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| COURSE CODE: | ARD 507 |
| COURSE TITLE: | NEWS AND SCRIPT WRITING AND EDITING |
| NUMBER OF UNITS: | 3 Units |
| COURSE DURATION: | Three hours per week |

COURSE DETAILS:

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| Course Coordinator: | Dr. O. Oyekunle , <i>HND, PGD, B.Agric., M.Agric., PhD</i> |
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| Office Location: | AMREC, FUNAAB |

COURSE CONTENT:

Techniques of writing agricultural news stories for the media. Emphasis is on practice in writing newspaper feature stories and short magazine articles as they relate to agricultural extension. News evaluation and copy editing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

This is an elective course in the department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development. Students who chose the course are expected to participate in all the course activities and have a minimum of 70% attendance to be able to write the final examination.

READING LIST:

1. Adebayo, K. (1997) *Communication in Agriculture*. Abeokuta: Greenlinks International. ISBN 978-34337-2-5, Pp 60-76
2. Agbamu, J.U. (2006) *Essentials of Agricultural Communication in Nigeria*. Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited. ISBN 978 023 197 8 Pp155-169
3. Nwachukwu, I. (2003) *Agricultural Communication: Principles and Practice*. Umuahia: Lamb House Publishers. ISBN 978-33278-3-6. Pp 79-104.

LECTURE NOTES

WHAT IS NEWS

News is any event, idea or opinion that is timely, that interests the people and affects a large number of people in a community, and that is capable of being understood by them. It is a compilation of facts and events of current interest or importance to the readers/listeners or viewers.

It is any dependable and unbiased report of an event containing new information that affects the lives, welfare, future or interest of the reader, listener or viewer receiving the reports.

CATEGORIES OF WHAT MAKE NEWS

- (1) **Novelty:** Something that could happen but not often but rarely happens and can create amusement for people.

- (2) **Personal Impact:** What interest the average reader in his daily life.
- (3) **Local /Foreign News:** A local bus crash with three dead in Lagos can be more interesting than 60 died in a plane crash in Italy.
- (4) **Money/Finance/Business:** The budget is news, so are taxes, fall in commodity prices, salary increment and economic crises.
- (5) **Crime:** Especially murder which has a morbid appeal.
- (6) **Conflict:**
- (7) **Religion:**
- (8) **Disaster and Tragedy:** Pipeline explosion, plane crash, auto crash, etc.
- (9) **Humor:** Funny and entertaining
- (10) **Human Interest/Human angle:** Ordeals suffered, e.g. a man escaped from the hands of Kidnapers
- (11) **Mystery:** How did it happen Who discovered it; under what circumstances did it happen? Suspense can keep a story running for days.
- (12) **Health:** Outbreak of diseases, e.g. Meningitis, Cholera, bird flu, etc.
- (13) **Science:** New discoveries, innovations, scientific breakthroughs.
- (14) **Famous people:** Famous people make news, e.g. film stars, sports heroes, musical prodigies or men in high offices. Their doings never fail to catch the attention of the reader.
- (15) **Weather:** Weather reports in newspapers, radio and television
- (16) **Food:** Shortage of food in the news, so is glut. Have the prices fallen?
- (17) **Fuel Situation/Energy or Power**

WHAT IS AGRICULTURAL NEWS

Agricultural news is any agricultural information, ideas, facts or innovation that is disseminated to the people through a medium. Such medium could be print, electronic or human.

Such information is always new and interesting to the listener, reader or viewer.

Agricultural news could also be a regular reminder of agricultural information. Such information should have as much as possible, a new character, be technically feasible and economically viable.

SOURCES OF AGRICULTURAL NEWS

- (1) Publicity releases
- (2) Reporters on specific beats
- (3) Extension guide, bulletin, handbills
- (4) Books, extension publications and journals
- (5) Research Institutes
- (6) Universities of Agriculture
- (7) Interview statistics and opinion polls
- (8) News services of media organizations
- (9) Agricultural Development Programmes.
- (10) Internet
- (11) Extension agents
- (12) Newspapers

PRODUCTION OF AGRICULTURAL NEWS IN TELEVISION STATIONS

Reporters go out to gather relevant agricultural news from agricultural agencies or organizations, such as University of Agriculture, Research Institutes and Agricultural Development Programmes. The reporter will write the news and carry out self editing before submitting it at the newsroom of the television stations.

There are editors who will also edit the report properly so that all errors will be removed and it will be suitable and fit well into the news bulletin for the day. The news producer will also look at it and make sure that it is good enough for airing. He will also arrange all other news items in the best order. The agricultural news must be recent, balance, accurate and relevant

to the needs of the farmers. The script will then be given to the newscasters for reading in the studio.

ATTRIBUTES/QUALITIES OF GOOD NEWS

- (1) Relevance
- (2) Objectivity:
- (3) Recency/Currency:
- (4) Balance/completeness:
- (5) Accuracy/Correctness: .
- (6) Precision (Conciseness and Clarity)

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

The person/group to which information is directed is called an audience. An audience can be disaggregated for analysis on the basis of the following characteristics among others:

- (a) Socio-economic status: education level, leadership position, income and occupation.
- (b) Age group: Children, youth, middle-aged, the elderly
- (c) Gender: Men, women, boys, girls
- (d) Religion: Christianity, Islam, traditional
- (e) Scale of production: Small scale, medium scale, large scale
- (f) Culture and norms
- (g) Types of associations: Cooperatives, development unions, social groups

Methods used in audience analysis

- (i) Observation
- (ii) Discussion
- (iii) Survey
- (iv) Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

KINDS OF AGRICULTURAL SCRIPTS OR PAPER

- (1) **Descriptive paper/script:** This presents information on a given technology. It is a simplified technical description of a process or farming practice. It gives detailed information
- (2) **Narrative paper:** It tells the story of events or occurrences in a sequential manner. It could be a paper on trends in agricultural extension approaches in Nigeria, etc.
- (3) **Expository paper:** The key issue here is to expose. It hinges on reporting the highlights of a research result. It touches on the salient and critical aspects of a research finding.
- (4) **Argumentative paper:** It presents an argument in favor of an idea. It seeks to convince an audience through logical reasoning. It discusses the opposing views of an issue, and then takes a position. It can also present arguments for and against an idea then leave the reader to make a decision.
- (5) **Persuasive paper:** You write with the aim of getting your audience adopt given practices. It persuades people to believe that utilizing a certain practice, production system, tool, machine or product will benefit them.

PROCEDURE FOR WRITING AGRICULTURAL SCRIPTS FOR A PRINT MEDIUM

- (a) Plan the script
- (b) Write the Script

- (c) Review and Edit
- (d) Obtain feedback for future improvement

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CATEGORIES OF MEDIA PROGRAMMES IN WHICH AGRICULTURAL SCRIPTS ARE RELEVANT.

- (1) **Talk** – This is the straight reading of a prepared script on a single topic. It aims at persuading the listener to modify his behavior.
- (2) **Documentary**: This is an exhaustive examination of a chosen topic which could be about people, places or events.
- (3) **Features**: This is an in-depth treatment of an aspect of an issue idea or event.
- (4) **Magazine**: This is a collection of several items. It may include talks of various kinds, interviews and short discussions.
- (5) **News Stories** – This may be the news of the day having the lead, and the body which amplifies the lead.
- (6) **Scientific and other Technical bulletins.**

STEPS INVOLVED IN THE DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION

Title of documentary

Preparation – This involves:

- Decision on what to include and what not to include in the work
- Draw up plan of work for shooting

Scripting

- Writing of script based on available visuals and the extra shooting that will be carried out.

Shooting

- This is the actual recording or shot taking that constitute the visuals to be used in the documentary.
- It may be done before or after the script writing.

Voicing

- The script is taken to an audio studio, read and recorded into a Compact Disc or Audio Cassette

Finalizing

- Play the edited work to see areas that need adjustment. It may be in the audio or visual
- Effect all corrections, cuts and alterations
- Read all captions including opening and end credit
- Do the final recording of the work on CD or DVD

STEPS IN WRITING NEWS INTENDED FOR PUBLICATION IN AN AGRICULTURAL MAGAZINE

- i. Know your audience, in other words, carry out audience analysis
- ii. Define the message
- iii. Design the material to attract attention, e.g. use colored cover page and catchy pictures
- iv. Structure the information, i.e. divide the content into sections that lead logically from one to another
- v. Proof read and edict draft

- vi. Submit the final edited copy for publication

TIPS ON DEVELOPMENT AND WRITING OF RADIO AND TELEVISION SCRIPTS FOR FARM BROADCAST:

- (1) Use an ear catcher
- (2) Use short sentences
- (3) Use breathers: In newspaper writing, prepositions (on and at) and relative pronouns (which, that and as) are left out of news stories without apparent loss of understanding to the reader of the copy.
- (4) Place authoritative sources and transitional words at the beginning of sentences
- (5) Use symbols correctly (only in print). Do not use symbols in broadcast, write out the digits, e.g. one thousand, five hundred and twenty naira.
- (6) Fractions: Write out the decimal point in words
- (7) Percentages: Spell out the symbols in words
- (8) Hour of the day should be written as 5:30 in the afternoon
- (9) Never start a sentence with digits. (10) Avoid abbreviations
- (11) Avoid alterations, i.e. sentences that have similar sounding vowels or components.
- (14) Use punctuation aids: When we have a list of names, titles and addresses, you should use dashes and prepositions to make it easy for the newscaster to read and the audience to understand.

TYPES OF BROADCAST PROGRAMMES

- (1) **News talk/commentaries**
News talk deals with recent events, happenings and new information released from government that may affect the life and production activities of the people.
- (2) **Commentaries**
The difference between news talk and commentaries is that you put in your personal opinion in commentaries.
- (3) **Documentaries:**
These can be on issues, profile of a technology or agriculturalist, disaster, anniversary or a historical event that offers opportunity to recreate the past. A documentary helps an audience to have familiarity with a new idea and have a deeper understanding. Documentaries can be educational and they must have correct information. A documentary should centre on a given topic and must carry messages on a subject matter that is well composed with pictures and sound, systematic discussion and intelligently presented.
- (4) **Features:**
These are human-centered stories that place emphasis on facts to arouse people's interest in a vocation or to entertain. There could be a feature on the best farmer in Nigeria. Features usually deal with places, people, and ideas. They give an in-depth description of the stories.
In features, we want to answer the questions: who? what? where? why? when? and how?
- (5) **Magazines:**
A magazine is a broadcast programme that has many compartments or segments under a single theme. It entails variety presentation with an allotted time. Magazines aim at providing information and entertainment in variety form but do not entail depth.
- (6) **Panel discussion:**

This involves inviting experts in an aspect of agriculture to present views and advise on a given problem. The view and advice are passed on as information to an audience. There must be preliminary research on the topic. The presenter acts as moderator of the discussion but he is not a discussant.

(7) **Drama:**

This involves the use of fiction to deliver an agricultural message by dramatizing roles and situations. Drama uses social methods to market ideas and act as a vehicle for teaching and passing information to an audience.

Drama should have a fusion of entertainment effect, cultural, linguistic and musical factors into a package for broadcast. A comparison of organic and chemical fertilization of soils can be dramatized to portray the benefits of organic farming.

WHAT IS EDITING

Editing is a refining process involving the elimination of erroneous details, grammar, punctuations and other forms of impurities or noise from a copy. It also involves indication of the size of typefaces in which stories will be typeset to correct the error of under-reporting.

Editing is the final stage of writing. It involves the preparation of an authors work for publication by selection, arrangement, and annotation.

Types of editing

(1) **Self Editing:** The reporter does this type of editing before submitting his story for formal processing by the editors. He decides what details to include in his story out of the many, relating to an event.

(2) **Minimal Editing:** This involves correction of minor errors of style, spelling, grammar and punctuations.

(3) **Maximal Editing:** This is a substantial editing of stories caused by poor structuring of ideas, grammatical and semantic errors and burial of lead material within a story. Stories with such errors are re-written. In some newspapers only the front page stories are given such treatment while copy editors are assigned different pages to edit.

Reasons for editing

- (1) Elimination of libelous statements
- (2) Wrong lead
- (3) To ensure fairness
- (4) To update a copy:
- (5) To conform to house style:
- (6) Unprofessional copies: .
- (7) To make copies fit into the available news hole or airtime:
- (8) To remove distasteful portions:

Guidelines in editing

- (1) Cut out any words not needed
- (2) Breakout or reorganize any sentence that cannot be understood on first reading
- (3) Check the choice of words
- (4) Check the grammar
- (5) Check the punctuation
- (6) Check the spellings, capitalization and apostrophes
- (7) Proof read
- (8) Ensure that the level of writing matches the educational level of the target audience
- (9) Re-write when the language is confusing, boring or repetitive
- (10) Deal tactfully with authors and obtain their consent for corrections made.