

Hlatshwayo, P. P. K.³⁷ & Worth, S. H.³⁸

Correspondence Author: P Hlatshwayo - Email: Phendukani.Hlatshwayo@kzndard.gov.za

ABSTRACT

Extension practitioners, as visible face of the discipline, carry the brunt of the criticism by the public, at all levels for none visibility and accountability. The study was conducted to assess the stakeholder perceptions on visibility and accountability of the state extension services. Three sets of key stakeholders (over 290 individuals) with interest in agricultural development were sampled to participate in the study. These stakeholders' were traditional councils (n=9), Elected community leaders (n=34) and community care givers (n=23). A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Forty- one questions grouped into three themes (visibility of extension services, accountability of extension and knowing of state agricultural programmes) were collected, analysed and processed.

The result showed that all three stakeholders regard extension services in Nquthu as highly visible (78.8%), as extension officers are known, their interventions visible in the communities. The results also indicated that extension service is accountable as 81.5% of community leaders confirmed. Participants also indicated the high knowledge (76%) of major state programmes available to assist them to improve their lives. The result of Chi-Square analysis showed some significant differences on elected and proportional leaders on all themes.

The study concluded that the state extension service is highly visible and accountable to the key stakeholders it serves.

Keywords: Operation Sukuma Sakhe, extension-stakeholder relations, agricultural extension

1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF, 2011) of South Africa initiated the National Framework for Extension Recovery Plan (ERP) aiming at extension revitalization. The plan placed visibility and accountability of extension as apex pillars in revitalization of agricultural extension in South Africa. The ERP was conceptualized due to complains by stakeholders and communities about participation, visibility and accountability of state agricultural extension. Actual participation of stakeholders and farmers in any programme creates self-confidence in them and they learn more by doing. Kgosiemang & Oladele (2012) stated that participation is defined as a process that involves grassroots extension programme planning, national extension policy formulation, improvement of

³⁷ PhD candidate – University of KwaZulu-Natal, KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Nquthu Agricultural Office, Private Bag X5501 Nquthu 3135. Email: Phendukani.Hlatshwayo@kzndard.gov.za

³⁸ Director - Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Resource Management, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Private Bag X01 Scottsville 3209.

extension organisational structure for more effectiveness, organisation of famers for empowerment and group extension approach.

The role of agricultural extension is vital to the diffusion of new technology, but extension is currently failing (Malawi 2000). Ngomane (2010) indicated that extension practitioners, as visible faces of the discipline, carried the brunt of the criticism by the public, policymakers and lawmakers (politicians) at all levels for none or less visibility and accountability. The criticism has prevailed despite international and national efforts directed toward extension renewal.

Agricultural extension faces important challenges in the areas of relevance, visibility, accountability and sustainability amongst the stakeholders it's supposed to serve (Chintamanie, 1998).

Failure by research and extension to understand and involve clientele in problem definition and solving (Davis, 2010) lead to misunderstanding and often low or no adoption of agricultural extension innovations rendered by state extension services.

Furthermore Kgosiemang & Oladele (2012) indicated that participation in agricultural extension means putting responsibility in the hands of farmers to determine agricultural extension programmes; it can make services more responsive to the local conditions, more accountable, more effective and more sustainable. According to Swanson & Rajalahti (2010), agricultural extension has three major goals which determine their activity (visibility); these goals are achieving food security (Umali & Schwartz, 1994), improvement of rural livelihood and improvement of natural resource management.

2. OBJECTIVES

The study was conducted to determine the participation and perception of stakeholders (community leaders and general fieldworkers, who are also farmers) representing farmers about the visibility and accountability of the state extension workers and their management to the community it serve. The study also sought to identify gaps so as to inform agricultural extension policies as to how extension should be conducted or not conducted to increase visibility and accountability to farmers through stakeholders.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in all 17 wards of Nquthu Municipality (KZ 242). The entire municipal area is under traditional leadership and approximately 90% is communal under Ingonyama Trust Board (KwaZulu-Natal Ingonyama Act, Act 3 of 1994 as amended). That make the Traditional Authorities the provider of agricultural land, and the extension services have to be introduced as well as all state programmes.

According to Census (2011), the total area of Nquthu is 1962 km², unemployment is at 44.4% and the number of agricultural households is estimated at 19 997 which is 63% of the total households.

3.2 RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND SAMPLING

This study was conducted in 2014, in the form of self-administered survey questionnaires. All survey questionnaires were in IsiZulu and English. Forty-one questions were asked, and categorized into three thematic areas namely visibility of extension officer, accountability of both extension officers and the Extension Manager and the knowledge of extension programmes by stakeholders. Municipal wards are also extension wards for ease of logistics and reporting.

Elected leaders; both ward and proportional representative councillors (18 May 2011- 3 August 2016) were the first stakeholders surveyed mid-term of their tenure. The importance of these stakeholders is that they are political leaders of their wards, therefore they have very huge influence on development including agriculture. Questionnaires were issued to all thirty four elected leaders, Twenty-six responded, which was 76.5%. This group responded individually and the returned survey forms were stamped and signed by the Council Speaker for verification and quality control.

Traditional Councils (TC) was the second group of stakeholders surveyed. Nquthu Municipal area is completely under traditional leadership that makes the Traditional Council an important stakeholder group in terms of traditional rules, allocation of fields and general order in the area. This stakeholder is not aligned to municipal wards; there can be two or more Traditional Councils in a ward. Questionnaires were issued to all nine Traditional Councils of which eight responded and returned (88.8%). All TC in Nquthu area have 30 members, the composition is; Inkosi / Chief, as the chairperson of the council, Izinduna /headmen (60%) directly appointed by Inkosi and 40% of the council is elected community members and there is the secretary of the council, who is an employee of the provincial Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. TC answered questions as a group, which meant that majority answer, as recorded by the secretary was final, as it is the practise, in traditional meetings.

The final stakeholder group was Community Care Givers (CCG's) n=23. These are field workers employed by the Department of Health (Hospitals) in the province. They work on villages; it does happen that there is more than one CCG in a municipal ward. Their mandate is to work in the communities primarily on health and healthy living promoting issues like door size gardens which promote production and consumption of fresh vegetables. This group also responded individually, their returned forms were stamped by the hospital to ensure validity and quality control. The response rate from this group was 98%.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were coded, entered and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (IBM SPSS 19.0). Descriptive statistics techniques such as frequency, mean and percentage were calculated to determine distribution of the study variables. Fishers' Chi-Square test was used to test the significance difference between variables under investigation (ward and proportional representation councillors and villages where CCG's work), at 0.05 level of significance.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 ELECTED LEADERS

Table 1 indicates that 80.8% of elected leaders knew who the extension officer working in their ward was and had seen agricultural projects within the municipal area. Results also

showed that there was constant exchange of information between extension officers and the elected leaders as 73.1% of elected leaders knew the official cell phone number for the officers based in their areas. This is in agreement with what Hedjazi, Rezaee & Zamani (2006) reported that constant communication is vital for agricultural development. More leaders (69.2%) indicated that their areas have benefited in terms of visible (infrastructure) projects and had noticed extension meetings done by the extension office working in Nquthu municipal area.

Table 1: Frequency analysis of elected leaders’ perception on visibility and accountability of Nquthu extension service

Parameters	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Visibility theme</u>			
Know the EO in your ward	Yes	21	80.8
	No	5	19.2
Noticed projects in your ward	Yes	21	80.8
	No	5	19.2
Know the cell phone number of EO?	Yes	19	73.1
	No	7	26.9
Ward benefitted from programmes	Yes	18	69.2
	No	8	30.8
<u>Accountability theme</u>			
EO attend war room meetings	Yes	20	76.9
	No	6	23.1
Manager addressed Council	Yes	16	61.5
	No	10	38.5
Discuss agriculture with EO	Yes	19	73.1
	No	7	26.9
Officers arrogant	Yes	4	16
	No	21	84
Agricultural office accessible to public	Yes	20	80
	No	5	20
<u>Knowledge of Programmes theme</u>			
Mechanization	Yes	20	76.9
	No	6	23.1
Food Security	Yes	22	84.6
	No	4	15.4
Livestock	Yes	22	84.6
	No	4	15.4
Youth and Woman	Yes	19	73.1
	No	7	26.9

Source: Survey 2014, n=26 (76.5%), EO=Extension Officers

Operation Sukuma Sakhe - Ward War Rooms (OSS) are the initiative of a service delivery model from the KwaZulu-Natal Office of the Premier, which are based in all municipal

wards. All provincial, national departments, non-governmental organisations, traditional councils meet on a monthly basis to discuss and most importantly respond to community issues. 76.9 % of elected leaders indicated that extension officers attend, actively participate and account to these meetings. This also made the extension service office more visible and accessible to the people on the ground.

Majority (61.5%) indicated that the Extension Manager had address Council on agricultural issues, these issues are of policy, general agricultural direction and accountability on state resources utilised within municipal area over the period of time. Only 16% indicated that extension officers are arrogant towards them and the farmers.

Most elected leaders (76.9%) indicated that they know about major departmental programs like Mechanisation, where free tractor and input services were made available to needy farmers or households based on war room's household profiling and traditional leader recommendations. Also this program was advertised on the national radio station, which might have contributed to most leaders knowing about it. Similar trends as shown in Table 1 were observed on other departmental programs in terms of elected leaders' knowledge. The common factor with these programs is that they were more provincial but implemented by local offices.

Chi-Square analysis (Table 2) showed there were significant differences between ward and proportional representatives on visibility and issues of engagement with extension officers. Where ward councillors affirmed and the proportional councillor disagreed. This will be expected, as ward councillor (overall winner) will be more known in the ward and at most of the times will take initiative to look for help in government and other stakeholders. Similarly it was noticed on accountability and according to the OSS model, the ward councillor is the ward champion who chairs all development committees. Therefore he/she will know which department officials attend to account in the ward. Both types of elected leaders indicated a very high knowledge of departmental programmes. As these programmes are localised indications were that the extension office popularized the departmental programmes in various areas where both types of councillors attended.

Table 2: Chi-Square analysis of elected leaders' (ward and proportional) perception on visibility and accountability of Nquthu Extension Service.

Parameters	Response	Type of elected leader		Chi-square (X^2) test			Statistics comment
		PR	Ward	X^2	df	p	
Visibility theme							
Know EO in your ward	Yes	5	16	9.905	1	0.002	S
	No	5	0				
	% Yes	50.0	100.0				
Noticed projects in your ward	Yes	9	12	0.891	1	0.345	NS
	No	1	4				
	% Yes	90.0	75.0				
Know the cell number of EO	Yes	4	15	9.036	1	0.003	S
	No	6	1				
	% Yes	40.0	93.4				
Ward benefitted from programmes	Yes	7	11	0.005	1	0.946	NS
	No	3	15				
	% Yes	70.0	68.8				
Accountability theme							
EO attend OSS war room meetings	Yes	5	51	6.635	1	0.010	S
	No	5	1				
	% Yes	50.0	93.8				
Manager addressed Council about agriculture	Yes	5	11	0.914	1	0.036	NS
	No	5	5				
	% Yes	50.5	68.8				
Discuss projects with EO	Yes	5	14	4.398	1	0.036	S
	No	5	2				
	% Yes	50.0	87.5				
Is EO arrogant?	Yes	3	1	3.144	1	0.076	NS
	No	6	15				
	% Yes	33.3	6.3				
Office accessible to public / farmers	Yes	7	13	0.043	1	0.835	NS
	No	2	3				
	% Yes	77.8	81.3				
Knowledge of programmes theme							
Mechanization (<i>application forms, tractors</i>)	Yes	7	13	0.439	1	0.508	NS
	No	3	3				
	% Yes	70.0	81.3				
Food Security (<i>seed scoops, tunnels, one home one garden</i>)	Yes	9	13	0.362	1	0.547	NS
	No	1	3				
	% Yes	90.0	81.3				
Livestock (<i>dip tanks, poultry runs, fencing</i>)	Yes	8	14	0.266	1	0.606	NS
	No	2	2				
	% Yes	80.0	87.5				
Youth and Women (<i>YARD, WARD</i>)	Yes	8	11	0.396	1	0.529	NS
	No	2	5				
	% Yes	80.0	68.8				

Source; Survey 2014, PR=Proportional representation, p=Probability at 0.05, S=Significant, NS=Not significant, EO=Extension practitioner/officer, YARD=Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development, WARD= Women in Agriculture and Rural Development.

4.2 TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

All (100%) traditional councils indicated as shown in Table 3, that they know where the Nquthu Agricultural Office is located and have visited it for various agricultural issues. The most notable one was when they were enquiring about departmental programs that were not ward specific but that cut across all their areas. They also indicated that they know who the extension officer assigned to work in their areas was. That meant that the extension officer was properly introduced to the council and that made working relations with the communities cordial. All secretaries of traditional councils have access to extension officers as they have their official contact details. This made communication both ways easy and possible at all times. In case there was an emergency or notice that needed to be communicated for example November 2015 drought feed scheme that was agreed on Friday to be rolled out on Monday, it was communicated to the traditional secretary over the weekend.

Most of the Amakhosi (88%) knew who the extension leader (Manager) of extension services in the whole municipal area is. This situation is beneficial as traditional leaders know very well who to contact in case there is a concern with the performance of an extension officer allocated in their area. Also 88% of council had seen extension officers holding extension meetings with people under their jurisdiction. It is a good sign that extension officers consult and inform the farmers they are serving in their wards.

All Council members indicated that they have noticed extension officers training farmers to take soil samples in their fields in preparation for crop production as most people practise agriculture as their livelihood. In relation to this study, Khan & Akram (2012) reported only 4% has seen extension officers working.

Table 3: Frequency analysis of traditional council's perception on visibility and accountability of Nquthu extension service

Parameters	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Visibility theme</u>			
Location & Visit to Agriculture office	Yes	8	100
	No	0	0
Know the name of the extension officer	Yes	8	100
	No	0	0
Secretary has the Officer cell number	Yes	8	100
	No	0	0
Inkosi know Agriculture Manager	Yes	7	88
	No	1	12
Seen extension meetings	Yes	7	88
	No	1	12
Farmers being trained on soil sampling	Yes	8	100
	No	0	0
<u>Accountability theme</u>			
EO come when required	Yes	7	88
	No	1	12
EO report meetings	Yes	6	75
	No	2	25
Manager come when asked	Yes	7	88
	No	1	12
Complaining about service level	Yes	7	88
	No	1	12
Discuss how to look after of projects	Yes	8	100
	No	0	0
<u>Knowledge of Programmes theme</u>			
EO introduce new programs	Yes	7	88
	No	1	12
Mechanization	Yes	4	50
	No	4	50
Food Security	Yes	7	88
	No	1	12
Community Gardens	Yes	7	88
	No	1	12
Fencing	Yes	3	38
	No	5	72
Animal Health	Yes	8	100
	No	0	0
Infrastructure e.g. Poultry structures	Yes	3	38
	No	5	62

Source: Survey 2014, n=9, EO=Extension Officer

Table 3 also showed that 88% of traditional councils confirmed that the extension officers and their manager do come to council meetings, when asked to come and discuss issues of importance and relevant to agriculture in their area. This pointed to a good working relationship between the traditional council and the extension office.

The majority of traditional councils also indicated as shown in Table 3, that departmental programs were introduced to them, with all relevant requirement so that their subjects can benefit. However half of the traditional council indicated that they understand the Mechanization program, which was very big and aimed at improving massively the lives of people. It was also confusing as to why only half will know because the programme was launched in Nquthu where all Amakhosi and Izinduna were invited and attended. It could be assumed that the traditional councils were confused between knowing programme and the implementation thereof.

4.3 Community Care Givers (CCG's)

82.6% of CCG's as shown in Table 4 indicated that they know the extension officers working in their area. They further indicated that they talked about agriculture with them, like where the need for community gardens or other extension interventions were. It was also interesting and encouraging that CCG's have seen extension interventions in the form of community projects (78.3%) and individual gardens (82.6%) in their area of operation.

More CCG's indicated that they have knowledge of the main departmental programs relevant to their work namely Mechanization and Youth and Women programs. 73.9% of CCG's indicated that they know about the Mechanization program and even more (78.3%) indicated that people in their areas have benefited from the program. 91.3% confirmed that they discuss agriculture as a vehicle to alleviate poverty in their communities.

Table 4: Frequency analysis of Community Care Givers (CCG’s) perception on visibility and accountability of Nquthu Extension Service.

Parameters	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Visibility theme</u>			
Know the EO for your area	Yes	19	82.6
	No	4	17.4
Talk about agriculture	Yes	18	78.3
	No	5	21.7
Know EO cell phone contact details	Yes	15	65.2
	No	8	34.8
Noticed projects in your area	Yes	18	78.3
	No	5	21.7
See home gardens in your area	Yes	19	82.6
	No	4	17.4
<u>Knowledge of Programmes theme</u>			
Mechanisation	Yes	17	73.9
	No	6	26.1
People benefitted from mechanisation	Yes	18	78.3
	No	5	21.7
Youth and Women programme	Yes	16	69.6
	No	7	30.4
CCG's report about agriculture	Yes	21	91.3
	No	2	8.7

Source; Survey 2014, EO=Extension Officer

Table 5 showed that the Fishers' Chi-square analysis for CCG’s, all agreed with each other as there were no significant differences amongst them on all the issues.

Table 5: Chi-Square analysis of Community Care Givers (CCG's) perception on visibility and accountability of Nquthu Extension Service

Parameters	X ²	df	p value	Statistical Comment
<u>Visibility theme</u>				
Know the extension officer for your area	21.974	22	0.476	NS
Talk about agriculture	21.263	22	0.404	NS
Know EO cell phone	19.481	22	0.779	NS
See projects in your area	21.263	22	0.404	NS
See home gardens in your area	21.974	22	0.476	NS
<u>Knowledge of Programmes theme</u>				
Mechanisation Programme	20.597	22	0.347	NS
People benefitted from Mechanisation	21.263	22	0.404	NS
Youth and women Programme	19.474	22	0.81	NS
CCG's report about agriculture	26.725	22	0.684	NS

Source; Survey 2014, X²= Fisher's Chi-square tests, df=degrees of freedom, NS=not significant

5. CONCLUSION

This study concluded differently to what Eicher (2001) found by indicating that extension services in developing countries is deteriorating day by day. This study concludes that the state of extension in Nquthu agricultural office is highly visible to all stakeholders, it does engage and discuss government initiated agricultural projects and programmes like food security, mechanization and community investment (fencing, dip tanks). It also account when asked about issues of importance in the community, traditional leaders knew the extension manager and the contact details in case there are issues that need to be discussed or just to solve problems before they become big.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Key stakeholders other than farmers should be identified by local offices or service centres and be engaged and taken on board on agricultural issues by extension.

2. Surveys in visibility and accountability should be carried out country wide, to assess extension impact on communities
3. Agricultural projects should be designed in conjunction with farmers and stakeholders for thorough understating and greater chance of success
4. National extension policy should be developed and ensure that visibility and accountable survey about extension office are carried out at least once in five years, and such exercise can form part of national extension evaluation.
5. More reporting should be encouraged from local office to stakeholders and scientific media so that leaders know the impact extension has on poverty eradication programs in their areas.

REFERENCES

- CHINTAMANNIE, B. 1998. Guyana Agricultural Extension in a changing environment “Towards Farming Systems Approach”
<http://independent.academia.edu/BissasarChintamanie>.
- DAFF. 2011. National Framework for Extension Recovery Plan, Pretoria Republic of South Africa
- DAVIS, K. E. 2010. Extension in Sub-Sahara Africa: Overview and assessment of past and current models, and future prospects. *Vol. 15 (3) Fall 2008. 10.5191 /JIAEE .2008. 15302*
- EICHER, C. K. 2001. Africa’s Unfinished Business: Building Sustainable Agricultural Research Systems. Staff paper 20001-10, Department of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University. East Lansing, Michigan.
- HEDJAZI, Y. R., REZAEI, & ZAMANI, N. 2006. Factors affecting the use of ICTs by Iranian agriculture extension specialists. *J. Ext. Syst. 22 (June):1-15.*
- KGOSIEMANG, D. T. & OLADELE, O. I. 2012. Factors Affecting Farmers’ Participation in Agricultural Projects in Mkhondo Municipality of Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. *Journal for Human Ecology, 37(1): 19-27 (2012)*
- KHAN, A. & AKRAM, M. 2012. Farmers’ perception of extension methods used by Extension. Personnel for dissemination of new agricultural technologies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. *Sarhad J. Agric. 28(3):511-520*
- MALAWI, GOVERNMENT of. 2000. Agricultural Extension in the New Millennium: Towards Pluralistic and Demand-driven Services in Malawi. Policy Document. Lilongwe: Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Department of Agricultural Extension Services.
- NGOMANE, T. 2010. From A Deficit-based to an Appreciative Inquiry Approach in Extension Programs: Constructing a Case for a Positive Shift in the Current Extension Intervention Paradigm DOI: 10.5191/jiaee.2010.17305
- SWANSON, B. E & RAJALAHTI, R. 2010. Strengthening agricultural and advisory system: *Procedure of Assessing, transforming and evaluating extension systems. World Bank, Washington DC*
- UMALI, D. L. & SCHWARTZ, L. 1994. *Public and private agricultural extension: Beyond traditional frontier.* Discussion Paper 236. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.