The Attitude of Agricultural Extension Instructors Regarding their Own Competencies in the Teaching Process during Short-Term Courses for Farmers, Isfahan, Iran

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Introduction
Agricultural extension in Iran such as many developing countries is mainly focused on common extension approach and also with a more specific attention to short-term extension courses in different topics for farmers. To do so, various part-time instructors from diverse disciplines are selected as part-time instructors in these informal short period courses.

They are picked up partly from inside the Ministry of agricultural-Jihad (a new merged ministry responsible for agriculture in Iran) and partly from other Ministries or private companies. The evidences indicate that as instructors, these part-timers need more capabilities and teaching competencies to present new information and technology in these courses with the best quality. So, in this study the most important competencies for teaching in such informal, practical and short-term courses for farmers have been investigated.

Purpose and Methods
The purpose of the study was to explore how the target group conceives their own teaching capabilities and competencies in aforesaid courses. And to what extent they have a positive self-conscious as to their teaching competencies. A number of 100 out of 330 instructors from 24 townships of Isfahan province were selected. The research group was comprised of all instructors who had invited for teaching in the courses at least for three continuous years. A closed questionnaire was used for data collection. Then, “Kolmogorov-Smironov test” was applied for analyzing data and determining the significance of differences.

Major points and lessons learned
As it was expected, the majority of respondents believed that they lack sufficient teaching competencies propounded in the questionnaire. These competencies were: presentation skill, having update information in the discipline, capability of assessing farmers’ real needs and problems, using participatory methods in teaching process, evoking farmers’ actual motivation and satisfaction, and making the teaching flexible, diverse and more appealing for audience. Nevertheless, they proclaimed that they have been able to establish a mutual and friendly communication with farmers and also they have a considerable self-confidence during teaching period and dealing with participants in the classes.

Educational Importance
According to the results, extension instructors to be competent in their temporary job (teaching), should be supported and equipped with necessary competencies and skills. Continuous evaluation of instructors and learning environment should be taken into account. Providing essential accommodation and audio-visual instruments for the courses, and finally delivering apropos training programs for instructors are also propositions to support instructors’ competencies and capabilities on the one hand and increase their effectiveness and performance on the other hand. Further studies are also recommended to measure different respondents’ opinion and complement the results of this research with other perspectives as well.