

TRAINING OF EXTENSION WORKERS ¹⁾

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INTRODUCTION

There is no substitute for quality. The quality of the professional extension personnel are to some extent even more important than their number, which can be expanded by developing lay leadership in extension, the use of vocational teachers in extension etc. Adequate equipment, status and quality of the individual extension workers is certainly a deciding factor in effective extension. A successful extension service depends to a great extent on the ability to recruit, retain and train suitable staff. In this connection salary scales, which should be about equal to these of somewhat similar qualifications in other professions and possibilities for promotion within the extension service should not be overlooked. Extension workers should be well qualified technically and with personal characteristics which would enable them to carry on their duties effectively. The morale and personaliby of the extension worker, which can hardly be influenced by training, are probably the most decisive factors.

The extension worker's classrooms and laboratories are the growing plants, the livestock, the fields, the rural homes, the market place and . . . the rural community. The farming population must not only know how to adapt modern scientific developments to their own conditions, but even more important, must become convinced of their value and be induced to get in action. To accomplish this educational task the extension worker must not only be trained in subject matter, know farming methods and farming people intimately, but also be trained in educational methods and techniques, that have proved of greatest value throughout the years in conducting extension work. Adequate professional training must proceed along broad lines. It is essential to outline this because of the still prevailing belief that extension is an activity anyone can undertake in connection with his specialised field of training. An extension worker is more than an expert in a certain field. His training should also prepare him to be a community organiser, an adult educator and a student

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of human behaviour in general. Most of the extension workers come to the service as technicians rather than as educationalists.

There are wide variations as to the functional organisation of extension work and the qualifications of extension workers in the various countries. With a higher educational level of the rural population and advanced specialised types of agriculture more need will be for highly qualified and specialised extension officers. In less developed regions more use could be made in extension of general practitioners and technicians without an university degree, well acquainted with farm practice. In all cases however academic trained all round general extension workers should supervise regional extension work, integrating extension activities with a view to the balanced development of agriculture, bearing in mind that ultimately the farm and the farm family are units rather than un-coordinated segments resp. members.

The first extension workers were often selected on the bases of successful practical farm experience and clear evidences of leadership. Gradually with the development of agricultural sciences agriculture has become a rather complicated industry, combining both production and marketing. Rural life with its many interrelated aspects is drawing attention increasingly. Finally the educational level of the rural populations is rising gradually. Therefore the training of extension workers requires more and more attention.

There are three aspects to the training of extension workers: pre-service training, induction training and in-service training. There is a gradual transition from the one into the other.

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

Pre-service training accorded to extension workers must be of a high standard with regard to general education, technical education and farm experience. There are wide variations in courses provided by higher educational institutes in the various countries. It would be difficult, even if desirable, to attempt to define the pre-service training most suitable for future extension workers at these institutes. Extension work has however become of sufficient importance as a profession to warrant specific consideration in curricula determination at these institutes, which should furthermore be adapted periodically to the ever changing needs of modern agriculture and the rural population.

Basic theoretical grounding in the physical economic and social sciences of significance to rural life is essential of formal pre-service training in order to lay a sound foundation for further training of the future extension workers. Furthermore adequate practical farm experience is necessary. Post graduate courses for instance in farm management, paedagogy, psychology, educational methods and techniques and other appropriate subjects might be provided in cases where the curricula of the educational institutes would become overloaded, or prejudicial to their educational level.

INDUCTION TRAINING

Induction training of new entrants into the extension services is becoming increasingly important, for poor initial training can leave its mark on a young extension worker for many years, and besides, might undermine the prestige of the service among the rural population.

The emerging pattern of induction training is to place the young recruit under the personal supervision of an experienced senior extension officer, who has a natural liking and ability for training work. Besides a formal induction training scheme has to be organised for junior extension workers, ranking as paid members of the extension services and preferably with some practical experience in extension work. This continuous course for trainees preferably living together, should cover subjects which were not adequately dealt with during the pre-service training and which would furthermore introduce them with basic knowledge in the field of rural extension. The course, if possible to be held within the sphere of the university at regular intervals, should for instance include instruction as to scope, procedure and organisation of the rural extension services, organisation and efficiency, rural psychology, sociology and agricultural economics, historical and cultural aspects of rural life, the national agricultural policy and the international agricultural aspects, rural organisations and last but not least extension methods and aids in the widest sense, including effective farmer approach, public speaking, discussion techniques and demonstrations, extension program planning, agricultural journalism, audio-visual aids. To some extent induction training could be provided on an international basis.

Much stress has to be laid on cooperation and discussion among the participants of the induction training course and also on visits to well selected demonstrative objects relevant to the topics dealt with, whereas actual participation of the trainees in carrying out appropriate projects themselves should be stimulated. The number of participants should generally not exceed, say 25. If a greater number is necessary, more care has to be taken in regard to the discussion groups to be formed. Lectures should be prepared in time and sent in advance to the participants as a base for discussion. In the Netherlands a three years induction training course for the non academic trained local agricultural advisers has been started on a regional base, though co-ordinated for the country as a whole. It is planned to provide afterwards a centralised induction training course of 6 months' duration annually for the new entrants in the service. An induction training course for the academic trained junior advisers has been planned and will be carried on soon. This course will cover two periods of 10 days each during a year and will last in total 2 years.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

In-service training of extension personnel at all levels and to be continued throughout their career is of particular importance to keep them abreast of current trends in agriculture and rural life, of developments in the agricultural sciences and in extension techniques and methods.

Extension has to be a dynamic enterprise. Like a farmer who does not look beyond his own farm will go back, an extension worker who does not look beyond his own environment might at last drop behind. The level of training for senior personnel presupposes increase of understanding rather than merely gain in knowledge. Extension workers should therefore be provided with adequate vocational periodicals and bulletins. In this regard the issue of periodic extension reviews on a regional, national and also international level (as for instance the *F.A.T.I.S.-review*) will be very valuable.

Provisions for close cooperation between extension and research work will also be valuable in keeping extension workers up to date with progress in agricultural science and vice versa will force agricultural research to pay attention to the most urgent problems in practice. Extension specialists if possible located at institutes for applied research may provide a valuable link in this respect. As to regional experimentation work extension workers may be engaged to some extent in the management of experimental substations, devoted to a certain type of farming, where as extension workers may carry on themselves experimentation work in the respective regions differing as to way of farming, soil and climate.

Furthermore frequent conferences, refresher courses at regular intervals and study tours on the regional, national and even international level are effective means for providing adequate in-service training. As to the courses even more than in the case of induction-training ample provisions should be made for effective frank and free discussion. Much is dependent on the voluntary participation in joining in-service training if this is to be effective.

It will be worthwhile to make provisions for a periodic leave on full pay over a 6-12 months period for extension workers to encourage them to improve their training either within the country or abroad.

TRAINING AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Expanding international cooperation in rural extension may include for the future as an integral part of a continuing education of extension workers through well organised training programs, also facilities and schemes for supplementary training at the international level. What has been achieved in the post war years in this regard is promising for the future. International governmental organization like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation, the Foreign Operations Administration and also private foundations of Kellogg, Ford and Rockefeller have contributed much to this international aspect of training extension workers. Special reference may be made to the train trainers project at Cornell University (U.S.A.). Experience has shown in this respect that still much could be gained from timely preparation, clear definition of objectives as to subjects thoroughly planned, attendance by personnel of somewhat similar qualifications and finally clear assessment of extension work carried on in the respective countries.

For extension administrators periodic conferences on a international basis, organised by the respective countries in turn, are worthwhile to exchange views and gain information as to crucial organizational matters, as for instance coordination of the rural extension services in regard to an integrated extension approach in the technical economic and social sphere, as to the functional organization for instance in regard to allround extension workers versus specialists as to scope of work, extension program planning, evaluation of extension activities, relationships with allied services, farmer participation, training extension personnel. Much could be gained in this respect by a clear examination, assessment of the extent and possible scope of extension work carried out in the respective countries. On the basis of a periodic critical review of the national extension services the development of the extension

services and the follow-up as to recommendations for improvement made could be examined. An example of the latter most efficient procedure is the Development of the Agricultural Advisory Services in Europe since 1950 (O.E.E.C. 1954, Paris) dealt with during the Int. Conference on Agricultural Advisory Services held in the Hague (the Netherlands) in 1953.

For extension specialists periodic meetings and courses on an international basis, particularly in regard to subjects requiring greater attention in extension work, at centres eminent in the respective subjects, can be most efficient in pooling experience. Such subjects are for instance labour efficiency and work simplification, farm building, agricultural economics and farm management, extension evaluation. Within the European area the more than 20 training courses sponsored by O.E.E.C. during the last years may be mentioned as striking examples in this respect.

For practising extension workers the arranging of regular induction and in-service training courses on an international basis particularly in regard to extension methodology and extension program planning at centres well equipped for this purpose can be effective in widening the views of the extension workers as to these most important subjects in their daily work. The various regional training centres established by F.A.O. throughout the world and the annual training centres since 1953 organized by the International Agricultural Study Centre in the Netherlands are examples in this regard. These courses could be carried out by the respective countries on a cooperative basis. The establishment of an exchange system between countries for extension workers both to teach and to learn and the provision of facilities for training young extension workers in the extension services of other countries could be extended too. In all cases direct and personal contact between countries are essential to secure an effective international exchange of ideas and experiences in the field of extension.

But one should keep in mind that the base for training extension workers lies in the countries themselves, as extension to be carried on has to adapt itself purposely to the conditions of agriculture and the rural population prevailing in the respective areas, which as a matter of fact are widely differing.