

Original Research Article

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Constraints Faced by Block Level ATMA Functionaries in Providing Pluralistic Extension Services in the Cooch Behar District of West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

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Agricultural technology management agency (ATMA) is the autonomous institution situated at the district level to provide service to the farmers. The ATMA converge with other department of public, private, NGOs and farmers to provide pluralistic type of service. The present study explores the different constraints faced by the block level ATMA functionaries in providing pluralistic extension service. The study was conducted in three blocks of Cooch Behar district. The study revealed that the respondents faced more technological constraints in the study for providing service.

Introduction

Pluralistic extension defines as the partnership of different public, private, NGOs, Farmers group to meet different approaches like extension services, funding streams, and agricultural information for providing service to the farmers (Sajesh, *et al.*, 2018, Rivera and Qamar, 2003). Agricultural Technology Management Agency is the public extension system institution which disseminates information to the farmers by converging with other departments and satisfies the pluralistic extension service definition. The ATMA is

the autonomous institution which provides extension service at the district level. It mainly works at different levels. The district level officials are Project Director and two Deputy Project Directors working as extension functionaries. The Project Director gives report to the district magistrate who is the chairman of ATMA. The Farm Information & Advisory Centre (FIAC) consisting of Block Technology Team (BTT) comprising officers of agriculture and other allied departments within the block. Block Technology Manager (BTM) is provided in each Block to co-ordinate the ATMA related

activities of the BTT and Block Farmers Advisory Committee (BFAC). Under each BTM three to four Assistant technology managers are working. The block level functionaries are the agents who directly contact with the farmers. They are mainly faced different constraints in providing service. The ATMA extension functionaries of Assam were facing infrastructural problems, lack of adequate training on new technologies, lack of knowledge on efficient and appropriate methodologies in extension activities, lack of coordination among the staff of ATMA and unavailability of agricultural inputs at affordable price to farmers (Das and Borua, 2017).

Materials and Methods

The study was randomly conducted in three blocks of ATMA. 23 official respondents were selected to find out the constraints faced by them. The constraints were taken for the research purpose were administrative, management, technological, Infrastructure and policy, Financial and political constraints. Constraints were measured as perceived by the officials in the organization. Different constraint situations were exposed with a 3-point scale for response as: extreme (3), moderate (2) and low (1) respectively. The mean score of the constraints was considered as the value of constraint and ranking was done.

$$\text{Mean Score (MS)} = \frac{\text{Total constraint score}}{\text{No. of officials}}$$

Results and Discussion

The present study explored the different constraints faced by the block level ATMA functionaries in providing pluralistic extension services with different domains Administrative, Management, Techno-logical, Infrastructural and Policy, Financial and Political.

The table 1 depicted the ranking of constraints perceived by the ATMA officials for providing service to the farmers.

Administrative constraint

To run an organisation efficiently the administration should be structured. From the table 1, it showed that majority of ATMA officials given first rank to inadequate staffing pattern to provide pluralistic extension service to farmer having highest mean score 2.21 followed by other constraints like other line departments are reluctant to support practicing pluralistic services (2.04), Staff vacancy within sanctioned posts (2.00), lack of opportunities for updating knowledge (1.91), too much report writing (1.85) and post of supporting staff are less (1.65) respectively. ATMA is formed at district level to provide pluralistic service to the farmers. But the staffing pattern is not good as it is not recruiting any subject area specialist to provide service. ATMA is formed to work with other line departments but it is only working under the state department of agriculture. ATMA should be reformed at district level with specific subject area specialist to provide service to the farmer.

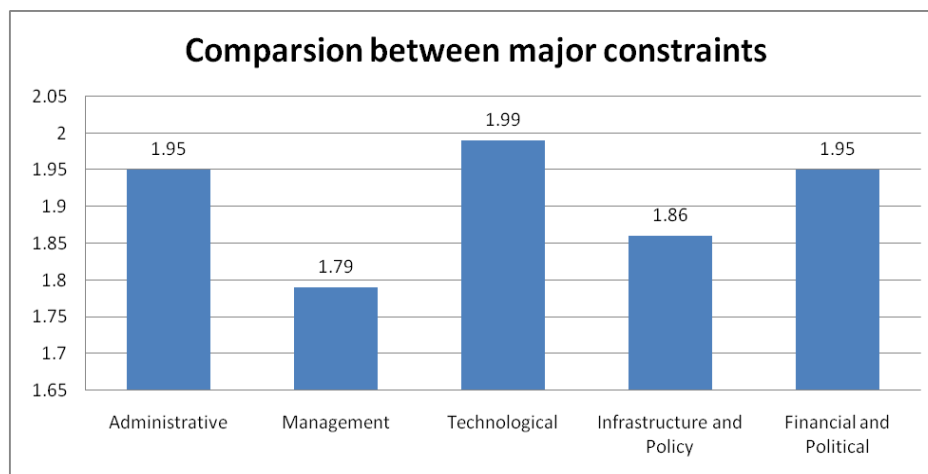
Management constraint

Management is the process of controlling or dealing with the people for improvement of the organisation. From the table 1 it was revealed that majority of officials gives first rank to lack of incentives for excellent work having highest mean score 2.08 followed by discrimination in reward, lack of encouragement from superiors, difficulty in practicing Bottom-up planning with farming community and lack of cooperation from subordinates, office staff and colleagues having mean score 1.82,1.78,1.73 and 1.56 respectively.

Table.1 Constraint faced by the ATMA officials expressed in percentage (N=23)

Sl. No.	Constraints	Somewh at (1)	Moderate (2)	Extreme (3)	Mean	RANK
Administrative constraints						
1.	Inadequate staffing pattern to provide pluralistic services to the farmers	0	78.26	21.74	2.21	I
2.	Staff vacancy within sanctioned posts	30.43	39.13	30.43	2.00	III
3.	Other line departments are reluctant to support practicing pluralistic services	8.70	78.26	13.04	2.04	II
4.	Posts of supporting staff are less	52.17	30.43	17.39	1.65	VI
5.	Too much report writing	30.43	52.17	17.39	1.89	V
6.	Lack of opportunities for updating knowledge	30.43	47.83	21.74	1.91	IV
Management Constraint						
1.	Lack of incentives for excellent work	26.09	39.13	34.78	2.08	I
2.	Lack of encouragement from superiors	30.43	60.87	8.70	1.78	III
3.	Lack of cooperation from subordinates, office staff and colleagues	47.83	47.83	4.35	1.56	V
4.	Discrimination in rewards	30.43	56.52	13.04	1.82	II
5.	Difficulty in practicing Bottom-up planning with farming community	30.43	65.22	4.35	1.73	IV
Technological Constraints						
1.	Lack of location specific technologies	26.09	56.52	17.39	1.91	III
2.	Lack of response from the farmers to adopt technologies	17.39	56.52	26.09	2.08	I
3.	Lack of training facility to know about new complex technology	17.39	65.22	17.39	2.00	II
Infrastructure and Policy Constraint						
1.	Lack of infrastructural support below district level	26.09	65.22	8.70	1.82	II
2.	Inadequate policy support for convergence with other service departments (Govt./NGO/Pvt.)	8.70	82.61	8.70	2.00	I
3.	Shortage of transport facility	30.43	60.87	8.70	1.78	III
Financial and Political constraint						
1.	Pressure from the local politician to fetch more benefits from KVK schemes to their own jurisdiction	34.78	39.13	26.09	1.91	II
2.	Inadequacy of funds	17.39	65.22	17.39	2.00	I

Fig.1 Comparison between the constraints faced by ATMA officials



There was no incentive for the officials for their excellent work which affects the work performance of the officials. Their moral value decreases as they are not getting any recognition for their excellent work. The government should give some incentive for their excellent work for that the officials will be highly encouraged and their work performance will be improved.

Technological constraint

Technology is the main component to increase the work efficiency and to reduce the time of work. Table 1 reflects that lack of response from the farmers to adopt technologies was the major constraint having mean score 2.08 followed by lack of training facility to know about new complex technology(2.00) and lack of location specific technologies (1.91) respectively. As per the officials there were a lot of farmers who are hesitate to adopt new technology. The main reason of lack of response from the farmers was that the farmers were small and marginal and believe in traditional farming. The officials should aware the farmer about the technology and they should form different farmer group to adopt the technology. For which the cost of technology will be less and farmers can easily use the technology.

Infrastructure and policy constraint

From the table 1 it was shown that majority of the officials gives first rank to inadequate policy support for convergence with other service departments (Govt./NGO/Pvt.) having mean score 2.00 followed by lack of infrastructural support below district level (1.82) and Shortage of transport facility (1.78) respectively. The officials were not getting enough support from other departments to do the work more effectively. There should be specific policy for the convergence of the departments to improve the efficiency of worker as well as the farmers.

Financial and political constraint

Table 1 reflects that inadequacy of fund was the major constraint than the pressure from the local politician to fetch more benefits from KVK schemes to their own jurisdiction. The fund coming from the government was not adequate to solve a large number of farmers problem. The fund should be increased by the government and there should be a specific structure how to utilise the fund in a specific scheme.

From the figure 1, it shows that technological constraint was the major constraint followed

by administrative, financial and political, infrastructure and policy and management respectively. The officers should be taken proper training on the new technology before going to the farmer. The ATMA should converge with the private company to transfer the technology to the farmers.

Similar type of constraints faced by ATMA officials also observed in the study of Bortamuly and Khuhly, 2013, Das and Borua, 2017.

The study revealed that the block level ATMA functionaries faced more constraints on technological followed by administrative and financial and political constraint. The lack of response from the farmers to adopt any new technology and lack of training facility for the officials to know about the complex technology were the major factors of technological constraints faced by the ATMA functionaries of Cooch Behar district, West Bengal.

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