

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION NEEDS OF OUT OF SCHOOL  
YOUTH ENGAGED IN FARMING

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Summary

Reference: Not listed.

The Government of India, recognising the need for agricultural production commensurate with the rate of growth of population in the country, have made some effort to train young farmers; but the programme needs to be extended to provide for the needs and interests of the drop-outs or 'out of school youth' farmers. This study was designed to determine the personal characteristics of these young farmers, identify their needs and interests, and their attitudes to the agricultural education programme in operation. The enquiry showed a positive interest among the young farmers in improving and increasing their output by learning new techniques, by self education, and an educational programme through village level worker.

Report

Introduction

Agricultural production and the rate of its increase commensurate with the rate of growth of population in this country have been a cause of concern to everyone. Of late we have become dependent on food from outside. There are several reasons for this, but one of the important reasons appears to be lack of information, knowledge and technical skills on the part of farmers about modern methods and farming and agricultural improvement. To remedy this situation, agricultural extension has been given a high priority in community Development, but a systematic programme for providing agricultural education to practicing young farmers has not been prepared.

Recognizing the need and importance of imparting such education to young farmers, the Department of Adult Education made a study of the agricultural education needs of young working farmers, with a view to developing a suitable educational programme for them.

Present Position

According to the 1961 census, India had a population of 439 millions. Of this, 360 millions, which is about 80% of the total population, live in villages. Out of 360 million rural population nearly 72 million (20% of total rural population) are youth in the age group of 15 to 25 years which is considered to be most potential human resource.

As regards the educational background of these youth, 55.5 million (about 78%) are illiterate.

India is at present providing primary education to 76.4 per cent of children of the age group 6 to 11 years. Three fourths of these drop out before completing five years of elementary education. Of those who continue their education through middle school stage about 60% leave the school after the VI Standard. The drop outs from these various stages of formal education either go back to their ancestral occupations, main among which is farming, or seek employment in cities and towns. Among those who have gone back to farming a majority would not have received any education in farming worth the name either in school or outside.

In the existing agricultural education programmes of schools, more emphasis is given on theoretical teaching of subject matter rather than on practice of farming. Also the programmes often operate independently of the needs of the pupils and their communities. Nor are our schools taking care of these dropouts who leave schools in such large numbers and go on the farms. There is no provision of continuing education for the dropouts or for out-of-school youth farmers. Government have made some efforts to train young farmers and adult farmers through farmers' training wings, tractor training centres and farmers training camps but the scope of such programmes has been rather limited and it can hardly be called a systematic agricultural education built on the basis of needs and interests of farmers both young and adult.

The existing educational programmes have taken very little notice of educational problems of out-of-school young farmers which are of the following nature:

- (a) a high rate of illiteracy
- (b) no access to formal education or incomplete studies, without even completing elementary education
- (c) need for education for upgrading skills and improving occupational competence even for those who have completed formal education.

The facilities for agricultural education in the country as a whole are inadequate and leave much to be done.

### Purpose of the Study

The present study was designed with the following objectives:

- (a) to determine some personal characteristics of young working farmers
- (b) to identify the needs and interests of young working farmers in respect of their principal occupation, namely agriculture
- (c) to determine the attitudes of young working farmers to selected aspects of agricultural education programme.

### Geographical Area for the Study and the Sample

The study was conducted in two of the Intensive Agricultural District Programme areas of neighbouring states namely U.P. and Punjab with corresponding control blocks in the same states outside the Programme areas. Thus the study was confined to four C.D. Blocks of U.P. and Punjab. From

these blocks 10 per cent stratified sample of villages was chosen and not less than 10 per cent random sample of young farmers was chosen for direct interview. Thus the actual sample consisted of 206 young farmers, 3.9 per cent of total young farmers of the 23 villages.

### Conclusions

In the present investigation while studying the characteristics of the young farmers it was found that the majority of the youths possessed the following attitudes though not well developed:

- (a) realisation that the present level of production is not sufficient
- (b) confidence in possibility of increasing production
- (c) desire and willingness to try out new practices and to experiment
- (d) confidence in the people like village level workers, extension agents, adult educators, school teachers, etc, who can guide them in bringing about desirable change.

Besides the above mentioned attitudes, one further desired attitude necessary to facilitate agricultural development is the readiness of the farmer to consider carefully the different alternatives and to make firm independent decisions based on these considerations.

Regarding readiness to make independent decision, it may be said that these youths in most cases did not have the opportunities, as they had to work under the supervision of the heads of their families who were responsible for such decisions.

In order to develop these attitudes firmly and to bring about a favourable change in them to facilitate agricultural production they needed education. Hence, to the illiterate farmers basic education in three R's becomes the first essential requirement for agricultural development.

A change from a largely traditional agriculture, as it prevails today in India, to a modern progressive agriculture necessitates on the part of the farmers, learning to take independent decisions of several kind. Some of these decisions must be taken by the political leadership of the country. Some of the main decisions in this regard are of the following type:

For agriculture to be progressive:

- (i) a balance between soils, climate, crops, livestock and people must be maintained properly and with alertness as it goes on changing constantly with the slightest change in the situation
- (ii) the proportion in which the land, labour and capital are utilised in farming are to be adjusted frequently to suit the changing situations
- (iii) successful control of cost of production and increase in farming income along with the increase in crop yield becomes a necessity if agriculture is to be transformed from a subsistence level profession to a commercial one
- (iv) continuous adjustment between agriculture and other sectors of national economy must be carried out.

Therefore, besides basic education, they needed to have also developmental education concerning their occupation.

In India, the Community Development programme has tried to educate the farmers in this regard through extension education and literacy programmes. However, these had not been very effective as would be seen from the low increase in food production of the country. While indicating their attitudes towards different items of agricultural education programmes of the Community Development set-up the young farmers have attached little importance to extension activities. The findings of this study about the attitudes of the young farmers towards agricultural education programmes indicate an over emphasis on the materialistic approach of the Community Development Programme and less attention towards the development of human material and resources.

Though in these programmes physical inputs like seeds, fertilizers, improved implements and insecticides etc., were made available and distributed among the farmers on a large scale it has not succeeded in improving agricultural production appreciably which may be due to a failure to bring about the desired change in the economic behaviour of the farmer. This change can only be brought about by education based on needs and interests. This has been highlighted by the present study of the needs of out-of-school rural youth engaged in farming in the areas served by specialised programmes like the IADP.

The study revealed that education plays an important role in increasing agricultural productivity. Among the young farmers interviewed it was observed that their agricultural productivity increased with the rise in their education. Also the progressive element in the youths was found to increase with the rise in their educational level, particularly among those who had education above the primary level.

In these high yielding areas with the Package Programme in full swing with all its physical and educational activities the average crop yield had gone up to about 37.5 mds of wheat per acre. However, the educated farmer among these youths on an average had produced a crop yield as high as 45 to 50 mds per acre. This showed how a basic educational programme in three R's is essential for improving agricultural production. This production can be accelerated by imparting developmental education related to farming.

This enquiry also showed that almost all the youths were interested in and desirous of learning new techniques of farm production, farm management and farm mechanics. The details about their special interests in different items under these instructional areas varied from individual to individual but there was not a single individual who had shown complete apathy to these items.

The interests expressed by these youths showed that they desired in order of preference, to study farm production (50%), farm management (44.4%), and farm mechanics (31.7%) respectively. Under farm production these young farmers were desirous of studying subjects like insect control (85.4%), weed control (83.9%), crop diseases (81.55%), soil testing and use of fertilization (68.9%), and vegetable gardening (52.9%). Under farm management a majority of the young farmers desired to study marketing (78.6%), soil conservation (77.6%), co-operative farming (66%), farm laws (65.5%), farm finance (44.1%). These subjects were directly connected with investment

and profits. The youths were, therefore, interested in learning things which were concerned with pecuniary gain. Under farm mechanics repair and maintenance of pumps, engines (70.3%), farm implements (64.5%), and tractors (54.3%), were the major interests of these young farmers. They also showed interests in learning irrigation methods and farm layout (46.6%) and use of electricity (20.3%).

These were the interests that were directly expressed by the young farmers during the interview with them. However, these interests did not appear to have been affected by the different educational levels of the young farmers as they were based more or less on their immediate farming needs.

But there was another area where they had remained silent during interviews and where most of them needed education. This was the area of agro-based industries. Young farmers had yet to realise that these industries were part of agriculture and helped in increasing their income.

The study of attitudes of these young farmers towards certain selected existing programmes of agricultural education showed that the youth attached very great importance to self education and an educational programme through village level worker. This implies the desire to learn new things through immediate practical application of the things in the field and built upon their practical experience. This also shows that though there is a definite need of an agricultural education programme for the young farmers the utility of the programme will mostly depend upon the immediate practical use in the field. Therefore, any agricultural education programme for young farmers will have to be broken up into small units for satisfying the immediate needs and interests of farmers. A complete agricultural educational programme should consist, therefore, of a ladder of such short courses which may lead towards the understanding of all the processes involved in progressive farming. While organising such courses their duration and timings should be in accordance with the convenience of the intending learners. This study has shown that the young farmers can spare two evenings in a week and a fortnight after each agricultural season for learning new techniques of farming.

That there is a definite need for such courses is evident from this study. However, it must be mentioned that these courses will not produce agricultural experts as in the agricultural colleges but will make young farmers more efficient. The ultimate aim of these courses should be to establish the young farmers and not to uproot them from their profession to go out in search of white collar jobs.