CHANGING FACE OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION: 
FROM A P TO 4PS - A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Public funded extension services in India have a wide outreach and the services provided are usually free of cost. In recent times the severe criticism largely because of their inability to provide last mile delivery of services in time is being faced by them. The increased demand for more efficient services has increased the scope of privatization of extension services which has taken different forms in different countries ranging from Franchisee, Vouchers, Contracting to Cost sharing etc. Serious doubts are raised about the sustainability of privatization that Privatization would concentrate on commercial resourceful big farmers, favourable areas such as irrigated, fertile soils and commercial crop growing areas. The concept of Public Private Partnership has also been tried at many levels and in different forms. One of the successful reported cases is the Hoshangabad model in Madhya Pradesh where the Department of Agriculture, Government of M. P and Dhanuka group, joined hands to provide timely inputs to the farmers besides capacity building by organizing tours and trainings. The future of extension envisages a participatory development model for rural areas which should clearly define the role of different partners. Public Private Panchayat Partnership (PPP) may involve Panchayats at local levels as promoter and facilitator so as to bridge the gap between farmers and research scientists which may aim at moving from mere livelihood support to promoting rural prosperity, increasing farm income and augmenting rural employment.

Key words: Privatization, Partnership, Franchisee, Voucher, Facilitator, Rural business hub.

Public research and extension system played a major role in achieving self sufficiency in food grains all over the globe. The cooperative Extension service of USA which came into force as a result of the Smith Lever Act 1914 is one of the best examples of public extension systems. It served as a role model for the extension system of various countries. Different mechanisms in different countries have been envisaged for Public extension services. In India, Community Development (C.D) programmes were launched in 1952 where the emphasis was on the development of community infrastructure. The C.D model however had very less concern for agriculture, serving as a source of livelihood of three fourth of the population that time. The C.D programmes were than transformed into the National Extension Services (NES) in 1953. Since then a number of programmes have been launched for agriculture and rural development. The strength of public extension systems lie in their strong reach and wide network, coverage to broad spectrum of agriculture and a provision of free services (Tiwari and Pandey, 2001). For the academic importance, the public extension systems all over the globe have been described by APO, 1994 as follows:

Since years, providing extension services has been the main responsibility of the states but the current trend of liberalization has put them under scrutiny. They suffer from poor performance, fiscal crisis and lack of accountability, top down approach, lack of motivation, weak research-extension-farmer linkages, poor communication, and lack of feedback with absence of coordination among different technology transfer systems (Sarvanan, 2001).

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### Table 1: Public (P) Extension Systems in different countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Extension Service</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government type</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Central Govt. run</td>
<td>Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Central and Provincial govt. run</td>
<td>Australia, Canada, Philippines, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Central, provincial and local govt. run</td>
<td>USA, Switzerland, Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agricultural University run</strong></td>
<td>Scotland, country is divided into 3 regions each covered by one of three agricultural universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmer’s organization (cooperatives) run</strong></td>
<td>Finland, Iceland, Senegal. Network of Agricultural societies, cooperatives and informal groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agricultural industries run</strong></td>
<td>Fiji, Taiwan. Industries concerned with the Sugarcane, Pineapple and other animal products provide extension services for their products</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### From Public to Private (PP)

With the aforesaid considerations the prototype shifted from public to private extension services. The word ‘Privatization’ acquired a broad meaning as it came to symbolize a new way of looking at society’s need and rethinking of role of government in fulfilling of these needs. According to Farrington (1994) the factors that favored privatization can be enlisted as:

a) Difficulty faced by the government in funding the extension machinery as a result twenty percent of the post lay vacant at any time in the agricultural department.

b) Reduced donor contribution to agricultural research and contribution from the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme and other international bodies.

c) Transformation of agriculture from a subsistence to profit oriented enterprise.

d) Global competition after GATT which has led to the liberalization in terms of easing of trade restrictions and tariff barriers.

This increased demand for more efficient arrangements for funding and execution of agriculture with a greater role for private sector. Changing paradigms in development practice took different shapes and methods of implementation of the services offered by the private players. Some of the prevalent shapes are Franchisee, Vouchers, Contracting, Cost sharing etc.

**Contracting**: It is considered to be one of the most feasible options for privatizing the economies of developing countries. Government can assign contract to nonprofit voluntary organizations for various types of services.

**Franchisee**: Government grants private entities the authority to provide a particular service within a specified geographical area. Users receive and pay for service directly but the government may monitor performance with respect to franchisee in terms of price, amount or level of service and the ability of providing a service.

**Vouchers**: Government provides certificates to eligible citizens requiring a particular service. The users are then free to exchange the certificate or vouchers for services from qualified private organizations that return the voucher to local government for their reimbursement.

**Subsidy**: Government makes a financial or in kind contribution to private extension agencies at reduced cost. The subsidy arrangements are often used for government activities such as public safety, health, human services and recreation.

### Implications of Privatization:

With certain advantages over Public extension services, the privatization of these services has certain backdrops. Tiwari and Pandey (2001) have summed up the following implications of privatization:

a) Privatization of extension services may hamper the free flow of information.

b) Commercial interests of these private agencies are likely to jeopardize the efforts made by public research and extension systems towards eco friendly and sustainable agriculture.

c) Human resource development role of organizing, motivating and guiding the farmer may be sidelined.
Table 2: Privatization - A global overview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>System adopted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Complete Commercialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Complete commercialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Cost recovery from users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Farmer’s organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>Share cropping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>Voucher system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Subcontracting and voucher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Private service centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Cost sharing of advisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Contract</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Rivera, 1998)

d) Contact farmer and extension agent may decline.
e) The fall out of such an arrangement may increase regional imbalances.
f) Small and medium farmers who have little access to public extension services may be eventually displaced from commercial production.

Privatization would concentrate on commercial resourceful big farmers, favourable areas such as irrigated, fertile soils and commercial crop growing areas. It focuses mostly on the ‘profit maximization role’ (Sarvanan, 2001).

PARADIGM SHIFT
Public Private Partnership (PPP):

The future scenario exhibits emergence of multiple layers of farmers producing multiple commodities to meet the demands of multiple markets. To cater to these requirements multiple organizations involved in research, extension and marketing need to be integrated. Specific strengths of both the public and private extension systems are harnessed through specific MOU’s on public private partnership (PPP) mode to address the challenges of agriculture (Desai, 2005). Public Private Partnership is one of the arrangements by which the public sector comes together with the private sector to deliver the services that have been delivered by the government (Reddy, 2005). The concept of PPP has been tried at many levels and in different forms. One of the successful reported cases is the Hoshangabad model in Madhya Pradesh where the Department of Agriculture, Government of M. P and Dhanuka group, a pioneer in Pesticides and seed formulation joined hands to implement the conceptual framework of PPP provided by National Institute of Agriculture Extension Management (MANAGE). Various activities such as Soil testing, organization of training programmes and farmer study tours, field demonstrations, arranging inputs as per needs by establishing agriculture super markets, printing and dissemination of agriculture literature, films on success stories and participatory monitoring and evaluation were taken up. As a result of working in partnership mode certain impact factors generated were:

a) Awareness about PPP in agriculture extension management at all levels. Agriculture department received expression of interest for PPP in Agriculture Extension Management from reputed Agri-Business Companies.
b) Change in policy as Dhanuka group and Department of Agriculture, government of M.P were invited to many national and state level policy forums to share their experiences.
c) Joint planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation brought private partner in mainstream extension. It laid the foundation of beginning of change of the system.
d) Attitude of public extension personnel towards private extension service provider changed from a ‘greedy aggressive marketer’ to resourceful person useful to public extension in reaching farmer.
e) Increase in the accountability of extension worker.
f) It also proved to be cost effective and time effective.

The PPP model also had some bottlenecks. It is prone to lack of trust and absence of systematic interfaces, misunderstanding among different stakeholders, overlapping of roles and no level playing field for different partners. All these factors combined together or individually can affect the working of model seriously.

COMING TOGETHER FOR PROSPERITY: NEED OF THE HOUR
Public Private Panchayat Partnership (PPP):

The vertical framework confining delivery of public programmes through government agencies has tended to exclude local leadership and institution as also the vast capacity that exist outside the government. Public extension services in the agriculture sector have not kept pace with new challenges and opportunities. Overall the reform measures initiated by the government are yet to penetrate agriculture and allied rural sector. Panchayati Raj institutions have to transform the
vision of their mandate as being limited to resolving local disputes and implementing small works to accepting a direct leadership role in agriculture, which is mainstay of rural economy. This envisages a participatory development model for rural areas which should clearly define the role of different partners. PPPP constitutes the basic and distinguishing strategic underpinning to enable better market access for locally available resources and skills by encouraging entrepreneurs in finding markets for products and skills by involving Panchayats at local levels as promoter and facilitator so as to catalyze the gap between farmers and skilled artisans on one hand and entrepreneur on other hand. In such a model the Panchayats can perform the key role of identifying the skill and endowments of peoples and natural resources, address the concern of local inhabitants, establish and sustain community linkages. Panchayats are also to provide a variety of facilitator support including identifying land, providing common work shed or other infrastructural support and organizing appropriate training. The business partner would perform the role of identifying local products that have wider market potential, preparing business plans acceptable to community and provide sustainable local employment. The central and state government would support the initiative through conducive policy regime, dovetailing government schemes and bridging critical gaps in infrastructure (Singh, 2010). PPPP model can be successfully employed in creating storage facilities at village level to prevent grain drain and to feed the hungry billions.

Rural Business Hubs (RBH) an initiative of Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) is already in operation under PPPP mode. It aims at moving from mere livelihood support to promoting rural prosperity, increasing farm income and augmenting rural employment. In consultation with the state government 35 districts have been identified for
focused RBH intervention. The first MOU under RBH initiative was signed in Dehradun for setting of RBH for processing fruits in Ramgarh and some other blocks of Nainital. A few other MOU’s have been finalized and signed to set up RBH for Jatropha plantation and product of bio-diesel in Faridabad and Mewat district of Haryana. Such type of framework could be implemented through a special purpose vehicle (SPV). The SPV could be at the state, district or the block level depending on feasibility scale for extension services. To draw in the best agencies for extension services the net need to be cast wide and public and private agencies, the NGO’s and cooperatives that qualify a certain eligibility criteria should be encouraged to bid.

CONCLUSION

Extension is a function and can be performed by any person or public or private institution technically qualified in the subject of extension. Extension will take different organizational structures, human expertise, strategies, approaches and methodologies to be determined by the situational context which will be different in different locations and therefore dependence on any single organizational structure; human expertise, strategy or approach which is promising in some other location will not be logically right and may be counterproductive. Various extension reform principles and interventions for deciding any type of extension system should keep in mind sharp focus regarding the aspects of popular participation, gender sensitivity, client focus, demand driven, pluralism, decentralization, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment and institutional linkages.

REFERENCES


