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GRDC - Final Report DAW 251W

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GRDC - FINAL REPORT

Project - 19/9721

DAW 251W

Tom Sweeny, Development Officer
Dept. of Agriculture, Albany, W.A. 6330

Dates of Conference 12/10/93 - 14/10/93
Project supervisor - G. Paust, Regional Manager
Department of Agriculture , Albany

A final report prepared for the
Grains Research and Development Corporation

GRDC - FINAL REPORT

Project - 19/9721-DAW 251W

Australian- Pacific Conference, Brisbane, 1993.

Tom Sweeny, Development Officer,

Dept. of Agriculture, Albany, W.A. 6330.

Dates of Conference - 12/10/93 - 14/10/93.

Project Supervisor - G.Paust, Regional Manager, Dept. of Agriculture, Albany.

Background.

Working in the extension industry for 20 years, this forum appeared as an ideal testing ground to compare the processes practised in W.A. with those in other areas. As most of my work time has been aligned to Crop Industries, a poster presentation on the efficiency of growing crops was considered logical. At the time of the conference, I was working in Jerramungup, and the amount of group activity work and one to one contact was very high, and hence 'time out' to reflect on the techniques used was believed to be worthwhile.

Aim.

To share experiences with others in the extension industry and build upon my current range of options used in Agricultural Extension.

Method.

My active role was to make a poster presentation on the '3 tonne Club' and also another one on a 'Pasture Renovation' poster on behalf of D.Highman, Development Officer, Dept. of Agric. Albany. In the 'rapid fire' approach of the conference during which hundreds of posters were presented, I was happy with both presentations.

Results.

The main 'triggers' for me during the conference were;

- * that extension people 'filter', especially during the feedback process. Tools to assist with this process lagged well behind those possessed by 'information generators'.
- * that the crucial part of any 'talk' is the discussion period
- * many publications are too general
- * separate definitions were needed to differentiate that extension which dealt with groups as opposed to that which involved individuals
- * participative and consultative activities are key roles in any extension campaign
- * focus groups are good for cultivating listening and boosting teamwork
- * appearance was a crucial part of any extension campaign(eg. apples and insecticides in Queensland).
- * printed information is often boring and frustrating to use if the material is lengthy and the reader is interested in only a specific topic.
- * the role of women needs to be considered and overseas work suggests that their lives can be broken into 3 phases, with children under 7 years old, with children over 7 years old and the post fertility years.
- * education via groups can be a good way of harnessing peer group pressure to achieve greater adoption of the systems concepts. Groups are not efficient with respect to resource use and the delivery of a quality product eg. property planning.
- * classical adopter typologies are irrelevant and misleading and extension must shift focus from technology transfer models to ways of managing complex systems with an emphasis on experiential learning and conceptual thinking processes(ie. develop a questioning insight).
- * it is a myth to believe that researchers and extension officers know what farmers needs are without consulting them and equally wrong to think that farmers have a greater need for production information than other forms.

- * learning is a social process
- * people need to work on issues that are most relevant to themselves, rather than simply absorb the offerings of teachers
- * a lot of extension activity is directed at those who don't need it
- * Australian extension lacks clarity in objectives and exhibits a conflict between the goals of productivity, economic viability and biological sustainability.
- * traditional extension staff are seen as inflexible practitioners who are being replaced by landcare facilitators. This latter breed recognises that land degradation is really a social and attitudinal problem, not a technical problem. Efforts to combine these two groups have been 'half hearted' in some states.
- * any new technology or practice must be demonstrated as being technically feasible and economically profitable.
- * the importance of degradation issues decreases when external attitudes affect farmers' intentions and behaviours.

Another important result of this conference was its effect on me with respect to further study. I have subsequently enrolled at the University of Western Sydney to undertake a Masters Course in Agriculture.

Summary.

The conference highlighted the current fragmentation of the extension industry and the need for greater cooperation and listening on the part of extension workers. Landcare workers are seen as an emerging force.

APPENDIX - NOTES USED TO DELIVER AN OFFICE SEMINAR TO THE STAFF OF THE DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE, KATANNING, IN FEB. 1994.

AUSTRALIA - PACIFIC EXTENSION CONFERENCE

**OCTOBER 93 - GOLD COAST QUEENSLAND
360 DELEGATES, 10 FROM WA, 40 FROM
OVERSEAS, MOST ATTENDING WERE
GOVERNMENT FUNDED, 80 WOMEN.**

**GLEANNING THE LITERATURE - THE GOOD BITS.
FUTURING. EXTENSION STAFF NEED TO BE
FUTURISTS. THIS IS NOT ABOUT PREDICTIONS,
BUT RATHER ABOUT TRENDS, POSSIBILITIES,
OPTIONS, ALTERNATIVES AND SCENARIOS. IT
INVOLVES USING TREND DATA TO AFFECT THE**

PRESENT THEREBY CREATING THE FUTURE. IT IS ABOUT ANTICIPATION AND REDUCING UNCERTAINTY. IT IS A WAY OF THINKING AS MUCH AS A SET OF TECHNIQUES. FUTURING IS DATA BASED.

EXTENSION IS NOT WORKING BECAUSE EXTENSION OFFICERS ARE FILTERING THE FEEDBACK PROCESS.

PUBLIC FUNDING FOR EXTENSION WILL CONTINUE TO DECLINE. (DONKEY STORY).

**PRESEASON CHATS ONE SIDED WITH LITTLE DISCUSSION. (BANGALORE)
PUBLICATIONS TOO GENERAL.**

**THE ROLE OF WOMEN WAS EMPHASISED,
ESPECIALLY IN UNDER DEVELOPED
COUNTRIES.**

**SEPARATE DEFINITIONS ARE NEEDED FOR
EXTENSION (GROUP / EDUCATION) AS OPPOSED
TO ADVICE (INDIVIDUAL).**

**THERE IS A NEED TO USE A PARTICIPATIVE
AND A CONSULTATIVE ROLE IN THE
EXTENSION PROCESS OTHERWISE IT WON'T
WORK EFFICIENTLY AND THE STAKEHOLDERS
WILL NOT FEEL OWNERSHIP.**

**FOCUS GROUPS ARE GOOD FOR CULTIVATING
LISTENING AND BOOSTING TEAMWORK.**

**INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT IN APPLES IN
QUEENSLAND WAS HAVING A MARKETING
PROBLEM. APPLES WERE SAFER FOR THEM
AND THE ENVIRONMENT.**

**TOOLS THAT INTELLIGENTLY FILTER
INFORMATION AND DELIVER IT AS RELEVANT
AND IN CONTEXT IS LAGGING WELL BEHIND
THE INFORMATION GENERATORS.**

**PRINTED INFORMATION IS OFTEN BORING AND
FRUSTRATING TO USE IF THE MATERIAL IS
LENGTHY AND READER IS INTERESTED IN
ONLY A SPECIFIC TOPIC.**

IN MALAYSIA THE ROLE OF WOMEN WAS HIGHLIGHTED. SEGREGATING THEIR LIVES INTO PORTIONS WAS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTANDING THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN AGRICULTURE ESPECIALLY THE MARKETING SIDE. THE 3 SEGMENTS WERE LISTED AS

- 1) WITH CHILDREN OVER 7 YEARS OLD,**
- 2) WITH CHILDREN UNDER 7 YEARS AND**
- 3) POST FERTILITY YEARS. THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF CLIENTS AT THEIR LIFE STAGES SHOULD BE GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.**

EXTENDING SYSTEMS THROUGH INTERESTED GROUPS OF FARMERS IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF HARNESSING PEER GROUP PRESSURE USING LIMITED EXTENSION RESOURCES.

INVOLVE PRODUCERS FROM THE OUTSET.

FARMERS NEED TO HAVE IMMEDIATE ANSWERS TO IMMEDIATE QUESTIONS. INCORRECT ANSWERS COULD SPELL DISASTER.

RICE INDUSTRY HAS EXPERIENCED A 30% YIELD INCREASE IN 10 YEARS BECAUSE OF A COORDINATED TEAM APPROACH TO PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY.

CLASSICAL ADOPTER TYPOLOGIES ARE IRRELEVANT AND MISLEADING AND EXTENSION MUST SHIFT FOCUS FROM TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER MODELS TO WAYS OF MANAGING COMPLEX SYSTEMS WITH EMPHASIS ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND CONCEPTUAL THINKING PROCESSES I.E. DEVELOP QUESTIONING INSIGHT RATHER THAN PROGRAMMED KNOWLEDGE. LEARNING IS THE PROCESS WHEREBY KNOWLEDGE IS CREATED THROUGH THE TRANSFORMATION OF EXPERIENCE. IF EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS THAT POTENTIAL REWARDS WILL BE GREATER THAN EXPECTED EFFORTS OR COSTS, THE INDIVIDUAL IS LIKELY TO ADOPT RELEVANT INNOVATIONS.

RESEARCHERS AND EXTENSION OFFICERS KNOW WHAT FARMERS NEEDS ARE WITHOUT CONSULTING THE FARMERS THEMSELVES - WRONG. ANOTHER MYTH IS THAT FARMERS HAVE A GREATER NEED FOR PRODUCTION INFORMATION THAN OTHER INFORMATION.

EXTENSION OFFICERS MUST UNDERSTAND THAT EFFECTIVE LEARNING IS A SOCIAL PROCESS. LEARNING NEEDS ARE UNIQUE TO THE INDIVIDUAL. REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION AND ABSTRACT CONCEPTUALISATION ARE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE LEARNING FROM ACTION.

THERE IS A NEED FOR PEOPLE TO WORK ON ISSUES THAT ARE MOST RELEVANT TO THEMSELVES RATHER THAN SIMPLY ABSORB THE OFFERINGS OF TEACHERS.

THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR PRACTICAL FARM EXPERIENCE.

SHARED EXPERIENCE GENERATES OWNERSHIP AND OWNED ACTION ENGAGES INTENSE LEARNING AND WISER ACTION.

A LOT OF EXTENSION ACTIVITY IS DIRECTED AT THOSE WHO DON'T NEED IT.

MORE DYNAMIC LEARNING CAN BE ACHIEVED BY COMBINING CONGRUENT LEARNING AND THE FACILITATION PROCESS. THAT IS PROCESSES WHICH IF USED SEPARATELY CERTAINLY GENERATE WORTHWHILE OUTCOMES, BUT IF USED CONJOINTLY GENERATE A SYNERGY WHICH ENSURES NOT ONLY LEARNING BUT ALSO CHANGES IN ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS.

EMPOWERMENT - ACTION TO CHANGE A SITUATION.

SYNERGY - THE COMBINED EFFECTS OF THE PARTIES ACTING TOGETHER EXCEEDS THE

**SUM OF THE INDIVIDUAL EFFECTS IF THEY
ACTED SEPARATELY.**

**SUCCESS AT WORKSHOPS COMES FROM
MAKING THE TASK MORE RELEVANT,
SIMPLIFYING THE TASK, ALLOWING TIME FOR
COLLABORATIVE REFLECTION ON LEARNING
EXPERIENCES AND CREATING A HELPFUL AND
OPTIMISTIC ATMOSPHERE.**

**LANDCARE IS INCREASINGLY REQUIRING
STATE EXTENSION OFFICERS TO WORK IN A
FACILITATING CAPACITY IN ASSISTING
GROUPS TO WORK THROUGH PROBLEMS AND
ARRIVE AT SOLUTIONS. THIS REQUIRES
FURTHER TRAINING.**

**LACK OF CLARITY IN OBJECTIVES OF
AUSTRALIAN EXTENSION. VAGUE AND
LIMITED OBJECTIVES OF EXTENSION EXHIBITS
A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MAJOR GOALS OF
PRODUCTIVITY, ECONOMIC VIABILITY AND
BIOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY. THERE IS
SERIOUS DUPLICATION OF DEPT. ADVISORY
SERVICES AND THOSE OF PRIVATE
CONSULTANTS ON MACHINERY AND
CHEMICALS, WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR
USUALLY MORE CURRENT. TRADITIONAL
EXTENSION STAFF ARE SEEN AS INFLEXIBLE
PRACTITIONERS WHO WERE BEING REPLACED
BY LANDCARE FACILITATORS. THIS NEW
BREED RECOGNISES THAT LAND**

**DEGRADATION IS REALLY A SOCIAL AND
ATTITUDINAL PROBLEM, NOT A TECHNICAL
PROBLEM.**

IN SOME STATES THERE IS ONLY A HALF HEARTED ATTEMPT TO INTEGRATE DEPT. SPECIALISTS WITH LANDCARE FACILITATORS AS ONE TEAM COMMITTED TO COOPERATION AND ATTAINMENT OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE. DEPT'S MUST FOSTER LANDHOLDER OWNERSHIP OF GROUP OUTCOMES.

ATTITUDE CHANGE IS NOT ENOUGH TO BRING ABOUT IMPROVED SOIL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES. PROFITABLE AND PRACTICAL CONSERVATION CROPPING TECHNOLOGIES ARE REQUIRED. EXTENSION PROGRAMS NEED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE TECHNOLOGIES BEING EXTENDED ARE TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE AND ECONOMICALLY PROFITABLE.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ADVISERS NEED TO WORK MORE CLOSELY WITH RESEARCHERS/ AGRIBUSINESS EXTENSION IN THE PROMOTION OF FARMING SYSTEMS. RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEEDS TO BRIDGE THE COMPARTMENTS OF SPECIALISED AGRICULTURE AND ENCOURAGE MORE OF THEIR PEOPLE TO HAVE A GENERAL OUTLOOK. INFORMATION IS MORE PRACTICAL, RELEVANT AND CREDIBLE WHEN IT COMES FROM OTHER FARMERS. MUCH OF THE WORK BEING DONE BY GOVT. SYSTEMS IS NOT WORTH DOING.

WORKSHOP APPROACH IS GOOD FOR ACHIEVING HIDDEN AGENDAS EG. GROUP UNITY BUT NOT OTHERWISE EFFICIENT IN THE SHORT TERM WITH RESPECT TO RESOURCE USE AND DELIVERING A QUALITY PRODUCT. (PROPERTY PLANNING)

THE CONCEPT OF ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN LAND CONSERVATION IS A WINNER. GOVT. MUST BE PREPARED TO RELINQUISH SOME OF ITS AUTHORITY.

THE DEFICIENCY OF CONVENTIONAL AGRICULTURE IS NOT ONLY THE IGNORANCE OF THE BALANCE BETWEEN THE ENVIRONMENT AND INPUTS BUT THE NEGLIGENCE TO IDENTIFY FARMERS AND GRAZIERS ATTITUDES AS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR THE ADVISORY SECTOR. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEGRADATION ISSUE DECREASES WHEN THEIR ATTITUDES AFFECT THEIR INTENTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS. SOME SOCIAL NORMS LIKE GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS OR SOCIETY'S WANTS HAVE NO IMPACT ON THEIR ATTITUDE. ANALYSIS OF

**LANDHOLDERS ATTITUDES SHOWS THAT
FIRSTLY THE GOVT. DOES NOT
CONSIDER THE DEGRADATION ISSUE AS
A PRIORITY AND THAT IT HAS BEEN
EXAGGERATED BY TV.**