

The Evolution of Agricultural Extension Services In India

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ABSTRACT

The agricultural extension services play a major role in the economy and several programmes were implemented by the Government from time to time. Several individuals also undertook extension activities before independence also. The paper traces out the evolution of extension services in India by dividing it into before and after independence and activities after 1970. In spite of these efforts the activities are not reaching farmer which is a major problem in India.

Keywords: Evolution, Extension, Programmes

The basic necessity of a human being is definitely food, for which he has to rely on agriculture. The agriculture in order to achieve its expected growth has to depend on several factors which include technology, research and obviously extension. The basic function of agricultural extension is to train, teach and guide farmers. The extension involves the conscious use of communication of information to help people form sound opinions and make good decisions (Van Den Ban and Hawkins, 1998). The World Development Report (2007) emphasizes agricultural extension as an important development intervention for increasing the growth potential of agricultural sector. Extension improves the speed of technology transfer and linkage between the extension service and farmers are essential.

A review in the World Bank of a large portfolio of extension projects pointed out that research-extension linkages were fragile and neither research nor extension was satisfactorily aware of the need to understand the constraints and potentials of the different farming systems as a basis for determining relevant technology and technology development requirements. (Purcell and Anderson 1997) The study on agricultural information flow in India by Adhiguru et al. (2009) has showed that only 40 per cent farm households access information from one or the other source. The public extension system has been found to be accessed by only 5.7 per cent households. Only 4.8 per cent of the small farmers have access to public extension workers as compared to 12.4 per cent of large farmers.

EXTENSION ATTEMPTS IN INDIA BEFORE 1947

In 1903, Sir Daniel Hamilton started model villages in Sunderban, Bengal. The Cooperative Deposit Institute was established as a part of this programme. The project of this kind was the first initiative in India and helped young farmers to become self-reliant. This project had its end after fifteen years. The extension attempts were started in India started after the opening of Imperial Research Institute at Pusa, Bihar in 1905.

The programme started by Rabindra Nath Tagore in 1921 was called Sriniketan Experiment. Sriniketan Village Welfare Institute was established and main objectives were to increase the knowledge of rural people and to help the rural people in establishing cottage industry. The achievement of the project includes increased production and income in the villages surrounding Sriniketan, but was not conveyed to other villages. The Marthandam project of rural development was instigated in the village Marthandam by Young Men Christian Association (Y.M.C.A) and Christian Church Association under the leadership of Dr. Spencer Hatch in 1928. The project was aimed at the development of spirit, mind and body. The project started extension work in forty villages around Marthandam and was concentrated in income generating activities. There was success in the production and selling of honey and some other income generating activities. After the death of its founder the project stopped.

The Guragoan experiment was a programme started by F.L. Brayne in 1927 and a village guide was posted in each village to work like an extension agent. The agents transferred expert information on various aspects ranging from agriculture to female education. Although it focused on various aspects of human life the project could not succeed after the transfer of its founder. Another extension service called Sevagram was started under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in 1933 and origin was outlined from All India Spinners Association initiated in 1920. The programme aimed at rural development through upliftment of village people. This project emphasized on economic equality by decentralized production and promoted cottage

industries. Khadi products become more popular .It stressed on social equality by removal of untouchability and stressed on women education.

EXTENSION AFTER 1947

The Etawah Pilot project which was conceived by Albert Mayer in 1947 and was launched by Government of Uttarpradesh. This project was educative and extension workers were friendly to the villagers. The pattern was adopted for other similar projects. Nilokheri experiment started in 1948 was another popular extension attempt started by S.K Dey which drew nationwide attention. It was started among Pakistani refugees and objective was self-sufficiency. The whole experiment was considered successful.

The Grow More Food Campaign (GMFC) was India's first prepared attempt to increase food production. This paved the way for initiation of Community Development Programme in 1952. The programme was aimed for the overall development of rural people by boosting their confidence. S.K Dey then minister for community development and Panchayati Raj stated that war began on October 2, 1952 against poverty, disease and ignorance after the introduction of Community Development Programme. The programme underlined stress on aspects such as rural manpower programme, well construction programme, applied nutrition programme, agricultural production and minor irrigation. Taylor et al. (1965) specified reasons for the failure of the programme as the difficulty to recruit and train enough persons to play all essential roles, to adequately staff the many local areas where programme had been under operation. They suggested remedy as the strengthening of its work at village level. To make Community Development Programme more far-reaching National Extension Service was launched on 2 October 1953. In the Pre-intensive development stage efforts were to be made to make the people aware of importance of agriculture and to create interest for the development work. In the Intensive development stage sufficient funds were kept for expenditure during three years, so that every block development may be established. Funds were allocated for the demonstration of agriculture in every block. In the Post-intensive development stage the construction of the offices and residence was completed.

The period between 1950's and 60's were characterized by institutionalization of many national extension services and the focus was on interactive communication and community development and extension agents were loaded with lot of responsibilities and agricultural services were multifunctional. (Anandajayasekharam et al. 2008) The Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP) was started in 1960 to increase agricultural production. It was introduced in seven districts of the country. Encouraged by the success of Intensive Agriculture District Programme, the Centre Government introduced Intensive Agriculture Area Programme in 114 districts of country in 1964-65. It was encouraged to protect and to grow the selected crops on block, district and state level. The High Yielding Variety Programme (HYVP) has been initiated in the year 1966 and government took a concentrated effort to increase the production of some crops which resulted in first Green Revolution.

EXTENSION AFTER 1970's

The integrated rural development approaches and the emergence of Training and Visit (T&V) extension systems was during 1970's. The T&V system was introduced as a world bank funded project in 1974. Benor and Baxter (1984) stated the key feature of T&V system as professionalism. The extension service works under single line of command. The Village Extension Worker (VEW) visits farmers regularly. The Subject Matter Specialists held regular workshops and they presented their suggestions to Agricultural Extension Officers (AEOs) and Village Extension Workers (VEWs). Regular and continuous training are conducted under the system to the extension staff. There was a dynamic regular contact of extension workers with farmers under T&V system and workshops were organized to improve production. Gershon Feder and Roger Slade (1986) have analyzed some key hypotheses about the effects of T&V extension. The results, based on data from India, show that T&V greatly increases the number of contacts between farmers and extension workers, and the proportion of farmers reached increases the longer the T&V system operates. Extension agents were found to be an important source of knowledge about new farming practices, particularly when these practices are complex and expensive. The paper shows that T&V led to significant increases in yields of a major crop in one area covered by a detailed study. The principles of the T&V system were simple and there was effective linkage between research and extension.

The demerits of T&V system was that programme was staff intensive and except crop production almost all other farmers remain untouched. The T&V system emphasized on technology and very little on extension methods. The lack of adequate interaction between contact farmers and other farmers also posed a problem. (Barman et.al, 2014). The most regrettable part of this experience to report was the slowness of the Bank to admit that the model was inappropriate for the situations of many of its client countries. With the continued

budgetary crisis of developing countries and scattered farmers the system could not earn the results it expected.

The KrishiVigyanKendras was established in 1974 to provide mandate of imparting training to farm men, farm women, and farm youth according to the recommendations of Mohan Singh Mehta Committee. Although the emphasis was initially given to human resource development they also participate in the transfer of technology. The KVK's are also called Farmer Polytechniques because this institution helps farmers through on-farm trainings, frontline demonstrations etc. The KVK's are district level institutions run by State Agricultural Universities, Indian Council For Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Non-Government Organisations(NGO's).Every year lakh of farmers are trained at KVK's in areas of crop husbandry,horticulture,animal husbandry and training ,fisheries and vocations leading to self-employment. Trainers' Training Centres (TTCs) are subject specific training institutions to train KVK scientists and subject matter specialists.

The extension during 1980' had given emphasis to farming system approach to research and extension (FSRE) .The generation of location specific technology was encouraged through a better interaction between farmers and scientists. The National Agriculture Extension Project was also started in 1983to bridge the gap between research and extension. In 1999 Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) was established under Innovation in Technology Dissemination (ITD) component of National Agricultural Technology Project(NATP) .All participants like Department of Agriculture ,Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, KVK's,representation of farmers organisations ,NGO's are linked in the programme. The discrepancies in the implementation of ATMA prompted government to issue new guidelines in June 2010.

“Despite the variety of agricultural extension approaches that operate in parallel and sometimes duplicate one another, the majority of farmers in India do not have access to any source of information” (Glendenning, et al 2010).In India different organisations are working in extension. India adopted a strategy of extension pluralism as the number of farmers need to be covered by the extension organisations are very large. The National Agricultural Research System (NARS) of the country comprising ICAR, SAUs has generated huge amount of information to the farmers.

Despite these efforts lot of problems are there. Feder et al. (2001) had identified generic problems in-built in extension functions.The World Bank in 1997 advocated for institutional pluralism to respond to the needs of farmers. Increasing private sector participation and number of participatory approaches including farmer groups, women groups etc. are needed. Information Communication Technology (ICT) can be used for making extension effective. Through Cyber Extension large amount of information can be provided to farmers about crops, insurance, weather conditions etc.A co-ordinated effort from the part of government both Central and State Government is needed to make extension effective. Extension should reach common farmers and technology transfer should take place through diffusion of innovation. Then only the meaning of extension will be truly in operation.

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