

Suggestions for Converting Agricultural Graduates as Successful Agri-preneurs

Keywords: *Agricultural education, Agricultural graduates, Entrepreneurial culture, Successful agri-preneurs, Suggestions,*

Agricultural education has now to evolve in tune with fast changing national and international scenario. The agricultural graduates are required to possess professional capabilities to deal with the concerns of sustainable development. agri-business comprises of organizations and enterprises which in some way contribute for value and supply chain elements such as production, processing, marketing, packaging, transportation and wholesale and retail trade. Bringing as many agricultural graduates in the field of entrepreneurship as agri-preneurs is the challenging task of the policy makers in the present situation. Entrepreneurship in Agriculture is a strategic development intervention that has the potential to accelerate the development process. Agri-preneurship is greatly influenced mainly by the economic situation, education and culture. Integration of entrepreneurship education into the curriculum is imperative so as to produce graduates who would be self-employed in the face of biting economic quagmire where the government cannot provide employment for every graduate. A total of ten (10) agri-graduates, who are the alumni of State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states completed their under graduation or post graduation and converted as successful agri-preneurs in different agriculture and allied activities were selected as sample. Exploratory research design was adopted in the study to obtain pertinent information from the respondents. As one of the important objective of the project, the suggestions for converting agri-graduates as successful agri-preneurs were analysed and presented in this paper. A total of ten important suggestions were elicited from all the respondents later, each respondent was requested to rank all the ten suggestions in terms of their priority. The data was subjected Garret Ranking procedure and the suggestions were ranked based on Garrett Mean Score. The suggestions were exposing the agricultural students to the opportunities available for the agribusiness, University linkage with industrial experts, financial and technical support to the agri start-ups, creating the positions of coordinating officers in each and every college for providing hand holding support for agri-graduates, Involvement of students in

agribusiness module during final year course work, Creating awareness on the project proposal preparation, rules and regulations and information about enterprise establishment cum management, exposure visits to the agro industries during course work, guest lectures by the entrepreneurs should involve in course time, preparing the student with clear cut knowledge about the genesis and subsistence of crops and their cropping system, encouraging the students to work sincerely in field activities to understand the farmers problems as per the rank order from one to ten. These ten suggestions are like ten formulae in bringing entrepreneurial culture among the agricultural graduates.

The research paper is a part of research project of ICAR Extramural Research Project entitled “Agricultural graduates as successful agri-preneurs – process analysis” carried out during 2017-18 funded by Education division of ICAR, New Delhi. The author is the Principal Investigator of the research project.

Entrepreneurship in the field of agriculture has paramount importance to bring glory to agricultural education. In the recent past, lot of initiatives been launched in agricultural education to develop entrepreneurial culture among the agricultural graduates. All such efforts one way or other motivate the agriculture graduates to seek for agri-premiership than employment. As the concept is an innovative and not popularized much among the agricultural graduates, an attempt has been made to explore and logically document the process of transforming agriculture graduates as successful agri-preneurs. On the other side, mere dependence on employment not produced desired results for the agriculture graduates. This condition also pushes the agriculture graduates towards entrepreneurship. There is no much research carried out in this area, the present study proposed to design an appropriate curriculum and to bring a modest approach to the agriculture graduates to venture in to agri-preneurship. The project also aims at more realistic and exhaustive inquiry on the process and factors involved in transformation of agriculture graduates as agri-preneurs.

Agricultural education has now to evolve in tune with fast changing national and international scenario. Future agriculture is dominated by looming dangers of food insecurity originating from an unholy alliance of existing and emerging issues such as stagnating/declining productivity and profitability; degradation and depletion of natural resources; increased risks in the face of changing climate; globalization of trade and commerce; etc. The agricultural graduates are required to possess professional capabilities to deal with the concerns of sustainable development (productive, profitable and stable) of agriculture in all its aspects. Also, the education should address the stakeholders' expectations especially for utilitarian mode. (Gupta, A. K., 2005)

Bringing as many agricultural graduates in the field of entrepreneurship as agripreneurs is the challenging task of the policy makers in the present situation. This entry not only encourages entrepreneurship but also enhances the success rate of agri-business due to their technical competency. Hence there is every need to provide entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. Using this framework, students will have: progressively more challenging educational activities; experiences that will enable them to develop the insight needed to discover and create entrepreneurial opportunities; and the expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses to take advantage of these opportunities.

An entrepreneurial agricultural education occupies a very vital position in the development of manpower and technological skills and abilities to meet the demand of socioeconomic development of individual and the nation, for self-reliance sustainability, productivity and affordability in human endeavor (Kwajaffa A. M. 2014). Entrepreneurship is regarded as one of the best economic development strategies to develop country's economic growth and sustain the country's competitiveness in facing globalization. Policy makers, researchers, farmers' unions and advisory services are all working on the development of entrepreneurship in agriculture (Pieter and Herman, 2002-2006).

With 60 per cent of India's population still engaged in agriculture and allied activities, economists and policy makers often talk about the need for creating new work avenues and industries to shift a major segment of this population out of agriculture. However, this is not the only solution to the economic woes of India's agri-graduates. Apart from generating new sources of job and income, it is equally important to bring about transformational change in the agricultural

sector and help the agri-graduates add to their agricultural resources. Not only in developing alternative sources of employment, entrepreneurship can also help radicalize farming techniques and bring innovation to improve yields per hectare. The effort drawn by the government to revolve more youngsters to become more self-reliance and eventually establish themselves as agriculture entrepreneurs is the outcome yet to be seen and proven (Abdul and Sulaiman, 2013). Encouraging entrepreneurship in agricultural education is an innovative concept introduced as per the fourth dean's committee recommendations in India. Acharya N. G. Ranga Agricultural University initiated appropriate steps to bring as many agricultural graduates in the field of entrepreneurship. Few of the successful cases already been evident to reflect the efforts of the university in producing successful agripreneurs for the welfare of the farming community. This research paper documented the suggestions as given by our alumni agricultural graduates converted as successful agripreneurs so as to bring entrepreneurial culture among agri-graduates.

This research study was conducted under ICAR extramural research project of Education Division of ICAR, New Delhi and the field investigation was carried out during the month of February and March 2018. A total of ten (10) agripreneurs, the alumni of state agricultural university (SAUs) of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana completed their under graduation or post-graduation and converted as successful agripreneurs in different agriculture and allied activities were documented through different entrepreneurial dimensions. Exploratory research design was adopted in the study to obtain pertinent information from the respondents. The respondents were selected purposively having experience and expertise in the field of agri-business for more than 10 years. The case study method was used for the documentation of agriculture graduates transformed as successful agripreneurs. Semi-structured interview schedule was designed for data collection. As one of the important objective of the project, the suggestions for converting agri-graduates as successful agripreneurs were analysed and presented in this paper.

A total of ten important suggestions were elicited from all the respondents through personal interview. Later, all the suggestions were pooled, edited and framed to a total of ten suggestions. Then each respondent was requested to rank all the ten suggestions in terms of their priority. The data was subjected Garret Ranking procedure and the suggestions were ranked from one to ten based on Garrett Mean Score. Appropriate interpretations, reasoning and possible means implementation of all the suggestions as expressed by the respondents was

also presented for bringing entrepreneurial culture and converting as many agri-graduates as successful agripreneurs.

The data presented in the Table shows the suggestions given by successful agripreneurs as per rank order by following Garret ranking procedure. All the ten suggestions were presented here under.

Exposing the agricultural students to the opportunities available for the agribusiness with Garrett mean Score (GMS) of 80.5 was ranked the first and foremost suggestion by the respondents. It was observed that, most of the respondents felt exposure to opportunities is essential for the agriculture graduates and it helps change the attitude of graduates and transform as agripreneurs. To realize this objective, the students should have enough exposure to available opportunities for agribusiness by means of exploring all available opportunities in agriculture sector. This strategy paves the way for fixing their minds towards a particular business entity and develops passion towards that business. During the course of action student also orient his academic efforts towards attaining specific goal. Business opportunities in agricultural sector are unlimited starting from seed to agro processing, a wide range of avenues will provide ample scope for business growth. Starting from small scale to large scale business, there are local, national and international business entities which will provide an urge for entering in to business. Hence they might have opined that the primary task of the agricultural education is to expose every student to all the available opportunities through real and virtual exposure.

University linkage with industrial experts was the second most important suggestion given with Garrett mean Score (GMS) of 58.1 by the agripreneurs. The agricultural universities should have linkage with industrial experts because, the first generation entrepreneurs they are struggling with fast moving economic and competitive world. Formulating appropriate policies for establishing linkages with experts working in different agro based industries such as seed, fertilizer, agro chemicals, farm machinery, agri-processing etc., so as to take up all academic activities in collaboration with the private sector organizations. A long term Memorandum of Understanding has to be established by all the State Agricultural Universities with different industrial experts working in private sector organizations as well as entrepreneurship development institutions in different cadres of their excellence. These experts will be the source of inspiration to the students in choosing their means of serving the society.

Government should support new start-ups with subsidies, training programs and technical support with Garrett mean Score (GMS) of 57.9 was ranked as

third suggestion by the respondents. The majority of the respondents started their agri-business with their own savings only, so that government should provide subsidies and assistance to new start-ups to encourage agricultural graduates enter in to the agri-business. The life blood of the business is capital. Being the agri-graduates, they might be projecting their vision and mission at higher side both in terms of cost and utility. Hence they require huge capital which may not be enough with the available own capital. On the other hand, the gravity and complexity of the technology been adopted in the business requires lot of technical support for the upcoming agri-graduates. Hence, policy makers can design a supportive mechanism for the outgoing agri-graduates prioritizing both financial and technical backup to get in to business venture immediately after graduation.

Creating the positions of Coordinating officers in each and every district for the registration and other agribusiness activities was ranked the fourth position with Garrett mean Score (GMS) of 56.5 for the reason that all respondents were faced the problems during registration of company, so that the need of coordinators to entrepreneurs are essential in the initial stage. A strong set up has to be established at both college level and at University level by deputing interested faculty to engage themselves in coordinating different activities and maintaining tie up with different organizations duly supporting the student all through their degree programme. Establishing and strengthening Business Incubation Centers at each college should be given top priority along with academic activities. These coordinating officers should be completely deputed for taking up the activities pertaining to entrepreneurship development among the students.

Involvement of students in agribusiness module during final year course work is one of the core suggestion given by the agripreneurs ranked fifth with 53.9 as its Garrett Mean Score (GMS). To have a pragmatic experience in operating a business for the students can be achieved through creating a platform by involving students in a business entity at college level during their course work. For this purpose, every college should run different agri-business modules and the students should be given opportunity to choose their interesting enterprise and allow them to work as teams in the enterprise. During the period, they should act as real time entrepreneurs to build the enterprise according to its vision and mission. They should be given freedom to share their ideas to expand and diversify the business. A competitive environment has to be created among the students to excel in implementation of their entrepreneurial strategies. This exercise will develop a sense of belongingness, team work, achievement motivation and other entrepreneurial characteristics among the students.

Creating awareness on the project proposal preparation, rules and regulations and information about enterprise establishment cum management is the suggestion with Garrett Mean Score (GMS) of 46.1 and ranked sixth in its order. The students wish to be in the line of becoming entrepreneur, they should have awareness and knowledge and skills in preparation of Project proposal. It is an anchor to show the direction, and plan of work and ultimate vision of the enterprise. The project proposal depicts all the dimensions of enterprise establishment, management, and projected growth of the business with micro level analysis. The agri-graduate are expected to be ready for preparing their own sound project proposal after the conceptualization of a business idea. Mean while the student should be acquainted with the procedures, policies, rules and regulations in enterprise establishment and management. Hence, necessary components should be included in course curriculum and theoretical orientation followed by practical sessions should be designed in formulating different project proposals.

Exposure visits to the agro industries during course work is another important suggestion given with a Garrett Mean Score (GMS) of 43.1 and ranked seventh in its order. The students after joining in the course, they need to be exposed to different local, national and international agri-business organizations on regular basis. This paves the way for the students to set a positive thinking towards becoming entrepreneur as well as it build self confidence among the students. A realistic picture on the business can be

conceptualized by the student through exposure visits. This also facilitates in gaining firsthand knowledge about the intricacies in business by the students in a real life setting. Exposure to wide range of business entities confer as many as visualizations among the students to become entrepreneurs.

‘Guest lectures by the entrepreneurs should be involved during course work’ is the suggestion given by the Agri-preneurs with a Garrett Mean Score (GMS) of 41.2 and ranked eighth in its order. To support the exposure visits, it is also mandatory to organize guest lectures by the entrepreneurs and they will act as extrinsic motivators for the students. Guest lectures will provide ample opportunity for the students to probe, analyze and reform their own strengths, weaknesses to meet the prerequisites for becoming successful entrepreneur. On the other side, they will also be exposed to the available opportunities and possible threats in the present entrepreneurial culture so that they can evaluate and perpetually made ready to the face the challenges of entrepreneurship. Guest lecture also throw light on the sharing of realistic and real time experiences of the entrepreneurs which will build confidence among the students.

Preparing the student with clear cut knowledge about the genesis and subsistence of crops and their cropping system with Garrett Mean Score (GMS) of 37.6 was ranked ninth. The agripreneurs felt that, there must be strong technical know-how among the agri-graduates emerging as agri-preneurs particularly on the genesis and subsistence of crops and their cropping

Table 1. Suggestions to encourage the agricultural graduates to transform as successful agri-preneurs

S. No.	Suggestions	Garrett Mean Score	Rank
1	Exposing the agricultural students to the opportunities available for the agribusiness.	80.5	I
2	University linkage with industrial experts.	58.1	II
3	Government should support new start-ups with subsidies, training programs and technical support	57.9	III
4	Creating the positions of coordinating officers in each and every college for providing hand holding support for agri-graduates	56.5	IV
5	Involvement of students in agribusiness module during final year course work.	53.9	V
6	Creating awareness on the project proposal preparation, rules and regulations and information about enterprise establishment cum management.	46.1	VI
7	Exposure visits to the agro industries during course work	43.1	VII
8	Guest lectures by the entrepreneurs should be involved during course work	41.2	VIII
9	Preparing the student with clear cut knowledge about the genesis and subsistence of crops and their cropping system	37.6	IX
10	Encouraging the students to work sincerely in field activities to understand the farmers problems	33.1	X

system. The students must focus on physiology of crop growth as well as its inbuilt combative mechanism to overcome the adverse conditions created through biotic or abiotic factors. Mere preparation for the examinations does not support the students to venture in to a professional agri- business. Hence, they recommended for in depth study of each and every concept with logical reasoning and scientific rationality.

Encouraging the students to work sincerely in field activities to understand the farmers problems was ranked tenth position with 33.1 as GMS (Garrett Mean Score). As a practice of identifying the real field level problems faced by the farmers, the students should be encouraged to visit the farmers fields very frequently and allow them to interact with farming community to explore the ground level realities in farming. This exercise facilitate the students to think towards projecting their own ideology in conceptualizing rational solutions in the form of business ventures. A multi-disciplinary team of faculty has to be formulated to handle this task of achieving realistic academic empowerment by the students.

Keeping in view of all the suggestions given by the agri-preneurs as per their priority, appropriate strategies can be formulated by all State Agricultural Universities and modest operational mechanisms can be designed to implement the need based programmes so as to convert as many agri-graduates as successful agri-preneurs.

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