

**OBSERVATION ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES AND
TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE IN AGRICULTURE OF THE
VILLAGE EXTENSION OFFICERS (GRAMSEVAKS)
IN TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT, (KERALA STATE)**

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With the launching of the Community Development and National Extension Programmes in 1952, agricultural extension work in India took a turn and laid emphasis on programmes of socio-economic importance. Though the village level extension workers in the N. E S Blocks were multipurpose workers, lion's share of their efforts had to be diverted towards increasing production in the field of agriculture. It is important to assess the activities of the village level works *vis a vis* their technical knowledge of farming for improving the quality of agricultural extension work done at the village level (Dubey 1958, Dhillon 1963). Hence a study with the following objectives was undertaken in the Trivandrum District, Kerala State:

1. To find out the extent of importance given by the Village Extension Officers to the various administrative activities as determined by their extent of practice.
2. To determine the extent of technical knowledge and skill in farming possessed by the Village Extension Officers.
3. To delineate the administrative and technical problems faced by the Village Extension Officers in agricultural extension work.

Methodology

The studies covered the Village Extension Officers of the twelve C. D. Blocks in Trivandrum District, Kerala. The data were collected through a mailed questionnaire which comprised of two parts. The first dealt with administrative activities of the Village Extension Officers. The second part dealt with the technical knowledge and skill possessed by the Village Extension Officers in the field of agriculture with special reference to cultivation of paddy, coconut and tapioca. These information were collected using a Thurstone type three-point-rating scale. Arbitrary weights

of 2, 1 and 0 were given to the responses denoting high to low degrees of response respectively. The questionnaire were sent to 120 Village Extension Officers out of which 74 officers responded.

Findings

It is seen from Table 1 that the responsibility of sending reports in time secured the highest rank of employment among the Village Extension Officers as shown by its highest mean practice score of 1.95. This was supported by the high mean practice score secured by the awareness developed amongst the Village Extension Officers with regard to the function and value of reports (1.87). The second rank (1.91) amongst the administrative activities had been claimed by the activity of analysing the existing situation before framing and implementing any programme. Team spirit prevailed amongst both officials and non-officials in Community Development.

The results show that there was very little feeling of responsibility and authority amongst the Village Extension Officers in spending the funds in the appropriate manner. They invariably organised suitable committees for the planning and execution of agricultural programmes. It is also revealed that a majority of the Village Extension Officers rarely had powers delegated to them for the most economic operation of the funds. The findings also indicated that there were problems in spending the funds according to the planned schedule. The basic policies of the Community Development programmes were rarely cared for while preparing and implementing agricultural programmes as evidenced by the low mean practice score (1.39). Lack of accountability and suitable procedure for reporting were exhibited by the practice ranks secured by these activities. Preparation of written plan of work and making programmes flexible to suit the local requirements were the two activities whose practice score was found to be below average. Other activities like compliance of programmes to the budget, consulting and co-operating with both officials and non-officials in the implementation of C. D programmes secured above average mean practice scores amongst the Village Extension Officers.

The above findings reveal that there was need for delegating more powers to the Village Extension Officers and for inculcating in them the feeling of responsibility and authority to spend funds in the appropriate manner as per the planned schedule. The importance of suitable committees for planning and implementing agricultural programmes have to be stressed in addition to timely guidance and assistance for forming the committees. Eventhough the Village Extension Officers have given the top most priority to sending reports in time it is evident from the findings that accountability for the information reported, is lacking amongst the Village Extension Officers.

Table 1

**Ranking of the administrative activities as practiced by the
Village Extension Officers**

No.	Activities of Village Extension Officer in implementing Community Development Programme.	Mean practice score.	Rank.
1	Analysis of existing situation based on the programme	1.91	2.0
2	Consideration of basic policies of Community Development programme	1.39	14.5
3	Preparation of a written plan of work	1.51	9.5
4	Organisation of suitable committees	1.34	16.5
5	Seeking the Co-operation of both officials and non-officials	1.63	7.0
6	Making programmes flexible to suit the requirements of the locality	1.51	9.5
7	Development of a feeling of responsibility and authority for implementing programme	1.50	11.0
8	Consultation with both officials and non-officials while implementing programme	1.72	6.0
9	Feeling of team spirit amongst both officials & non-officials	1.82	4.0
10	Budget-oriented implementation of programme	1.53	8.0
11	Feeling of responsibility and authority to spend funds in the appropriate manner	1.23	18.0
12	Delegated powers for the most economic operation of the budget	1.34	16.5
13	Funds spent based on a planned Schedule	1.39	14.5
14	Responsibility for sending reports in time	1.95	1.0
15	Reports sent in suitable proforma	1.42	13.0
16	Accountability for information reported	1.43	12.0
17	Awareness of function and value of reports	1.87	3.0
18	Reports guide future programmes	1.73	5.0
Pooled average		1.57	..

Table 2

Extent of knowledge and skill possessed by the Village Extension Officers with regard to farming

S. No.	Topic	Knowledge		Skill	
		Mean know- ledge score	Rank	Mean skill score.	Rank
1	Soils, their testing, reclamation & conservation	0.92	10.0	0.77	10.0
2	Seeds and sowing	1.05	7.0	10.07	7.0
3	Nursery practices	1.19	2.5	1.11	1.5
4	Tillage	1.19	2.5	1.09	4.0
5	Manures and fertilizer application	1.16	5.5	1.09	4.0
6	Planting methods	1.19	2.5	1.09	4.0
7	Interculture	1.19	2.5	1.09	4.0
8	Irrigation and Water conservation	1.04	8.5	0.91	9.0
9	Plant Protection	1.16	5.5	1.08	6.0
10	Harvest and storage of produces	1.04	8.5	0.92	8.0
Pooled average		1.11		1.02	

Rank Correlation Coefficient 'R' = .942*

*Significant at .05 and .01 levels of probability

With regard to the technical knowledge and proficiency, Table 2 reveals that the Village Extension Officers had sufficient knowledge and skill in farming. They possessed deepest knowledge in nursery practices, planting methods, tillage and intercultural operations of the major crops namely, paddy, coconut and tapioca. They were found to possess above average knowledge and skill on application of manures and fertilizers and plant protection.

Topics like soils, soil testing, reclamation and conservation, harvest and storage of agricultural produces, irrigation and water conservation secured low mean knowledge and skill scores. Significantly high relationship existed between the extent of knowledge and skill possessed by the Village Extension Officers in farming.

Summary of findings

Field evaluation studies were undertaken in the Trivandrum District (Kerala State) to assess the activities of Village Extension Officers in relation to their technical proficiency. Reporting to higher authorities was the major activity of the village Extension Officers. Both officials and non-officials in Community Development had team spirit in implementing the

programmes based on analysis of the existing situation. Delegation of powers, responsibility, authority, and accountability for the economic operation of funds amongst the Village Extension Officers was inadequate. Written plan of work and flexibility in programme planning and implementation were rarely found in the Community Development administration. High compliance of programmes to the budget existed in the district. The basic policies of Community Development were rarely cared for by the Village Extension Officers. They felt that they had sufficient knowledge and skill in all the areas of farming except in soil testing, soil reclamation, soil conservation, irrigation and water conservation as well as harvest and storage of agricultural produces.

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