

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
NEEDS OF OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION COUNTY STAFF

By

CARA CAYENNE FERRELL

Bachelor of Science in Design, Housing, and Merchandising  
Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, Oklahoma  
1997

Master of Science in Design, Housing, and Merchandising  
Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, Oklahoma  
2000

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate College of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
December, 2005

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
NEEDS OF OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION COUNTY STAFF

Thesis Approved:

Charles Cox, Ed.D.

---

Thesis Adviser

James Key, Ph.D.

---

Penny Pennington, Ph.D.

---

Robert Nolan, Ph.D.

---

Gordon Emslie, Ph.D.

---

Dean of the Graduate College

## PREFACE

I would like to thank my committee, Dr. Charles Cox, Dr. James Key, Dr. Penny Pennington, and Dr. Robert Nolan for supporting me with your time and expertise throughout my coursework and dissertation work. Oklahoma State University is fortunate to have faculty members that are as devoted to their students as you are. I am especially thankful to Dr. Charles Cox for making time to be my dissertation adviser. Time is a precious commodity when you are the State 4-H Program Leader – thank you.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. Your work is noble and often under appreciated. Oklahoma is a better place because of your dedication and service. Thank you to Joyce Martin for providing me with data on the current OCES in-service training system. Specifically, I would like to thank Claude Bess, Nancy Dunlap, Don Britton, Mark Gregory, and Debbie Sharp. Claude and Nancy, it was an honor to work for you – I can't thank you enough for all of the encouragement and support you gave me. Don – I only wished that I could have worked for you longer. I learned so much from you, not just about Extension, but about working with people and being a leader in a community. Mark – many thanks for all of the encouragement you gave me to pursue a Ph.D. Debbie, you are undoubtedly the most talented person I know. Thank you for sharing your creativity

and kindness with me. You are truly an innovator of Extension programming. No one else is truer to our heritage and traditions while providing programming that meets the needs of citizens today.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my loving husband Shannon – this is dedicated to you. This is for taking the time to encourage a young freshmen girl at OSU that was completely convinced she was going to fail her courses and be forced out of college. The compassion you showed that night gave an insecure girl the confidence she needed to get through that semester, which grew throughout that year, her undergraduate degree, her master's degree, and now her Ph.D. Thank you for your confidence in me when I had none, for inspiring me, for pushing me outside my comfort zone, and for doing it all with a kindness and love. Most of all, thank you for marrying me. I am so proud to be your wife.

To Mom – my first example of a professional woman. You taught me the importance of determination, ambition, and education. Thank you for being such a loving mother, Christian example, and friend.

To Dad – this dissertation would not have happened without you. You exposed me to the Extension Service at a very early age. We have walked more sheep, show calves, and rode more horses than I can ever count. Thank you for showing me what hard work is and the rewards for that. I know that you have wanted me to get my Ph.D. for a long time, I hope you are proud.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Introduction to the Cooperative Extension Service .....	1
Problem .....	2
Purpose .....	3
Objectives .....	3
Scope .....	4
Assumptions .....	4
Definitions .....	4
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	6
The Challenge of Professional Development .....	10
Professional Development Models .....	13
Adult Education Research .....	17
Andragogy .....	19
Characteristics of Adult Learners (CAL) .....	19
Knox's Proficiency Theory .....	20
Transformative Learning Theory .....	20
Cooperative Extension In-service Training Models .....	21
North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service .....	21
Texas Cooperative Extension Service .....	22
Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service .....	23
Ohio Cooperative Extension Service .....	24
Integration of Adult Education and Cooperative Extension Training Models .....	24
Summary of Literature Review .....	25
III. METHODOLOGY .....	26
Discussion Questions .....	30
Population and Sample Description .....	31
Additional Demographic Information about the Educators With Three Years or Less Experience .....	33

Chapter	Page
IV. FINDINGS .....	37
Objectives .....	37
Objective 1 .....	37
Objective 2 .....	38
Objective 3 .....	39
Objective 4 .....	40
Application of Professional Development in the Counties .....	41
Technical Knowledge or Subject Matter Expertise .....	42
Opinions on Other Topics for Oklahoma Cooperative	
Extension Professional Development .....	44
Opinions about New Employee Orientation .....	45
Opinions about Current Professional Development Activities	
For all Employees .....	46
Opinions about Measuring the Success of a Professional	
Development System .....	47
Suggestions for Future Professional Development .....	48
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	50
Recommendations .....	54
Implications .....	56
REFERENCES .....	58
APPENDIXES .....	61
APPENDIX 1 – IRB APPROVAL FORM .....	62
APPENDIX 2 – INFORMED CONSENT FORM .....	64
APPENDIX 3 – SYSTEMS APPROACH: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL: OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION .....	67
APPENDIX 4 – NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CORE COMPETENCIES .....	69
APPENDIX 5 – NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR CORE COMPETENCIES KNOWLEDGE OF THE ORGANIZATION .....	71

Chapter		Page
APPENDIX 6 –	NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR CORE COMPETENCIES TECHNICAL/SUBJECT MATTER .....	73
APPENDIX 7 –	NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR CORE COMPETENCY PROGRAMMING .....	77
APPENDIX 8 –	NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR CORE COMPETENCY PROFESSIONALISM .....	80
APPENDIX 9 –	NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR CORE COMPETENCY COMMUNICATIONS .....	82
APPENDIX 10 –	NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR CORE COMPETENCY HUMAN RELATIONS .....	85
APPENDIX 11 –	NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR CORE COMPETENCY LEADERSHIP .....	87
APPENDIX 12 –	OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION FAMILY RESILIENCY IMPACT TEAM CHARACTER EDUCATION ASSESSMENT .....	90
APPENDIX 13 –	FOCUS ANALYSIS WORKSHEET .....	96



## LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Focus Group Participation by Program Area and Years of Experience .....	33
2.	Telephone Interview Participants by Program Area and Years of Experience .....	35
3.	Sample Members Length of Employment With Oklahoma Cooperative Extension .....	36

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Integrative Approach to Professional Development .....	13
2.	Professional Development Dynamics .....	15
3.	OCES Education Years of Experience, 2005 .....	27

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction to the Cooperative Extension Service

The Cooperative Extension Service is the outreach division of land-grant universities. It was created in 1914 by the Smith-Lever Act as a partnership of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the land-grant universities. Its mission was to “aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture, uses of solar energy with respect to agriculture, home economics, and rural energy, and to encourage the application of the same” (Smith-Lever Act, 1914, Chapter 79, Section 2). Today Cooperative Extension staff lives and works in local communities and serve as a link between the university and the community to disseminate research-based information to the citizens of their communities.

Cooperative Extension field staff educates the citizens of their communities through various teaching methods. Nichols and Howard (2002) explain how Extension staff members educate adults in Ohio on the topic of gerontology through the use of fact sheets, conferences and workshops, and shared programs. Fact sheets are publications distributed to the public on various topics of expertise. Conferences and workshops are taught by Cooperative Extension staff members to the public. Shared programs share

information and educational products that are developed by its members and are shared among states (Nichols & Howard, 2002).

Cooperative Extension focuses on educating the public. In order to do that effectively, staff members need to employ adult education teaching methods. However, adult education instructional methods should not be limited to the audience the county staff serves. They should also be used in the professional development training that is used by Cooperative Extension to train its staff. These training sessions are referred to as in-service trainings by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension staff.

### Problem

Cooperative Extension is known for disseminating research-based information for practical use by the public. Training Cooperative Extension staff to disseminate this information is the responsibility of each state. The training models used for Cooperative Extension professional development vary greatly state to state in this country. There is no national standard for a state Extension program to follow. The state of Oklahoma is currently in the process of creating a professional development system for Cooperative Extension Educators.

The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service is experiencing significant staffing changes, including the addition of 37 new County Extension Educators from July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005. At the time of this study 21% of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Educators have worked in Extension for less than three years. With so many employees new to the Extension system, there is a great need for a professional development system.

## Purpose

The purpose of this research was to consider existing Cooperative Extension professional development core competencies and make recommendations for the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. These recommendations were based on the literature and qualitative data collected from Oklahoma County Extension Educators in focus groups.

## Objectives

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following objectives were accomplished:

To review adult education/professional development and Cooperative Extension literature and identify professional development core competencies.

To identify foundational components used in other Cooperative Extension professional development models.

To determine if the core competencies of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension professional development model are relevant competencies for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County Educators professional development needs through focus group interviews.

To summarize the findings from the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County Educators focus groups and make suggestions based on those findings.

## Scope

Twenty-one percent of Oklahoma's Extension Educators have less than three years experience (OCES Educator Statistics, 2005). These new Extension Educators are in need of professional development experiences to orient them to their new positions. The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service has developed a professional development model that this study evaluated to determine its viability for use in the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. Educators with three or less years of experience in the Cooperative Extension Service and Educators with fifteen or more years of experience in the Cooperative Extension Service discussed their professional development needs through focus group interviews.

## Assumptions

This study assumes that the focus group participants gave the best possible information in the focus groups and that the participants felt comfortable enough in the environment to speak freely.

## Definitions

4-H Youth Development Extension Educator – provides leadership to 4-H youth development program in the county where they are employed and are responsible for youth educational programs.

Agriculture Extension Educator – presents and coordinates educational programs in agriculture and natural resources requiring a broad technical knowledge of subjects related to the agriculture of the county.

County Extension Director (CED) – County Extension Educator who has also been assigned the responsibility of managing the county office and reports to the County Commissioners of the county, district, and state staff administrators.

Family & Consumer Sciences Extension Educator – provides leadership to family and consumer sciences programs in the county where they are employed and are responsible for educational programs such as volunteer and leadership development, food safety, nutrition, child development, parenting, resource management, and family finance.

In-service Training – a common term used to describe professional development experiences in the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.

Program Advisory Committee (PAC) – a grass roots group of Cooperative Extension supporters who give their feedback to County Extension Educators for programming needs.

Staffing Assignments – Extension Educators may be assigned to more than one program area, examples include Agriculture and 4-H Youth Development, Family & Consumer Sciences and 4-H Youth Development, Agriculture and Rural and Community Development, Family & Consumer Sciences and Rural and Community Development. Educators are assigned to each program area for a specified amount of their time for example 50%/50%, 90%/10%.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research from the fields of professional development, adult education, and Cooperative Extension are explored to review the literature relevant to professional development experiences in The Cooperative Extension Service. Extension Educators rely on professional development and adult education activities to prepare them to serve as and educator for their clientele. This review of literature begins by reviewing professional development research.

Belzer (2005) evaluated the professional development system for the Pennsylvania Adult Basic and Literacy Education program. In this study, Belzer studied the relationships between the planners and participants of professional development and studied the impact of the professional development system. From this study recommendations were made for implementing a professional development system. Included in those recommendations were suggestions for building a shared vision of professional development. The shared vision is an important ingredient in building a cohesive professional development system. A consensus for establishing guiding principles for the system is important for determining the purpose of the professional development. Understanding the purpose of the professional development system assists participants in their understanding of how and why the activities they are involved in are important.



A reoccurring theme in Belzer's (2005) study was that professional development systems do not always meet the range of the participants. In this study, the participants that were experienced in their fields, often felt as if the professional development activities were at too basic of a level to meet their needs. These experienced participants felt that the activities assumed they had little formal training or experience. This is a missed opportunity for targeted professional development experiences (Belzer, 2005).

Kutner & Tibbetts (1997) stated that in professional development, practitioners should be active participants in determining their own needs and should contribute to designing appropriate learning activities (p.3). In their study, they reviewed a comprehensive professional development system and found that professional development activities should be based on competencies and an assessment of needs. They also stated that there is no one best approach to professional development and multiple approaches should be utilized (Kutner & Tibbetts, 1997).

Slusarski (1999) offered a light-hearted view of adult learners participating in professional development. She identified four different styles of participation in professional development activities. The first style are the ghosts, these learners are reluctant to participate in professional development activities, and are even known to be "invisible" during these activities. Grazers look at all of the options and skim over the choices available. At conferences, they may attend one session for a little while, and then disappear to attend another session. Gluttons always have the latest research and are interested in all of the professional development activities available.

Gardeners intentionally select an area to develop and enjoy talking to others about their experiences with the topic. Slusarski's humorous look at learner perspectives is reflective of the different needs of adult learners in professional development activities.

The purpose of professional development is to obtain information, techniques, and resources from research-based information that the adult learner can implement. The goal of a professional development instructor in Cooperative Extension becomes to provide that information from the research. Professional development is distinguished from the academic study of adult education which seeks to extend the field's knowledge and theory base in addition to serving the needs of the practitioners. Practitioner-driven professional development models of adult education practice often presents more challenges than opportunities. These challenges can be overcome by creating a professional development program where practitioners are an integral part of the improvement process (Marceau, 2003).

Professional development activities help educators understand why and how they perform certain duties. Educators are in a unique situation in professional development, they are adult learners, and are often learning how to be teachers themselves. Professional development activities are needed to assist educators develop their own teaching skills. Professional development should include activities that foster content and process knowledge through reflections of the learner. Activities that focus on "how" rather than broader topics are an attempt to create knowledge. Often times, these attempts fall short of their goals, they focus on one

component of a bigger picture and do not meet the needs of the adult learners (Cranton & King, 2003).

Livneh & Livneh (1999) conducted a study to determine if characteristics and skills associated with the pursuit of professional development could be identified. They found that self-motivation was the best indicator for the amount of time spent in learning activities over the past twelve months. External motivation and education level were also indicators of the amount of time spent over the past twelve months. Lower levels of education were found to increase time in professional development activities, although the lowest level of education evaluated was a bachelor's degree (Livneh & Livneh, 1999).

Educators involved in professional development activities need to understand what they do and why they do it. Activities should incorporate content, process, and premise reflection. Content reflection is “the examination of the content or description of a problem” (Cranton & King, 2003, p. 34). Content reflection is often used to evaluate professional development activities by the educator (Cranton & King, 2003).

Process reflection evaluates problem-solving activities that were used in professional development. This is a method that educators examine their programs to determine what strategies may not have been effective. Premise reflection questions the problem itself. This type of self-reflection can be a good evaluation tool for professional development as well as a starting point for continuous improvement (Cranton & King, 2003).

Cranton & King (2003) suggest transformational professional development strategies which includes action plans, case studies, curriculum development, and critical theory discussion in addition to the previously discussed reflective activities. Action plans include reflective activities used to guide the flow of the educational activities. Case studies are educational tools that use real-life examples to analyze consequences and actions. Curriculum development is used to link theory and practice in professional development. Critical theory is used by educators in programs for adults to build on practice by analyzing teaching and learning practices. These steps are recommended to explore new possibilities of educating adults in professional development rather than teaching and learning as usual to provide the ground work for lifelong learning (Cranton & King, 2003).

Kelleher (2003) approaches professional development as Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound (SMART) goals. These SMART goals are a collection of connected activities that are closely linked to the goals of the professional development. A SMART goal is specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound. Once a goal has been created for the individual or group it will influence the selection of professional development activities (Kelleher, 2003).

### The Challenge of Professional Development

The challenge of developing professional development programs is complicated by the diverse educational and training background of the workforce. A broader, more descriptive method of documenting the impact of professional

development is needed. Belzer (2003) said that conceptions of professional development along four dimensions: 1) who or what the primary source of knowledge is; 2) process/content/outcome; 3) conceptions of change; 4) the relationships between theory/research and practice (Belzer, 2003).

Lawler and King (2003) argue to challenge the status quo of professional development one should start with a new commitment from three perspectives. The first perspective is to reconceptualize the process of understanding teachers of adult learners and the context in which they work. In the past, the focus has been on content, what should be learned, accountability, and assessment, and outcomes. Now the focus needs to be expanded to include understanding the needs of teachers of adults, motivation, goals, reward structures, and the organizational context. Planning programs in professional development is a social activity in the context of people, politics, and organizational culture (Lawler & King, 2003).

The second perspective is to integrate the concept of active learning into our professional development activities. Adults who are active in their learning are more likely to make that learning meaningful to their personal lives. A more collaborative approach on the part of teacher of the adults and the adult learners is a more successful approach to professional development. Strategies should include engaging in learning activities that include teachers of adults in the planning and evaluation processes (Lawler & King, 2003).

The third perspective includes reflection and dialogue that requires being aware of the practice and skills of questioning and listening. The process of professional growth requires critical reflection on what is central to the learning

process. Observation, reflection, and taking action steps are important in the development process (Lawler & King, 2003).

Distinguishing between training and adult education is another way to explain various modes of delivery. Training is the transmission of information and knowledge and learning (which is considered impact). Adult education is an activity in which participants are gaining new information and generating new knowledge as well as problem solving and critiquing the current knowledge base. The variety of approaches suggests that methods of gathering data and descriptions of impact should be both philosophically consistent with a range of professional development activities (Belzer, 2003).

Training has many benefits for an organization, especially in regard to the constantly changing technologies that effects an organization. Individuals within an organization can frequently be uncomfortable with change when it comes to learning something new. However, change is one constant in the organizations today. Training can be a tool to help ensure success in a changing environment (Hinton, 2004).

In academia professional development is also termed as Continuing Professional Education (CPE). In the past these professional development activities have been viewed as short workshops or graduate classes. Livneh & Livneh (1999) argue that these opportunities need to evolve to include reflection on practices and problem solving, continuing dialogue with colleagues, development of a social culture that involves collaboration, involve peer observation, coaching, and feedback, as well as continuing the entire length of the professional's career.

## Professional Development Models

Lawler & King (2003) propose an integrated approach to professional development based on their vision of five assumptions and their relationship to professional development.

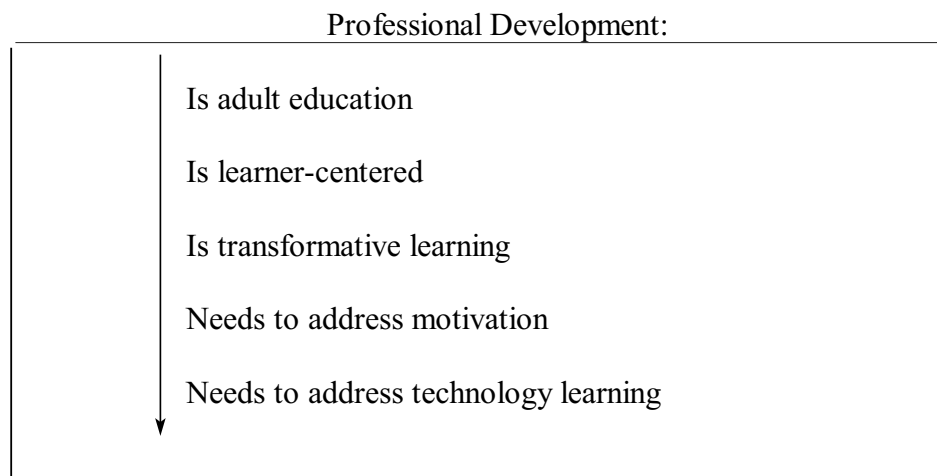


Figure 1. Integrative Approach to Professional Development

Source: Lawler, P.A. & King, K.P. (2003). Changes, challenges, and the future. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 98, 83-91.

The first assumption of this model is that professional development is adult education. Professional development utilizes research and practical application from the field of adult education. The second assumption requires a shift of paradigm to a learner-centered philosophy and practice of adult education. The characteristics of

the teachers of adult's needs, goals, issues, and context are now the central focus of the planning, development, and delivery of the programs through a collaborative process. The third assumption says that professional development is also a transformative learning process. This view looks at professional development as an opportunity to cultivate reflective practice and challenge the assumptions, beliefs, and values of what is being taught. Learning is viewed as a lifelong process that empowers individuals to transform themselves. Assumption four, motivation, is key to learning and change. Teachers of adults have unique issues to face. The theories and practical strategies of adult learning concepts can be applied to assist us in our understanding of why teachers, trainers, and other educators are reluctant to change and grow in their practices with adult students. The final assumption, the need for learning educational technology, has a constantly changing effect upon teachers of adults. Professional development vision and practices need to address effective strategies for evolving technology (Lawler & King, 2003).

Stern & Queeney (1992) outline Nowlen's Performance Model for CPE. Their models has three facets; a) keeping updated on professional knowledge and skills, b) analyzing job functions and preparing for new roles, and c) considering the environment, professional, and personal contexts within the professional activities. There is a debate as to who is responsible for this continuing education. It is argued that the responsibility lies with the professional; others argue that it is the organizations responsibility, and still others say that it is a combination of both. If the responsibility is to be shared, then it must be determined how professional development can facilitate life-long learning (Livneh & Livneh, 1999).



King and Lawler (2003) proposed a Professional Development Dynamics Model that focuses on professional developers, teaching educators, the teachers of adult learners, teaching adults, and the adult learner as a process and the needs and issues they face. See Figure 2.

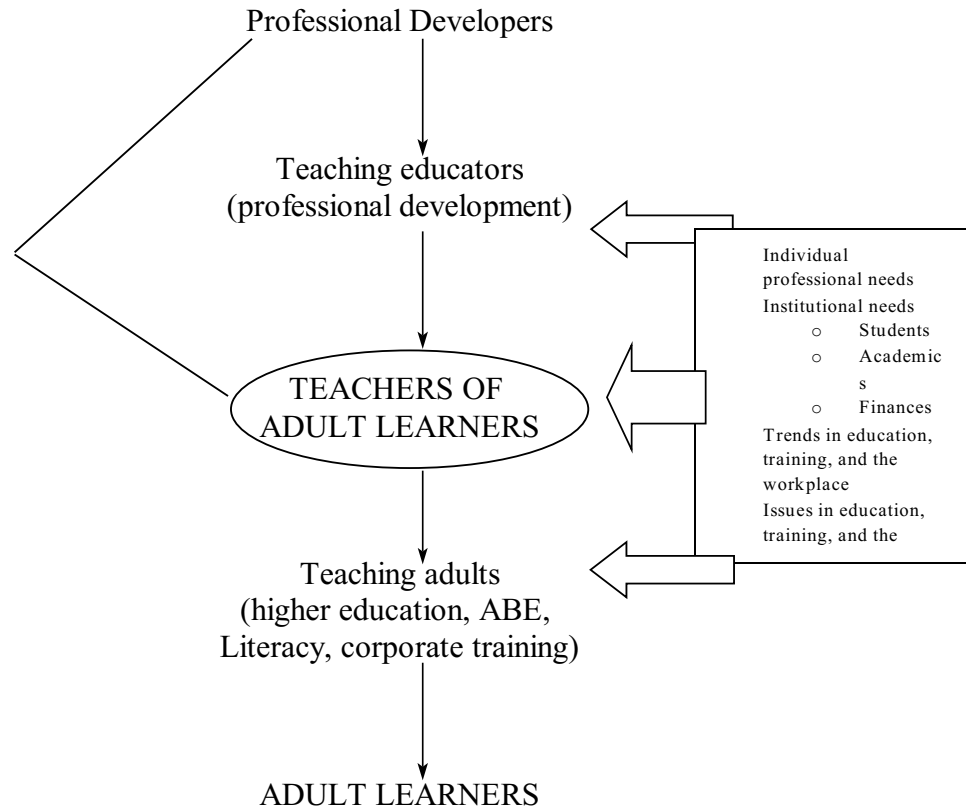


Figure 2. Professional Development Dynamics

Source: Lawler, P.A. & King, K.P. (2003). Changes, challenges, and the future. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 98, 83-91.

The Professional Development Dynamics model recognizes that professional developers are under pressure in today's organizational culture where they must effectively handle students, academic concerns, finances, and current trends, and issues. In the past, student performance was the primary focus. Today the educator's responsibility is heavy with an emphasis on achievement. Educators face the varied needs of students of different nationalities, languages, gender, sexual orientation, educational preparation, and age. The professional developers become teaching educators that are faced with meeting these individual professional needs (King & Lawler, 2003).

As the professional developers become teaching educators, then teachers of adult learners, and begin to teach these adults specific subject matter, they are faced with more needs. The institution's needs that must also be met include students, academic concerns, and financial concerns. The professional developer must also address trends and issues in education, training, and the workplace in their training(s). Trends that the educator must face include the demand for incorporation of the latest technology into the content and delivery of the professional development and meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse educational setting. Technology, professionalization, focus, and assessment are issues for the professional developer reflected in the model. New technologies force us to consider how we use the technology in our work. The call for the professionalization of teaching provides expertise in recognizing educator's needs and interests. A new focus of teachers of adults on experiences can help learners understand with a new perspective. The final issue professional developers must face is the need for assessment. Assessments evaluate the success or failure of a program as

well as identifies successful programs and best practices in a comprehensive evaluation. All of these steps of the model lead to learning for the adult learner (King & Lawler, 2003).

### Adult Education Research

Learning and teaching are two different terms with different meanings. Learning refers to what the learner does while teaching refers to what the teacher does. The Kolb cycle explains these ideas further and suggests that learning takes place through a series of stages following the experience of an event. A process of reflection occurs which leads to conceptualization. Then learners will experiment with or demonstrate what they have learned. This experimentation leads to further experiences and the cycle begins again. If this cycle is used to direct the learning process, it is a process of teaching, not learning. The Kolb cycle is effective because it emphasizes the role of reflection and experimenting with knowledge (Moon, 2004).

The learner can affect the quality of their learning process. There is a difference between learners who take a deeper, in depth approach and those who take a surface approach to learning. Learners who take a deeper approach to understand the meaning of the material and make sense of it in terms that they already know are more able to interpret ideas to put into practice. A learner with a surface approach to learning who is only concerned with putting the idea in their head for short term memory will not internalize the information learned (Moon, 2004).

Honey and Mumford (1986) identified four preferred learning styles for adult learners. Activists are learners who enjoy the challenge of new experiences but often

become bored with implementing the new knowledge. They enjoy action and activities centered around themselves. Reflectors are learners who observe and evaluate situations from several different perspectives before reaching a conclusion. Their perspective is one from the past and the present and they are cautious to consider others opinions before any decision is made. A theorist is a learner who integrates their observations into logical theories that can be complex. They benefit from logically coherent learning connections between differing learning opportunities. Pragmatists enjoy trying new ideas and theories and testing them to determine how they can be put into practice. They act quickly to find a practical, problem solving approach to a situation.

Good teaching is defined in three ways by Moon (2004). The relation to the quality of learning that is encouraged, the teacher's ability to be aware of the learner's state of learning, and the technical skills of the material. Good teachers do what they can to facilitate and adopt the appropriate approach for the learner (Moon, 2004).

Adult learning principles are based on learner attributes such as readiness to learn what a person perceives that they need. If adult learners do not perceive the need to attend an educational event, they will leave the event having learned or shared nothing. Adult learners prefer problem centered information rather than subject centered. Information can be applied to their work situation immediately is more attractive to adult learners who view themselves as independent people who's life experiences contribute to their work environments. They prefer activities that are structured, logical, and respect their individual freedom of ideas (Dealy & Bass, 1995).

## Andragogy

Malcolm Knowles proposed a framework for adult education called andragogy. In his framework he outlined six assumptions of adult learning, they are; 1) the need to know, 2) the learner's self-concept, 3) the role of experience, 4) readiness to learn, 5) orientation to learning, 6) motivation (Knowles, 1990). These assumptions distinguish adult learning from pedagogical models of children's learning.

Assumption one, the need to know, states that adults need to know why they need that information before learning it. The second assumption, the learner's self-concept, addresses adults need to have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions and their own lives. They need to be treated by others as capable of being self-directed. The third assumption, the role of experience, places educational value on the life experiences of the learner. Assumption four, readiness to learn, states adults need to be ready to learn information that they can apply to their lives. The fifth assumption, orientation to learning, says adults learn knowledge most effectively when it is applied to real-life situations. The final assumption, motivation, states that internal motivation is the best motivators to adult learning (Knowles, 1990). This framework provides practical application for adult learners in various situations, including professional development training.

## Characteristics of Adult Learners (CAL)

The characteristics of adult learners (CAL) are a model proposed by Cross (1981). Cross's CAL model is a framework of the current knowledge of adult learners that serves as a guide for future research by thinking about what and how adults learn.

Cross states that some of andragogy assumptions can be incorporated into his model. It is based on the differences between children and adults and consists of two classes of variables; personal and situational characteristics. Personal characteristics are physical, psychological, and sociocultural dimensions. These dimensions reflect growth and development from childhood into adult life. Situational characteristics are variables that are unique to adult learners, for example, full-time versus part-time learning. The CAL model incorporates completed research on aging, participation, and motivation. This model also offers a framework for thinking about what and how adults learn.

#### Knox's Proficiency Theory

Knox's Proficiency Theory (1980) focuses on the gap between what adults know and what they want to know. Proficiency is the capability to perform in a given situation. Knox states performance involves some combination of attitudes, knowledge, and skill. This theory helps to explain what motivates adults to achievement in learning activities. Proficiency in continuing education emphasizes achievement of optimal standards of adult life roles.

#### Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow initially introduced Transformative Learning Theory in 1975, over time this theory had grown through the works of other researchers. At the heart of this theory is the concept that we make meaning out of the world through our experiences. If something happens once, we expect it to happen again. Throughout our daily lives we

absorb values, assumptions, and beliefs about how things are through our past experiences (Cranton & King, 2003).

Transformational learning takes place when the process of absorbing our past experiences leads us to open our frame of reference to see new alternatives. That new view of options leads us to act differently in the world. When educators examine their practices critically, they acquire new ways of understanding what they do and transformational learning takes place. This is a goal of professional development (Cranton & King, 2003).

### Cooperative Extension In-service Training Models

#### North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service

North Carolina's professional development system is based in Core Competencies, sub-competencies and proficiency levels. North Carolina Cooperative Extension (NCCE) established the Blue Ribbon Commission on Staff Development and Training in August 1998 (<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/pods/rootofcomps.shtml>, 4/25/03). Today their professional development system includes a mission and a set of guiding principles. The mission of the Personal & Organizational System (PODS) is to ensure excellence in North Carolina Cooperative Extension through individual and organizational growth. There guiding principles are:

The Personal and Organizational Development System contributes directly to the mission, vision, and goals of North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

The Personal and Organizational Development System is competency-based and competencies include technical, conceptual, and interpersonal knowledge, skills, and observable behaviors.

Individuals are responsible for their own growth and development in a learner-focused system.

The organization provides an environment that supports learning opportunities and growth for all employees and volunteers.

Learning is a continuous and interactive process; individuals enter NCCE with varying levels of competencies and progress developmentally as long as they are associated with the organization.

The Personal and Organizational Development System is a dynamic and flexible system that adjusts and renews itself in response to internal and external forces. (NC Cooperative Extension, 2003).

The seven Core Competencies identified are presented in Figure 2 were downloaded from the North Carolina website (<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/pods/comps.shtml>) on April 25, 2003. These competencies provide the basis for the professional development trainings provided to their employees and can be found in Appendix 2.

There are sub-competency and proficiency levels for the core competency for County Extension Directors. The following figures show the sub-levels the technical expertise competency which is important for county educators who are developing their expertise and leadership skills to become a County Extension Director.

#### Texas Cooperative Extension Service

Competencies are the bases for the professional development system in the Texas Cooperative Extension Service. Competencies are the application of knowledge, technical skills, and personal characteristics that lead to outstanding performance (Stone, 1997). Competency models can be built for individuals, specific jobs, teams, units or an entire organization. When the models are implemented they can be applied to a variety



of contexts including orientation, training, and career development. The systems approach to developing competency models includes:

- identifying areas of opportunity,
- targeting potential audiences,
- collecting competency data and associated behaviors,
- building competency models, and
- communicating the new language of competencies (Stone, 1997).

After the model is developed Extension professionals will evaluate their knowledge and skills in relation to the competencies in their model. Supervisors will work with the professionals in the development of the models which will be a factor in their employee evaluation (Stone, 1997).

#### Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

Cooperative Extension In-service training varies from state to state. Currently, there is no standard system for states to use to train its staff. Oklahoma is currently in the process of developing a system for its county staff. It is currently in the form of objectives stated below:

- To offer progressive, consistent, thorough and integrated in-service education to county educators.

- Enable county educators to deliver quality educational programs that make a difference in people's lives.

- Be consistent with county educator's plans of work, timeline, and support professional development.

- Departments and specialists will be responsible for developing a logical and progressive plan of in-service education.

- In-service plans will include information about all of the components of the program and how to deliver/evaluate the program. Teaching materials will focus on application to help solve problems faced by citizens.

Some programs may be designated as “impact programs” (an impact program devotes considerable time and emphasis with the goal of being able to document the effect of the program) (OCES, 2005, p.1-2).

These objectives were derived from a report provided to me by the Director for Staff and Program Development for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service titled “Key Points to Guide Departments in the Development of an In-service Education Plan”. A new position has been developed by OCES to work with the in-service education system. Currently, they are in the process of re-vamping the in-service system. The goals in this report are the starting place for these changes. Therefore, with the assistance of OCES Southeast District Director we determined that the previously listed objectives would be the most suitable guidelines for use in this study.

#### Ohio Cooperative Extension Service

Ohio State University uses a professional development model based on four stages (Kutilke, Gunderson, & Conklin, 2002). They are the entry stage, the colleague stage, the counselor stage, and the advisor stage. Each stage considers the motivators and organizational strategies for that phase. The model can be found in Appendix 1:

#### Integration of Adult Education and Cooperative Extension Training Models

The goal of integrating adult education, professional development and Cooperative Extension literature is to build a research foundation for further Cooperative Extension professional development research. Adult education and professional development research provide a base for training model development. The

commonalities of adult education and professional development training models need to be identified for possible incorporation into any new potential professional development systems for the Cooperative Extension Service. It is important to combine research, theory, and models from all of the related fields to address all of the needs of a strong professional development program for Extension employees.

### Summary of Literature Review

The professional development literature focused on the adult learner as a part of the professional development process. In addition to these models, other adult education and training research was reviewed and summarized.

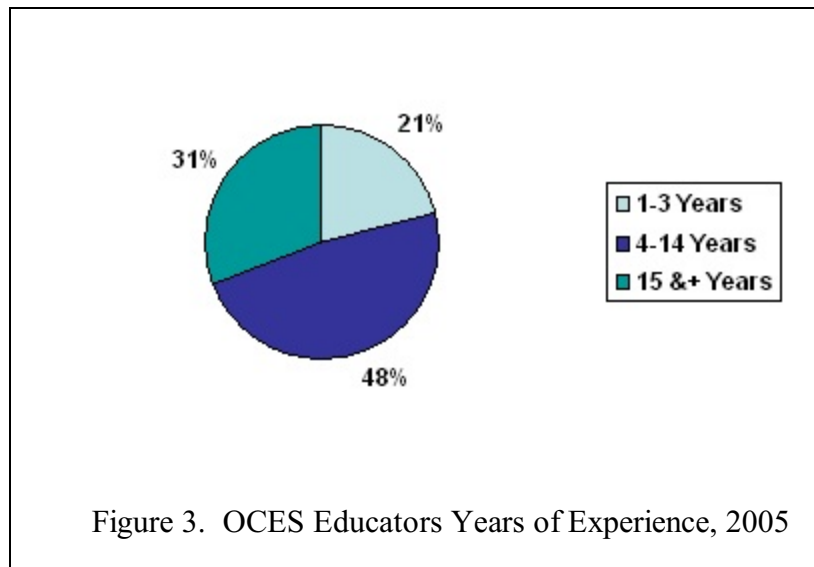
The Cooperative Extension Service literature review found two states that had established professional development models and two additional states that relied upon objectives or core competencies to guide their professional development needs. The Ohio Cooperative Extension Service Professional Development Model (Kutilke, Gunderson, & Conklin, 2002) is based on four stages of development; the entry stage, the colleague stage, the counselor stage, and the advisor stages. The similarities of the framework of stages and competencies confirmed the decision to utilize the North Carolina professional development model for evaluation.

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension professional Development model is based in core competencies, sub-competencies and proficiency levels. This model was the bases of comparison for the focus groups.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

During the summer of 2005, the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service employed 182 Extension Educators. As illustrated in Figure 3, at the time of the study, 14% of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service's County Educators had less than one-year of experience. Twenty-one percent of the educators had less than three years experience (OCES Educator Statistics, 2005,). In contrast 31% of the staff in Oklahoma had 15 or more years of experience. These two groups of educators were selected as they combined represented 52% of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Educators. Of those educators who participated in this study, none of the educators in the three years or less focus groups also had County Extension Director (CED) responsibilities; however, some in the 15 years of service group were currently CED's or had served in the role on an interim basis during their career.



The population of this study was selected as Extension Educators from each of three program areas of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service: Agriculture, Family Consumer Sciences and 4-H Youth Development with three or fewer years of service and educators with 15 or more years of service. Six focus groups were conducted; agriculture educators (Ag) with three years or less experience, agriculture educators (Ag) with fifteen or more years of experience, 4-H (4-H) educators with three years less experience, 4-H (4-H) educators with fifteen or more years of experience, family and consumer sciences educators (FCS) with three years or less experience, and family and

consumer sciences (FCS) educators with fifteen or more years of experience. There were a total of twenty-three participants.

Three focus groups focused on the needs of new county educators. Educators who had worked less than three years were asked about the importance of knowledge of the organization, technical expertise, programming, professionalism, communications, human relations, and leadership as a core competency needs for their professional development. There was a focus group for each program area in this category of years of service, therefore the focus groups were: Agriculture Educators with three years or less experience, Family & Consumer Sciences Educators with three years or less experience, and 4-H Educators with three years or less experience.

Three additional focus groups focused on the needs of experienced county educators. Educators who had worked fifteen or more years were also asked about the importance of knowledge of the organization, technical expertise, programming, professionalism, communications, human relations, and leadership as a core competency needs for their professional development. There was a focus group for each program area in this category of years of service, therefore the focus groups were: Agriculture Educators with fifteen or more years of experience, Family & Consumer Sciences Educators with fifteen or more years of experience, and 4-H Educators with fifteen or more years of experience. The differences between the two groups were explored and compared to core competencies identified by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension system.

To achieve the objectives of the study, the focus group method was selected. The methodology for conducting the focus groups and evaluating the data from the

participants was based on the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Family Resiliency Impact Team Character Education Assessment. The Focus Group Tool Kit materials were developed by the Christine Johnson, Ph.D., Director of the Bureau of Social Research at Oklahoma State University (Johnson, 2004) and are found in appendix 12. The tool kit included instructions for conducting focus group interviews which were used in this study. This design was tested in the spring of 2005 by the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Family Resiliency Impact Team.

The focus groups were effective at collecting data in the form of open ended questions and creating discussion among the participants. Focus groups were selected because they provide valuable sources of information and they are capable of reporting factual data and the data can be interpreted. Focus groups provide data that includes the discussion of opinions, feelings, and perceptions in a structured group discussion (Chioncel, Van Der Veen, & Jarvis, 2003). Focus groups are well suited for adult education research because they offer a concrete opportunity for participants and researchers to learn from the process and participate in the process (Field, 2000). Focus groups also provide an opportunity for shared exchanges that challenge the opinions being discussed (Field, 2000).

The focus groups data were documented on audio tape as well as transcription of the meeting. Confidentiality was maintained and consent forms were completed by the participants as approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board. All transcripts of the focus groups were kept in a locked cabinet and the transcripts and audio tapes of the focus groups were destroyed after the research was completed. Federal regulations and Oklahoma State University policy require review and approval of all

research studies that involve human subjects before investigators can begin their research. The Oklahoma State University Office of University Research Services and the Institutional Review Board conduct this review to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in biomedical and behavioral research. In compliance with the aforementioned policy, this study received the proper surveillance and was granted permission to continue under approval number OSU AG0540.

### Discussion Questions

The following discussion questions were asked of the participants during all six focus group interviews and telephone interviews. The questions were sequenced by an opening question, introductory and transitions questions, key questions, and closing questions as suggested by Krueger (1998). The responses to these questions were audio-taped and the researcher also took notes during the focus groups.

Tell us your name, county, programming responsibilities, and how long you have worked for Extension.

Describe a professional development experience since you have worked for Extension that was an outstanding experience(s).

What has been your biggest disappointment in your Extension professional development experience(s)?

Let's talk about your professional development needs. How can Extension most effectively address those needs?

What needs are being overlooked that need to be addressed?

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service has identified some core competencies for their professional development system. Let's talk about these competencies.



Knowledge of the Organization – they define it as: An understanding of the history, philosophy, and contemporary nature of North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

Technical Expertise – The mastery of a scientific discipline, a research body of knowledge, or a technical proficiency that enhances individual and organizational effectiveness.

Programming – The ability to plan, design, implement, evaluate and account for significant Extension education programs that improve the quality of life for NCCE customers.

Professionalism – The demonstration of behaviors that reflect high levels of performance, a strong work ethic, and a commitment to continuing education and to the mission, vision, and goals of the NCCE.

Communications – The ability to transfer and receive information effectively.

Human Relations – The ability to successfully interact with diverse individuals and groups creating partnerships, networks, and dynamic human systems.

Leadership – The ability to influence a wide range of diverse individuals and groups positively.

Would these core competencies be effective in an Oklahoma Cooperative Extension professional development program? Would some of them be better than others?

How would you measure the success of a professional development system in Oklahoma?

Have we missed anything you would like to discuss?

Did I correctly describe what was said?

### Population and Sample Description

The population of the focus groups was Extension Educators in attendance at their professional association meetings of each of the program areas, per suggestion of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension District Directors. A list of Educators registered to attend the conference was provided to the researcher. Educators who had registered for

the meeting and met the focus group criteria, were contacted by phone and email and asked to participate in the focus groups during their free time at the meeting two weeks prior to the conference. The professional association meetings where the focus groups were conducted are voluntary for the county educators. Therefore, not all of the Extension Educators in Oklahoma were in attendance and available for recruitment into the focus groups. The sample included the Extension Educators that met the criteria and agreed to participate in the focus groups from the population. The focus groups were administered on the following dates: Agriculture Educators with three years or less – June 21, 2005, Agriculture Educators fifteen years or more – June 20, 2005, Family and Consumer Sciences Educators with three years or less experience – July 26, 2005, Family and Consumer Sciences Educators with fifteen or more years of experience – July 27, 2005, 4-H Educators with three or less years of experience – July 28, 2005, and 4-H Educators with fifteen or more years of experience – July 27, 2005. Table 1 provides additional information about the sample members.

TABLE 1  
FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS BY PROGRAM  
AREA AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Program and Years of Service	Ag ≤ 3 yrs.		Ag ≥ 15 yrs.		FCS ≤ 3 yrs.		FCS ≥ 15 yrs.		4-H ≤ 3 yrs.		4-H ≥ 15 yrs.	
Number of Participants	3		8		3		3		4		2	
Gender of Participants	3 M	0 F	8 M	0 F	0 M	3 F	0 M	3 F	0 M	4 F	1 M	1 F

Additional Demographic Information about the Educators  
with Three Years or Less Experience

All of the participants in the 3 years or less experience category (including all program areas) had worked for the Extension Service for less than one year. Two of the participants had actually only worked 8 days. Of the same group, three of the participants had worked less than 6 months. Therefore, out of a total of 10 educators who had worked three years or less, only one educator had worked more than six months (eleven months) and no one had worked more than one year. This data can be explained further by examining the number of county staff hires over the three year period prior to the study. From July 1, 2002-June 30, 2003 only five Extension Educators were hired. In the fiscal year 2003-2004 (same dates) only seven Extension Educators were hired. From July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005, thirty-seven Extension Educators were hired (OCES Educator Statistics, 2005).

From the ten educators who had worked three or less years, six of them came to the Extension Service from another organization with previous work experience. Therefore, only four of the participants were actually beginning their careers as the Extension Service being their first employer.

In some of the groups there seemed to be gaps or low numbers of participants. Considering the inexperience of some of the educators in the focus group, telephone surveys were administered to increase the sample size. Additionally, by collecting the data through multiple methods, the validity of the data can be increased (Bickman & Rog, 1998). The telephone surveys were administered to solicit feedback from non-response participants. The 2005 Cooperative Extension Service Personnel Directory was used as a list to identify staff who met the demographic criteria. The non-response participants were contacted by email and phone to request their participation in this study. After the participants agreed, then a date and time was established to administer the phone survey. The phone surveys were conducted at times available to the participants from November 1 – November 14, 2005. The additional participants were called and the same questions were asked of the phone participants that were asked in the focus groups. Procedures, sampling and coverage issues were planned prior to the telephone interview according to Bickman & Rog (1998). The data collected in the telephone interviews was consistent with the data collected in the focus groups. The consistency of the data, combined with better qualified sample members, increased the validity of this study.

The data from the telephone interviews was handwritten and not recorded on audio tape. The notes of that data were destroyed to maintain confidentiality. The data

from the focus groups and telephone interviews was cross checked to determine if there were notable differences in responses. No notable differences were found. Table 2 describes the participants of the telephone interviews.

TABLE 2  
TELEPHONE INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS BY PROGRAM  
AREA AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Program and Years of Service	Ag ≤ 3 yrs.		Ag ≥ 15 yrs.		FCS ≤ 3 yrs.		FCS ≥ 15 yrs.		4-H ≤ 3 yrs.		4-H ≥ 15 yrs.	
Number of Participants	2		0		0		1		3		1	
Gender of Participants	1 M	1 F	0 M	0 F	0 M	0 F	0 M	1 F	1 M	2 F	0 M	1 F

Information about the total sample including members from the focus groups and telephone interviews is found in Table 3. Table 3 also provides additional information about the sample members time of employment in Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.

TABLE 3  
SAMPLE MEMBERS LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT WITH  
OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Total # of Participants	Male	Female	Each Participants Length of Employment in Oklahoma Cooperative Extension							
Ag ≤3 yrs (5)	4	1	8 days	8 days	2 mo.	1 .5 yrs	3 yrs			
Ag ≥15 yrs (8)	8	0	18 yrs	18 yrs	19 yrs	19 yrs	21 yrs	24 yrs	27 yrs	30 yrs
FCS ≤3 yrs (3)	0	3	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr					
FCS ≥15 yrs (4)	0	4	16 yrs	18 yrs	22 yrs	24 yrs				
4H ≤3 yrs (7)	1	6	4.5 mo.*	6 mo.	6 mo.	8 mo.	11 mo.	1.5 yrs	1.5 yrs	
4H ≥15 yrs (3)	1	2	15 yrs	22 yrs	25 yrs					

\* This educator had over 5 years of Extension experience in another state before coming to Oklahoma Cooperative Extension.

A total of 30 Oklahoma County Extension Educators participated in this study, either through focus groups or telephone interviews. The same discussion question questions were asked of all of the participants in the focus groups and telephone interviews.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### Objective 1

*To review adult education/professional development and Cooperative Extension literature and identify professional development core competencies.*

Lawler & King (2003) developed the Integrative Approach to Professional Development Model and the Professional Development Dynamics. Both of these models focus on the adult learner as a part of the professional development process. In addition to these models, other adult education and training research was reviewed and summarized.

A Cooperative Extension Service literature review found two states that had established professional development models with core competencies and two additional states that relied upon objectives or core competencies to guide their professional development needs. The Ohio Cooperative Extension Service Professional Development Model (Kutilke, Gunderson, & Conklin, 2002) is based on four stages of development; the entry stage, the colleague stage, the counselor stage, and the advisor stage.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension professional Development model established the Blue Ribbon Commission on Staff Development and Training in August 1998 is based in core competencies, sub-competencies and proficiency levels. This model was the bases of comparison for the focus groups.

## Objective 2

*To identify foundational components used in other Cooperative Extension professional development models.*

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Professional Development System utilizes the proficiencies of core competencies as the foundation for their professional development system. These core competencies are: Knowledge of the Organization, Technical Expertise, Programming, Professionalism, Communication, Human Relations, and Leadership.

The Texas Cooperative Extension Service also uses competencies for their professional development system. Stone (1997) developed these competencies; they are application of knowledge, technical skills, and personal characteristics that lead to outstanding performance. Competency models can be built for individuals, specific jobs, teams, units or an entire organization. When the models are implemented they can be applied to a variety of contexts including orientation, training, and career development.

The Ohio State University Cooperative Extension System uses a professional development model based on four stages (Kutilke, Gunderson, & Conklin, 2002). Each stage considers the motivators and organizational strategies for that phase. The similarities of the framework of stages and competencies informed the decision to utilize the North Carolina professional development model for evaluation.

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service relies upon objectives to develop their in-service training professional development system. They are:

To offer progressive, consistent, thorough and integrated in-service education to county educators.



Enable county educators to deliver quality educational programs that make a difference in people's lives.

Be consistent with county educator's plans of work, timeline, and support professional development.

Departments and specialists will be responsible for developing a logical and progressive plan of in-service education.

In-service plans will include information about all of the components of the program and how to deliver/evaluate the program. Teaching materials will focus on application to help solve problems faced by citizens.

Some programs may be designated as "impact programs" (an impact program devotes considerable time and emphasis with the goal of being able to document the effect of the program).

### Objective 3

*To determine if the core competencies of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension professional development model are relevant competencies for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County Educators professional development needs through focus group interviews.*

All educators, regardless of years of experience, found at least some core competencies that they felt needed to be included in a professional development system. Interestingly, the new educators felt as if they had already received all of the core competencies, but the experienced educators thought that the new educators would need every competency in a professional development system. The biggest difference is in terms of the appropriate competencies for corresponding years of experience. Different focus groups disagreed on which components were the most relevant. Each group had a different perspective of the most relevant to them.

#### Objective 4

*To summarize the findings from the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County Educators focus groups and make suggestions based on those findings.*

Each program area is very different and has very different professional development and county needs. Therefore, each focus group had their own opinions about which competencies should be adopted in an Oklahoma Professional Development Model. To effectively meet all of the individual needs, an individualized professional development plan of the competencies, should be considered. Such a plan would require an individual needs assessment, plan development or administrative approval, and evaluation.

Each focus group identified different professional development needs. This is not surprising due to the fact that each group represented different job responsibilities at different points in their careers. However, one commonality found was in the area of technical expertise. The groups that a stronger technical component to their program area stated that they needed more professional development in the area of technical and subject matter expertise. The program areas with that need are agriculture and family and consumer sciences. The new and experienced Agriculture Educators and the experience Family and Consumer Sciences Educators all agreed that they needed technical professional development, which is consistent with their job responsibilities.

4-H Extension Educator's responsibilities include "Provides evidence of ability to build and maintain relationships and work effectively with clientele, advisory groups, volunteers, other professionals, etc." (OCES Position Description, 2005, p.2) The needs that both groups of 4-H educators identified are also consistent with their job

responsibilities. They identified leadership, human relations, and communications as important areas for professional development which is consistent with their people oriented skills and responsibilities.

Two major themes emerged from the focus group and interview responses. The first was the application of professional development in the counties. The second was the need of technical and/or subject matter expertise.

In response to the questions “how can Extension most effectively address those needs? and have we missed anything you would like to discuss?” the following topics emerged: Opinions of New Employee Orientation, Opinions about Current Professional Development Activities for All Employees, Opinions about the Success of a Professional Development System, and Suggestions for Future Professional Development. The results and discussion from the focus groups and telephone interviews are summarized by each of these thematic areas.

### Application of Professional Development in the Counties

Applying the knowledge gained in a professional development experience is important to Extension Educators. The Educators said that they would measure the success of a professional development system by their success in taking information back to the county and applying it to their citizens and Program Advisory Councils. To apply the knowledge gained to Extension clientele, the programming of the professional development activity should meet the needs of their Program Advisory Council members (citizens involved in the grass roots programming of Extension) and other citizens in

their counties. Utilizing needs analysis data collected in Program Advisory Councils would increase the application of professional development topics in the counties. When asked about measuring the success of a professional development program, educators responded that they would measure success in terms of applicability in the county. Educators commented that an indicator of a successful professional development program would be using the information learned in their own county programming. The ability to successfully interact with county clientele was also emphasized and recognized as an important topic to address in professional development activities. Educators often have to interact with all types and ages of people. Communication skills, leadership, and human relations were identified as core competencies that could address this issue. Educators also thought that human relations were important to reach people in their counties. They stated being knowledgeable of other cultures would allow them to successfully interact with people from various cultural backgrounds.

#### Technical Knowledge or Subject Matter Expertise

The second theme identified was the importance of technical knowledge or subject matter expertise. Extension Educators expressed a desire to have technical information included in their professional development experiences.

Research, subject matter, and curriculum updates were popular professional development needs identified by Extension Educators. The educators wanted new subject matter information and curricula as well. They stated that grab-and-go curricula would be especially beneficial. This type of updated information and curriculum was important to Extension Educators because they often have to work in fields that are

outside of their educational background and they saw professional development as a way to gain that needed knowledge.

Subject specific areas were mentioned including: training by the departments of Agriculture Engineering, Agronomy, and Agricultural Economics based on past positive experiences. The 4-H Shooting Sports Training and Team Building Ropes Course were also both identified as beneficial professional development experiences.

One Extension Educator echoed those thoughts and expressed a desire to be updated on new and developing research and said, “most of our producers, if they are still surviving it is because they are innovators, they need up-to-date [information], maybe something that is not even in production yet. A lot of them are really innovative people, we have got to have the most up to date information in all agriculture.” Another Extension Educator agreed and said, “I think as far as expertise, we can never have too much. The more knowledge you have and the more valuable you are to the organization.”

Extension Educators also noted that their fields were constantly changing and stated professional development was important to keep them abreast of these changes. The educators rely heavily on their State Extension Specialists for this technical knowledge. A participant agreed and said, “We can’t physically go through all of the information that there is out there and I have told my area specialist that I depend on them to sort through stuff that they think is important for ag [agriculture]. And it should come out of the university too, and specialist in certain fields should know and be aware of.” Extension Educators also relied upon State Specialists to deliver technical knowledge directly to their clientele by teaching technical programs in their counties in

addition to County Educator programs resulting from professional development experiences.

Technology application was a specific technical knowledge area that was cited as a need in professional development activities in most focus groups. The formatting and etiquette of email was also mentioned as an area of technical knowledge that the Educators would like to have addressed in professional development activities. However, new Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Educators did not feel that they needed technical expertise because they could rely on the internet for their information. Instead, they expressed an interest in learning information about daily administrative issues like travel forms and enrollment management software.

#### Opinions on Other Topics for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Professional Development

The final topics identified through the focus groups and interviews were opinions about Oklahoma Cooperative Extension's Professional Development System from their County Extension Educators. New staff orientation was discussed suggestions made from both the newer educators as well as the veteran educators. A variety of suggestions were offered including formatting of professional development experiences and topics. The issue of separate professional development systems based on years of service was also addressed.

## Opinions about New Employee Orientation

Currently, new Extension Educators attend a three day orientation session during the first 6 months of their employment. This orientation is held on the campus of Oklahoma State University and various speakers come and discuss the different aspects of Cooperative Extension.

The majority of new educators identified New Educator Orientation as a professional development opportunity that was disappointing to the new educators and they offered the following suggestions for improvement. They would have liked to have representatives from the Agriculture Education department there, as well as representatives from the professional associations. They suggested having county educators come and speak about balancing program responsibilities and everyday county information. These educators found the training overwhelming, and needed assistance learning how to complete reports such as the ES237 and administrative forms such as travel approval paperwork. The 4-H educators would have also liked to have had an opportunity to complete their CORE volunteer development requirements.

New educators who were balancing responsibilities between program areas wanted the opportunity to speak to an experienced educator about the management of multiple program areas. A participant said, "It would have been more helpful to actually have time to talk to other educators that have been either 90% FCS and 10% 4-H or those who are 50/50 ... And it would be helpful to talk to someone at the beginning that was 50/50 to tell you how to balance all of that. You get in over your head."

The educators attending new employee orientation also wanted the opportunity to learn more about their roles and the roles of their County Extension Directors, district

and state staff members roles and their expectations. They also liked the idea of new educator professional development as a group. A district professional development activity or orientation was suggested to further explain their roles as county educators. A mentoring program for new educators was also suggested.

The experiences of the veteran county educators were similar to the experiences of the new educators. As the educators reflected upon their early professional development, they remembered their professional development experiences when they were sent to another county for orientation to their new job. They felt as if they were sent to those counties too early, before they understood what they would be doing in their jobs. They were also frustrated with not knowing what to do on a daily basis in their jobs when they first started.

### Opinions about Current Professional Development

#### Activities for all Employees

All educators, regardless of years of experience, found at least some core competencies that they felt needed to be included in a professional development system. Interestingly, the new educators felt as if they had already received all of the core competencies, but the experienced educators thought that the new educators would need every competency in a professional development system.

The educators with 3 years or less experience thought that they were already receiving sufficient training in the competency areas. They did suggest that programming, communications, and leadership were areas that could be strengthened. The more experienced educators responded that travel budgets considerations should be



included in a professional development system and that a new system should have some flexibility.

The experienced educators thought all of the North Carolina's competencies would be good to include in a professional development system, but that there should be different levels for different levels of experience in Extension. One experienced educator said, "I think that is going to have to be in 2 separate categories, have it so that it meets the needs of the new educators and experienced educators." Following that thought they also stated that they did not want to be measured by these standards, because it would be subjective measure some of the competencies, for example communication.

Additionally, they stated that the system should be flexible enough to meet the needs of the educator in each county. With county populations being so different across the state, the educator's needs are different from county to county.

#### Opinions about Measuring the Success of a Professional Development System

The educators were then asked if Oklahoma was to have a formal professional development system. How would you measure the success of that? The less experienced educators thought "it would be a balance of employee performance and employee evaluation of the system. I think you need to have their performance and how people view their performance as part of it." While the more experienced educators said "something that would benefit me that I can take back and use in my county clientele that they would want and like and want to pursue, and that basically boils back to PACs our

PAC members are telling us what they want to see, but that is not necessarily what they want us to see at the state level.

Educators with 3 years or less experience stated that they would measure the success of a professional development system by how well the presenter related the information to the audience and personal feelings of confidence and satisfaction. Additionally, they thought that the system could be evaluated by collecting feedback from employees, possibly in the form of surveys. They also thought a balance of performance and evaluation was important to assess the success of the system.

Educators with 15 or more years of experience reiterated that a professional development system needs to be flexible to meet the individual educator's needs. They also discussed the importance of having professional development to continue the life-time learning process and not for the purpose of meeting administrative needs or PAC desires. Trainings should be required in moderation and address travel budget concerns, without losing the personal side of professional development.

### Suggestions for Future Professional Development

More participation in professional development experiences like national and state professional association meetings were cited as being examples of excellent professional development experiences to include in the future. The program sharing and hands-on learning activities that are common at these events were recommended to be repeated. The experienced educators who remembered when Annual Extension Conference was held, wanted to see that re-instated into their professional development. One educator summarized the groups thoughts by saying, I been in this job 16 ½ years

and I have been officers in all the associations... but what I get out of my job, is what I put into it. If I don't go to any professional development or improvement, I am not gaining, and ... we can always do better.”

The delivery method of some of their professional development activities was also disappointing to the educators. They did not like lecture and computer trainings. The lectures were too long for the participants, sometimes lasting for two days. The computer trainings were frustrating for the participants because they often times did not remember the information after they left the trainings. The educators with 15 or more years of experience were disappointed that they were they were being trained on information that they had already successfully completed. They felt as if they were being treated like children.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study are similar to the findings of Belzer's (2005) study. Belzer (2005) recommended building a shared vision of professional development between the planners and the participants. This shared vision would require a consensus between stakeholders. When asked about implementing a professional development model for the Oklahoma Extension Service, educators replied that they wanted a system that met their needs to enable them to meet the needs of their clientele. The Extension Educators and their clients are stakeholders in the professional development system for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension.

The experienced Oklahoma Extension Educators stated that they felt as if the professional development experiences were not consistent with their years of experience. Belzer's (2005) study reinforced that finding and recommended that experienced professional development participants often found their experiences to be too basic for their level. They felt as if professional development activities assumed they had little formal training or experience in their field. Belzer's (2005) also recognized this as a missed opportunity for effective professional development. Belzer (2005) recommended that professional development strategies meet the needs of multi-level participants. Trying to address the needs of a broad range of participants may not be practical,

therefore Belzer (2005) recommended that professional development planners consider their audience and specifically target to that group.

Consensus among the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Educators was that any professional development system implemented would need to be flexible to meet educator's broad range of needs. A study by Kutner & Tibbetts (1997) agreed with this finding by recommending that there was no one best approach to professional development and that multiple approaches should be used.

To draw final conclusions to this study, each objective was reviewed.

*To review adult education/professional development and Cooperative Extension literature and identify professional development core competencies.*

Lawler & King (2003) developed the Integrative Approach to Professional Development Model and the Professional Development Dynamics. Both of these models focus on the adult learner as a part of the professional development process. In addition to these models, other adult education and training research was reviewed and summarized.

A Cooperative Extension Service literature review found two states that had established professional development models with core competencies and two additional states that relied upon objectives or core competencies to guide their professional development needs. The Ohio Cooperative Extension Service Professional Development Model (Kutilke, Gunderson, & Conklin, 2002) is based on four stages of development; the entry stage, the colleague stage, the counselor stage, and the advisor stage.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension professional Development model established the Blue Ribbon Commission on Staff Development and Training in August

1998 is based in core competencies, sub-competencies and proficiency levels. This model was the bases of comparison for the focus groups.

*To identify foundational components used in other Cooperative Extension professional development models.*

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Professional Development System utilizes the proficiencies of core competencies as the foundation for their professional development system. These core competencies are: Knowledge of the Organization, Technical Expertise, Programming, Professionalism, Communication, Human Relations, and Leadership.

The Texas Cooperative Extension Service also uses competencies for their professional development system. Stone (1997) developed these competencies; they are application of knowledge, technical skills, and personal characteristics that lead to outstanding performance. Competency models can be built for individuals, specific jobs, teams, units or an entire organization. When the models are implemented they can be applied to a variety of contexts including orientation, training, and career development.

The Ohio State University Cooperative Extension System uses a professional development model based on four stages (Kutilke, Gunderson, & Conklin, 2002). Each stage considers the motivators and organizational strategies for that phase. The similarities of the framework of stages and competencies informed the decision to utilize the North Carolina professional development model for evaluation.

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service relies upon objectives to develop their in-service training professional development system. They are:

To offer progressive, consistent, thorough and integrated in-service education to county educators.

Enable county educators to deliver quality educational programs that make a difference in people's lives.

Be consistent with county educator's plans of work, timeline, and support professional development.

Departments and specialists will be responsible for developing a logical and progressive plan of in-service education.

In-service plans will include information about all of the components of the program and how to deliver/evaluate the program. Teaching materials will focus on application to help solve problems faced by citizens.

Some programs may be designated as "impact programs" (an impact program devotes considerable time and emphasis with the goal of being able to document the effect of the program).

To determine if the foundational components of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension professional development model are relevant components for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County Educators professional development needs through focus group interviews.

*To demonstrate if the core competencies of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension professional development model are relevant competencies for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County Educators professional development needs through focus group interviews.*

The Oklahoma County Extension Educators all felt as if some of the foundational components (core competencies) of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension professional development model were relevant. However, the different focus groups disagreed on which components were the most relevant. Each group had a different perspective of the most relevant to them. Any use of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension professional development model would need to identify these differences in perspective of relevance by each individual/group.

*To summarize the findings from the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County Educators focus groups and make recommendations based on those findings.*

The common theme running through all of the data collected in the focus groups was flexibility. If the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service develops a professional development model of its own, it needs to be a flexible model to meet a great number of adult learning needs. Extension Educators, who have worked for three years or less, do not have the same needs as someone who has worked fifteen years or more. To be effective the model would also need to be flexible enough to meet the needs of educators with responsibilities in multiple program areas.

The area of Technical Expertise was the only area that almost all of the focus groups and telephone interview participants agreed upon. The only group that did not find technical expertise as an important core competency for professional development was the Family and Consumer Sciences Educators with three years or less experience. There was not general agreement among any of the other focus groups on important core competencies. Therefore, individualized professional development plans should be considered as an option for the professional development of Extension Educators in Oklahoma.

### Recommendations

*To review adult education/professional development and Cooperative Extension literature and identify professional development training models.*

Research from adult education, professional development, and Cooperative Extension was included in the literature review. However, additional research should include literature from the training, management, and leadership fields.



*To identify foundational components used in other Cooperative Extension professional development models.*

The formally developed Cooperative Extension models found in literature were discussed. However, many other states use other informal methods to meet the professional development needs of their staff. Other states' field staff may not be assigned to a specific county for their program responsibilities. States that utilize county clusters or team programming may have other important foundational components for professional development that should be explored further.

*To determine if the foundational components of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension professional development model are relevant components for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County Educators professional development needs through focus group interviews.*

The North Carolina Professional Development model was designed specifically for County Directors, not all Educators. Further research could be conducted to determine if County Educators without Director responsibilities have different needs from those with Director responsibilities.

Other states' models, such as the Ohio Professional Development model could also be used as the basis for another study. Then a comparison could be made between different states' models and the Oklahoma County Educators responses to the relevance of those models.

Additional future research should also focus on the different needs of experienced and less experienced Educators. A study could review the needs for each group based on years of experience and recommend a professional development system for each group.

*To summarize the findings from the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County Educators focus groups and make recommendations based on those findings.*

Based on this study, recommendations for future research would include expanding the years of service into four groups. Distinguishing between being new to Cooperative Extension and being new to any career would add an additional group of Educators to the 3 years or less of service, and would be beneficial in providing data for educators that have completed 1 year of service. The first year of work in Cooperative Extension involves a great deal of learning on the part of the Educator. Additionally, the needs of those individuals between 3 years and 15 years of service should be researched. Therefore it is recommended that another study be completed with years of service divided into four groups; educators with less than 1 year of service, educators with 1-3 years of service, educators with 3-15 years of service and educators with 15 or more years of service. This could provide a basis for individualizing professional development programs for those specific groups.

Also in that study, distinction between educators that are starting their first career with Extension and educators that are coming to Extension from another career could be made. This distinction could provide additional insight into the data collected.

To determine if unsatisfactory professional development experiences contributes to the loss of Extension Educators, exit interviews should be preformed. These exit interviews would provide Cooperative Extension to identify areas for improvement for future professional development activities.

### Implications

As mentioned by some of the Educators, allowing current Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Educators to teach some of the professional development trainings could be

beneficial for the Educators attending the professional development activity and for the Educators teaching the activity. The experienced Extension Educators would learn from preparing for the professional development activity and that knowledge would be reinforced through teaching. The new Extension Educators would also have the opportunity to learn new knowledge and benefit from the wisdom of the experienced Extension Educators.

## REFERENCES

Becker, H.S. (1958). Problems of inference and proof in participant observation. American Sociological Review, 23: 652-660.

Belzer, A. (2005). Improving professional development systems: Recommendations from the Pennsylvania adult basic and literacy education professional development system evaluation. Adult Basic Education, 15, 1, 33-55.

Bess III, C. Southeast District OSU Cooperative Extension Director. Personal Interview. 05, November, 2002.

Bickman, L. & Rog, D. (1998). Handbook of applied social research methods. Sage Publications, Inc. Thousand Oaks, CA.

Chioncel, N.E, Van Der Veen, R.G.W, & Jarvis, P. (2003). The validity and reliability of focus groups as a research method in adult education. International Journal of Lifelong Education, 22, 5, p.495-517.

Cox, C. Personal Interview. State 4-H Program Leader. 25, November, 2004.

Cranton, P. & King, K.P. (2003). Transformational learning as a professional development goal. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 98, 31-37.

Creswell, J.W. (2003). Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

Cross, K.P. (1981). Adults as Learners: Increasing Participation and Facilitation Learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Dealy, M.F. & Bass, M. (1995). Professional development factors that motivate. Nursing Management, 26, 32F-32I.

Field, J. (2000). Researching lifelong learning through focus groups. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 24, 324-335.

Honey, P. & Mumford, A. (1986). The Manual of Learning Styles. Maidenhead, Ardinly House.

Johnson, C. (2004). OSU cooperative extension family resiliency impact team assessment. [http://www.fcs.okstate.edu/parenting/building\\_character/educators/](http://www.fcs.okstate.edu/parenting/building_character/educators/) (22, January, 2005).

King, K.P. & Lawler, P.A. (2003). Trends and issues in the professional development of teachers of adults. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 98, 5-13.

Knowles, M. (1990). The adult learner: A neglected species. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) Houston: Gulf Publishing Company.

Knox, A.B. (1980). Proficiency theory of adult education. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 5, 378-404.

Krueger, R.A. (1998). Developing questions for focus groups. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, California.

Krueger, R.A. (1994). Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, California.

Kutilek, L.M., Gunderson, G.J., Conklin, N.L. (2002). A systems approach: Maximizing individual career potential and organizational success. Journal of Extension, 40, <http://www/joe.org/joe/2002april/al.html> (24, March, 2002).

Kutner, M. & Tibbetts, J. (1997). Looking to the future: Components of a comprehensive professional development system for adult educators. A Publication of Building Professional Development Partnerships for Adult Educators Project. [www.nrsweb.org/pubs.asp](http://www.nrsweb.org/pubs.asp) download 25-October, 2005.

Lawler, P.A. & King, K.P. (2003). Changes, challenges, and the future. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 98, 83-91.

Livneh, C & Livneh, H. (1999). Continuing professional education among educators: Predictors of participation in learning activities. Adult Education Quarterly, 49, 91.

Marceau, G. (2003). Professional development in adult basic education. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 98, 67-74.

Moon, J. (2004). Using reflective learning to improve the impact of short courses and workshops. The Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Profession, 24, 4-11.

Nichols, A. & Howard, S. (2002). Gerontology information and training needs of cooperative extension professionals. Educational Gerontology, 28, 681-693.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Personal and Organizational Development Model. <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/pods/comps.shtml> (25-April, 2003).

North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Personal and Organizational Development Model Origins. <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/pods/rootofcomps.shtml> (25, April, 2003).

OCES Educator Statistics. (2005). Collected from OSU Agricultural Personnel Office, 18, October, 2005.

OCES Position Description. (2005). <http://dasnr4.dasnr.okstate.edu/jobs/pdfs/05-20.pdf> (31-October, 2005).

Schutt, R.K (1999). Investigating the social world: The process and practice of research. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Pine Forge Press: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Slusarski, S. (1999). A lighter look at professional development. Adult Learning/Public Policy. 6 & 9.

Smith-Lever Act. (1914). United States Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service.

Stern, M.R. & Queeny, D.S. (1992). The scope of continuing professional education: Providers, consumers, issues. In E.S. Hunt (Ed.), Professional workers as learners: The scope, problems, and accountability of continuing professional education in the 1990's. Washington, D.C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX 1

### IRB APPROVAL FORM



## Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, April 11, 2005  
IRB Application No AG0540  
Proposal Title: Cooperative Extension Professional Development for County Staff: A Focus on Professional Development Models  
Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

**Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 4/10/2006**

Principal

Investigator(s)

Cara C. Bigger  
927 Parkway Dr.  
Stillwater, OK 74075

Charles Cox  
205 4-H Bldg.  
Stillwater, OK 74078

---

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, emct@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

## APPENDIX 2

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Cooperative Extension Professional Development for County Staff

Investigators:

**Principal Investigator(s)**

Cara C. Bigger, M.S. (405) 744-4200

Charles Cox, Ed.D. (405) 744-8885

**For information on subjects' rights, contact Dr. Sue Jacobs, IRB Chair, 415 Whitehurst Hall, 405-744-1676 the investigators listed above.**

Purpose:

This study examines the professional development research and models of various states Cooperative Extension Services. The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service professional development model will be used as a starting point to explore the needs of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County Educators. Your expertise and input is being sought to make recommendations for the needs of an Oklahoma Cooperative Extension professional development model.

Procedures:

Your participation is completely voluntary. In this focus group, you will be asked to discuss your needs, thoughts, and ideas about a professional development system in the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. As a starting point for discussion, we will be using the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Core Competency Model. Your anonymous discussion will be audio-taped and transcribed for research proposed. At no point will you be named or identified in this study. If a question arises to the accuracy of a quote you have made, you may be contacted for clarity, but your comments will remain anonymous. The focus group discussion should last 1-2 hours.

Risks of Participation:

**There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.**

Benefits:

As a result of this study, participants input will be contributed to the findings and recommendations of this study. Your input will be suggested to the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service as recommendations for an Oklahoma Cooperative Extension professional development system for County Extension Educators.

Confidentiality:

Focus group respondents can be assured that anonymity is sought and names will not be included in the findings or summaries. Data will be collected by primary investigator where they will be summarized and reported in the aggregate for the findings section of the dissertation. Responses to open ended questions will be reported but will not be associated with the respondents.

Data will be stored in a protected area out of access to the general public and once data has been added to an electronic format tapes and notes used will be destroyed on or

before May 31, 2006. Data will be stored on a password protected computer system.  
**The OSU IRB has the authority to inspect consent records and data files to assure compliance with approved procedures.**

**Participant Rights:**

Participation is completely voluntary and you can choose to discontinue this activity at any time without reprisal or penalty. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this activity or reasons for you to want to terminate your participation, but you are free to discontinue your participation at any point in time.

**Signatures:**

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX 3

SYSTEMS APPROACH: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MODEL: OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

**Systems Approach: Professional Development Model:  
Ohio State University Extension**

Career Stage	Motivators	Organizational Strategies
Entry Stage	Understanding the organization, structure, culture Obtaining essential skills to perform job Establishing linkages with internal partners Exercising creativity and initiative Moving from dependence to independence	Peer mentoring program Professional support teams Leadership coaching Orientation/job training
Colleague Stage	Developing area of expertise Professional development funding Becoming an independent contributor in problem resolution Gaining membership and identity in professional community Expanding creativity and innovation Moving from independence to interdependence	In-service education Specialization funds Professional association involvement Formal educational training Service on committees or special assignments
Counselor and Advisor Stages	Acquiring a broad-based expertise Attaining leadership positions Engaging in organizational problem solving Counseling/coaching other professionals Facilitating self renewal Achieving a position of influence and stimulating thought in others	Life and career renewal retreats Mentoring and trainer agent roles Assessment center for leadership Organizational sounding boards

## APPENDIX 4

NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CORE COMPETENCIES

**Personal and Organizational Development  
Core Competencies  
North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service**

**KNOWLEDGE OF THE ORGANIZATION**

An understanding of the history, philosophy, and contemporary nature of North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

**TECHNICAL EXPERTISE**

The mastery of a scientific discipline, a research body of knowledge, or a technical proficiency that enhances individual and organizational effectiveness.

**PROGRAMMING**

The ability to plan, design, implement, evaluate and account for significant Extension education programs that improve the quality of life for NCCE customers.

**PROFESSIONALISM**

The demonstration of behaviors that reflect high levels of performance, a strong work ethic, and a commitment to continuing education and to the mission, vision, and goals of the NCCE.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

The ability to transfer and receive information effectively.

**HUMAN RELATIONS**

The ability to successfully interact with diverse individuals and groups creating partnerships, networks, and dynamic human systems.

**LEADERSHIP**

The ability to influence a wide range of diverse individuals and groups positively.



## APPENDIX 5

### NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR CORE COMPETENCY KNOWLEDGE OF THE ORGANIZATION

## North Carolina County Extension Director Core Competency –

### Knowledge of the Organization

<p style="text-align: center;">County Extension Director Core Competency</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Knowledge of the Organization</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">An understanding of the history, philosophy, and contemporary nature of NCCE.</p>			
Sub-Competency	Proficiencies		
	Level I	Level II	Level III
History, philosophy, and mission	<p>Understands fully and can articulate the history of NCCE</p> <p>Knows and can explain the mission of NCCE</p>	<p>Internalizes and models philosophy of extension</p> <p>Operationalizes the mission through action.</p>	<p>Instills belief in mission by others through consistent espousal.</p>
NCCE organizational structure, function, & relationships	<p>Knows structure and systems and their functions</p> <p>Is aware of critical relationships between systems and groups within NCCE</p>	<p>Demonstrates a clear understanding of roles within unit goals</p> <p>Demonstrates clear understanding of roles within Extension</p>	<p>Effectively works within structure and relationships to achieve goals</p> <p>Effectively leverages "external to the unit" relationships to achieve unit goals</p>
NCCE programs and goals (Program Focus)	<p>Knows NCCE programs and goals</p>	<p>Establishes and creates initiatives for programs and goals</p>	<p>Links interrelationship between programs to strategic direction of organization</p>
Maintaining Strong County Partnerships	<p>Understand the importance of the county partner.</p> <p>Demonstrates clear understanding of Memorandum of Understanding</p>	<p>Effectively builds and nurtures relationships with county government</p>	<p>Helps to develop multi-beneficial strategic goals between county government and other NCCE partners.</p>
Funding Process	<p>Understands funding process</p>	<p>Demonstrates a clear understanding of funding process to others</p>	<p>Effectively communicates funding process to all partners, clients and employees.</p>
National Perspective of Cooperative Extension	<p>Understands national perspective of CES.</p>	<p>Demonstrates a clear understanding of national perspective to others</p>	<p>Effectively communicates national perspective of CES to all.</p>

## APPENDIX 6

NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION

DIRECTOR CORE COMPETENCY

TECHNICAL/SUBJECT MATTER

**North Carolina County Extension Director Core Competency  
Technical/Subject Matter Expertise**

<p style="text-align: center;">County Extension Director Core Competency <b>Technical/Subject Matter Expertise</b> The mastery of a scientific discipline, a research body of knowledge, or a technical proficiency that enhances individual and organizational effectiveness.</p>			
Sub-Competency	Proficiencies		
	Level I	Level II	Level III
Team Building & Group Work	<p>Knows the principles of Team Building.</p> <p>Develops an understanding and acceptance of individual roles and responsibilities within the team.</p>	<p>Engages unit staff &amp; volunteers effectively in team building.</p> <p>Builds an effective environment for team development.</p> <p>Knows principles and skills of effective facilitation.</p> <p>Effectively facilitates group meetings.</p>	<p>Engages organization staff, volunteers, and leaders effectively in team building.</p> <p>Develops understanding of team strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>Can develop and facilitate the strategic planning effort of a team.</p>
Policies & Procedures	<p>Knows, models, and practices key policies and procedures.</p> <p>Knows and can address differences between state &amp; county policies and procedures.</p> <p>Knows and can follow procedures for addressing liability and crisis issues.</p> <p>Is aware of the organizational reporting requirements of all team members.</p> <p>Ensures that all team members complete appropriate reports in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Knows interpretive policies and procedures.</p> <p>Demonstrates good judgment in application of interpretive policies and procedures.</p> <p>Demonstrates ability to manage liability and crisis.</p>	<p>Serves as a resource to other administrators on policy and procedure issues.</p> <p>Participates in evaluating and revising organizational reporting activities.</p>
Resource Development	<p>Demonstrates ability in assisting staff in assessing resource needs of office and county (personnel, volunteers, space, money, time, educational/program materials, equipment, etc.).</p> <p>Demonstrates techniques that ensure staff members become knowledgeable of resources.</p>	<p>Secures additional resources.</p> <p>Can develop a resource development plan for new program, equipment and personnel.</p> <p>Can identify potential sources of resources available.</p> <p>Can develop grants and administer them.</p>	<p>Executes a resource development management plan successfully.</p> <p>Assists others on the team in developing resource development plan and in securing additional resources.</p> <p>Can prepare, present, and justify budget to county manager or commissioners for</p>

		<p>Secures resources for optimal program by team.</p> <p>Secures resources for programming efforts of county team (Budgets, Grants, Fundraising, &amp; Donations).</p>	<p>consideration.</p> <p>Exercises control of expenditures of budgeted funds.</p> <p>Able to manage self and negotiate priorities.</p>
Training, Coaching & Delegating	<p>Seeks to develop team members.</p> <p>Understands the principles of empowerment.</p> <p>Mentors employees on their performance development plans.</p> <p>Orients new employees using the prescribed process into their work environment and programs successfully.</p> <p>Recognizes needs and methods of achievement of others.</p>	<p>Demonstrates good practices in delegating and sharing assignments that help others to grow &amp; develop.</p> <p>Develops buy-in and commitment to delegated assignments.</p> <p>Recognizes the major achievements of others.</p>	<p>Mentors other supervisors on methods for developing others and empowerment.</p> <p>Consistently recognizes and celebrates achievements of others.</p>
Appraising People and Performance	<p>Understands and performs effective performance appraisal for each employee.</p> <p>Understands and follows organizational guidelines for creating consistent performance appraisals.</p> <p>Understands the skills required in building agreement of future expectations among employees.</p> <p>Demonstrates the ability to give effective feedback on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>Knows, models, &amp; practices legally appropriate methods in evaluating performance.</p>	<p>Demonstrates the ability to give counsel and implement disciplinary measures in a positive manner.</p> <p>Demonstrates the ability to get employees to accept responsibility for improving performance.</p>	<p>Demonstrates the ability to restore employee's performance to within the accepted standards without loss of respect or trust.</p>
Staffing, Recruitment & Hiring	<p>Understands staffing &amp; program needs of customer-base.</p> <p>Has knowledge of and demonstrates effective behavioral interviewing skills.</p> <p>Knows, models, and practices legally appropriate methods in recruitment and hiring.</p>	<p>Executes a staffing plan successfully.</p> <p>Knows and uses appropriate methods &amp; markets in the recruitment of new employees.</p> <p>Understand implications &amp; manages the impact of</p>	<p>Anticipates needed staffing changes and incorporates them into existing staffing plans.</p>

		county-state matching formula.	
Risk Management, Decision Making, & Project Planning	<p>Understands risk implications related to all decision-making areas of responsibility.</p> <p>Uses an effective approach in evaluating decisions.</p>	Has knowledge of and uses decision- making techniques to evaluate choices.	<p>Mentors and provides training to others on the use of decision- making techniques.</p> <p>Uses decision-making techniques with groups.</p>
Political Climate, & Relationship Building	<p>Understands the principles of "positioning the organization."</p> <p>Understands the needs of primary customers.</p> <p>Demonstrates awareness of the political nature of community.</p> <p>Can identify key political leaders &amp; related characteristics.</p>	<p>Demonstrates abilities to position the unit and organization in the market.</p> <p>Demonstrates abilities in building a customer focus among subordinates.</p> <p>Demonstrates abilities in maintaining strong relationships with key customer and political leaders.</p> <p>Further knowledge of relationship marketing.</p>	Demonstrates relationship making with political savvy.
Budget Management	<p>Knows how to find information on accounting and financial management.</p> <p>Knows how to develop budgets and administer budgets.</p>	Knows and understands tools for analyzing financial management.	<p>Demonstrates ability to manage budgets to address unexpected circumstances.</p> <p>Manages and maximizes finances and resources successfully to achieve unit goals.</p>

## APPENDIX 7

NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR

CORE COMPETENCY

PROGRAMMING

## North Carolina County Extension Director Core Competency – Programming

<p style="text-align: center;">County Extension Director Core Competency</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Programming</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">The ability to plan, design, implement, evaluate, and account for significant Extension education programs that improve the quality of life for NCCE customers.</p>			
Sub-Competency	Proficiencies		
	Level I	Level II	Level III
Planning	<p>Studies &amp; maps the organization's publics.</p> <p>Identifies target publics.</p> <p>Identifies and networks with leaders of target publics.</p> <p>Facilitates collaborative identification of needs specific to target audience.</p>	<p>Models program planning for others.</p> <p>Integrates trend and prediction data into identification of needs.</p> <p>Examines unfelt needs of target audiences.</p> <p>Helps community leaders to understand the target audience's needs.</p>	<p>Assists others in mapping organization's publics.</p> <p>Helps others facilitate identification of needs specific to target audience.</p> <p>Utilizes team in program planning effectively.</p>
Design	<p>Develops clear educational goals for target publics</p> <p>Defines specific measurable outcomes (teaching objectives) for each goal.</p>	<p>Develops multi-organizational goals for target publics.</p>	<p>Facilitates goal development for others.</p> <p>Manages the design and delivery of programs by team effectively.</p>
Implementation	<p>Develops plan of action (specific educational strategies &amp; learning activities to address desired outcomes).</p> <p>Develops plans for evaluating learning outcomes &amp; assessing learning experience.</p> <p>Implements marketing for plan of action.</p>	<p>Develops multi-organizational plan of action.</p>	<p>Facilitates plan of action development for others.</p>
Evaluation & Accountability	<p>Measures outputs linked to specific program goals.</p> <p>Uses program revisions for accounting to stakeholders.</p> <p>Knows and demonstrates ability to evaluate programs and be accountable on total program effectiveness.</p>	<p>Uses evaluation findings for program revisions.</p> <p>Develops evaluation studies.</p> <p>Knows who, what, where, when, &amp; how to be accountable.</p> <p>Writes high level success stories and narratives and</p>	<p>Assists others in the development of evaluation plans.</p> <p>Participates in regional and statewide evaluation studies.</p> <p>Provides appropriate info relating to accomplishments for</p>



		<p>worthwhile ERS reporting efforts.</p> <p>Demonstrates how to collect accountability information.</p> <p>Demonstrates the difference between accountability and evaluation.</p> <p>Develops team approach to reporting accomplishments to stakeholders.</p>	<p>funding sources and citizens.</p> <p>Markets program impacts of unit or team effectively.</p>
Effective use of Volunteers and the Advisory Leadership System	<p>Knows value of involving volunteers in each phase of program development.</p> <p>Demonstrates the ability to use volunteers in program planning, development and delivery.</p> <p>Demonstrates the ability to build and manage an effective ALS system.</p> <p>Understands and demonstrates the skills needed to maintain a strong advisory leadership system.</p> <p>Knows and values the relationship of all program areas and the ALS.</p> <p>Understands and can interpret the ALS handbook.</p>	<p>Helps others develop and utilize effective volunteer system.</p> <p>Role models and can articulate an appreciation for ALS and it's relationship to the program process.</p> <p>Instills ownership and appreciation of their role among ALS leaders &amp; volunteers.</p> <p>Insures county agents have active ALS component within their program.</p>	<p>Uses volunteers effectively throughout programming process.</p> <p>Has significant programs managed by volunteers.</p> <p>Effectively leverages "external to the unit" relationships to achieve unit goals.</p> <p>Teaches and coaches staff in understanding the importance of the ALS.</p> <p>Teaches and advises other CEDs on building an effective County ALS system.</p>
Adult Education	<p>Knows principles and practices of adragogy (adult education).</p> <p>Demonstrates the ability to delivery effective education activities.</p>	<p>Demonstrates the ability to delivery educational program using innovative methods &amp; techniques.</p>	<p>Encourages others to effectively use principles and practices of adragogy.</p> <p>Demonstrates ability to use emerging educational technologies.</p>

## APPENDIX 8

### NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION

#### DIRECTOR CORE COMPETENCY

#### PROFESSIONALISM

## North Carolina County Extension Director Core Competency – Professionalism

County Extension Director Core Competency			
Professionalism			
The demonstration of behaviors that reflect high levels of performance, a strong work ethic, and a commitment to continuing education and to the mission, vision, & goals of the NCCE.			
Sub-Competency	Proficiencies		
	Level I	Level II	Level III
Personal Organization Skills	Knows effective work habits and time management. Knows how to set personal goals. Has basic understanding of and demonstrates good work behavior.	Practices effective work habits and time management. Demonstrates ability to work toward achieving goals. Performs outstanding work behavior skills when working with people. Manages multiple tasks without becoming overwhelmed.	Engenders in others effective work habits and time management to achieve desired results. Inspires others to achieve program goals. Instills the highest level of work behavior in others when working with people. Instills in others the ability to manage multiple tasks without becoming overwhelmed.
Professional and Personal Development	Understands work expectations and the need for balance between professional and personal life. Demonstrates ability to balance administrative and program duties. Knows various professional development opportunities for staff and self. Practices self examination and has targeted personal and professional development goals	Performs duties as expected by administration and practices good balance. Takes advantage of professional development opportunities with professional associations. Takes advantage of professional development opportunities and shares information with others. Demonstrates ability to develop and implement a self-development plan.	Instills in others high performance while maintaining balance between professional and personal life. Takes active individual leadership role in appropriate professional development activities and associations. Inspires, supports staff, and helps others seek opportunities for professional development.
Managing Change	Demonstrates ability to understand change and change process. Demonstrates ability to continuously evaluate environment for change.	Demonstrates ability to reevaluate existing processes and explore new methods in response to change.	Demonstrates ability to effectively assist others in dealing with change.
Ethical Behavior	Understands the value of ethical behavior. Understands need for <a href="#">NCCE Ethics Guidelines</a>	Practices ethical behavior. Interprets and practices <a href="#">NCCE Ethics Guidelines</a> .	Instills the highest level of ethical behavior in others.

APPENDIX 9

NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION

DIRECTOR CORE COMPETENCY

COMMUNICATIONS

## North Carolina County Extension Director Core Competency – Communications

<p style="text-align: center;">County Extension Director Core Competency Communications The ability to transfer and receive information effectively.</p>			
Sub-Competency	Proficiencies		
	Level I	Level II	Level III
Oral Communication	<p>Can speak well in front of groups.</p> <p>Can effectively communicate orally.</p> <p>Can create an effective presentation.</p> <p>Can present organized oral presentations.</p> <p>Can develop and use visuals for presentations.</p> <p>Understands and adapts to level and skill of audience.</p> <p>Values need for bilingual communication.</p>	<p>Can present well organized oral presentations using effective topic transitions, introductions, and summaries.</p> <p>Can effectively speak at a moment's notice.</p> <p>Can develop and use high quality visuals for presentations to audience.</p> <p>Works toward bilingual communication.</p>	<p>Gives dynamic motivational and inspirational speeches.</p> <p>Teaches others how to develop and use high quality visuals for presentations to audience.</p> <p>Masters bilingual communication.</p>
Written communication	<p>Can write documents that are grammatically correct and appropriate.</p> <p>Effectively communicates information to audiences with different levels of expertise and interests.</p> <p>Writes in appropriate way for each delivery media.</p>	<p>Writes effective and marketable impact statements.</p> <p>Writes and produces effective marketing materials.</p>	<p>Writes with vision, incorporating strategies and learner-focused information.</p> <p>Create publishable documents and training materials.</p> <p>Inspires others through writing.</p> <p>Facilitates writing skills development in others.</p>
Listening	<p>Uses feedback appropriately.</p> <p>Practices active listening.</p> <p>Receives information and ideas shared by others.</p>	<p>Demonstrates the art of inquiry</p>	<p>Receives, interprets and articulates information and ideas shared by others.</p> <p>Uses feedback effectively to access performance and make appropriate modifications.</p>
Information Communication Technology Skills	<p>Reads, sends, and manages e-mail.</p>	<p>Can use the computer to make presentations with projector.</p>	<p>Can use communications information</p>

	<p>Uses and manages voice mail.</p> <p>Uses computers to write.</p> <p>Can comfortably use the computer to create visuals and presentation materials.</p> <p>Can find and retrieve materials via the Internet and World-Wide-Web.</p> <p>Develops communication system for timely and accountable responses.</p> <p>Understands strengths and weaknesses of different communication delivery methods.</p>	<p>Demonstrate ability to effectively search the Internet and specific resources such as the Libraries databases.</p> <p>Chooses appropriate delivery method for communicating with others.</p>	<p>technologies to deliver educational activities at a distance.</p> <p>Uses Internet and WWW technologies to communicate with others.</p> <p>Encourages others to use emerging information communication technologies.</p>
--	---	---	---

## APPENDIX 10

NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR

CORE COMPETENCY HUMAN RELATIONS

## North Carolina County Extension Director Core Competency – Human Relations

<p style="text-align: center;">County Extension Director Core Competency</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Human Relations</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The ability to successfully interact with diverse individuals and groups creating partnerships, networks, and dynamic human systems.</p>			
Sub-Competency	Proficiencies		
	Level I	Level II	Level III
Interpersonal Relationships & Emotional Intelligence	<p>Recognizes the importance of developing interpersonal skills.</p> <p>Has high self-awareness of emotions.</p> <p>Demonstrates skills in managing emotions.</p> <p>Understands importance of assessing and appreciating the feelings and thoughts of others.</p>	<p>Practices effective interpersonal skills</p> <p>Creates an environment that allows everyone to perform at an optimal level.</p> <p>Understands the importance of body language</p> <p>Demonstrates skills in managing emotions when under stress.</p>	<p>Inspires others to use appropriate interpersonal skills to build an effective environment.</p> <p>Demonstrates effective assertiveness skills.</p> <p>Works with others in helping them deal with emotions.</p>
Networking, Partnerships, & Collaboration	<p>Values Extension's relationship with appropriate partners.</p>	<p>Effectively networks with partners.</p> <p>Maximizes opportunities to position NCCE in a costive relationship with appropriate partners.</p>	<p>Develops and manages collaborative relationships.</p>
Negotiation & Conflict Management	<p>Understands and is aware of effective negotiation skills.</p> <p>Understands conflict and personal styles in dealing with conflict</p> <p>Understands stress management.</p> <p>Understands trust and trust building.</p>	<p>Demonstrates appropriate negotiation skills.</p> <p>Effectively uses conflict management skills.</p> <p>Effectively manages stress in normal situations.</p>	<p>Engages others in successful negotiation to achieve a win-win situation.</p> <p>Demonstrates skills in helping others resolve conflict through facilitation.</p> <p>Trains others effectively in the use of conflict management</p>
Customer Service	<p>Understands the importance of good public relations.</p> <p>Understands the importance of customer service.</p>	<p>Demonstrates skills that exhibit public relations.</p> <p>County center demonstrates effective customer service.</p>	<p>Effectively uses public relations skills to enhance Cooperative Extension.</p> <p>Creates an environment where customers return and exhibit a high level of satisfaction.</p>



## APPENDIX 11

NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR

CORE COMPETENCY LEADERSHIP

## North Carolina County Extension Director Core Competency – Leadership

<p style="text-align: center;">County Extension Director Core Competency</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Leadership</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The ability to influence a wide range of diverse individuals and groups positively.</p>			
Sub-Competency	Proficiencies		
	Level I	Level II	Level III
Creativity, Innovation, & Visionary Thinking	<p>Identify problems and alternatives.</p> <p>Examines trends and looks for opportunities.</p>	<p>Is creative in solving problems.</p> <p>Understands paradigms and can brainstorm new ways of thinking.</p>	<p>Instills creativity in others for problem solving and achieving program goals.</p> <p>Effectively makes cutting edge decisions.</p>
Model the Way	<p>Understands the importance of a positive image.</p> <p>Understands characteristics of a positive role model.</p>	<p>Projects a positive image.</p> <p>Displays characteristics of a positive role model and projects a vision.</p> <p>Demonstrates the ability to mentor others on a specific job, task, or area of expertise.</p>	<p>Demonstrates the ability to project oneself in a manner that is positively received by an audience.</p> <p>Inspires and motivates others to be a positive role model.</p> <p>Has the ability to lead others to create a shared vision for the team.</p>
Understanding Self and Others	<p>Understands personal strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>Demonstrates ability to recognize differences between self and others.</p> <p>Operationalizes a core set of principles for leading.</p>	<p>Demonstrates ability to develop and articulate a personal mission and vision.</p> <p>Demonstrates ability to set and achieve personal development goals.</p> <p>Demonstrates ability to explore diverse mental models when addressing issues.</p>	<p>Demonstrates the ability to work effectively with diverse individuals.</p> <p>Assists others in understanding self and others through providing appropriate training and/or counseling.</p>
Systems Thinking	<p>Understands core principles of systems thinking.</p> <p>Demonstrates ability to understand interrelationships between objects and systems.</p>	<p>Demonstrates ability to articulate impacts of decisions to systems.</p> <p>Can identify and explain structures and patterns of behavior within organizational systems.</p>	<p>Demonstrates ability in identifying actions and changes in structures which lead to significant and enduring improvements.</p>
Working with Teams/Groups	<p>Understands group development theory and can recognize stages.</p>	<p>Recognizes dysfunctional behaviors that interfere with group work.</p>	<p>Understands and demonstrates skills in using advance group</p>

	Can facilitate group brainstorming and consensus building.	<p>Demonstrates skill in addressing dysfunctional behaviors in a group setting.</p> <p>Understands and can demonstrate skills in using basic group process techniques including affinity diagrams, nominal group techniques, multivoting, and the Interrelational Diagram.</p>	<p>process techniques.</p> <p>Understands the stages and techniques of strategic planning.</p> <p>Demonstrates ability to take a group through an effective strategic planning process.</p>
--	--	--	---

APPENDIX 12

OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION FAMILY

RESILIENCY IMPACT TEAM

CHARACTER EDUCATION

ASSESSMENT

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Family Resiliency Impact Team  
Character Education Assessment.

Christine Johnson, Ph.D.

## **Steps In Conducting A Focus Group**

### **1. Housekeeping before the Focus Group starts**

- sit in a circle
- name tags or name cards

### **2. Beginning the Focus Group discussion**

- The welcome
- The overview and topic
- The ground rules
- The first question

### **3. Make sure tape recorder is on and microphone in the center**

### **4. Assistant moderator**

- Away from the table
- Takes good notes
- Watches for non-verbal interaction
- Draws a picture of where people are sitting with initials
- Takes care of the tape recorder

### **5. While doing the focus group...**

- Listen for inconsistent comments and probe for understanding
- Listen for vague comments and probe for understanding
- Offer a group summary of key questions and seek confirmation
- Any other comments?

### **6. After participants leave**

- Make sure tape recorder was working
- Moderator and assistant go over diagram
- Moderator and assistant conduct a debriefing (themes, hunches, interpretations)
- Label and file all notes, tapes, forms

## **Who is the Moderator?**

- Trained
- Uses pre-determined questions
- Must be comfortable with the type of participants involved
- Needs to make people feel comfortable
- Is neutral and objective

## **Moderator Skills**

- Be a listener
- Be mentally prepared
- Use purposeful small talk
- Record the discussion
- Have a smooth and snappy introduction
- Use pauses and probes
- Control reaction to the participants
- Use subtle group control
- Uses an appropriate conclusion
- Use nonverbal acknowledgments cautiously so don't indicate agreement/disagreement
- Stays neutral and objective

## **Controlling Group Dynamics**

- "People echo"
- Participants who say "I agree"
- Participants who don't want to talk
- Dominators or pseudo experts

## **Try to think of everything that could go wrong**

- Equipment
- Environment
- Participants
- Questions

## Focus Group Outline

### *Welcome*

*Introduce moderator and assistant*

Our topic is...

The results will be used for...

You were selected because...

### Guidelines

No right or wrong answers, only different points of view

We're tape recording, one person speaking at a time

We're on a first name basis

You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views

Rules for cellular phones and pagers if applicable. For example: We ask that you turn off your phones or pagers. If you cannot and if you must respond to a call, please do so as quietly as possible and rejoin us as quickly as you can.

My role as moderator will be to guide the discussion

Talk to each other

Opening question

## **Developing the Question Route**

### **Refer to sample focus group questions**

#### **Good focus group questions:**

- Sound conversational
- Use words the participants would use
- Are easy to say, clear, short & simple
- Are usually open-ended
- Avoid dichotomous questions
- Avoid using synonyms – keep simple, like yes/no, one dimensional
- Use “think back” questions
- Use examples cautiously

#### **How to structure the questions:**

- General before specific
- Positive before negative
- Uncued before cued questions
- Be cautious of adding questions that come to mind during the discussion

#### **5 types of questions**

- Opening question (round robin) – short responses, easy to answer and factual, everyone can answer without status or differences
- Introductory question is their connection to the issue
- Transition question - 1 or 2 to move to key questions
- Key question - drive the study, spend ample time for response, draw out information, probe.
- Ending question – reflect, restate most important points, summarize

#### **Question route timing**

- 10-12 questions for 2-hour Focus Group
- 5-6 questions for 1-hour Focus Group
- Get feedback from others on the impact team
- Pre-test the questions
- May need to reduce or simplify further for children/youth
- Keep the questions consistent

#### **Data analysis process**

During the Focus Group -

- Summarize key points with participants

Immediately after the Focus Group:

- Debrief with assistant moderator
- Listen to recording quality
- Label tapes and notes



- Copy tape, store original
- Transcribe ASAP

## **Analysis**

Complete a Focus Group analysis worksheet for each group

Separate moderator from participants' comments

Identify each new speaker – note speaker changes

Look for 4-6 main topics (themes)

How are the topics linked together?

Look for the big picture

Repeat for each type of focus group

- What is the same/different?
- Stand out as common or remarkably different

## APPENDIX 13

### FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

## Focus Group Analysis Worksheet

(Complete a separate form for each group)

Date of Focus Group	
Location of Focus Group	
Category of Focus Group	
Number of Participants	
Moderator Name	
Asst. Moderator Name	

### Responses to Questions

Question:

Focus Group \_\_\_\_\_

Question:

Brief Summary/Key Points	Notable Quotes

Question:

## VITA

Cara Cayenne Ferrell

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR  
COUNTY STAFF: A FOCUS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
MODELS

Major Field: Agricultural Education, Communications, and 4-H Youth Development

### Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, On February 2, 1976, the daughter of Walter Bruce Bigger and Sandra Teer. Married Shannon Lee Ferrell, on July 16, 2005 in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Education: Graduated from Madill High School, Madill, Oklahoma in May, 1994; received Bachelor of Science degree in Human Environmental Sciences, Design, Housing, and Merchandising from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 1997. Graduated with a Master of Science degree in Design, Housing, and Merchandising at Oklahoma State University, in Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2000. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Agricultural Education, Communications, and 4-H Youth Development in December, 2005.

Experience: May, 2000-June, 2004 Pottawatomie County Family and Consumer Sciences and 4-H Youth Development Educator; June, 2004-present Oklahoma State University Career Services Government Career Consultant.

Professional Memberships: Member of the Oklahoma Association of College and Employers, Member of the Southwestern Association of Colleges and Employers, and Member of Oklahoma State University Alumni Association

Name: Cara Cayenne Ferrell

Date of Degree: December, 2005

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
NEEDS OF OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION COUNTY  
STAFF

Pages in Study: 97

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: Agricultural Education, Communications, and 4-H Youth Development

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this research was to consider existing Cooperative Extension professional development core competencies and make recommendations for professional development for the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. To achieve the purpose of this study, the following objectives were accomplished: To review adult education/ professional development and Cooperative Extension literature and identify professional development core competencies. To identify foundational components used in other Cooperative Extension professional development models. To determine if the core competencies of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension professional development model are relevant competencies for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County Educators professional development needs through focus group interviews. To summarize the findings from the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County Educators focus groups and make suggestions based on those findings.

Findings and Conclusions: Adult education, professional development, and Cooperative Extension literature support the findings of this study. North Carolina and Texas Cooperative Extension Services both use core competencies in their professional development system while Ohio and Oklahoma use stages and objectives. Educators in each focus group saw both positive and negative attributes to the North Carolina Extension professional development model. The focus group opinions varied by program responsibility and years of service in Cooperative Extension. If a professional development model similar to the North Carolina Cooperative Extension model is implemented in the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, the model would need to be flexible enough to meet a variety of needs of County Educators. These findings are consistent with two other professional development studies conducted by Belzer (2005) and Kutner & Tibbetts (1997).

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Charles Cox, Ed.D.

