

## A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE TRAINING AND VISIT (T&V) SYSTEM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PUNJAB, PAKISTAN.

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Agricultural extension is essentially an educational service which has been designed primarily to improve the living standard of rural people through increased agricultural production and improved farm income. It promotes efficient use of available resources at farm level which is a function of a thorough understanding by farmers of improved production technologies. This ultimately demands an appropriate extension approach involving trained extension personnel communicating appropriate technology at the right time by using suitable means to an appropriate audience; in other words an effective extension system. In view of the bottlenecks in the conventional extension system, the T&V system was introduced in the country. The empirical evidence suggests that the new approach was equally ineffective in promoting the basic function of education and communication, in making organized and systemic contact with farmers, in selecting appropriate contact farmers (CFs) who could set examples for others, in enhancing the professional standard of extension field staff (EFS), and in maintaining an effective linkage with research and other allied agencies.

### INTRODUCTION

Agriculture, in this modern age, has become too complex a venture to be managed successfully by illiterate and unskilled farmers. An effective extension system, through its concerted educational functions, can improve the managerial capacities of the man/woman behind the plough to make intelligent decisions regarding farm and home management which are considered as the most vital in productive and sustainable agriculture. For instance, it was the result of extension efforts that Bangladesh went from being a tobacco importer to being an exporter within a few years (Axinn, 1985). Realizing its importance, "World Bank funding

has increased considerably in the past 20 years. Since 1965 the World Bank has lent over US\$ 1.8 billion to 79 countries to help strengthen agricultural extension" (Pickering, 1989:9). In fact extension education has now gained a global recognition with a total expenditure of more than US\$ 6 billion annually involving over 600,000 trained extension workers (FAO, 1990). Amongst various extension systems, the T&V system has been claimed to have the potential of becoming a powerful communication tool (Bcnor *et al.*, 1984). Therefore, it has gained a wide recognition and consequently is now in effect in over 60 countries of the World (Dcsai & Bidari, 1989). Pakistan is no exception in this respect,

Unit 1978, traditional system of agricultural extension was in operation in Pakistan. However, this traditional approach to extension had certain inherent weaknesses which stood in the way of its effective functioning. Consequently the system had little impact on production (Govt. of the Punjab, 1983). With the realization of the weaknesses in the traditional system, a new approach, namely the Training and Visit (T&V) system of extension (Benor & Harrison, 1977) was introduced initially in 5 districts of the Punjab and Sind provinces of Pakistan in 1978 and 1979 respectively. At present, this new approach is being used in the Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan Provinces of Pakistan (Govt. of Pak., 1990-91).

Since the implementation of the T&V system, the Department of Agriculture (Extension) has been striving hard to achieve its basic task of facilitating a better living standard of households in rural areas by applying procedures set under the new system. The present paper is an attempt to critically look into different components of the system and functioning thereof.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

An empirical study was undertaken in the Punjab province to assess how closely actual performance of the T&V system conformed to the model proposed by its pioneers. Data were collected in one tehsil of Faisalabad district from March to October, 1992. Farmers, extension workers and researchers, being the main components of the system, were selected for data collection. Sixty four CFs and 128 non-contact farmers (NCFs) were randomly selected from 16 villages selected through stratified random sampling technique. Four

Agricultural Officers (AOs) and 4 Field Assistants (FAs) working under each AO were selected at random thereby making a sample of 20 EFS. In addition, all the supervisory and training staff at tehsil level were included in the study. For the selection of the research worker respondents 13 research institutes / sections were selected from the Ayub Agricultural Research Institute (AARI), Faisalabad by using purposive sampling technique. Head of each Institute/section was taken as study respondent. The technology used in the instrument designed for the farmer respondents to assess their awareness and adoption levels was concerned with sugarcane crop. The data were mainly collected through personal interviews. In addition, observation technique was also used to obtain an inside picture of the system. The data were analyzed using 'Minitab' statistical package.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The basis of the T&V system is to establish an organized and systemic regular contact between the extension agency and the farming community. Village extension workers (WEWS) who are designated as Field Assistants (FAs) in Pakistan, are the major and real contact between extension and farmers. The observed data show that none of the FAs was making a visit according to the prescribed schedule. However, such a highly critical situation might be the result of the severe hot weather when the observations were made. They were found to be far behind the expectations as only 18.3% of the farmer respondents reported them as their source of information. The more significant figure is that only about 46% of CFs mentioned FAs as their source of information, and most of those only

'to some extent'. As regards the feedback link, a vast majority (84.6%) of the research worker respondents were not at all satisfied with the existing linkage and regarded it as weak.

Training is one of the basic and important components of the T&V system. It aims to build-up and maintain a high level of professionalism among extension workers at all levels through providing technical support in the form of regular training sessions. The observed data suggest that by and large the training given by the training staff to the EFS was conducted in a purely informal setting in a friendly atmosphere. However, it was totally confined to the aspect "what to communicate" while the other aspect "how to communicate" was not touched at all. Moreover, AV-aids were not at all used: one of the trainees simply read out the message to others and where needed the trainer made necessary explanations. It was also observed that more or less one-third respondents absented themselves from the training sessions. Physical facilities such as space and furniture were highly deficient.

Under the T&V system FAs are supposed to focus their educational efforts mainly on small number of selected CFs who are supposed to play an important role in propagating extension messages received from FAs among their other fellow farmers i.e. NCFs. The empirical evidence however, shows that CFs served as a source of information for only 2.6% of the farmer respondents which means that their contribution as information source for other farmers especially NCFs as expected under the T&V system was almost nil. This may imply that EFS have failed to selected appropriate farmers for this purpose who could be regarded as trustworthy by the rest of the farming community. Majority of the

CFs (57.1 %) were found to be unaware of their own status as contact farmer of the extension department. This may imply that such farmers had not been told about their positions by EFS and also they are not at all contacted by the EFS.

A vast majority (85.8%) of the farmer respondents did not know any of the CFs. The most significant figure is that 60% of the CFs did not know their fellow CFs who are supposed to meet on regular basis. This implies that CFs did not attend fortnightly meetings at all and their selection was not made through mutual agreement in an open meeting of the farmers.

Adaptive research is another important component of the T&V system. Under this component, a team of Subject Matter Specialists (SMSs) has been posted at various adaptive research farms. They are supposed to play an important role in the formulation of fortnightly messages and maintaining close coordination between research, extension and input supply agencies. During data collection, the first author visited an Adaptive Research Station. In connection with his field observations. It was a meeting day in which more or less 15 representatives of Agriculture Department and other allied agencies were supposed to participate. The purpose of the meeting was to prepare the fortnightly training message for the training stall of the department and to review the field situation. the researcher was surprised to see that only one SMS was there preparing training message assisted by an FA. Saeed (1982) reported almost similar experience about the same adaptive research station. He regarded its working to be at the lowest ebb.

Under the T&V system, extension is supposed to have a very close and systematic

contact with researchers to ensure an effective two-way flow of information. According to a great majority of research worker respondents (84.6%) the existing linkage was weak. As regards the feedback of farmers' problem to researchers, extension personnel's contribution appeared to be low. About half of the research worker respondent were of the view that extension personnel had contact with them but they seldom informed them about farmers' problems.

### CONCLUSIONS

EFS' role as information sources for the farmers was found to be very disappointing: they had contacts with less than half of the CFs and their contacts with NCFs were almost nill. The observed data suggest that the EFS did not follow the prescribed schedule of visits. This may be attributed to low morale on the part of EFS, and ineffective supervision.

CFs' role as information source was very poor which may be attributed to their inappropriate selection by EFS. The fact that a large majority of the respondents were unaware of CFs suggests that there might be something lacking in CFs' selection: their selection might not have been made through mutual agreement of other farmers in an open gathering. Similarly the ignorance of a fairly large majority of CFs about their fellow CFs may be interpreted to suggest that they are unlikely to be attending fortnightly meetings, if arranged by EFS.

Majority of CFs have been found to be unaware of their own positions as CFs which shows that they might not have been informed by EFS about their positions and the important role they are supposed to play under the T&V

system. This again comes under the selection fault.

Preparation of fortnightly messages for EFS by the SMSs was found to be a routine type activity. Observed data show that the interest taken by SMSs in message preparation and other outside members who are supposed to be there at the time when the field situation is to be reviewed is almost nil.

AOs have not been found to be regular in on-farm contact with FAs while they conducted fortnightly meetings with CFs. This may also be the result of irregular visits made by FAs to CFs which might have deprived AOs of opportunity to have on-farm contacts with FAs. Both situations can be attributed to ineffective supervision of EFS.

By and large the fortnightly training given by training staff has been found satisfactory in some respects apart from certain aspects such as improving the communication skills of EFS: 'how to communicate' use of AV-aids, attendance and physical facilities.

The existing research-extension linkage appeared to be very weak. Much of the extension contact did not lead to feedback of farmers' problems to researchers which suggests that contact alone is not a sufficient condition for improved feedback: extension personnel need to know and discuss farmers' problems with researchers.

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