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- The Indian Journal of Extension Education is a quarterly publication of the Indian Society of Extension Education, located at the Division of Agricultural Extension, I.A.R.I., New Delhi-110012

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12-12-82

EDITORIAL

What is the future of Extension Education in the developing countries? This question is often asked by many who are even remotely associated with this Discipline. On one hand empirical evidence has been produced to show that significant achievements have been made on the food front without extension interventions and, on the other hand, extension education is taken as a major instrument of rural development. Many new extension approaches are being tried and strategies developed. Sociologists and psychologists have also shown interest in demonstrating how individual development and group action could bring about permanent changes in the rural masses. It is difficult to say whether such development efforts will make significant contributions to the Extension Discipline or not. One obvious fall-out of such approach is a question mark put against the conventional type of extension research being conducted in centres of learning, findings of which are sometimes old enough and even impractical to be of any consequence.

For the last few year research in Extension Education has been critically viewed for its quality and utility. Many believe that Extension researches which made significant contributions in the sixties and the seventies no more contribute much to the improvement of the extension system in developing countries. While this may be only partly true, the fact remains, the quality of extension research has not kept pace with the changing requirements of agricultural development. The extension professionals and grass-root workers have not derived much benefit from it. In early years our extension scientists made very useful basic contributions in the fields of adoption and decision making processes, inter-personal and mass communication, extension administration, extension methods, etc. However some of our new researches are either repetitions of the older studies or are entangled in statistical jargons. As a consequence, the quality of research papers appearing in extension journals (like ours) is also adversely affected. Professor A.W. Van den Ban, Wageningen, Netherlands, in his recent communication to the Chief Editor has cautioned against such an approach in extension research and has expressed doubts about utility of such a research effort. He has as well expressed doubt about the utility of research articles appearing in IJEE as "these are written in a language which administrators and trainers (in extension) would not understand." In his view the authors would increase their scientific standing if their research findings are widely used by extension workers. In his communication he further says; "In this issue (IJEE) I found only two references to foreign literature, which are less than 20 years old and not less than 10 years old. There is no doubt that there is a lot of Indian literature in this field but I am convinced that your country would develop more rapidly, if you would make more use of research and experience in other countries just like other countries have profited from research and experience on extension in India". We would welcome views from the extension experts on this issue so that the quality of research may improve.

I wish to share with you a major development which has taken place in the extension infrastructure in India. The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), the first-line extension wing of the ICAR, is expanding in India.

There are now 187 KVKs in the country and by the end of VIII Plan, all the 450 districts will be covered with KVKs. The financial allocation for the first-line extension wing has increased over five folds over the previous Plan period. The important feature of this new expanding wing is the integration of all first-line extension efforts with the KVK. The National Demonstrations Project, the Operational Research Projects and the Lab to Land Programme will be implemented through KVKs at the district level. The four-fold functions assigned to the KVKs are : farm advisory, vocational training, training of SMSs and extension workers and on-farm/action research. The new model has invoked a mixed reaction among the extension fraternity. While some believe KVKs will now emerge as strong centres of extension work, others fear, due to training orientation of KVKs, other functions will occupy back seat.

The ICAR has lent its support to this approach by allocating Rs. 160 crores for the VIII Plan period. What contribution we as extension professionals can make in support of this structural and functional change is a point to ponder. In this context, the inter-relationship between technologists and extension professionals is a crucial factor which would influence the success of this venture and also determine the employment opportunities in extension in the country. What would happen if we fail to become useful partners in this new process and remain spectators to the achievements made by the technologists?

We will appreciate receiving your brief communication on these and other vital issue.

P.N. Mathur
Chief Editor