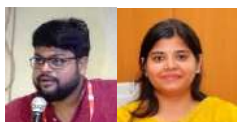




MY MEETING NOTES

National Youth Professionals Development Program on New Competencies,
Career Opportunities and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension
July 22-26, 2024 | SOA University, Bhubaneswar
In collaboration with MANAGE, Hyderabad



Satyabrata and Ruchi contemplate their participation in the National Youth Professionals Development Program, which MANAGE and Siksha 'O' Anusandhan University arranged from July 22-26, 2024.

CONTEXT

The dimensions and pace of agriculture have changed over the years, and so has the role of Agricultural Extension, both in theory and practice. Reorientation of the discipline is required to meet the evolving needs of agricultural stakeholders through multifaceted and modern approaches. The National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), being the apex body of Agricultural Extension in the country, has been instrumental in taking new initiatives such as reorganizing the course structure at the postgraduate level and providing capacity development initiatives through its University Alliance for all stakeholders.



Under this University Alliance, MANAGE, in collaboration with Siksha 'O' Anusandhan University (SOA), organized the National Youth Professionals Development Program on New Competencies, Career Opportunities, and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension from July 22-26, 2024, at SOA University, Bhubaneswar. The program aimed to familiarize participants with emerging areas in extension research, practice, and policy and to explore new competencies, career opportunities, and research priorities in the discipline. The five-day program had 60 participants from 8 states and 15 universities, including 41 Doctoral Scholars, 13 MSc. Students, and 6 Assistant Professors.

The program was meticulously structured and carried out by Dr. Saravanan Raj (Director, Agricultural Extension) and Dr. Sandipamu Rahalya (MANAGE Fellow) from MANAGE Hyderabad, and Dr. Pranoy Ray (Assistant Professor) and Dr. Anshuman Jena (Associate Professor) from SOA University, Bhubaneswar. The broad focus of the 5-day program was as follows:

Evolving Agricultural Extension, Research traditions, Approaches and Tools

Gender Research, Indigenous Knowledge System and Capacity Development for AEP

Global Opportunities, Extension for Organic Farming, Entrepreneurship and Gender Equality

Social Science Research, Climate Resilient Agriculture and Monitoring & Evaluation

Agricultural Extension strategies to Climate Change and Competencies for AEP and Human Decision Modelling

PROGRAM SUMMARY AND KEY LEARNINGS

Day 1: Evolving Agricultural Extension Research Traditions, Approaches, and Tools

Focus:

The focus of agricultural development in India has shifted from addressing food scarcity post-independence to ensuring nutritional security and strengthening climate resilience today. Extension Advisory Services (EAS) need to reorient their strategies to meet these changing priorities. New actors, including private sector players, NGOs, farmer organizations, and ICT applications, are now providing EAS. To keep pace, EAS must reorganize through the 3Rs: Reawakening, Reforming, and Revisioning. Initiatives by MANAGE and ICAR, such as updating curricula for postgraduate courses, were timely steps in strengthening EAS.



Key Learnings:

- **Reorientation of Research:** Shifting from traditional models to innovative approaches like developing new paradigms, pathways, and methods.
- **Capacity Development:** The need to upgrade skills and competencies through structured training programs aligned with modern agricultural challenges.

Reflections:

The sessions by Dr. Saravanan Raj and Dr. P. Sethuraman Sivakumar provided a critical reality check on current research practices and inspired a forward-thinking approach in EAS.

Day 2: Gender Research, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and Capacity Development

Focus:

Setting research priorities is critical, with a need to focus on modern and scientific approaches at global, national, and regional levels. Gender and social inclusion in agriculture remain key areas, highlighted by a 2019 survey where 79% of Indian respondents agreed that men should have more job rights than women when jobs are scarce. Addressing such gaps requires prioritizing awareness and capacity development.



Key Learnings:

- **Gender and Social Inclusion:** Addressing gender gaps in agriculture by following the 3Rs: Recognizing gendered contributions, Reinforcing gendered access, and Removing barriers.
- **Indigenous Knowledge:** Integrating traditional practices into modern agricultural research to preserve biodiversity and enhance resilience.

Reflections:

The interactive sessions by Dr. Meghajt Sharma, Dr. Bibhudha Parashar, and Dr. Mahamaya Prasad Nayak emphasized the critical role of EAS professionals in promoting inclusive agricultural practices and preserving IKS.

Day 3: Global Opportunities, Extension for Organic Farming, and Entrepreneurship

Focus:

This day explored global opportunities in extension, organic farming, and entrepreneurship, highlighting the skills needed to thrive in these areas.



Key Learnings:

- **Skill Requirements:** Identifying and acquiring specialized skills for international and national career opportunities.
- **Organic Farming:** Insights into organic farming practices and the importance of specialization in niche agricultural sectors.
- **Entrepreneurial Success Stories:** Inspiring examples of agricultural entrepreneurs, demonstrating the potential of turning challenges into opportunities.

Reflections:

Sessions by Mr. Parmveer Singh and Ms. Sravani Reddy, conducted online, showcased their journeys from India to the USA, inspiring participants. Dr. Mahesh Chander's engaging sessions and the exposure to real-life success stories motivated participants to pursue specialized fields and consider entrepreneurial paths in agriculture.

Exposure Visits

Orchid n More, Bhubaneswar:

Col. Sujan Mohanty and his wife's journey from retired armed forces to successful orchid farmers was a testament to resilience and innovation. Despite challenges like Cyclone Fani and the COVID-19 pandemic, their determination inspired participants to think beyond traditional career paths.

Mission Shakti Bazaar, Bhubaneswar:

A showcase of women's empowerment through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), the Mission Shakti Bazaar provided participants with a live example of how dedicated market access can transform livelihoods for rural women.



Reflections:

The exposure visits highlighted the importance of embracing new opportunities and the potential for agricultural innovation in both personal and community contexts.

Day 4: Social Science Research, Climate Resilient Agriculture, and Monitoring & Evaluation

Focus:

The day focused on developing skills in social science research, climate-resilient agriculture, and the critical area of Monitoring, Evaluation, Assessment, and Learning (MEAL).

Key Learnings:

- **Enhancing Competencies:** Identifying core competencies required for modern EAS professionals.
- **Climate Resilience:** Learning from ICARDA's projects on implementing climate-resilient agricultural practices.
- **MEAL Techniques:** Understanding the terminologies and methodologies for effective monitoring and evaluation.

Reflections:

The sessions by Dr. PVK Sasidhar, Dr. S. Rahalya and Dr. Kishore Behera were eye-opening, providing a deep dive into new research areas and the skills necessary for impact-driven agricultural extension work.



Day 5: Agricultural Extension Strategies, Climate Change, and Decision Modelling

Focus:

The final day covered the intersection of agricultural extension with climate-smart strategies and the psychological aspects of human decision-making in extension practices.

Key Learnings:

- **Policy Influence:** Understanding the role of extension professionals in shaping policy for effective EAS delivery.
- **Decision Modelling:** Insights into how human psychology influences decision-making in agricultural extension.

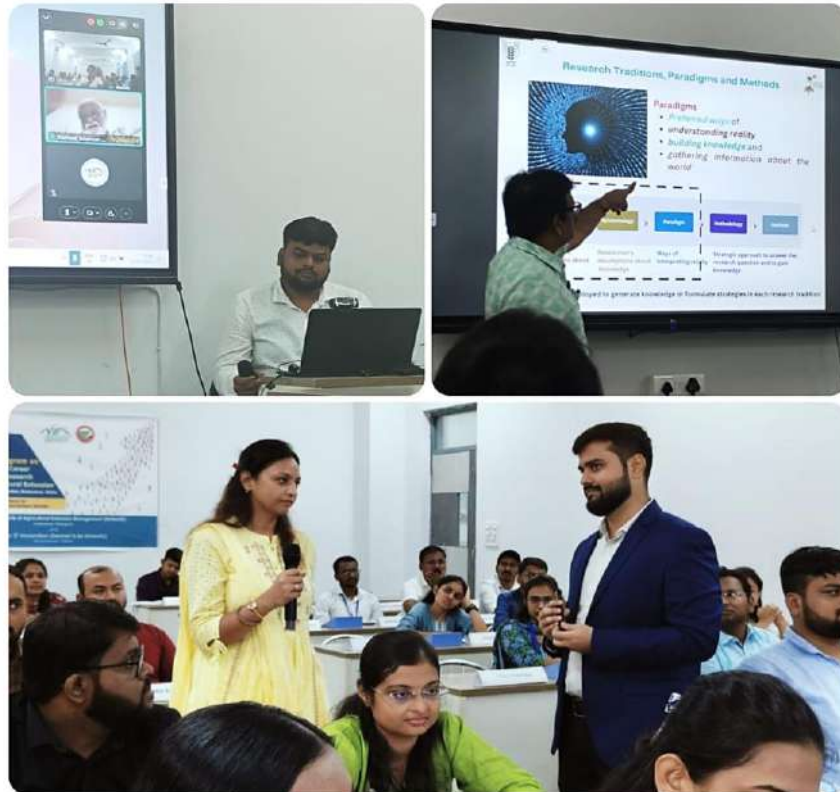
Reflections:

These sessions by Mr. Srajesh Gupta, Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman V, and Dr. P. Sethuraman Sivakumar broadened our understanding of the complex interactions within agricultural extension, highlighting the need for continuous learning and adaptation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Skills and Competencies:** Identifying new skills needed for young professionals to address the evolving demands of agricultural stakeholders.
- **Social Inclusion Strategies:** Strategies to ensure effective participation of marginalized communities in agricultural programs.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The critical role of extension professionals in improving program outcomes through systematic evaluation and learning.
- **Research Priorities:** Emerging research needs and priorities in agricultural extension were aligned with current demands.
- **Networking:** Opportunities to connect with experts and peers, fostering potential collaborations and career growth.



SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT

The program could have emphasized identifying and honing specific skills for extension professionals through more hands-on training and case study-based learning. Recording the sessions for future reference and reducing the number of lectures per day could enhance overall effectiveness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our sincere thanks to Dr. Saravanan Raj, Dr. Sandipamu Rahalya, Dr. Pranoy Ray, Dr. Anshuman Jena, and the entire organizing team for their dedication. We also appreciate the hospitality of SOA University and are grateful to the speakers for sharing their valuable insights.

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