FCS6013

**UNIVERSITY *of*
FLORIDA**
UF

IFAS Extension

Educational Methods for Extension Programs[1]

Lisa A. Guion[2]

In Extension we deliver education to our target audiences using a non-formal structure that allows more flexibility and options in the way that we teach. Another benefit of the non-formal structure is that creativity and innovative education methods are encouraged. There are a host of educational methods available to use in teaching Extension educational programs. One way of determining which method to use for a given program is to examine the purpose of your educational session. For example, there are certain methods that are better suited for teaching new information to your target audience, while other methods are better for reinforcing or expanding their current knowledge of the topic. This article provides a list of different educational methods most commonly used in Extension as well as definitions (see attachment) of and uses for the different methods.

Types of Methods

Experiential. These methods allow the audience to gain experience with the information being taught. It involves hands-on activities that utilize the senses. These methods are excellent for teaching new information. Research suggests that the more the audience can interact with the information being taught, the better they will learn and retain the information. Some experiential methods include:

Case study	On-farm test
Field day	Practicum
Games, role play	Play
Interactive CD	Demo skits
Interactive video/audio	
Interactive workshop	

Reinforcement. These methods reinforce learning and provide motivation for continued learning. They also reinforce information that you have already taught or that learners already know. Some reinforcement methods that are well suited for Extension include:

Articles (EDIS/journal/etc.)	Newsletters
Newspaper articles	Fact sheets
Fax or e-mail messages	Notebooks
Home study kits	Posters
Leaflets or flyers	

Integrative. These methods allow the learner to clarify, discuss, and gain a greater understanding of the information; and integrate new information with existing information. The learners gained increased in-depth knowledge of a topic. Some integrative methods include:

Brainstorming	Seminar
Buzz group	Symposium
Conference	Teleconference
Convention	Telephone TA
Forum	Personal visit
Institute	Office visit
Meeting	
Panel	

Other Considerations in Determining Appropriate Educational Methods

There are a number of other considerations that you should make when deciding which method to use for a given program. These considerations are based on the preference and/or special needs of your target audiences. In terms of preferences, we all have different learning styles and preferred ways of receiving information. An examination of some of the abundant literature on learning styles will equip you with some tools for designing your educational programs to appeal to various learning styles.

In addition to preferences for learning, the special needs of our audience can dictate which educational method is most appropriate. Some special considerations include:

Literacy and reading level. For example, if your audience has a low reading level then having them read and discuss a case study would not be appropriate even though it is a popular experiential method.

Socio-economic status. Some of these methods require the learner (target audience) to have access to computers or other equipment that they may not be able to afford.

Lifestyles. Your particular target audience may lead very busy lifestyles. Thus you want to use a method that allows flexibility such as home study kits.

Cultural relevance. Some cultural groups respond better to certain types of educational approaches. It is important to learn which methods are most appropriate for your audience. For example, some cultures prefer to learn in group settings where cooperative learning is emphasized.

Money. Some methods are more expensive to deliver, so it is essential to plan ahead and develop a budget for your programs.

Time. Some methods require more time to plan and execute. Therefore, a key part of the planning process is developing a timeline.

Staff. Some methods require additional staff and/or volunteers to assist you in carrying out the learning experience.

Facilities or Equipment. Some methods require special facilities and/or equipment. For example, the interactive CD requires computer access. Therefore, if you use that method, the facilities must have adequate technology to support the implementation of the program.

Summary

As you can see, there are a large variety of methods that you can use to deliver your Extension education programs. Primarily, the type of method you use will be based upon the special needs and interests of your target audience. A secondary, but nonetheless important, consideration is the purpose of the education. In this paper you learned the best methods for teaching new information (experiential), reinforcing and motivating learning, as well as expanding existing information. Regardless of the method you choose, proper planning and creative implementation are key to successful programming.

References

Boone, E.J. (1985). *Developing programs in adult education*. IL: Waverly Press Inc.

Richardson, J. G. & Jenkins, D.M. (1999). *Extension education*: Process and Practice. NC Cooperative Extension System Publication, NC State University.

Attachment: Definitions of Different Methods

Brainstorming: A process in which the audience are invited to participate by sharing and discussing ideas. Each idea is valued and noted.

Buzz Group: Five to eight people who discuss questions posed by a larger group

Case Study: A specific description of an event that is presented for discussion and analysis.

Conference: A meeting of any size group of people for formal presentations on one topic.

Convention: A gathering of a large number of people with similar interests that represent different parts of a larger organization. Many planned meetings occur simultaneously.

Fact Sheet: Six or less pages focusing on a single subject that includes instructions, guidelines, or other specific information.

Fax or E-Mail Message: Printed or electronic information that is transmitted by data port, either a facsimile machine or in packets of data through servers.

Field Day: A planned one-day activity in an indoor or outdoor setting for demonstrations **Forum:** A form of group discussion that allows the audience to participate. It may or may not be moderated. The focus typically is on an issue that affects a large number of people. **Game:** A simulation or fantasy in which learners explore a certain subject, opportunity, or implication. Also, involves using traditional game formats that are adapted to a particular subject matter (Example: Nutrition Jeopardy Challenge).

Home Study Kit: Educational materials assembled or created for the purpose of independent study.

Interactive Video: an electronic system with which the learner can interact to obtain information by both visual and audio means.

Journal Article: A means of presenting scientific, theoretical, or philosophical information in a professional publication.

Leaflet or Flier: Brief, concise printed information focused on a specific subject designed to create or enhance awareness.

Meeting: An assembly of people at which information on a topic of common interest is presented.

Method Demonstration: An explanation of how to implement a practice by guiding the learner in carrying out the task.

Newsletter: A printed instrument developed for a targeted audience in order to provide timely information of current interest.

Notebook: A compilation of fact sheets or other printed information concerning a specific topic.

Office Visit: A face-to-face meeting between two people, usually at the location of the information provider.

On-Farm test: A process in which the new practice or solution is tested on an actual farm to demonstrate how useful it is.

Panel: A discussion among a small group of people who are knowledgeable about a subject conducted in front of an audience.

Personal Visit: A face-to-face meeting between two people, usually held at the location of those being provided information.

Result Demonstration: A presentation that shows the effects of a practice change by means of practical application.

Role-Play: An exercise in which selected members of a group are assigned to play specific roles followed by discussion.

Seminar: A meeting in which a group of people who are studying a specific subject engage in discussion led by a recognized authority.

Skit: A short, planned, rehearsed dramatic presentation designed to illustrate a situation or point. Discussion follows the skit.

Symposium: An assembly in which short presentations are made by a small number of speakers who are knowledgeable about a particular subject.

Teleconferencing: When three or more individuals are connected by two-way audio signals for the purpose of exchanging ideas.

Tour: Travel by a group of learners to a place of defined interest to study aspects that may be unfamiliar to them.

Workshop: A meeting in which a small group of people with common interests meet to research, study, or practice a certain specific topic or skill.

*Definitions provided by Richardson and Jenkins (1999).