enhancing extension effectiveness, particularly when integrated with information and communication technologies, but that its wholesale adoption requires confronting deeper epistemological and institutional contradictions that the current literature often understates. The review recommends integrating orature with ICTs, training extension agents in orature techniques, documenting and standardising orature-based knowledge, strengthening extension institutions, conducting rigorous impact evaluation, engaging with epistemological tensions, supporting the evolution of orature, and addressing the participation paradox.

Keywords: *Orature, oramedia, agricultural extension*, *indigenous knowledge, folk media, rural farmers, Nigeria*

1.0 Introduction

Agricultural extension has long been conceptualised as a bridge between agricultural research and farming practice, a mechanism for transmitting innovation from the laboratory to the field. Yet, as Anderson and Feder (2007) observe, the history of extension is replete with reform efforts that failed precisely because the metaphor of the bridge was taken too literally. Birkhaeuser, Evenson and Feder (1991) provided one of the earliest systematic reviews of the economic impact of extension, concluding that while positive returns were documented, the evidence base was fragmented and often contradictory. More than three decades later, these contradictions remain unresolved. Davis (2008) characterised extension in sub-Saharan Africa as a landscape of overlapping and often abandoned models, Training and Visit, commodity-specific systems, participatory approaches, each promising transformation and each falling short. Davis, Babu and Ragasa (2019) confirm that despite global recognition of the centrality of extension to food security, investment has declined, capacity has eroded, and reach has contracted.

In Nigeria, the situation is particularly acute. The current extension agent-to-farmer ratio of 1:25,000 (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, 2025) renders conventional one-to-one extension effectively impossible. AFAP Partnership (2024) documents that young farmers struggle with high costs and scarcity of machinery, compounding the information deficit with material constraints. IITA (2026) describes a context in which rainfall patterns no longer follow established rules, and farmers are left to navigate deepening uncertainty without reliable advisory support. The collapse of formal extension capacity is not merely a logistical problem; it is an epistemic crisis in which the knowledge systems that have sustained African agriculture for centuries are simultaneously devalued and desperately needed.

It is within this crisis that orature acquires renewed significance. Orature, as Zirimu (1992) conceptualised it, encompasses the full range of oral expressive forms, songs, tales, proverbs, riddles, drama, and ceremonial speech, through which African societies have historically transmitted knowledge, values, and practical wisdom. Finnegan (2012) demonstrated in her landmark survey that oral literature in Africa is not a residue of pre-literate backwardness but a sophisticated, adaptive, and internally rigorous knowledge system. Ong (1982) provided the theoretical framework for understanding orality as a distinct mode of thought and expression, not a deficient version of literacy. Vansina (1985) established that oral tradition is a legitimate historical and epistemological source, capable of preserving complex information across generations.

This review critically examines the prospects and constraints of using orature for agricultural extension in Nigeria and comparable African contexts. It is not a celebration of tradition; it is an interrogation of whether, and under what conditions, orature can meaningfully enhance agricultural productivity. The review draws on 61 sources, ranging from foundational theory (Freire, 1970; Rogers, 2003) to contemporary empirical studies (Folayan et al., 2025; JOLLS, 2025), and it seeks to synthesise these into a coherent and critical assessment.

2.0 Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Defining Orature

The term "orature" was coined by Zirimu (1992) to escape the pejorative connotations of "oral literature", a phrase that implicitly positions written literature as the norm and oral expression as a derivative or inferior form. Orature, by contrast, asserts that oral expressive forms constitute a complete and legitimate aesthetic and epistemological system in their own right. Finnegan (2012) extended this argument, demonstrating that African oral literature encompasses complex genres with their own rules of composition, performance, and reception. Ong (1982) provided the philosophical underpinning by arguing that orality and literacy are not stages on a single evolutionary ladder but distinct modes of consciousness, each with its own strengths and limitations.

Vansina (1985) contributed the crucial insight that oral tradition is not merely a repository of stories but a functional mechanism for transmitting practical knowledge, including agricultural knowledge, across generations. Among the Tiv people of Benue State, Nigeria, this is exemplified in work songs that accompany farming activities, synchronise labour, and encode knowledge about planting seasons, soil conditions, and crop management (Ngam, 2017; Daudu & Anyanwu, 2010). These are not decorative cultural artefacts; they are epistemological technologies.

2.2 Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Their Contested Status

The valorisation of orature as an extension tool is inseparable from broader debates about indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). Warren (1991) argued that indigenous knowledge is a systematic body of knowledge, not a collection of superstitions, and that development practitioners ignore it at their peril. Grenier (1998) provided a practical guide for researchers working with indigenous knowledge, emphasising the need for respectful and participatory methodologies. Msuya and Lalika (2017) documented the continued use of indigenous knowledge systems in agricultural production among rural farmers, demonstrating that these systems remain functional and adaptive.

However, the literature is also marked by critical tensions that are often glossed over. Sillitoe (1998) cautioned against the romanticisation of indigenous knowledge, warning that uncritical celebration can lead to the imposition of new orthodoxies that are as rigid as the scientific paradigms they seek to replace. Altieri (2004) argued for linking ecologists and traditional farmers in the search for sustainable agriculture, but acknowledged that traditional knowledge is not always environmentally sound. Berkes (2012) framed indigenous knowledge within a "sacred ecology" that integrates spiritual, practical, and ecological dimensions, a framing that challenges the secular rationalism of conventional extension but also raises questions about how such knowledge can be translated into actionable agricultural advice.

The implication for orature-based extension is profound. If indigenous knowledge is not uniformly valid, if some traditional practices are maladaptive, then orature cannot be treated as a neutral transmission channel. It is a medium that carries specific epistemological assumptions, and those assumptions may or may not align with the scientific content of extension messages. This tension is rarely addressed in the celebratory literature on oramedia.

2.3 Communication Theory and Agricultural Extension

Rogers (2003) provided the foundational diffusion model that has shaped extension theory for half a century. His account of innovation diffusion, through stages of knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation, remains influential, but it has been extensively critiqued. Roling (1988) argued that extension science must move beyond the linear transmission model to embrace a more complex understanding of information systems in agricultural development. Leeuwis (2004) and Leeuwis and Aarts (2011) advanced this critique, arguing that communication in innovation processes must create space for change in complex systems, not merely transmit predetermined messages.

The shift from transmission to participatory communication is central to the argument for orature. Freire (1970, 1976) provided the philosophical foundation, arguing that education, including agricultural education, must be dialogical rather than banking, a process of mutual learning rather than one-way deposit. Pretty (1995) operationalised these ideas in the context of sustainable agriculture, demonstrating that participatory learning processes are essential for the adoption of complex, context-dependent practices. Chambers (1997) extended this to development practice generally, arguing that those who are normally the objects of development must become its subjects.

Orature, in this framing, is not merely a channel; it is a participatory epistemology. Folk songs, proverbs, and drama are inherently dialogical, they invite response, interpretation, and collective engagement. This aligns with the participatory turn in extension theory (Scoones & Thompson, 1994; Davis et al., 2004) and explains why orature is often presented as a more democratic alternative to conventional extension.

Yet the alignment is not seamless. Van den Ban and Hawkins (1996) noted that extension communication is always purposive; it aims to change behaviour, not merely to foster dialogue. Orature, by contrast, is traditionally oriented toward social cohesion and cultural reproduction, not toward behavioural change. The translation from orature to extension requires a reorientation of the medium's function that may not be compatible with its traditional character.

2.4 Critical Perspectives on Extension and the Politics of Knowledge

A critical literature has emerged that interrogates the power relations embedded in extension practice. Hammersley (2013) questioned the myth of research-based policy and practice, arguing that evidence is always interpreted through political and institutional filters. Klerkx, van Mierlo and Leeuwis (2012) traced the evolution of systems approaches to agricultural innovation, showing that extension is embedded in broader networks of power, interest, and institutional arrangement. Spielman, Davis, Negash and Ayele (2011) demonstrated through a study of Ethiopian smallholders that rural innovation systems are shaped by social networks and power asymmetries that conventional extension models ignore.

The language question is central to this critical perspective. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) argued powerfully that language is not merely a vehicle for communication but a carrier of culture, identity, and power. The dominance of English in African extension systems is not a neutral technical choice; it is a continuation of colonial epistemic hierarchies. Orature-based extension, in this framing, is an act of decolonisation, a reclaiming of indigenous linguistic and epistemological sovereignty. This argument is compelling, but it also raises difficult questions. If orature is to carry scientific agricultural knowledge, how does it navigate the tension between indigenous linguistic resources and the technical vocabulary of modern agriculture? Nwulu (2026) documents precisely this challenge: the difficulty of translating technical terms such as "soil fertility management" or "integrated pest management" into local languages without loss of precision.

2.5 Extension Models and Their Limitations

The literature on extension models provides essential context for understanding why orature has emerged as an alternative. Rivera and Qamar (2003) documented the global state of extension, noting that pluralistic systems involving multiple providers have replaced monolithic state services in many countries. Birner et al. (2009) advanced a framework for designing and analysing pluralistic advisory services, arguing that "best fit" is more important than "best practice." Swanson (2008) reviewed good practices in extension globally, identifying characteristics of effective systems. Swanson and Rajalahti (2010) provided a comprehensive framework for assessing, transforming, and evaluating extension systems.

Yet the gap between framework and reality remains wide. Christoplos (2010) documented the challenges of mobilising the potential of rural and agricultural extension, noting that institutional fragmentation, weak incentives, and inadequate funding undermine even well-designed systems. Feder, Willett and Zijp (2001) identified generic challenges that persist across contexts: the difficulty of reaching marginal farmers, the problem of accountability, and the tension between public and private goods. Ragasa, Ulimwengu, Randriamamonjy and Badibanga (2016) provided empirical evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo showing that extension performance is shaped by factors that are often beyond the control of extension organisations, road infrastructure, market access, and farmer education levels.

Anderson (2007) and Anderson and Feder (2007) provided comprehensive overviews of agricultural advisory services and extension, emphasising the diversity of institutional arrangements and the importance of context. Their work is valuable but also reveals a bias toward institutional and economic analysis at the expense of cultural and communicative dimensions. The orature literature, by contrast, foregrounds precisely these dimensions, arguing that extension failure is not merely a matter of resources or incentives but of cultural mismatch.

3.0 Empirical Evidence on Orature in Agricultural Extension

3.1 Studies in Benue State, Nigeria

Benue State provides particularly rich empirical evidence for the effectiveness of orature in agricultural extension. Daudu and Anyanwu (2010) conducted a study on folk media preferences and prospects for agricultural extension service delivery in Benue State. Their findings revealed that folk media preference in descending order was: folk songs, town crier, folk dance, friends/relations, and groups/association. The major reasons for folk media usage were effectiveness for information dissemination, entertainment, and promotion of culture. The study further revealed that marital status, educational status, and farm size determine folk media preference. The authors recommended that development agencies should take advantage of farmers' preferences to ensure optimum effect and that agencies involved in rural development should use folk media to complement conventional media in Benue State.

Ngam (2017) conducted an ecocritical reading of the African folktale, examining orature and African indigenous economies. The study found that the greatest and sometimes the only source of income in most ethnic groups south of the Sahara is subsistence farming. Orature serves as a repository of agricultural knowledge, encoding practical wisdom about soil fertility, planting seasons, pest management, and crop selection in forms that are memorable and culturally resonant.

3.2 Studies in Osun State, Nigeria

Folayan, Komolafe, Obi-Okoye, Banjo and Odenike (2025) conducted an exploratory assessment of the effectiveness of oramedia in communicating new agricultural terminologies and techniques among farmers in Osun State, Nigeria. The study was guided by four research questions examining the extent to which current local farmers comprehend agricultural terms in their native Yoruba language, translation difficulties, prospects of oramedia application, and translation adoption. The findings revealed that experts and a representative sample of farmers consider the traditional communication model (oramedia) potentially more effective than conventional approaches. The study recommended translation adoption and oramedia application as strategies for enhancing agricultural communication. However, the study also found that the ability of farmers to comprehend technical agricultural terms is largely dependent on their levels of formal education.

Taylor and Francis (2014) studied factors influencing the use of traditional communication methods in information dissemination among farmers in Osun State, Nigeria. The study found that the use of proverbs, hooting, putting leaves on paths, and use of palm fronds to deliver information was employed at a moderate level by farmers. This finding suggests that while traditional communication methods are available, their use is not maximised, possibly due to the influence of modern communication channels or the erosion of traditional practices.

3.3 Studies in Borno State, Nigeria

JOLLS (2025) studied the linguistic techniques employed by agricultural extension workers in post-conflict Borno State, Nigeria. The study found that linguistic techniques played a pivotal role in communication effectiveness, trust-building, and innovation adoption. The strategic use of language adaptation, code-switching, metaphors, storytelling, and participatory approaches were instrumental in enhancing yield improvement. Trust levels in extension worker information were high, with 73.0% of farmers either "completely trust" (28.0%) or "mostly trust" (45.0%) the information provided. However, 77.0% of farmers reported that conflict either "greatly affected" (35.0%) or "somewhat affected" (42.0%) their trust in agricultural advice, highlighting the importance of trust-building through culturally appropriate communication.

The Borno State study is particularly valuable because it demonstrates that orature-based techniques are not merely culturally appropriate but are also effective in challenging contexts, in this case, a post-conflict environment where trust in formal institutions has been severely damaged. The use of metaphors and storytelling allowed extension workers to communicate effectively without triggering the distrust associated with formal, official communication.

3.4 Studies in Rivers State, Nigeria

Delta Agriculturist (2026) studied the influence of traditional communication media in the dissemination of crop-based technologies among farmers in the South-East Senatorial District of Rivers State, Nigeria. The study found that town criers, traditional meetings or ceremonies such as marriages, naming ceremonies, town and village festivals or funeral ceremonies, and market places were the traditional means of communication available in the study area. The use of town criers, market places, and religious groups/churches or schools were identified as the most effective means of disseminating information. This finding reinforces the importance of orature forms in agricultural communication in Nigeria.

3.5 Studies in Other African Contexts

FAO (2024) documented the use of traditional theatre, song, and dance for development activities in Tanzania. Women in the villages were organized to express their problems regarding lack of access to water, crop prices, land use, distribution of basic commodities, and activities for young people through their traditional types of songs, dance, and drama. The performances brought out possible solutions to these problems, and discussions held afterward led to community short-term and long-term action plans. This case study demonstrates the potential of orature to facilitate participatory problem-solving and community action.

FAO AGRIS (2025) studied indigenous knowledge systems and sustainable agriculture in Lesotho, focusing on sorghum production. The study found that indigenous knowledge is under threat of extinction, not only partly due to western cultural and scientific imperialism but also because of the oral tradition through which it is passed from one generation to the other and recorded in the people's heads and practices without written documentation. This finding highlights the urgency of documenting and preserving orature-based agricultural knowledge.

FAO AGRIS (2026) studied perspectives on communicating 21st-century agricultural innovations to Nigerian rural farmers. The study found that the conventional top-down approach to extension delivery, where extension agents act as teachers to farmer-pupils in a one-way communication model, has proven inadequate. There is growing recognition that farmers must be recognized as autonomous agents in a two-way communication process.

3.6 Studies on ICTs and Agricultural Extension

Aker (2011) provided a comprehensive review of information and communication technologies for agricultural extension in developing countries. The study found that ICTs have the potential to enhance extension reach and effectiveness, but that their impact depends on contextual factors including infrastructure, literacy, and institutional support. Nakasone, Torero and Minten (2014) documented the power of information and the ICT revolution in agricultural development, noting that mobile phones have transformed market information systems and extension delivery in many contexts. Ayim, Kassahun, Tekinerdogan and Addison (2020) conducted a systematic literature review on the adoption of ICT innovations in the agriculture sector in Africa, finding that adoption is shaped by factors including perceived usefulness, ease of use, and facilitating conditions. Tiwari (2022) reviewed information and communication technology initiatives for knowledge sharing in agriculture, noting that ICTs can complement but not replace traditional communication channels.

Okeke, Nwalieji and Uzuegbunam (2024) studied the emerging role of information communication technologies in extension service delivery in Nigeria. The study found that ICTs help in expanding outreach to a large number of farmers, offering a solution to resource and capacity issues within the agricultural sector, improving information flow and connecting people within rural areas, answering questions relating to farm problems with the advantages of getting feedback using telephone, and obtaining market price information and weather forecasts. Problems identified include poor ICT infrastructural development, high charges for radio/television presentations, inadequate capital for farmers, and insufficient knowledge of ICTs.

Emerald (2026) reviewed radio's role in agricultural development, focusing on broadcasting strategies for farmer education in South-West Nigeria. The review found that radio remains a powerful medium for reaching rural farmers, particularly when programmes are designed with an understanding of local languages and cultural contexts.

3.7 Studies on Constraints and Challenges

Europe PMC (n.d.) studied constraints to agricultural communication, finding that the language of presentation of agricultural radio programmes was a significant constraint, along with brief programme length, inappropriate programme scheduling, and failure to ask appropriate questions and provide feedback.

Frontiers (2025) studied constraints impeding extension agents in disseminating climate-smart agricultural practices. The study found that insufficient number of extension workers to provide services for a large number of farmers ($\bar{x}$ = 1.87), lack of incentives for staff motivation ($\bar{x}$ = 1.83), and inadequate means of transportation ($\bar{x}$ = 1.83) were significant constraints.

IHSN (2010) studied scientific and technical information and rural development, finding that the town crier is typically a male figure with an average age of 55.54 years who has post-secondary education and obtains information primarily from the traditional head. Main information disseminated by the town crier bothers on security of the town and community development and projects. The study concluded that this channel rarely meets the information need of the people, as only 20% of such information meets these needs. However, the study also noted that the use of town criers can effectively fill the gap created by the collapse of formal extension institutions and recommended that town criers be trained on basic extension work.

Nwulu (2026) studied urban farmers, English and local language, identifying challenges associated with the use of both languages in agricultural communication. The challenges include exclusion of non-literate farmers (M = 2.54), difficulty understanding technical terms (M = 2.51), the tendency of English to ignore local customs (M =

2.45), dialect differences that may alter meaning (M = 2.41), and the time required for translation (M = 2.47). Illiterate farmers may experience low self-esteem (M = 2.56) when engaging with extension messages.

Taylor and Francis (2025) studied lead farmer extension and engagement in the Zango and Kofa drylands of North-Western Nigeria. The study found that funding was the common challenge for research and extension institutions, with "time" and "workload" also mentioned. Public extension in Nigeria is largely supported by donors, which makes it unsustainable.

Yahaya and Aina (2024) studied communication and social change, drawing lessons from cassava technology transfer in Nigeria. The study found that drama was the most preferred traditional media, suggesting that dramatic performances can be powerful vehicles for agricultural extension messages, particularly when they incorporate local cultural elements and address real farming challenges.

4.0 Critical Synthesis and Discussion

4.1 The Evidence Base: Strengths and Limitations

The empirical evidence for the effectiveness of orature in agricultural extension is compelling but uneven. Studies in Benue State (Daudu & Anyanwu, 2010; Ngam, 2017), Osun State (Folayan et al., 2025; Taylor & Francis, 2014), Borno State (JOLLS, 2025), and Rivers State (Delta Agriculturist, 2026) consistently demonstrate that orature forms are preferred by farmers and are perceived as effective. The Tanzanian (FAO, 2024) and Lesotho (FAO AGRIS, 2025) studies provide additional support from other African contexts.

However, the evidence base has significant limitations. First, most studies rely on self-reported preferences and perceptions rather than objective measures of productivity or adoption. Farmers may prefer orature because it is familiar and entertaining, but this does not necessarily mean it is more effective for communicating technically complex agricultural information. Second, the studies are predominantly cross-sectional, providing snapshots rather than longitudinal evidence of impact. Third, there is a publication bias toward positive findings; studies that found orature ineffective may not have been published. Fourth, the studies are often conducted by researchers with a vested interest in demonstrating the value of orature, raising questions about researcher bias.

The Borno State study (JOLLS, 2025) is notable for attempting to link linguistic techniques to yield improvement, but the causal mechanism remains unclear. Did the use of metaphors and storytelling directly increase yields, or did it enhance trust, which in turn facilitated adoption of recommended practices? The distinction matters for designing effective extension interventions.

4.2 The Translation Problem: Technical Accuracy versus Cultural Resonance

One of the most persistent constraints identified in the literature is the difficulty of translating technical agricultural terms into local languages (Nwulu, 2026; Folayan et al., 2025). This is not merely a linguistic problem; it is an epistemological one. Technical terms such as "integrated pest management," "soil fertility management," and "climate-smart agriculture" emerged from specific scientific paradigms and carry assumptions that may not have equivalents in indigenous knowledge systems.

The translation problem is compounded by dialect variations. Nwulu (2026) found that dialect differences that may alter meaning were a significant challenge (M = 2.41). In a country with over 500 languages and countless dialects, the standardisation of agricultural terminology in local languages is a monumental task. Folayan et al. (2025) found that the ability of farmers to comprehend technical agricultural terms is largely dependent on their levels of formal education, suggesting that translation alone cannot overcome educational barriers.

The response to this problem in the literature is often to advocate for "simplification", using everyday language to explain technical concepts. But simplification risks distortion. If "integrated pest management" is translated as "fighting pests without chemicals," the nuance of the approach, the careful monitoring of pest populations, the use of biological controls, the integration of multiple strategies, is lost. The challenge is to communicate technical content accurately without alienating farmers through jargon or simplifying to the point of inaccuracy.

4.3 The Documentation Dilemma: Preserving Orature without Killing It

FAO AGRIS (2025) identified the oral nature of orature as a fundamental constraint to its sustainability. Without written documentation, orature-based agricultural knowledge is vulnerable to loss as older generations pass away

and younger generations migrate to cities. Yet documentation poses its own problems. Ong (1982) argued that orality and literacy are distinct modes of consciousness; transcribing oral forms into written text inevitably transforms them, stripping away performance elements (tone, gesture, rhythm, audience interaction) that are central to their meaning and effectiveness.

This is the documentation dilemma: orature must be preserved to be sustainable, but preservation through writing may destroy the very qualities that make it effective. The literature offers no easy resolution to this dilemma. Some scholars advocate for multi-media documentation that captures performance elements (audio and video recordings, not just transcripts), but this is expensive and requires technical expertise that is often lacking in rural contexts. Others argue that orature should remain oral, transmitted through apprenticeship and participation rather than documentation. But this position risks the loss of knowledge that is already under threat.

4.4 The Institutional Constraint: Extension Systems in Crisis

The literature on extension systems (Davis, 2008; Swanson & Rajalahti, 2010; Ragasa et al., 2016; Christoplos, 2010; Feder et al., 2001) provides essential context for understanding the constraints on orature-based extension. The fundamental problem is that extension systems in Nigeria and much of Africa are in crisis. Funding has declined, staff have been retrenched, and infrastructure has deteriorated. The extension agent-to-farmer ratio of 1:25,000 (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, 2025) means that even if extension agents were trained in orature techniques, they would be unable to reach more than a tiny fraction of farmers.

Frontiers (2025) documented specific constraints: insufficient number of extension workers ($\bar{x}$ = 1.87), lack of incentives for staff motivation ($\bar{x}$ = 1.83), and inadequate means of transportation ($\bar{x}$ = 1.83). Taylor and Francis (2025) found that public extension in Nigeria is largely supported by donors, which makes it unsustainable. These are not problems that can be solved by adopting orature; they are structural problems that require political will and investment.

The implication is that orature-based extension cannot be a substitute for adequately funded and staffed extension systems. It can complement conventional extension, but it cannot replace it. The literature sometimes implies that orature is a low-cost solution to extension problems, but this is misleading. Effective orature-based extension requires trained personnel, materials development, and coordination, all of which require investment.

4.5 The Epistemological Tension: Indigenous Knowledge and Scientific Agriculture

The literature on indigenous knowledge (Warren, 1991; Grenier, 1998; Sillitoe, 1998; Berkes, 2012; Altieri, 2004; Msuya & Lalika, 2017) reveals a fundamental tension that the orature literature often glosses over. Indigenous knowledge is not always compatible with scientific agriculture. Some traditional practices are maladaptive, they may deplete soil fertility, encourage pest resistance, or fail to adapt to changing climatic conditions. If orature is used to transmit agricultural messages, what happens when the content of those messages contradicts traditional knowledge?

Sillitoe (1998) warned against the romanticisation of indigenous knowledge, arguing that uncritical celebration can lead to the imposition of new orthodoxies. Altieri (2004) acknowledged that traditional knowledge is not always environmentally sound. Berkes (2012) framed indigenous knowledge within a sacred ecology that integrates spiritual, practical, and ecological dimensions, a framing that challenges the secular rationalism of conventional extension but also raises questions about how such knowledge can be translated into actionable agricultural advice.

The orature literature tends to assume that orature is a neutral channel that can carry any content. But orature is not neutral; it is embedded in specific epistemological frameworks. Folk songs, proverbs, and folktales carry assumptions about causality, agency, and the relationship between humans and nature. When extension messages are embedded in orature forms, they are interpreted through these frameworks. If the message conflicts with the framework, if it assumes a scientific worldview that is at odds with the indigenous worldview embedded in the orature, the message may be rejected or distorted.

4.6 The ICT Opportunity: Integration or Substitution?

The literature on ICTs in agricultural extension (Aker, 2011; Nakasone et al., 2014; Ayim et al., 2020; Tiwari, 2022; Okeke et al., 2024; Emerald, 2026) offers a potential pathway for overcoming some of the constraints on

orature-based extension. Mobile phones, radio, and digital platforms can extend the reach of orature-based messages, allow for interactive feedback, and facilitate the documentation and sharing of orature content.

The National Electronic Extension Platform (NEEP) launched by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (2025) represents a major policy initiative that recognises the importance of indigenous languages in extension delivery. The platform's accessibility in English, Pidgin, Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo languages demonstrates institutional recognition of the need to communicate with farmers in languages they understand.

However, the ICT opportunity is not without risks. Okeke et al. (2024) identified poor ICT infrastructural development, high charges for radio/television presentations, inadequate capital for farmers, and insufficient knowledge of ICTs as significant problems. The digital divide means that the most marginal farmers, those who would benefit most from orature-based extension, are often the least likely to have access to ICTs.

The risk is that ICTs will be used to substitute for, rather than complement, orature-based extension. If extension services invest in digital platforms at the expense of training extension agents in orature techniques, the result may be a further marginalisation of farmers who lack digital access. The literature suggests that integration, using ICTs to enhance and extend orature-based extension, not to replace it, is the more promising approach.

4.7 The Participation Paradox: Dialogue or Manipulation?

The participatory turn in extension theory (Freire, 1970, 1976; Pretty, 1995; Chambers, 1997; Scoones & Thompson, 1994; Davis et al., 2004; Leeuwis & Aarts, 2011) has been influential in shaping the argument for orature. Orature, it is argued, is inherently participatory, it invites response, interpretation, and collective engagement. This aligns with the Freirean ideal of dialogical education and the participatory approach to development.

But there is a paradox at the heart of this argument. Extension is not merely dialogue; it is purposive communication aimed at changing behaviour. Van den Ban and Hawkins (1996) noted that extension communication is always purposive. If orature is used to transmit predetermined messages, if the content is decided in advance by extension agencies and the orature form is merely a vehicle for delivering it, then the participation is illusory. It is manipulation dressed up as dialogue.

The literature on orature-based extension rarely confronts this paradox. It celebrates the participatory character of orature without acknowledging that the context of extension, with its institutional hierarchies, funding constraints, and accountability requirements, may preclude genuine dialogue. If farmers are invited to sing songs about improved seeds, but the decision to promote improved seeds was made without their input, then the orature is not participatory; it is propaganda.

4.8 The Sustainability Question: Who Will Carry the Tradition?

The sustainability of orature-based extension depends on the continued vitality of orature itself. But orature is under threat. Urbanisation, migration, the dominance of electronic media, and the decline of traditional institutions have eroded the contexts in which orature is performed and transmitted. Young people in rural areas are increasingly disconnected from traditional forms of communication.

The literature does not adequately address this sustainability question. Studies document the effectiveness of orature in contemporary contexts (Daudu & Anyanwu, 2010; Folayan et al., 2025; JOLLS, 2025), but they do not ask whether orature will remain effective in the future. If young farmers do not know the proverbs, do not sing the songs, and do not participate in the dramas, then orature-based extension will become irrelevant.

There is also a risk of "museumification", treating orature as a static artefact to be preserved rather than a living tradition to be adapted. If orature is frozen in time, used only to transmit traditional messages, it will lose its relevance to contemporary challenges. The challenge is to support the evolution of orature, to enable it to engage with new agricultural realities while retaining its cultural rootedness.

4.9 The Evidence Gap: What We Do Not Know

The literature on orature in agricultural extension has significant gaps. First, there is little rigorous evidence on the impact of orature-based extension on productivity. Studies document farmer preferences and perceptions, but few measure outcomes such as yield increases, income gains, or adoption rates. Second, there is little research on

the comparative effectiveness of different orature forms. Is folk song more effective than drama? Are proverbs more effective than folktales? The literature offers anecdotes but not systematic comparison. Third, there is little research on the interaction between orature and other communication channels. Does orature reinforce or undermine conventional extension messages? Fourth, there is little research on the cost-effectiveness of orature-based extension. Is it cheaper than conventional extension? If so, by how much? Fifth, there is little research on the scalability of orature-based extension. Can it work at scale, or is it inherently local and context-specific?

These gaps reflect the broader weakness of the evidence base on extension in Africa. Birkhaeuser et al. (1991) documented the limitations of extension impact evaluation more than three decades ago, and those limitations persist. Hammersley (2013) questioned the myth of research-based policy and practice, arguing that evidence is always interpreted through political and institutional filters. The orature literature is not immune to this critique.

5.0 Prospects and Recommendations

5.1 Integrating Orature with ICTs

The most promising prospect for orature-based extension lies in its integration with ICTs. Aker (2011), Nakasone et al. (2014), Ayim et al. (2020), and Tiwari (2022) have documented the potential of ICTs to enhance extension reach and effectiveness. The NEEP platform (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, 2025) provides a model for how indigenous languages and traditional communication forms can be integrated with digital technologies. Mobile phones can be used to share orature content, radio can broadcast folk songs and dramas, and digital platforms can facilitate interactive feedback.

However, integration must be done carefully. Okeke et al. (2024) identified infrastructural and capacity constraints that must be addressed. The risk is that ICTs will be used to substitute for, rather than complement, orature-based extension. The goal should be to use ICTs to extend the reach of orature, not to replace it.

5.2 Training Extension Agents in Orature Techniques

The Borno State study (JOLLS, 2025) found that linguistic techniques employed by extension workers played a pivotal role in communication effectiveness, trust-building, and innovation adoption. This suggests that training extension agents in orature techniques, the use of proverbs, storytelling, folk songs, and drama, should be a core component of extension agent education. Training should include not only the techniques themselves but also the cultural contexts in which they are embedded and the epistemological assumptions they carry.

5.3 Documenting and Standardising Orature-Based Knowledge

FAO AGRIS (2025) identified the oral nature of orature as a fundamental constraint to its sustainability. Documentation is essential for preserving this knowledge for future generations. However, documentation must be done in ways that respect the performative character of orature. Multi-media documentation (audio and video recordings, not just transcripts) can capture performance elements. Standardisation of agricultural terminology in local languages can facilitate communication across dialect boundaries (Nwulu, 2026; Folayan et al., 2025).

5.4 Strengthening Extension Institutions

The constraints identified by Frontiers (2025), Taylor and Francis (2025), and Ragasa et al. (2016) are structural. They cannot be solved by adopting orature; they require political will and investment. Extension systems must be adequately funded, staffed, and equipped. The donor dependency of public extension in Nigeria (Taylor & Francis, 2025) must be addressed through sustainable government funding.

5.5 Conducting Rigorous Impact Evaluation

The evidence base on orature-based extension is weak. Rigorous impact evaluation, using experimental or quasi-experimental designs, is needed to measure the effect of orature-based extension on productivity, income, and adoption. Comparative studies are needed to assess the effectiveness of different orature forms. Cost-effectiveness studies are needed to assess the economic viability of orature-based extension. This research should be conducted in partnership with extension agencies and farmer organisations to ensure relevance and uptake.

5.6 Engaging with Epistemological Tensions

The tension between indigenous knowledge and scientific agriculture (Sillitoe, 1998; Altieri, 2004; Berkes, 2012) must be confronted rather than glossed over. Orature is not a neutral channel; it carries epistemological assumptions that may conflict with scientific content. Extension practitioners must be trained to navigate these tensions, to engage in dialogue with farmers about the compatibility of traditional and scientific knowledge, and to adapt messages in ways that respect indigenous epistemologies while promoting practices that are scientifically sound.

5.7 Supporting the Evolution of Orature

Orature must be allowed to evolve. It must engage with new agricultural realities, climate change, market integration, digital technologies, while retaining its cultural rootedness. This requires supporting the creation of new orature forms, not just preserving old ones. It requires creating spaces for orature performance, supporting traditional institutions, and enabling young people to participate in and adapt orature traditions.

5.8 Addressing the Participation Paradox

The participation paradox, the tension between dialogue and purposive communication, must be acknowledged. If orature-based extension is to be genuinely participatory, farmers must have a voice in determining the content of extension messages, not just the form in which they are delivered. This requires institutional changes, greater farmer involvement in extension planning, more responsive extension systems, and mechanisms for accountability to farmers.

6.0 Conclusion

This review has critically synthesised 61 sources on the prospects and constraints of using orature for agricultural extension in Nigeria and comparable African contexts. The evidence suggests that orature offers genuine prospects for enhancing extension effectiveness, particularly for reaching non-literate farmers and for communicating in culturally resonant ways. Studies in Benue State (Daudu & Anyanwu, 2010), Osun State (Folayan et al., 2025), Borno State (JOLLS, 2025), and Rivers State (Delta Agriculturist, 2026) consistently demonstrate that orature forms are preferred by farmers and are perceived as effective.

However, the prospects of orature-based extension are constrained by significant challenges. Translation and dialect differences (Nwulu, 2026), the orality-literacy divide (Ong, 1982; Vansina, 1985), the absence of documentation and standardisation (FAO AGRIS, 2025), institutional weaknesses (Ragasa et al., 2016; Frontiers, 2025), and unresolved tensions between indigenous knowledge and scientific agriculture (Sillitoe, 1998; Altieri, 2004) all limit the potential of orature. The structural crisis of extension systems, inadequate funding, staffing, and infrastructure, cannot be solved by adopting orature; it requires political will and investment.

The review concludes that orature-based extension should be seen as a complement to, not a substitute for, conventional extension. It offers particular promise when integrated with ICTs (Aker, 2011; Nakasone et al., 2014; Ayim et al., 2020; Tiwari, 2022), when extension agents are trained in orature techniques (JOLLS, 2025), and when orature is allowed to evolve rather than being frozen in time. But the wholesale adoption of orature requires confronting deeper epistemological and institutional contradictions that the current literature often understates. The challenge is not merely to communicate agricultural messages more effectively but to create extension systems that are genuinely participatory, adequately resourced, and epistemologically humble.

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Effectiveness of Internal Versus External Recruitment on Employee Performance in Polytechnics: A study of Selected Federal Polytechnics in North Central Nigeria

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Abstract
This study examined the effectiveness of internal versus external recruitment on employee performance in polytechnics, using selected federal polytechnics in North Central Nigeria as a case study. Recruitment remains one of the most consequential human resource functions in tertiary institutions, yet public polytechnics in Nigeria continue to grapple with the choice between promoting existing staff into vacant positions and sourcing new employees from the open labour market. Anchored on Human Capital Theory and Person-Organisation Fit Theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A sample of 410 academic and non-academic staff was drawn from five federal polytechnics in North Central Nigeria- Federal Polytechnic, Bida (Niger State); Federal Polytechnic, Idah (Kogi State); Federal Polytechnic, Offa (Kwara State); Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa (Nasarawa State); and Federal Polytechnic, Wannune (Benue State) - using a multi-stage stratified random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire, validated by experts and pilot-tested with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86, was the main instrument of data collection. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and percentages) and inferential statistics (independent-samples t-test and multiple regression analysis) at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that both internal and external recruitment practices have a statistically significant positive effect on employee performance, but internal recruitment exerted a stronger effect on productivity, job commitment and institutional loyalty, while external