DEVELOPING HOME ECONOMICS PROGRAMS IN
LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

by Linda Nelson*

Thus far we have considered African countries individually but Latin America as an area. It is possible to generalize -- and Dr. Heft presented some excellent generalizations with respect to Latin American education. However, we must exercise caution and recognize that each of the Latin American countries has unique characteristics and traditions as well as those which are shared with the sister republics. Sometimes we are prone to take a "tourist" view, noting the similarities to our own culture and commenting on the great differences, although overlooking their importance in the integral functioning of the culture in which we are visiting. The panel members last night provided some excellent examples of communications barriers which arise when we do not assign correct interpretations to signs and symbols. At present the only functioning college contract program in Latin America is the Brazil-Purdue contract. Both the FAO and OAS organizations which do try to promote home economics in Latin America, are trying to serve large and varied regions. Thus the development of home economics in Latin America must be considered within whatever assets and limitations are provided by a diffuse rather than a concentrated focus.

It is always easier to speak about what one knows well. Therefore, I will try to explain my work so that you can see how it fits into the theme of developing home economics programs in Latin America. I work for the Organization of American States under a contract with AID in the Graduate School of IICA (Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences). Our responsibilities include teaching, research, publications, and consultations in the 21 member countries of the OAS. As Dr. Heft indicated, there are four major languages used in these countries -- Spanish, Portuguese, French and English. The geographic region is large and diverse. The cultures and subcultures are many and varied. As Dr. Quan indicated, women in many of these countries have not recognized their full value as persons and now are becoming aware of their possibilities.

Given this variety of challenges and the multiplicity of responsibilities within IICA, you can imagine the difficulty in determining priorities when you learn that IICA has only four home economists, working by zones to

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1See David Heft, "Influences on Latin American Education Affecting International Cooperation in University Curriculum Development," pp. 85-97 of this report.

2See section on international communications, pp. 99-138 of this report.

3See Graciela Quan Valenzuela, "The Significant Role of Education for the Home in Underdeveloped Countries," pp. 35-42 of this report.
stimulate home economics. In view of the fact that we tried to develop our programs according to the needs and requests of the member countries, you can imagine that our efforts have been dispersed quite thinly at times.

During a recent revision of IICA objectives there was an opportunity to project ideas related to the future role of IICA in the development of home economics in Latin America. This proposal, which included some suggestions about how to coordinate the work of the four home economists, was accepted by the directors. The proposal has been sent to AID in Washington as a supplement to our work plan. Although the AID office has not yet had time to process these papers and react to them, Dr. Katherine Holtzclaw very kindly gave me permission to share some of the content with this group. It is understood that there may be minor alterations in the plan as it is put into effect. What is attempted here is to present some of the clauses of the proposal along with illustrations of how we have been developing some of these ideas in Latin America countries.

Considering the objectives of IICA, it seems that the available resources ought to be dedicated to strengthening the educational institutions which prepare professional home economists. Preference should be given to universities in those countries in which there is at least one home economics program functioning at the university level (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Peru at the time of writing). In the other countries, IICA personnel can function in one or more of the following ways, according to the interest of the national personnel: help to initiate a university program and/or help to prepare personnel in non-university level programs within school systems or the extension service. Previously we have been engaged in many short course programs trying to fill gaps of incompletely prepared extension workers. With our own scarcity of personnel, we now think that concentration in the preparation of university level professors will be a wiser use of resources.

4Those interested in obtaining information about home economics personnel and programs in specific Latin American countries should direct inquiries as follows:
   For Mexico, Central America, Panama and the Caribbean:
      Miss Maria Justina Laboy
      IICA Zona Norte
      Apartado 1815
      Guatemala, Guatemala
   For Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela:
      Miss Ana Lauretta Diaz
      IICA Zona Andina
      Apartado 478
      Lima, Peru
   For Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay:
      IICA Zona Sur, Casilla de Correos 1217, Montevideo, Uruguay
      Miss Virginia Lattes, who has been the home economist in Montevideo, will be studying at Michigan State University during the 1965-66 academic year. We have not yet secured her replacement.
There are many possible ways to encourage and accomplish such preparation of university professors. We need to circulate information about scholarships in Puerto Rico, the United States, and the South American countries which grant degrees in home economics. It is important that professionals complete a study program instead of taking isolated courses. We need to seek out Latin American university women in whatever branch of study in order to interest them in serving the Latin American university programs in home economics. All too frequently we do not initiate programs because we lack personnel. Home economics in the United States did not begin with women titled in home economics from other countries, but rather with sensitive, educated women from other fields of study.

We can promote intensive education of two types. One is the specialization of persons with an academic base. These persons could take graduate work in one area or a short course program related to the specialty, using the facilities of CINVA, INCAP, and similar institutions. Latin Americans do not admire a specialist in preference to a generalist as much as many North Americans; therefore, it may not be easy to incorporate this idea. Within the rapid changes taking place, it probably is wise to encourage as liberal an education as possible so that the persons will be able to adjust to alterations of objectives and structures of the organizations by which they are employed. Nevertheless, a certain amount of specialization will provide the depth needed to lead certain programs.

Analyzing personal observations and conversations with Dr. Quan, I would like to make a suggestion to the AHEA Scholarship Committee. Considering the political organization of most Latin American countries, it would be wise to offer the Latin American scholarship through educational institutions or government ministries rather than accepting candidates who do not have assured positions upon return to their countries. It might also be wise to use the contacts of the OAS (Pan American Union, Washington, D.C.) to help in securing recommendations about the applicants. Perhaps some national institutions could share the costs, so that more than one Latin American student could be offered a scholarship each year.

CINVA is the Inter-American Center of Housing and Planning
Apartado Aereo 6209
Bogota, Columbia

INCAP is the Institute of Nutrition for Central America and Panama
Apartado 1188
Guatemala, Guatemala
Central America
Assistance to Local Professors

The second type of intensive education which we have been promoting is consultation of a tutorial type for professors in their home institutions during the academic year while they are developing specific courses. Experience of this type has varied from a few weeks to two or three months of personal contact, followed by regular correspondence. With variations, this idea has been applied by IICA home economists in many of the Latin American countries.

In one situation we were developing courses in home management, human development, and family relations in a two-year program for rural school teachers. The professor was a university level graduate in sociology. The objectives of the course were discussed thoroughly by the local professor and the consultant. In the beginning, the consultant taught some of the classes. Soon the local professor was teaching all the classes and leading the discussions, although the consultant was present as an observer.

Let us cite one example of the working relationship. The local professor inclined more favorably toward human development and family relations than home management. The consultant wished to capitalize on this interest as well as guide her toward an awareness of the interrelations of the fields. It was decided to begin a unit about the use of money and socialization processes which parents use in money matters. The participants in the course were asked to contribute orally ideas about their first personal experiences with money. In a round table discussion each person gave an illustration. Upon analysis the consultant noted that all of the examples referred to their first earning experiences as teachers. The local teacher and the consultant then gave some examples of earlier experiences, for example, the use of a penny bank, Sunday candy money, shopping experiences for gifts or personal clothing. Then the participants were asked to re-think their experiences in terms of their earliest acquaintances with money. From this discussion the group catalogued attitudes toward money and incidents which helped to formulate these attitudes. The group also discussed problems which each member had experienced as a result of lack of practice in spending money.

Meanwhile outside the classroom, the consultant and the local teacher were translating the Household Finance Corporation's bulletin entitled "Children's Spending." The translation was a rough draft to be used only for the purpose of stimulating discussion. When the local professor grasped the essential concepts, she selected the ideas which she thought were applicable to her own culture. She discussed these with the consultant. Then she presented some of the ideas as discussion topics to her group of rural teachers. At the close of the course, the rural teachers developed a pamphlet entitled, "Su Nino y su Dinero" (Your child and his money). This pamphlet was mimeographed, made available by the extension service of the country, and sent to extension personnel in some other Latin American countries as a possible

8Prepared by the 1963 Class at ISHA, mimeographed by INTA Extension Agency, Bolivar, Argentina.
stimulus. This pamphlet is a real adaptation, not a translation. The participants who developed it have never seen the original pamphlet which inspired their professor.

Other speakers have mentioned the interest of Africans in role-playing. Many of the Latin Americans enjoy this form of expression also. It has been used to motivate discussions in many places. Role-playing has been especially successful in work simplification efforts. Although time-saving is not a particularly important concept in Latin America, energy saving is. Based on observations made in a Costa Rican community, we have been aware of the systematic patterns of organization which prohibit economic use of the limited energy of the women who are often undernourished and who have large families and little labor-saving equipment. The consultant used illustrations from this study to present the theory of work simplification. Then a group of extension agents were asked to create a dramatization which would capture some aspect of the local homemaker's day in which work simplification principles could be applied. The result was a dramatization of a woman going to market in a community in which the woman first sells her products and then buys what is needed for her own family. The agents based their illustrations on the observations of good and improvable practices which they had observed during their years of service. They employed local terminology. The plan was to present this dramatization with local women playing the roles as a motivation for an extension meeting. After the presentation, the agents hoped that the local homemakers would be able to indicate the strong and weak points of the woman's form of selling and buying. With this new awareness, the agents hoped to teach principles of work simplification applied to marketing. To date it has not been possible to mimeograph this script, nor is there a report as to the use which might have been made of the idea.

Another variation of the tutorial consultation has helped to prepare teachers of research methods. Professors and extension workers recognize the scarcity of basic information needed by home economists in Latin America, and they wish to help obtain it, although there are few persons with the combined knowledge of research methods and subject matter areas needed to plan and execute research programs. In answer to the demand, the home economist in the southern zone has offered short courses for a duration of five months. These have been attended among others by professors from Chilean universities. Following the five months training period and field work experience in social science research methods, two of these professors have invited the professor as a consultant to help them plan and carry out similar courses in their universities. Since these universities require their students to present an undergraduate thesis as part of the requirements for a degree in home economics, we foresee an improvement in the quality of this work as well as a gradual accumulation of useful information.

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Latin American professors can be helped by correspondence following concentrated tutorial contacts and in some cases even when such contacts have not been possible. The Turrialba Center has provided some translations, bibliographies, and photocopies of materials which are useful in home economics courses. We have translations of selected articles from the Journal of Home Economics, Rural Sociology, Scientific American, Journal of Cooperative Extension, Social Forces, and Economic Development and Cultural Change. We have mimeographed a few original papers done by our students. There is a bibliography available entitled, "Sources of Information about How Families Live in Latin America." Other selected bibliographies of Spanish works related to home economics are in preparation.

In order to stimulate student participation in classes rather than the traditional memorization, we also try to provide professors with suggestions for student activities in relation to the courses which they are developing. These may be topics to discuss, observations to be made, reading to be done, or other types of activities. Last night you listened to a portion of a tape on how mothers discipline their children in different cultures. That same tape is being used in Turrialba by students in cultural anthropology. A small group has listened to the tape in English. These students have extracted the basic concepts as they understand them. They have discussed the parallels in Spanish and are developing a script of Spanish illustrations. They hope to experiment with taping this script and present it for commentary to their companions. If this can be perfected, it should be useful not only in anthropology courses, but also in extension, home economics, and other social science courses as a stimulator of discussion.

In a course in educational psychology, the Turrialba students were asked to adapt any test or experiment for possible use by extension agents in Latin America. Working with the local extension agency, one such group developed an idea similar to one reported to us last night with respect to types of drawings accepted by rural people. The local agency hopes to initiate a program of better housing, nutrition, and health care for swine. The students wished to learn what types of drawings or photographs would be understood by the local rural farmers as a guide for making the most effective posters for this campaign. The students photographed a well-made pig pen, a healthy animal, and a sick-one. From these photographs they made drawings in three styles: conventional, modernistic, and humoristic. They asked some farmers who were local extension leaders to select the photographs and drawings which they liked best on a forced-choice basis. Although this was only a test and not a selected sample study, it was soon evident that modernistic and humoristic drawings were not appropriate for this audience. The students experienced this, rather than only reading the results of someone else's research. At the same time the local leaders have some understanding of the objectives of the extension agency personnel and are motivated to help in the campaign.
The final example of methods for helping professors to develop their own Latin American programs is that of stimulating correspondence between professors of similar subject matter in the different countries. This is hindered by the fact that Latin Americans seldom will correspond with an institution. They prefer to write to an individual who is known to them. As the IICA home economists travel from country to country they try to provide personal links between these professors. At present there is some correspondence between extension supervisors, sociology professors, and professors of human development and family relations. Some of these persons have had an opportunity to meet each other after the correspondence was begun.

Role of Turrialba Graduate Center

Now let us turn to some specific ideas of the role of the Turrialba Graduate Center in the development of home economics in Latin America. Since there are relatively few women eligible to enter graduate school the majority of our students are men. Our work in the zones is to concentrate on developing undergraduate programs so that, hopefully in the future, there will be more graduate women students. Meanwhile the graduate school contacts will be mainly males. Of those men in the discipline of economics and social sciences, most have been general agriculture majors as undergraduates with later experience in the extension service. Most will return to positions of leadership as professors, extension supervisors, or higher posts in the ministry of agriculture in their countries. For the future development of home economics in Latin America it seems essential that these men grasp a concept of the depth and breadth of home economics as well as its importance in the emergence of Latin America.

Earlier in this conference mention was made of the problems encountered in explaining home economics to African men. All home economists have experienced this problem in greater or lesser degree. When we must work with a language which is not our mother tongue, the problems are increased. One solution seemed to be the development of an illustration which would indicate the interrelatedness of the home economics areas. The illustration which I am going to present originated in necessity and has been presented in at least nine Latin American countries to both men and women of many different educational levels. It has been adapted by students in the orientation course in one of new university programs to explain home economics to their parents. It has been used by extensionists with new agents, with government ministers, and with homemakers as a guide in program selection. It has been used in the graduate school mainly with male extension personnel. This is the first time that the idea has been presented in English and to a group of professional home economists. We shall welcome your comments and criticisms of this means of explaining what home economics is.

The central idea is a comparison of home economics to a house. Of course the picture which one has of a house varies by culture, but clever teachers can adapt the idea to the local concept of a house. First a simple house is constructed with plastic blocks. It consists of a floor, four walls, a ceiling, and a roof. This structure is knocked down with one movement of the hand. It is pointed out that while all the elements remain, the pile hardly represents a house.
The second phase of the illustrated talk consists of reconstructing the house more slowly with appropriate parallels in home economics. The house of home economics begins with a floor which represents an amalgamation of all the sciences (both biological and social), arts, and humanities which form the base upon which home economics draws to apply knowledge to the development of the family. The bricks which form each of the four walls represent knowledge, skills, and attitudes in foods and nutrition, housing, clothing, and human development. Comments are made with respect to the relationships between the touching walls as illustrated in the column of bricks which two walls have in common. The ceiling represents home management, which provides a means to relate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes which form all four of the walls, thus expanding their interrelation and highlighting the need for decision-making by families. The roof represents family relationships, the dynamic, human factor which influences the types of management and the use of the resources available. Since the types of family relationships vary in the Latin American countries, this provides a way to illustrate how the different forms of family organization are related to all of home economics.

In the end, the entire structure is again broken. The final comment is that the elements are all present, but without organization and sense of relationship, a balanced, integrated home economics program cannot be built, just as a house cannot be built without the expected relationship of the construction elements, each in a proper placement.

Recognizing the need for some means to unite all the IICA efforts in developing home economics within Latin America and given the diverse responsibilities with which the home economists are charged, the central focus selected is the family in Latin America. There is a course in the graduate school entitled "The Family in Latin America." This is offered to all the students in economics and social science. From ideas presented in this course we hope that some students will select their thesis topics. It would be especially useful if pairs of students could interview husbands and wives simultaneously about certain aspects of family life. Currently one husband and wife team is preparing a report of a study of this type which was carried out in Mexico. As was mentioned previously, the Latin American universities require the writing of an undergraduate thesis to complete the requirements for a degree. Currently the IICA home economists are trying to advise students on a wide variety of topics. It is hoped that we will be able to align some of the interests so that by providing bibliographies and some sample questionnaires we will be able to curb the dispersion and obtain comparative data from various countries as well as being able to orient more students with our current limited group of professionals.

The students in the graduate course reviewed the literature and formulated a list of 27 Spanish and Portuguese definitions of the family. We are still trying to develop a truly Latin American definition of the concept which will incorporate the variations which we have discussed. One motivating technique which was successful in the course and which might serve as a means of rapidly gathering useful information in other developing university programs was the use of incomplete sentences. On the first day of class before explaining the objectives and outline of the course, the students were asked to respond to 55 incomplete
sentences related to various themes which would be included in the course.
For example:
The family in my country ....
The rich family ....
The average family ....
The rural family ....
Parents ought to ....
The family hopes to ....

The responses were compiled and presented to the class as an introduction to each of the topics. It was easy for each student to evaluate his original reaction to the major concepts presented in the course.

It is hoped that as this course is given again, the IICA home economists can write a manual for teaching the course. Such a manual would indicate possible objectives, course organization, student activities, sources of information and educational aids, and many possible ideas for evaluating the learning. The manual envisioned could be useful at the university level, the secondary level, and in extension wherever people have a need to learn more about families in Latin America. The manual could also serve as an example of a type of guide which could be developed by leaders in other subject matter areas to help their professors.

These brief glimpses into selected phases of the work of the IICA home economists in trying to help the developing home economics programs in Latin America have been chosen to try to illustrate many of the excellent principles of communication, values, and other key concepts which the previous speakers have highlighted.

ANNOUNCEMENT

At the closing session Dr. Nelson issued the following invitation:

To all who have students from Latin American countries or who expect to be involved in contracts with Latin American universities, I would like to issue an invitation to:

1. Visit us in Turrialba to learn about Latin America and what is going on there in educational and research programs. You might use our library and our language laboratory. Perhaps you could study during one term. I would recommend participation in our course on "The Family in Latin America," which will probably be offered during spring term, 1966. If you are not directly involved you might suggest such a visit to AID/college contract personnel in your university.

2. Send Latin American students to us before they come to the United States as well as one their way home so as to aid them in the transition.

3. Write to us for information such as bibliographies, Spanish teaching materials, and possible contacts in the countries of your interest. Please try to identify your problems so as to ask specific questions rather than "please send everything we need to know about Latin America!"