Indian Journal of Extension Education
Vol. XXXV No. 3&4, 1999

Attitude of Farmers, Extension Personnel and Scientists Towards Privatization of Agricultural Extension Service

R. Saravanan*, N.S. Shivalinge Gowda and K. Narayana Gowda*****

The growing commercialization of agriculture treat the extension as a new income-generating economic input; and also, new patent regime has drawn the attention of private sector to the noble area of extension service. In this existing climate, extension experts suggest that, extension should be 'demand driven' and 'cost-effective; and also propose to privatize the public extension system. These above developments urge the search for alternative extension approach to meet the next millennium needs and challenges. In coming years, experimentation of implementation of privatization might be an inviting proposition in agricultural extension.

Concept of Privatization

Bloome (1993) indicated that, Private Extension involves any personnel in the private sector which delivers advisory services in the areas of agriculture, and is seen as an alternative to public extension. Whereas, Van Den Ban and Hawkins (1996) say that farmers are expected to share the responsibility for this service and pay either full or part of the cost.

For this privatization was operationalised in the following way:

"Privatization of agricultural extension service refers to the services rendered in the area of agriculture and allied aspects by extension personnel working in the private agencies or organizations, for which farmers are expected to pay fee and it can be viewed as supplementary or alternative to public extension service".

Nevertheless, it is always desirable that before effecting any such change, the attitude of farmers, extension personnel and scientists must be known. In the background of above facts, this investigation was undertaken with the main objective of knowing the attitude of farmers, extension personnel and scientists towards privatization of agricultural extension service.

METHODOLOGY

The investigation was conducted in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu state (India) during March and April 1999. The study was conducted among four categories of respondents viz., farmers aware of Privatized agriculture

*Post Graduate Student, **Associate Professor and ***Professor and Head, Department of Agrilcultural Extension, GKVK, UAS, Bangalore-560065

extension service, farmers utilizing Privatized agriculture extension service, Extension personnel, and Scientists. Farmers were selected purposively who fulfilled the following criteria;- or; or;-

1. Minimum level of education (i.e., eighth standard pass),
2. Those who are aware of public extension service, and
3. Those who are aware or utilizing (private consultancy service) privatized agricultural extension service (PAES)

Sixty farmers having awareness about PAES, 30 farmers already utilising PAES, forty extension personnel (Agricultural Officer (AOs) and Assistant Agriculture Officer (AAOs)) from State Department of Agriculture, and 40 extension oriented scientists from SAUs, ICAR Institutes (Sugarcane Breeding Institute (SBI) and Central Institute of Cotton Research (CICR)) were selected as the respondents for the study.

Measurement of Attitude

A summated rating scale was developed (as suggested by Likert, 1932, Devellis, 1991 and Spector, 1992) through identification of dimensions, collection of items, relevancy test for item analysis; and scale was tested for the reliability and validity. Standardised scale consisting of 21 statements (10 positive and 11 negative) were administered to know the attitude of farmers, extension personnel and scientists. The response was obtained on a five-point continuum viz, 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'undecided', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with the weightage scores of 5,4,3,2 and 1 for positive statements, and reverse scoring system was employed for negative statements. The total attitude score for each respondent was calculated. The possible total score of the scale ranged from 21 to 105. Based on the scores obtained, the respondents, were categorized into three categories taking mean and half standard deviation as a measure of check.

Table 1: Comparison of attitude of farmers aware of privatised agricultural extension service, farmers utilising privatised agricultural extension service, extension personnel and scientists towards PAES

Attitude Categories	Attitude score	Respondent Categories: F.A. PAES (n = 60) No	%	F.U. PAES (n = 30) No	%	Extension personnel (n = 40) No	%	Scientists (n = 40) No	%
Least favourable	< 64.84	5	8.33	1	3.33	28	70.00	13	32.50
Favourable	64.84 . 78.22	29	48.33	14	46.67	9	22.50	18	45.00
Most favourable	> 78.22	26	43.33	15	50.00	3	7.50	9	22.50
Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis						72.29**			

F-A-PAES : Farmers Aware of Privatised Agricultural Extension Service.
F-U-PAES : Farmers Utilising Privatised Agricultural Extension Service.
**Significant at 1% level.

Attitude category	Attitude Score
Least favourable	upto 64.84
Favourable	64.84 to 78.22
Most favourable	above 78.22

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data reported in Table 1 reveal that a good number of farmers aware of PAEs (48.33 and 43.33 per cent), farmers utilizing PAEs (46.67 and 50.00 per cent) and scientists (45.00 and 22.50 per cent) had favourable and most favourable attitude towards PAES, respectively. In contrast to this, a great majority (70.00 per cent) of extension personnel and some proportion of scientists (32.50 per cent) had least favourable attitude towards PAES. The Table 1 also indicated that comparison of attitude scores of four respondent groups are significantly different from each other as explained by Kruskal Wallis, one-way analysis of variance.

Table 2: Comparison of Attitude Scores of Farmers Aware of PAES, Farmers Utilising PAES Extension Personal, and Scientists Towards PAES by using Mann-Whitney's U-test

Sl.No.	Attitude score category	Mean score	Computed value 'p'
1.	F-A-PAES	77.00	
	Vs		0.01901641*
	F-U-PAES	78.75	
2.	F-A-PAES	77.00	
	Vs		0.00000001**
	Extension personnel	68.50	
3.	F-A-PAES	77.00	
	Vs		0.00000081**
	Scientists		
4.	F-U-PAES	78.75	
	Vs		0.00605284**
	Extension personnel	68.50	
5.	F-U-PAES	78.75	
	Vs		0.04133089*
	Scientists		
6.	Extension personnel	68.50	
	Vs		0.00005625**
	Scientists	67.50	

**Significant at 1% level

*Significant at 5% level

The comparison of attitude score of each respondent group with the other respondent group by using Mann-Whitney's U-test as indicated in Table 2 revealed that all six combination of comparison of four groups significantly differed with each other. However, farmers aware of PAES-farmers utilising PAES, and scientists - farmers utilising PAES comparisons were found to be significantly different at 5 per cent level of significance, as compared to other four combinations of comparison, which showed differences at 1 per cent level of significance.

Favourable attitude of higher proportion of farmers aware of PAES, farmers utilising PAES and scientists could be attributed mainly to some of the positive points of privatisation, viz., going privatisation is expected to ease the financial burden of government; improve staff professionalism and management; make users' problems main priorities; enhances overall efficiency of agricultural production system; hope that private extension personnel become more competent and creative, and thereby gaining confidence among farmers; farmers will be more inclined to follow the advices of private extension workers; agricultural extension becomes more effective; and farmers are likely to get appropriate advisory services.

High proportion of extension personnel had least favourableness which might be due to the fear that, privatisation of agricultural extension

service is not suitable for small and marginal land holdings as their subsistence farming may not support the privatisation. Vast rainfed area provides less scope for alternative fee charging arrangement for public extension service. Extensionists may also be apprehensive about commercial nature of private sector, which may concentrate on increasing their profit. For resource-poor small and marginal farmers, it may not be possible to pay for the service. And, above all, extension personnel might fear that, privatisation of agricultural extension service may reduce job opportunities for agricultural graduates in public sector, and it may also lead to reduction of employees, and may be, total disappear of public sector extension.

However, there are chances that the privatisation might increase regional and resource-imbalance, since this concentrate mainly on areas having high potential resources like irrigation, high fertile soil; and also, they give importance to big farmers. Sometimes, the aggressive marketing nature of private sector leads to contradictory message flow. Feed back to public research system might be reduced. It may result in lesser contact between farmers and extension personnel. Profile orientation of the private agencies may result in low attention to sustainability including environment; and resource conservation technologies and food grain production may also reduce. The above interpretation finds conformity with the reports of Harter and Hass (1992), Bloome (1993), Ameur (1994) Sulaiman and Gadewar (1994) and Van Den Ban (1995).

CONCLUSION

Results of this investigation provide some basis for planning of future extension strategies, and effect desirable changes in existing public extension system to meet the present and future needs and challenges of farming community. Based on the results of investigation, it is recommended that extension services emphasising privatisation should be experimented and implemented in a phased manner.

REFERENCES

Ameur, C. (1994). Agricultural Extension: A step beyond the next step. *World bank Technical paper, No: 247,* The World Bank, Washington DC., USA.

Baxter, M. (1987). Emerging priorities for developing countries in agricultural extension. In: Rivera, W.R. and Schram, S.G. (eds.) *Agricultural Extension Worldwide*: Issues, Practices and Emerging Priorities, Room Helm, New York.

Bloome, P. (1993). Privatization lessons for US extension from New Zealand and Tasmania. *J. Extn.*, Spring 1993.

Devellis, R.F. (1991). *Scale development: Theory and application*. Sage Publication, Newburry Park.

Dinar, A. (1996). Extension Commercialization: How much to charge for Extension services. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. 78(1): 1-12.

Edwards, A.L. (1969). *Techniques of Attitude Scale Construction*. Vakils and Simon Pvt. Ltd., Bombay.

Hansra, B.S. and Adhiguru, P. (1998). Agriculture transfer of technology approaches since Independence in India. Journal of Extension. 9(4): 1998.

Harter, D. and Hass, G. (1992). Commercialization of British extension system: Promise or primrose. Journal of Extension System. 8: 37-34.

Keynan, G., Olin, M. and Dinar, A. (1997). Co-financed public extension in Nicaragua. *The World Bank Research Observer*. 12(2): 225-247.

Likert, R. (1932). A technique for the measurement of attitudes. *Arch. Psychology*. 140:44-53

Spector, P.E. (1992). *Summated rating scale construction - An introduction*. Sage Publication, Newburry Park.

Sulaiman, R.V. and Gadewar, A.V. (1994). *Privatizing farm extension - Some issues. International workshop on "Alternative and cost effective approaches for sustainable agriculture: Methodological issues". Proceedings and Selected Theme Papers,* organized by Ford Foundation, FAO and TNAU, Coimbatore, pp. 56-50.

Rivera, M.W. and Cary, W.J. (1997). Privatizing agricultural extension, In: *Improving Agricultural Extension, A Reference Manual*, (eds.) Swanson, E.B., Bentz, P.R., Sofran Ko, J.A., FAO, Rome, pp. 204-210.

Van Den Ban, A.W. and Hawkins (1996). *Agricultural Extension*, Blackwell Science Ltd. Pub., Oxford, pp. 256-258.