

The Role of Higher Education in Alleviation of Policy at Rural Tamilnadu

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Abstract

In this new millennium, in which our daily news is often dominated by terrorism, we know that inequalities feed delinquency and crime, which in turn frequently constitute a sign of the poor's exasperation with world inequalities. One of the major inequalities affecting the rural poor is their unequal access to quality education, which is so important for social and economic development. In order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, specifically the first two goals, which focus on reducing hunger and poverty by half and ensuring universal primary education by 2015, we need to change the traditional working modalities of international aid agencies and address the needs of the world's biggest neglected majority – rural people. This can be achieved through new multi sectoral and interdisciplinary alliances and partnerships among aid specialists working in education and those working in agriculture and rural development. By taking the initiative of launching the research leading to this publication, FAO and the International Institute for Educational Planning of UNESCO have tried to take a step in that direction. The findings of the study are meant to serve not as models but rather as points of reference for all those who are seeking ways of developing education in rural areas and contributing more effectively to rural development.

Key words: Rural, Higher Education, Poverty alleviation, etc.

I.INTRODUCTION

Rural Development in India is one of the most important factors for the growth of the Indian economy. India is primarily an agriculture-based country. Agriculture contributes nearly one-fifth of the gross domestic product in India. In order to increase the growth of agriculture, the Government has planned several programs pertaining to Rural Development in India. The Ministry of Rural Development in India is the apex body for formulating policies, regulations and acts

pertaining to the development of the rural sector. Agriculture, handicrafts, fisheries, poultry, and dairy are the primary contributors to the rural business and economy.

Rural development in India has witnessed several changes over the years in its emphasis, approaches, strategies and programmes. It has assumed a new dimension and perspectives as a consequence. Rural development can be richer and more meaningful only through the participation of clienteles of development. Just as implementation is the touchstone for planning, people's participation is the centre-piece in rural development. People's participation is one of the foremost pre-requisites of development process both from procedural and philosophical perspectives. For the development planners and administrators it is important to solicit the participation of different groups of rural people, to make the plans participatory.

Aims and Objectives

Rural development aims at improving rural people's livelihoods in an equitable and sustainable manner, both socially and environmentally, through better education, and services, and control over basic development of rural area (in its financial or economic and political forms) that enable them to improve their livelihoods on a sustainable and equitable basis.

The basic objectives of Rural Development Programmes have been alleviation of poverty and unemployment through creation of basic higher education, provision of training to rural unemployed youth and providing employment to marginal Farmers/Labourers to discourage seasonal and permanent migration to urban areas.

Role and function of the Government

The Government's policy and programmes have laid emphasis on poverty alleviation, generation of employment and income opportunities and provision of infrastructure and basic facilities to meet the needs of rural poor. The Ministry of Rural Development in India is the apex body for formulating policies, regulations and acts pertaining to the development of the rural sector. Agriculture, handicrafts, fisheries, poultry, and dairy are the primary contributors to the rural business and economy. The introduction of Bharat Nirman, a project by the Government of India in collaboration with the State Governments and the Panchayati Raj Institutions is a major step towards the improvement of the rural sector.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 was introduced by the Ministry of Rural Development, for improving the living conditions and its sustenance in the rural sector of India. The Ministry of Rural Development in India is engaged in legislations for the social and economic improvement of the rural populace. The ministry consists of three departments viz., Department of Rural

Development, Department of Land Resources and Department of Drinking Water Supply. Under the department of rural development, there are three autonomous bodies viz., Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) and National Rural Road Development Agency (NRRDA).

The objective of the ministry can broadly be elaborated as to encourage, promote and assist voluntary action in the implementation of projects for the enhancement of rural prosperity, strengthen and promote voluntary efforts in rural development with focus on injecting new technological inputs, act as the national nodal point for co-ordination of all efforts at generation and dissemination of technologies relevant to rural development in its wide sense and assist and promote programmes aimed at conservation of the environment and natural resources.

However, various ministries in the central government are engaged directly or indirectly for implementation of many programmes and schemes for the development of rural areas like Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Family Welfare, New and Renewable Energy, Science and Technology, Women and Child Development and Tribal affairs etc.

In addition, to strengthen the grass root level democracy, the Government is constantly endeavouring to empower Panchayat Raj Institutions in terms of functions, powers and finance. Grama Sabha, NGOs, Self-Help Groups and PRIs have been accorded adequate roles to make participatory democracy meaningful and effective.

Higher Education for rural development

Type of support by HAE	Input	Output
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Professional and technical education for rural development	HAE delivered programmes Joint programmes with other parts of HE system. Contributions to other academic programmes (social, health, education, economics, infrastructure, environment)	Human resources with knowledge and skills to manage and implement the process and detail of rural development.
Policy advice on education for rural development	Vision, strategy, analysis and data for policy-makers and leaders from other sectors and society at large concerned about rural development issues.	Rational and sustainable education policies for agriculture and the rural space together with the resources needed to implement the policies.
Support to primary, secondary, vocational and adult education for the rural space	Curriculum advice and input for each level. Materials preparation for each level. Teacher training related to agriculture and natural resources management in curricula. In-service training for education for rural development practitioners.	Key knowledge and skills for agriculture, NRM and related agribusiness activities available to the population of the rural space. Links between agriculture and management in curricula. NRM and the environment health, nutrition and infrastructure clarified

Challenges for Higher Education in Rural Development

- Under-resourced – Inadequate materials and facilities
- Overcrowded
- Under-funded - How to get adequate and stable funding is a major concern. Conditions imposed on some sources of funding can inhibit the HEI's freedom and ability to reform in significant respects (World Bank 2002).
- Have weak faculty – Useful lessons such as secondary sources of income, job security, and teacher training at (Chapman 2002; 187; Ayuba, 2000)
- Brain drain occurs (Danso 1995; Tapsoba et al. 2000)

- Low levels of teacher training and pay – Inexperienced teachers and low pay can harbour poor teaching habits. There are many possible solutions to both (Task Force 2000; 74; Chapman 2002; 17).
- Weak infrastructure and institutional management. Many universities lack the resources to maintain an efficient administrative body.
- Lack of flexibility – Some HEIs are elitist, Western, or based on out-dated methods of instruction.

Meeting the Learning Needs of the Rural People

In a number of countries, higher education institutions are already active in the field of basic education, beyond their established roles in teacher education and curriculum development. In view of rapid transformations in the education sector, a major issue of growing interest relates to the ways in which universities might best contribute to the development of basic education in the context of lifelong learning.

University-school-community collaboration can contribute to promoting education for active citizenship in a way consistent with universities' traditional mission of advancing and transmitting knowledge for democratic societies. Universities also have enormous resources – human, economic, and other kinds – which can potentially be used creatively in situations of economic and community disintegration.

Specifically, to help achieve Education for All, it has been suggested that universities could, for example:

- Initiate adult literacy classes on campus;
- Introduce a national service course requiring students to teach in basic education schools as a condition for graduation;
- Launch campaigns motivating and encouraging children of lower socioeconomic status and women to pursue basic education; this can be done through media and the extramural projects or activities of the university;
- Have the 'extramural studies department' organize community meetings wherein they can discuss the usefulness and the quality of the basic education programs in so far as they concern the institution of higher education (e.g. adult literacy program of the department, the training of teachers, the content of the training materials prepared within the institution of higher education, etc);
- Work with media in preparing programs geared towards reinforcing and sustaining education for neo-literates;

- Organize evening meetings wherein the members of the community may identify any inefficiency perceived and experienced by them and discuss possible means of correcting them;
- Organize meetings with potential donors to finance programs to improve basic education;

In addition to these education and training roles, agricultural universities may also be able to improve the quality of education and contribute to educational reforms in many ways. Working to solve the problems of their university's locality can provide students and faculty members with outstanding opportunities for effective learning, service, and the advancement of knowledge. Involving students and teachers in the development of readings and video production is an example of such linkages.

The contribution of university students to the planning committees of local schools is another example. In addition, students and faculty members can be encouraged to get involved in other community service and educational programs, promoting for example, health and nutrition, or community arts.

Target and strategy of the XIth FiveYear Plan (2007-2012)

- Adequate provision has been made for the state share in continuing Centrally Sponsored Schemes like Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SAGSY), Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), Integrated Waste Land Development Programme (IWDP), Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Mid Day Meal Scheme, DRDA Administration and National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).
- Besides these, World Bank aided DPAP project is being implemented in 14 districts for the last 6 years. Support for this will continue under the second phase of the scheme in the eleventh plan. Similarly, M.P. Rural Livelihood Programme (MPRLP) is being implemented with the help of Department of International Development (DFID). Water and Land Management Institute (WALMI), DRDA Administration Yojana, Gokul Gram and Godan Yojana and community development programme are proposed to be continued into the XIth Plan.
- Besides these, the State Government is supporting 5 new schemes namely, State Rural Road Connectivity Scheme, C.M. Rural

Housing 90 Scheme, Master Plan Scheme, SGSY scheme, Training IEC scheme and Sutradhar scheme.

- As a successor to Rashtriya Sum Vikas Yojana (RSVY), Backward Regional Grant Fund (BRGF) scheme will be implemented in 24 of the 48 districts.

Backward Regional Grant Fund

- The scheme is sanctioned by the Ministry of Panchayatraj in 2006-07. The duration of the scheme is five years. For each district, every year about Rs. 15 crores will be sanctioned and this programme will cover 24 backward districts of the state. Total fund for this scheme is provided by the Panchayatraj Ministry, Government of India.
- For the year 2007-08, the plan outlay is Rs. 423.39 crores and for XIth five year plan outlay is Rs. 2,256.95 crores is proposed.

The XIth plan allocation under various schemes/programmes

S.No	Scheme/Programme	Proposed out lay XIth Five year (2007-2012) (Lakh Rs.)
1	SJGSY	29656.12
2	SGRY	18016.64
3	DPIP9SS (EAP) / EAPII Phase	23158.72
4	Rural roads	50000.00
5	Indira Avas Yojana	27766.71
6	IWDP	10598.56
7	DRDA	6012.36
8	DAPA	21294.84
9	Gramin Ajjivika Pariyaojna	22480.00
10	Community Development	29265.00

New Schemes proposed under the XIth plan

Some new schemes viz., State Rural Road connectivity, State Rural Housing, State SGSY, Training, Master Plan and Sutradhar are proposed for XIth Five Year Plan period. The provision made under new schemes for 2007-12

is Rs. 18,110.60 lakhs and for 2007-08 is Rs. 6,720.00 lakhs. Scheme-wise activities have been described briefly as follows-

- **State Rural connectivity:** Under PMGSY, the construction of all weather roads is not permitted if the villages are less than 500 meter away from the main route/road. Such left out roads and bridges will be covered and connected under the scheme with state support. During annual plan 2007-08, a provision of Rs. 25 crores has been made to construct such missing links.
- **Mukhya Mantri Awas Yojna:** Inspite of the scheme being under Bharat Nirman, as against nearly 38 lakh houseless families in the state, annual allocation under Indira Awas Yojna is only about 46,000. At this rate, it will take about nine decades to fulfill the existing need. The State Government has decided to flag off the Chief Minister Rural Housing Scheme. The main objective of the scheme is to provide housing to the houseless SC/ST families. During annual plan 2007-08, a provision of Rs. 32 crores has been provided for constructing 12,800 houses.
- **State SGSY:** To strengthen the SHG movement, it has been decided to constitute SHG Federations on the basis of activity and the geographical location. Rs. 5 crores and Rs. 18 crores have been proposed for Annual Plan 2007-08 and XIth five year plan 2007-12 respectively.
- **Training IEC Scheme:** A New scheme will be initiated from 2007-08 for the training on project implementation and its monitoring. For this scheme, during 2007-08, Rs. 0.1 crore is proposed.
- **Working Plan for Water Storage:** It is a plan on the basis of a survey of the catchment areas and flow of water direction. On the basis of watershed specificities, identification and cost estimation of the probable water harvesting structures is done. On the basis of this study, the master plans have been prepared for all the districts of the State. On the basis of the master plan, works of nature of pond deepening and renovation, check dam construction and other watershed activity will be taken up in a planned and systematic manner in 14 districts not covered by NREGS and BRGF. For the implementation of works, according to the Master Plan, an outlay of Rs.5 crores is proposed for the 2007-08.
- **Sutradhar Yojana:** The establishment of the kiosks has been planned to facilitate access in rural areas to electronic communication and information and government schemes and programmes. These kiosks will facilitate provisioning of up to date information about Centre/State Government organizations and schemes. For this scheme, Rs. 0.1 crore is proposed for

the annual plan 2007-08. An outlay of Rs. 7, 17,783.60 lakh for the XIth Five Year Plan is proposed. Out of this, Rs. 18,110.60 lakh is proposed under new state schemes. An outlay of Rs. 1, 29,196.60 lakh is proposed for Annual Plan 2007-08, of which Rs. 6,720.00 lakh has been allocated for new schemes.

Suggestions

Although concerted efforts have been initiated by the Government of India through several plans and measures to alleviate poverty in rural India, there still remains much more to be done to bring prosperity in the lives of the people in rural areas. At present, technology dissemination is uneven and slow in the rural areas. Good efforts of organizations developing technologies, devices and products for rural areas could not yield high success. Experiences of many countries suggest that technological development fuelled by demand has a higher dissemination rate.

However, in India, technology developers for rural areas have been catering to needs (with small improvement), rather than creating demand. There is no industry linkage machinery to create demand-based-technology market for rural communities. Besides, there is also an imbalance between strategies and effective management programmes. Propagation of technology/schemes for rural development is slow and there is a lacking in wider participation of different stakeholders. An ideal approach may therefore, include the government, panchayats, village personals, researchers, industries, NGOs and private companies to not only help in reducing this imbalance, but also to have a multiplier effect on the overall economy.

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