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Setting up the PEN: APEN assists with the establishment of an extension network in the Philippines.



Participants at the initial establishing workshop for the Philippines Extension Network (PEN)

Recently APEN was awarded a grant from AusAID to help establish a sister organisation called the Philippines Extension Network (PEN). While there is an extensive network of extension officers and NRM facilitators throughout the Philippines, many of them operate in fairly remote situations with limited opportunities for contact with fellow practitioners. The extension activities of the Department of Agriculture were devolved some years ago to local municipalities, making it even more difficult for practitioners to get together much and swap ideas and information.

Past Treasurer, **Horrie Poussard** was in the Philippines last year looking at the development of Landcare in Southern Philippines, supported mainly by a multinational organisation ICRAF. While there, the issue of improving contact between Philippine extension practitioners was widely discussed, with the APEN project being the outcome.

Part of the project was the funding of an

initial "establishing workshop" which was held at University of the Philippines, Los Banos on March 1-2. Horrie along with APEN President **Jane Fisher**, was there to assist the process of establishing PEN, and to develop the basis for an on-going close relationship between PEN and APEN.

This is the first step for APEN to foster other extension networks but is in line with a continuing appreciation at national and international levels of the need for such mechanisms to share ideas and information and thus improve the skills and knowledge of extension practitioners.

The PEN project is currently funded by AusAID for this year only, although there are good hopes for a further extension of funding following a successful establishment of PEN. There may well be other opportunities for funding similar network development in other developing countries in future years.

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FROM THE CHAIR

Jane Fisher

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Great news - APEN has a sibling! PEN (Philippines Extension Network).

I am writing this from a meeting room at the University of Los Banos, Laguna. Around me, the interim committee of PEN are energetically discussing the structure of the new organization. Well done **Horrie Poussard**, who initiated this venture following discussions with **Dennis Garrety** of ICRAF (International Centre for Research in Agroforestry) when Horrie visited the Philippines as a guest of ICRAF to look at Landcare in August last year. From small things, big things grow. An interesting snippet from a report about extension in the Philippines "Some extension workers are forced to spend several hours a day hitching to meetings" - *next time you are feeling under resourced, reflect on that!*

Amabel Fulton has resigned from the Committee of Management (CoM). Amabel has been a driving force within APEN, initiating the Tasmanian Chapter, and serving with distinction on the last National Conference Committee. Personal commitments and new professional directions have led to this decision. I hope that in the future Amabel can return to the CoM, and perhaps lead the organization.

The CoM met in Sydney in early February for strategic planning and policy development. This was the first time that the CoM has met in person other than at an annual general

meeting, and followed on from the decision to start developing policy that was made at the Melbourne Forum. It was wonderful to put faces to names, and to start to move from a group to a team with a common understanding of issues - like a definition of extension.

The meeting was ably facilitated by **Stuart McMahon** following exhaustive planning with **Greg Cock**, **Mark Paine** and me. As well as attempting to define extension, we worked on a new mission statement for the organization. More on this in the next issue. We addressed succession planning, funding for APEN, and developed a timetable for future Forums. The meeting was very productive, and much more enjoyable than teleconferencing where silence means assent. Thanks to **Rosemary Currie**, **John James**, **John McKenzie**, **Amanda Miller**, **Mark Paine**, **Terry Reid**, **John Warren**, and to **Sally Marsh**, **Greg Leach** and **Roger Johnson** who generously contributed their time and intelligence to the planning for the organization.

It is rewarding to report that two sectors - horticulture and aquaculture - are encouraging industry members to join APEN. **Les Baxter** of Horticulture Australia was particularly enthusiastic, promising support for ExtensionNet and for the Conference.

FROM THE EDITOR

Mark Paine

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What strange times we live in!

I doubt there has ever been a period when the function of extension in society was more important than it is today. Together with this demand for service has come an equally strong call for the discipline to present itself as a relevant and vibrant player in areas where the management of change is a vital aspect of work. This issue addresses these dual challenges: responding to an increasing demand for service while expressing a contemporary image.

Ian Tarbotton discusses how extension played a role in a project that was using a combination of farmer and researcher knowledge to develop a decision tool for managing the perennial problem of internal parasites in sheep. The project team used multiple methods to ensure coverage of diverse farming situations and also probing for a depth of analysis into a range of farmer decisions.

Jeff Coutts refers to a number of projects to construct his argument that extension needs to be more specific about the various roles it is playing in society. This article by Jeff is based on a presentation he gave at the APEN 2000 Forum which was considered by many

to be a highly relevant response to current issues facing extension. We therefore are publishing his article with a view to making his framework more widely available and for extending discussion about the relevance of extension in policy and practice.

Peter van Beek challenges extension to take a practice led approach to defining a place for the discipline. Peter identifies several critical actions performed by extension as a way to ensure we are relevant to the needs of stakeholders while contributing to the development of our discipline.

We are starting to receive more news from the chapters with particularly interesting information from the Philippines (**Horrie Poussard**) and South Australia (**Ray Farrelly**). Excitement is building as **APEN 2001** draws near - be sure to keep abreast of developments as the conference is only six months away. Finally, following a suggestion by **John Petheram**, **ExtensionNet now has an ISSN number**. This means your articles are formally recognised by institutions and they therefore have more credibility within your CV or as references within project reports.

The Editorial Committee is seeking feedback and suggestions for improvement, so please send me any comments, no matter how brief, and indicate whether you want your comments published. If you have any articles for publishing please contact me.

How can farmers help us to help them?

Endoparasite (internal parasite) management is a very complex area of pastoral livestock farming. In New Zealand, farmers have no obvious "neutral information provider" following the privatisation of public extension services and with veterinarians retailing anthelmintic products. This creates difficulties for farmers when they make decisions about endoparasite management. These difficulties include the development of parasite resistance to some proprietary anthelmintic drenches and concern about anthelmintic residues in animal products and environmental contamination.

A meat industry (Meat NZ) funded research study was set up to develop a decision tool to aid in the management of endoparasites. This paper discusses the approaches used to work with farmers in the development of an appropriate decision tool.

Multiple insights enrich

The development team included a combination of people with expertise in parasitology and social research who worked with farmers to come to an understanding of their decision making related to endoparasites. This understanding guided the decision tool development process.

The approach involved focus group meetings with sheep and cattle farmers in nine regions of New Zealand. Existing networks and farmer groups, (such as the Sheep Council) assisted in the setting up of these voluntary meetings. Farmer interest in participating in the small groups to share their understanding and contribute to the decision support tool development was high. The regions were selected on the basis of differences in the type of livestock farming, climatic differences and geographic spread across the country.

The three hour focus group meetings were designed to rapidly investigate farmers' understanding of endoparasite management. A cognitive mapping software package called Decision Explorer (Brightman 1997) enables a qualitative map of decision making and strategies to be made. By projecting it onto a large screen a group can focus and form a shared decision

Combining forces to develop decision tools for complex problems

process view by starting with a *clean sheet*. The responses to questions asked of the group were added as items that were later linked to form a cognitive map of activities that formed a logical sequence. The initial question asked was "what are the activities you associate with the management of endoparasites on your farm?". A group view was constructed by ensuring no item was added to the diagram until the group universally agreed on the significance and relation of the item to others in the diagram. This approach was used to create three separate diagrams one each on general management, regional issues and information gaps. The topic category "general management" identified the management activities typical of the farmers in the focus group. "Regional issues" recorded management factors which were unique to a region and may require consideration when making recommendations for providing endoparasite information to a region. "Information gaps" were those topics where farmers were seeking solutions to problems but where they perceived considerable ambiguity in advice from service providers. The cognitive map in Figure 1 identifies **best liveweight gains** as the overall goal for the group. Three key activities were selected by the group as strategies to achieve this goal, these included monitoring faecal egg counts, minimising drenching and developing a programme with the vet. A large number of activities are required to realise these strategies in practice. Activities are often interdependent or related in some way. The arrows indicate the linkage and sequencing of activities.

Comparative analysis of information gaps identified that "the impact of boluses on drench family resistance" was a question common to all regions. Many groups were also concerned about 1) the ambiguity in advice provided on the appropriateness of dosing ewes with anthelmintics, and 2) how effective the rotation of drench families is on delaying the development of resistant strains.

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Other forms of data collection used during the focus group meetings were audio recordings and written questionnaires. The transcriptions of audio recordings gave insights into farmer reasoning and the basis of debates thereby aiding with interpretation of the output from Decision Explorer.

Focus group participants completed a written questionnaire to describe the demographics and farming systems represented in the groups. This questionnaire also asked about information sources and key people who had informed the farmer about endoparasite management. Veterinarians were the most important informant to the farmer on this topic.

Another questionnaire was completed by participants looking at paired comparisons of six management aspects compared with the farmers' own management. A map of farmer beliefs was then generated to identify which aspects of farm management were closely related to the management of endoparasites. Profitability and animal health were the two aspects most closely associated with improving the management of endoparasites.

A feedback comment from one farmer participant was “we could have met together for a week and would not have gained the depth and completeness that this meeting has”.

A planning approach to decision making could provide the basis for integrating monitoring with control strategies.

Farmers emphasised the need for long term benefits rather than focusing on a short term gain (e.g. this season).

A feedback comment from one farmer participant was “we could have met together for a week and would not have gained the depth and completeness that this meeting has”. A summary of outcomes from the focus group meetings were sent to all participating farmers. This included a two page summary of key points that compared results across regions.

In planning the focus groups and during other parts of the study veterinarian input was also gained. Veterinarians said they would like a decision tool that assisted with planning endoparasite management on a seasonal cycle. Some veterinarians were seeking a decision tool that will assist them to give advice that farmers see as independent from any sales activities related to animal remedy products. A forward planning approach that has a medium to long term focus would help to make the purpose of any purchase decisions clear because the attributes of the product would need to be made explicit in terms of contribution to the overall plan. Veterinarians also discussed the benefits of farmers monitoring (e.g. lamb live weights) to help to objectively measure changes in performance and make changes to the original plan. A planning approach to decision making could provide the basis for integrating monitoring with control strategies.

From discovery to design

Results from scientific research are not often released in a form that is amenable to direct uptake by farmers. An appreciation of farmers’ world view is necessary to understand their needs. In this endoparasite project a process was used to incorporate farmers’ views, knowledge and needs in the design process. The practicalities of doing this can be daunting but with robust project planning and the use of appropriate tools like Decision Explorer and focused written questionnaires, useful insights are attainable. In this case participant feedback showed that they valued being part of comprehensive focus group discussions on the topic. The challenge was how to incorporate these findings into a decision tool for farmers that would be easy to use and understand.

The farmers said they wanted to plan the management of endoparasites but they explained that their primary mode of opera-

tion is more one of *trouble-shooting*. In Figure 1 the development of a programme with the vet refers to this desire for forward planning or having a programme for endoparasite management. This planning approach is consistent with the moves in the agricultural industry toward product traceability and quality assurance (QA). Therefore, one design criterion for the decision tool was the facility to enable and encourage planning to be undertaken. A decision tool that enabled effective planning would therefore diminish the stress and risks to poor animal performance arising from trouble-shooting.

A planning approach has implications for the way information is used in the decision making process. Planning is a process (ie. a way of performing the management action) rather than treating information as a prescription or a final solution. A planning process approach to information considers situational and seasonal variables when managing endoparasites. Farmers want to have access to third party support when they develop their plans. This second design criterion for the tool specified an ability to enhance participatory approaches to decision making and enable farmers and service providers to incorporate unique farming situational variables into the decision making process. Examples of these variables include pasture species, stock policies and resistance problems. There was a fear that anthelmintic resistance would reduce the options available to farmers. This had led to the need for a longer planning time frame. Farmers emphasised the need for long term benefits rather than focusing on a short term gain (e.g. this season). This time dimension related to a third design criterion whereby the tool needed to support decision making in relation to the financial performance of sheep and cattle enterprises.

Distinct differences were revealed between the regions which raised a fourth design criterion. These differences require a planning approach that is robust across regions and farming systems. The researchers came to the realisation that there are three levels of information support to farmers managing endoparasites:

National — those technical facts or prin-

Activities

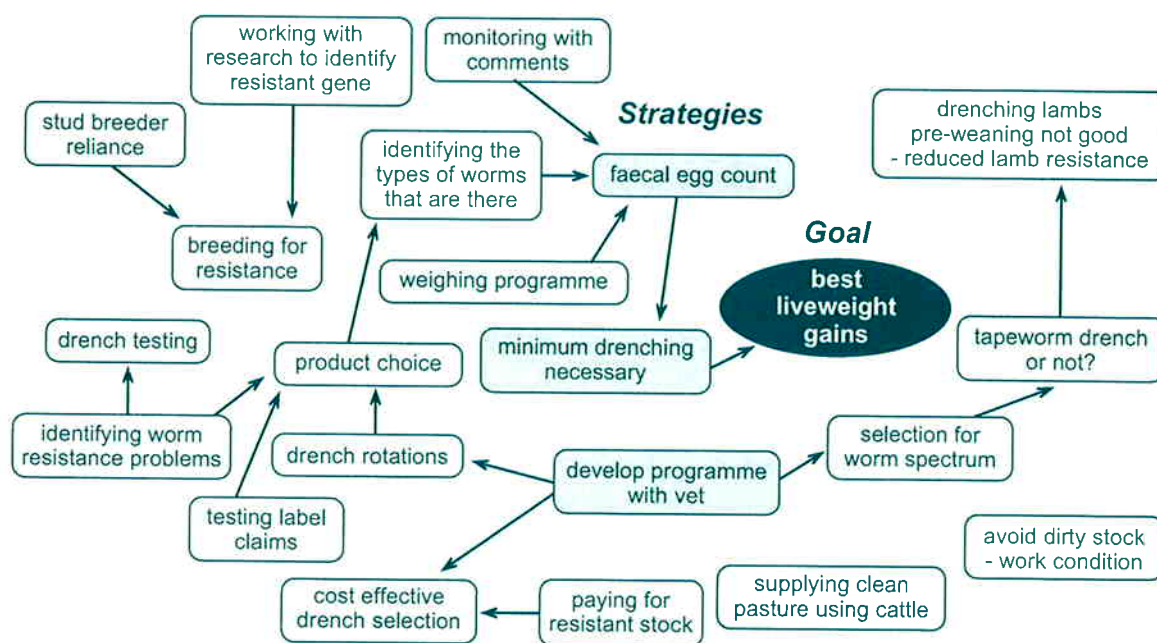


Figure 1: Cognitive Map

ciples which apply across the whole country

Regional – the information that applies to a region with particular climatic and farm system features. Some of this information will apply to multiple regions.

Individual farm – the information tailored to a particular farm with its own system, history, scale and management.

Where to from here?

Involving farmers in the development of a decision tool ought to improve the likelihood of delivering to farmers' needs but is also an important learning experience in its own right. Prior to the focus group meetings a key direction of the programme was to produce a manual so farmers could understand the biology of parasitic nematodes. This science push approach suggested that an exhaustive understanding of the information was necessary for effective management outcomes. This was also based on the assumption that acquiring the right knowledge would effect behaviour change, when often knowledge is just one contributing factor. Following the exploratory focus group meetings the whole emphasis was changed to one of supporting the forward planning of endoparasite management.

A decision tool has been produced which is designed to encourage the devel-

opment of a 12 month plan for endoparasite management. A key feature of the tool is a decision tree that embodies a sequence of questions arranged in a way to promote effective diagnostic analyses and information searching routines as part of the process of developing the management plans. Two farmer groups, along with a sample of veterinarians, will evaluate the tool prior to its release to a wider population of service providers and farmers.

For complex management topics such as endoparasites the interdisciplinary approach linked with considerable farmer input was a valuable and effective way to progress the development of decision support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgement is given to my fellow researchers Mark Paine and Allen Heath, as well as the focus group farmers who made a significant contribution.

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Involving farmers in the development of a decision tool ought to improve the likelihood of delivering to farmers' needs but is also an important learning experience in its own right.

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Five Domains of Extension

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What has been missing is a clarification of the domains in which extension now operates.

Extension's role in such policy processes is increasingly being recognised and sought after.

Introduction

Extension was once referred to as the handmaiden of research. Over the last decade or so however, extension has emerged as a discipline in itself. In so doing, practitioners and academics redefined the meaning of the term extension as going beyond technology transfer (Coutts 1994). In the late 1980's Roling (1988) wrote a book entitled Extension Science which provided a watershed in the way extension was viewed and used. Since then, extension's role with respect to research has been renegotiated.

The baggage of the metaphors associated with extension (that is: an extension of university teaching; extending research; extension lead or ladder etc), however, means that debate about terms, definition and function continues. Some practitioners are shying away from the term extension and reaching for names such as innovation specialists or development officers. On the other hand, other groups are beginning to associate themselves with the term as they recognise what the discipline has to offer them in their work, industries and communities.

What has been missing is a clarification of the domains in which extension now operates. By clarifying these domains we can take the discussion further and better position extension in the policy and the total Research, Development and Extension (RDE) environment.

This article explores extension's relationship with research by describing five distinct, though complementary and sometimes overlapping, domains of extension.

Extension and its relationship to research

Extension domains

Extension is increasingly being seen as having a role independent of research (as well as interdependent with research). An overarching role for extension has also emerged – that of monitoring and evaluating the RD&E processes for development. I believe that these different roles can be captured under five distinct though complementary domains of extension. My thinking about these domains was inspired by Owen's 5 forms of evaluation (Owen 1993) where evaluation was shown to have an overt role at all stages of a project

rather than just as a tack-on at the end. Likewise, in the past, extension had been viewed as coming in after the research had been completed. We now need a framework to think about extension that is occurring beyond this limited domain.

The domains I propose are:

Domain P: Defining (policy and) RDE needs and Priorities

Domain L: Facilitating Linkages with formal (policy and) research

Domain X: Facilitating information eXchange and access

Domain I: Facilitating Informal research and learning

Domain M: Researching (policy and) RDE Methodologies and processes.

These domains will be dealt with in more detail later.

Policy

At the risk of increasing the complexity, I have flagged policy in some of these domains. RD&E occurs within a policy and legislative context, and extension is increasingly seen to have a role in interactive policy development (Van Woerkum 1995). Morris et al (2000) in their paper entitled Negotiating environmental and production outcomes in practice, brought attention to work they were undertaking in New Zealand at the interface of extension science and political science. They pointed out that...in both agricultural and environmental areas, policy processes involving discussion documents, proposed policies, submissions, hearings and appeals through the courts are familiar to us...But whether these processes are leading to effective policy that will deliver sustainable outcomes in economic, social as well as environmental terms has been questioned, particularly by land managers.(p6) Extension's role in such policy processes is increasingly being recognised and sought after.

Players

The domains of extension are moving away from the public/private divide. Players in each domain can come from a range of groups involved in extension at some level. These players include: public extension (increasingly directed at natural resource management issues) [Pub]; privatised/commercialised or user-pay extension services [Priv]; industry based exten-

sion services [Ind]; consultancy services [Con]; and community extension [Com]. Also, as the Queensland Department of Natural Resources extension strategists are showing, the extension function is not necessarily limited to those staff with designated extension roles. Likewise, landholders and community persons fulfil extension functions in a number of these domains.

Domain P: Defining (policy and) RDE needs and Priorities

Traditionally, extension was 'out there' working one on one with the farming community. Government RDE programs informally received the information they needed to determine farming needs and research priorities from this source. With the reduction of such close association in day to day activities with the community, new processes have been needed to work through and capture needs and priorities of landholder and community groups. Increasingly, the 'needs' and priorities of a highly urbanised nation need to be brought into the equation as society attempts to come to terms with multiple claims on land use (Roberts & Coutts 1996).

It is in this domain that extension skills and processes are providing the breakthroughs. Morris et al (2000) provide an example of the role of extension applicable to this domain. The context was farm dairy effluent and the interplay between practices – farming; advising; researching and policy. Practice theory formed the basis of the investigation. Techniques including (modified) Rapid Rural Appraisals, workshops, surveys and interviews were used to highlight issues and gaps. These techniques found...significant misalignment between researchers', farmers', extension and policy agents' perceptions and expectations of factors required for effective farm dairy effluent management (p9) and...provided a process that identified opportunities to improve stakeholder competencies and alignment, and agreed strategies that would enable continual improvement and strengthening of the technological change. The authors concluded that:

...further development of this model has the potential to break through into a policy development paradigm that fits much bet-

ter the collaborative, multi-disciplinary, integrative way of doing things that is essential for making progress on many of today's policy programs (Morris et al 2000 p9) (my emphasis).

Domain L: Facilitating Linkages with formal (policy and) research

Traditionally, research applications to funding bodies had to nominate how the extension component would be carried out. A survey of final reports and new proposals carried out by Woods et al (1993) concluded that...most activities described in the technology transfer component were aimed at the awareness stage of the knowledge assimilation process (p19). They did note however, that...more new projects involved end users in the research process, used existing groups for information dissemination or formed new groups to enhance the adoption process. This trend has grown through the 1990s, and the concept of co-learning groups has developed.

One example of the co-learning approach was that undertaken within a New South Wales Agriculture project (funded by the then Meat Research Corporation) aimed at establishing Lotus (a pasture legume) in the grazing system. Producer groups were linked into the formal research program from the outset of the project. Existing groups (chiefly Landcare groups) as well as specially established groups were used. Lotus sites were planted on farms as a basis for farmer learning in tandem with formal trials on the research station. A conclusion of the final evaluation of the co-learning component of the project was that

...the key and consistent element that characterised stakeholder understanding of co-learning was that of mutual learning – that learning occurred in all groups and was not just one-way. The co-learning sites were clearly not just demonstration plots transposed onto farms, but were genuine opportunities for researchers, district agronomists, company agronomists and producers to learn more (quickly) about how Lotus responded to a range of climatic/soil and managerial situations. (Bilston et al 1999 p 30)

I include more traditional awareness and

technology transfer in this domain – those activities to assist the appropriate industry or community to be aware of formal research outcomes and their relevance.

Domain X: Facilitating information eXchange and access

Traditionally, extension officers provided a strong information sharing role as they moved from farm to farm. They had some knowledge of research being undertaken, what was in the farming journals, and what different producers were doing on their farms. They handed out fact sheets and booklets and put people in touch with the 'experts' and/or other farmers who had tried different approaches. They were at the end of the telephone when needed or in the local bar for informal discussions about whatever was current at the time. As extension officers moved away from this one-on-one interaction, new methods of facilitating information exchange have had to be developed.

The development of comprehensive crop notes, booklets, manuals and workshop packages have to some extent come in to fill this gap. Property Management Planning, FarmBiz and other workshop approaches have sought to provide relevant and current information in cohesive and timely packages. Call centres have attempted to fill in the gap left by fewer extension officers at the end of an ad-hoc phone call.

The internet is increasingly replacing filing shelves in farms and in government offices – but without the personal touch to assist people in the maze. Easdown (2000 pers com) points out that there is a huge need for cyber extension officers who can provide information pathways and link people with the information and experts through the internet.

Domain I: Facilitating Informal research and learning

In this domain, there is no essential link between the formal research process and the role of extension. Research becomes one of the many information sources which landholders or communities may

Extension will be even more in demand in the next ten years – in all of the five domains – whatever term is used.

When asked by 'outsiders' what extension means, even seasoned contemporary extensionists mumble something about 'giving advice to farmers'.

These domains should also assist in effectively planning extension in relation to the issue(s) being addressed, the needs of the community and the role of formal R&D in the system.

wish to access, depending on their needs and development direction. Extension's role is in facilitating the process of problem and opportunity identification and the pathway for acting on them.

Clark and Timms' (1999) better practices processes provides a tested approach to facilitate informal research and learning. They highlight as a key issue that...there are few, if any, programs that enable individuals in groups to learn and provide a continuous improvement and innovation process in any context (p.4). The Better Practices Process is about meeting this need. It is based around facilitating a group through a structured process which is...designed to enable individuals in groups to utilise the elements of Benchmarking, Problem-solving and Continuous Improvement, and benefit from group dialogue and discussion (p31). This approach has taken off around Australia, with support from Meat and Livestock Authority (MLA) and WOOLMARK, with strong interest from New Zealand and beyond.

The Producer Initiated Research and Development (PIRD) project funded by MLA and WOOLMARK is another initiative that fits into this domain. In this case it is often the landholders who are taking the initiative and providing the group facilitation process between cooperating farms.

Domain M: Researching (policy and) RDE Methodologies and processes.

Traditional agricultural researchers have undertaken quantitative research trials on and off research stations to come up with what technology or management practice will work best on farm. Extension officers have also been 'trialing' and learning the best approaches for development from trial and error over a long period. It is only recently as action research and qualitative research has become more understood and widespread, that frameworks have been available to turn anecdotal knowledge generation by extensionists into serious and rigorous research!

Extension officers are increasingly undertaking Masters and PhD research as part of their roles in RDE programs and projects. Social and extension research is also being funded as part of larger R&D programs. In New Zealand a special social research group within NZ AgResearch provides such a research role. A prospectus to develop a cross-RD&E extension and educa-

tion research program is currently under development in Australia.

Evaluation processes operate in this arena – mostly underdeveloped and under-resourced. Extension in this domain can provide the rigour and learning to assist a project in achieving positive outcomes and in assisting future programs to be better positioned.

Summary of domains

These domains have been summarised in Table 1. The table does not intend to limit players or methods in each domain, but rather to illustrate the features from those currently most commonly operating in these domains.

Implications for Australian public and private extension in the next 10 years.

Extension will be even more in demand in the next ten years – in all of the five domains – and whatever term is used. Extension provides the cogs that make things happen. It is about interaction between people – information sharing, dialogue, learning and action. Nothing is going to change on the ground, regardless of the excellence of legislation or science unless these cogs are moving, and increasingly this is being recognised by politicians and strategists.

Just as extension moves forward it becomes entangled in its baggage and gets drawn back into its traditional roots – or suffers from embarrassment because others view it through its historical role. When asked by 'outsiders' what extension means, even seasoned contemporary extensionists mumble something about 'giving advice to farmers'. The concept of the five extension domains will hopefully provide a substantive framework for describing the breadth of where extension contributes to the total development system.

These domains should also assist in effectively planning extension in relation to the issue(s) being addressed, the needs of the community and the role of formal R&D in the system. Instead of loosely including generic extension as a part of an RDE program (and risking falling into the default mode), planning and dialogue can be based around the extension domain needed to be addressed at different phases of a project or program – by whom and with what methodologies!

The public/private debate is largely irrelevant as extension across the sectors increasingly relies on federal and industry funds to achieve

Table 1: Five domains of extension

Extension domain	Main players	Techniques and methods used	Outputs & outcomes
Domain P: Defining Priorities	Pub. Priv.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rapid appraisals ▪ Focus groups ▪ Interviews ▪ Workshops ▪ One-one 	Producer and community owned policy and RDE needs and priorities.
Domain L: Facilitating Linkages with research	Pub.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reference groups ▪ Co-learning groups ▪ Field Days ▪ Media 	More relevant and useful research better integrated with local practices.
Domain X: Information eXchange	Pub. Priv. Ind. Con. Com.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One-one ▪ Workshop series ▪ Call-centres ▪ Internet sites ▪ Fact-sheets ▪ Crop notes etc 	Useful timely information as needed in the total decision making process.
Domain I: Informal research and learning	Pub. Ind. Com.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better practices ▪ Continuous Improvement ▪ Action learning ▪ Soft systems ▪ List-serves ▪ Chat rooms 	Innovation and practice change driven by those most affected.
M: Researching Methodologies	Pub. Priv.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualitative research ▪ Action research ▪ Benchmarking 	Improved RDE processes Changes to government policies

Pub.= public extension; Priv.= privatised/commercialised or user-pay extension services; Ind.=industry based extension services, Con.=consultancy services; and Com.=community extension.

specified outcomes. The experience, size, skills and geographical positioning of extension providers will be the greatest driver of who works in which domain. State extension agencies will continue to be major providers or contractors of extension as they seek to implement policy imperatives of government.

It is again time for extension professionals and practitioners to hold up extension as a profession that is essential for positive change. Its critical role in each of the five domains reinforces that extension is the fabric which holds the development process together.

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The public/private debate is largely irrelevant as extension across the sectors increasingly relies on federal and industry funds to achieve specified outcomes.

It is again time for extension professionals and practitioners to hold up extension as a profession that is essential for positive change.

3RD INTERNATIONAL APEN CONFERENCE: 3- 5 OCTOBER 2001, TOOWOOMBA

Contemporary extension as a powerful vehicle for regional change,
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia. Papers welcome.
Registration Kits available. See page 11 for more details

Are we sinning against our own values ?

THE AUTHOR

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We continue to hear statements from senior managers in organisations dealing with Natural Resource Management and Primary Industries that they '*are not in extension*'. In the past decade we have seen many Departments '*get out of extension*', only to rapidly re-invent it under other names once they found that they cannot do without. At the moment it seems to be Queensland's turn. (Hang in there fellows, this folly will pass, it has everywhere else).

But.... I wonder to what degree our own language is at least partly responsible for this. I looked up the Collins dictionary: 'Extension – a service by which the facilities of an educational establishment are offered to outsiders'. I went back to past definitions and read those in the Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture (Vol 40, no 4). (By the way, this edition is dedicated to Extension and well worth getting). It includes the definition used by APEN on its web-site: 'The use of communication and adult education processes to help people and communities identify potential improvements to their practices, and then provides them with the skills and resources to effect improvements'.

Really? Do we really expect funders and employers to buy this? Their interest is in getting certain changes 'out there'. Their bonuses can depend on it, or at least on creating an appearance of change. In my opinion this is a folly forced upon them by modern Public Administration practices, but it is real none-the-less. Having conceptual definitions is not wrong, we need them for ourselves to realise and review the essence of what we are doing. But are these definitions relevant to our stakeholders? Do they connect the definitions with THEIR concerns, see solutions to THEIR pains, relate them to THEIR work? I think not. My argument is that these definitions have become rather irrelevant. That can be fatal, to us!

A working description

In many interviews over the last five years, senior managers and other leaders equated extension with facilitation, participation and adult education. Which is no wonder, given those definitions and our strong (and justified) decade-long focus on adult education. I am often asked, after the official part of these interviews, to give my 'definition' of Extension. I normally avoid replying, as I believe that in this case

practice should lead theory. I thus describe what I see extensionists do as a group, rather than define extension. Over time, that description has boiled down to the following points, all of which I believe to be essential:

Extensionists help to:

- Locate/create/collate/(re-)format
- Information/insights/innovations,
- get these from where they are
- to where they are needed/wanted

AND

- get them understood,
- adapted,
- and used/acted upon/applied,
- voluntarily'.

Clarification of the points

If asked (and if we have time), I then more or less clarify the points as follows:

Helps to.

'Helping to' takes many forms: giving immediate advice, facilitation, publishing printed or electronic material, setting up Internet facilities or information centres, and many more.

Locate/create/collate/(re-)format

Locating can involve searching worldwide as well as local sources. Sources can be research, legislation, markets, other farmers, and general changes in community values. Creating new insights/information can be through conducting workshops, complementary or local research or whatever. Collating and (re-)formatting includes re-writing findings into a range of words, expressions and other forms understandable to diverse audiences, so that these can start interpreting it. Special formatting is needed for different media. Where possible, all this is done in dialogues with stakeholders.

Information/insights/innovations.

These three are often interwoven and inseparable. Each one requires its own transfer techniques, hence a combination of forms and techniques has to be used for effective transfer. New Information/insights/innovations can cover every aspect of any human activity.

From where they are.

Information/insights/innovations can be embedded in practices, products and technologies, as well as being held in many places and formats: printed, electronic, tapes, photos and most of all inside people's heads.

To where they are needed/wanted.

Information/insights/innovations can be needed by many people: researchers, policy makers, commerce, teachers, the media, the general public, as well as producers. All these groups have their own distinctive rules, value systems and views of the world and what is important. The new bits can be needed but not be recognised as such, or needed and recognised, but

not wanted. An important part of extension is to effect a change from 'needed' to 'wanted'.

AND

Initially, extension concentrated almost solely on transferring technology, which process is embedded in the previous four points. However, recently the focus of extension has swung so far towards the four points discussed below, that the 'Information/insights/innovations' appear to have been lost. It seems, at least in Australia, as if extension has thrown the baby of 'Information/insights/innovations' away with the bath-water of the much criticised 'Transfer of Technology' model of extension. Yet new Information/insights/innovations is precisely what many stakeholders in extension are looking for.

Get these understood.

Understanding the reasons behind a change is essential to prevent subsequent dis-adoption. Many extension programs, certainly many farmer-driven ones, start by analysing a problem in detail. This creates a deeper understanding of the workings of a farm, property, business, conservation area or whatever system people are working in. This in turn can lead to a desire for more Information/insight/innovations and so gets the extension process started.

Adapted.

Most Information/insights/innovations need to be adapted to fit into existing situations, as each situation is unique. Discussions and participatory research in its many forms aim at helping with this adaptation. Often the situations need to be adapted as well in order for innovations to fit, or to cope with the consequences of its use. Consequences can take time to become evident, so monitoring of effects is vital, and adaptation can be a long process.

Used/acted upon/applied.

To funders of extension and our employers, the whole purpose for extension activities is to get adapted Information/insights/innovations used, acted upon or applied. To them it is the final and most important aspect. Furthermore, producers and Agri-business people are under high time pressures and only have time for extension officers if these can provide relevant and practical benefits. 'Benefits-on-the-ground' are also part of our wider accountability.

Voluntarily.

Extension aims at voluntary changes that they will be sustained, not changes made under threat or duress. Seed money and subsidies can be part of gaining early voluntary adoption.

Extension as a tool

If appropriate, I then mention that Government and many other organisations use extension as one of many management tools. It is normally more user-friendly and

effective, cheaper, and politically less damaging than regulation or inspection, and more focussed on achieving immediate applied results than general education.

Those descriptions and the use of extension are readily recognised and seen to relate to vital activities and roles of the organisations my interviewees work in. Any nonsense claim that 'we are not in extension' then just evaporates. People outside agriculture also recognise themselves or their staff as extensionists, and extension as a vital tool for their organisation.

Are we sinning?

Based on those reactions, I believe that

we are sinning against our own professional values. We deny other stake-holders 'co-ownership' of extension through excluding from our definitions an ingredient that is of vital importance to them. And we talk down to them by using a language that is not theirs.

I thus believe that we urgently need to do two things. While we need to continue working on conceptual definitions, we need to put 'Innovation' back into them. Even if some of us don't believe Innovation to be of central importance, it is vital to many of our key stake-holders. And they 'own' extension as much as we do. We preach that 'co-ownership' is important and

the ethical thing to do. So let us practice it.

The second thing is to **also** develop, publish and promote practical descriptions to which our stake-holders can readily relate. People generally don't relate to conceptual definitions when these are not expressed in their language. But they do recognise practice, of all professions we should understand that best. Again, we need to practice what we preach. We will become extinct if we don't communicate in the language of our stake-holders. And deservedly so!

These sins cost us jobs and money, and create heartaches! They are not even enjoyable!!

So why sin??

APEN International conference

The APEN 2001 international conference promises to be about people. People who are excited about achieving positive regional change. People who are committed to challenging their own and others' assumptions. People with the aim of improving their profession and proving its value and relevance in today's world.

If this sounds like you, or like people you want to know, don't miss APEN 2001!

Checkout the website at www.apen.org.au/apen2001 <<http://www.apen.org.au/apen2001>> for more information.

Hard copies of the registration kit are available from the Conference Secretariat, phone 61 7 4635 5550.

New APEN website

Explore the new APEN website at www.apen.org.au <<http://www.apen.org.au>> to see the latest information about our network.

The e-mail groups are a great way for keeping in touch and extending your boundaries. If you are not currently receiving our messages, then just click on the appropriate 'Join' button for your region. Read about job opportunities and events of interest... make your network work for you!

2001 APEN Members Listing

Look for the 2001 APEN Members Listing which will be sent to all APEN members on the listserver in mid May. The information listed will be preferred name and surname, job title – industry, , organisation, business phone number and e-mail address. **If you have any changes in these or have never given me your job title and industry;** eg. Development Officer – Beef, Viticulture, Aquaculture etc, Facilitator – Landcare, Ambulance Service etc, Extension Officer – Roses, Financial Planning etc, Doctor – Mental Health etc, Consultant – Whole farm planning, PMP etc, etc; **please get them to me by May 1, 2001. Rosemary, APEN Secretariat, 61 2 6024 5349, rcurrie@albury.net.au**

FROM THE CHAPTERS

The changing face of Extension in SA agriculture

Primary Industries and Resources SA (PIRSA) Rural Solutions, the commercial arm of PIRSA has grasped the opportunities offered in the training sector. They are in the process of regaining their Registered Training Organisation (RTO) status and have 18 staff undergoing Certificate 4 in Workplace trainer / assessor through Hortus Australia.

The work with Hortus Australia also covers conducting a Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) process across the state for producers. This enables current producers to gain articulation to a certificate or diploma through identification of current capability. The process also identifies

the gaps that they need to gain competency in to complete a formal qualification.

The experience of the process on the Northern Adelaide Plains is that those who undergo RCC want to do more with improving their skill base. Eleven producers completed a RCC program and undertook some gap training. This resulted in them achieving certificates or diplomas in Horticulture. They are buoyed that they have achieved recognition of their current skills and are looking to improve their skills in the management sectors.

PIRSA Rural Solutions are currently aligning short course to the national competency standards and designing new courses aligned to the Horticulture competencies that will be delivered in March. This is taking the old agriculture extension

specialist to a new area. They are providing more formal learning outcomes and as a consequence producers seeing themselves as being well skilled professionals.

A number of staff from PIRSA Rural Solutions has commenced an Adult Learning and Facilitation unit with the REC from Gattton College. **Rob Neilsen** and **Terry Reid** delivered the first 5 days to a group of 14 in mid-February. A follow up session will occur in several months. This contact was made through the SA Chapter of APEN.

The SA Chapter are hoping to use the REC staff as keynote speakers when they return to the state. This will be a great opportunity to encourage more of the extension staff in various sectors to consider the course offered by Gattton. Information provided by **Ray Farrelly**

Research in Practice: Social Research Methods for Extension Practitioners



Clients and funding agencies are demanding more rigour from extension. *Research in Practice* is designed for extension professionals who are seeking to make the most of their experiences as practitioners by drawing on recent methodological and theoretical advances in social science.

At completion the participants will be capable of selecting and applying appropriate methods for their specific project requirements.

Topics include:

- the purpose, role and ethics of social research
- research design, methodology and

- writing effective proposals
- how to improve the quality of your research (issues of validity and reliability)
- the uses and abuses of survey research
- why theory and method go together in good designs
- action research strategies
- using case studies
- advances in social research that are useful for people in the field; and
- pulling it all together – a framework for designing and implementing practice focused research.

An optional half day orientation for practitioners who want to brush up on library and internet search skills will be organised on application.

Participants will be required to read and review appropriate readings provided through the course, and will need to complete the unit assessment. This will include a research proposal design and

methodology based on case study material.

This course is recognised by the University of Melbourne for credit assessment within the Bachelor of Applied Science program. The unit is at the 400 level, and open to Honours and postgraduate level students, as well as practitioners.

Dates: 16 to 18 May & 27 to 28 June '01

Time: 8.30 to 5.30

Place: University of Melbourne, Burnley

Cost: as calculated through the Community Access Program with bursaries available for professional development.

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NEW APEN WEBSITE

**http://
www.apen.org.au**

APEN MEMBERSHIP

495 members at end March 2001

357 are Financial

90 owe for 2000/2001

48 owe for 1999/2000 & 2000/2001

Opinions expressed in ExtensionNet are not necessarily those of the Australasia Pacific Extension Network (Inc.) unless otherwise stated.

Guidelines and deadlines

Submissions should be made in Word with minimal formatting. A portrait photograph is required. All photographs, figures and/or tables ought to be provided as separate files (preferably TIF, GRIF or JPEG). Feature articles ought to be 1500 words and minor articles 750 words. Letters to the editor or general items of news of interest to the network are welcome. Articles should be submitted to the committee four weeks prior to publication. Preference is given to articles that are grounded in some form of project or event.

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