

ARD 501
GROUP DYNAMICS IN EXTENSION.
Section B
By
Ashimolowo O.R. (Ph.D)

Course Content.

1. What is group dynamics?
2. The distinguishing characteristics of group dynamics
3. Assumptions of group dynamics
4. Importance of group dynamics in agricultural extension
5. The place of individual in the group
6. Motivation
7. Blocks to participation in groups and adjustments to blocks
8. Group development
9. Phases of group growth
10. Internal dynamics of group
11. External dynamics of group
12. Selection, features and use of some group techniques
13. Group evaluation
14. Some studies in group dynamics
15. Analysis of some groups relevant to agricultural extension

THE PLACE OF INDIVIDUAL IN A SOCIAL GROUP.

There are 2 approaches

1. social group consists of persons who interact more with members than non-members when operating to attain the objectives of the social system.
2. social groups have pattern of relationships among its members, hence there are lots of social groups. They also interact with members than non-members.

Interaction refers to the influence one person has on the action and thoughts of another. It is also the influence of a person on group as well as influence of the group on the person. A group can also have influence on another group. Interaction can be between individuals, groups, villages, religious, nations etc.

Other characteristics and function of a group.

1. Individual :- The way we perceive ourselves in relation to our professional work.
2. Peer group:- The way we perceive our colleagues, the way our fellow colleagues and extension agents also view us.
3. Organization:- how extension agents build their roles and the way they perform their roles
4. Public:-This refers to the way the outsiders view members of the group. For instance, farmers look up to us in finding answers to some questions.

CASE STUDY ON GOOSE PROCESS

Fact 1: As each goose flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird that follows. By flying in a V-FORMATION, the whole flock has 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.

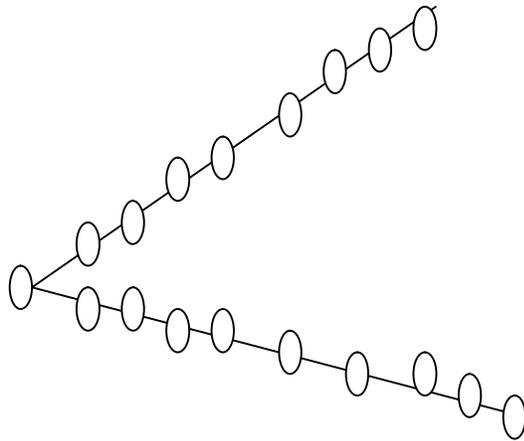
Lesson 1: People who share common directive and a sense of community can get to where they are going more quickly and easily because they are travelling on the trust of each other.

*trust

*co-operation

*partnership

Fact 2: when a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it



Lesson 2: if we have as much sense as a goose, we stay in formation with those heading where we go. We are willing to accept their help and give help to others.

Fact 3: When the lead bird tires, it rotates back into the formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.

Lesson 3: It pays to take turns doing the hard task and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are interdependent on each other's skills, capabilities and unique arrangements of gifts, talents and resources.

Fact 4: The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those upfront to keep up with their speed.

Lesson 4: We need to make sure that our honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement, the output is much greater. The power of encouragement is the quality of honking we seek.

Fact 5: When a goose gets sick, wounded or struck down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again, then they launch out with other formation and catch up with the flock.

Lesson 5: If we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult time as well as when we are down.

MOTIVATION

Motivation comes from the word 'MOTIVE' which comes from the Latin word 'to move'.

Motivation is anything that moves people to perform regardless of the reason such as fear, money, recognition, peer pressure, self esteem etc

If people are trying, they are motivated and we must take note that one thing not synonymous with trying is therefore not motivation.

This implies that **Motivation = motive +action**.

In other words, associates not only need to have a reason to act in certain ways. They must be moved into some form of action.

A good manager is therefore some one who achieve maximum result from what he or she manages. We need to recognise in our attempts to motivate others that motivation deals with personal needs and each person has different needs. The key to individual motivation is to create the feeling of contribution by satisfying the basic needs they all share.

1. **Recognition:** All of us need to know that others accept and approve of our work. The amount and kind of approval differ from each person. Some may cherish public recognition while some may be embarrassed by public recognition.

Simple type of recognition are:

'thank you, you did a great job'

'that is a good idea'

Two of the most powerful tools for recognition are helping other people achieve their goals and asking others for advice.

** When you offer your help, do so in a supportive rather than interfering manner. When you ask for others advice, try to use at least part of it

** when you choose to applaud individual's effort, make sure the recognition is sincere and appropriate in amount and kind.

2. **Affection:** we all need to know that others care. Listen attentively to your group, their problems and successes, recognize what is happening/ occurring within the people'

We don't live in a vacuum that allows us to be angry and frustrated at home and, happy and energetic elsewhere. When we recognise these in others, we will be more understanding and show them we care about them.

We all need to be challenged to do something well and to master new skills. Accomplishing that involves building confidence through asking and listening, finding out what people would like to do, what level of support do different

people enjoy, what support do they need in order to accomplish a task. Allow people to say no. Merge individual interests, experience and skill with task.

3. **Security:** Knowing that we belong to a group reinforces our sense of security. Secured individuals are open-minded. Statements like 'you've done it that way' or 'we are not ready for that yet' can destroy a member's sense of security.

Try statements like 'it is different', 'let me see if I can understand this ' OR 'lets discuss it' OR 'what do we do to make it work'.

Ask for opinions and ideas in a discussion. Give each person the opportunity to contribute. Support members with statements like 'you and I talked about this earlier; I think people will be interested in your idea.

Summary

Personal needs are powerful motivators. Group members must feel comfortable in expressing their needs as well as their interest and talents. Satisfying human needs for security-acceptance build trust. In turn, trust contributes to expression of needs

Blocks to participation in groups and adjustments to blocks

Thing to discuss:

- a. Stages involved in group development
- b. Roles of group members
- c. Blocks to participation

Stages of group development

Tuckman forming storming norming, performing model was established in 1965. He added a fifth stage, adjourning in the 1970's. The forming storming norming performing theory is quite helpful in understanding team development and behaviours in group. Tuckman's model emphasises that part of team building is maturity and ability with the establishment of relationships, with leaders changing leadership styles as situation demands. It starts with the style of directing, moving through nurturing, participating, delegating. The process could lead to the production of a successor leader and the previous leader could move ahead to develop a new team. This progression is clearly shown in the Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum – the authority and freedom extended by the leader to the team increases while control of the leader reduces.

Forming – stage 1

The group is not yet a group but a set of individuals. Individuals learn to establish personal identities within the group and leave impression – participation is limited as individuals get familiar with the setting.

- individuals begin to focus at task at hand and discuss its purpose
- the group is essentially evolving around rules on which future decisions and action would be based.

There is a high dependence on leader for guidance and direction. There is a little agreement on the aim of the team while most guidance is provided by the leader. Individual roles and responsibilities are not too clear and leaders should be prepared to answer lots of enquiries about the objectives, purpose, internal and external relationships. Processes are often not followed and tolerance of leaders could be tested by the members.

Storming – stage 2

- Characterised by intra group conflict and lack of unity.
- Preliminary ground rules of purpose, leadership and behaviours are damaged
- Individuals become hostile towards each other and express their individuality by pursuing and revealing personal agenda.
- Friction increase, rules are broken, arguments can happen, but if successfully handled, this stage leads to a new and more realistic setting of objectives, procedures and norms.

Decisions don't come easily within group. Team members vie for position while establishing themselves. Leaders could receive challenges from team members, and overtime clarity of purpose increases with so many uncertainties (power struggle, cliques, factions). There is a need to remain focussed to avoid distraction (as a result of relationships and emotions) There could be a need to compromise to achieve progress.

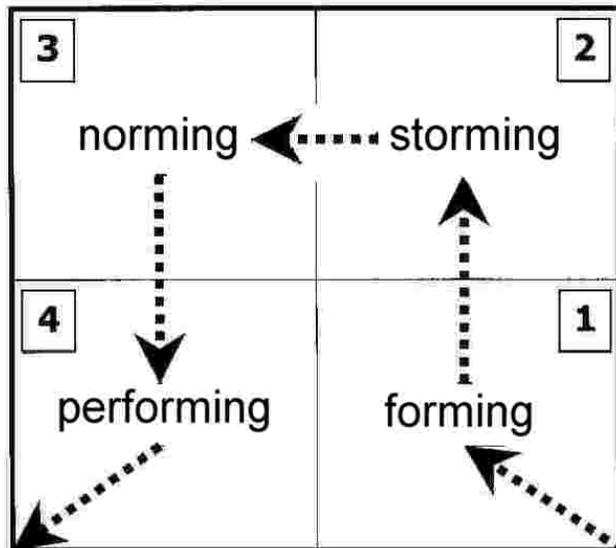
Norming – stage 3

This is characterised by overcoming tensions and developing cohesion with the establishment of norms and practices. Group members accept roles, responsibilities and one another. Development of group spirit and harmony becomes a serious issue. Team members learn to agree and reach consensus, responding encouragingly to the team leader. Important decisions are taken collectively by the group members while smaller/less important decisions are delegated to individuals /small team. Team members are highly committed and unity is strong, taking active participation in social activities. There could be a renewed respect for leaders while team members take turn to share leadership. The leader facilitates the team activities.

Performing – stage 4

This stage is characterised by full maturity and maximum productivity. You can only get to this stage once you have successfully completed the previous stages. Members take on roles to fulfil their responsibilities since they have learnt to relate to one another. Roles and responsibilities become more flexible while group energy is channelled into identifying tasks. Group have new insights and solution begin to emerge. There is a shared vision and team can successfully operate without interference from the leader. Decisions are made against criteria set by the leader. High degree of autonomy is experienced. Disagreements are resolved positively and timely and changes can be effected in the structure of the team. Team has no need for an instructor but often ask for assistance from the leader once the need arises

tuckman's forming storming norming performing model



Mourning/adjourning – stage 5

Bruce Tuckman refined his theory around 1975 and added a fifth stage to the forming, storming, norming, performing model and he called it adjourning, which could also be referred to as deforming and mourning. Adjourning is not an extension but rather a follow up to the previous 4 stages. It perceives the team beyond the objectives of the first four stages and it is relevant to people in the group and their well being. It has no bearing with the main task of the team and development of a team which are central to the other four stages. Some group experiences this while others do not.

Adjourning signifies the break up of the group hopefully when the task is completed. It happens when objectives and purposes are fulfilled, team members move on to new things with a sense of achievement. Recognition and sensitivity to people's vulnerability on the part of the management is essential. This is from the perspective of sense of insecurity created by close bonds and threats from resulting change.

Roles of group members

A. A task roles of group members

1. defining problems
2. seeking information

3. giving information
4. seeking opinion
5. giving opinions
6. testing feasibility

B. Group building/maintenance roles

1. co-ordinating
2. mediating -harmonising
3. orienting-facilitating
4. supporting-encouraging
5. following

Blocks to participation in groups activities and adjustment to blocks

Conflict occurs between people in all kinds of human relationships and in all social settings. Because of the wide range of potential differences among people, the absence of conflict usually signals the absence of meaningful interaction. Conflict by itself is neither good nor bad. However, the manner in which conflict is handled determines whether it is constructive or destructive. Conflict is defined as an incompatibility of goals or values between two or more parties in a relationship, combined with attempts to control each other and antagonistic feelings toward each other (Fisher, 1990)

In groups, conflicts may arise when there is difference in opinion between group leaders and in situation where one group tend to exploit the other. Conflicts between personalities may lead to group quarrel and the diffusion of groups into several fractions. This demand result in a strong group defence reaction with each group trying to obtain dominant position over the other. It can also arise from the use of pressure group by a certain section of the community to gain an advantage over the rest of the community.

Individual conflict too may entail intense feeling about conflicting individuals. Conflicted individuals may refuse to greet each other or do things together. Conflict is therefore that form of social interaction by which the actors seek to obtain scarce reward by eliminating or weakening other contenders. This may take the form of fist fight, threats, legislation.

Conflict has both positive and negative effects

Negative effect

1. destruction of social unity
2. generation of bitterness which could lead to destruction of properties and blood she
3. generation of inter group tension
4. destruction of normal channel of cooperation
5. diversion of members activities from group goal

positive effect

1. it leads to a clear definition of issues. When such issues have been identifies, they can be amicably resolved.
2. with conflict, group cohesion and solidarity increases and this has positive effect which can be directed for a more efficient attainment of group goals

3. conflict keep the group alert to members' interest while such awareness help to prevent future conflict

individuals who are at conflict with group activities could constitute as blocks to his participation in group activities.

Causes of blocks to group activities

1. lack of knowledge of group goals
2. disapproving the means with which the goals and objectives are attained
3. inability to afford membership conditions
4. having a feeling of insecurity about groups, a concern as to whether or not the group will accept the causing concern
5. having inferiority complex for reasons such as persons, status, educational background, clothing
6. lack of human relation skills to get along with the other members
7. personal dislike of some group members
8. being not sure of the groups expectation and its members
9. oppression and suppression for instance as a result of unwillingness of the mates to allow females to participate.

Adjustment to Blocks and frustration to participate in group activities.

When a person is subconsciously blocked or frustrated from attaining his set goal, there is always the tendency to think in terms of abstractions and to constantly organise the available experiences with the universals around. Therefore there must be some rationale or conscious mental escape from any failure in the attempt to attain goals within that experiences world. The mechanism by which this is done is called Adjustment. Extension workers should understand the position of group members whenever some of these mechanisms are employed. By doing so, the process of adjustment to blocks or frustrations should be facilitated in order to promote healthy and functional group members.

Methods of Conflict Resolution:

Regardless of the level of conflict, there are differing approaches to deal with the Incompatibilities that exist. Conflict can result in destructive outcomes or creative ones depending on the approach that is taken. If we can manage conflict creatively, we can often find new solutions that are mutually satisfactory to both parties. Given interdependence, three general strategies have been identified that the parties may take toward dealing with their conflict; win-lose, lose-lose, and win-win (Blake, Shepard & Mouton, 1964).

The win-lose approach: This is very common. People learn this type of behaviours - destructive conflict early in life. It entails – competition, dominance, aggression and defence which is found in many of our social relationships from the family to the school playground. The is based on the wrong notion that what one party gains, the other loses. The strategy is thus to force the other side to capitulate. Sometimes, this is done through socially acceptable mechanisms such as majority vote, the authority of the leader, or the determination of a judge. Sometimes, it involves secret strategies, threat, innuendo – whatever works is acceptable, i.e., the ends justify the means. The major goal of this type of resolution is to have a victor who is superior, and a

vanquished who withdraws in shame, but who prepares very carefully for the next round. In the long run, everyone loses.

The **lose-lose strategy** is characterised by smoothing over conflict or by reaching the simplest of compromises. This strategy believes that disagreement is inevitable. There is need to settle the difference or smooth over difficulties in as painless a way as possible? Sometimes, this is indeed the reality of the situation, and the costs are less than in the win-lose approach, at least for the loser. At the end of the day, each party gets some of what it wants, and resigns itself to partial satisfaction. Neither side is aware that by confronting the conflict fully and cooperatively they might have created a more satisfying solution. Or the parties may realistically use this approach to divide limited resources or to forestall a win-lose escalation and outcome.

The **win-win approach** entails a conscious and systematic attempt to maximize the goals of both parties through collaborative problem solving approach. The underlining principle is that conflict is seen as a problem to be solved rather than a war to be won. The important distinction is we (both parties) versus the problem, rather than we (one party) versus they (the other party). This method focuses on the needs and constraints of both parties rather than emphasizing strategies designed to conquer. Full problem definition and analysis and development of alternatives precede consensus decisions on mutually agreeable solutions. The parties work toward common goals, i.e., ones that can only be attained by both parties pulling together. There is an emphasis on the quality of the long term relationships between the parties, rather than short term accommodations. Communication is open and direct rather than secretive and calculating.

Threat and coercion are prohibited/barred. Build up of trust and acceptance is encourages rather than an increase in suspicion and hostility. The win-win approach requires a very high degree of patience and skill in human relations and problem solving.

Conclusion:

Conflict is an inevitable fact of human existence. If we work to understand and manage it effectively, we can improve both the satisfaction and productivity of our social relationships.

Selection, features and use of some group techniques

Small Group Techniques (adapted from: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/smlgroup.htm>)

What characterises small group exercises?

1. active participation and interaction;
2. run by a group leader or facilitator;
3. a task, theme, or goal;
4. help reach consensus or develop priorities;
5. help gather a range of ideas, opinions, and concerns;
6. applied to either planning or project development;
7. In a breakout group, a small group task reflects the larger group agenda; and
8. Breakout groups report back to the larger group.

Why use them?

1. Small group techniques foster interaction between participants.

In most small group techniques participants are encouraged to speak frankly and openly. There are ground rules, such as allowing only one person to speak at a time, ensuring a fair play between all participants. An open and unbiased meeting processes promote adequate interaction with some element of trust.

2. They make a larger meeting more efficient and productive.

Breakout groups use various techniques to address a specific issue. It allows series of ideas to be brought up in the small groups which could be useful in a larger setting. It helps enriched the larger setting when ideas are collated, reported and incorporated into the issue at hand.

3. Small group techniques foster dissemination of information

The information gathered is brought back and used by a larger community. Representatives meet in small sessions, cover issues, and report back to their constituents. Talking/teaching others about your ideas clarifies issues and help make issues more clearer.

4. Techniques make meetings more interesting.

The interactive nature of small group activities makes them highly interesting and the experience could be real fun. People are interested normally and willing to attend and participate when they know the session will be highly productive and of less stress.

4. Small group techniques offer a strategy for achieving a meeting goal.

Techniques helps keep conversation on track or establish a step-by-step process for handling discussion. They help develop consensus or an action plan.

Examples of small group techniques

(<http://www.theorywatch.com/ist501/grpelicit.html>):

Breakout groups are subdivisions of a larger meeting to deal with specific issues. Small groups meet in separate areas -- corners of a large room or several smaller rooms. Each group appoints or elects a discussion leader, and each participant has a chance to express an opinion. Afterwards, groups report back to the large meeting.

Study circles hold a series of meetings to discuss critical issues. Members are assigned readings and other tasks between meetings. Encourage students to create their own study groups/circles beyond the tutorial setting.

Round. Everyone sits or stands in a circle and responds to the same question. They think or write it out for a minute and then have 30 seconds to respond. This is a good way to get all students to participate in a session

Stations. Create a set of five theme areas or concepts you wish to cover. In each, create five questions. In your tutorial section, set up five stations, each with one theme/concept. Break your class into five groups. Have each group answer one

question at each station. After a specified amount of time, have each group rotate to the next station. Continue until all questions at all stations have been answered (provide paper or flip charts at each station). Have the each group summarise the answers for the whole class. (NOTE: this exercise takes a long time and is well suited to mid-term or final review, using a whole tutorial session)

Fishbowl. Useful especially when many students have not done the readings for the week. Teams of three or four work on a problem or exercise, or discuss a reading. At the same time, other teams of three or four observe the first teams. In particular, the first teams work on seeking other points-of-view, listening to and paraphrasing ideas, and other communication skills while solving the given problem. The second teams focus their attention on the team dynamic and make sure they are prepared to discuss how well or poorly the first teams worked together to solve the problem. (There is sometimes the tendency of the second teams to focus on the problem rather than the team dynamic.) After some time (even if every team has not finished the problem), the class discusses what happened and what didn't happen during the activity.

Line. Students stand in a line. Each end of the line represents a particular stance on a given topic or question. All participants stand on the part of the line that represents their views. To find your position, talk to the person on either side of you in the line-up to find out if you are in the right place in relation to others. This strategy is useful for “hot” discussion topics where people often have very strong opinions. It lets students feel confident about their own position – because they *need* to find a place in the line. It shows that all viewpoints are respected.

Snowball. Ask a question of the class (for example to define a difficult concept). Have each student turn to their neighbour and come up with an answer (to the best of their ability). After a pre-determined amount of time, have each pair turn to another pair and repeat the process. Repeat as needed for the size of the tutorial class. When you are left with two to four groups, have each summarise their understanding of the concept(s).

Brainstorming. Brainstorming is a good way to generate idea for discussion. Students contribute ideas without any discussion, elaboration, or criticism. After the brainstorming exercise, students go through the various ideas and choose the ones they would like to pursue.

Buzz Groups. Students discuss a particular topic or question in small groups (2-3 people). The discussion is continued in the large group. Students who normally would not contribute will feel confident giving their opinion out loud once they have had it validated by a few peers.

One-Minute Paper. In order to get feedback on what students understood from lecture or the readings, a one-minute paper that you collect, read and do not grade allows you to find out how to gear your lesson plan. You can incorporate the one-minute papers into the participation grade. The one-minute paper gives you a chance to see where students are in their understanding of the material. This can become part of other small group exercises and can be a way to create focus for the tutorial.

Think/Write/Pair/Discuss. To get students to articulate their ideas about a concept/problem in writing can help foster discussion. By using the TWPD you do not have to read the answers provided by students, you can ask them to discuss their writing with each other, in pairs or in threes and then take up the answers generated with the whole class.

Jigsaw. If there is reading material (such as background, or particularly difficult course material that students are having trouble with) to be digested before doing an activity, split it up into 3 or 4 self-contained parts. Divide the class into the same number of Reading Groups, with one member from each team. Give one part of the reading to each team to digest and to prepare to explain to their team. Then rearrange the students so that each team has someone who has read one of the self-contained parts, and have each student teach his/her part of the reading to the rest of the team.

Word Webbing. As a team or individually, open-ended or with concepts provided by the teacher, students construct a concept map within a specified domain. If done in teams, each member should have a different colour of pen. This can be coupled with the creation of a dictionary of terms for your course that students have to compile (individually or as a class) from the weekly readings.

Roving Reporter. When a team gets stuck, one member is allowed to roam the room looking for ideas and reports back to the team.

Two-Box (or Two-Column) Induction. The teacher puts items into one of two boxes (usually on the blackboard) without telling students what the criteria are for sorting the items. As the teacher adds items to the two boxes, students (standing in teams) discuss the items and possible categories. When a team decides that they know how the sort was done, they sit down without revealing their answer. (This is a non-disruptive way of letting the teacher know how the individual teams are doing.) When all teams are seated, there are three different options:

1. Ask each team to add an item to each box, and let the other teams evaluate and comment on the choices
2. Present additional items to the class, and ask teams to decide which box each item belongs in.

Group evaluation

There is need to assess the degree to which a group is achieving or has achieved its set goals. The process of assessing this constitutes evaluation. The group need to assess itself in-order to be as productive as possible. Evaluation can be useful, exciting and an important knowledge development tool. A good evaluation provides a useful tool for managing on-going activities within the group, identify successes and weaknesses in group activities and help make effective planning for the development of new initiatives.

Evaluation does not only happen at the end of the project, but rather it begins when the project starts through the formulation of goals and objectives and continues throughout the life of the project. Evaluation allows us to know if we are meeting our set goals and having the desired impact. Evaluation could be carried out by an individual or a number of people. In small projects with limited resources, evaluation could be done by project sponsor, while larger projects could entails hiring of outside evaluator. Roles and responsibilities should be clarified.

Importance of evaluation

1. It helps to identify group's strength and weaknesses
2. it indicates changes for future which will increase group productivity and maturity.
3. it allows group leadership to concentrate on the importance of their groups
4. it helps to compare the actual work with the ideal in group situation so as to know when and where to modify the line of action.

What can be evaluated in group situation?

1. The group and the dynamics (internal and external dynamics)
 - i. atmosphere or climate of the group
 - ii. communication pattern
 - iii. involvement or participation pattern of the group
 - iv. level of performance as compared to standard
 - v. degree of social conformity: social control, values
 - vi. degree of identification of members
 - vii. general role definition of members and sub groups
 - viii. specific roles performed by members
 - ix. individual human relation skill
 - x. quality resolution of individual differences
 - xi. group size
 - xii. use made of evaluation
 - xiii. conformity of community values and goals
 - xiv. status of a group as related to others
 - xv. community expectations and group goals
 - xvi. identification with institutional values
2. Goals and objectives
 - i. effectiveness of goal consideration
 - ii. degree of consensus in objective formulation
 - iii. understanding and acceptance of goals
 - iv. clarity of statement of objectives
 - v. the dynamic qualities of group goals
 - vi. the achievability of goal with community value

- vii. the developmental aspect of goal
 - viii. co-operative determinants of goals
 - ix. the compatibility of goal with community values
 - x. evaluating potential of goals
3. Techniques
- i. appropriateness in relations to members abilities and skills
 - ii. appropriateness in relation to internal dynamics
 - iii. appropriateness in relations to external dynamics
 - iv. compatibility with stated objectives
 - v. creativity as expressed by adoption and invention

5 Key evaluation questions:

- | | | |
|------------|----|--|
| What?. | 1. | Did we do what we said we should do? |
| Why? | 2. | What did we learn about what worked and what didn't work? |
| So what? | 3. | what difference did it make that we did this work? |
| Now what? | 4. | what could we do differently? |
| Then what? | 5. | how do we plan to use evaluation findings for continuous learning? |

The five evaluation process step

1. Define the project work: having a clear, measurable project goal and objective.
Project activity type could be:
 - need assessments
 - education and awareness
 - resources development
 - skills development
 - developing innovative models etc
2. Develop success indicators and their measures: define what constitute success of project. This allows us to know whether project objective has been achieved or not. How do we identify the success indicators? Ideas
3. Collect the evaluation data: after the above mentioned steps decide (a) what information the project needs to collect (b) who has the information (c) how the information will be collected.

Data could be collected through:

- written questionnaire
- telephone survey
- reaction sheet
- interview – face to face or phone
- focus group
- participant observation
- project diary
- program records
- before and after questionnaire
- non-traditional method of documentation

4. Analyse and interpret the data. There could be a need to make a summary of data collected, it should be analysed and key learning identified. This would help prepare the final report. Recommendations are often made and action plan stipulated.
5. Use the evaluation results: this could be used throughout the project to improve planning and implementations of activities. It is advisable to share the result with others as it adds to the body of knowledge.

Organizing a project evaluation involves:

- Putting together an evaluation team
- Developing an evaluation plan
- Putting in place a management structure and process so that evaluation runs smoothly

Factors to consider include:

- Degree of interdependence or “objectivity” required: This means whom the evaluation is for and its purpose.
- Time, cost and logistics
- Expertise: will the project team be able make effective use of the data gathering, analysis and reporting technique.

Establishing policies, procedures and structures

These are fundamentals before the actual planning of the evaluation

- Who will manage the evaluation – project leader/manager, steering group?
- Who will be part of the evaluation team
- Who else will play a role in planning and actual evaluation of project
- Who will scope the parameters and overall approach of evaluation? How will this be determined?
- Who will carry out the evaluation and when?
- What will be the general reporting requirement?
- Who will own and control the evaluation data and findings?
- Who will oversee the quality of the evaluation?
- What guidelines should be followed?
- How will recommended improvements stemming from the findings be facilitated?

How to carry out an evaluation peer group discussion

A focus group discussion (FGD) is an exploratory research tool. You administer this tool on representative of the target audience you want to communicate with. FGDs provide qualitative information on your research interest, thereby exploring knowledge, beliefs, concerns and attitude rather than giving statistical facts

Stages in FGDs

1. clarify your objectives: what do you want to learn from the focus group and what missing information and problem issues do you hope to address. Provide a framework for your agenda which will assist in getting useful

information. All stakeholders should be involved in the definition of objective

2. **Selecting participants:** Best size of FGDs is 6 to 12 persons. This is advisable for easy management. Participants at FGDs should have similar background for comfortability and maximum participation.
3. **Making practical arrangements:** all participants need to be informed of the date, time and place of the meeting. Adequate transportation could be provided. Choose a person with good verbal communication skill as a facilitator for the group. He should be versatile and lead the conversation in a subtle manner.
4. **Preparing for the discussion:** agenda preparation is essential as it acts as a reminder of the main issues of discussion. Be selective with type of questions asked. Open ended questions could be more desirable. Avoid leading questions. Recording of the discussion is essential (tape, video, taking of minutes). Refreshments could also be provided for the participants.
5. **Manage the discussion:** introduce your self and explain purpose of FGD. Tell them their contributions will be valued and that you are interested in their opinions and not the right answers. Have rules to involve all participants, ask general questions to start with, summarise discussion at the end of the session. Listen attentively to your audience.
6. **Using the information:** analyse discussion and summarize all information provided under the objectives defined at the beginning of the evaluation. Share findings with stake holders

Listening survey

This type of survey allows you find out more about the attitudes and beliefs of the target group and assist in deciding mode of communication with them. It is an informal way of speaking to the people on the issue at hand and listening to their opinions. Its major advantage is that people speak freely about their feelings in an informal setting. Some people are not in support of this type of survey since they believe it is deceptive as you are not opportuned to tell people why you are doing the survey. It concentrates on exploring knowledge, attitudes beliefs other than quantitative facts.

How to conduct a listening survey

- Go to where people gather and talk
- Start a conversation
- Be careful not to be too obvious
- If possible work in pairs
- Listen to what people say
- Ask questions about what people think rather than saying what you think
- Record your findings after you have left the group.

Extending the use of adult learning principles from training to extension activities

(By Richard Fell, Managing Consultant (Low Hill Enterprises)/Adjunct Lecturer, Centre for Regional and Rural Innovation – Queensland, University of Queensland Gatton Campus)

Learning theories for training and extension

Fell (1986 & 1996) developed his adult learning principles based on the work of Knowles (1972) and Rogers (1973).

Principle one: Build on local experience; use the knowledge within the group/individual.

Adults come to educational or training activities for a variety of reasons. What they bring with them is a wealth of experience that is there to be built on and used in the particular activity (Malouf 1993, Knowles 1990 and Rogers 1973). It is important to tap into this experience, to see what they already know and to then develop the material that you have from this base.

Principle two: Make the learning environment comfortable and encouraging.

When adults are faced with a new (learning) experience they are often anxious about their own perceived deficiencies and about showing this in public (Rogers 1973). Any learning experience should be structured to take these feelings into account. It is important therefore to create an environment that is comfortable and drawing out their experience is one starting point.

Principle three: Ensure that the learning activity meets the needs and relates to the problems of the client group.

An important aspect to remember in any learning activity is that adults feel a need to learn (Malouf 1993, Knowles 1999) and they usually have problems or issues that they are concerned about. Thus they come into activities looking for answers to their concerns. The learning therefore needs to have practical pay off for the adults who are at the learning experience. The activity has to be relevant to these needs and to ensure this involve them in planning.

Principle four: Involve the audience in planning their own learning experience.

Involvement and participation in the learning process is also important for adults; activities need to be designed that cater for the four learning styles (Honey & Mumford 1986). The action learning process provides a basic framework for involving people and ensuring participation.

Principle five: Activities need to actively involve people, be stimulating and participatory.

Adults come to these learning experiences wanting to learn, so we must make it possible for them to do so. Activities should therefore challenge and stimulate the individual in the learning process. It is also necessary to ensure that all four learning styles; pragmatist, activist, theorist and reflector are covered by exercises, activity, reflective practice and planning.

Principle six: Allow time for people to reflect on what they are learning, take difficult subjects slowly and always be open to questioning.

Reflection on what is being learnt is a key element when using adult learning principles – people need time to think about what they are learning and what it means to them and/or their work. The time for reflection needs to be deliberately set aside in the schedule.

Principle seven: Build group and individual confidence by letting them know they are right, building a confidence that they are making progress towards their learning goals.

All people need to feel they are making progress in their learning – for example, see the student who wants to have their marks for an assignment as quickly as possible. It is possible to let people know they are making progress by rewarding “success”. Praise the individual or group when they do things right – take more time to do this than to correct their mistakes.

Principle eight: Learning must involve effective two-way communication

It is difficult to undertake any learning if there isn't two-way communication. Dialogue between trainer and participant, between participants themselves and then between participant and client is inherent in the learning process. This must be central to the training or learning experience.

Practical examples of the way that adult learning principles have been used in learning project/extension activities. The course and in particular the Adult Learning in Regional Development subject was, and is, developed using adult learning theory and practice and reflects a good learning experience for the majority of participants who attend the subject. Some examples of the practical ways that adult learning principles are used and the evaluation of that use are presented below