

PROCESS AND FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication in agricultural extension involves the purposeful and collaborative interaction between farmers and extension field staff with the primary purpose being the overall uplift of the living standard of the farm people through increased agricultural production and improved farm income. It calls for a system that involves a competent source sending useful and applicable message(s) through the most suitable and reliable channel(s) to an appropriate audience. Agricultural Extension represents an intentional, specific and highly planned form of human communication designed to promote socio-economic change among rural people. It assembles ideas useful to an audience, clarifies their meanings, gets the ideas accepted and motivates people to apply and practice them (Khan, 1969). Swanson and Claar (1984) viewed extension as an ongoing process of getting useful information to people (the communication dimension) and then assisting them to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to utilize effectively this information or technology (the educational dimension). Generally the goal of the extension process is to enable people to use these skills, knowledge and information to improve their quality of life. Extension is viewed as the science of developing capability of the people for sustainable improvement in their quality of life (Ray, 2003).

Agricultural Extension basically involves dissemination of useful ideas among rural people and motivation for their adoption. These are the basic functions of communication. That is why Garforth et al. (1988) regard communication as a core of extension. It helps people in making adoption decisions among alternate courses of action. Van den Ban and Hawkins (1988) argue that extension involves the conscious use of communication of information to help people form sound opinions and make good decisions. Röling (1988) regards extension as a policy instrument which uses communication to

induce voluntary changes with a presumed public or collective utility. This implies change, rather a desirable change, in the knowledge, understanding, attitudes, behaviours and skills of people for better outcome. In this perspective Freire (1974) argues that the act of extension involves the relationship between human beings and the world in order for human beings to be better equipped to change the world.

It is usually people's motivation, understanding, self interest, commitment and organization which makes development work successful. Therefore, local people's involvement is crucial in extension work. It encourages people to organize themselves and to take initiative in improving their lives on a self help basis. It develops decision making capacities of people to make wise decisions to ensure efficient and economic use of the scarce resources. To be efficient in achieving this goal, extension needs systematic and planned efforts i.e. an effective communication system. As for example, without an effective system of communication within the extension service and between it and farmers, agricultural extension can achieve little (Benor et al., 1984).

1.1 The Concept of Communication

Communication is a process by which two or more people exchange ideas, facts, feelings, or impressions in ways that each gains a common understanding of the meaning, intent, and use of messages (Leagans, 1963). It involves someone sending a message to someone through some means to achieve some purpose. Thus communication can be regarded as purposeful interaction among people. Communication may be referred to as the process of human beings responding to the symbolic behaviour of the persons (Adler and Rodman, 2003).

In the simplest context the verb "to communicate" usually implies an action of sending a message about something to someone (McQuail, 1987). In psychological perspective, communication process aims at affecting or influencing

people's minds (Shannon and Weaver, 1949, Osgood et al., 1957). Communication is a very complex social and psychological process. In the ordinary course of life, people can communicate on many levels, for many reasons, with many people, in many ways (Berlo 1960). For example, "the husband kisses his wife, the customer looks at the price tag, the pupil raises his hand, the little girl smiles, they are all communicating" (Smith, 1966:1). In fact communication is very fundamental human process which starts at birth and continues till death in one form or the other. Thus living is largely a matter of communicating. It serves as a basic tool to understand each other and generally acts as a strong bond to keep people close to each other through minimizing differences of opinions and bringing them to a common consensus. Schramm (1971) regards it as an instrument of human relations which enables people to live harmoniously. It should also be kept in mind that communication always has the potential for creating misunderstanding, disagreement, and divergence (Rogers and Kincaid, 1981) as against the desired purpose of achieving common understanding, mutual agreement, and convergence. For example, the use of an inappropriate message or improper language or unpleasing style is more likely to create misunderstanding than common understanding. Communication can be a tool for expressing warm feelings and useful facts, but under different circumstances that the same words and actions can cause both physical and emotional pain (Adler and Rodman, 2003).

Communication is a fundamental process in explaining behavioural changes. Agricultural extension education primarily deals with such changes in rural people. Therefore, communication is considered as an effective tool of extension for bringing about voluntary changes in people (Röling 1988). Kokate (2006) regards communication as an essential dimension of human life. In a society, communication not only sustains the social process but also influences the very pace of development and progress. He further goes on to say that in the process of communication, lies the potential for man to overcome ignorance and poverty. In fact good communication

is the essence of good extension. Adoption and diffusion of innovations among people, the prime objective of all extension education efforts, is closely and directly associated with communication. In this context Brown (1981) argues that the basic tenet of the diffusion strategy is that individuals may be persuaded to adopt through communication.

In a much wider perspective communication may include media and means such as electronics, roads, railways, vehicles, telephone, telegraph, etc (Khan, 1969). In this perspective it is closely linked with social progress and rural development. Perhaps that is why McQuail (1987) argues that expansion of all kinds of communication is more likely to cause social progress. Its significance becomes even greater in the developing world which still has a long way to go towards progress.

Communication can serve as an effective instrument for enabling people to understand and to come closer to each other. Gerbner (cited in McQuail and Windahl, 1981) considers it as an effective means of social interaction. Communication always implies relationships among each other. Mutual understanding through information sharing is considered as a crucial purpose of communication (Rogers and Kincaid, 1981). According to Vanikar and Palia (2005) communication encompasses all forms of expression which serve the purpose of mutual understanding.