Their work involved the functional approach to administrative theory and has been the most traditional concept utilized within organizations. They pointed out that administrators carry out a series of functions which have come to be known collectively as "POSDCoRB." This acronym

has been coined from the first letter of various administrative activities identified by Gulick and Urwick (10) as follows:

- Planning - Determining in broad outline the things that need to be done and the methods for doing them to accomplish the set goals.
- Organizing - Establishing a formal structure of authority through which work divisions are arranged, defined, and coordinated for the established objectives.
- Staffing - The personnel function of bringing in and training the staff and maintaining favorable working conditions.
- Directing - The continuous task of making decisions and embodying them in specific and general orders and instructions and serving as the leader of the enterprise.
- Coordinating - Interrelating the various parts of the work.
- Reporting - Keeping supervisors informed, keeping self informed, and keeping subordinates informed through records, research and inspection.
- Budgeting - All parts of budgeting including fiscal planning, accounting and control (p. 13).

Extension directors nationwide have added an "ER" to "POSDCoRB" which represents the following:

- Evaluating - Determining whether the objectives have been met and making adjustments where necessary.
- Relationships - Building rapport with individuals, groups, and organizations that assist in accomplishing the goals of the organization (8, p. 7).

In 1950 Simon (21) criticized the functional approach of Gulick and Urwick and emphasized the importance of the decision-making process in administration. He stated that a general theory of administration must include principles of organization that will insure correct decision-making, just as it must include principles that will insure effective action.

In the literature, supervision was recognized as an integral part of administration. Van Dersal (24, p. 25) defines supervision as "the art of working with a group of people over whom authority is exercised in such a way as to achieve the greatest combined effectiveness in getting work done." His seven principles of supervision are:

1. People must always understand clearly what is expected of them.
2. People must have guidance in doing their work.
3. Good work should always be recognized.
4. Poor work deserves constructive criticism.
5. People should have opportunities to show that they can accept greater responsibilities.
6. People should be encouraged to improve themselves.
7. People should work in a safe, healthful environment.

There has been a shift in the areas of emphasis in the early years from an overseeing, directing and controlling orientation to a more democratic, human relations approach which includes leadership, guidance, and personnel development.

Durfee (7) believes that the role of the supervisor in the Extension Service has changed. He asserts that the extension supervisor responds to a major influence of changing knowledge and of changing needs within the organization. He reports that the practice of supervision is moved through three stages. During the first stage, the supervisor's actions were determined by his understanding of the needs of the organization. During the second stage, the supervisor focused attention upon needs of the individual worker; and during the third stage, the supervisor has turned back to the goals of the organization with a

greater emphasis on the individual than was present during the first stage.

Need for In-Service Training

According to Lessly (12, p. 14), "the need for increased emphasis regarding in-service training has never been more relevant than it is today." He added, "Cooperative Extension workers have been recognized as educators and leaders in the most successful voluntary out-of-school educational program in existence (p. 14).

In order for the Cooperative Extension Service to maintain its function of providing up-to-date technical information communicated by competent, professional people, then it must continue to provide its employees with an effective in-service training program. The National Policy Guidelines for Staff Development prepared by the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) Subcommittee on Personnel Training and Development (8) indicate the fact that experienced staff members need in-service education experiences to assist them in the following:

1. To further develop technical subject matter competencies to keep abreast of, and if possible, ahead of change.
2. To explore educational and technological content and processes in varying depths to extend personnel competencies.
3. To take a broader view and yet focus more sharply on particular extension role responsibilities and up-date approaches to carrying out responsibilities.
4. To develop a continuing sensitivity to social, economic and political changes and to acquire the capacity to deal with these situations (p. 12).

For purposes of this study items two and three above serve to

establish the need for administrative training for county extension chairmen.

In addition, Richert (18) concluded from a study on training needs for County Extension Agents in North Carolina that county extension personnel generally identify their own training needs with accuracy and fairness. The self-expressed needs serve a two-fold purpose: first, to determine the average training needs of a group, whether it be a group by position, by tenure, by district or by state; and second, to identify the individual's needs as he views them.

Price (16) reported that needs assessment by the agents was important and suggested that surveys be distributed periodically among the agents to determine what they consider to be their training needs at a given time.

Related Research

As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, five major studies were located by the researcher that related to importance and performance of county extension chairmen in their administrative responsibilities. All five of the studies dealt with role perceptions of the county administrative position as viewed by several job groups for the purposes of staffing, development of position description, training, role definition, and job clarification.

The earliest inquiry reviewed was a 1964 study by Abdullah (1) which recommended that: (1) a written job description be developed and communicated to the entire extension staff in California; (2) the County Extension Director position be included in the organizational chart; (3) candidates for the County Director position should be

required to complete a graduate training program in extension administration prior to their placement on the job; (4) County Directors with more than 10 professional staff members be relieved of their subject matter teaching; and (5) the training policies be changed to encourage County Directors to enhance their administrative effectiveness.

Abdullah's (1) study was similar to two other University of Wisconsin studies, one done by Caul (2) in 1960 with Michigan County Extension Directors and the other done by Fernandex-Ramirez (9) in 1961 with Puerto Rico County Extension Administrators. Abdullah reported comparable findings with these two studies.

As this researcher investigated the relevant literature, notation was made that all the studies reviewed were completed at a time within the respective state Extension Services that preceded or followed a major organizational shift establishing the county administrative position. In either case the research was to be utilized by the top extension administration to help make the change smoother and more efficient.

In 1968, Van Meter (25) found agreement between the extension respondent group and the local governing body as to the rank order of importance of the administrative functions of the County Director in Kansas. The total respondents ranked the administrative functions in this order: (1) organizing, (2) planning, (3) assembling resources, (4) directing, and (5) controlling. However, he noted that there were two major problems facing this position: (1) the local extension council laws should be reworded to reflect joint planning functions between the council and extension; and (2) there exists a high degree of misunderstanding of the administrative functions of County Directors

by some professional extension workers.

Jones (11) and Wheaton (27) conducted similar research in North Carolina and in Florida, respectively, involving the expectations of the administrative role for the County Extension Chairman/Director as perceived by five extension job groups. In an effort to delineate the major areas of administrative responsibility for the County Extension Director six main functions were enumerated as follows:

1. Management and coordination of personnel in the county office.
2. Budget for and finance of county operations and programs.
3. Office management.
4. Professional development of self and staff.
5. Communications and relationships.
6. Program development.

For purposes of this study, these six functions were utilized to develop the data-gathering instrument but were reworded and restructured. These six functions would aid in categorizing the administrative skills and to serve as major areas for in-service training.

These six functions were identified from an intensive review of relevant literature concerning the necessary county extension chairmen skills for performing the administrative role and through interviews with extension personnel in Arkansas. A committee of experts from Arkansas and Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service reviewed for appropriateness the skills grouped under each major area.

Finally, the most recent research found was by Sanders (19) in a Texas study completed in 1981 which considered: (1) the value of the county supervisor position, (2) the relative importance of the

administrative tasks, (3) who should carry out certain administrative tasks, (4) clarifying the job assignments, (5) changes in perceptions of who should do the tasks after a period of seven months had passed, and (6) determining training needs, if any, as perceived by county and district supervisors in Texas. Again, the need for the study was based on a decision that had been made by top Texas Extension administrators to establish county supervisory positions in certain counties. Conclusions by Sanders were that only half the respondents felt that the position was worthwhile and that if the number of counties with the position were expanded, then counties with only four or more staff members should be considered. Furthermore, based on the findings, the Extension employees did not change their perceptions of who should conduct supervisory tasks, that being the district supervisor. Some tasks were identified as being appropriate for county supervisors. No areas of training were identified from the results. Only the need for additional studies for administrative needs was recommended.

Summary

From literature reviewed in this chapter, the Cooperative Extension Service must be in tune with changes in technology, society, the environment, the clientele and other factors that may cause change in the structure of the organization itself. Extension is a people-oriented organization. As people within and people who are served by Extension change, so should the organization change.

Administration is a generalized type of behavior to be found in all organizations. Its primary function is the organization and direction of human and material resources to achieve desired objectives of the

group and/or the individual. The most highly accepted administrative theory that has been adapted for Extension's use was discussed as "POSDCoRBER."

In-service training enhances the effectiveness of the professional Extension work according to the literature. County Extension Agents are generally accurate in their self-assessment of training needs. It was pointed out that surveying should be done periodically to determine new areas for in-service training.

At least five related studies were reviewed to provide research information on role analysis of the county extension administrator. Two studies utilized six major administrative functions for developing the data-gathering instrument which were adapted for this writer's study.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND CONDUCT OF THE STUDY

The methods and procedures used in conducting the study were dictated by the purpose and objectives stated in Chapter I. The specific objectives were:

1. To determine the self-perceived level of importance that County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen in Arkansas have placed on 50 selected administrative skills.
2. To determine the self-perceived level of importance that County Staff Chairmen have in performing these skills.
3. To compare the agents' perceived levels of importance and performance of these skills with tenure, years of experience as a staff chairman, courses in behavioral and social sciences and size of county staff.
4. To identify major areas of need for future administrative training for county chairmen.

Four considerations were to be determined prior to the collecting and analyzing of needed data. These were:

1. Determining the population for the study.
2. Developing the data collection instrument.
3. Developing the data collection procedure.

4. Selecting the data analysis methods.

Population for the Study

The population of this study consisted of County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman in each of the Arkansas counties. There are 75 counties in Arkansas; however, at the time when the study was being conducted, the staff chairman position in Dallas County was vacant. In addition, the writer of this research held the staff chairman position in Sebastian County and did not complete a questionnaire. Therefore, the total population for the study was 73 county staff chairmen.

Development of the Instrument

Several steps were involved before the final questionnaire used in this study was developed.

The first step was the decision to use the mail questionnaire as the data collection instrument since it was the most practical in terms of time involvement and expense. Wallace (26) pointed out these two factors of consideration for this type of data collection.

Although several questionnaires were examined in a review of literature, no suitable instrument was found that fit the constraints of the objectives and specifically delineated the administrative skills of county staff chairmen in Arkansas. Therefore, a questionnaire pertinent to this study had to be developed.

The six major administrative areas were utilized from the Jones (11) and Wheaton (27) research to categorize the administrative skills for Arkansas staff chairmen.

The 131 items from the Abdullah (1) study in California; the Caul (2) study in Michigan; and the Fernandez-Ramirez (9) study in Puerto Rico were summarized, categorized and adjusted to fit appropriate terminology for this study. The Clark and Abdullah (4) work was also reviewed. Other items were added to complete a list of 50 items for the respondents in Arkansas.

Levine and Gordon (13) offered several suggestions concerning appearance and effectiveness. Their considerations that were utilized in constructing the questionnaire for this study included:

1. The questionnaire should be short and not lengthy in appearance.
2. The questions should be stated simply and clearly with adequate space separating the items and the responses.
3. Lines should be used to separate items for clarity.
4. Interdependence to other questions should be avoided.

The two responses to each item were separated by the item listing with the "importance" responses down the left side of the page and the "performance" responses down the right side of the page.

A five-point Likert-type rating scale was utilized for each response. The respondents were asked to circle a response from "1" to "5" indicating a low level response to be "1" and a high level response to be "5."

Members of a committee of experts consisting of staff development personnel in the Oklahoma Extension Service, members of the author's graduate advisory committee, top administrators in the Arkansas Extension Service, and Arkansas co-workers were consulted. This committee checked the 50 items for phrasiology of the item, clarity

of instructions for completing the questionnaire, error in item appropriateness, and item association under the six major administrative functions.

The questionnaire was then pretested by a select number of County Extension Directors in Oklahoma. They were asked to comment on the factors as listed above for the committee of experts. The author was assisted in this step by the Oklahoma Extension Staff Development Specialist who sent questionnaires to selected agents for pretesting (Appendix B). Only minor changes were suggested by the Oklahoma County Directors. The changes were made and a final copy was drafted.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was mailed to each of the 73 Arkansas County Extension Staff Chairmen on April 1, 1983 (Appendix A). Two transmittal letters plus a self-addressed, stamped envelope were included in the mailing. The first transmittal letter (Appendix B) was from the author, explaining the purpose and need for the study; it was written in a personal manner to the peer group. The second transmittal letter (Appendix B) was from the Associate Director - Field Operations; it encouraged the staff chairmen to cooperate in the study by completing the questionnaire which would be valuable in developing future administrative training for staff chairmen. The first mailing netted 53 questionnaires being returned, or a 73 percent return the first week.

A follow-up letter (Appendix B) was sent one week later, on April 8, 1983, as a reminder to complete the questionnaire and to assure that all staff chairmen received a copy of the questionnaire through the mail. This letter resulted in 12 additional questionnaires being

returned, for a total return percentage of 89 percent for the two week period.

Finally, personal telephone calls were made on April 15, 1983 by the author to obtain the 100 percent return for the questionnaire over a four week period.

Analysis of Data

With the 100 percent return on the questionnaire providing a total population response, the need for sophisticated statistical treatment was limited. In addition, 100 percent completion for the two responses--one for "importance" and one for "performance" was made.

After consultation with the author's primary advisor, it was determined that the use of descriptive statistics would be the most appropriate for analysis of the data. Calculation of the mean, frequency count and percentages for each item comprised the major statistics for the study. In addition, the standard deviation for each item was utilized to ascertain the degree of variation from the mean.

To determine which items should be given priority for training, the differences between the mean for importance and the mean for performance was calculated. The items with the difference of .55 or greater for each administrative skill were identified as training considerations.

Similar calculations were made for the population characteristics to determine if differences in responses could be attributed to tenure, years of experience as a chairman, courses in behavioral and social sciences and staff size.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

As we discussed in the previous chapters, the intent and purpose of this study was to determine the levels of importance and performance that Arkansas County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen perceive themselves to possess in performing 50 selected county administrative skills. From this determination areas for future in-service training on county extension administration were to be identified.

This chapter presents an analysis of data that has been compiled from the responses of Arkansas County Extension Staff Chairmen. The respondents were asked to complete a 50 item questionnaire and respond by circling one of the five-points on the "Likert" scale for perceived "importance" for each administrative skill and on a similar scale for perceived "performance" of that administrative skill.

For purposes of presentation and interpretation the following terms have been designated for the numerical points on the scale: Low-1, Below Average-2, Average-3, Above Average-4, High-5.

Only the "low" and "high" terms were designated on the questionnaire, and assigning these terms provides greater clarity of data explanation.

Calculation of the mean for "importance" and "performance" was

made for each of the 50 items. Frequency of the response and percentage of the population was also calculated. Means were rounded to the nearest hundredths and the percentages were rounded to the nearest tenths.

Population of the Study

The population of this study included 73 County Extension Staff Chairmen as of March 1, 1983, in Arkansas. Of the 75 counties in Arkansas, only two counties were not included in the study; one county staff chairman position was vacant at the time, and the author held the staff chairman position in the other county.

The 73 questionnaires were completed and returned, representing a 100 percent response.

Selected Characteristics of the Respondents

Provided in Table I are summarized data relative to the number of years the respondents were employed by the Cooperative Extension Service. The number of years did not have to represent employment only in the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service but could include years of employment in other states if necessary. Since a minimum requirement for application as a staff chairman in Arkansas was three years of experience, no responses were given for the 0-3 category. The largest number of respondents were in the 26 years or more category which was 25 agents, representing 34.2 percent of the population. Nine agents in the 16-20 years of employment group, representing 12.3 percent, was the smallest group of respondents. One-fifth of the population had less than nine years of employment in the Extension Service. It was

TABLE I
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY EMPLOYMENT
IN THE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Years of Employment	Total (N = 73)	
	N	%
0-3	0	0
4-9	15	20.5
10-15	11	15.1
16-20	9	12.3
21-25	13	17.8
26 +	25	34.2

interesting to note that 26 agents (35.6 percent) had been employed by the Extension Service 15 years or less while 47 agents (64.3 percent) had been employed more than 15 years. In addition, there was almost a 50/50 split in the population between the number of agents with less than 20 years of employment and those with more than 20 years of employment. This is reflected by the numbers of agents with less than 20 years being 35 or 47 percent and the number of agents with more than 20 years being 38 or 52.0 percent.

Data in Table II represented a compilation of the responses by the number of years of experience the respondents have had as a County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman. Five (6.8 percent) county chairmen had 26 years or more experience representing the smallest group while 23 (31.5 percent) county chairmen had from two to five years experience representing the largest group. One of the most noteworthy observations of this data was the fact that 30 county chairmen or 41.1 percent available from the population had less than five years experience in the county chairman position while only 11 chairmen or 15.0 percent had more than 20 years experience in the chairman position. Moreover, 41 respondents or 56.2 percent had less than 10 years experience in the position.

Shown in Table III was data concerning the degree attainment of the respondents of the population. Two chairmen (2.7 percent) possessed only the Bachelor's degree and six chairmen (8.2 percent) had "some graduate work" beyond the Bachelor's level for a total of eight respondents or 10.9 percent possessing less than a Master's degree. The largest group of agents has attained a Master's degree representing

TABLE II
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
AS COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT - STAFF CHAIRMEN

Years of Experience	Total (N = 73)	
	N	%
1	7	9.6
2-5	23	31.5
6-10	11	15.1
11-15	11	15.1
16-20	10	13.7
21-25	6	8.2
26 +	5	6.8

TABLE III
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY
DEGREE ATTAINMENT

Degree	Total (N = 73)	
	N	%
Bachelor's degree only	2	2.7
Bachelor's degree plus some graduate work	6	8.2
Master's degree	42	57.5
Master's degree plus additional graduate work	23	31.5

42 chairmen or 57.5 percent. Furthermore, 23 chairmen (31.5 percent) have accumulated "additional graduate work" beyond the Master's level for a total of 65 chairmen or 89.0 percent of the Arkansas respondents attaining the Master's degree plus additional graduate work.

For an analysis and presentation of data for the respondents' number of hours taken in "social or behavioral" sciences beyond the Bachelor's degree, Table IV has been enumerated and summarized. Data revealed that 25 respondents (34.2 percent) had not enrolled in courses in the "social or behavioral sciences." Four agents (5.5 percent) had taken 25 or more hours of social or behavioral science courses for their graduate work and an additional 5.5 percent (4 agents) had taken more than 18 hours in these areas for a total of eight respondents or 11 percent possessing more than 18 hours of social and behavioral sciences. Also observed from the data was the fact that 32 chairmen representing 43.8 percent, had enrolled in at least one to 12 hours of graduate courses in these two areas while 16 chairmen or 22 percent of the respondents have taken more than 13 hours of graduate courses in these areas.

The distribution of respondents by size of staff has been tabulated from data and formulated in Table V. After inspection of the table, one can easily observe that a majority of the county chairmen worked in counties with less than five other staff positions. Forty-eight chairmen or 65.8 percent of the population reported staff size of less than five positions. One-fourth of the chairmen worked in counties with staff of three or less positions. This number included both filled and unfilled professional positions as well as para-professional and clerical staff positions. Twenty-five chairmen or 34.2

TABLE IV

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY THE NUMBER OF
HOURS IN "SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE"
BEYOND THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE

Number of Hours	Total (N = 73)	
	N	%
None	25	34.2
1-6	17	23.3
7-12	15	20.5
13-18	8	11.0
19-24	4	5.5
25 +	4	5.5

TABLE V

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY SIZE OF STAFF

Number of Staff Members	Total (N = 73)	
	N	%
2	10	13.7
3	10	13.7
4	14	19.2
5	14	19.2
6	4	5.5
7	1	1.4
8	5	6.8
9	2	2.7
10	2	2.7
12	1	1.4
13	1	1.4
14	2	2.7
15	2	2.7
16	1	1.4
17	1	1.4
20	2	2.7
27	1	1.4

percent indicated that they worked in counties with staff of six or more positions. Seven or 9.6 percent of the counties had staff of 15 or more positions. The largest county staff had 27 positions and two counties each had 20 positions on the county staff. Finally, 84.9 percent or 62 out of the 73 county chairmen in Arkansas reported 10 positions or less on the county staff.

Findings of the Study

The remainder of this chapter is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data pertaining to the levels of importance and levels of performance the County Extension Agent - Staff Chairmen in Arkansas perceived themselves having for the selected administrative skills. The findings of this study in this chapter are discussed under six major administrative headings which are the areas that were identified as general in-service training areas. A comparison of data is also presented for the demographic data.

Data have been enumerated and summarized in the tables that follow. The frequency distribution of the respondents for "importance" and the corresponding percentage of the population represented by that number were calculated. Similar information utilizing the same calculations were determined for the responses for "performance" of each skill listed on the questionnaire. In addition, in the preparation of the tables, a listing of the mean responses for "importance" and for "performance" was included.

Skills with responses of a "high level of importance" or a large mean are significant items to consider for training, especially when linked with responses of a "low level of performance" or a smaller mean

for the same item.

In addition the largest difference between the two means for each item also served as an indicator for training considerations. A skill with a mean difference between importance and performance of .55 or more was listed as an area for administrative in-service training. This mean difference level of .55 or greater was also utilized to analyze the population characteristic data for differences between importance and performance as well as between characteristic groupings.

Comparison of Level of Importance and
Performance Level by Population Characteristic

In Table VI data indicated that agents with 16-20 years of employment had the highest mean (4.67) for overall importance of the 50 items on the questionnaire while agents with 10-15 years of employment had the lowest mean (4.07) for this particular characteristic. The 16-20 years employment group also had the greatest mean difference which indicates that this group perceived their role as the most important but their performance was not as high as the agents in the other groups. The 4-9 years employment group also had a mean difference (.57) greater than .55. For overall performance of the administrative skills selected for the study, the agents in the four to nine years of employment had the largest mean (3.96). The agents with 10-15 years employment perceived their overall performance as being somewhat lower with a mean response of 3.66. All the group's perception was above average in importance and performance. From a comparison between groups from the lowest mean to the highest mean, the 16-20 years employment group had a noticeable difference from the 10-15 year

TABLE VI
COMPARISON OF THE PERCEIVED LEVELS OF
IMPORTANCE AND PERFORMANCE BY
TENURE IN THE COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION SERVICE

Years of Employment	N	Importance Mean	Performance Means	Difference in Mean
0 - 3	0	0	0	0
4 - 9	15	4.53	3.96	.57
10 - 15	11	4.07	3.66	.41
16 - 20	9	4.67	3.90	.77
21 - 25	13	4.14	3.82	.32
26 +	25	4.29	3.84	.45

employment group with a .60 difference. Thus, tenure among the 16-20 year group may have a relationship to the response of chairmen.

Data in Table VII were an overall comparison of importance and performance by years of experience as a staff chairman. Agents in the one year staff chairman experience group perceived the items to have the greatest level of importance overall (4.46); however, agents with 26 or more years of experience was slightly below this group with a mean of 4.43. Agents in the six to 10 year experience group had the highest level of performance while three groups, 16-20, 21-25 and 26 or more had the lowest performance perceptions as indicated by the 3.72 mean. The 26 or more experience group had the most outstanding mean difference (.71) and can be identified as the group with relatively high importance and low performance overall. There was not enough variation between each experience group to indicate that experience as a staff chairman had any effect on the responses.

To examine whether course hours taken in "social and behavioral sciences" may have affected the agents' perception, data in Table VIII was summarized. Agents who had taken 25 or more hours in "social and behavioral sciences" perceived the importance and performance of the selected skills much higher than any other agents who had taken fewer hours in this area as indicated by the mean of 4.73 for importance and 4.36 for performance. Agents who had taken no hours in these areas had the lowest mean of the group for importance as well as performance. This may indicate that there is a positive relationship between the way the agents responded on the questionnaire and the number of courses taken in the behavioral and social sciences.

Data in Table IX summarize the importance and performance of the

TABLE VII
COMPARISON OF THE PERCEIVED LEVELS OF
IMPORTANCE AND PERFORMANCE BY YEARS
EXPERIENCE AS A STAFF CHAIRMAN

Years of Experience	N	Importance Mean	Performance Mean	Difference in Mean
1	7	4.46	3.94	.52
2 - 5	23	4.37	3.85	.52
6 - 10	11	4.21	3.97	.24
11 - 15	11	4.38	3.88	.50
16 - 20	10	4.17	3.72	.45
21 - 25	6	4.00	3.72	.28
26 +	5	4.43	3.72	.71

TABLE VIII
COMPARISON OF THE PERCEIVED LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE AND
PERFORMANCE BY THE NUMBER OF HOURS TAKEN IN
"SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL" SCIENCES
BEYOND THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE

Number of Hours	N	Importance Mean	Performance Mean	Difference in Mean
None	25	4.21	3.61	.00
1 - 6	17	4.28	3.89	.39
7 - 12	15	4.29	3.85	.44
13 - 18	8	4.45	4.05	.40
19 - 24	4	4.33	4.14	.19
25 +	4	4.73	4.36	.37

TABLE IX
COMPARISON OF THE PERCEIVED LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE
AND PERFORMANCE BY SIZE OF COUNTY STAFF

Number of Staff Members	N	Importance Mean	Performance Mean	Difference in Mean
4 or less	34	4.34	3.83	.51
5 - 10	28	4.33	3.89	.44
11 - 15	6	3.91	3.74	.17
16 or more	5	4.34	3.75	.59

overall responses for agents according to the size of staff in the county. Little was revealed from these overall means which ranged from 3.91 to 4.34 for importance and from 3.74 to 3.83 for performance. There was little indication that staff size and the responses of the chairmen had any relationship.

Professional Development

Data in Table X provided the distribution of responses for importance and performance of the administrative skills in the area of professional development. Nine items were considered to be under this major area. Fifty-three (72.6 percent) of the chairmen perceived item 7, "orienting all new county staff members," as the skill obtaining a high level of importance, while 51 (69.6 percent) of the agents perceived item 4, "developing a high degree of professionalism for self and staff," as the next skill with a "high" level of importance, but a lower level of performance as indicated by the mean difference of .55 for each. Both mean responses for these skills reflect the top two rankings of importance with 4.67 and 4.63 respectively.

Skill 3, "demonstrating to agents the use of innovative teaching methods," was an additional skill that the mean responses for "importance" was higher (4.19) than the mean responses for "performance" (3.55). In fact item 3 had the greatest difference in the means (.64).

The 73 county extension chairmen perceived their overall level of importance as "above average" and their overall level of performance as "above average" for the area of professional development.

Based on the criteria set of mean differences of .55 or more be

TABLE X
COMPARISON OF THE PERCEIVED LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE
AND PERFORMANCE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE
SKILL IN THE AREA OF PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Skill	<u>Importance</u>		<u>Performance</u>		Difference in Mean
	Mean	S.D.*	Mean	S.D.*	
1. Technical Knowledge	4.53	.59	4.03	.80	.50
2. Traditional Methods	4.08	.72	3.69	.83	.39
3. Innovative Methods	4.19	.79	3.55	.91	.64
4. Professionalism	4.63	.70	4.08	.81	.55
5. Active Professionally	4.19	1.04	4.07	1.02	.12
6. Professional Improvement	3.78	1.03	3.55	1.00	.23
7. Staff Orientation	4.67	.58	4.12	.85	.55
8. Media	3.68	1.07	3.37	.91	.31
9. A/V Communication	3.97	.87	3.48	.93	.49

*Standard Deviation

considered for training topics, items 3, 4, and 7, fit into this constraint. The three items also had some of the lowest standard deviations for the grouping which would indicate less variation in the responses.

Office Management

Data in Table XI was representative of the responses of county chairmen for the perceived importance and performance of the five administrative skills in the area of office management.

One may note upon first investigation of data that item 10, "obtaining adequate physical facilities, equipment, and supplies for the county Extension office," had mean responses that ranked it first for the level of importance and lowest for the level of performance with a mean difference of .76. This is evidenced by the fact that the "above average" response of 4.51 was the highest for "importance" and the 3.75 mean response was the lowest for "performance" even though both mean responses fit into the "above average" rating scale. This was also substantiated by examination of the frequency and percentage data in which 70 chairmen (95.5 percent) rated this item "above average" or "high" for the level of importance and 21 chairmen (25.8 percent) rated it "average" or less for the level of performance. Item 11, "utilizing efficient office procedures," had a mean response for importance of 4.47 and for performance of 3.79 with a mean difference of .68.

Even though mean responses were "above average," the mean difference for the remaining items were not great enough to warrant discussion. However, mean differences indicated that agents perceived their

TABLE XI

COMPARISON OF THE PERCEIVED LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE
AND PERFORMANCE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE
SKILLS IN THE AREA OF
OFFICE MANAGEMENT

Skill	<u>Importance</u>		<u>Performance</u>		Difference
	Mean	S.D.*	Mean	S.D.*	in Mean
10. Facility acquisition	4.51	.63	3.75	.99	.76
11. Office procedures	4.47	.60	3.79	.80	.68
12. Communicating policy	4.55	.65	4.26	.75	.29
13. Distributing office work	4.40	.86	4.04	.84	.36
14. Staff conferences	4.33	.72	3.92	.84	.41

*Standard Deviation

training needs to be for "obtaining adequate physical facilities, equipment and supplies for the county Extension office, item 10 and item 11, "utilizing efficient office procedures."

The overall perceived level of importance of the seven office management skills as indicated by the county chairmen was "above average" for performance and importance.

Personnel Management

Table XII was formulated to summarize responses from the county chairmen regarding their perceived levels of importance and performance for 14 administrative skills in the area of professional management.

Data in the table indicate that the county chairmen perceived the level of importance for this group of 14 skills to range from a mean of 4.70 for item 15, "building and maintaining a high degree of staff morale" to a mean of 3.60 for item 21, "handling of employee termination." Fifty-two agents or 71.2 percent of the population rated item 15 as having "high" importance. Even though "staff morale" was rated the highest in the group for importance, it had an "above average" mean response of 4.12 for level of performance with 82.1 percent of the chairmen rating their performance in this manner. This item also had a mean difference of .58 and a standard deviation of .49 for importance.

The chairmen rated item 17, "utilizing staff work-time efficiently," as the most important skill with a mean response of 4.53 and 70 respondents (95.5 percent) indicating level of importance as "above average" or "high." Forty-three respondents or 58.9 percent rated it "high" for level of performance. It had a relatively low mean

TABLE XII
COMPARISON OF THE PERCEIVED LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE
AND PERFORMANCE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE
SKILLS IN THE AREA OF PERSONNEL
MANAGEMENT

Skill	<u>Importance</u>		<u>Performance</u>		Difference in Mean
	Mean	S.D.*	Mean	S.D.*	
15. Staff morale	4.70	.49	4.12	.82	.58
16. Stimulating productivity	4.29	.77	3.66	.73	.63
17. Staff work-time	4.53	.53	3.67	.75	.86
18. Counseling staff	4.38	.79	3.97	.71	.41
19. Delegating assignment	4.36	.79	3.73	.82	.63
20. Hiring secretaries	4.30	.90	3.67	.90	.63
21. Employee termination	3.60	1.15	3.37	1.00	.23
22. Salary adjustments	4.45	.81	3.73	1.12	.72
23. Leave time	3.77	1.00	3.62	.97	.15
24. Performance evaluation	4.33	.91	3.84	1.01	.49
25. Resolving conflict	4.44	.93	3.79	.91	.65
26. Employee benefits	4.01	.89	3.64	.90	.37
27. Job descriptions	3.63	1.03	3.38	.86	.25
28. Staff decision-making	4.36	.73	4.01	.72	.35

*Standard Deviation

response for performance of 3.67 when compared to the other items in the group. "Staff work-time" also had the greatest mean difference between importance and performance of .86. The standard deviation was relatively low for the group, indicating little variation in responses.

Close scrutiny of data to discern mean differences of .55 or more between levels of importance and levels of performance for training needs, seven items meet this requirement. They are: item 17, "utilizing staff work-time efficiently;" item 22, "recommending salary adjustments;" item 25, "resolving conflict;" item 19, "coordinating and delegating assignments for agents;" item 20, "recruiting and training clerical and/or paraprofessional employees;" item 16, "stimulating creative productivity;" and item 15, "building and maintaining a high degree of staff morale."

Overall perception of the 73 county chairmen for this group of items for personnel management was "above average" on performance and "above average" on importance.

Financial Management

Contained in Table XIII are data summarizing responses of 73 county extension staff chairmen in Arkansas relative to the importance and performance levels of seven administrative skills in the areas of financial management.

Data revealed that the county chairmen rated these items important as indicated by a mean range of 4.62 for item 30, "obtaining financial and other resource support for the county Extension program," and item 35, "keeping up to date on legislative action affecting Extension's budget." The mean difference for item 30 was .58 with a standard

TABLE XIII
COMPARISON OF THE PERCEIVED LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE
AND PERFORMANCE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE
SKILLS IN THE AREA OF FINANCIAL
MANAGEMENT

<u>Skill</u>	<u>Importance</u>		<u>Performance</u>		Difference
	Mean	S.D.*	Mean	S.D.*	in Mean
29. Travel allotment	3.52	1.11	3.44	1.01	.08
30. Resource acquisition	4.62	.52	4.04	.87	.58
31. Budgeting	4.29	.96	3.95	.93	.34
32. Fund raising	3.89	.95	3.65	.93	.24
33. Resource utilization	4.32	.33	4.07	.32	.25
34. Record keeping	4.29	.95	4.11	.96	.18
35. Legislative action	4.62	.68	4.10	.85	.52

*Standard Deviation

deviation of .52 for importance and .87 for performance. For items 30 and 35, 50 (68.5 percent) and 52 (71.2 percent) responded with a "high" level of importance for those two skills.

Overall the data indicated "above average" perception levels of importance and "above average" to "average" perception levels of performance for these seven administrative skills for county extension chairmen in Arkansas.

One skill was identified in the grouping as a topic for training based on the selection criteria. It was item 30, "obtaining financial and other resource support for the county Extension program." However, item 35, "keeping up to date on legislative action affecting Extension's budget." could have been considered since the level of importance was high and the mean difference was so close to the cut-off point.

Communication and Relationships

Table XIV was developed to reflect a summary of data collected from 73 county extension staff chairmen in Arkansas in regard to the importance and performance levels of eight administrative skills in the area of communications and relationships.

Sixty-nine chairmen (94.5 percent) indicated that the most important skill in this group was "working well with people," item 36. This was further documented by a mean response of 4.95 (high). However, the agents felt they performed this skill "above average" with a mean of 4.53 for "performance."

The mean range for importance was from 4.95, item 36, above to

TABLE XIV
COMPARISON OF THE PERCEIVED LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE
AND PERFORMANCE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE
SKILLS IN THE AREA OF COMMUNICATIONS
AND RELATIONSHIPS

Skill	<u>Importance</u>		<u>Performance</u>		Difference in Mean
	Mean	S.D.*	Mean	S.D.*	
36. People oriented	4.95	.23	4.53	.58	.42
37. District rapport	4.59	.64	4.19	.76	.40
38. Farm organization rapport	4.77	.51	4.48	.69	.29
39. Community relationships	4.71	.51	4.55	.50	.16
40. Written communication	4.45	.65	3.70	.91	.75
41. Mass media rapport	4.51	.77	4.22	.80	.29
42. Public speaking	4.29	.75	3.77	.79	.52
43. Program communication	4.33	.71	3.64	.81	.69

*Standard Deviation

4.29 for item 42, "utilizing effective public speaking skills on general topics, on topics about Extension and/or the university system, and on subject matter topics." One other item, "maintaining rapport with major farm organizations," had a "high" (4.77) response for importance, but it also had a relatively "high" (4.48) degree of performance with a small difference between means.

For the level of performance, mean responses ranged from the smallest mean of 3.64 for item 43, "developing a method to communicate Extension's program results to appropriate groups as well as the general public," to the largest mean response of 4.55 for item 39, "maintaining good relationships with leaders, officials, civic groups, USDA agencies, and other related groups in the county." It was interesting to note that the next to lowest ranked "importance" item (43) was also the lowest ranked "performance" item. However, item 40, "practicing good written communications," had a relatively high importance ("above average" for the mean of 4.45) and a low performance response (3.70) which gave the greatest difference in the means.

Overall the chairmen rated their perceived importance and performance as "above average" for the skills of communications and relationships.

In ascertaining which skills had relatively high importance and low performance for training needs and the greatest mean difference for item 40 exhibited the most apparent need.

Program Planning and Development

A summary of county extension staff chairmen's perceptions of their level of importance and performance on seven administrative skills in the area of program planning and development was provided in Tabel XV.

Analysis of data show chairmen perceived their level of importance and performance as being generally "above average" and viewed item 49, "recruiting, training, and utilizing volunteers for conducting activities in all phases of the county Extension program" as being the most important with a mean response of 4.52 and 44 (60.3 percent) of the respondents rated it with a "high" level of importance. In addition, chairmen responded to this item in a much lower vein as indicated by a relatively low mean of 3.60 and 31 (42.4 percent) respondents rating themselves in performance of this skill as "average" or less. This item also had the greatest mean difference for the group of .92.

Forty-five chairmen, or 61.6 percent, perceived their performance as being "average" or less with six of these agents or 8.2 percent rating their performance as "low" for item 46, "utilizing evaluation techniques for the county impact programs." The mean response was 3.18 and was ranked the lowest on performance but was perceived by the agents as being "above average" in importance for this skill. The difference in the means was .87. The highest perception for the level of performance was for item 48, "knowing and complying with civil rights and other state and federal rules and regulations for Extension," but had a somewhat low ranking for level of importance as perceived by the chairmen.

TABLE XV

COMPARISON OF THE PERCEIVED LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE
AND PERFORMANCE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE
SKILLS IN THE AREA OF PROGRAM
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Skill	<u>Importance</u>		<u>Performance</u>		Difference
	Mean	S.D.*	Mean	S.D.*	in Mean
44. Planning process	4.36	.87	3.68	.94	.68
45. Joint programming	4.32	.71	3.79	.83	.53
46. Evaluation techniques	4.05	.94	3.18	.97	.87
47. Guiding evaluation	3.97	.87	3.30	.91	.67
48. Federal regulations	4.26	.94	4.08	.84	.18
49. Volunteer utilization	4.52	.71	3.60	.84	.92
50. Forecast program demand	4.37	.75	3.85	.82	.52

*Standard Deviation

Furthermore, it was observed that "supervising and coordinating the total county program planning process," item 44, was perceived with relatively high importance and relatively low performance with mean responses of 4.36 and 3.68 respectively and a mean difference of .68.

In identifying training needs for the administrative area of program planning and development, "recruiting, training and utilizing volunteers for conducting activities in all phases of the county Extension program," item 49; and item 46, "utilizing evaluation techniques for the county impact programs," are two skills that have been revealed by their mean differences for high importance and low performance. In addition, item 44, "supervising and coordinating the total county program planning process," and item 47, "assisting agents in evaluating their educational activities," may be included as topics for training according to the criteria.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the study's procedures and major findings in relation to its purpose and objectives. The conclusions and recommendations presented are based upon an analysis of data collected and observations made in conducting the study.

Summary of the Study

Purpose

The overall purpose of this study was to determine the self-perceived levels of importance of Arkansas County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen concerning 50 selected administrative skills to identify training needs for future administrative in-service training conferences.

Specific Objectives

The four specific objectives that were established to guide and direct the study were:

1. To determine the self-perceived levels of importance that County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen in Arkansas place on 50 selected administrative skills.
2. To determine the self-perceived level of importance of County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen in performing the 50 selected administrative skills.

3. To identify areas of training needs in which future administrative in-service training may be developed.

4. To compare the agent's self-perceived levels of importance and performance for the skills by tenure, years of experience as a staff chairman, courses in "behavioral and social" sciences and size of staff.

Rationale

The organizational structural change in the Cooperative Extension Service to include an administrative position at the county level is a concept that is still somewhat unsettled in the sense that there exists misunderstanding of the role expectations and job responsibilities for this type of position. Many county Extension personnel have been thrust into this position with little or no background in administration. Because of some experience as a County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman in Arkansas, the author has perceived a need for training in the area of administration and felt that others in this position had similar needs. To ascertain the administrative training needs for staff chairmen, this study was developed with the hope that the identified areas might serve as a basis for future in-service training conferences.

Procedures

A review of related research and literature was made, and major tasks in designing and conducting the study were begun; (1) determining the population of the study; (2) developing an instrument for data collection; (3) determining a method for collecting the data; and (4) determining a method for analyzing the findings.

The population of the study included 73 county extension staff

chairmen who were serving in that position as of March 1, 1983. Two of Arkansas' 75 counties were not a part of the study because one chairman position was unfilled and the other position was held by the author. A questionnaire was designed to elicit responses. A panel reviewed the instrument for validity and clarity. It was then pretested by a group of Oklahoma county directors. Respondents were instructed to indicate perceptions of the importance of each of 50 selected job-related administrative skills along with their perceptions of their own performance of each of the skills. The chairman respondents were also asked to provide personal information about their years of employment, years of experience as a staff chairman, academic degrees held, and county office staff size.

The 73 instruments were mailed on April 1, 1983. All were subsequently completed and returned.

Utilizing descriptive statistics for analysis of data, priority for training was determined by the greatest difference between the mean for importance and mean for performance of each skill. Items with a mean difference of .55 or greater were identified as training areas. A similar level was set for comparison of the population characteristics.

Summary of the Findings

The completed questionnaires were analyzed, first as to the personal characteristics, and then as to respondent perceptions of the importance of and their performance of the 50 selected job-related skills. For more complete analysis the 50 administrative skills were grouped into six areas: professional development, office management, personnel management, financial management, communications and

relationships, and program planning and development (see Table XVI for a summary).

Selected Characteristics of the Respondents

Of the 73 respondents in the population, 25 (34.2 percent) had 26 or more years of employment in the Cooperative Extension Service. However, 26 (35.6 percent) of the county chairmen had 10 years or less employment in the Extension Service. The way chairmen in the 16-20 year group and the 4-9 year group responded to the items on the questionnaire could be related to tenure, based on the mean difference and a substantial difference between the 10-15 year group and the 16-20 year group.

Thirty agents (41.1 percent) had five years or less experience in the position of County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman. Eleven agents (15.0 percent) had 21 years or more experience as a staff chairman. No response differences were apparent for this variable.

Only two agents (2.7 percent) had only a Bachelor's degree, while 65 (89.0 percent) of the chairmen had Master's degrees. Twenty-three (41.5 percent) had completed graduate work beyond the Master's degree. Since a large portion of the population had Master's degrees as well as additional graduate work, it was felt that this factor would not reveal much variance in the way agents responded.

Twenty-five or 34.2 percent of the county chairmen had not taken any courses in the "behavioral or social" sciences beyond the Bachelor's level; but four (5.5 percent) agents had taken 25 hours or more of graduate work in these areas. A noteworthy mean of 4.73 for this latter group who had completed 25 hours or more when compared to

TABLE XVI
SUMMARY OF MEAN RESPONSES AND MEAN DIFFERENCES
FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS FOR
EACH OF THE MAJOR AREAS

Skills	Importance Mean	Performance Mean	Mean Difference
<u>Professional Development</u>			
1. Exhibiting up-to-date knowledge in appropriate subject matter areas as an example to agents	4.53	4.03	.50
2. Demonstrating to agents the use of traditional teaching methods	4.08	3.69	.39
3. Demonstrating to agents the use of innovative teaching methods	4.19	3.55	.64
4. Developing a high degree of professionalism for self and staff	4.63	4.08	.55
5. Participating actively in professional organization/s	4.19	4.07	.12
6. Assisting staff in developing their professional improvement programs	3.78	3.55	.23
7. Orienting all new county staff members	4.67	4.12	.55
8. Demonstrating for agents the preparation of good radio and/or TV presentations	3.68	3.37	.31
9. Demonstrating for agents the use of effective audio-visual communications (slides, overhead, films, etc.)	3.97	3.48	.49
<u>Office Management</u>			
10. Obtaining adequate physical facilities, equipment and supplies for the county Extension office	4.51	3.75	.76
11. Utilizing efficient office procedures	4.47	3.79	.68

TABLE XVI (Continued)

Skill	Importance Mean	Performance Mean	Mean Difference
12. Communicating policy changes and other pertinent information to county staff	4.55	4.26	.29
13. Distributing work among clerical and/or paraprofessional staff	4.40	4.04	.36
14. Conducting effective county staff conferences	4.33	3.92	.41
<u>Personnel Management</u>			
15. Building and maintaining a high degree of staff morale	4.70	4.12	.58
16. Stimulating creative productivity	4.29	3.66	.63
17. Utilizing staff work-time efficiently	4.53	3.67	.86
18. Counseling staff on pertinent matters	4.38	3.97	.41
19. Coordinating and delegating assignments for agents	4.36	3.73	.63
20. Recruiting and training clerical and/or paraprofessional employees	4.30	3.67	.63
21. Handling of employee termination	3.60	3.37	.23
22. Recommending salary adjustments	4.45	3.73	.72
23. Coordinating leave time for all staff members	3.77	3.62	.15
24. Conducting a performance evaluation for appropriate staff members	4.33	3.84	.49
25. Resolving conflicts	4.44	3.79	.65
26. Explaining employee benefits to staff	4.01	3.64	.37

TABLE XVI (Continued)

Skill	Importance Mean	Performance Mean	Mean Difference
27. Preparing job descriptions for self and with staff	3.63	3.38	.25
28. Involving the staff in decision-making	4.36	4.01	.35
<u>Financial Managment</u>			
29. Coordinating county travel allotment	3.52	3.44	.08
30. Obtaining financial and other resource support for the county Extension program	4.62	4.04	.58
31. Preparing and justifying budgets	4.29	3.95	.34
32. Coordinating fund raising (4-H and other)	3.89	3.65	.24
33. Utilizing county financial and other resources efficiently	4.32	4.07	.25
34. Keeping records for county appropriations and other expenses	4.29	4.11	.18
35. Keeping up-to-date on legislative action affecting Extension's budget	4.62	4.10	.52
<u>Communications and Relationships</u>			
36. Working well with people	4.95	4.53	.42
37. Maintaining communications with the district team	4.59	4.19	.40
38. Maintaining rapport with major farm organizations	4.77	4.48	.29
39. Maintaining good relationships with leaders, officials, civic groups, USDA agencies, and other related groups in the county	4.71	4.55	.16

TABLE XVI (Continued)

Skill	Importance Mean	Performance Mean	Mean Difference
40. Practicing good written communications (news articles, letters, office memos, etc.)	4.45	3.70	.75
41. Maintaining rapport with local mass media personnel	4.51	4.22	.29
42. Utilizing effective public speaking skills on general topics, on topics about Extension and/or the university system, and on subject matter topics	4.29	3.77	.52
43. Developing a method to communicate Extension's program results to appropriate groups as well as the general public	4.33	3.64	.69
<u>Program Planning and Development</u>			
44. Supervising and coordinating the total county program planning process	4.36	3.68	.68
45. Working jointly with agents to implement county impact programs	4.32	3.79	.53
46. Utilizing evaluation techniques for the county impact programs	4.05	3.18	.87
47. Assisting agents in evaluating their educational activities	3.97	3.30	.67
48. Knowing and complying with Civil Rights and other state and federal rules and regulations for Extension	4.26	4.08	.18
49. Recruiting, training and utilizing volunteers for conducting activities in all phases of the county Extension program	4.52	3.60	.92
50. Anticipating future program demand from clientele	4.37	3.85	.52

the other means in the group does give some indication that agents with this training responded generally higher in terms of importance and performance to the item.

Forty-eight (65.8 percent) of the county chairmen worked in counties with five staff positions or less. Twenty (27.4 percent) of these had three or fewer staff positions. Two (2.7 percent) county chairmen are in counties with 20 staff positions, and one chairman (1.4 percent) works in a county with 27 staff positions. No outstanding differences in the way the agents responded could be noted among groups by size of staff categories.

Professional Development

Item 3, "demonstrating to agents the use of innovative teaching methods," item 7, "orienting all new county staff members," and item 4, "developing a high degree of professionalism for self and staff" were the three items which met the mean difference criteria of .55 or greater.

Office Management

Item 10 "obtaining adequate physical facilities, equipment and supplies for the county Extension office" and item 11, "utilizing efficient office procedures" were perceived by the agents as having the most importance and the lowest performance as well as having the greatest mean difference for this group of five administrative skills.

Personnel Management

Item 17, "utilizing staff work-time efficiently," item 22, "recommending salary adjustments," item 25, "resolving conflict," item 16, "stimulating creative productivity," item 19, "coordinating and delegating assignments for agents," item 20, "recruiting and training clerical and/or paraprofessional employees," and item 15, "building and maintaining a high degree of staff morale" were identified as having a mean difference between importance and performance of .55 or greater. From comments such as "never done this" and "don't like to do this" made by the respondents on the questionnaire beside the items 21 and 27, "handling of employee terminations" and "preparing job descriptions for self and with staff," may be an indication why these performance levels were the lowest in the category and also showed low levels of importance.

Financial Management

From interpretation of data, "obtaining financial and other resource support for the county Extension program," item 29 and item 35, "keeping up-to-date on legislative action affecting Extension's budget" were two areas ranked highest in terms of importance by the county chairmen. Perhaps comments such as, "state office does that," beside item 29, "coordinating county travel allotments," account for the low level of importance as well as being the lowest level of performance. Also, comments such as, "we're not supposed to handle money," which were written on the questionnaire may have attributed to the fact that item 32, "coordinating fund raising," had low levels

of "importance" and "performance," in relation to the other items in the category.

Communications and Relationships

From data analysis, "practicing good written communications," item 40 and item 43, "developing a method to communicate Extension's program results to appropriate groups as well as the general public" were identified as areas for administrative in-service training. This was based on the fact that the chairmen perceived these two items as being the lowest in performance represented by the small mean scores and being rated "above average" in importance even with a low mean ranking in relation to the others. Furthermore, the mean differences for the two items were greater than .55. Agents also had a high level of perception for both "importance" and "performance" for "working well with people;" "maintaining rapport with major farm organizations," and "maintaining good relationships with leaders, officials, civic groups, USDA agencies, and other related groups in the county."

Program Planning and Development

In reviewing data, item 92, "recruiting, training and utilizing volunteers for conducting activities in all phases of the county Extension program" had the greatest difference between the means of importance and performance. "Utilizing evaluation techniques for the county impact programs," item 46 and item 47, "assisting agents in evaluating their educational activities" are two items involving evaluation that ranked above the mean difference criteria. Additionally,

item 44, "supervising and coordinating the total county program planning process," fit this criteria also.

Conclusions

Based on the limitations of this study and of the findings, the following conclusions were made:

1. County Extension Chairmen in Arkansas generally regard each of the 50 selected administrative skills as being above average in importance for the job, and they also perceive their own performance of each of the skills as being above average. Skill performance, however, was perceived as generally being lower than skill importance. Therefore we can conclude that agents do not feel they are doing as well as they could in carrying out their administrative role.

2. Since there was a difference between importance and performance at any level of years of experience as a chairman, administrative training for all chairmen would seem to be an important thrust.

3. None of the six major areas of administration emerged as being a significant need area for training. Relatively high importance and relatively lower performance as measured by the difference between means for each item within the six areas were identified. Therefore, we can conclude that training is needed in all areas of administration with emphasis on topics within each major area.

4. Seventy-five of the 73 respondents in Arkansas staff chairman positions possess a Master's degree or a Master's degree plus some additional graduate work. Where academic degree alone may not assist agents in performing their administrative role more effectively, courses included in an Extension curriculum such as administration, supervision,

and management could.

5. Over 50 percent of the staff chairmen in Arkansas have had no or only a few hours in the social and behavioral sciences. Such courses may assist the agent in understanding people and in performing their administrative role with greater confidence as well as to help narrow the gap between skill importance and performance.

6. Most county chairmen in Arkansas are administering Extension staff with five positions or less on the county staff. Smaller counties offer fewer opportunities to utilize administrative skills; however, a staff chairman with a staff size of two will still have need for developing his or her skills, particularly if he or she plans to advance to a chairman position in a larger county where the administrative work load is much greater.

Recommendations

As a result of analysis of data and major findings of the research, the following recommendations are made:

1. Findings of this study be communicated to appropriate Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service administrators at the district and state levels so that the information might be utilized to strengthen the in-service training program for developing administrative skills of county staff chairmen in Arkansas.

2. Since the mean differences were small for most of the items, and since little training has been available in recent years, a general administrative training conference should be planned and developed with sessions designed to help the staff chairman develop his or her skills. Training topics should be selected from the following areas:

- a. Staff orientation
- b. Developing professionalism
- c. Innovative teaching methods
- d. Office procedures
- e. Techniques in obtaining physical facilities, equipment,
and supplies
- f. Building and maintaining high morale
- g. Time management
- h. Salary administration
- i. Resolving conflict
- j. Secretarial management
- k. Creative productivity
- l. Delegating assignments
- m. New ideas in financial resource management
- n. Legislative process
- o. Written communications
- p. Techniques for communicating program impact to
appropriate individuals and groups
- q. Volunteer utilization throughout the program
- r. Evaluation techniques
- s. Supervision of the county program planning process.

3. As indicated in written comments by a number of respondents, the job description for County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen in Arkansas should be reviewed and revised to include a more definitive listing of responsibilities. Revisions should be communicated throughout the Arkansas Extension Service so that the role of the county staff chairman may be better understood.

4. While chairmen in smaller counties need basic administrative training, chairmen in larger counties may need more indepth training to handle the larger administrative responsibilities. In addition, from comments made by some respondents, considerations should be given to expanding the administrative responsibilities of staff chairmen in larger counties.

5. Before an applicant is selected for a County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman position, consideration should be given to courses completed in behavioral and social sciences. Courses in Extension administration or other administrative training, as well as techncial background and experience should be given consideration.

6. Emphasis on courses in Extension administrative management and supervision should be made by the University of Arkansas in curricula for students interested in an Extension career.

7. Agents who are working toward any advanced degree or who wish to expand their professional development program should be encouraged to include courses in Extension administration management and supervision in addition to solid technical courses.

Future Areas of Research

The following recommendations are made by the author in regard to additional research conducted in the future:

1. Similar research be conducted to determine importance and performance of administrative skills perceived by the district supervisor, field staff administrators, and other county professionals as well as the county staff chairman.

2. Research on the relationship of the staff chairman's

administrative duties to subject matter responsibilities.

3. Role perception study of the staff chairman as perceived by state specialists, county extension agents and the staff chairmen to revise the current job description.

4. Research be conducted on agents' perceived competencies in the technical fields of agriculture or home economics.

5. Research be conducted in 4-H program and for the time needed to achieve a desired task and the actual time spent on the task.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

An Assessment of the Administrative Skills of County Staff Chairmen
in the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to determine the skills level that county staff chairmen perceive themselves to possess in performing 50 selected administrative tasks as county Extension administrators, and the relative importance that you attach to each task. The listing of skills you have been asked to respond to has been developed from relevant literature and other research.

The results of this study will identify administrative management areas in which future training programs for county staff chairmen may be conducted.

General Instructions

1. There are no "right" or "wrong" responses. The most important consideration is for you to respond openly and frankly to each item.
2. Please respond to all items on the questionnaire and recheck your responses to make sure that you have not skipped an item.
3. Please DO NOT sign the questionnaire. A number will be the only identification to your response. All questionnaires will be regarded as confidential.

PERSONAL DATA

Please check one response for each of the following items:

1. As of March 1, 1983, how many years have you been employed with the Cooperative Extension Service?

<u> </u> 0 - 3 years	<u> </u> 10 - 15 years	<u> </u> 21 - 25 years
<u> </u> 4 - 9 years	<u> </u> 16 - 20 years	<u> </u> 26 years or more
2. As of March 1, 1983, how many years' experience have you had as a county Extension agent - staff chairman?

<u> </u> 1 year or less	<u> </u> 11 - 15 years	<u> </u> 21 - 25 years
<u> </u> 2 - 5 years	<u> </u> 16 - 20 years	<u> </u> 26 years or more
<u> </u> 6 - 10 years		
3. What is the highest academic degree level you have currently attained?

<u> </u> Bachelor Degree only	<u> </u> Bachelor Degree plus some graduate work
<u> </u> Masters Degree only	<u> </u> Masters Degree plus additional graduate work
4. If you have taken academic courses beyond the Bachelors Degree level, approximately how many hours have you had in the "social and behavioral sciences" (education, sociology, process skills, administration, management, supervision, etc.)?

<u> </u> none	<u> </u> 7 - 12 hours	<u> </u> 19 - 24 hours
<u> </u> 1 - 6 hours	<u> </u> 13 - 18 hours	<u> </u> 25 hours or more
5. What is the total size of staff in your county? (Count the filled and unfilled professional, paraprofessional and clerical positions, but exclude your position.)

In your role as a county Extension administrator, what importance do you place on the following skills and to what level do you perform these skills?

IMPORTANCE					SKILLS	PERFORMANCE LEVEL				
(Circle one)						(Circle one)				
low				high		low				high
1	2	3	4	5	1. Exhibiting up-to-date knowledge in appropriate subject matter areas as an example to agents.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	2. Demonstrating to agents the use of traditional teaching methods.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	3. Demonstrating to agents the use of innovative teaching methods.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	4. Developing a high degree of professionalism for self and staff.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	5. Participating actively in professional organization/s.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	6. Assisting staff in developing their professional improvement program.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	7. Orienting all new county staff members.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	8. Demonstrating for agents the preparation of good radio and/or TV presentations.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	9. Demonstrating for agents the use of effective audio-visual communications (slides, overhead, films, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	10. Obtaining adequate physical facilities, equipment, and supplies for the county Extension office.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	11. Utilizing efficient office procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	12. Communicating policy changes and other pertinent information to county staff.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	13. Distributing work among clerical and/or paraprofessional staff.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	14. Conducting effective county staff conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	15. Building and maintaining a high degree of staff morale.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	16. Stimulating creative productivity.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	17. Utilizing staff work-time efficiently.	1	2	3	4	5

IMPORTANCE					SKILLS					PERFORMANCE LEVEL				
(Circle one)										(Circle one)				
low				high						low				high
1	2	3	4	5	18.	Counseling staff on pertinent matters.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	19.	Coordinating and delegating assignments for agents.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	20.	Recruiting and training clerical and/or paraprofessional employees.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	21.	Handling of employee termination.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	22.	Recommending salary adjustments.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	23.	Coordinating leave time for all staff members.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	24.	Conducting a performance evaluation for appropriate staff members.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	25.	Resolving conflicts.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	26.	Explaining employee benefits to staff.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	27.	Preparing job descriptions for self and with staff.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	28.	Involving the staff in decision making.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	29.	Coordinating county travel allotments.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	30.	Obtaining financial and other resource support for the county Extension program.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	31.	Preparing and justifying budgets.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	32.	Coordinating fund raising (4-H and other).				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	33.	Utilizing county financial and other resources efficiently.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	34.	Keeping records for county appropriations and other expenditures.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	35.	Keeping up to date on legislative action affecting Extension's budget.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	36.	Working well with people.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	37.	Maintaining communications with the district team.				1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	38.	Maintaining rapport with major farm organizations.				1	2	3	4	5

IMPORTANCE					SKILLS	PERFORMANCE LEVEL				
(Circle one)						(Circle one)				
low				high		low				high
1	2	3	4	5	39. Maintaining good relationships with leaders, officials, civic groups, USDA agencies, and other related groups in the county.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	40. Practicing good written communications (news articles, letters, office memos, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	41. Maintaining rapport with local mass media personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	42. Utilizing effective public speaking skills on general topics, on topics about Extension and/or the University system, and on subject matter topics.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	43. Developing a method to communicate Extension's program results to appropriate groups as well as the general public.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	44. Supervising and coordinating the total county program planning process.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	45. Working jointly with agents to implement county impact programs.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	46. Utilizing evaluation techniques for the county impact programs.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	47. Assisting agents in evaluating their educational activities.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	48. Knowing and complying with Civil Rights and other state and federal rules and regulations for Extension.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	49. Recruiting, training and utilizing volunteers for conducting activities in all phases of the county Extension program.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	50. Anticipating future program demand from clientele.	1	2	3	4	5

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

APPENDIX B

CORRESPONDENCE

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

AGRICULTURE AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS



DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE

STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA 74078

March 25, 1983

Bruce Bigger
County Extension Director
102 N. 4th
Madill, OK 73446

Dear Bruce,

Frank Plafcan, County Staff Chairman from Arkansas, is presently completing a doctoral program with our Department. The purpose of Frank's dissertation study is to assess the administrative skills of County Staff Chairman in the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. In order to increase the validity of his questionnaire, I would appreciate it if you would take a few moments to complete the enclosed draft copy. If you have any questions or additions to the questionnaire, please note them on the last page.

After completing the questionnaire, please return it to my office at 459 Ag Hall, Oklahoma State University, 74078.

I appreciate very much your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Roy R. Lessly
Extension Staff Development Specialist

RRL:mc
enclosure



Cooperative Extension Service

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture, and County Governments Cooperating.

1201 McAlmont
P.O. Box 391
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203
(501) 373-2500

March 10, 1983

Confidential

To County Extension Agents - Staff Chairmen:

One of the vital functions of the County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman is to perform certain administrative responsibilities in addition to conducting a county educational program.

To determine your current as well as desired level of confidence that you have in your role as a county Extension administrator, the enclosed questionnaire has been developed by Frank Plafcan for a study he is preparing. Individual responses will be kept confidential. The compiled responses from this questionnaire will be used in planning future training programs for staff chairmen. Since it was necessary to cancel the one this year, this study will help us to identify areas in which staff chairmen desire management training.

I would appreciate your prompt cooperation in completing this questionnaire.

Sincerely yours,

Randel K. Price
Associate Director - Field Operations

RKP:skh
Enclosure



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS Division of Agriculture, U. S. Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating

P. O. Box 973
Fort Smith, AR 72902
March 28, 1983

CONFIDENTIAL

POSTAGE

To County Extension Agent - Staff Chairmen
in Arkansas

In trying to select a dissertation topic, I considered what problems Extension agents have in performing their jobs. As a staff chairman, one of the most difficult problems I face is the role that we have as a county administrator. We were all trained in agriculture or home economics, not personnel management, office management, supervision or any specific administrative task. Most of us rely on our past experiences and common sense to carry out these duties. Nevertheless, they will always be part of the job.

To help us do our job better, I need your help in identifying administrative management areas in which you feel training is needed. A questionnaire has been developed to do just that.

Would you please take about 15-20 minutes of your time to complete the questionnaire and return it in the stamped envelope as soon as possible. You will be provided the results of the study.

Thank you for prompt attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Frank T. Plafcan
County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS Division of Agriculture, U. S. Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating

P. O. Box 973
Fort Smith, AR 72902
April 8, 1983

CONFIDENTIAL

POSTAGE

Dear Co-Worker:

Last week you should have received a questionnaire from me concerning the importance and performance of certain administrative skills as a county Extension agent - staff chairman.

If you have not completed it as yet, could you take a few minutes to do so today. If you did not receive one, please let me know and I will forward another one to you. In order to reflect more statistically accurate data, as many questionnaires as possible should be returned.

Again, thank you for your attention on this matter.

Sincerely,

Frank T. Plafcan
County Extension Agent-
Staff Chairman

VITA

Frank Tresvant Plafcan

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS OF COUNTY STAFF
CHAIRMEN IN THE ARKANSAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Major Field: Agricultural Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, August 28, 1947, the son of Mrs. Betty Ann Plafcan and the late Frank P. Plafcan.

Education: Graduated from Carlisle High School, Carlisle, Arkansas, May, 1965; received the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degree from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas, May, 1970; received the Master of Science degree from the University of Arkansas, May, 1976, with a major in Agricultural Economics; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1983, with a major in Agricultural Education.

Professional Experience: Rice and Soybean farm background; Assistant County Agent in Lee County, Marianna, Arkansas, from August, 1971 to July, 1973; County 4-H Agent in Washington County, Fayetteville, Arkansas, from July, 1973 to April, 1977; County Extension Agent - Staff Chairman in Sebastian County, Fort Smith, Arkansas, from April, 1977 to present.

Organizations: Arkansas County Agricultural Agents Association; National County Agricultural Agents Association; Arkansas Association of Extension 4-H Agents; National Association of Extension 4-H Agents; Epsilon Sigma Phi; Gamma Sigma Delta.