



Communication Training Needs of Extension Personnel In West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the communication training needs among Agricultural Extension personnel in west Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. A total of sixty eight extension personnel in the district were sampled. The primary data were collected using a structured interview schedule by conducting personal interview. The data was collected and analyzed in the form of Training Need Index (TNI) and accordingly ranks were allotted. The result of the finding reveals that Majority (48.52 per cent) of extension personnel require training to medium extent, followed by 33.82 per cent in high category and only 17.64 per cent in low category of training needs. The highest training need index (TNI) observed were in the areas of training in presentation skill (73.42%), Training in Communication methods (62.17%), Training in ICT (59.46%) followed by training in Interpersonal communication (54.83%), Preparation of communication literature(50.79%), Communication strategies(50.17%), Use of visual aids (47.17%) and Mobilization of farmers (44.17%).

Key words: *Communication training need, Training Need Index, Extension personnel.*

Training is the process of acquiring specific skills to perform a job better. It involves the processes of teaching, informing and educating people. It helps them to become qualified and proficient in performing their duties, Obibuaku (1983) states that the ability of an extension agent to guide farmers from the awareness stage to sustained adoption of agricultural innovations was dependent on his training and experience in agriculture and extension methods. Kanungo & Mohapatra (2003) stress that extension workers should be properly trained to select the appropriate communication mechanism to use in their situation for diffusion of farm innovations Agent, farmer contact can reduce as a result of agent's lack of the necessary knowledge demanded by farmers and this can be harmful to the extension system.

If agricultural extension personnel are to improve in their on-the-job effectiveness, they must receive continuous in-service training according to their communication needs. Effective communication is of paramount importance for agricultural development. The primary objectives of agricultural extension services are to improve agricultural productivity and living standard of farmers. Attempts have been made to improve

educational and extension programmes but low agricultural productivity among small farmers and poor adoption of technology, raises questions concerning the technical knowledge and communication skill of the extension personnel. Since the development in agriculture depends on communication, the findings from this study will spur them to develop themselves as it will help them identify areas of weakness and seek for training for improved performance in communication. The study was planned with the following specific objective

(i) To Assess the communication training needs of extension personnel

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in West Godavari district of the Andhra Pradesh state during the year 2016. west Godavari district is having a total of 62 mandals it includes 83 Agricultural Officers (A.O's) and 22 Assistant director of agriculture (ADA's) working in various sections such as fertilizer control order (FCO) lab, Regional soil testing labs (RSTL) and Joint Directors office of agriculture out of them 54 field AOs and 14 field ADA's are selected for the purpose of study. The

primary data were collected using well structured interview schedule by conducting personal interview. It includes Eight broad areas of communication viz., Communication methods, Training in presentation skills, Use of visual aids, Preparation of Communication literature, Training in ICT , communication strategies, Interpersonal Communication, Mobilization of farmers, Further, critical training need sub-areas were identified by reviewing available literature, in consultation with experts. Responses of the respondents were rated on three point continuum viz., very much needed, moderately needed and not needed by assigning a score of 3,2 and 1, respectively. Training Need Index (TNI) was computed with the help of following formula.

$$TNI = \frac{\text{Total score obtained}}{\text{Maximum Score Obtainable}} \times 100$$

The Data so obtained was tabulated, classified and analysed by percentage, mean, standard deviation using SPSS software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of respondents according to their training needs:

Data in Table 1 revealed that majority (48.52%) of the respondents had medium level of communication training need followed by high level of training need comprising of 33.82 percent of the respondents and only 17.648.18 per cent of them had low level of training need. similar findings were reported by Nongtdu *et al* (2012)

Area specific communication training needs of extension personnel:

It is evident from the table 2 that maximum TNI was given to training in presentation skills

(73.42%) ,training in Communication Methods (62.17%), Training in ICT (59.46%) which were ranked in I,II and III respectively. This was followed by training in Interpersonal communication (54.83%), Preparation of communication literature(50.79%), Communication strategies(50.17%) , Use of visual aids (47.17%) and Mobilization of farmers (44.17%) reflecting on these facts it can be concluded that extension personnel are interested in learning new presentation methods and new communication methods as they were having regular meetings with farmers these methods are very useful in their daily job role. further it was noticed that training ICT is essential as it is the fastest growing technology nowadays all activities intertwined with the ICT 's in addition to ICT's extension personnel emphasized the need of training in Preparation of communication literature, Communication strategies this will be helpful in technology dissemination to farmers. Alongside that, it was seen the Use of visual aids and Mobilization of farmers were given least importance this might due to the fact that most of them have gained enough experience in organising meetings with farmers and using visual aids. These results are in line with the findings of Hanif and Waman (2015).

it is clearly seen from the table 3 that training in online learning modules was given utmost importance following training in TV talk and radio talk alongside that, we find training in conducting group discussion, demonstrations, exhibition. The extension personnel are well acquainted with skills in organising exhibitions, campaign and Kisan melas. thus, their training needs are not high in this regard. Conversely, it could be argued that importance in online modules were of high importance because of their application in agriculture increasingly growing nowadays.

Table1 Distribution of respondents according to their training needs (N=68).

S.No	Levels of Training needs	Score Range	N	Percentage
1	Low	Up to 38.86	12	17.64
2	Medium	38.87 to 54.73	33	48.52
3	High	54.74 and above	23	33.82

$$\mu=42.16$$

$$\sigma= 5.16$$

Table 2. Area specific communication training needs of extension personnel.

S.No	Training needs	TNI	Rank
1	Communication Methods	62.17	2
2	Training in presentation skills	73.42	1
3	Use of visual aids	47.17	7
4	Preparation of communication literature	50.79	5
5	Training in ICT	59.46	3
6	Communication strategies	50.17	6
7	Interpersonal communication	54.83	4
8	Mobilization of farmers	44.17	8

TNI=Training Need Index

Table 3. Training in communication methods.

S.No	Training needs area	TNI	Rank
1	Radio talk	65.61	3
2	T.V talk	71.43	2
3	Non verbal communication	48.68	7
4	Group discussion	60.85	4
5	Demonstrations	51.32	5
6	Agricultural Exhibition	53.44	6
7	campaign	48.15	8
8	Kisan mela /farmers fair	44.97	9
9	Online learning modules	76.72	1

Table 4. Training in Presentation Skills.

S.No	Training needs area	TNI	Rank
1	Improvement of public speech	47.62	6
2	Improvement in body gesture	45.40	7
3	Effective preparation of presentation	63.49	4
4	Message clarity	44.4	8
5	Connecting emotionally with audience	64.02	3
6	Captions / illustrations	76.16	1
7	Ideas to be incorporated in to visuals	52.91	5
8	Combining different methods	67.20	2

A clear picture of Table 4 shows that training needs in presentation skills use of illustrations/captions and combining different methods were ranked top as they were very important in attracting farmer and arousing interest among them. further investigation shows connecting emotionally with audience was ranked third.

It is seen designing power point was ranked first among the above table as many of the

extension personnel were not having much training in use of computers hence they ranked it as the important training need designing flash cards was ranked second following designing flip charts and designing flannel graphs from table 6 it can be observed that extension personnel have maximum training requirement for technical writing, editing skills, designing pamphlets moreover extension personnel reported higher training needs on

Table 5. Training in use of Visual Aids .

S.No	Training needs area	TNI	Rank
1	Designing flip/strip charts	47.09	3
2	Use of flannel graphs	43.92	4
3	Designing Flash cards	54.40	2
4	Designing power point	59.26	1

Table 6. Training in preparation of communication literature.

S.No	Training needs area	TNI	Rank
1	Designing bulletins/pamphlets	54.50	3
2	Computer aided design	50.79	4
3	Designing posters	47.62	5
4	Technical writing	64.55	1
5	Use of appropriate colours	46.03	6
6	Editing skills	61.38	2

Table 7. Training in Information and Communication Technologies.

S.No	Training needs area	TNI	Rank
1	Developing information kiosk	59.64	4
2	Sourcing information with CD-ROM	65.61	2
3	Use of internet	71.43	1
4	Soil mapping with GPS	48.68	7
5	Generating database	60.85	3
6	Mobile applications	51.32	5
7	Development of e - learning Modules	50.38	6
8	Development of websites	48.15	8

computer aided design , designing posters and use of appropriate colours in preparing the communication literature

In context to training in ICT's , it was use of internet, sourcing information from the CD-ROM and generating database were ranked high this might be due to majority of the extension personnel don't have experience in using the internet as they belong to higher age groups. these are the advanced communication techniques used at present. In addition to them most of respondents expressed training in developing information kiosk, development of mobile applications, development of e learning modules, soil mapping with GPS and development of websites.

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Highest training needs were reflected to Developing location specific and need based instructional kits, Principles of coordination and team work and Understanding. on the contrary Evaluating agricultural extension programmes and evaluation and monitoring the effectiveness of communication material individually and combination were given least importance as already many of the respondents have skill in evaluating the

Table 8. Training in Developing communication strategies.

S.No	Training needs area	TNI	Rank
1	Understanding farmers	51.32	3
2	Evaluating agricultural extension programmes	48.15	4
3	Evaluation and monitoring the effectiveness of communication material individually and combination	47.62	5
4	Developing location specific and need based instructional kits	76.72	1
5	Principles of coordination and team work	63.49	2

Table 9. Training in interpersonal communication.

S.No	Training needs area	TNI	Rank
1	Impersonal relations with colleagues	44.44	5
2	Impersonal relations with superiors	71.43	1
3	Impersonal relations with subordinates	48.68	4
4	Impersonal relations with farmers	60.85	2
5	Impersonal relations with input dealers	51.32	3

Table 10. Training in Mobilization of farmers.

S.No	Training needs area	TNI	Rank
1	Forming the farmers groups	51.32	1
2	Motivating farmers	48.15	3
3	Strengthening and revitalizing community	45.50	4
4	Improving group cohesion	44.97	5
5	Identifying potential group leaders in community	48.68	2

effectiveness of communication material. it can be clearly seen from the table 9 that impersonal relations with superiors was ranked as the highest training need followed by impersonal relation with the farmers and input dealers the plausible reason might be due to age gap between superiors as some of the agricultural officers belong to younger age groups and least preference was given to Impersonal relations with subordinates and colleagues.

Table 10 revealed the training needs in mobilization of farmers, forming the farmers group was given the first rank followed by Identifying potential group leaders in community as these are the difficult tasks as felt by the extension personnel farmers groups are very important for all the activities conducted by department. moreover Motivating farmers, Strengthening and revitalizing community and Improving group cohesion were given the least importance.

Conclusion

The study has pointed out the training needs required by Agricultural extension personnel in the areas of communication aspect that majority of the extension personnel had medium and high training needs. Thus, necessary steps should be taken to identify the unfelt needs of the extension personnel and strengthen their knowledge, skills and attitudes required for performing their job efficiently. The study further revealed that training in presentation skills (73.42%), training in Communication Methods (62.17%), Training in ICT (59.46%) which were ranked in I, II and III respectively. Thus, the study stresses the need for organizing trainings in these areas. So, the Department of Agriculture as well as the concerned training organizations needs to organize training programmes covering these areas according to their importance.

As the communication training needs of extension personnel changes over time, training needs assessment should also be done on a regular basis and the important areas in the communication which the extension personnel needs training should be considered while planning training for the extension personnel. In this context the ICAR Research Institutes, National and Regional Level Extension Training Institutes and State Agricultural Universities should timely assess the communication training needs of extension personnel and accordingly need based training module need to be designed. The emphasis required on medium duration theory and practical oriented training program with experiential learning methods.

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