

Framework for phased participatory extension education system: a sustainable extension model for Africa

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Abstract

So many years of extension work in Africa are yet to bring the goal of agricultural development into realization. Even proven technologies and successful strategies in other parts of the world when adapted for Africa ended with dismal results. The Training and Visit extension system that had worked impressively in Asia and some other parts of the world has not significantly solved the problem of food security and rural poverty in Africa. This paper thus designs a framework that may cause a turn around in agricultural development in Africa. Phased Participatory Extension Education System (PPEES), is suggested for trial as there seems yet to be no concrete solution to rural poverty and underdevelopment.

Introduction

After the initiation of Training and Visit Extension System in Africa, there have been several attempts at fashioning a more participatory and sustainable approaches toward achieving poverty reduction, food security and integrated rural development. The Training and Visit might not have totally achieved the desired level of success in Africa, it has provided a solid template upon which further progress could be made. It has become much more evident that, before sustainable rural development could be achieved development initiatives must focus on:

- i. Community empowerment.
- ii. Meaningful grass root participation.
- iii. Bottom up rather than top down approach.
- iv. Aggressive capacity building at the local level.
- v. Institutional changes and human development rather than only physical investments; and
- vi. Promotion of local ownership (World Bank, undated).

The earlier efforts of the proponents of Participatory Technology Development and Farmer-First and Farmers Experimentation (Chambers 1993), had culminated in practical participatory extension approaches (Moses 1996 and Brown *et al.*, 2002). Examples of such are documented in Learning together through participatory extension in Zimbabwe (Brown *et al.*, 2002) and the World Bank Community Driven Development Approach currently making waves in Africa.

On the basis of recent experiences and the relatively high level of success of participatory methodologies and lessons learnt from many previous interventions, the phased participatory extension education system has been designed (Ladele 2002). For the sake of emphasis, the basic assumptions, core elements and how the system works will be summarized before the paradigm is presented.

Phased Participatory Extension Education System: The phased participatory extension education system (PPEES) hinges on the theoretical background that sustainable development cannot be achieved unless people's livelihood and value systems are touched. It equally recognizes the philosophy that people rather than physical improvement are important and should be treated as such.

Basic assumptions: The basic underlying assumptions within which PPEES can function are as follows:

1. Public sector remains the main source of fund for extension in the developing countries since most benefits of extension are yet to be appropriated by the private sector in Africa.
2. The technology transfer system has shifted from the linear form to encompassing the total Agricultural Knowledge Information System (AKIS) linkage; in reality technology diffuses in a wider scope than the traditional

research-extension-farmer linkage. The indigenous knowledge component has now been recognized as significant.

3. Stability of structures ensuring that projects are not prematurely terminated; and giving room for flexibility is highly essential.
4. Each defined operational domain undergoes adequate participatory rural appraisal to determine problems, priorities, projects and available resources.
5. The T and V system has successfully improved the competence of extensionists; and fashioned a formidable Research-Extension-Farmer-Input Linkage System.

The core elements of the PPEES consist of functional phasing of core elements of PPEES: extension, participation and inclusive education. Other essential elements include appropriate political will, local monitoring and evaluation outfit; variety of extension methods and flexibility. The elements are:

1. *Functional phasing of Education.* The T and V extension programs have achieved both the spatial and temporal phasing. The third dimension of phasing required is functional phasing. Beneficiaries must gradually but progressively be transformed from the delivery extension system to acquisition extension system. The functional phasing of extension instrument will on the long run relieve government/donors of the burden of perpetually funding extension. The process commences with basic functional literacy and empowerment, graduating to improving management and decision-making capacity. The extension agency gradually disengages until the community's action committees assume greater responsibilities. This is copious evidence of empowerment and capacity building.
2. *Community participation.* This relates to the involvement of the local people in deciding on extension programs to handle depending on local aspiration and felt needs. Appropriate PRAs enable the communities to decide their priorities and own their decision-making skills. The change agent needs to assume a facilitating role thus allowing the community members

to feature prominently in different aspects of project development setting up appropriate linkages both within and without implementation and evaluation.

3. *In Inclusive Education.* This consists of three components of education that are expected to function on complementary basis. They include:
 1. Literacy education.
 2. Awareness creation.
 3. Extension education. Illiteracy is largely regarded as a major limitation to technology adoption and transformation from subsistence to market orientation. Awareness creation involves the use of appropriate information and communication technologies (ICTs) to bring appropriate success stories of local initiatives and actions all over the world to psychological challenges rural folks into activities otherwise thought to be beyond them. Extension education encompasses projects towards improving people's livelihood through adequate income generation. Appropriate project may not necessarily be agricultural and therefore left to the rural folks to decide.

Other key elements essential for the proper functioning of PPEES are as follows:

- Political will and appropriate policy environment to support rural development initiated and sustained by the people as a vital pre-condition for national development. Roles must be fashioned and integrated at various tiers of government to ensure that policies are sensitive and responsive to the desire and interest of the local people.
- Local monitoring and evaluation outfit will ensure that program agenda are kept.
- Extensive use of appropriate extension methods' combination supported by relevant ICTs.
- Flexibility is a final key feature that will make the system adaptable to different socio-cultural or geo-ecological environment.

PPEES process in practice

The effort here is at putting together how the phased participatory extension education system works in practice. Figure 1 represents the schematic form of its framework. The steps basically are five (each also involving several interactive processes). The steps are:

Step 1

Situation Analysis:

- Entry point for the change agency to the community.
- Series of participatory rural appraisal methodologies through which development agencies along with all relevant stakeholders together gain insight into the community and learn from the local folks.
- Knowledge of local resources (tapped and untapped; natural, human cultural/institutional) available and the environment.

Note: It is important to carefully manage what signal and notions transpiring at this point. The development agency should be careful not to give the impression that 'we have come to help you to develop you with so much capital grant; we already have the to elixir to your problems. Relax and just do what we demand of you.

Step 2

Problems, interest, priorities, and alternative actions towards solution:

- As a result of the analyses of the local situation, further consultations result in action plans towards problem solving.
- Sensitization and motivation of the community members towards self-help and community driven development. Success stories through video shows are relevance here. Video recording of key meetings and brainstorming session should be recorded to pave way for future review.
- Communities begin to compile notes on priorities and alternative actions and solutions.
- Directions toward problem solving are highlighted and documented at the point.
- Note: Immediate action desired by the rural folks may not be in the realm of agriculture!
- A decision for adult literacy programme may have to be taken at this point.

Step 3

Negotiation among key players / elements for successful implementation of programmes:

- Compilation of extension programmes in order of priority. Projects may be on – conservation, health and sanitation, family planning, basic infrastructure, cottage industry or agriculture.
- Which project will be a precursor to others?.
- Agenda for sourcings of fund (both internal and external).
- Identifying relevant social organisations and institutions. e.g. Cooperatives.
- Agreement among relevant AKIS players toward action
- Literacy programme continues

Step 4

Programme planing and implementation

- Various local action committees in place.
- Elaborate planing on projects for immediate action.
- Identification of prioritized projects; their objectives statement and expected outcomes.
- Decision on appropriate extension methods.
- Plan / Calendar of work (who will do what, how and when?).
- Action learning principles in practice.
- Relevant local government agencies and other support services in action.
- Documentation of activities (video recording).
- Monitoring continues.

Step 5

Evaluation

- In-built mechanism to review activities on quarterly and annual basis.
- Evaluation teams with significant local representation.
- Preparation of reports and recommendations to local action committees and all stakeholders.

At the end of a cycle, the facilitating agency will have to review how effective various projects have been. What changes have taken place in socio-economic parameters of beneficiaries? Specific indices will include capacity for problem solving, decision-making, occupational capacity building, self-reliance and independence.

After executing various development projects for five years, it is expected that a particular community that have enjoyed heavy extension presence could be comfortably relieved while the facilitating and intervening agencies can move to other locations. However, the 'graduating' community would be expected to know how and where to obtain required information, technologies and other support services without waiting to be spoon-fed.

Conclusion

The Phased Participatory Extension Education System is designed to respond to the peculiarities of the rural sector in Africa. It could however be applied to other developing countries. Exploratory work continues to demonstrate the effect empirically with particular reference to the core elements- functional phasing, grassroots participation and inclusive education.

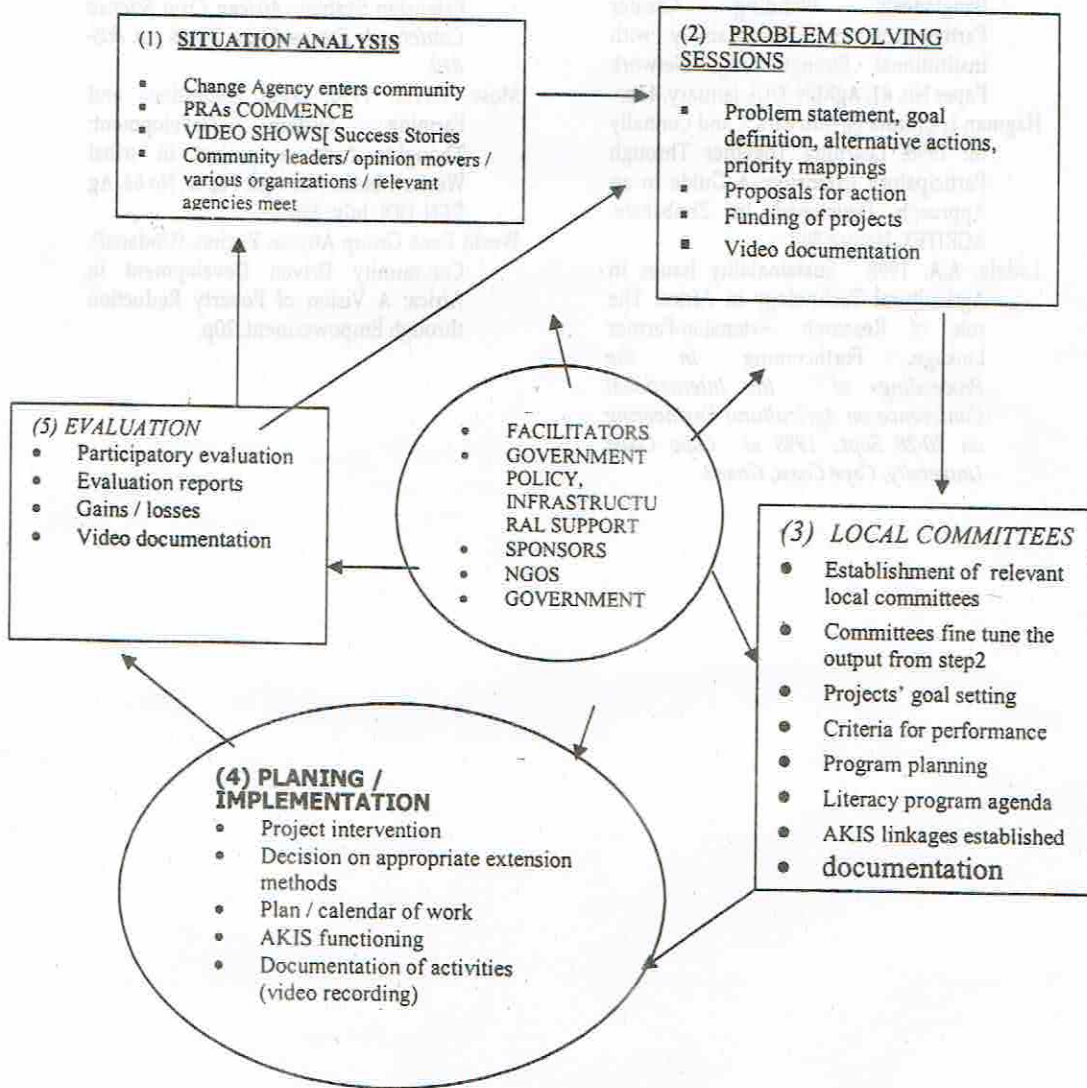


Figure 1: Steps in phased participatory extension education system

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