

THE ROLE OF THE EXTENSION AGENT IN THE FACE TO FACE COMMUNICATION

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SUMMARY

More than one way of technology transfer is practiced in extension. Depending on the circumstances extension agent may use one of them or combination of them to reach the farmer more effectively. Face to face communication (FFC) is one of the most important method of extension. Scholar of extension such as Francis and Rawlins-Branan (1986); Ashby, et al (1990) discuss that FFC is the most effective way of technology transfer, although it is highly costly method of extension. Communication techniques is the intrinsic element of FFC and achievement of the communication technique used hinges mainly upon skills of extension agent. In this paper, focus has been done on the FFC, and that extension agent's role has been discussed.

INTRODUCTION

"Face to Face Communication" (FFC) is one of the frequently practiced method of agricultural extension. It is accepted that the method would increase the efficiency of the extension agencies. Extension agent has, because, more chance to affect his client every aspect of adoption process in this method than the others. It is, hence, suggested that the method should be taken into account by the extension agencies as an effective way of technology transfer in extension works.

There is more than one way of technology transfer and the one we have chosen follows a tradition in which FFC can be seen as a specific form of a general phenomenon within the extension activities. It has been defined in a number of ways, but we do not wish to emphasize to either one particular definition of FFC or communication models. They have inevitably been neglected in focusing the role of extension agent and his features as a sender of messages.

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During the FFC, a certain consensus will happen regarding the task of the extension agents and the norms between agents and their clients. As a consequence of this consensus, the client can accept to be influenced by the extension agent only because he expects this agents to adhere to a role which is acceptable to him. The technique of conducting a FFC will have to be an effective instrument at the service of the extension agent acting out his professional role.

Communication technique is the intrinsic element of a FFC and depends on skill of extension agent, but it can be developed systematically. This requires an assessment by the agent of the role expected of him by his client. These expectations require careful research.

The Role of Extension Agent

The roles expected of the extension agent can be summarized as follows;

- * an extension agent should be an expert in a specific field or at least should know the subjects considerably more than his client,

- * an extension agent is able easily to transmit information and insight which are immediately useful to solve the practical problems of the clients,

- * an extension agent is able to present his knowledge in such a way that the clients are able to understand and work with it. Furthermore, knowledge and insight should be also presented in such a form and at such a time that the clients can make maximum use of it at his own discretion. To realize this, an extension agent has a certain didactical skill and talent,

- * an extension agent should be aware of the clients circumstances. One expects interests, willingness, to conform to the wishes, feelings, in short the whole personal world of clients. From an experienced agent the client will expect through knowledge of his situation,

- * an extension agent's starting-point should be the interest of the client. This is certainly the most difficult part in the role of the extension agent. In this case, the difficulties appear the question is raised: "Who defines what the interests of the client are?" Some extension agents can state that they

themselves often determine what is the interest of the client and can try and talk him round to their view, while others reply "the client".

There are no certain answer to this question and it hinges completely on thinking of extension agent and his client in terms of final and intermediate aims. If the client has a final goal and target, the interest of the client should be defined and determined by the client. If the client has no final aim and just wants something "because somebody wants something" the definition and determination of the client's interest can be drawn by the extension agent. Otherwise, continuation of the discussion will be time consuming and the consequent of the FFC will be fruitless.

By intermediate interest we understand something for which one strives, because with it one thinks to be able to realize or justify another interest. In practice, every interest which can be experienced as final can also be seen as intermediate. Hence it would often be better to speak of two aspects of the same interest. In other words, to use the intermediate aspects of the client's interest for fruitful would increase the chance of the extension agent to determine of the final aim of the client. This is part of the extension agent's role when assisting the client.

The another conflict question about the final and intermediate objective of the client can appear when working groups during FFC. The question is that what should the extension agent do when the interest of a group is contrary to that of some of its members? In such case, the best remedy is to remain neutral with regard to the conflicting interests of individuals or groups. By this the clients will understand explicitly from the extension agent's advise to each of them how best they can attain their intended ends even if these interest should conflict with their own.

* an extension agent must be objective. The client should believe that extension agent will try to do his best for all possible relevant means to realize the client ultimate interest, and to choose the most desirable of them.

* an extension agent should leave the decision to the client in most cases. With regard to this aspect of the role of the extension agent, some can accept that the decision should be left to the person advised while

others can be advocate of a different approached that one would limit the decision of the client using their own agricultural knowledge and information. Some claim that the extension agent was allowed to push the client along towards a decision for quite a while, when the client is in the first part of the decision-making process or unable to understand the matter is important for him. Other was convinced that extension agent dared make a decision for the client even they can believe that it would be the best, if the farmer thought that they had made the decision himself.

* extension worker should be careful making the contact his client and proved that training and orientation is the key factor rather than the gender of the extensionist because he should work with the different target group such as women farmers,

Concerning the ideas discussed above of extension agents, our experience showed that the best course of action of any agent, who involve in extension and rural development activities, is solely encourage and underpin the clients for making up their mind. They themselves never make a decision instead of their clients. Otherwise, the implementation rate of any information or advise will be too narrow.

CONCLUSION

After making up extension agent mind, concerning which role he might have to fulfil in certain circumstances, he still needs to have command of the required method to develop a certain relationship and to have a special type of discussion with the client.

To perform the role of an agent inquiring after information adequately is especially in two respects. He must, on the one hand, derive the information with which to determine how to help the client, on the other hand, he will be able to help the client begin to view his own problems clearly. Moreover, the client must be convinced that they really are his own problems and should observe that agent shares his feelings. In the first place it requires the extension officer to be intensively interested in what is motivating the client and to show it.

In order to stimulate the agent's interest and feeling, the client is expected that the problems should

be explained so clearly about reaching the objectives without reserve, unless he perceives that he is constantly interrupted by agent's thought process or rejects his point of view. In other words, extension agent has to give the chance his client to end up the conversation and has not to show his own feelings to his client so as to keep alive FFC.

Thus the agent should be able to accept as the basis of discussion the subjective point of view of the client and not reject it even if he is not in agreement. Those, who are not sufficiently suited to this approach to the client, should have to learn it, as part of the role of the agent within the FFC.

Face to face communication is by no means a uniform process of extension, and that the role of extension agent and his skills are vital component of it. The process is influenced by many elements, and that extension agent will act various ways in it. It is evident that a number of ways of acting, both by the agent and the client, are more and less discernible as a role. This must be the result of a rather high frequency in the occurrence of these methods of extension.

Consequently, although face to face communication is a highly costly method to technology transfer, it would be suggested in many cases of extension as an effective way for extension agencies. Because, with face to face communication and determined and well performed role of extension agent, fruitful from extension works can be easily derived and that there is fair room for farmer participation in it which is the real phenomenon alleviating the poverty of rural people.

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