THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER

JUL 22 1993

University Grants Commission

Agricultural Education In Bangladesh-II

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THE University Grants commission was established in 1973. It allocates resources to the universities and overviews their activities. It also advises the universities in all matters concerned with the management of the universities, although it has limited powers of governance.

BAU Project Area in Kotwali Thana, Mymensingh:

In order to test the Agricultural and Rural Development technologies, evolved by the scientists of the University, a "scheme setting up an Agriculture University Project Area in Kotwali thana of Mymensingh district" was initiated. The scheme has been operated for years, but no independent evaluation has yet been organized. The activities have been expanded and continued in a routine manner. Undoubtedly, it is an invaluable effort for the Agricultural Scientists to gain added experience and confidence in their research output through actual participation in the transfer of technology in the field and identification of field problems. The students too acquire insight into reality and equip their minds with knowledge beyond the borizon of the text-books and the classrooms. The other institutions of higher education have also the plan to establish project areas for such outreach activities.

Working Relationship with the major Research Organizations for Post-graduation Teaching

Anticipating the difficulties that might arise, if research responsibility is not given and increased at the Agricultural University level, the then Pakistan Food and Agriculture Commission had advised that "arrangement should be made between the university and the research organizations to enable post-graduate students, in pursuance of higher degree, to work in the laboratories and in the farms of the research organizations." So far such arrangement has been meaningfully organized only by the Institute of Post-graduate Studies in Agriculture (IPSA), now Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University.

Teaching in Isolation

At present, as already indicated, there is practically no integration of research, teaching and extension. Without the stimulation of relevant and purposeful research, instruction in the classroom loses vitality and vigour. The continuous acquisition of new knowledge, through realistic and applied research, makes teaching effective and practical. But without the backstopping of feed-back from the extension organizations, research can not address itself to the solution of problems of farmers and other people. Research, in its turn, then becomes pointless and ineffective. On the other hand, the extension loses the benefit of an Agricultural Institution to build-up rural economy. The three functions mutually reinforce the classroom teaching to become realistic to stir the imagination of the students. Without doubt, in absence of such interaction between research, extension and teaching, agricular education becomes dull and fails to convey thoughtful ideas and knowledge to the students. This is exactly what has been happening to the Agricultural Education in Bangladesh. But it is encouraging to find that the bad effect of this kind of gap is now being more and more realized, and efforts are being made in the teaching institutions to develop mechanisms to establish strong linkages with the national grid of agricultural research as well as the extension organizations.

Evaluation

There is yet no periodic evaluation system of the teaching institutions. As a result, one remains in darkness, as to what happened, in regard to such important matters as the maintenance of standards of teaching extension and research and the progress towards the attainment of the objective of agricultural education to solve the problems of rural areas. The lack of realization of the concept of agricultural teaching institutions (generally), the universities and colleges has led agricultural education to a state of complete isolation and alienation from the main stream of agricultural life. In contract to this bleak scene in Bangladesh, the Agricultural University System in India, initiating steps almost at the same time to reorganize the higher agricultural education system, could achieve a spectacular record of advancement and progress in agricultural production and rural development because they adopted to Indian condition the model of land grant university in the USA, which is acclaimed to be one of the most successful rural education experiment in the world.

The positive features of successful Higher Agricultural Education System

These could be outlined as follows:

a. Integration of teaching, extension and research through the development of appropriate mechanism
b. Ability to respond to farmers problems in all phases of agricultural production
c. Collaboration and cooperative linkages with the agricultural development agencies and institutions
d. Facilities for resident instructions with provision for experiment stations.
e. Effective feed-back ensuring the free flow of information from farm to the laboratory and ability to disseminate knowledge.

The joint review team (1978) for strengthening' Bangladesh Agricultural Research made the following observations:

"The BAU has been compared to the agricultural universities of India and also the US land grant universities. This is not an accurate comparison since the agricultural universities that have been established in India since 1955 were set up to separate the agricultural college and university level training from the traditional university institution system. The Indian agricultural universities are under the department (Ministry) of Agriculture of the respective States. Similarly, the US land grant colleges were established in 1862 in recognition of the inadequacy of the US universities of that period — that were patterned after Western European Universities- to meet the needs of a developing agriculture. The US land grant colleges (subsequently, universities in 1887) were established as autonomous bodies under the boards of regents or boards of governors responsible to the legislators of the States. Neither, the Indian Agricultural Universities nor the US land grant college/universities are under the control of the Department/Ministry of Education."

In India, during the last many decades the agricultural faculties within the structure of the general universities and also the agricultural colleges were upgraded and reorganized into agricultural universities with radical and revolutionary changes. This is how, India achieved tremendous success today in manpower development in agriculture which, in turn, helped in the development of agricultural technologies comparable with those of any developed countries. It may be noted here that, Dhaka Agriculture College (BAI) was one of the six agricultural colleges of the then British India. But unfortunately, except this agricultural college (BAI), falling in Pakistan/Bangladesh, all the other five colleges after division of India, were reorganized as agricultural universities incorporating changes that, in sense, made them rural universities to serve the rural communities to solve perilous food problems. Later, many more agricultural universities were established at least, one in each state of India by upgrading the old agriculture college. There are 2 to 4 agriculture universities in several states.

The Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), because of faltering and half-hearted integration concept by the Pakistan Education Commission, brushed aside by the then Pakistan Food and Agriculture Commission, remained as a mere seat of so called learning and scholarship under the Ministry of Education. How can we then expect capable scientists to come out and develop technologies to strengthen economy? The gaps in our higher agricultural education system have been repeatedly pointed out but there was neither any administrative, nor any political interest shown to the concept of higher agricultural education. Everything moved for decades in a routine way without the clarity of concept. Thus, we have, over the years become more and more dependent on technologies from outside, and in fact, are now fond of such technologies. But no country for long time can continue to depend on temporary gains with exotic technologies.

Based on the above facts, it emerges that an effective higher agricultural education system for a country like Bangladesh whose economy is predominantly agrarian, must be reorganised with the following basic characteristics:

A campus in rural setting with requisite farm land and also having experiment stations at appropriate places; there should be necessary infrastructures and adequate operational resources to ensure thorough on-farm training.

Effective mechanisms for integration of teaching, extension and research.

Formal linkage and feed-back with agricultural development agencies and participation of the higher teaching institutions in agricultural planning and production programmes.

Sufficient capital and operational funds.

These basic features can be met out by upgrading the three Agricultural colleges into full-fledged Agricultural universities, reorganising and integrating their major activities attached to the Ministry of Agriculture

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