

MANAGE : A CASE OF HRD IN GOVERNMENT

Vikram Singh and B.D. Tripathi**

The National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) is an apex level autonomous body set up in 1987 under the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. It is the Indian response to the challenges of management in a rapidly growing and diverse agricultural sector. An organization like MANAGE has three important elements which have a direct bearing on the performance of the individuals viz., structure, culture and processes. Structures in the organizations are generally given and the amendments in them are rarely done as it involve decisions at the topmost level. However, bringing changes in the culture and processes, are well within the authority of head of the organization and also at the command of the individuals at different levels. Realizing this fact, in MANAGE, lot of innovative initiatives are taken with an eye on positive changes and performance raise in the organization. This process of change aims at becoming responsive institution ready to meet the demands and challenges of the 21st century organization.

1. Facilitators and resource persons

The functions in MANAGE are basically fourfold; research, training, teaching and consultancy. As it caters to the needs of various clients of varied nature at national level, it was difficult to meet the expectations of everyone keeping a small faculty of four to begin with, and, therefore, the concept of facilitators, who are not really the regular faculty of MANAGE, came into being. They are the regular employees of other organizations in public, private or NGO sectors. The facilitators have an expertise in any given area of agriculture, extension management, HRD, marketing and IT, also have knowledge and competence about various agricultural development projects

• *Principal Coordinator, Post-Graduate Programme in Agri-Business Management, MANAGE, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad – 500 030.*

* *National Consultant (NATP), MANAGE, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad – 500 030.*

and programs run by public, private and NGO sectors. With this objective in mind, an arrangement is worked out with various State Governments, SAUs, NGOs to sponsor the candidates to a facilitator selection workshops having competence in the above mentioned areas. Later, these selected candidates were made to undergo a rigorous 3-4 weeks training program on various subjects and few of them were finally picked up to be the facilitators for MANAGE. The process of selecting the facilitator is intensive, purpose focused and innovative. The chosen facilitators were further trained not only in India but abroad also in the subjects which have a greater relevance in the context of Indian agriculture including Farming Systems Approach, Farming Systems Based Extension, Strategic Research and Extension Plans preparation, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Project Management, Agri-Business Management, Human Resource Development. A Memorandum of Understanding then worked out with the employers of the chosen facilitators to ensure the availability of their services to MANAGE. The cost incurred on such arrangements and trainings are paid for by MANAGE along with a provision of nominal honoraria to the facilitators. This arrangement helped not only MANAGE to remain slim, updated and effective but also to the facilitators and their organizations. These facilitators also served very well, as the ambassadors of MANAGE core values and carried its image to all corners of the country. This is an arrangement which survives and sustains on the merit of cost effectiveness, optimum use of available expert manpower and mutual benefits to the organizational gains. This knowledge and multiple skill resource base in the form of facilitators keeps MANAGE highly contemporary and futuristic.

2. Decentralization and delegation

Usually, in any Government organization the decentralization and delegation remains a lip service and therefore, these processes do not show up in the operative systems and performance. In MANAGE, the process of decentralization and delegation have taken roots. In order to deliver the mandated activities like training, teaching, research, consultancy and institution

building, the 14 support services are identified, as crucial and important as the mandate itself. A nodal officer is identified for each service and provided with adequate financial and functional authority to facilitate them to perform the service at an acceptable time, cost and quality. They are given with adequate imprest money which not only help them to do the job on time but also prevents unnecessary paper work, approvals/ sanctions and delays. Also it fixes the accountability on the nodal officer for any given service. Some of the services like catering, horticulture, security, house keeping etc. are contracted out which takes away lot of burden from administration.

The list of services for which the nodal officers created are like Director General's Office, Computer Maintenance, Telecommunications, Horticulture and Landscaping, Electrical Maintenance, Hostel Management, Vehicle Maintenance, House Keeping, Civil Maintenance, Audio Visual Systems Maintenance, Library and Documentation Services, General Administration and Stores Maintenance.

Also it was felt necessary that these services must be evaluated and feedbacked by their users and, hence, a feedback mechanism is evolved and implemented in the organization. All the above mentioned services were rated by all the employees of the institute once in a year on a scale of 0-10. It may appear a very non-routine and threatening exercise in the organization but, with an appropriate briefing and rapport to all the concern, the results paved the way for over all improvements. The nodal officers whose services rated poor, are then talk to, in order to understand if there is any gap in the function allotted and the authority provided to them or skill gaps. Accordingly the plan of action was initiated in consultation with the service providers. Initially, some of the poor rated service providers felt, as if this would be a control mechanism to be exercised on the service providers. However, this fear took no time to shed away as the intentions of this feedback were made clear to them and consequently not only the services got improved but also the confidence of the service provider was established into this institutional feedback mechanism.

3. Transparency

Secrecy in itself is not as paralyzing to the system in the organization, as the myth about secrecy. This myth of secrecy is broken in MANAGE. The events, documents and decisions which by now were known only to a select class of people are now available to most of the people in the institution. To name a few, EC/GC agenda, minutes and decisions are known to every one in the organization. Believe it, no damage is done to either people, system or function. When information get shared among the people, it not only enhances sense of ownership but also responsibility and commitment. Information is power, when it get shared in the larger network of people, people become powerful. This itself is a threat to the people who had monopoly on the information and wanted it to be secret.

4. Capacity building

All the staff members in MANAGE across the cadre are encouraged and facilitated to identify the areas in which their capacity need to be built. It began with the faculty members who were sent on various training programs as proposed by them within country and outside. Also the other staff members along with the faculty were trained in the computer and IT skills by NIIT where the cost was shared by the organization and the individual incumbent. All the staff in MANAGE except peons and drivers have functional and professional proficiency to perform their jobs using IT equipment. MANAGE has cut down on the strength of its temporary staff and invested heavily on building the capacity of these regular employees. The stenographers in MANAGE who used to serve the faculty on one-to-one basis are now computer trained professionals serving one and half units. All the staff members other than the faculty are also sent to various training programs within the country in their respective areas of function and improving their performance. The process of decentralization, transparency and capacity building have improved communications and confidence of people tremendously.

Communication is a very significant phenomenon in any organization of this nature. Realizing this, in MANAGE one may find a table without a person

but surely equipped with a telephone and a computer. This only emphasizes the power of communication and communication equipments to raise the effectiveness of the individuals and also of the organization. In order to make the systems user-friendly it was realized that unless all the service providers are well-versed in the use of communication equipment, the efficiency of the core function in the institution cannot be raised. Hence most of the core function deliverers also have undergone the training on computers and also they are provided with the cyber equipped secretarial manpower. This has resulted into a high quality output in terms of training, research, publications, film making, info-connectivity and linkages with other institutions.

5. Health systems

Green and user friendly ambience in MANAGE surely affect the health of the persons work or stay in the campus. An Allopathic system in any case is available where the greater emphasis is on 'Curative Health Management' rather than prevention. Additionally, homeopathy and dental care services become the composite part of the health system available to MANAGE employees. The experiences in MANAGE is that in spite of having more than one system of treatment, the expenditure has come down due to regular health check ups for all age groups of the employees and their family members. Pranik Healing and Yoga are the other therapies organized for the benefit of the employees. It provides a wider option for the employees to choose any health system which suits to them keeping the expenditure at the lowest. MANAGE expenditure on health systems is considerably reduced since the principle of preventive health management with all these therapies put into use.

6. Privatization of services

The services like landscaping, horticulture, housekeeping, catering, security, vehicles etc. are given to the private contractors. This has helped not only improvement in all the services but also works out a cost effective mechanism. To a great extent the administrative and management cadres are able to find enough of time to devote to other activities related to Human Resource Development, Natural Resource Management and Management of Cyber

Equipment and other Machinery and System. The responsibility is fixed on these private service providers with continuous monitoring and regular feedbacking to them by the service users. The sense of responsibility among the staff is of very high order and any slackness in the services noticed by any staff is immediately brought to the notice of the service providers and a prompt action is experienced more often than not.

The culture evolved over the years in MANAGE because of these interventions is of trust, commitment and confidence. One may leave a word with any service provider sounding him as to what kind of service is expected and more often than not the expectations are met. It only highlights the point that job is done without much difficulty and on time without undermining the necessity of official formalities. The issue here is that a function for which an employee exist is important, without compromising on rules and procedures. MANAGE is like any other government organization, but what triggered change is the institutionalization of above mentioned interventions. This has resulted into a significant positive impact on the performance of the organization.

Few lessons from this case are summarized in the following statements.

1. Provide scope of HRD for every one. Imparting right kind of knowledge and skill, create right kind of mind set.
2. Secrecy is more a matter of myth in public organizations. Encounter secrecy with more transparency.
3. Transparency multiplies power of information among people in the organization.
4. Decentralization and delegation reduces channels and layers, thus improves speed and quality of decision.
5. Provide autonomy to people and allow them to commit tolerable mistakes, (only to learn from them). It enhances their initiative and people conduct with greater sense of responsibility.
6. Making intentions clear and 'will' at the top are necessary conditions for such a change.