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ACADEMICS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
Lessons from the Dharampur Project

By

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ACADEMICS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- Lessons from the Dharampur Project*

- V.S. Vyas

In mid seventies a project was undertaken at the IIM, Ahmedabad with the objective of evolving a workable programme for the development of the rural poor and to assist its implementation in selected areas. In the following paragraphs I will describe the experiences of the faculty working on this project and bring out what seems to be the strengths and weaknesses of an academician when he assumes the role of an 'activist' in rural development.

The programme was organized with the hope of deepening our understanding of the process of change in rural society and to ascertain the contribution which an academic institution can make in designing and implementing programmes which would touch the hard core of the poor and deprived sections generally by-passed by the developmental process.

* The author has benefited from the comments of his colleagues at the IIM, Ahmedabad, particularly Professors B.M. Desai, Ranjit Gupta, and Tushar Moulik. An abridged version of this paper was delivered as the Bhaikaka Memorial Lecture at Vallabh Vidyanagar in March 1979.

Action Research in Rural Development in IIMA -Genesis and Outline:

The Centre for Management in Agriculture (CMA) at the Institute has studied different aspects of rural development, particularly the organizational aspects of the input delivery systems, and the supportive and marketing systems. Mainly as a result of these activities, the faculty has been made acutely aware of rural reality. It was in this context that, when I joined the Institute in July 1974, I suggested to the then Director Dr. Samuel Paul and to my other colleagues in CMA that a time had come to focus our efforts in developing a holistic view of rural development. The Director and the CMA Faculty endorsed this view; we were also encouraged and backed by the Ford Foundation. By the end of 1974 a group was organized in the CMA* which, after intensive discussion, prepared an outline of the project known as Rural Development for Rural Poor. In early 1975, four of us (Profs. B.M. Desai, Ranjit Gupta, Tushar Mouluk, and myself) organized ourselves into a Rural Development Programme (RDP) group to elaborate and operationalize RDRP project.

* Members of this group were Profs. D.K. Desai, G.M. Desai, S. Sambrani, U.K. Srivastava, and V.S. Vyas.

To develop proper methodologies for the challenging tasks we had set for ourselves, the group had a series of intense discussions and extensive interactions with other faculty. All these deliberations helped crystallize our views on the type of action research we were proposing to embark upon. By early 1975 a project known as RDRP (Rural Development for Rural Poor) was born. The basic philosophy of the project and the broad outline of our approach were spelled out in the introductory note I wrote for the volume Rural Development for Rural Poor, Dharampur Project. I am quoting below from this introduction as it gives a clear idea about our approach to not only Dharampur project but to rural development in general.

"In recent literature on developmental planning a distinction is made between growth and development. While the former is symbolized by Gross National Product, the latter deals with improvement in the quality of life. One of the major concerns of Indian planners as evident in the plan documents is to improve the quality of life of the rural population. Most of the societies in the industrially developed nations as well as those in the Third World have the problem of a wide disparity between the rural and urban populations as far as access to social services like health, education, and recreation is concerned. The rural population of the poorer countries

is deprived of even the minimum of such facilities. As the provision of such services is almost exclusively the responsibility of the state, the gap in the requirement and availability of these collective consumption goods reflects the lack of concern of the planners and administrators."

"In India, inspite of decades of planning, there is no indication of any remarkable improvement in this regard. All that seems to have happened is that a small section of the rural population has been able to take advantage of the various facilities of the type referred to above. The bulk of the population is deprived of such amenities and in this regard they do not seem to be much better-off than the generations preceding them."

"Why has this happened? Is there a possibility of different organization of men and materials in rural areas which would enable the bulk of the rural population to avail of the goods and services considered necessary for a decent human existence? These are major questions, answers to which - rather understanding of which - are sought in the proposed study....."

"Various hypotheses try to explain the rural-urban differences in this regard. All these ultimately converge on the issue of low rural incomes. The low incomes in rural areas are generally ascribed to the following factors working singly or in combination: a) low

resources base, b) low level of technology, c) institutional handicaps, and d) absence of external stimuli. To these may be added the severe natural and physical handicaps faced by some regions....."

"The first step in understanding the paucity of the amenities required for improving the quality of life is to examine the possibility of breaking the low income barrier of the rural poor in the face of the handicaps listed above. What are the planning and organizational efforts implied when the objective is to raise the incomes of the rural poor above a minimum threshold? The underlying assumption is that without the provision of adequate income the attitude of the rural poor to all developmental efforts is the "third party" attitude, i.e., an attitude of non-involvement."

"It is against this background and with a view to find answers to these vexing questions that a five-year programme of research, of which this study is a part, has been undertaken. The specific objectives of the programme are:

1. To evolve in selected geographical areas a package of viable economic activities which can ensure a threshold income (I) to the rural poor, keeping in view the natural, institutional and human constraints within which it has to function.
2. To prioritize items which enhance quality of life (Q) and to suggest the content of programmes for achieving Q so that these improve the productivity of the rural poor with the least possible opportunity cost.

3. To examine various organizational patterns with a view to ensure that the opportunities of earning I or improving Q are provided to the rural poor, and that the suggested organizations satisfy the conditions of economy, replicability, continuity, and involvement of beneficiaries.
4. On the basis of the insights gained by these studies, to organize training programmes for those who will deal with problems of rural development in various capacities. ^{11*}

The original design of the project envisaged action research in areas handicapped by one or other of the major constraints. The basic unit of the study and action was the taluka. Activities geared to the development of the economy of the poor will require pronounced support from the bureaucratic and political machinery. Since district, and to an extent taluka, is the locus of political and administrative action, the project which is co-terminus to these units has obvious advantages. Between the district and the taluka the latter was selected mainly keeping in view (a) the large geographical spread of the districts and (b) the fact that block, which is co-terminus with taluka in several states, has emerged as the basic unit of developmental activities since the days of Community Development Programme.

* See, V.S. Vyas, T.K. Mbulik, B.M. Desai and Ranjit Gupta, Rural Development for Rural Poor - Dharampur Project, Part I: The Setting. Ahmedabad, Centre for Management in Agriculture, Indian Institute of Management, 1976, p. 1-5. (Hereafter referred as Dharampur Report).

The second step in the project design was the selection of specific talukas for action research. The main objective was to locate the projects such that we could familiarize ourselves with the major constraints facing a large number of poor in different parts of the country. A typology of areas concentrated with the poor was formulated. Areas included these (i) where social and physical links with the rest of the economy are tenuous and or exploitative i.e., the tribal areas, (ii) with severe institutional handicaps, i.e., where semi-feudal relationships still prevail, (iii) which are captive of a physical trap, i.e., where physical resources are severely depleted and (iv) which are taking the "back lash" effect of urbanization. The typology was not all embracing, yet it was felt that the above areas covered the major concentrations of poor in our country.

In each one of these areas it was our intention to select at least one block for devising an implementation strategy in favour of the by-passed sections. During the first four years of the working of the programme we identified and started work in two of the four selected areas. The first type of region was represented by Dharampur taluka of Gujarat and the second by the Deogarh tehsil of Rajasthan.*

* Subsequently another area where a group lead by Prof. Ravi Matthai was involved in a somewhat similar exercise, known as the Jawaja Project, was added to the RDRP programme.

A brief account of the implementation strategy tried out in this project follows.

Implementation Strategy:

It was envisaged that the development in Dharampur should essentially be an outcome of the actions of the existing developmental agencies, that no new agencies need be created for this purpose. Although a role was envisaged for voluntary groups, the emphasis was clearly laid on the official agencies. The strategy has a wider implication. The reason being that a wide net work of official and quasi-official agencies are already in existence with the express objective of contributing to the development of backward areas and disadvantaged sections. Thus, bureaucracy has become the most pervasive, if not the most potent, change agent. Dharampur is no exception to this. Apart from a special variant of community development programme more than a dozen other developmental projects were being executed in that area. In a taluka of 237 villages and nearly 2 lakh population, nearly 800 persons were on the pay-roll of official or semi-official agencies. In the year of the survey (1975-76) nearly Rs. 8 million were spent by various agencies, under different state sponsored, or assisted, programmes (nearly 80 per cent of this was spent on wages and salaries). The question, therefore, was whether it would be possible to revamp and

reallocate the existing resources in men and material to make a significant dent in the lives of the poorest sections.

The project comprised preparing a plan for economic activities, infrastructure, and social services which would directly and favourably affect the poor; to get this plan accepted by various agencies within the Government and outside; to get it implemented in a way that likely "leakages" were blocked and the benefits reached the poor. These in no way are unusual objectives. The country's massive developmental efforts during successive plans are supposedly geared to these very tasks.

The RDRP Group's concentration till recently had been on the first two aspects, i.e., in preparing the plan, and in sensitising the Government functionaries and political leadership at various levels.

The Action Plan of Dharampur comprised the following steps:

- i) Writing Area profiles
- ii) Identifying disadvantaged groups
- iii) Preparing inventory of physical resources
- iv) Preparing manpower budget
- v) Identifying gap between existing and desirable income levels among different segments of the poor.
- vi) Estimating income and employment potential of different ongoing projects.
- vii) Identifying main programmes for different target groups.
- viii) Identifying supportive services for main programmes.

- ix) Translating programmes into the bankable projects.
- x) Determining nature and location of institutions for the provision of basic amenities like health, education etc.
- xi) Monitoring the programme.*

Within a reasonable time, i.e. in about a year, most of the steps (barring the formulation of bankable projects and a monitoring design) could be completed and a development strategy for the poor of the taluka could be outlined. A two volume report on the Action Plan titled "Rural Development for Rural Poor - Dharampur Project" was produced.

Immediately following the completion of the report action on the second front, i.e., on sensitising the political and bureaucratic circles about the action plan was initiated. This was done in a number of ways. A two-day seminar was organized at the taluka headquarters, where the leaders from Panchayatiraj institutions and voluntary agencies, Government officials, and the RDRP group and some other faculty from the IIMA participated. Later on personal discussions were held with the Chief Minister, Planning Minister, Chief Secretary, Development Commissioner, and others. One of the

* For a detail description of these steps see, V.S. Vyas, "Block Level Planning - Lessons of Dharampur" to be published in Artha Vikas (July 1979).

important infrastructure programmes, that of creating 40 services centres in the taluka, was computerized and screened to a large number of people. The press and radio cooperated in giving due publicity to the project. The lessons of Dharampur, particularly the planning methodology evolved at Dharampur, were spread by the members of the group whenever they participated in seminars, workshops, discussions etc.* A number of teaching materials based on Dharampur project were prepared and used in different courses in the Institute, particularly in the course on Management of Rural Development Programmes.

Thus, in two major areas of the project—planning and sensitising the implementation agencies — the Group could at least partially achieve its objectives. Where we have not succeeded is in the area of implementation of the poor oriented programmes. It is not that new developmental programmes were not initiated. Because of the attention that the Dharampur Plan received the taluka became a centre for variety of ad hoc activities. But these activities were, at best, only partially related to the programme which the RDRP Group had designed. Since it was made amply clear in the report that it was not the amount of money spent on developmental efforts in the

* The RDRP Group can take some credit for the Gujarat State Government's Twenty Taluka Programme, which was initiated in twenty most backward talukas of the state (in 1978), with the same objectives and by and large used the same methodology of Planning.

taluka, (which was not inconsiderable) but the direction and manner in which the amount was spent, its effectiveness vis-a-vis downtrodden sections was neutralized. It is our fear that the accelerated tempo of investment following Dharampur Plan may not correct the situation because even now, as in the past, the focus is quite blurred.

It is a time, therefore, to ask the question why the implementation has gone away. Since the academics had taken a leading role in designing the programme, the question can be more pointed and one could seek to evaluate the role of the academics in implementing rural development strategies. I will attempt to answer this question in the rest of my presentation.

It was mentioned above that the implementation strategy of the project was based on the notion of galvanizing existing developmental agencies. These institutions were handicapped organizationally, personnel-wise and, in terms of the programme.* But it was assumed that there was a slackness in the system which prevented it from performing as well as it could have. Two approaches were tried to activate these institutions, (i) persuasion and (ii) pressure.

* For a fuller discussion of the organization of the developmental administration in Dharampur, see Dharampur Report, op.cit. Part I & Part II.

The persuasive approach mainly relied on role enrichment. In that process the importance of the functionary was deliberately exaggerated. It was soon realized that in circumstances where the roles are ill defined and structural alignments are more important than individual initiative, there is a limit beyond which it became difficult to motivate a functionary by alluding to his "glorious" role. The underpinning of the individual initiative on which the persuasion strategy relies is circumscribed by the structure of functions and the relative positioning of various functionaries in the role-space. Until and unless the tasks performed and results obtained could be clearly correlated, such strategy would, at best, lead to ego inflation without much positive results.* In the development administration role satisfaction, at best, can be availed of at the top-level of the block bureaucracy, say, at the level of a Block Development Officer. In the absence of clearly defined roles and in face of a hierarchical structure, it is difficult to motivate people, especially at the lower rung of administration, merely by exhortation.

The major thrust of the implementation strategy, it must be admitted, was on generating pressure. In the original design the pressure was sought to be applied from the top, to be generated from below and, also,

* In our set up it is easier for a teacher to have the role satisfaction than a VLW.

to be provided laterally i.e., by an enlightened public's opinion. Unfortunately, there was over reliance on the pressure from above.

After some discussions at the ministerial level a Committee of Secretaries was formed at the Sachivalaya level to look into the Dharampur Project as designed by the IIMA. The Additional Chief Secretary was the Chairman of the Committee. The Bulsar Collector (in whose district Dharampur lie) was asked to form a Committee at the district level. Apart from the fact that Gandhinagar is too far removed from Dharampur the committee of secretaries, in the absence of firm acceptance of the Programme by the State Government, did not have a clear-out agenda. Had the government agreed upon the programmes suggested in the Dharampur Plan a committee at the top had relevance. In the absence of such a commitment, the committee remained an ornamental device as far as the Project was concerned.

The local bureaucracy perceived the constitution of special committee as a reflection on their handling of the developmental programme. The Collector never took serious interest in Dharampur project, although he was supposed to be the Chairman of the District Level Project Committee. The State level committee also met with a similar fate once the top functionary (the Additional Chief Secretary), who, for one reason or other, got interested in the programme, left the scene after his retirement. His working with the Institute for a short period thereafter as a researcher did not improve the matter.

The success that the group could claim was in terms of generating favourable public opinion. Though it is an amorphous phenomenon yet it was clear that a wide cross sections of public, the journalists, the academics, thinkers on rural development, and the activists got interested in the Dharampur Project and by and large endorsed the initiative and direction. The interest among the top political leadership of the State could be sustained till today partly due to the public opinion created in support of this experiment.

As against this, our major failing was that we could hardly generate any pressure from below. It is not that the spokesmen of poorer sections were ignored. One of the largest organizations of the rural poor in that area was the forest Labourers Cooperative. Repeated attempts were made to persuade the leader to pressurize the Government to act in the directions suggested in the Report. Another leader of a voluntary organization who had similar and more deep rooted contacts with the rural poor was also approached. However, this was never taken up as a systematic campaign by the members of the RDP Group. These efforts retained by and large the characteristics of spasmodic and ad hoc activity. The follow on was not continuous or systematic. The result was that, like the bureaucracy, the voluntary organizations also continued their own efforts without much thought to the directions suggested in the plan.

It is instructive to note in this context that another poor oriented programme in the area viz., Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) had a relatively better record of execution compared to the Dharampur Plan, which as noted above could not make much headway. A Project Officer was appointed to push a variety of programmes intended to benefit the tribals. The Project Officer was a senior (class I) Officer. He had jurisdiction over five tribal talukas of Bulsar District including Dharampur. He was given a small nucleus budget, but most of his resources came from the budgets of different departments. From available indications it seems that he was able to get many of the schemes of the Tribal Sub-Plan executed. This, of course, does not mean that all the benefits had reached the intended population groups or that the most economical use of resources was ensured. While there can be questions on these scores the fact that the financial, and to a large extent physical, targets of the TSP were met cannot be ignored. Better performance of the schemes under TSP can be ascribed to several factors. Firstly, the Project Officer was made accountable for the success or failure of the TSP, to the extent such accountability is possible in a bureaucratic structure. Secondly, he was responsible, exclusively, for the implementation of the tribal sub-plan with no other official responsibility outside TSP. This arrangement gave not only a definiteness to his role but also made it possible for him to know exactly the resources at his command. Thirdly, the very fact that he

was a class I officer made the interaction with the district level officers relatively easy. Finally, and this is probably the most important reason, there was a clear commitment by the Central as well as the State governments to support TSP. With these favourable features it was possible for a reasonably competent person to fulfil his obligations.*

It was clear to the Project Officer that his career prospects and the success of the Tribal Sub-Plan in his area were interdependent. To the extent the good record at the field level could strengthen a functionary's position in the bureaucratic hierarchy, he was certain that it would happen in his case as well.

But the implementation of the Tribal Sub-Plan was carried out in a manner which was all too familiar to the bureaucrats. The work procedures and the roles and responsibilities of different functionaries were clearly defined. In this respect the TSP was in no way different from a number of other projects sponsored during the last three decades in different parts of the country. An unstructured, unusual, all embracing plan like the Dharampur Plan, is a

* Similar features accounted for the success of some of the IAD programmes. See, V.R. Gaikwad, Gunwant M. Desai, Paul Mampilly, V.S. Vyas, Development of Intensive Agriculture - Lessons from IADP: Ahmedabad, Centre for Management in Agriculture, 1977, Chapters V & VI.

different proposition. It needed competence and authority to deal with a host of agencies, both official and non-official, without corresponding formal sanctions.

Academics as Activists:

While discussing the role of academics as activists, the underlying assumption must be made clear. The assumption being that the change they are postulating is one that the system can contain. If the exercise demands destroying the system, academics qua academics have no particular advantage. But if there is a consensus on the desired directions the academics have several comparative advantages. This we discovered while working on the Dharampur Project. It is quite possible that the IIMA because of its name and fame had initial advantage. Yet the Dharampur experience has convinced me that a body of committed and reasonably well-trained academics can enjoy similar advantages.

To start with, it is much easier for the academics to gain an entry and acceptability in any community. Notwithstanding prevailing cynicism, academics of higher learning are considered ipso facto respectable individuals. In fact, so called backward societies attach even greater value to learning. The scholars and academics enjoy a very favourable and rather privileged position in these societies. The same is true, though for other reasons, for the relationship between academics and the bureaucracy, particularly the

relationship between academicians and the bureaucrat working in non-metropolitan areas. For an official working in remote field areas, e.g., a Collector or a District Development Officer, the college and university teachers are among those few individuals with whom he can interact with relative ease. In the mofussil places where they are posted, equally well, or better, educated persons constitute the milieu to which they can easily relate (provided they do not feel threatened by the easy accessibility which the academics may enjoy with their superiors). Generally, people as well as the bureaucrats treat academics with a degree of respect which they may not accord other professionals.

The academics can, by and large, maintain an objectivity and independence which several others, including the functionaries of large voluntary organizations, find difficult to retain. Although the ideological predilections of the academics cannot be ruled out, the level of abstraction and the large gap between ideological premises and the realities at the field level makes it possible to keep such predilections in the background and permits them to take a more realistic, and objective, view.

The objectivity enjoyed by the academics is coupled with the freshness of approach through which they solve problems. In this respect they provide a contrast to the bureaucrats who find it difficult to depart from set approaches and procedures. The 'freshness' of the academics is related to two causes: firstly, neither they have a vested

interest in adhering to a particular approach nor they are prisoners of their precedents. In dealing with issues and problems, they can afford to experiment and innovate. Secondly their contact with the academic work refines their ability to conceptualize; it exposes them to new understanding, and prompts them to venture new solutions for old problems. These approaches may be dubbed as "academic" but they reflect accumulated experience and insights. The formalized approach of the academics is superior to the ad hoc approach of the bureaucrats; particularly so when the problem to be tackled is a persistent rather than a periodic crisis.

The academics have clear advantages in establishing links with other organizations particularly research and developmental bodies. An atmosphere of mutual trust can be created and the spirit of camaraderie evoked. This is particularly true when the work of various academic institutions is complementary rather than competitive. In Dharampur Project at every stage we sought and received very good support from different institutions. The local college as well as the Bureau of Economics and Statistics of the State Government assisted us in conducting large scale census of the households in intensive sample surveys. The Gujarat Agricultural University's Navsari campus could be involved in the detailed soil mapping and other technical work pertaining to land use planning. The sociological and anthropological background of various tribes could be obtained from various specialized institutions in the area. For

selecting a portfolio of labour intensive forestry development programmes we could receive very good support from the Forestry Research Institute. The point which I am making is that, for the developmental activities of the type we are interested in, the academic institution which takes an activist's role need not be unduly worried about the lack of cooperation from other institutions. In fact, such cooperation would be more readily forthcoming should the request come from an academic institution rather than from the bureaucratic establishments.

The point most in favour of the academics' involvement in rural development activities is their easy rapport with the younger people. They deal with young people, and understand them. The academic institutions will find it easier to mobilise 'student power' for initiating developmental activities. On many occasions, the academics may also enlist of the help of past students now occupying key positions in services, trade, commerce, industry etc., in the selected area. Such contacts are invaluable for obtaining results.

To sum up, acceptability by bureaucrats and public at large, objective and independent approach to problems, freshness of outlook and approach in resolving issues, possibility of building bridges between different institutions, and capability of mobilising young and enthusiastic support, constitute favourable features of an action programme

that is sponsored by the academics. We had availed of all these advantages in the Dharampur Project.

At the same time the academics have serious limitations in directing an "action-research" programme of the type I have described earlier. It is important to underline these limitations because in our enthusiasm to involve educational institutions, particularly the institutions of higher learning, in rural development we are likely to forget these. The major limitation arises due to the conflict between the career goals and the ideological predilections. The career advancement of the academics is linked with the research of conventional type, publications in academic journals, performance in the class room, participation in seminars, symposia and contribution through committees and commissions. Most of these are facilitated by single minded devotion to the chosen field of specialization. The involvement in action-research does not directly subserve the career goals. More often than not the ideological commitment of the faculty serves as the mainspring for involvement in rural development activities. Such commitments do not last long once the constraints to career advance become obvious. It is not unusual to find that most academics actively involved in rural development are either too young, and presumably not overly concerned with their career prospects, or those elderly scholars who have already established their reputation in their fields.

By the nature of their training, and also because of the traditions in certain disciplines, particularly in social sciences, an academic is a lone wolf. (This may not apply to teaching and research in natural sciences where in several areas team work has become a necessity). There are few instances of sustained and lasting team work by the academics even in the narrow academic pursuits. Activities included in the rural development programmes require voluntary team work. Without a formal binding mechanism the academics do not find it easy to work as a team.

A similar handicap becomes obvious while dealing with a multitude of agencies and actors. By training, a scholar likes to relate himself to a known, identified, client or client groups. When demands are emanating from diverse sections with a variety of constraining and facilitating factors his single-ended, purist, approach does not help in forging a strategy composed of different strands. In this respect a bureaucrat or politician has a distinct advantage as by training and aptitude he can simultaneously deal with different groups in varied circumstances.

A similar difficulty is faced by the academics in taking decisions which have political connotations. Again, his training and background do not equip him to cope with the situations of open conflicts, of power sharing, of settlements by bargaining and trade offs. Whenever a situation of multiple goals and contending factions emerge he

is clearly at a disadvantage. And these situations are at the core of rural reality.

Besides, a scholar is accustomed to dealing with known entities and with situations where his subject-matter knowledge imparts of degree of confidence, if not certainty. It is difficult for him to grapple with issues where the knowledge gap is yet to be bridged, i.e., the "soft-areas" of development. His comparative advantage in knowledge-based action gets eroded once he enters a field where the knowledge itself is inadequate or infirm. This, incidentally, differentiates the action programmes where academics are participative observers - a method well known among anthropologists and socialologists - to complete his knowledge, and the action programme of the Dharampur type where the academics also takes the role of an activist. While in the former the academics are not handicapped, in the latter type of action they are faced with the difficulties I have narrated above.

Finally, an action programme manned by the academics will be an expensive programme. Apart from the relatively higher emoluments, the style of functioning is such as would make any economic approach difficult to adhere to. As pilot projects such efforts have their value. But it is a moot question whether large scale involvement of academics in this type of activity would make the programme more expensive and hence difficult to replicate.

Models of Participation:

In spite of the handicaps noted earlier, the current mood of academics to champion the cause of rural poor by active involvement with the poor-oriented programmes is a welcome one. It will help the rural societies for the reasons I have referred to earlier. It will also help academics in coming to grips with rural realities and bringing that knowledge to the classroom.

There are two major expectations when academics enter this arena. It is expected in the first place, that their involvement is not sporadic nor purely research-oriented. Their commitments should be lasting and their involvement should be clearly to facilitate action in favour of the rural poor. The academics' roles may not be the same as those of full fledged activist, but certainly an academician is not a silent spectator. In the action research context his role is essentially that of facilitating action in desired directions. Also so long as he operates from the base of a university, college, or institution, it is expected that the experience gained while facilitating the change will be incorporated in the teaching and research material. If either of these two conditions are not fulfilled, there is no particular advantage in involving academics in an action oriented rural development programme.

If the roles described above are accepted, it follows that the involvement of academics should be purposive and lasting. There can be 3 principal modes of such involvement.

Model 1: The academics who are interested in rural development, particularly in the action aspect of it, organize themselves into a separate institution solely geared to this task. A number of handicaps noted earlier would then not apply. For example, the conflict between the career goals and ideological predilections will not hamper the members of such an institution.

Model 2: In the existing institutions, particularly in the larger ones, academics desirous of taking part in the action research are insulated for some time in order to concentrate upon the rural development tasks. They may not agree to spend all their lives in this activity, but will commit at least 3-4 years at a stretch to play this role. It will be necessary to lighten their routine burden and give them facilities to work in the rural areas. They would be in constant touch with other parts of the academic system and would act as a liaison between the developmental workers and academic community.

Model 3: A group of people, or even an individual, may take leave of absence for a year or two and work with the developmental agencies, voluntary or official. He brings to bear his own expertise in the service of the rural community, but at the same time will imbibe the realities of rural situation by first hand observation and by direct involvement.

There are both advantages and disadvantages in these three approaches. However, all the three are workable and, depending on the nature of the institution and the commitment of the faculty, one or the other can be tried out. So long as the twin requirements of bringing academic input to the rural development action, and informing academic activities with the experiences in developmental programmes are retained, it is possible to try out one of the three alternatives with significant gains to the rural society and to participant academics.

A precondition for the success of the action programme in which academics are involved is an agreement on the programme or the approach. Without such a consensus he will have all the handicaps and none of the advantages listed above. In most cases such consensus does not exist and has to be patiently evolved. Thus, an academician who opts for an action programme in rural areas does not abdicate his role as an educator. Only by consciously pursuing this role can he make himself effective and, at the same time, enrich his own understanding of the dynamics of rural change.