

“PARTICIPATION AND LINKAGES FOR IMPROVED EXTENSION DELIVERY” – THE ROLE OF THE EXTENSION WORKER

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable agricultural development is only possible if there is participation and clear linkages between the role players that will ensure improved extension (service) delivery. The aim of this study is to determine the role of the extension worker to ensure participation and the formation of linkages, and by doing so, improve extension delivery. The evaluation of a number of organisations/institutions involved in delivering an extension service as well as the clients (farmers) organisations shows very little participation processes and only a few linkages (in most cases a top down approach), between the service provider and the client and vice versa. Development projects that were successful indicated towards the importance of the following fundamental principles that give direction when one is working with people in a community: respect for human dignity; individuality; self-determination; self-help; community needs; indigenous plans; partnership and change. By applying these principles the extension worker became part of the community and the first step to participate and to link has been formed between the client and extension worker on the farm and within the farming community (bottom-up approach).

1. INTRODUCTION

Nobody is in a dispute about the necessity and importance of participation and the formation of linkages to improve the delivering of services to clients in all sectors of society and life today. According to

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The Strategic Plan for South African Agriculture (2003:5-11), agriculture remains an important sector in the South African economy. The core focus of the Plan is “to generate equitable access and *participation*” to contribute to a “better life for all”. The Sector Plan identify five broad challenges:

- Constrained global competitiveness and low profitability,
- Skewed *participation*,
- Low investor confidence in agriculture,
- Inadequate, ineffective and inefficient support and *delivery* systems and
- Poor and unsustainable management of natural resources.

Once again participation and delivery feature clearly as challenges that need to be addressed. With regard to *linkages* the Sector Plan (2003:27) clearly outline that proper coordination among the various role players is essential and need to be ensured. The vision for the South African agriculture is: “A united and prosperous agricultural sector” and this vision is only attainable through sustainable agricultural development. Sustainable agricultural development is therefore only possible if there is participation and clear linkages that will ensure improved extension (service) delivery (National Department of Agriculture, 2001).

Who then is responsible to initiate, facilitate and structure a process of participation? Who is responsible to form linkages? What role can the extension worker play, to ensure participation and the forming of linkages and by doing so, improve extension delivery? Where do we start to participate, to link, to improve extension delivery and ultimately to develop a sustainable agricultural sector in South Africa?

2. ORGANISATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES INVOLVED IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION

There are a number of organisations and institutions involved in delivering a service to the farming community in South Africa. Time does not allow us to go into any detail and therefore only a broad description of the organisations/institutions is presented.

In Figure 1 the organisations and institutions involved in delivering an extension service and the linkages that could be identified with the

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES	LINKAGES/ PARTICIPATION WITH CLIENTS
<p>National</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament • Politically driven • Portfolio committee • NDA <p>Budget approval to implement programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imbizo <p>⇒</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidential Working Group
<p>Provincial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislature • Politically driven • Portfolio committee • Dept of Agriculture <p>Budget approval to implement programs</p> <p>Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - head office - regional - greater municipalities - districts wards/sub-wards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imbizo • On invitation <p>⇒</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forums ? • Working groups ? • Councils ? • Boards ? • Committees ?
<p>Local government</p> <p>Municipalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politically driven • Council • Divisions ? Forums ? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development forums ? <p>⇒</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development committees?
OTHER STRUCTURES	PARTICIPATION/LINKAGES
<p>House of Traditional Leaders</p>	
<p>Private Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operatives • NGO's • Financial institutions • Providers of agricultural inputs • Training Institutions • Etc. 	<p>⇒ On request</p>

Figure 1: Organisational/institutional structures: Delivering an extension service

clients (farmers) are being outlined. Figure 2 is a broad outline of the organisations and institutions representing the clients (farmers) and their identified linkages with the service provider (National

Agricultural Directory, 2004/5). The identification of the role players and the structures were not so difficult, but to identify the linkages and the processes of participation were almost impossible.

According to the above Figure 1 the question marks indicate the necessity for a platform to participate, these platforms however could not be clearly identified. The only structured platform and linkage that was found is the Imbizo program from National Government. A program highly appreciated by the people of South Africa. A worrying factor is however that most of the needs identified on this level should have been identified and addressed at provincial and local government level (IMBIZO, 2003:Tabloid/Information Sheet, October 2003. www.gov.za).

1. NAFU
2. AGRI SA
3. TAU SA
4. Others (non political)

THE STRUCTURE	LINKAGES with PROVIDERS
National level : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional committees Specialist organisations 	⇒ Working group at Parliament level ⇒ On request
Provincial level : ↑ Functional committees	⇒ On request
District level ↑ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associations • Study groups • Etc. 	⇒ On request
The farmers/ clients ↑	⇒ Direct with the Extension worker
Labour Unions ↑	⇒ Direct with the members
Employer associations	⇒ Direct with the members

(↑ ⇒ = Linkages)

Figure 2 : Organisations/institutions of the clients/farmers

In Figure 2 the arrows indicate clear linkages, the problem once again is the lack of platforms to participate with the service providers. The only platform available was on national level (Working group at Parliament level). At all other levels the client needs to request to meet with the service organisations.

The overall conclusion one can make is, that we are over structured (continually re-structuring) with little participation and very few linkages.

3. THE ROLE OF THE EXTENSION WORKER TO IMPROVE EXTENSION DELIVERY

When one talks about the role the extension worker will or can play to improve service delivery in the community he/she is working in, the following aspects come forward:

- What does the community expects from the extension worker (Beal, Bohlen & Raudabaugh, 1969:99-100).
- What does the situation in the community dictates to the extension worker (Lombard, 2003:173).

Taking the above aspects into consideration, the extension worker will then make a choice and decide on a role or even a combination of roles that he/she needs to play to improve service delivery. Various roles are defined and discuss in the literature today and according to Lombard (2003:173 – 196) includes the following:

The role of:

- Guide or broker
- Enabler or facilitator
- Expert
- Planner
- Organiser
- Coordinator
- Encourager or motivator
- Researcher
- Public relations officer
- Educator
- Administrator
- Negotiator
- Mediator
- Mentor
- Advocate
- Activist
- Agitator
- Therapist

The aim of this paper however is not to discuss these roles, their principles, where and when applicable and specifically with regard to participation and linkages to improve extension delivery. It is necessary for the extension worker to go a few steps back and start at the beginning!

3.1 Genesis – start at the beginning

The farmer is the extension worker's object of concern, meaning that the extension worker works with people. This is the point of departure to participate and to form linkages.

According to Ferrinho (1981:9) there are a number of principles that give direction when one is working with people in a community. These principles refer to "a basis, a conviction, a point of departure" (Eksteen, 1984:56).

It provides a fundamental basis and philosophical starting point and the philosophy is the system of values which characterises the entire outlook on the community and the work that need to be done (Ferrinho, 1981:16).

3.2 Fundamental principles to improve agricultural extension work

3.2.1 *Respect for human dignity*

Human dignity originates in self-respect, which in turn, is fundamental to the acceptance of others (Lombard, 2003:201). The human being's ability and responsibility to deal with his own problems according to his own convictions, expectations and resources need to be taken into account. Human dignity apposes any authoritative management and it defends the autonomy of the community. It demands respect for others opinions and their ability to make decisions and built up a life of their own. According to Ferrinho (1981:18) the extension worker need to become concerned with the ability of people to function socially and that one should have faith in people rather than providing assistance Dawid Kruiper, Khoisan leader in South Africa declare: "Maar ek begeer mos nie baie wat in die wêreld aangaan nie. Al wat ek begeer is om uitgelos te word. Moenie planne en raad vir my gee nie en moenie my voorsê nie" (Naweek Beeld, 28 August 2004). *Freely translated it*

means: "I do not have a desire for many things in the world today. The only thing I desire is to be left alone, do not make plans and advice me and do not tell me what I must do". According to Salomon (2004:34) extension practitioners need to engage with people as 'whole people', communicate emphatically, listen carefully and with intent.

3.2.2 Individuality

Every person is unique and therefore has the opportunity to create his own unique living space. The culture, social and economical structure and political factors all contribute to the unique character of the community. The individual however, is also part of a family and or household and therefore the family/household is unique. The human being (man/women) has the ability to recall images of past experience and to make value judgements about them and to project the lessons of such judgements into the future. This enables man to establish in his mind the things he/she wants in future. Recognition of the uniqueness of the individual farmer/client in the community, is a prerequisite for participation and the extension worker can establish it.

3.2.3 Self-determination

People would like to know that they have the ability to make decisions which affects their lives. An extension worker must realise that all people have the same potential to improve their own interest, to speak for themselves, to help as well as be-helped and to effect change to help themselves – this is in harmony with the philosophy of extension namely: "to help people to help themselves" (Raudabaugh, 1967). It becomes clear that the imposing of projects (no participation), even in emerging situations, is coming into sharp question. Most communities of people, be they in an African village, a New York slum or a squatter camp somewhere in South Africa, will change their ways if forced to change or if they are highly motivated to do so. When a community is forced reactions of suspicion, hostility or increased insecurity can also be expected.

A medical team under the supervision of a medical doctor (Dr S Kark) has been appointed to deliver medical services in a community with 800 inhabitants, in the Middle East (Ross & Lappin, 1967). The inhabitants of the community come from many parts of the world. They have a

variety of ideas about health and physical care, diet and health practices, many unknown to the Western world. Their attitude to modern medicine and its practitioners also varies greatly, some groups are quite superstitious, regarding doctors and nurses with a good deal of suspicion. Some groups have deep-rooted traditions which make no provision for modern medicine and its directives. Dr Kark's motto to deliver a medical service to the community is:

"Health cannot be given to people, it demands their participation".

Therefore his purpose is not to impose a health scheme on the community, but to attempt to have the community participate in developing its own health program. To implement this philosophy, Dr Kark had to clarify the philosophy with his team members. They all had to agree on the fundamental objectives and methods. Dr Kark did not direct, impose or lead his team members in the traditional sense. Frequent meetings of the team took place during which the practices of the villagers were discussed and Dr Kark then questions many of the assumptions and value-judgements of the team members. Team members had difficulty in understanding this method. All their lives they have been taught what was "right" and what was "wrong". They see many "wrong" practices in the village and feel that it is their duty to correct them. This is their job! And know their manager does not support their efforts but even question their authority for judging "right" and "wrong". This philosophy that Kark implemented with the staff was approximately the same as with the villagers. It can be summarised as follows:

- As a rule of thumb, one should never attack the fundamental types of belief directly.
- If fundamental beliefs are wrong and incompatible with reality the beliefs will themselves dissolve in the course of time, but nothing gives them life like a direct attack upon them.
- The untruth of the beliefs has to be discovered slowly by the people, and at the rate or pace at which the people are finding new sources of security.

- A belief upon which a persons security depends cannot simply be wiped out.

The medical team under Kark therefore begins their work not with lectures, moving pictures or distribution of literature on how to be healthy (the Western way) but with an attempt to understand the health practices of the various groups in the community, and how these practices fit in with their whole culture. Recognition is given to the health practices of the groups that have meaning for the people. No attempt was made to impose new standards on the people to challenge existing beliefs and practices. An attempt was made to create a climate in which free interaction between team members and villagers took place. This interaction (participation) has led to the exchange of ideas and to a feeling on the part of the villagers for change in some practices. It is therefore recognised that people will only change when they feel ready for change. Ways and means must be found to provide the average farmer/client with some sense of participation in and control over his changing environment (Ross, 1954: 22-24).

3.2.4 Self-help

It simply implies that the members of the community accept the responsibility to do something for themselves in order to improve their own circumstances. Self-help leads to the development of self-respect. Successful self-help projects serve as a source of motivation in the process of becoming independent. The extension worker can play a very important role to encourage the community and provide them with the opportunity to help themselves. In an appraisal of the Vulamehlo Handcraft Project (Kruger & Verster, 2001:250–251) it became clear that because of the fact that the project was initiated as a self-help project, the women were able to operate from home without neglecting their household duties, and they were identified as individuals who through their enthusiasm, drive and ambition have become economically active. During the initial 12 months period a total of R8 096.40 was collected for the items sold. The women participating each received R65.15. Although the average earning per month is low it is a beginning and there is a high degree of commitment from them. The project also received the recognition and acknowledgement of the local Chief and all the community members. In visiting the rural village of Hlabisa in northern Kwazulu-Natal, Gasa (2004:12–13) experienced

how a rural, under-resourced community managed to rise above difficult circumstances to survive and develop. When all the role players in the community formed a Development Forum, large numbers of community members volunteered to be members so that they can themselves contribute in any way possible. Women formed groups that identified and implement income-generation projects, young people were encourage to take education seriously and guard their health to the best of their ability.

A third example of a self-help program is about Ntuthukoville, a low-income residential area where a “traumatised community has transformed an informal settlement into a model of self-help” (Charlton & Silverman, 2004:10). A partnership was formed between the community and the municipality and today the residents service their own neighbourhood, cleaning roads, cutting grass alongside roads, doing door-to-door refuse removal, etc. This self-help program has provided residents with permanent employment.

3.2.5 Community needs

Identify and address the needs that the community itself indicates and not those imposed on them. It is the extension worker’s responsibility to help and support them to conceptualise and prioritise their problems/needs. The extension worker need to lead and guide the client towards their unfelt needs, slowly and at a pace determined by the client. According to Semana (1999:109–118) the success of participation in Uganda depended on “starting where people are and learning from their ways....walking and working with them”.

Evaluating two land reform projects Hart (2003:30) came to the conclusion that farmers must design their own systems based on their needs, skills and resources. Farmers are willing to be involved in needs identification and prioritisation. In a study in Nigeria more than 96% of the farmers indicated their willingness to participate in the process of needs identification and prioritisation (Apantuka, Oloruntoba & Fakoya, 2003:53). In a newspaper article (Zondi, 2005:6) the Kwazulu-Natal Premier made the following statement about the government-driven farm redistribution program:

“Prime land that has been handed to people is lying unused..... with the new occupants only interested in boasting about being the owners.... And the problem was that people did not want to work”.

The question is to what extent did the people participate in developing the program, which is a government-driven program and what are the needs of the people? Maybe their only and most important need was to own land and not necessarily to farm on the land. What role did the extension worker played in this program? What would the situation be, if this program was a community-driven program, based on the needs of the farmers and supported by government? In the same newspaper there was another article where the government commits itself “to spur public participation” to “mobilise communities in an effort to get ordinary people involved in the business of governing their communities” (Brown, 2005:6). This is definitely a move in the right direction to improve service delivery through participation and linkages.

3.2.6 Indigenous plans

Clearly linked to self-determination, self-help and community needs is the principle of indigenous plans. Already in 1945, Leighton suggested: “No matter how good a plan is, if the people for whom it was made fail to feel it belongs to them, it will not work successfully” (Ross & Lappin, 1967:36).

For many years this has been demonstrated where vast amounts of money and man power have been spent to launch projects, some of which have been little appreciated, a few of which have been thoroughly disliked and many with no cooperation from the local people.

An integral part of indigenous plans is indigenous knowledge and the extension worker must strive to understand the farmers’ knowledge systems and strive to adapt them if they can not be used in the original form (Squire, 2000:71), but do not ignore it. A study on the use of national plant materials as agro-chemicals among small-scale farmers in three villages in Nigeria, reveals that 60% of the small-scale farmers used *Azadirachata indica* solution extracted from fermented leaves to control cowpea pests in the field. Small-scale farmers know that this

plant is non-toxic, readily available and less expensive than agro-chemicals available on the open market (Gana, 2003:53-60).

3.2.7 Partnership

When people participate, they develop their abilities and the individual's ability to grow and to develop depends on active association with other people. The first partnership that needs to be establish is between the extension worker and his/her clients. This partnership depends on cooperation and mutual trust between the two parties and is only possible if principles such as respect for human dignity, self-determination, self-help, individuality etc. has been dealt with. If there is no partnership there will be no participation!

3.2.8 Change

The extension philosophy – to help people to help themselves – includes the principle of change and more specifically, behaviour change. According to Hugo (1971:14) the potential of the human race is fundamental to this principle. Self-realisation is man's highest calling, man is always in a process of becoming and is thus never static. Extension work, community development implies an intervention and that implies change and when will and desire are present, change can be greatly facilitated. Where does will and desire come from? From recognition of respect for human dignity, self-determination, individuality, self help, indigenous plans etc.

Principles such as justice, equity and development of local leadership also needs to be taken in consideration (Lombard, 2003:201-202).

3.3 The extension worker's involvement in participation and the forming of linkages

No one is in a better position to participate and to form linkages with the farmers than the frontline extension worker ("soldier"). The extension worker must identify and give recognition to the local structures for participation and the forming of linkages. Open up the channels within and between structures to improve participation. To be able to do this the extension worker must become part of the community. How? :

- Be there when they need you
- Listen carefully to what they say
- Be prepared to dirty your hands in the soil
- Take off your white laboratory jacket and put on a working overall
- Be on time, rather early but never late
- Be honest
- Become a technical expert in at least one field

These are some characteristics that build credibility and credibility will path the way to receive “citizenship” from the community, the starting point to participate.

Citizenship of the community however does not give anyone the right to talk. A “licence” (right) to talk can only be achieved when the principles of community development has been applied, namely:

- Show respect for human dignity
- Except self-determination as a reality
- Recognise the uniqueness of individuality
- Encourage self-help
- Address the needs of the community
- Form partnerships
- Give recognition to indigenous plans and knowledge
- Understanding of behaviour change.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To improve extension delivery the importance of participation and the formation of linkages between the extension worker and the client is an absolute necessity. The first step to participate starts between the extension worker and the farmer (or community) on the farm (in the community). During this first step to participate the first linkages is formed. To make sure that the participation and linkage are sustainable apply the principles that gives direction when working with people.

By doing that the extension worker will built credibility and will became part of the community. He/she will receive citizenship of the community and earn a licence to talk.

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