



Participatory Knowledge Sharing among Agricultural Extension Professional on Organic Farming Practices

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ABSTRACT

The present study evaluates the participatory training programmes conducted on organic farming methods for the agricultural extension professional of Medak district, Telangana. The extension workers cutting across 46 mandals of the district covering State Agricultural Department and voluntary organisations working at the grassroot level were purposively sampled and the knowledge levels were studied before and after these participatory trainings by a structured questionnaire. Based on the findings, the middle aged extension professional age group of 31-45 yr were mostly playing a key role in disseminating the agricultural information at the grassroot level of the district and still there is a need of frequent up gradation of their knowledge. This study had shown that extension professionals with hierarchically superior designation found to be dealing extension matters in a better way and were promoting extension methods better, than any other professional.

Key Words: Extension, Organic farming, Participatory training, Extension workers.

INTRODUCTION

The grassroot level extension personnel play a key role in transfer of agricultural technologies and knowledge in farming community in our country. Radhakrishna and Thomson (1996) further stated that extension agents particularly require experiential learning that provides them with opportunities to relate to rural people in an interactive process that combines scientific technical knowledge with local indigenous knowledge in client-oriented problem solving activities whereas Ferroni and Zhou (2011) reported that the intervention of technically sound, well trained and equipped extension personnel at the grass root level was lacking. There is a critical need for a large number of well-trained extension workers in many developing countries (Crowder, 1996). The knowledge intensive agriculture plays a pivotal role in case of agricultural development in countries like India. The primary need to enhance the knowledge requires a critical appraisal of knowledge sharing process, where in ultimate stakeholders keep them abreast with the latest technical knowhow. In this perspective, the participatory technology

development through participatory knowledge sharing enhance the efficiency of stakeholders to apply the knowledge and to get optimum benefit from the applied knowledge. In such a resilient research niche, the present paper has envisaged to explore the areas of participatory knowledge sharing among the agricultural extension professional in the lime lighted issue like organic farming.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted at Deccan Development Society-Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Medak, Sangareddy, Telangana where participatory training programmes on bio-diversity based organic farming methods were conceptualized and organised for district agricultural extension officials, ATMA staff and Indira Kranti Patham (IKP) extension staff of DRDA who were directly working with the farmers at the grassroot level in the district. Through a participatory extension methods, three days training were conducted for 205 extension workers cutting across 46 mandals of the district and various persons from different

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Table 1. Distribution of extension professional as per department & designation.

Sr. No.	Designation	Departments	No. of Officials	(JDA: Joint Director Agriculture, ADA: Asst. Director Agriculture, MAO: Mandal Agriculture Officer, MAEO: Mandal Agriculture Extension Officer of State Agricultural Department, BTM: Block Technology Manager & ATM: Asst. Technology Manager of ATMA, APM: Asst. Project Manager, CC: Cluster Coordinators of IKP, DRDA)
1	JDA	State Dept. of Agriculture	1	
2	ADA		11	
3	MAO		30	
4	MAEO		40	
	Total		82	
5	BTM	ATMA	22	
6	ATM		25	
	Total		47	
7	APM (IKP)	DRDA	50	
8	CC (IKP)		26	
	Total		76	
	Grand total		205	

designations of State Agricultural Department and voluntary organisations were purposively sampled and knowledge levels were studied before and after these participatory trainings through a pre and post evaluation questionnaire on organic farming practices. Based on the difference in the score obtained by the respondents in the pre and post evaluation the knowledge gained score was calculated. The data were processed using statistical tools like frequency, percentage, correlation and regression was used to draw a conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The distribution of grassroot level extension professional working in the district is presented in the Table 1. There were 82 extension professionals in district agriculture department, 47 extension professionals in ATMA and 76 extension workers in Indira KrantiPatham (IKP) staff of DRDA who were closely working in the villages.

Nearly 90 percent (89.27%) of the respondents were in the age group between 20 and 45 yr. The data (Table 2) indicated that the middle aged extension professional were playing a key role to disseminate the agricultural information in the grassroot level of the district. The respondents under the age group 20-30 yr were 43.41 percent that reveals a crucial

fact that the young extension professionals were also taking more initiative in case of state extension activities. According to the gender, the extension professional in the operational district were mostly belonging to the male gender (81.46%), still there is a need of incorporating women in the human resource pool of state extension system. Regarding education, about 46.34 percent of them were graduate and 37.56 percent of them have done diploma in agriculture. In work experience, 50.24 percent of the extension personal in the district were having upto 5 yr of expericence, 22.93 percent of them were holding upto 10 yr and 3 percent were having more than 20 yr of expericence, while, more than 50 percent of the agriculture extension professional had very little experience (1-5 yr) to deal with extension methods in the grassroot level.

The highly designated extension professional had the experience in case of dealing extension matters in a better way and the development of interest in case of promoting extension methods at the grass root level was more prominent than any other professional. They were innovative, experienced, endeavoured and in search of agriculture knowledge, and utilizing them in grassroot level extension through appropriate extension methodology and this may be the possible

Knowledge Sharing among Agricultural Extension

Table 2. Distribution of extension professionals as per personal and professional profile.

Sr. No.	Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age	20-30 Yr	89	43.41
		31-45 Yr	94	45.85
		46 Yrs and above	22	10.73
2.	Gender	Male	167	81.46
		Female	38	18.54
3.	Marital Status	Single	169	82.44
		Married	36	17.56
4.	Education	10th Standard	29	14.15
		12th Standard/ Diploma	77	37.56
		Graduation	95	46.34
		Post-Graduation (Ag)	4	1.95
5.	Experience	1-5 Yr	103	50.24
		6-10 Yr	47	22.93
		11-15 Yr	32	15.61
		16-20 Yr	17	8.29
		More than 20Yr	6	2.93

reason for the significant and positive relationships between designation and knowledge gained in the of participatory training on organic farming (Table 3). On the other hand, variable gender was negatively and significantly associated with the dependent variable knowledge gained by the extension professional in participatory training. Women have shown negatively significant association with the knowledge gained. Based on the interest, motherly attitude in working with the people, higher degree of participation and mobilization in the trainings, women extension professional at the grass root level were gaining much more knowledge through these participatory methods and they have the capacity to retain this knowledge and utilize it in disseminating the agricultural information to the farmers within the district.

The variable gender was significantly and negatively contributing in characterizing the dependent variable knowledge gained by the extension professional in participatory training programme on organic farming (Table 4).

Table 3. Correlation Coefficient of Knowledge with attributes of Extension Professional.

Sr. No.	Variable	Coefficient of correlation (r)
1.	Designation	0.165
2.	Age	0.030
3.	Gender	-0.267*
4.	Marital Status	0.073
5.	Education	0.133
6.	Experience	-0.064

* 1% level of significance.

This depicted that women play important role in case of mobilizing the agricultural technologies in a better way within themselves. In addition to that the women extension professional were much more attentive to take the knowledge from the training programme and they were attributed to work with the local people in an emphatic way. On the other hand, the variable education was positively and significantly contributing the dependent variable knowledge gained in participatory training

Table 4. Regression analysis of Knowledge gained with attributes of Extension Professional.

Sr. No.	Variable	Standardized regression coefficient (β)	Unstandardized regression coefficient (B)	S.E of 'B'	t-value
1.	Designation	0.143	0.189	0.115	1.639
2.	Age	0.061	0.016	0.028	0.564
3.	Gender	-0.227	-1.337	0.447	-2.992**
4.	Marital Status	0.035	0.210	0.493	0.426
5.	Education	0.154	0.421	0.203	2.077*
6.	Experience	-0.062	-0.023	0.041	-0.574

R²= 0.113, * 5% level of significance, ** 1% level of significance.

programme on organic farming. It may be their higher educational exposure through which they have developed their favourable attitude towards any new technology and improved their capacity to understand and retain the knowledge and skill required for disseminating those technologies to the village level.

The R square value being 0.113 that meaning all the six variables put together has explained 11.30 per cent variations embedded with the independent variable knowledge gained by the extension professional form the participatory training programme on organic farming. The results indicated that there was a need of incorporating more number of situations specific contextual and impact enabled predicted variable in the student to increase the explicability.

CONCLUSION

The middle aged extension professional i.e age group of 31 to 45 yr were mostly playing a key role in disseminating the agricultural information at the grassroot level and extension professional with hierarchically superior designation have found to be dealing extension matters in a better way and were promoting extension methods at the grassroot

level better than any other professional. Like wise, where majority (66.18%) of the rural agriculture extension officers were under middle age group with higher level of education upto graduation and were more active with the job performance. Eventhough women extension professional were less in number and have shown negative correlation with the knowledge gained in the participatory training programme based on the higher degree of their interest and participation in the participatory trainings programme on organic farming. It can be expressed that they were capable of gaining more knowledge and can retain knowledge and play key role in disseminating agricultural knowledge to the farmers.

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