

1.6.1 Role of the extension worker

The extension worker is the key figure in the whole extension programme. Because of the multipurpose nature of his work, he plays an important role in the uplift of rural life. Therefore he should have a comprehensive understanding of village people and their problems. He must have close contact with the rural people, and should participate in the sorrows and joys of the villagers. He has to win the willing and enthusiastic cooperation of the people. The way to do this is to start with the felt local needs.

The extension worker has to choose his way so as to adjust himself in the existing society. He has to respect the villagers' customs, traditions, and ways of life if he is to exercise a real influence on their minds and create in them a desire for real achievement.

Keeping in view the multipurpose nature of the work, the role of the extension worker may be described as follows. The extension worker:

- a. gets information regarding all the farm families in the village and their problems, needs, and capabilities.
- b. provides an opportunity to rural people to work in co-operative group action. They should be encouraged to have discussions, through which they will gain confidence and ultimately a village extension group will flourish. In the beginning, the extension worker must give leadership to the group.
- c. uses a variety of extension teaching methods which are best suited to the situation.
- d. works for the uplift of rural life and environment. He is also responsible for making the rural people feel that he is a real partner in village affairs. If this happens, his help and cooperation will be needed and valued in every village activity.
- e. brings the latest agricultural technology to the farming community, so that their income is increased.
- f. makes people aware of the conditions prevailing in progressive countries.
- g. takes the problems of rural people to scientific research institutes in order to get them solved.
- h. changes the attitudes, knowledge, and skills of the villagers.
- i. brings a psychological change in the minds of the village people in favor of adopting new ways of life.

1.6.2 Qualifications of the extension worker

A person entering the field of extension as an extension worker must possess certain qualifications so that he or she can perform this multi-faceted work successfully. A brief description of these qualifications is given here.

Background and Experience

- Extension workers should preferably be from a rural background and should have some kind of farming experience.
- Teaching experience is helpful, because the extension worker is a teacher, a counsellor, and a guide.

Training

- He/she must have acquired a degree or diploma from a recognized institution in the field of agriculture.
- He should have had special courses in extension work like:
 - a. Extension methodology
 - b. Programme planning
 - c. Group dynamics
 - d. Rural leadership and community development
 - e. Youth organizations
 - f. Evaluation
 - g. Audio-visual communication
 - h. Diffusion and adoption process
- High technical ability in the broad field of agriculture.

Characteristics

He/she must be:

- A good teacher
- A good planner and organizer
- Tactful—not offending others, and able to develop rapport with farmers
- Interested in people and their problems and well-being
- Enthusiastic
- Reliable
- Free and frank, not sneaky
- A good friend

In addition, the extension worker should have certain qualities:

- Leadership qualities and farsightedness
- A sympathetic attitude towards colleagues and others
- Clear and systematic thinking—not confused or haphazard

- Good expression—in writing, and in speaking/addressing
- Faith and courage

1.6.3 Duties of the extension worker

The extension worker performs multi-faceted duties, some of which are listed below.

1. Represents the extension service/department to conduct educational programmes.
2. Studies the situation as it exists regarding:
 - a. People
 - b. Agriculture
 - c. Ways of life
 - d. Social customs, rituals, values, etc.
 - e. Community problems and possibilities of their solutions.
3. Maintains rural community organizations to help, develop, and carry out extension programmes.
4. Develops long-term regional, jurisdictional extension programmes involving both adults and youth.
5. Develops rural leadership.
6. Assists local organizations with their educational programmes.
7. Promotes coordination and friendship among people as well as nation-building departments.
8. Maintains a public office.
9. Keeps himself up-to-date.
10. Assists local leaders in carrying out community development programmes.
11. Arranges for the help of specialists.
12. Provides information to individuals and groups other than those organized.
13. Helps in evaluation of extension programmes.
14. Encourages club work and youth organizations involving families.

One of the main functions of the extension worker is to motivate people to adopt innovations. It therefore, seems very essential that the extension