

Intensification of Agricultural Extension Service

*(A plea for utilisation of services of
Teachers in Rural Schools.)*

By

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Research and Propaganda are the two limbs of the Department of Agriculture. Both should march hand in hand for a proper solution of the various agricultural problems in the country. At the present moment, emphasis must be more on the side of extension service than on research to meet the present crisis of food shortage.

The magnitude of research work done in our institutes and farms has been applauded by all the eminent visiting scientists from abroad and other parts of India. "The work that is going on here" said the distinguished British scientist Sir John Russell, "offers the prospect of solving to a great extent India's food difficulty. The practical difficulty is to get better materials over to the peasant, to enable him to adopt the methods suggested by agricultural experts. There remains always the practical difficulty of getting these methods adopted and properly carried out." It is this weak link in the chain that needs immediate strengthening. Results of research, however valuable and useful are of little significance unless they are translated into practice in the villages. We have made remarkable progress in evolving strains of various crops suitable to varying conditions of soil and climate in this State. It is true also that we have reliable data pertaining to different cultural practices and manurial improvements. But we have failed to carry the results so gained to the tiller of the soil, to the extent desired. It is for us now to think of the methods we have adopted so far and to devise ways and means of how best these can be enlarged, amended or improved for achieving quick and effective results.

Drawbacks of uniform policies : In the enunciation of any policy or formulation of any scheme, it has been our failing to have been led by set patterns of procedure for the entire State, irrespective of local conditions and needs. In the extension side of our Department, a uniform standard from Srikakulam to South Kanara will not work. Each district and taluk has its own special problems which require special treatment, and the least we have to think of is in terms of zones. The West Coast for example cannot normally be clubbed with the rest of the State in the planning of any scheme on a State-wide basis. While an agricultural demonstrator or a fieldman or maistri could normally tackle a couple of villages easily in a day in the Tamilnad or Tolugu districts, it will be difficult for him to meet even two ryots of a single village in a West Coast district or taluk in a day. This essential difference should be borne in mind in any policy or procedure affecting the work of the department.

Planning of extension service and its limitations: Any scheme devised for a proper organisation of the extension service in a locality should be based on the genius of its people. It is also very necessary to formulate schemes which will have a maximum effect with minimum expenditure from the present financial resources of the country. Surely we can show remarkable progress if we could appoint an Agricultural Demonstrator with a depot for each village, but it will be a dream—although in the ultimate analysis, it may become necessary for a country like India.

In Japan, it is said, for a prefecture of about 500 square miles in area—which is almost the area of one of our taluks here—there is a central experimental station and about 250 technicians—who are either graduates in agriculture or sufficiently trained hands—spread out in the entire prefecture. This works out to a technical man available at the rate of one a village or for an area of 2 to 3 square miles. These men maintain the link between the farmers and the experimental station, passing the results of research to the farmers and bringing to the notice of the research station the problems of farmers for investigation. It is no wonder then, that Japan can produce 2,350 lb. of rice per acre whereas we in India can obtain only 860 lb. What Japan does, India can do. In contrast with such efficient methods of Japan in extension service, we here, are charged with duties and responsibilities of a Grow-more-food campaign on a three-year plan. Of course our plans are not so ambitious and are limited to our resources of men and material. Indeed, in regard to facilities offered to the staff engaged in extension work we are having a retro-grade movement. While in the old scheme, we had a field man and two maistries for each firka and a minimum of two sales depots for each taluk, we are now having only one depot at taluk headquarters and the field staff is exactly halved in strength. This is a matter for us to pause and ponder.

Existing limitations of extension service: Supply of agricultural requisites to the door of the ryot and continuity of contact and maintenance of liaison between the department and the ryot are the two main factors that require immediate solution for making the extension service effective, efficient and useful. Only these two aspects are considered this paper and how this can be achieved effectively at minimum cost. If cost is not the criterion any ambitious scheme can be put up. This aspect has been kept in mind while discussing the possibility of utilising the services of teachers in rural schools for extension service.

Extension work by fieldmen and demonstration maistries: It is felt that the amount of work done by the fieldmen and the demonstration maistries under existing conditions cannot take us far. One can just imagine the difficulties of a subordinate who has to go 10 to 15 miles to the interior, along tracts badly connected by public conveyances, with hardly a place to halt and facilities even for a meal. When the holdings are scattered and approaches are through hills, valleys, streams and field bunds, we can imagine the number of ryots that could be contacted and kept in touch to secure some practical results. The anxiety of such subordinate is more to secure a seat in the returning bus,

if any, than to stay and do work in a place where he has neither the facility to stay nor to eat. Therefore, the stationing of men as near the work spot as possible is a prime necessity.

Again, the men charged with the duties of extension work should be those that inspire confidence and faith among the ryots and evoke their admiration. The fieldmen and the maistries are hardly the persons that can create these feelings among our ryots and it is for this reason that the idea of utilising the services of teachers in rural schools for organised extension work, is considered as opportune and suitable.

Status of a teacher in rural parts: Many higher-grade or secondary grade teachers employed in rural schools come from respectable families, who are also practical agriculturists with a high status in rural life and society. Their contact with students and the parents mark them as very useful persons for extension work. A selection of the best among them should be made.

Selection, training and employment of school teachers for extension work: Let us assume that a taluk has about 100 villages. 20 local teachers who are also practical agriculturists and who have an agricultural bias should be selected and deputed for a period of 6 months for intensive training at the nearest agricultural station at State expense. Care should be taken to select teachers from schools located in the centre of a group of 5 villages. On completion of training they are taken back on the staff of the school from which they were drawn and continue to work as teachers for only *half a day* and devote the *other half for* Agricultural extension work under the control and guidance of departmental officers. If he was getting say Rs. 30/- to 40/- per month for working as a full-time teacher he will continue to receive *only half this amount* from the school authorities. For working as an extension officer for half a day each day and during holidays he should be compensated by paying the other half plus an additional allowance of 25 to 50% of his entire pay. It is felt that an additional allowance of 25 to 50% should be a sufficient attraction and encouragement to a teacher to devote himself whole-heartedly to agricultural improvement work. The cost of paying the teacher, half his monthly pay plus allowances, should be met by this department under a scheme of subsidy on 50-50 basis between the Government of India and the State Government. These teachers should be also entrusted with sale of seeds, insecticides etc. according to local demand by providing themselves with some storage facilities, out of allowances granted.

In a taluk with about 20 such trained teachers stationed at the rate of one for about 5 villages, with facilities to supply the agricultural requirements at as near a place as possible and devoting their time every day among those with whom they are familiar and intimate, it would be possible to achieve remarkable results in a comparatively short time at a low cost. This scheme may be taken up on a five-year plan in some selected taluks of South Kanara and Malabar in the first instance, to be extended, or suitably modified and improved, based on the results achieved and experience gained. The financial implications of the scheme are worked out for a taluk of about 100 villages—where 20 trained teachers are proposed to be employed. A teacher's pay is taken as Rs. 40/- a month.

Recurring Expenditure.	Per month	Per year
(1) 50% of pay that is at Rs. 20/- per month for 20 teachers	... Rs. 400/-	Rs. 4800/-
(2) Allowance at 50% of full pay at Rs. 20/- for 20 teachers	... Rs. 400/-	Rs. 4800/-
(3) Contingencies — Postage and Travelling Expenditure once a month to headquarters of Taluk at Rs. 5/- per teacher for 20 teachers	... Rs. 100/-	Rs. 1200/-
Total recurring expenditure	... Rs. 900/-	Rs. 10,800/-

Non - Recurring Expenditure :

Supply of local measures and one Spring-balance etc., — L. S. at Rs. 100/- for each teacher for 20 teachers

... Rs. 2000/-

For each Taluk :

Recurring Rs. 10,800/-
Non Recurring Rs. 2000/-

