

POTENTIAL APPRAISAL OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION HUMAN RESOURCE -A SWOT ANALYSIS

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Agricultural development is seen as an increase in agricultural production and / or the productivity of land, labour and capital in agriculture. Agricultural extension is an instrument to promote agricultural development. The proposed Extension policy framework by the Ministry of Agricultural, GOI emphasised that in the context of meeting the holistic needs of increasing agricultural production, and to do so in a sustainable manner, agricultural extension has a crucial role to play. Reforms in the system envisage an extension service that is more broad- based and holistic in content and scope, thus beyond agricultural technology transfer. Its normal task of transferring and disseminating appropriate technologies would not be sufficient. Extension agencies, and workers need to exercise a more proactive and participatory role, serve as knowledge/ information agents, initiating and facilitating mutually meaningful and equitable knowledge based transactions among agricultural researchers, trainer and primary producers. All this needs to be done in an effective and cost efficient manner.

Under the T & V system, the technology dissemination regime was more supply-driven. In the light of the new international trading regime under the WTO and the export opportunities being opened up and also due to paradigm shifts in the agriculture from

- Productivity to profitability
- Subsistence to commercial agriculture
- Green revolution to Evergreen revolution
- Commodity oriented to Farming systems
- Local market to Export- oriented

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- Technology to Eco-technology
- Mono cropping to crop diversity
- Supply driven to Demand driven and
- Exploitative to sustainable agriculture.

There is a need for promotion of farmer participatory, demand-driven and farmer accountable extension. Organisations which are the assembling of interacting human beings collectively seeking to attain common goal, should be sensitive to change. Change has become an inevitable part of life. Organizations that do not change when needed or are not sensitive to the need for change do not survive long. The human resources available to agricultural extension is one of the key elements that affects the success of the system. Organizations need not have more people but more competent people who can recognise the requirements of the profession and improve their competency in accordance with changing times. Competencies are the characteristics of an individual which underlie performance of behaviour at work. Nowadays, competency movement has entered into the human resource scene to identify, evaluate and retain the competent people in the organizations. People require different competencies in dynamic and growth oriented organizations viz., technical, managerial, human and conceptual. The importance of Human Resource Development (HRD) for agricultural extension is increasingly being realized. In the context of the latest changes in the development front, there is a need for a fresh look at the HRD scenario and for necessary efforts to build the capacity and capability for HRD in the emerging issues. This calls for examining the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the human resource in the organisations. With this in mind, an attempt has been made to analyse the potential of Extension scientists through SWOT analysis.

Methodology

The study was planned with scientific human resource working in the only agricultural university in the state of Andhra Pradesh i.e., Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University (ANGRAU). All the teachers, trainers and TOT Scientists serving in ANGRAU with M.Sc(Ag)/Ph.D in Agricultural Extension were

considered for the investigation. At present 64 Scientists are working in the Agricultural Extension discipline in ANGRAU at its centres like Colleges, KVKs, District Agril Advisory and Transfer of Technology centres (DAATTCs), Extension Education Institute, (EEI), Agril. Information & Communication centre (AI & CC), ATIC and Extension Units of ZARS. The questionnaire with a request to indicate their own strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats was sent to all these Agril Extension Scientists. Few simple questions were also asked which reflect the domain under study with a view to obtain as many SWOT items as possible to facilitate the logical discussion, a few attributes mentioned in results were also included in the questionnaire. The responses received from the 45 respondents (70.31%) were analysed by using simple frequency and percentage and ranks are presented for the purpose.

Results and Discussion

The profile analysis based on the few selected attributes is given in Table-1

Table-1 Profile of Agricultural Extension Scientists

n=45

Sl. No.	Attribute	F	%
1	Cadre		
	a) Asst Professor	27	60.00
	b) Assoc. Proffessor	12	26.70
	c) Professor	6	13.30
2.	Nature of Work		
	a) Teaching	6	13.34
	b) Training	6	13.34
	c) Field extension	35	77.78
	d) Administration	2	4.44
3.	Academic qualifications		
	a) Masters degree	17	37.78
	b) Doctoral degree	28	62.22
4.	Age		
	a) Upto 35 years	12	26.67
	b) 35 to 50 years	21	46.66
	c) 50 and above	12	26.67

It is seen from the Table 1 that a majority of the respondents (60.00%) were Assistant Professors followed by Associate Professors (26.70%) and Professors (13.30%). There is a scope for sharpening the abilities of the Asst Professors as a major force through career planning, counselling, training and development mechanisms so as to mould their behaviour towards achieving goals for excellence. Most of the scientists (78%) are working in field extension i.e., in KVKs, DATTCs, ZARSs and Communication centre. The main job of the scientist working in these field units is to develop a data base, identify the needs, prepare action plans, train the stake holders, village adoption, content generation and dissemination to educate the farmers on reducing the cost of cultivation by 15% and increase productivity by 15% in the wake of WTO.

A majority (62.22%) of the scientists possessed Doctorate Degree in Extension Education while 37.78 per cent were having basic qualification of M.Sc (Ag). The facility of deputation for inservice candidates for higher degree leading to Ph.D helped the 19 respondents to acquire Doctorates. This clearly shows the interest of the organisation in Human Resource Development for growth. About 47.00 per cent of the respondents are belonged to the age group of 35 to 50 years while rest of these were equally distributed under upto 35 years and 50 & above categories.

A. Strengths

Every employee requires the highlighting of his strengths. His strong areas need to be known and capitalized. An effort in this regard could see the employee performing to the best of his potential. The strengths identified as perceived by the respondents are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2 Strengths of Agricultural Extension Scientists. n = 45

Sl. No.	Strength	Frequency	Rank
1	Hard working	36	III
2.	Expertise	32	IV
3.	Self confidence	24	VIII
4.	Empathetic ability	31	V
5.	Self motivation	27	VII
6.	Optimistic attitude	29	VI
7.	Job commitment	41	I
8.	Positiveness	38	II

As seen from the results, job commitment was found to be the major strength of the respondents. This shows that they perceive a particular job as useful, emotionally attaches himself to the ideals of a job to extend loyalty and there by making him obligatory rather than mandatory to perform better to the maximum extent. 'positiveness' and 'Hard working' of the respondents should be exploited by the organisation, through assigning productive tasks as these are the characteristics of true extension functionaries.

The 'Expertise' is considered as specialist knowledge, skills, know how, competence and capacity to perform difficult activities. Extension Scientist are always concerned with doing difficult activities like teaching and training of abstract subjects, convincing/ motivating people of having unlimited treasure of knowledge, while maintaining pace with rapidly changing technologies. Thanks to the DAATTCs a successful innovation in technology dissemination was introduced by ANGRAU by reorganising its Extension Education units. The working Experience in this centres and KVKs might have made them experts in their area of work.

The Empathetic ability' which is a basic feature of an ideal extension worker was the other strength identified. This trait distinguishes them from the crop scientists. Due to this ability, extension scientist could work for the satisfaction of the stake holders compared to others. The 'Optimistic attitude' of the extension human resource is really a strength that an organisation can exploit to attain the goal of extension mandate 'Reach the unreached' an individual should be a self starter in life. It should be his endeavour to set his own goals and finish them within his own prescribed time limits. The self motivation and self confidence would pave the way to set their realistic goals and succeed both in their professional and personal life. It is genuine to expect that higher degree of self confidence helps an individual in motivating himself by increasing his decision making ability, as stated in the theory of transactional analysis by Berne (1964).

B. Weaknesses

Not only the strengths, it is equally important to realise the areas of improvement of an employee and help him to overcome it. The identified

weaknesses of the respondents have been given in Table 3

Table 3 Weaknesses of Agricultural Extension Scientists **n = 45**

Sl. No.	Weakness	Frequency	Rank
1	Junior in Service	27	IV
2.	Poor drafting skills	18	V
3.	Poor participatory management skills	34	III
4.	No exposure to I.T.	40	I
5.	Less professional interaction	36	II

It could be noticed that 'no exposure to IT' was the major weakness. Development of computers and improvements in telecommunications offer farmers many new opportunities to obtain technical and economic information quickly and use it effectively for decision making. Communication technologies can range from low cost radio and videos to networked environments involving computers and satellites to expert systems, interactive video disc and Geographical Information systems. The extension scientists therefore have rightly recognised the area for improvement. The Less professional interaction was the other weakness recognised. Professional interaction will help the scientists to come to know about the happenings outside the box. Hence, frequent interaction meetings at least once in a year may be thought of for extension scientists to share the ideas. The 'poor participatory management skills' and 'poor drafting skills' were also identified as their weaknesses. The whole world is now moving around participatory approaches to involve all the players of the gaming the process. Drafting is a skill necessary to inform the readers / stakeholders about the technologies in a concise and convincing form, particularly in the wake of WTO which requires educating farmers on the cost reduction technologies.

Though the seniority should be respected and recognised, the junior scientist should also be recognised and given challenging jobs. Majority (60.00%) of the respondents were of Asst. Professor cadre. Given an opportunity, junior scientists will also prove their metal. This also helps them in experiential learning and mould them in a way what their organisation wants. Not giving an opportunity for conducting meetings with senior level people, participation in State, National and International level seminars / workshops / conferences,

guiding P.G students and undertaking research projects, might have made the respondents to feel that 'Junior in service' is a weakness.

C. Opportunities

The opportunities spelt out by the respondents are given in Table 4

Table 4 Opportunities of Agricultural Extension Scientists n = 45

Sl.No.	Opportunity	Frequency	Rank
1	Higher qualification	28	V
2.	Creativity	42	I
3.	Preparedness	34	III
4.	Research and guidance skills	30	IV
5.	Team spirit	36	II

'Creativity' emerged as the major potential as perceived by the respondents. Employees with creativity as career driver do things that are distinctly different from others, and they want to own the results. According to Shivkhera (2002), winners don't do different things, they do things differently. The Doctoral qualification coupled with rich experience in field extension might have contributed for their creativity. 'Team Spirit' was the other potential identified. In the present organisational context, majority of the functions require strong team work for achieving success. Team work is the element for an employee to perform to his optimum level and win laurels for his team and the organisation as a whole.

'Preparedness' is one of the quality of an extension worker who is supposed to deal with mostly varied personalities of various stake holders at various levels. The 'research and guidance skills' and 'Higher qualification' were the other potentials perceived. The extension Scientists working in field units particularly DAATTCs, KVKs and at RARSs can also be given an opportunity to guide the M.Sc (Ag) and Ph.D students depending on the competencies and resources they have. This enable the scientists to further sharpen their skills through attending Colloquiums and improved professional interactions.

D. Threats

The perceived threats by the respondents for discharging their duties are presented in the Table 5

Table 5 Threats of Agricultural Extension Scientists

n = 45

Sl.No.	Threat	Frequency	Rank
1	Feeling of transfer at any time	39	I
2.	Rapidly changing technology	18	V
3.	Poor recognition	32	II
4.	Less scope for career development	24	III
5.	Heavy work load	22	IV
6.	Frustrated fellow scientists	14	VI

A cursory look at the data indicated that 'Feeling of transfer at any time' was the major threat posed to the respondents. Transfer policy could only solve this problem and make the employees mentally prepared to work in places of their work comfortably with strategic extension plans. 'Poor recognition' was also the threat identified. Proper recognition from both superiors and colleagues of other disciplines at their centre could boost up the performance of the employee. People work for money, but need love, care, praise and recognition to go that extra mile. Clearcut job specifications and allowing the extension scientists to do technology related work could find solution for this problem.

The HRD sub systems like man power planning, counselling and motivation and rewards helps the organisations in taking care of threats like heavy work load less scope for growth and frustrated employees. Being extension personnel working at field units, they are supposed to cope with all the extension programmes at gross root level with a major focus on TAR, Kisan melas, capacity building programmes, and other dissemination works. Since most of them are working in DAATTCs and KVKs whose area of operation is more, they might have felt that 'Heavy work load, as the threat. The prospects of career growth

in the organisation enhances employee performance, boosts up their morale and motivation. The respondents could notice rightly that 'Rapidly changing technology' was the threat. Frequent interactions with higher ups, participation in national and international level workshops could help him/her to keep pace with rapid changes and face the challenges.

Conclusion

The study has brought out the potentials of Agricultural Extension Scientists through perceived strengths like job commitment and positiveness; weakness like no exposure to IT and less professional interaction, opportunities like creativity and team spirit; and threats viz., feeling of transfer at any time and poor recognition.

The strong areas need to be capitalized and the areas of improvement should be realized to help the extension human resource to overcome them through planned and continuous counselling and training and development. Challenging work environment, encouragement, creativity and out of the box thinking, placement of individuals based on their competencies provide positive stroke for the human resource to exploit their potential.

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