

Far more important is the informal discourse that occurs in real time in every farm and village between farmers, farm labour and farm service providers; conversations in every farm house between farm family and friends and relatives; discussions between field functionaries during formal visits, meetings and general discussions; informal and casual discussions between experts, policy makers and practitioners; and interactions between students and teachers after the class room.

Box 1: Extension Ecosystem or Extension Parivar:

It includes farmers, farm labour, farm service providers, field functionaries and marketing functionaries directly supporting farming, experts and scientists, policy and opinion makers and administrators, vast network of trade and industry including those providing input, marketing and logistical support, the vast education and training network including teachers, trainers and students. There is a large print and electronic media focussing on farm sector in the country. The vast *panchayati raj* network is also directly involved in farm production as is the large cooperative and other financing institutions. Educational institutions are also taking active interest in farm development as are various business groups.

However, the effectiveness and efficiency of extension discourse is not commensurate with the efforts made, resources deployed and the very high degree of intellectual input that goes into the discourse. Very low outcome of the discourse is perhaps the biggest waste of national resources which is still not being recognised with focus largely on physical loss of agriculture produce. The limited outcome is due to various reasons.

Firstly, the informal discourse, though most important, is not formalised and is not documented. It is only available to the narrow group involved directly in these discourses. Secondly, the formal discourse is most often too diffused and unfocussed and this too does not directly get into the policy making process due to lack of a system to formalise and internalise the same.

I had urged to start the process of influencing the 13th Five Year Plan (2017-2022) now, in my earlier blog (<http://www.aesagfras.net/blog.aspx?id=68&title=It%20is%20time%20to%20influence%20the%2013th%20Plan>) as it requires time to formulate issues; capture the concerns, aspirations and knowledge of all stakeholders of the extension ecosystem at all levels; and collate and present the same for consideration of the concerned sub groups and working groups of the planning commission.

EXTENSIONPEDIA

To help do this, I suggest setting up an “Extensionpedia” (building upon and adapting the methodology of Wikipedia). This is important for capturing the knowledge, concerns and practices in the discourse in extension ecosystem comprising entire range of stakeholders including policy makers, practitioners, experts, service providers, industry, farmers etc. Both formal and informal discourse, explicit as well as tacit, needs to be captured. Moreover, diffused discourse needs to be collated in an actionable form.

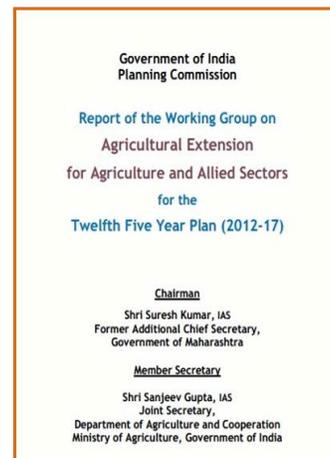
Box 2: Extensionpedia

“Extensionpedia” is a mechanism for capturing and collating the discourse on extension happening among wide range of stakeholders in different locations and fora mainly for internalising the same for consideration in policy, implementation and review. Concepts, methodology and systems for the same will need to be evolved. As a first step, an anchored theme paper may be prepared for each theme or area of interest and uploaded on a web platform to be developed/commented/edited by different stakeholders. This paper could be further revised based on new comments and inputs.

Why “Extensionpedia”?

“Extensionpedia” is important for the following reason:

- While formulating the report of 12th Five Year Plan Working Group on agriculture extension, it was felt that the Working Group and sub-groups did not have enough time to collect and collate data and provide opportunity to every stakeholder to give their views. The Working Group also could not consider all recommendations made in various forums, get them discussed extensively and then take a considered view well in time for inclusion in the report. Inability to interact widely with field level stakeholders to get a feel of their concerns and to get benefitted from their knowledge was also profoundly realized.
- Workshops, seminars and conferences in most cases have become an end in itself with no mechanisms (time or resources) for ensuring follow-up of the recommendation. Reports of commissions, working groups and expert groups also have the same fate. Detailing is often not done about how these should be implemented within the existing frame work and how much resources are required to act on these recommendations.
- Research studies often end up producing academic publications that are of little policy relevance. Many of them make similar and repetitive recommendations and there is no system to collate the voluminous output. It is not possible for the decision makers to consider the exceptionally large number of suggestions and recommendations available in individual documents.



There are a large number of activities which lose out on the benefit of co development due to lack of a suitable mechanism. These include research recommendations, extension education course materials and extension training materials.

OPERATIONALISING “EXTENSIONPEDIA”

“Extensionpedia” needs to be anchored in a national organisations and I suggest MANAGE (National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management) as a natural choice (www.manage.gov.in). I hope the following suggestions would be helpful in operationalising extensioipedia:

1. After wide consultations, various themes and sub-themes of the extension eco system may be firmed up by MANAGE or the anchor organisation. A directory of themes and sub-themes may be prepared giving unique number to each theme/sub-theme. The various themes selected for MANAGE Centres (Agricultural Extension Policy, Reforms and Processes; Agri-Institution Capacity Building; Agricultural Markets, Supply Chain Management and Extension Projects; Allied Extension and Water/Input use Efficiency; Knowledge Management, ICT and Mass Media; Agripreneurship, Youth and PPP; Women and Household Food and Nutritional Security, Urban Agriculture and Edible Greening; Agrarian Studies, Disadvantaged Areas, NRM Extension and Social Mobilization; and Agri-Business Management) could be the themes for the zero draft for this purpose.
2. The 12th Five Year Plan Working Group Report on Agricultural Extension, already hosted on the Planning Commission website (<http://planningcommission.nic.in/>) may be uploaded by MANAGE and other extension organisations on their respective portals. Multilingual reports of the sub-groups, after

uploading onto the planning commission website, may also be hosted on the above mentioned websites. These reports shall constitute the base document for extension policy planning.

3. For each theme and sub-theme, a base anchor paper may be prepared based upon the sub-group and working group reports which shall be the zero draft. The thematic anchor paper may be posted on website for collaborative development.
4. Every policy suggestion concerning a theme/sub-theme may be made through track change mode on the anchor paper which shall provide facility of link to every suggestion made on the lines of wikipedia and other projects. This will ensure that all policy recommendations are made and could be discussed on one anchor paper. This will also provide continuity in thinking; allow formation of consensus on various issues and further ensure that all suggestions are available at one place for the next sub-group and working group. It also ensures that no additional time is spent on making suggestions already made.



Very little research happens in extension and that is mostly based on MSc and PhD research. Many of these have little policy relevance and the recommendations of these studies are not easily accessible for decision makers.

5. Communities of Practice (CoPs) may be constituted for various thematic areas and sub-themes as required. (Communities of practice are groups of people or practitioners who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly through joint activities and discussions).
6. A Directory of track change options may be prepared with unique number to each option. Each option may be allotted to each CoP and other contributors.
7. Subsequent versions may be released annually as Version 1, Version 2, Version 3, Version 4 and so on after detailed comments from CoPs and a theme wise national consultation by concerned MANAGE Centre. Version may be distinguished by the year. For instance, one could use Version 2014, Version 2015, Version 2016, etc. Version before the constitution of working group may be termed as zero draft for the 13th Plan. Next working group may base its recommendations on this version which shall provide it the entire information about views of every stakeholder and status of its functioning. The Group could therefore, spend its time on consultations and working recommendations instead of collecting data and ascertaining views and opinions.

8. The anchor paper, as per latest revision, could be the base consultation paper for every workshop and seminar. Papers to be presented in extension workshops and seminars should take into consideration this anchor paper and the policy recommendations of the workshop should again be made with reference to the anchor paper.
9. On the lines of thematic anchor papers, scheme wise “Current Scheme Status” may be created for each scheme on lines of the theme paper. The current scheme status document may also include every development, instructions issued, progress made, observations, difficulties experienced and suggestions during the plan period. Document will need to be structured to capture data about progress made, field problems in various states especially those articulated by ATMA (Agricultural Technology Management Agency) and BTTs (Block Technology Teams). Each unit should record their progress and observations on this document. This shall ensure that everything about a scheme shall be available in one document rather than going through a large number of files and progress reports.
10. Technology Directory has been already recommended to be constructed to incorporate information about technical recommendations made, status of their adoption and impact. The Directory may be uploaded on the “extensionpedia” platform. Opportunities could be provided for everyone to give their feedback on the recommended technologies for further action.
11. Research Articles and technical papers may be uploaded on the portal. Every research project and technical paper should make the changes on the relevant place of the theme paper so that the same is captured real time. Mention about this needs to be made in the research paper.
12. The teaching and training material could be uploaded on the “extensionpedia” platform and co developed.
13. Compilation of an Extension Manual has been recommended by the working group on agriculture extension. The manual is to encompass best practices for various extension methods. This could be also uploaded on the portal and a revised version released annually.

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