



MY MEETING NOTES

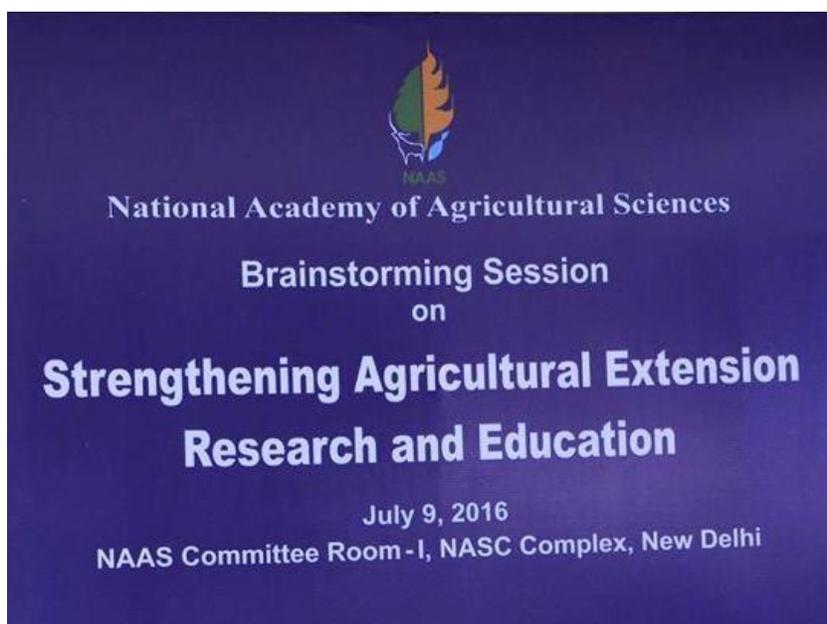
**Brainstorming Session on Strengthening Agricultural Extension Research and Education
9, July 2016, New Delhi
Organized by
National Academy of Agricultural Sciences**



The National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) organizes Brainstorming Sessions (BSS) on contemporary issues from time to time. On 9 July 2016, a BSS was organized on Strengthening Agricultural Extension Research and Education. Dr Mahesh Chander narrates his experience of participation in this BSS.

THE CONTEXT

The quality of research and education in the field of Agricultural Extension has remained a core concern over the past two decades. The National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) rightly and appreciably organized a brainstorming session (BSS) on this issue of national importance on 9 July 2016 at New Delhi. 45 Extension professionals, representing ICAR research centres, State Agricultural Universities, Central Universities and NGOs participated in this event. This meeting recognized that extension professionals need new capacities to deal with the changing environment. The participants discussed the importance of strengthening research and teaching in agricultural extension and the need for developing policies that support extension services.



The meeting was chaired by Dr S. Ayyappan, Former DG, ICAR and President NAAS. Dr A K Singh, DDG (Agricultural Extension), ICAR, was the convener and Chief architect of BSS. The participants were a good mix of retired extension luminaries like Dr C Prasad, Dr V V Sadamate, Dr B S Hansra, Dr P N Mathur, scientists and faculty, both young and experienced ones including the Directors of ATARI, Heads of Divisions, Directors of Extension of SAUs etc.



THE PROGRAMME

Dr A K Singh, DDG (Agricultural Extension), ICAR, The Convener of BSS, welcomed the participants with his introductory remarks. He provided an overview of the topic “Strengthening Agricultural Extension Research and Education” through a well-prepared Power Point Presentation. The overview was a good snapshot of the theme, encompassing all the issues gathered at one platform.

The next topic, “Current Status of Agricultural Extension Research” in India and the way forward was handled by Dr R Parshad. He is well known for his acumen, gravity and deep insights into rigorous research methodology. He made a crisp presentation on the methodological weaknesses in extension research, while giving examples of good research outcomes due to application of sound research designs. This is one area we extensionists must pay maximum attention, since most of us lack necessary capacities in this relatively difficult domain. Very rightly, he said extension research remains mostly analysis confined to nominal and ordinal levels, sometimes to interval level, but hardly we have studies done with analysis at the ratio

level. He said that with this level of analysis, we cannot think of publishing papers in high-rated journals. .

Dr J P Sharma, Joint Director (Agricultural Extension), ICAR, Indian Agriculture Research Institute, spoke about current priorities and various schemes of government in the agricultural sector. He emphasized that extensionists have to develop good understanding of these priorities and programs for best possible implementation. He cautioned about the inherent risks in not preparing oneself on these emerging challenges, priorities and schemes announced by the government. For instance, the government has announced doubling of farmers' income. This is a big challenge requiring high level of preparedness. The issue is raising income and not the productivity alone. The new challenges due to climate change, global trade scenario, organic farming etc need to be understood by extension functionaries in right perspective, he remarked.

Dr R N Padaria, Professor (Agricultural Extension), ICAR- Indian Agriculture Research Institute, New Delhi made an elaborate presentation on the courses being undertaken at IARI. Over and above the prescribed ICAR syllabus, the audit/non-credit courses being proposed made his presentation more meaningful. Many would agree that the curriculum needs rethinking considering the changing requirements, where we have to look at agriculture as business and agri-preneurship. We need now extension services not only for production advice but also for entire value chain. It is the job of agricultural extension professionals to tell farmers what they are going to do with the produce. Whereas, we are not prepared for this new role since we are trained to or used to old paradigm of prescribing only the production advice to farmers. The change in syllabus may be the task of Education Division of ICAR. However, the NAAS or Agricultural Extension Division of ICAR may consider forming a working group to oversee the course curriculum. The presentation of Dr Padaria was followed by intervention by Dr Premlata Singh (Head, Division of Agricultural Extension, IARI).

Appreciably, almost all the participants were given the opportunity to speak-up, so many ideas could be gathered as intended by the organizers. The meeting also discussed the issue of lack of standard text book in Agricultural Extension. Not many authors are coming forward for writing text books despite encouragement by ICAR on this front. Another issue that was discussed was the low quality of extension journals including very low Impact factor and poor rating by NAAS. The major suggestions were to improve the quality of research, employing rigorous methodology, statistical tools, techniques, larger sample in well-funded research projects. Most of the research in extension is done by the students with time and fund limitations.

MY OBSERVATIONS

Failing to build on previous initiatives

I attended one similar kind of BSS organized by the NAAS on "Role of Social Science in National Agricultural Research System (NARS)" on 23rd May, 2015. Dr. Mruthyunjaya, Former National Director, National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP), acted as Convenor of that meeting.

Over 25 leading experts in different social sciences including myself participated in this BSS. The BSS discussed the lack of clarity on the potential role of social scientists in the system and also the lack of critical mass.



The report of this BSS in the form of Status/Strategy paper was published by NAAS (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0TX5SvS4IMROTE2NXlvcUQxQIU/view?usp=sharing>) and I consider this as an excellent reference document. This report has observations on research and education in agricultural extension too. It could have served as a very good starting point to develop the base paper of the current BSS on Strengthening Agricultural Extension Research and Education. However, the base paper prepared for the 9 July meeting didn't even mention about the previous NAAS consultation. The paper failed to build on the recommendation of the previous NAAS event.

Lack of adequate pre-meeting consultation:

The base paper prepared for this meeting was not widely circulated prior to the meeting (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B44Jp4WgOL3uZ21pTFRrTTAzY0E/view>). If the base paper was circulated in advance, it could have helped the participants give their inputs/comments in writing. This view was aired and shared by many participants who did not receive the base paper to comment upon. However, I could submit my comments which were thankfully circulated to the participants.

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0TX5SvS4IMRWmtZnk03MFBtTWs/view?usp=sharing>).

Appreciably, the proceeding of 2nd meeting of Indian Extension Network mailed by me to the organizers was also circulated.

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0TX5SvS4IMRTERIWmtPNGR1UVk/view?usp=sharing>).

The base paper could have been sufficiently benefitted and enriched, if supported by relevant publications on similar lines. For instance publications like “Reorienting agricultural extension curricula in India” by Rasheed Sulaiman V and Anne W van den Ban (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B44Jp4Wg0L3uYVlhWIRQX19ZUWs/view?usp=sharing>) and reports from latest Deans committee could have strengthened the base paper to build upon. Perhaps due to time constraint, many more ideas could not be included in the base paper prepared for the BSS.

The number of participants (45) was considered good and appreciated by the NAAS President, since the other BSSs organized by NAAS usually has about 25 participants. Many others (based on their contributions in the field) not necessarily by designation or posts they were holding could have attended. For Instance, Dr Rasheed Sulaiman V could not make it to the meeting despite invitation due to some apparent communication gap, but he happened to be sincere enough to send his comments on the base paper prior to the meeting (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0TX5SvS4IMRVy1GeXhCZFNQWjg/view?usp=sharing>).

These comments in my opinion are very useful for drafting the policy note on the issue. Similarly, other professionals who in recent years have been writing on the issue of extension research and teaching such as Professor S V N Rao and Dr R M Prasad could also have been invited to this meeting.

AESA (Agricultural Extension in South Asia) Blogs on Research in Extension:

1. RESEARCH IN EXTENSION: NEW TOOLS TO REINVENT ITS FUTURE, Dr P Sethuraman Sivakumar. March, 2013. Available at: <http://www.aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/Blog%204%20Enhancing%20the%20potential%20of%20quality%20videos%20for%20farmers.pdf>
2. RESEARCH IN EXTENSION: IT IS TIME TO INTROSPECT, Dr R. M. Prasad. March, 2013. Available at: <http://www.aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/Blog%205-Research%20in%20Extension%20It%20is%20time%20to%20introspect.pdf>
3. EXTENSION RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT, Dr M J Chandra Gowda, Dr Sreenath Dixit, Dr R Roy Burman & Dr P N Ananth. February, 2014. Available at: http://www.aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/FINAL-M_J_Chandre%20Gowda-13-FEB.pdf
4. EXTENSION RESEARCH: RANDOM THOUGHTS FROM A WELL WISHER, Dr R M Prasad. September 2014. Available at: <http://www.aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/Prasad%20Sir-%20Blog%2039-FINAL.pdf>
5. SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING IN EXTENSION: ARE WE DOING ENOUGH AND ARE WE DOING WELL?, Dr S V N Rao, Dr K Natchimuthu and Dr S Ramkumar. October 2014. Available at: <http://www.aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/Blog%2040.pdf>
6. NEGOTIATING REALITY: A PRAGMATIC APPROACH FOR CONDUCTING QUALITY EXTENSION RESEARCH, Dr P Sethuraman Sivakumar. February 2015. Available at: [http://www.aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/RSeds-12FEB-2015%20final%20over%20Blog%2044%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/RSeds-12FEB-2015%20final%20over%20Blog%2044%20(1).pdf)

7. NEW ADVANCES IN EXTENSION RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES-PART 1, Dr P Sethuraman Sivakumar. June 2015. Available at: <http://www.aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/Blog%2049-1June-Sethuraman.pdf>
8. TOWARDS EXTENSION EDUCATION REFORMS 2.0: THE REALITIES, EXPECTATIONS AND IMPERATIVES, Mr Sreeram Vishnu and Dr Jancy Gupta. October 2015. Available at: <http://www.aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/Blog%2052.pdf>

Will these recommendations be implemented?

Considering the previous experiences with regard to implementation, I doubt whether the recommendations of this meeting will be implemented. For instance, in 1996, the ICAR,- National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research, organized a *Consultation on Social Science Education in Agriculture*. The recommendations of that meeting still remain unimplemented (http://www.ncap.res.in/upload_files/workshop/wsp3.pdf).

I attended a BSS on “*Methodological Issues in Extension Researches: Way Forward*”, organized nationwide at different locations as per the directive of ICAR vide letter No. F.No.20-12/2013/Ae-1 Dated 15th April, 2013.” I compiled the proceedings of this BSS as the facilitator at G B Pant University of Agriculture & Technology, Pantnagar (Uttarakhand) on 26th April, 2013. The recommendations from this meeting have also not been implemented so far.



(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0TX5SvS4IMRREFZVVITNGtwVFE/view?usp=sharing>).

I wonder if there is any mechanism to see that the recommendations from these types of meetings are followed up by the implementing bodies like various divisions of ICAR or other departments.

FINAL REMARKS

It was a good and memorable event for the extension professionals. Dr Ayyappan gave his concluding remarks and he appreciated the role of Dr A K Singh in gathering a large number of extension professionals for this event. He told that the role models in extension discipline are not visible whom extensionists can follow or policy makers can look upon and consider for their views. He suggested following points to ponder:

1. Improving the standard of extension education journals following professional approach in screening the papers and editing.
2. Developing a Database on extension professionals engaged in teaching and research.
3. Taking up some long term extension experiments since most of the extension researches are short term and quick analysis based which don't give valid results to depend on.
4. Preparing a policy paper on agricultural extension research and education for which views must be gathered beyond this BSS during the next 10 days.

Dr M P Yadav, former Director IVRI & Vice Chancellor Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Agricultural University and Secretary, NAAS, proposed vote of thanks.

RECOMMENDATIONS & WAYS FORWARD

The ideas which came up in the course of discussion are presented as under:

1. The standard text books on prescribed courses including a Handbook on Agricultural Extension may be published which ICAR can support through the Directorate of Knowledge Management in Agriculture (DKMA).
2. Improving the quality of research, employing rigorous methodology, statistical tools, techniques, larger sample through well-funded research projects.
3. Policies are better when these are framed based on evidences. The return on extension investment for instance is not well supported by evidence generated through systematic research. To convince policy makers about the role of extension, there is a need to find out the contribution of extension to productivity or farmers' income in percentage terms.
4. Experimental studies need to be taken up.
5. Interestingly, issue also came up whether agricultural extension be grouped with social sciences instead of agricultural sciences. With 4-5 years of undergraduate degrees in agriculture/veterinary and fisheries sciences, does 2 years of Master's in Extension Education make us more eligible for social science than in the respective undergraduate degrees. Well this is debatable and merits and demerits need to be weighed upon.
6. The extensionists need some core courses in basic discipline as per the mandate of the institution they work with. For instance if an extensionist is posted in a veterinary institution, s/he must have elementary knowledge of animal husbandry.
7. Network Project on extension was re-emphasised.
8. National workshop on writing skills was suggested to brush-up writing skills of extension professionals
9. It is an issue of concern that there are no National Fellows/National Professors/NAAS Fellows in Agricultural Extension.



10. The Directors of Extension in SAUs should be capable enough to provide leadership to extension professionals working under them.
11. Ethics and lack of professionalism was echoed and it was urged that the extensionists must introspect where they stand as far as professional delivery of extension services to the farmers as also discipline in teaching and conducting research is concerned. The indicators of professionalism need to be developed to rate the level of professionalism among extension functionaries at different levels.
12. To regularly invite suggestions from the extension professionals, virtual platforms like Facebook/Whatsapp/Blogs should be created so that views for improvement in the discipline can be explored and needed changes are brought about in due course.
13. Many courses in Extension discipline at Master's or PhD level have overlapping content. Such courses may be merged and space may be created for new courses which promote/inculcate entrepreneurship, agri-business, develop soft and brokering skills, value chain extension capabilities among the students.
14. The house was unanimous in their view that extension professionals lack capacities to deal with new challenges. So capacity building programmes including possibilities of training abroad to scientists and faculty must be explored.
15. Evidence must be generated to convince policy makers that KVKs/Extension Education units have relevance and important role in improving productivity.
16. Pluralism in extension services delivery must be supported by encouraging public private partnership, involving input dealers, enterprising farmers, corporates etc.
17. There are many extension societies which are organizing seminars and conferences with little impact. If these are merged to have only a robust extension society, may be organizing only one conference in a year would be beneficial for the Agricultural extension discipline.
18. The Agricultural Technology Application Research Institute (ATARI) is an important institutional innovation. It has to provide much needed leadership role at Zonal level in respective area of their operations as far as applied research in agricultural extension is concerned.
19. The extensionists must do introspection and soul searching while complaining about lack of attention to their demands.
20. The extension discipline is lagging behind when we compare it with other social sciences like Agricultural economics for the want developing new research tools, conceptualizing new methodologies etc.
21. The database of extension professionals in the country is not available though the number of extension functionaries in KVKs is now known. How many teachers and extension scientists are in India if somebody wants to know, there is no clear answer to this question.



22. There was optimistic note that extensionists can publish in high rated journals and Impact factors up to 9-10, provided they follow internationally accepted research methodologies developed by social science groups based in developed countries. It requires collaborations, networking & partnerships. Some extension professionals have already met such requirements and could publish in high impact factor journals.

Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy		aesa Agricultural Extension in South Asia		Details of Journals where extension research could be published		
S.N	Jrnl ID	ISSN	Name of the Journal	NAAS ¹ Rating	Other Rating	Publisher Details
Extension Journals						
1.	A222	0971-3115	Asian Journal of Extension Education (Maharashtra Journal of Extension Education)	2.93		
2.	1041	0537-1996	Indian Journal of Extension Education	3.26		Indian Society of Extension Education, Division of Agricultural Extension, IARI, New Delhi Website : www.isee.org.in
3.	1082	0972-2181	Indian Research Journal of Extension Education	3.92		Dr. Jitendra Chauhan Secretary, Society of Extension Education, Agra 810, Paschim Puri, Agra (UP)- 242007, India Web: http://www.seea.org.in/frisee.html
4.	1136	2319-7188	International Journal of Extension Education	4.15		The International Society of Extension Education, Department of Extension Education, College of Agriculture, Maharaibagh, Nagpur-440 001 (M.S.) INDIA Web: http://inseeworld.com/journal_publication.htm

For more details visit: <http://aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/Where%20we%20can%20publish%20extension%20research%20-%20Final%20Note.pdf>

23. Virtual classrooms should be set up so that the best in the subject can teach the students all over the country.

24. Coming out with one standard definition of Extension Education is also a challenge for extensionists as there are over 25 definitions given by lot many professionals as per their situations.

On the whole, this BSS provided a professionally stimulating & enriching environment, for which the organizers deserve great appreciation.

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