



FACULTY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES & ALLIED INDUSTRIES

Fundamentals of Agriculture Extension Education (AEX-121)

Lecture 8

New Trends in Agriculture Extension

Privatization of Extension

Privatisation broadly refers to a process by which the government reduces its role in an activity and encourages private sector to take up these roles.

Concept and Definition:

- ChandraShekara, 2001: The Process of funding and delivering the extension services by private individual or organisation is called Private Extension.
- Bloom indicated that private sector extension involves personnel in the private sector extension involves personnel in the private sector.
- Vanden Ban and Hawkins (1996) state that in private sector extension, farmers are expected to share the responsibility for the service and pay all or part of the cost.
- Saravanan and Shivalinge Gowda (1999) operationalized Privatization as follows: "Privatization of extension service refers to the services rendered in the area of agriculture and allied aspects by extension personnel working in private agencies or organisations for which farmers are expected to pay a fee (or free) and it can be viewed as supplementary or alternative to public extension services".

These concepts about the privatization emphasize three aspects:

- It involves extension personnel from private agency/organization.
- Clients are expected to pay the service fee.
- Act as supplementary or alternative to public extension service.

Through the process of privatization, extension effectiveness is expected to improve by:

- reorienting public sector extension with limited and well focused functions,
- more number of extension providers (institutional pluralism) resulting from active encouragement by the public sector to initiate, operate and expand.
- more private participation leading to the availability of specialised services hitherto not available from the public system
- user contributions to extension leading to improved financial sustainability,
- support and control by clients leading to client orientation,

Privatisation can take place broadly in two ways:

- ✓ Dismantling of Public sector
- ✓ Controlled Privatisation

Reasons behind privatisation of extension services

Following are some of the reasons behind privatisation in agricultural extension services:

- 1) Fiscal crisis: Many less developed country's governments have found it difficult to make adequate resources available for extension. Financial pressures have, in turn led to the search for ways of reduction in public sector costs.
- 2) Disappointing performance of public extension system: Impact of public extension system in agricultural development is disappointing. Extension work is ineffective, does not match with farmer's needs, there is little consideration for cost-effectiveness and less competent extension personnel have no accountability to farmers. Moreover, public extension alone will never answer to entire demand of farming community.
- 3) Changing contexts and opportunities: In recent past Indian agriculture is shifting from mere subsistence level to commercialized agribusiness to meet all challenges and opportunities of globalization and liberalization, effective alternative extension approach is required. Increasing commercial and specialized nature of agriculture will demand quickly and technically sound advice, based on scientific analysis with appropriate marketing information. Further India is facing population explosion which had resulted into reduction in land holding size.

Due to improved transport network and better communication facilities private agencies and communication media are also reaching to remote villages.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for an efficient technological guidance along with recent market information, which is only possible through privatization of extension services.

- 4) The extension worker: the extension worker and farmers ratio is very wide in India i.e. 1:1000 and it is further widens due to engagement of extension workers in administrative work, official correspondence, report etc.

Advantages of Private Extension System (Sulaiman and Sadamate, 2000):

1. Reorienting public sector extension with limited and well focussed functions. More number of extension providers (institutional pluralism) resulting from active encouragement by the public sector to initiate, operate and expand.
2. More private participation leading to the availability of specialized services hitherto not available from the public system.
3. Support and control by clients leading to client orientation.

Disadvantages of Private Extension System (Vanden Ban and Hawkins, 1998):

1. Privatization may hamper free flow of information.

2. Farmers may be less interested to disseminate technology to other farmers what they have learnt from private extension.
3. Only commercial farmers will be benefited through privatization and subsistence farmers will seldom be able to pay the fee.
4. The commercial interest of the private agencies may jeopardise the efforts of research and extension of eco-friendly and sustainable agriculture.
5. Contact between farmers and extension agents get declined.

Cyber Extension/ e-Extension

Cyber

According to Oxford dictionary the word Cyber means “relating to Information technology, the Internet and virtual reality, the Cyber space. The word has its origin from cybernetics.

Cyber space

The cyber space is the imaginary or virtual space of computer connected with each other on networks, across the globe. These computers can access information in form of text, graphics, audio, video and animation files. Software tools on network provide facilities to interactively access the information from connected services. The cyber space thus can be defined as the imaginary space behind the interconnected telecommunications and computer networks, the virtual world.

Extension

Extension stands for “the action or process of enlarging or extending something”. It could be extension of area, time or space.

E-extension and cyber extension are more or less synonymous and can be used interchangeably. Cyber extension and e-extension are extension approaches; whereas ICT is the tools by which various services are delivered to the clientele fulfilling the objectives of e-extension/ cyber extension (Mondal, 2019).

Cyber extension

According to Sharma (2005) Cyber extension can be defined as the “Extension over cyber space”. Cyber extension means “using the power of online networks, computer communications and digital interactive multimedia to facilitate dissemination of agricultural technology”. Cyber extension includes effective use of information and communication technology, national and international information networks, internet, expert system, multimedia learning systems and computer based training systems to improve information access to the farmers, extension workers, research scientists and extension managers.

Cyber agricultural extension is an agricultural information exchange mechanism over cyber space, the imaginary space behind the interconnected computer networks through telecommunication means. It utilizes the

power of networks, computer communications and interactive multimedia to facilitate information sharing mechanism (Wijekoon, 2003).

IT and ICT

IT (Information Technology) refers to computer based technology and telecommunications. IT refers to an entire industry that uses computers, networking, software and other equipment to manage information. Generally, IT departments are responsible for storing, processing, transmitting, retrieving and protecting digital information of the company.

ICT (Information Communications Technology) can be seen as an integration of IT with mediation broadcasting technologies, audio/ video processing and transmission and telephony. Therefore, ICT can be seen as an extended acronym for IT.

ICTs are those technologies that can be used to interlink information technology devices such as personal computers with communication technologies such as telephones and their telecommunication networks. The PC, laptop and tablet with e-mail and internet provides the best example (Mondal, 2019).

Information provided through Cyber extension

Cyber extension can provide large amount of information to farmers. Some of those as mentioned by Sharma are:

1. Weather: Daily information of maximum and minimum temperature, day length, direction and speed of wind, rain fall, relative humidity and weatherforecasting.
2. Alert: Information regarding type of disaster, sudden change in weather, outbreak of diseases and insectsetc.
3. Insurance: Detail information about insurance of farmers, his crop, animal and agricultural assets like tractors, implements and toolsetc.
4. General awareness: Information about vaccination, cleanliness, health, family planningand nutrition.
5. Rural Finance: Information about micro finance and subsidyetc.
6. Education: Detail information about farmers training and educational knowledge of his children about professional and non-professionalinstitution.
7. Animal Science: The detail regarding the local animal and well known diseases, better breeds, balanced feed, shed management, healthetc.

Advantages of Cyber Extension

1. Information can be provided quickly tofarmers.
2. Round the clock service tofarmers.
3. Information can be accessed from any place on theearth.
4. Helpful in enhancing the communicationefficiency.
5. Preserves the quality ofmessage.
6. Experts can be contacteddirectly.
7. Per unit cost is less as compared to traditional system ofextension.

Limitation of cyber extension

1. Lack of reliable telecom infrastructure in ruralareas.
2. Erratic or no powersupply.

3. Lack of ICT trained manpower (willing to serve) in rural areas.
4. Lack of content (locally relevant and in local language).
5. Low purchasing power of rural people.
6. Lack of holistic approach.
7. Issues of sustainability.