

TRAINING NEED OF EXTENSIONISTS

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SUMMARY

Concerning intensive training needs of extensionist, there was a strong consensus, especially at the administrative and field level, at the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development organized by FAO in Rome in 1979 (FAO, 1979). After this conference more attention has been given training needs of extensionists in many developing countries, including Turkey, with technical and financial support of FAO and World Bank. For instance, training and visit extension system has been accepted the way in which regular training component of the approach would be the best solution to tackle the training problems of extensionists. In this paper, the concept of training, training needs, types and subject matters of training and constraints to training are reviewed and training efforts for extensionists are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In most developing countries, high proportion of the population is engaged in agriculture, often at the subsistence level. In those countries, not only is the need for increased productivity, but also the incidence of literacy and other essential skills are low, among men, women as well as youths and children.

Most authors argue that an important part of the solution might lie in the improvement and expansion of non-formal education if it could be effectively organized, financed and administrated. In order to achieve this, cooperation is essential between government organizations, international agencies and private institutions.

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In most cases and countries, non-formal education rests with the extension services. Although extension and rural development workers are doing their best, they also need to be trained.

TRAINING NEED

Most of the countries have established some form of agricultural extension service. However, in many of these countries extension services have had only a limited effect on increasing farm production and incomes of farm families. The most important reason among others is a shortage of properly qualified extension workers.

It is becoming obvious that the farmers, mainly small and subsistence level, are hard to be reached without well-trained extension workers. In other words, every aspect of extension activities technology transfer to farmers is a highly complex job and needs real professionals. To produce capable extensionist at both administrative and field level, three types of instruction are essential which are basic education, pre-service training and inservice (on the job) training (Maalouf and Contado, 1984). Note here that the concept of education and training is completely different. Education is concern knowledge, training is concern skills and attitudes. Hence, education can be defined as the development of people knowledge and cognitive domain, which are mainly related with non-physical activities of human, to assist them to understand and success the future task, while the training can be defined as the development of people skills, attitudes which are mainly related with physical activities of human, to assist them to achieve the current task (Taylor and Lippit, 1983).

Basic Education

Basic education levels of extensionist vary widely in different countries. Swanson and Jaffar (1981) pointed out that of 78 countries surveyed, 33 countries recruited extensionists with certificate or diploma, while the remaining 45 countries recruited extensionist with B.Sc degree in agriculture extension service.

According to recent FAO survey, it is possible to distinguish three levels of extension staff at agricultural extension organizations in 26 countries:

* senior-level officers in charge of a division or district, normally with an academic background of a minimum of three years attendance at an agricultural college or university,

* intermediate-level officers of an administrative unit between division and local level, qualified by two to three years at an agricultural school,

* field-level officers, often with a background of one or two years at a farm institute (Maalouf and Contado, 1984).

Although emphasis is, time to time, going to be done on the curriculum of basic education of extensionists, discussion about curriculum detail of basic agricultural education at University goes far beyond the aim of this paper. Hence, focus will mainly be on pre-service and in-service training of extensionists. Because scholars of extension agreed upon that these types of training are the most effective way to tackle the training problems of extensionists in many countries (Luning, 1984; Maalouf and Contado 1984; Blum, 1985).

Pre-service Training

The objective of pre-service training is to help prepare young extensionists to function more effectively in extension programs designed to produce solution that are more useful, relevant and acceptable to farmers and to sensitize extensionists to the complexity of the small farmers decision-making environment.

Scholars agree upon that pre-service training is crucial for young extensionists because of the lack of practice and social sciences at university. For instance, Luning (1984) claimed that with very few exceptions, university agricultural education (basic education) often demonstrates the wide gap between theory and practice and does little to develop communication and management skills. One of the main causes for this gap is the absence of practical exercises in the curriculum owing to low budgets. Apart from this gap, much education remains academic and narrowly specialized and students therefore are not sufficiently prepared to solve problems that require the integration of knowledge and experience from a number of related fields.

Maalouf and Contado (1984) pointed out that the curriculum of agricultural faculties in the developing countries lack basic courses in social sciences and adult education. These also are essential to the training of extensionists who will be good at their job.

Concerning the gap between theory and practice, and the lack of communication-management skills, and social sciences, pre-service training is essential to extensionists. In spite of its importance, institutional pre-service extension training is not available in many countries because of a lack of qualified trainers (Maalouf and Contado, 1984).

In contrast, country who believes the importance of pre-service training such as Israel can be given as a good example. Blum (1985) pointed out that the extension service as one of the main initiators wanted the faculty of agriculture to train students prior to joining the service. From the extension leaders point of view, pre-service training would enable them to shorten the induction period or to raise its level, assuming that part of the pre-service training would be practical.

Concerning the program, pre-service course should use socio-economic methods and should procedure that are familiar to agricultural economists. However, the non-economists considered, for the most part, that they had been introduced to techniques which could greatly benefit them in their future work, although possibly by alerting them as to where to seek help, rather than necessarily doing it themselves. Furthermore, the curriculum of pre-service training has to have social science lectures such as sociology, psychology and social-anthropology because they are all the way to understand the feelings, cognitive, personal and community behavior of human and society. Indeed, with this program, the goal is not to produce second-rate social scientists, but to give young agricultural extensionist additional techniques of inquiry as well as to make them aware of the relevance of other disciplines to their own work.

In-service Training

The concept of in-service training is to train extensionists in terms of the development an application of skills and attitudes needed to improve ability in solving problems and by this way, to keep alive

technology and information transfer to the farmers. During the last decade, much emphasis has been given to in-service training of extensionists by decision-makers in many developing countries.

For example, training and visit extension was put forward by Benor and Harrison (1977) and Benor et al. (1984) assuming that not many developing countries have a really effective extension service due to a number of reasons. The lack of in-service training and the linkage between extension and research are hits among them. The approach, with the possible solution against weaknesses of the conventional extension system, was accepted and carried out by more than 40 countries all over the world.

Turkey has been one of the implemented area of the T & V extension and more attention has been given to in-service training of extensionists during the last eight years. It can be said that some fruitful results have been obtained from these training efforts. In spite of some achievement of the training programs, according to our observation, one point related with trainees has been questionable. For all training programs, only extensionists has been thought as trainees. Whereas supervisors, subject matter specialists and more importantly researchers should be thought as trainees within the training programs. Because in many cases and in many countries, there are very weak connection between research and extension and more important between research and the practice. This has been more important mainly developing countries where education level is low among men, women as well as youths and children. In their case, the priorities, real needs and actual facts of the farmers are not properly known by researchers and the research results do not match the problems of the farmers.

Today, many scholars of extension such as Chambers (1983), Ashby et al. (1984), Bunch (1989), Sumberg and Okali (1989), have discussed on the matters such as farmers reality, environment, indigenous knowledge and experience of farmers and have stressed on the close connection of extension-research-practice and farmer participation. It is becoming obvious that researches (excluding basic research) in agriculture should be designed and carried on under the farm condition (on-farm research) with the participation of farmers. This approach to research has been quite

confusing for many researchers in many countries but it has been accepted by some of them as time has passed. That is the reason why we mentioned above the training needs of researchers as well as extensionists.

A scholar of extension, Sudad (1979), redefined the in-service training and trainees concept which is underpin our point of view. He discussed that the concept of trainees should also be redefined to include not only extensionists but researchers, subject matter specialists and supervisors who are also involved in the various phases of farmer training. Such in-service training should have the objective of integrating the compartmentalized function of research, extension and training rather than of acquiring additional knowledge. The most significant outcome would therefore be the reorientation of field workers, so that their particular lines of work in research, extension or training are viewed not as "specializations" but interdependent functions in a system designed to achieve the common objective.

Extensionists need both farming skills and non-farming skills. Combination of both can be made in different types of in-service training. Those training programs share a common goal and a common training tradition, but as will be seen, they differ in their specific objectives, structure, pedagogical methods, contents and costs.

According to types and subject-matters of in-service training, Maalouf and Contado (1984) grouped the training into four types and into four subject-matters.

Types of in-service training are;

- * Regular in-service training,
- * Special in-service training,
- * Cooperative in-service training,
- * In-service training for qualification and graduation

Subject matter of in-service training are;

- * General technical agriculture,
- * Specific technical agriculture,
- * Mixture of technical agriculture and extension techniques,
- * Extension methodology.

Types and subject-matters of in-service training and leading to are depicted in Figure 1.

Regular in-service training focuses on the fortnightly or monthly regular sessions. The sessions are scheduled over a long period of time and the subjects to be covered are planned well in advance and follow the sequence of farm operations to grow a certain crop. Training and visit is a good example to this type of training.

Special in-service training is given practically all agricultural extension agents when a country adopts a new agricultural production program, such as the Masagona 99 program in the Philippines or the food self-sufficiency program in Bhutan. In this way all the technical and procedural requirements of a new Ministry of Agriculture policy and a new extension program can be coped with by extensionists.

Cooperative in-service training consist of close cooperation between the agricultural extension services and colleges/faculties of agriculture and research institutes. They conduct in-service training agreed upon for both extension agents and subject matter specialists. Depending upon the training needs, course duration normally takes from one to four months and it is used and is more appropriate for the training of trainers, subject-matter specialist and supervisors. A good example can be given from the Philippines, where rice subject-matter specialist and the trainer on rice in the Bureau of Agricultural extension are trained by the International Rice Research Institute.

In service training for qualification and graduation allow extension staff to take qualification from special courses (technical or pedagogical) or to follow a degree program in the university within the country or abroad. Today, this type of in-service training is practiced by many developing countries.

Although it is possible to include different subject areas to in-service training, they are generally summarized as follows;

General technical agriculture; the objective of this type in-service training is a review and updating of technical general subject matter. It, for instance, may be devoted to the study of producing a single commodity such as from sowing to harvesting of cotton, while specific technical agriculture focuses on a specific farming operation for example proper irrigation of cotton.

Mixture of technical agriculture and extension techniques are given to trainees together and the relative proportion of these varies according to the immediate problem areas. This is less common, but a highly desirable form of in-service training for extensionists.

The objective of extension methodology training is to understand how adults learn and how to encourage them to adopt new technology and farming practices. This is also called for when a new extension approach or method is being adopted, e.g. from individual to participatory approaches, or from conventional extension system to the training and visit approach. This subject-matter of in-service training is vital for those who may be well prepared in technical subject matters. Because, without knowing extension methodology, technology transfer to farmers and adoption of it is so difficult and require long time more than reasonable period of time.

Training Efforts in Turkey

Concerning basic education, pre- and in-service training, the situation which discussed above was not so different in Turkey from other developing countries. In basic education the lack of practices causes many difficulties when an agricultural engineer (a student is graduated after four year basic education from agricultural faculty and he is called as agricultural engineer in Turkey) is recruited at an extension service.

Furthermore, there were little opportunities to fill the practice gap of this extensionists with pre-service training because training was not the first priority for decision-makers and there were little emphasis on it. Some unregular training efforts were performed, mainly as in-service training, for extensionists till 1984 but it is not possible to say that these efforts were systematic and regular. That year, training and visit extension approach was implemented on the conventional extension structure in Turkey and situation as to training greatly changed.

With the new approach, fortnightly and monthly sessions between extensionist and researches have been programmed and performed, regularly. Time to time, lecturers and professors have been invited to the

sessions to discuss the actual problems in the area and it has been observed that following of this way would be fruitful both extensionists and researchers.

Within the structure of Turkish agricultural knowledge and information system, agricultural faculties are important sources of generated technology and agricultural information. But, transfer of this generated and accumulated knowledge into practice has been the main problem area because lecturers and researchers at the agricultural faculty have to devoted their time much to lectures, students and research activities because of the curriculum pressure on them.

Together with other reason, implementation of the T & V extension and its intensive training programs and the training needs of subject matter specialists (SMSs) have been the positive effect to the agricultural faculty and "Agricultural Extension and Research Center" was established by Ege University in 1987. During the last five years, the center has performed many in-service training programs such as animal husbandry, horticulture, milk technology, fertilizer and irrigation, agricultural mechanization with the participation of lecturers and professors of agricultural faculty. To these courses, more than 500 SMSs have attended from different areas of Aegean region and more than 100 subjects have been discussed.

SOME CONSTRAINTS TO PRE- AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Concerning pre- and in-service training, main constraint is the lack of adequate basic agricultural education in many developing countries. In other words, basic education for agricultural extension is critically inadequate, both quantitatively and qualitatively in these countries. Although many countries have training institutes offering regular courses in various fields, and that attention is being paid to the improvement of staff qualifications, the success of training efforts has been unacceptable level. A study which was performed by Nagel and Blackenburg (1982) confirms this fact.

Organizational, financial and technical constraints to training are hits among the others. In some countries, training programs are implemented by a separate unit. This often creates organizational and administrative problems because responsibility for the training activities is divided among different

ministries. It is called as "organizational constraints" to training. Possible solution is to avoid dividing the responsibility of training activities.

Because of the inadequacy of the training of extension staff and calculation difficulty as to return rate of training expenditure, decision-makers are not giving due importance to training in most developing countries. In other words, due to this characteristic of training, the priority of training is not first and there are not enough money in the budget of extension organizations for training efforts. It is called as "financial constraints" to training. To reduce the financial problems of training, close collaboration between extension, research and education subsystems of agricultural knowledge and information system is necessary.

"Curriculum" is another major constraint to training. Because its content is inappropriate to the extensionists and does not generally meet the training needs of them. This frequently occurs during the training activities because training needs and job analysis of trainees are not carefully identified, there is too much emphasis on theoretical presentation rather than practical training, recommendations are generally impractical and there is poor communication between trainers and trainees. In addition, the training programs have been performed unsystematically and without proper job analysis and worse definition of training needs, the duration and frequency of training are set arbitrarily and training periods are sporadic.

CONCLUSION

During the last decade, training need of extensionist has been crucial for extension organizations and they have stressed on it. Decision-makers have partly understood its importance to technology transfer and rural development. They have given some opportunities and have afford the money to extensionists to be trained in the country or abroad.

Most of the scholars of extension agree upon the training needs of extensionists (Luning, 1984; Blum, 1985; Rucks, 1985). They all focus on inadequate basic agricultural education and put forward pre and in-service training as the most appropriate way to tackle the training problems of extensionists.

Due to the lack of basic education of extensionists, many developing countries, including Turkey, are paying more attention to pre- and in-service training. For instance, a new extension approach, the T & V was put forward by Benor and Harrison (1977) and was implemented more than 40 countries because one of the main component of the approach is regular training of extensionists at each level of extension activities. Apart from the T & V approach, the project concerning the training farmers and agricultural laborers was based on training needs and gaps of extensionist in El-Salvador between 1979-1983 (Rucks, 1985).

In Turkey, training efforts have been increased after implementation of the T & V approach and many extensionists have been trained by short-long term training and graduation courses in the country or abroad. In addition, the training need of SMSs has been one of the main effect to establish of Agricultural Extension and Research Center at Ege University.

Surely, third World countries will gradually improve their level of basic agricultural education but such improvement is to be achieved within a reasonable period of time. In this period of time, well organized and administrated pre- and in-service training would be the best way to improve skills and attitudes of extensionist. Hence, more attention and resource should be paid to this sort of training activities for serving rural people more effectively.

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