

(Excerpted from The Kellogg Farmers Study Program: An Experience in rural leadership development. (1976) Ed. By Dr. H. L Miller. Printed by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.)

The Kellogg Farmers Study Program's Development

If leadership is taught, what is the curriculum? If leadership is discovered, what are the selection criteria? If leadership is developed, what is the process? If leadership is the sum of these, how is a model constructed?

Leadership is a vital ingredient of human interaction. It is a paramount principle of our American democracy. But how is it acquired? How is its development fostered? How do its components become action? The Kellogg Farmers Study Program is one program model for leadership developments and its seven-year experience indicates it was effective.

In the two decades following World War II, several key people at Michigan State University (MSU) recognized the continuing need for effective rural leadership. Agriculture, like the industrialized society to which it belongs, was growing more complex.

Dr. Arthur Mauch, MSU professor of agricultural economics, believed this need could be met with a concentrated effort toward a few key individuals rather than a broad-spectrum public affairs program involving large numbers of families or communities. In the 1950s, he organized public policy workshops dealing with agricultural production and marketing, community affairs, and international development. His goal was better informed rural leaders in Michigan.

In the mid 1950s Dr. Paul A. Miller, who was at that time director of the Cooperative Extension Service, initiated the concept of "agricultural statesmen"-persons--intensively trained and well-informed on the state's public policy issues, particularly those applying to rural areas.

Dr. Thomas K. Cowden, then dean of MSU's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, proposed the creation of a "Committee of 100." Such a statewide group of farmers and rural leaders would be knowledgeable about current issues and able to present effective seminars throughout Michigan.

These and other variations of the concepts persisted. The College created a Department of Resource Development. Public policy, rural and community development programs had a major focus in both instructional and Extension Service programs.

Eventually, Dr. Lawrence L. Boger, then Chairman of the Department of Agricultural Economics, assigned MSU faculty Dr. David Boyne, Dr. Russell G. Mawby, and Dr. Mauch the task of developing a program proposal for leadership development. Others also helped in providing the vision and promotion for such an undertaking that ultimately produced the Kellogg Farmers Study Program (KFSP).

Behind the KFSP evolution was the assumption that many successful Michigan farmers, though well-schooled in technology and management, were lacking in social science and liberal arts knowledge and understanding. Many advisors believed that a broad background in the

humanities as well as the social sciences, and a knowledge and understanding of world economics and politics were essential for solving the special problems rural people faced in the space age.

Also basic to the program concept was the belief that a concentrated training experience could accelerate the leadership development process. Normally, many years are required for potential leaders to rise to responsible leadership positions in the community. The KFSP was designed to speed up much of the extended metamorphosis which is commonly part of leadership attainment.

The proposals left the drawing board. The model was assembled, the organization put in place and from 1965-1972, a total of 150 Michigan farmers participated in the unique program. They, and the MSU faculty coordinators whose responsibility it was to test the leadership model, have been part of an evolving experience. It is one which, hopefully, others may wish to duplicate or modify or build upon. This report attempts to capture, document and interpret the development, strategy, and results which comprised the seven year venture.

Program Goals

Two major objectives of the study program were (a) to create a better understanding of the economic, political and social framework of American society and (b) to apply this understanding to the complex problems and unique concerns of agriculture and rural communities. To fulfill these goals, there was an implicit intent to create and test a model that might well serve other sectors of society in identifying potential and developing leadership.

A major focus of the 1965 study program proposal to the Kellogg Foundation was to develop a nucleus of informed agricultural and rural leaders across Michigan.

The proposal stated that, "It is proposed to establish at Michigan State University a program of study for potential agricultural leaders. A primary objective in this proposal is to expand and broaden the educational effort to develop agricultural leaders."

To implement the broad program goals, specific objectives with a participant focus were developed. The program was designed to:

1. Encourage participants to identify problems facing today's society and analyze alternative solutions. It was assumed that participants needed to develop a greater understanding of the social sciences and the humanities. Specifically, this meant developing a minimum level of competence in and knowledge of a broad spectrum which would include political science, sociology, world religions, economics, international studies, history, education, applied philosophy, and the arts. Collectively, these disciplines would provide participants with an improved understanding of the relevance of the aesthetic, intellectual, and moral values found in their own culture and in those of others.

2. A second objective was to develop skills in problem analysis, which requires both a knowledge base and process skills. To that end, the program was formulated to help participants develop a minimal working level of skills in debate, logical inquiry and communication,

including reading, writing, speaking and critical thinking.

3. Critical thinking ability was deemed highly relevant. If this could be better developed in participants, it would help them become more open-minded in their beliefs about ideas, institutions, cultures, social groups, and interpersonal relations. Such skills, coupled with expanded knowledge of the humanities and social sciences, would enable participants to make more informed, independent, intelligent, and critical judgments. Increased knowledge and skills would help participants become more cosmopolitan and more aware of the impressions they conveyed to others.

4. A broadened knowledge of public issues that influence Michigan's agricultural and rural communities was another objective. This was implemented in two ways: by helping participants increase their knowledge of local, state, national and international political affairs and the structure and process of political institutions; and by aiding in identification of agricultural and non-agricultural policy alternatives.

5. Given problem identification and analysis abilities and an understanding of the problems and issues facing agriculture and rural communities, it was presumed that participants would be motivated to develop necessary skills for leadership and responsible citizen participation. This was seen as a natural outcome, as was developing individual motivation for public service in local, state and national affairs. While the latter was an objective of the program, it was never overtly emphasized. There were concerns that this might alienate participants from their communities - the very people, it was hoped, they might better serve. Every attempt was made to equip the farmers with the necessary resources and skills to assume leadership roles. But whether and how these tools would be used were deliberations for each participant and his community to answer.

6. Finally, one hope for the program was the development of both individual and group motivation for life-long learning. The design was to create a climate that could result in a "contagious enthusiasm" for learning, investigation and further inquiry.

"With Leadership Comes Responsibility"