

Fisheries extension methods or Communication methods- individual, group and mass contact methods and their effectiveness, factors influencing their selection and use

A method is a procedure or process for attaining an objective. The choice of a channel or method of communication, also known as extension teaching method, generally depends on the number and location of the target audience and the time available for communication. They are categorized as individual method, group method and mass method. Each of the methods has both advantages and limitations. The extension agent has to choose a particular method or combination of methods according to the needs of the situation.

INDIVIDUAL METHOD

In this method, the extension agent communicates with the people individually, maintaining a separate identity of each person. This method is followed when the number of people to be contacted are few, are conveniently located close to the communicator, and sufficient time is available for communication.

Examples: farm and home visit, farmer's call etc.

Advantages

1. Helps the extension agent in building rapport.
2. Facilitates gaining first hand knowledge of farm and home.
3. Helps in selecting demonstrators and local leaders.
4. Helps in changing the attitude of the people.
5. Helps in teaching complex practices.
6. Facilitates transfer of technology.
7. Facilitates getting feedback information.

Limitations

1. This method is time consuming and relatively expensive.
2. Has low coverage of the audience.
3. Extension agents may develop favouritism or bias towards some people.

GROUP METHOD

A group may be defined as an aggregate of a small number of people in reciprocal communication and interaction around some common interest. In this method, the extension agent communicates with the people in groups and not as individual person. This method is

adopted when it is necessary to communicate with a number of people simultaneously, who are located not far off from the communicator, and reasonably good time is available for communication. Here group participation and formation of group opinion are important.

In this situation there may be a few communicators such as the extension agent and some subject matter specialists. The size of a small group may be from 15 to 25, a medium group from 25 to 50 and a large group from 50 to 100 persons.

Examples of group methods are result demonstration, method demonstration, group meeting, small group training, field day or farmers' day. study tour etc.

Advantages

1. Enables the extension agent to have face-to-face contact with a number of people at a time.
2. Can reach a selected part of the target group.
3. Facilitates sharing of knowledge and experience and thereby strengthens learning of the group members.
4. Reach fewer people, but offer more opportunities for interaction and feedback.
5. Satisfies the basic urge of people for social contacts.
6. Motivate people to accept change due to group influence.
7. More effective than mass method in stimulating action.
8. Less expensive than individual method due to more coverage.

Limitations

1. Wide diversity in the interest of group members may create a difficult learning situation.
2. Holding the meeting may be regarded as an objective in itself.
3. Vested interests, caste groups and village factions may hinder free interaction and decision making by the group members.

MASS METHOD

In this method, the extension agent communicates with a vast and heterogeneous mass of people, without taking into consideration their individual or group identity. The normal group boundary gets obliterated.

This method is followed where a large and widely dispersed audience is to be communicated within a short time. There may be a few communicators such as the extension agent and some subject matter specialists. The size of the audience may be a few hundreds in mass meetings, a few thousands in campaigns and exhibitions and millions in newspapers radio and television

Advantages

1. Suitable for creating general awareness among the people.
2. Helps in transferring knowledge and forming and changing opinions.
3. Large number of people may be communicated within a short time.
4. Facilitates quick communication in times of emergency.
5. Less expensive due to more coverage.

Limitations

1. Less intensive method.
2. Little scope for personal contact with the audience.
3. Little opportunity for interaction with and amongst the audience.
4. Generalized recommendations hinder application by individuals
5. Little control over the responses of the audience.
6. Difficulty in getting feedback information and evaluation of results.

Classification of Communication methods

Individual methods	Group methods	Mass methods
Farm and home visit	Result demonstration	Farm publication
Farmers call	Method demonstration	Mass meeting
Personal letter	Group meeting	Campaign
Farm clinic	Small group training	Exhibition
Adaptive or minikit trial	Field day or Farmers Day	Newspaper
	Study tour	Radio
		Television

Selection and combination of Extension methods

There can be no thumb-rule for selection, use and combination of extension methods. It will depend on the situation as well as on the knowledge and experience of the extension agent. However, some suggestions are, which may serve as a guideline for the extension agent for selection and combination of extension methods.

Nature of Audience		Extension methods		
Socio-economic status	Low	Individual	Group	
	High			Mass
Size of audience	Small	Individual	Group	
	Large			Mass
Location	Near	Individual	Group	
	Far			Mass
Stage of development	Less developed	Individual	Group	
	More developed			Mass
Teaching objective	Create general awareness			Mass
	Increase knowledge			Mass
	Increase skill	Individual	Group	Mass
	Technology transfer		Group	
Manpower/Fund/Availability of time	Limited			Mass
	Sufficient	Individual	Group	

From the broad categories suggested, the extension agent has to choose a particular method or combination of methods according to specific requirements of the situation. For instance, people with little or no education and low income may respond to personal visit and result demonstrations. The more educated and progressive section of the population may respond well to mass media like for Farm publications, exhibitions, radio and television.

Further in the initial stage of technology transfer program, result demonstration will be necessary to assist the farmer in all important stages, prevent making mistakes and gain confidence. When the technology has spread to some extent, mass media shall spread up to the process of diffusion.