

The Visitor

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CONTINUING EDUCATION'S ROLE IN THE LIFE-LONG LEARNING PROCESS

By

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Continuing education for educators can no longer be perceived as an added bonus or fringe benefit or pain-in-the-neck. In today's changing society continuing education (personal, in-service and formal) for educators is a virtual necessity. The obsolescence of knowledge, the rapid growth of new knowledge, the shift in state and national priorities, the multiplicity and complexity of social programs and consensus and the close relationship between the application of knowledge and societal progress all lead to the conclusion that lifelong learning is not only desirable but necessary.

As a staff member of the Agricultural Extension Service in Minnesota I will develop the case for continuing education utilizing Extension as an example. However the case for continuing education is applicable for all educators in today's society.

The Cooperative Extension movement, predating by several years its Federal recognition in 1914, represents one of the earliest, government sanctioned commitments to the concept of lifelong learning in the United States. The Cooperative Extension Service was founded and developed to bring educational services to those individuals no longer or never provided such opportunities by society's formal educational establishment. Recognition of the continuing education needs of people is a mission still at the heart of Cooperative Extension whether our clientele be commercial farmers, adult volunteer leaders, homemakers, business people or whomever. This commitment to lifelong learning and continuing education has guided extension educators in playing a major role in the technological miracle which has occurred in American agriculture, it has assisted in providing leadership opportunities for countless millions of people throughout the nation, and it

continues to provide a direction for the myriad of information educational activities which occur in every county Extension office throughout the country. Yet, this commitment to lifelong learning has implications not only to those we serve, but also to those of us who call ourselves Extension educators.

If in fact, we believe in our mission of providing for the lifelong learning needs of those publics we serve, we must also recognize our needs as Extension educators for continuing personal and professional growth and development. In a recent *Journal of Extension* article, George Strothers identified as one quality of the professional, one who takes a continuing interest in his/her subject matter. The true professional is committed to the concept of lifelong learning for him/herself.¹ Each of us will determine for ourselves whether we shall remain viable and effective Extension workers through active involvement in our own continuing education or whether we will become a slave to the Extension "activity trap." To paraphrase from Strother's article, there is nothing wrong with time spent in facilitating activities and events, but when event management emerges victorious in competing with our role as Extension educators, the ranks of the professional have been replaced by one more hired hand, posing as a professional.² The significance of a commitment to continual growth and development as an Extension educator lies not only in broadening our knowledge base, but also ought to provide the opportunity for us to assess what we are doing in terms of the mission and philosophy we espouse. Without time devoted to this reflection, it is all too easy for our jobs to create blinders which divert us from our real mission of serving the educational needs of the public.

In the ideal world the professional may well be defined as an individual who has internalized the value of continuing personal and professional growth and pursues it with "a lust of the mind." Since we do not, however, live in an ideal world, the Extension educator like all others, requires incentives, encouragement and the provision of growth/development opportunities. The responsibility for the continuing personal and professional growth and development does not end by looking at the professional alone. It is a responsibility shared by the Extension organization and the individual educator.

The role of the Extension organization is critical in providing for the continuing professional education of Extension educators. Any organization is made up of a compendium of human talent and the effectiveness of that organization depends upon the effectiveness of its human components. The organization then, to remain viable and renewing, must accept a large measure of the responsibility in seeing its staff is well trained and developed, both personally and professionally. John Gardner states, "We can never eliminate the conflict between man and his institutions, nor would we wish to, but we can insist that one of the aims of any organization be the development of the individuals who make it up."³ The individual in the organization and the organization have sets of needs and goals both of which must be met if either is to grow and develop, thereby a mutual responsibility for continuing professional development is simply a common sense necessity.

The employing organization has a vested interest, although a frequently ignored one, to assist staff members to grow and develop. This assistance can come in any variety of ways and perhaps is best accomplished by encouraging the professional to become involved in a wide diversity of educational endeavors. Some strategies at the disposal of the Extension organization include:

1. Providing time and salary for members to participate in the process of continuing education.
2. Providing counseling and guidance for staff members in developing annual and long range plans for their continuing education and career development.
3. Providing incentives for staff to participate in continuing education (salary and promotion).
4. Providing and encouraging the use of educational resources within the organization (staff library, programmed instruction packages (etc.).
5. Supplementing organizational in-service training activities with needs based in-service education activities provided on a free-choice basis.
6. Providing liberal policies for leaves so that individuals can continue their formal education or design other self-improvement learning programs.
7. Modeling a norm and expressing a commitment within the organization for lifelong learning.

The employing institution of the Extension educator plays a major role in the lifelong learning of their staff. It has the responsibility to establish personnel policies which reward and provide maximum opportunity for continuing education, and it must develop a system for assisting the individual professional in identifying and meeting his/her continuing learning needs. Perhaps most important of all, the employing organization must recognize its mutual responsibility for developing and maintaining high quality professional effectiveness.

I believe William Griffith of the University of Chicago, describes well what should be an underlying philosophy of Extension educator's and perhaps all educators commitment to continuing growth and development. He says:

Perhaps greater emphasis should be placed on the idea that an Extension worker isn't necessarily a professional at the time he is first hired by the Cooperative Extension Service; instead it's only through a systematic process of knowledge prerequisite to being regarded as a 'professional.'⁴

The Extension educator must recognize ultimate responsibility for the development of that range and depth of knowledge, but we must recognize also that it is a responsibility jointly shared by the Extension organization and the professional association.

References Cited

1. Strothers, George B. "Qualities of a Professional," *Journal of Extension* Vol. XV, January/February 1977.
2. Ibid
3. Gardner, John W. *Self-Renewal: The Individual and the Innovative Society*. New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1965, p. 54.
4. Griffith, William. A response to Harold Swanson's article "Are Extension Workers Professionals?" *Journal of Extension*, Vol. XIII, January/February 1975, p. 24.

M.Ed PROGRAM FOR THE NON-FORMAL TEACHER

Many non-formal teaching professional agricultural workers are engaged in agricultural education. They serve as county agricultural extension agents, soil conservation service workers, credit managers in farm lending institutions and agricultural directors in agricultural businesses. Education, in a non-formal setting, is their primary responsibility. It is for this large and growing segment of the agricultural education community that Plan II of the Masters of Education program is best suited.

Graduate programs in agricultural education are part of the in-service and continuing education responsibilities of the Agricultural Education Division. Not everyone who returns for graduate education has the same objective; therefore the programs advised through the Agricultural Education Division are tailored to a variety of needs. Some students wish to build professional competence in teaching agriculture at the local level. Others are preparing for careers in area vocational-technical schools or community colleges.

General admission requirements:

1. a bachelor's degree from an approved agricultural college;
2. evidence of academic ability based on previous grade point averages; and
3. final approval by the Dean of the College of Education through his designated representative.

To complete the program at least 45 quarter credits in courses numbered 5000 or above must be completed with a grade point average of 2.8 or above. In addition, the student will be required to make a final presentation before a committee of the Agricultural Education Division Staff. For more information contact the Agricultural Education Division Office.

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IT'S DIFFICULT TO SAY GOODBYE — MILO

By

Rodger E. Palmer
Assistant Professor

In the October 1976 issue of *The VISITOR*, Professor Milo J. Peterson wrote, "The *Visitor* mirrors the philosophy, trends and developments in vocational agriculture." If Milo views *The Visitor* as a mirror, then what must we view Professor Peterson as?

Perhaps each of you are aware that Professor Milo J. Peterson officially retired and assumed emeritus status at the University on September 30, 1977. Thus ends an active career in Agricultural Education at the University from 1946 to 1977. His service at the University included a 22 year stint as Head of Agricultural Education from 1948 to 1970. Undoubtedly, thorough biographical sketches will be published for historical buffs in other publications, but what is the mark of this man?

George Bernard Shaw said, "If you teach a man anything, he will never learn." Dr. Peterson would agree that you must teach, without seeming to teach, you must be an example for your students, and you must be dedicated to your profession, to be a truly great teacher.

Dr. Peterson believed in small words. "Small words have guts," he used to say. Say it in your own words, and say it so people can understand what you mean — these were lessons his editing pen subtly taught.

Dr. Peterson was a true professor in our country and at the international level, for he had not just the body of knowledge, but knew how to explain it. For 22 years as superintendent of education at the Minnesota State Fair he encouraged others to exhibit and demonstrate in the broad educational arena. As a scholar and consultant to Japan, the Philippines and Korea, Dr. Peterson broadened his influence by professing his knowledge to other cultures.

A leader? Serving as president of the American Vocational Association from 1961 to 1962 is an objective credential of Dr. Peterson's leadership. But, like Hubert H. Humphrey and Bob Hope, it was his charisma and ability to deliver that characterized his leadership.

Professor Milo J. Peterson — scholar, leader, friend — we wish you well 'till the sun sets on the tillage of the field of education.

1978
SUMMER SESSIONS INFORMATION
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

The Agricultural Education Department is planning a summer session program to better serve the needs of the vo-ag instructors. The 1978 Summer Session schedule will be:

June 12-23 — two weeks course

- AgEd 5034 — Procedures for Teaching Agriculture
- AgEd 5084 — Curricula For Career Exploration in Agriculture Occupations

June 26-30 — one week course

- AgEd 5072 — Practicum: Agricultural Business & Industry

July 10-14 — two weeks course

- AgEd 5052 — Farm Business Management Education
- VoEd 5110 — Entrepreneurship - Small Business Management Education

June 11 - July 14

- AgEd 5027 — Practicum: Extension Experiences
- AgEd 5090 — Independent Study
- AgEd 5095 — Independent Study - MEd Integrating Paper
- AgEd 8001 — Research in Agricultural Education
- AgEd 8091 — Field Problems

July 24 - August 4 — two weeks course

- AgEd 5128 — Methods of Teaching (Non-AgEd Majors)
- AgEd 5129 — Curriculum Planning (Non-AgEd Majors)
- AgEc 5120 — Agribusiness Management & Marketing

July 31 - August 4 — one weeks course

- AgEd 5051 — Enterprise Analysis

July 17 - August 18

- AgEd 5027 — Practicum: Agricultural Business & Industry
- AgEd 5090 — Independent Study
- AgEd 5095 — Independent Study — MEd Integrating Paper
- AgEd 8001 — Research in Agricultural Education
- AgEd 8091 — Field Problems

August 7 - August 18

- VoEd 5101 — Curriculum in Small Business Management

For further information, please contact the AgEd Office, 130 Classroom Office Building, St. Paul, MN 55108.