A Study to Determine if In-Depth Professional Development Provided to Extension Educators on Program Development Has an Effect on Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Extension Educational Programs.

Darrell Allen Dromgoole
Doctor of Education in Agricultural Education
Texas A&M University
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Abstract

Program excellence in Extension is contingent on an Extension educator’s ability to identify issues, prioritize these issues, implement educational programs to address these issues and resulting in measurable outcomes, evaluate these issues and utilize the results of these evaluations to redirect educational programs, and utilize these evaluation results as the foundation for program interpretation. The future success of Extension programs is dependent on the capacity of Extension to retain highly qualified Extension educators and the ability of these Extension educators to implement the process of Extension program development.

A comprehensive professional development intervention, entitled the “South Region Excellence in Programming Academy,” was designed and implemented from May 2006 to November 2006 to provide early to mid-career Extension educators with comprehensive instruction related to program planning, program implementation and evaluation and interpretation. A Pre-experimental research, One-Group pre-test-post-test, involved the administration of a pre-test (O1) to research subjects followed by the Academy (X) and then followed by a post-test (O2) to determine if Extension educators’ knowledge in program development increased as a result of participation in the Academy. Extension educators perceive that their proficiency in the Extension program development process increases as a result of their participation in the Academy. Extension educators incorporate principles covered during the Academy and were satisfied with the Academy in terms of providing skills that will enhance their ability to execute the Texas Cooperative Extension Program Development Model. This study showed that as an Extension educator’s knowledge of the program development process increased, and their perception of the elements of program development increased, Extension educators will incorporate the principles of program development covered during the Academy, and Extension educators were satisfied with the Academy. Recommendations are offered to improve future professional development interventions focusing on program planning, implementation, evaluation, and interpretation. The results of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge that will enhance the ability of personnel to provide quality professional development related to program development.