

Agricultural Extension

Aim: This section aims at imparting the knowledge of agricultural extension practice and its application for improving the farmers' social economic well being, in the student. At end of the lesson the students are expected to know and acquire the skills for the practice of extension services, using different extension systems/approaches to achieve the set transformational goal.

History of Extension Services

The term 'extension' has a long history of emergence across the countries of the world.

But the modern extension practice is widely believed to have begun in the United Kingdom.

This was initiated by James Stuart, a university lecturer who took a practical step to educate certain set of people on issues of interest outside their university setting In 1867

Based on the recorded successes on the out-of-school teaching, the educational service became formalised in 1873 by the Cambridge University and came to be known as 'university extension' or 'extension of the university'

As other universities such as London and Oxford Universities, followed suite, the out-of-school educational work became known as 'extension movement' in the UK.

About the same time, the same initiative took place in the United States of America where the out-of-school teaching was referred to as 'adult education'.

With educational service largely undertaken by the then College of Agriculture, the focus was farmers. But with the decrease in the number of farmers in the United States, the educational exercise thus becomes extended to all categories of people with interest in certain subject matters.

Extension Definition

Based on the origin of the extension services, it has come to be defined as:

a professional field of information education system aimed at educating people in their own context and life situation on how to identify and assess own problems, and acquire knowledge and skills on how to effectively deal with such problems so as to improve their living condition.

However, extension definition is not limited to this perceptive. Based on specific focus to which the practice of extension services has been adjusted, several other definitions have been, and could be formulated. Other definitions thus take the following:

Is a conscious use of communication of information to help people form sound opinions and make good decisions

These series of extension definitions suggest that extension as a practice is not limited to agriculture but other social and economic aspect of human life.

Agricultural Extension Service

Integration of informal educational teaching in agricultural activities gave rise to the term 'agricultural extension'.

This aimed at providing instructional education on how to increase farm productivity and improve the living condition of the farmers.

Notable experience in this regard was provision of instructional education on effective control and management of the incidence of potato blight that devastated the potato farms in the Republic of Ireland. The successes recorded in this regard gave rise to agricultural extension services

Agricultural Extension definition

This can be defined as:

The transfer of agricultural technologies to the rural farmers for application to improve their farm productivity and level of living

The conscious provision educational instruction or technical information for use of the farmers in taking actions to effectively manage their farm situation for increased productivity and improved living condition

Goals of Extension Service

Extension has the basic goal of improving the living standard of the extension clients through increased productivity of their means of livelihood

Philosophy of extension

This refers to the criteria guiding the practice of extension service delivery. Therefore the following must be given consideration in extension practices:

- Extension practice focuses on the learners with a view to empowering them to be able to solve meet their needs
- Extension practice creates a learning environment that is valued by the learners i.e. with tangible results or gains
- Extension practices emphasis learners' involvement in education programmes
- Extension activities must be well planned and sequenced to achieve the desirable changes in the social and economic well being of the learners
- Extension programmes are dictated by the needs of the learners or clients
- Extension programmes must be conducted in the learners' environment- farm, home etc
- Extension education is more concerned with *learning* and as such a variety of teaching methods that would enhance learning must be employed in the extension instructional education
- Learners' participation in extension educational practice is voluntary

Extension teaching methods

There are three basic extension teaching methods, each of which depends on the number of people to be at a time with the same message. These are:

Individual method: This refers to education of just a single client by an extension agent at a particular point in time.

Group method: This refers to bringing together two or more people at a particular spot for the purpose of educating them on a subject matter of interest to them all at the same time.

Mass method: This refers to reaching out a large number of people who could not be reasonably brought together at a spot, through the electronic media with certain extension message at a particular time.

None these methods is better than the other but the purpose of the message and the number of people to be reached at a particular time.

Extension Teaching Aids

This refers to any instruction device that supports educational training of extension clients. Examples include board and marker, posters, video and television, audio devices etc.

The extension teaching aids are basically grouped into three based on the sound and audio dependence. These are:

Audio teaching aid: This refers to any educational device that mainly appeals to sense of hearing and support audio instructional education of the extension clients. Examples include microphone and loudspeaker, megaphone, radio broadcast, audio recording etc.

Visual teaching aid: This refers to educational devices that mainly appeals to sense of sight and support instructional education by visible entities or physical items. Examples are pictures, images, posters, life objects, models etc.

Audio-visual teaching aids: This refers to educational devices that appeal to both sense of hearing and sight and support teaching by making use of sound and images. Examples are television broadcast, video recording, multimedia projector etc.

Typology of extension systems

Based on the purpose a particular extension service is meant to achieve or an approach to achieving the goal, there exists different extension systems, and these are:

Commodity based extension system: This focus on bringing about increased productivity of a particular farm enterprise.

Contractual extension system: In this regard, the farmers go into contractual agreement with certain agencies for extension services on certain farm enterprise they have agreed to produce for the agency.

Top-down extension system: This is system of extension that aimed at handing perceived potent innovations to the farmers for adoption without consideration for their production needs and system.

Participatory extension system: This a extension system that set out to involve the farmers in the generation of innovation and technical information that fit and work for their production system.

Training and visit extension system: This extension system aims at up-building the rural farmers and production system through regular visit and training of the farmers; providing them with workable technologies and linking them with the research system.

University-based extension system: This is a system of extension that focuses on selected villages as model village for provision of extension services by a particular university within the vicinity of the villages.

Extension system in Nigeria

Adopted extension system is the Training and Visit (T&V) extension system. It was developed for the World Bank by Benor and aims at improving the rural farmers' productivity through efficient extension service delivery in the developing countries. The system was introduced into the Nigeria's agricultural system in the mid-70s when it was tried in three enclaves of Gusau, Funtua and Gombe. The recorded successes from the trial led to state-wide implementation of the extension system as Agricultural Development Programme (ADP). Implementation of the extension system at the state levels gave rise to states acronyms of the ADP e.g Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme as OGADEP.

Implementation of the extension system in Nigeria

To reach out to all the rural farmers across the country, each state is structured into zones, blocks and cells. The extension personnel are as grouped as zonal manager, block extension supervisor/agent (BES/BEA), extension agents (EA) and the subject matter specialists (SMS). The EAs are expected to cover between 8 and 10 cells where they relate directly with the farmers reaching out to them with extension services at interval of two weeks. The EAs are well trained at interval of two weeks by the SMS on emerging agricultural issues of concern to the rural farmers. The SMS on the other hand are trained by the research institutes on mandated research areas. The EAs' training is at the Monthly Training session (MTS) and SMSs' training is at the Quarterly Technology Review Meetings (QTRM). Due to large numbers of farmers to be reached by an EA on weekly basis, they employ the services of the Contact Farmers (CF) whom they relate with directly and in turn the CF assists in reaching other farmers with the same extension message.

Principles of T&V system of Extension

The following are the principles of the T&V extension system:

1. **Professionalism:** It requires that the extension agents must be professionally trained, full-time worker and supported with all the necessary resources to perform effectively well.
2. **Single line of command:** An extension agent must be technically and administratively responsible to one authority
3. **Concentration of efforts:** Extension workers' efforts must be concentrated mainly on extension activities and with a clearly defined roles
4. **Time-bound work:** This requires that extension workers should be conscious of scheduled time for extension and farm activities.
5. **Field and farmer orientation:** This emphasises that extension agents must be regularly visit farmer and the farms for extension service delivery
6. **Regular and continuous training:** This implies that extension personnel and farmers must be regularly trained and have their professional skills up-graded and updated for efficient performance
7. **Two-way information flow:** This implies that there must be information flow between the extension unit and the farmers and with agricultural researchers/institutes