

INTEGRATING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY INTO THE PROJECT CYCLE TOWARDS GOOD GOVERNANCE - THE ROLE OF THE EXTENSION WORKER.

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ABSTRACT

The overall objective of this paper is to explore the role of Extension Workers in promoting food security within a good governance agenda. This paper views good food security governance as one of the benchmarks for government performance beyond 2015 and is used as a base for examining accountability and transparency measures amongst Extension Workers in the implementation of food security strategies. The authors present a theoretical framework for the interrogation of the role of Extension Workers in the maintenance of accountability and transparency in food security initiatives within South Africa, and conclude that accountability and performance ought to be incorporated into all phases of the project process. Further, the paper concludes that by so doing, Extension Workers will be able to contribute to the achievement of good food security governance.

Key words: good governance, food security, accountability, transparency

1. INTRODUCTION

The right to food is entrenched in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948). As a result, this right must be part of any development agenda. In addition to this human right, countries are challenged to work within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the global agenda of good governance (Mohamed Sayeed & Pillay, 2011:5). Good governance, in this regard, is seen as a benchmark for government actions and performance (Mohamed Sayeed & Pillay, 2013:16). South Africa faces a number of challenges in the pursuit of socio-economic development which are linked to the global calls for poverty reduction and good governance. Surveys on policy and practice indicate that South Africa is failing to meet development goals (Madue, 2008; Kanyane, 2010). Hence, the challenge for government departments is to find ways and means to “fast track” the implementation of policies and programmes in order to facilitate socio economic development within the parameters of good governance (Mohamed Sayeed & Pillay, 2011). As implementers of food security strategy within the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Extension Workers in South Africa are challenged to work within these policy agendas. As public servants, working within the parameters of good governance, they are being called upon to be more accountable and to display improved levels of performance by being transparent (Edwards, 2007). Thus, improving accountability and transparency, is considered to have the potential to improve the extent to which government is able to respond to the needs of its people and ought to be a focus of any interrogation of good or bad governance.

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2. THE PROBLEM

Within South Africa, Extension Workers are trained in the realm of extension with little education and training related to their role as public officials (Bembridge, 1994; Van Rooyen, Barnard & Van Zyl, 1996; Düvel, 2004; Wallace in Mohamed Sayeed & Pillay, 2012). This results in a situation where, extension is practiced quite often separately from their duties as public officials. The challenge is that Extension Officers as implementers of Food Security Strategy need to work within a large number of policy frameworks which require high levels of accountability, transparency and an adherence to regulations related to norms and standards which call for adherence to ethical standards and professionalism (Mohamed Sayeed, 2014:104). Mohamed Sayeed (2014) argues that a better understanding not only of the policy process but of the links between food security and good governance has the potential to drastically improve performance by Extension Workers in relation to socio economic development. This will further enhance their “comparative advantage” over other professionals to make a positive contribution to rural development, as described by Zwane (2012:22).

3. OBJECTIVES OF THIS ARTICLE

This article is guided by the following objectives:

- to examine the links between good governance and food security;
- to identify a framework for understanding these links;
- to ascertain the policy strategies in place to guide Extension Workers in regards to accountability and transparency; and
- to recognize a framework for integrating accountability and transparency into the project cycle thereby improving good food security governance.

4. METHODOLOGY

Good governance has become a term associated with public administrators who are effective and efficient. Global calls for improved governance, is coupled with calls for the reduction in poverty and food insecurity, as mentioned earlier. As a result, those who are tasked with the implementation of related policies are challenged to change the way they account for their actions and thereby are required to be transparent. For Extension Workers, this means that they need to show improved policy impact in regards to food security programmes with an emphasis on their levels of accountability and transparency. Based on these developments in the wider context of extension, the challenge is to find a framework for understanding the relationship between these concepts and for understanding how they impact on the achievement on food security. The authors adopt a desktop study through the examination of relevant literature regarding good food security governance, the role of policy implementers, and explore the role of the Extension Worker in the pursuit of the goals of socio-economic development and good governance. The literature is synthesized in order to make recommendations that are used for further empirical study.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Good governance

The good governance agenda is seen as a benchmark for government performance. Key dimensions of good governance as identified by the World Bank Development Report in 1992 entitled *Governance and Development* are transparency, accountability, legal framework and public sector management (Economic Commission for Africa, 2003:5). Whilst there are varying interpretations of good governance, Ghaus – Pasha (in Mohamed Sayeed & Pillay, 2013:91) argues that good governance is a means to an end through its focus on sustainable and equitable economic development; and as an end in itself, through its focus on political stability, transparency and accountability. The aim of a good governance agenda is essentially to reflect on a governments' ability to manage its affairs and deliver services. Good governance thus includes the values, policies and institutions by which social development is managed (adapted from World Bank, 1994). For the purpose of this article, good governance refers to the extent to which a government achieves through democratic means the socio economic needs of society. Further, good governance includes the levels of accountability, levels of ethical standards and the extent to which the government responds to the needs of its people.

5.2 Good food security governance

The FAO (2011:5) argues that “food security governance relates to formal and informal rules and processes through which public and private actors articulate their interests, and decisions for achieving food and nutrition security at local, regional and global level are made, implemented and sustained.” Thus, looking at food security through a good governance filter does not propose to present an ideal future state of government, but merely presents a way of understanding food security in relation to governance issues. The FAO PANTHER Principles, as described below, integrate governance into food security as a mechanism for understanding the extent of food security governance. The acronym refers to the various goals that must be achieved if food security is to be achieved within a good governance agenda. These include, *inter alia*:

- Participation requires that everyone have the right to subscribe to decisions that affect them.
- Accountability requires that politicians and government officials be held accountable for their actions through elections, judicial procedures or other mechanisms.
- Non-discrimination prohibits arbitrary differences of treatment in decision-making.
- Transparency requires that people be able to know processes, decisions and outcomes.
- Human dignity requires that people be treated in a dignified way.
- Empowerment requires that they are in a position to exert control over decisions affecting their lives.
- Rule of law requires that every member of society, including decision-makers, must comply with the law (FAO, 2011).

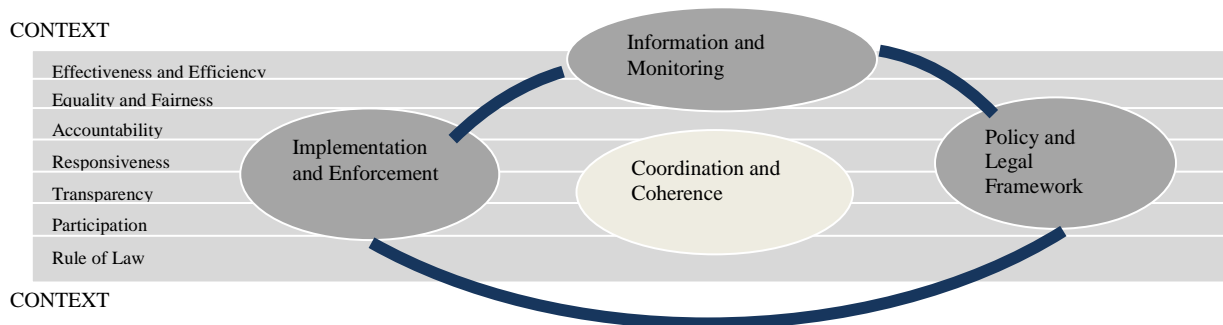


Figure 1: PANTHER Principles
 Source: FAO (2011)

These goals, together with the good governance agenda present a global framework for public sector performance and require effective implementation and enforcement of rules; a policy and legal framework; information and monitoring system; and a system for coordination and coherence of policies, processes and practices. These then can be used to view the relationship with food security where the right to food is seen as the starting point for food security intervention as indicated without which, the model suggests, good food security governance cannot be achieved (as indicated in Figure 2 below).

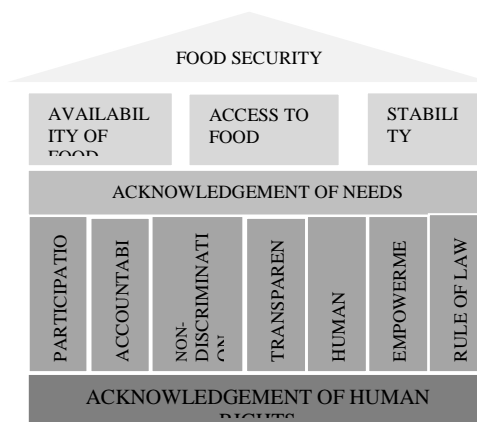


Figure 2: Relationship between Good Governance and Food Security
 Source: adapted from FAO (2011)

The second level requires an adherence to the elements of good governance, *viz*:

- legitimacy and voice – this requires that individuals, households and communities need to be allowed to engage in a dialogue with government over needs and responsibilities;
- direction – requires that the relevant policies and structures be in place in order to guide the actions of public servants;
- performance – requires that the actions of public servants and communities in the process of programme or policy implementation be geared towards the achievement of food security;

- accountability – requires that official mechanisms for accounting for actions or inactions are in place and applied;
- fairness – requires that the principles of equitable access by all to the benefits of policies and programmes be applied whilst adhering to the rule of law;
- ethics – requires that public servants in the process of policy or programme implementation adhere to ethical values and principles in the carrying out of their roles and responsibilities; and
- professionalism – requires that public servants in the implementation of policy or programmes balance their accountability and autonomy by providing services whilst imbuing the moral and ethical obligations of public administrators.

Thus, in striving towards the elements of good governance, this model suggests that the needs of the food insecure can be acknowledged, which, in turn, provides opportunities for food security policy intervention. Once the policy has been set up, intervention aimed at dealing with the three dimensions of food security will lead to food security on the national, household and individual levels. A criticism of this model is that there is the assumption that these will logically flow from one level to the next. Accommodation ought to be allowed for assessment and re-assessment of these conditions for success at each level. In other words, flexibility in achieving the ultimate status of food security, on all three levels, should be explicit in the model, not assumed. This will allow for the re-assessment of needs and conditions for good governance, and will further establish the foundation for the creation of new needs as some are achieved, and in so doing, a learning cycle can be facilitated.

5.3 Acknowledgement of Human Rights and the Rule of Law in South Africa

The right to access sufficient food and water is protected in Section 27 of the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996). This act further indicates that “the state must by legislation and other measures, within its available resources, avail to progressive realization of the right to sufficient food”. In addition to this entrenched right, the Integrated Food Security Strategy aims to eradicate hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity by 2015 (NDA, 2002). The Department of Agriculture as the convener of the Integrated Food Security Strategy and has committed itself to the achievement of this goal which reiterates the first Millennium Development Goal through this strategy (NDA, 2002; Altman, Hart and Jacobs, 2009:345). As 2015 approaches, with the realization that many of the MDG goals are yet to be achieved (Statistics South Africa 2011, MDG, 2010:24-25) the National Development Plan towards 2030, seeks to continue the pursuit of food for all through its objectives that recognize the role of accountability and transparency as critical issues that must be addressed if socio economic development, and food security is to be achieved by all beyond 2015 (RSA, National Planning Commission, 2011).

5.4 Parameters for accountability amongst public servants in South Africa

‘Accountability’ in the public service requires that administrators are held responsible for their actions and are required to report to a recognised authority. Accountability thus forms an integral part of the level of legitimacy that a government possesses and displays. Critical issues for government accountability are: Who does the planning? How it is implemented? Who implements it? Who organises the process of accounting? (Zwane & Düvel, 2008:116). Accountability within a good food security governance framework requires Extension Workers to “follow the formal chain of command in decision making to ensure that ethical

standards have been maintained” and that they adopt participatory methods in the identification of the needs of communities (Mohamed Sayeed & Pillay, 2013:4).

Establishing and maintaining accountability amongst Extension Workers begins with a legislative framework to guide elements of loyalty, neutrality, diligence, punctuality, effectiveness and impartiality. The South African government has a plethora of guiding acts and policies. The most significant of these for establishing and maintaining accountability amongst Extension Workers are:

- the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996* which provides guidelines within which government has to determine its policies and how the administration of the public sector has to be conducted. Chapter 10 of the Constitution of 1996 requires public administration to be governed by democratic values and principles;
- the *White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery* of 1997 outlined the eight Batho Pele principles which provide a set of values and principles which place people first in the public service delivery process;
- the *White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service* of 1995 promotes a professional ethos and greater accountability;
- the *Public Service Act, 1994* and the *Public Service Regulations of 2001* promote high ethical behaviour amongst public servants;
- the *Public Protector Act, 1994* provides guidelines for the dismissal of member who engage in misconduct, maladministration, corruption and unlawful enrichment in the course of their duties;
- the *Promotion of Administrative Justice Act* aims to ensure that public administration within the country is effective and accountable to its citizens. This act works together with the Bill of Rights, the Batho Pele principles, and section 33 of the Constitution (which seeks to guarantee that administrative actions will be reasonable) aims to ensure effective delivery of services;
- the *Prevention and Combating of Corruption Activities Act of 2004* is aimed at preventing corrupt activities. The act further provides guidelines for the reporting of such activities;
- the *Code of Conduct for Public Servants of 1998* provides guidelines for ethical conduct by public servants. This act forms the basis for public servant professionalism by way of providing ethical values and guidelines for accountability and transparency;
- the *Department of Public Service and Administration and in the Public Service Commission* outlines several indicators based upon constitutional principles which include the elements of ethics, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability; and
- the *Norms and Standards for Extension and Advisory Services in Agriculture of 2005* outlines a range of norms and standards specific to the implementation of strategy and policy within the department of Agriculture. These norms and standards which include that Extension services be demand driven, relevant, pluralistic, equitable and display sound governance, were aimed at clarifying the roles and responsibilities amongst those responsible for the delivery of services.

Accountability thus goes beyond institutional measures. Rather, it requires a commitment by Extension Workers, as public servants, not only to the rule of law, but towards ethical behaviour and a commitment to effective service delivery. Accountability, in this regard is closely related to openness or transparency.

5.5 Parameters for transparency amongst public servants in South Africa

Ghaus- Pasha (2007) sees transparency as action that is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. The South African government has sought to ensure transparency and access to information through two main pieces of legislation; namely, The Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 and the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000. The Promotion of Access to Information together with the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act makes provisions to overcome corruption by encouraging transparency amongst public servants. Ethical public servants need to lead the way in identifying corruption and this could be encouraged through making staff familiar with the protection they are afforded through the Protected Disclosures Act of 2000. The challenge is to ensure that codes of conduct and principles for the public service are part and parcel of the everyday activities of public servants. For Extension Workers, this requires being familiar with the guidelines within which they operate (Mohamed Sayeed, 2014:262).

6. A FRAMEWORK FOR EXTENSION WORKERS

If Extension Workers are to improve their effectiveness and efficiency and thereby contribute to the governments’ good governance record, they need to include the elements of accountability and transparency in all areas of their functioning as public administrators. Figure 3 below shows accountability and transparency as issues that ought to cut across all aspects of the functioning of the state in relation to food security strategy. Given that policies are in place providing the foundation for an accountable and transparent Extension service, adherence to the guiding norms, values and principles, with corresponding reprimand for non-compliance, would make a significant contribution to good food security governance.

Accountability	Policy, legal, institutional regulating frameworks		Planning and decision making		Implementation, enforcement and compliance	
Transparency						

Figure 3: Understanding good governance through accountability & transparency
Source: Adapted from FAO (2011)

In identifying opportunities for reflecting on accountability and transparency into their daily functioning as a means for contributing to good governance, the project cycle is a good starting point. Integrating the elements of good governance at each of the stages of the project cycle through accountability and transparency mechanisms (indicated as A & T in Figure 4 below) provides opportunity for constant consideration of the guiding norms, values and principles for Extension Workers, and as a result can reinforces compliance with good food security governance.

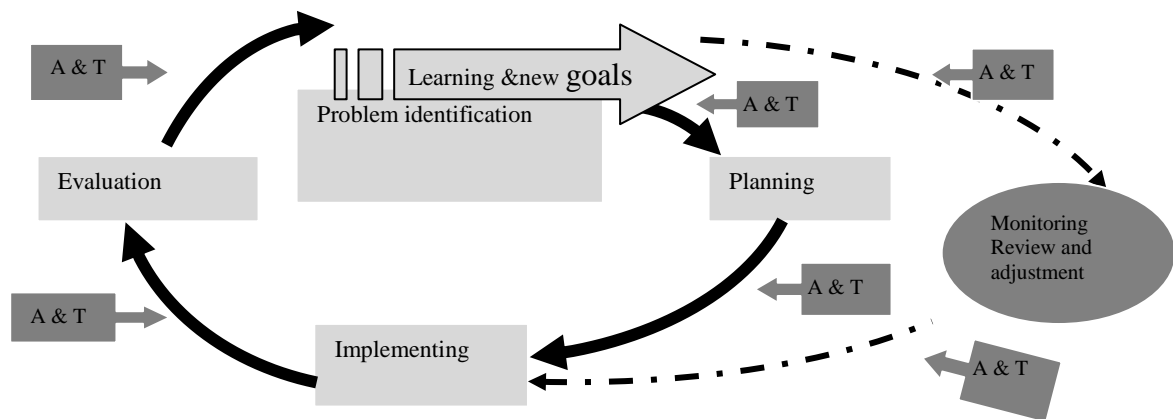


Figure 4: The role of accountability and transparency in the project cycle
SOURCE Adapted from Mikkelsen (1995:170-171)

7. CONCLUSION

The pursuit of the goal of food security for all by Extension Workers requires that they play a key role in the achievement of good governance. The term good food security governance seeks to understand this complex role in line with the legislative guidelines, the requisite norms and principles, and the level of professionalism required of Extension Workers as implementers of food security strategies. Accountability and transparency contribute to this analysis. This paper has shown that despite the prevalence of good legislative frameworks and guidelines for Extension Workers, much still need to be done in order to bridge the gap between policy and implementation. This paper concludes that the integration of accountability and transparency mechanisms into each stage of the project cycle offers opportunity for the achievement of good food security governance amongst Extension Workers.

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