

# **EXTENSION AS A PROFESSION IS CRITICAL IN DELIVERING EXCELLENT SERVICES**

**11 JUNE 2014**

**Elliot. M. Zwane PhD**

**SASAE CONFERENCE, TRAMONTO IN**

**GEORGE, WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE**



**LIMPOPO**  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

# PRESENTATION OUTLINE

**1. Introduction**

**2. Background**

**3. Research methodology**

**4. Results and discussion**

**4.1 Objective 1 Demography of respondents**

**4.2 Objective 2 Principles of professionalism**

**4.3 Reviewing progress in South Africa**

**4.4.Obstacles associated with professionalism**

**4.5 Professional requirements of extension**

**5. Conclusion and recommendations**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

- The debate about the concept of professionalism in agriculture is not new. The *American Journal of Sociological Review* reprinted an article which debated professionalism in agricultural extension in 1960 (Goode, 1960).
- In south Africa academics responded by conducting research and presented papers in conferences (Terblanche, 2007; Jibowo, 2007, Koch, Terblanche, 2013, Lukhalo, 2013).
- This paper has four objectives
  1. principles of professionalism
  2. obstacles in professionalism
  3. reviewing progress
  4. critical requirements of professionalism

## 2. BACKGROUND

- The journey towards extension professionalism was championed by a collective not a single person.
- The following parties have played a role:
- The South African Society for Agricultural Extension (**SASAE**) developed the extension landscape document which formed the building blocks of **Norms and Standard** produced in 2005, In 2007 SASAE hosted a conference under the theme about **professionalism**.
- Standard generating body (SGB), developed and ensured that extension qualifications were developed.
- The Department of agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) played a role by providing funding and commissioning a study towards professionalism.

# 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- The paper forms part of a bigger study conducted in few selected countries of SADC( RSA, Botswana and Malawi). It is initiated by Extension Africa.
- The sample was purposively selected in Limpopo in 3 districts as indicated in Table 1.
- **Table 1 Sample size**

Name of district	Number of respondents	Percentage
Capricorn	12	40
Sekhukhune	9	30
Vhembe	9	30
	30	100

# 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## 4.1 Objective 1 Demographic profile

- Gender : 70 % male and 30 % female. It was reported that 60-80 % of small holder farmers are women.

Legacy of colonialism and apartheid

- Marital status : 76.7% were married, 23.3% single

Married people are stable at work as compared to single or people cohabiting.

## 4.2 Objective 2 : Principles of profession

- What is our understanding of the word profession and what determines or characterize a profession ?
- Wikipedia (2014) identified 7 milestones that determine a profession:
  - 1) full time occupation
  - 2) training school
  - 3) establishment of a university
  - 4) local association
  - 5) national association
  - 6) introduction of codes of professional ethics
  - 7) licensing laws ( legally practice)

# Principles continued....

**Goode (1960) identified certain traits e.g.**

- the profession is recognized
- occupation gains income, power, prestige, ranking
- can demand higher calibre students
- there is adult socialization within the profession (mentorship)
- the profession enforces norms of practice

## 4.2 Professionalism continued.....

- Canadian extension is governed by Agrologist Act of 1994, while in RSA we have SACNASP Act No 106 of 1993.
- Duvel (1990) further identified the following elements of a profession: philosophy, body of knowledge, leadership, admission requirements and guidelines for behaviour.
- The acceptance of extension as a field of profession in January 2014 is opening doors for the extensionists to practice professionalism (Becker 2014).

## 4.3.Reviewing progress in South Africa

- The tools and procedure used to establish extension profession have been documented (Terblanche 2012, Lukhalo,2014)

Four documents have played a role in the process:

1. Norms and standards 2005
  2. Extension Recovery Plan
  3. Feasibility study document on professionalism
  4. Draft extension Policy (Lukhalo, 2014)
- Other role players include: PDA's, SASAE and SACNASP

## 4.4. Obstacles associated with professionalism

- Insufficient number of extension practitioners (2200), (Terblanche, 2012)
- Large number of extension practitioners are above 50 yrs
- Conflict among professions due to different types of training, code of ethics, professional societies also differ (Duvel, 2007)
- Low impact, inadequate specialization, inadequate financial backing, inadequate research culture, (Jibowo, 2007)
- The attitude of a professional determines his/her productivity

# 4.5 Professional requirements of extension

## 4.5.1 Public speaking was rated 86 %

This was confirming what authors are recommending that specialists need to develop skills in documenting and communicating program impact to their stakeholders (Bembridge, 1990, and Radhakrishna, 2001).

## 4.5. Professional requirements cont....

### 4.5.2 Writing skill. This was rated 72%

Extension specialists have the responsibility to synthesize, evaluate, integrate, and apply research information (Taylor & Summerhill, 1994).

### 4.5.3 Listening skills

This criterion was **rated 70%** to indicate its importance.

Several studies reveal that extension specialists are one of the primary sources of information for county agents.

(Radhakrishna & Thompson, 2001)

# 4.5. Professional requirements cont.....

## 4.5.4 Communication planning

- According to Van den Ban (1990), applying relevant skills should be seen as communication in agriculture, this has improved the returns on investment.
- The respondents rated this **criteria 83.3 %** and this has been supported as important because of this belief that agricultural extension involves dissemination of improved knowledge to farmers and assisting them to apply it on their farms ( Jibowo, 2007).

# 4.5 Professional requirements cont...

## 4.5.5. Leadership

- Terblanche (2007) indicated that extension specialists need to be able to manage.
- Coupled with management is leadership. This **criteria was rated 76.6%**.
- The importance of this quality has been confirmed by Radhakrishna (2001) who noted that specialists are key individuals in providing the technical information that drives county extension programming.

# 4.5. Professional requirements cont.....

## 4.5.6 Critical thinking

- The study found that this criterion was rated **63%** Extension specialists perceive this criteria to be very important hence it was rated above 50%.
- The reason is because they perceived a specialist to possess a high level of competence in critical thinking.
- This finding was confirmed by Radhakrishna (2001).

## 4.5. Professional requirements cont...

### 4.5.7 Research linkages

- Hagmann (1999) observed that the traditional approach to linking research with farmers has been strongly criticized due to its linear approach.
- This criterion has been **rated 83 %**.
- This is a high percentage which acknowledges its importance.
- This view has been carried by many traditional researchers who held the view of its importance for a wrong reason, for example Radhakrishna (2001).

# 4.5. Professional requirements cont.....

## 4.5.8 Supervisory skills

- Mathabatha & Duvel (2005) found that supervision has played a role in ensuring that the relationship between the subordinates and the leadership remain positive.
- The study found that this criterion was **rated 73%**.
- This is an opinion of the subordinates which still sends a strong message that supervision is important for the specialists.

# 4.5. Professional requirements cont.....

## 4.5.9 Group facilitation

- Duvel (2007) identified important skills for a professional extensionist to have, namely management, supervision and group facilitation.

The study found that this criteria was **rated 70%**.

- This shows the seriousness of this skill.

# 5.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Conclusions

- The paper has succeeded in highlighting the achievement of the study objectives.
- Of critical significance is the fact that respondents have confirmed the 9 qualities as critically important for extension profession.
- All these qualities were rated above 60 %, which further demonstrate their importance.

# 5.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....

## 5.2 Recommendations

- The parties involved should come up with a set of rules to handle, monitor, and manage the profession.
- An action plan needs to be developed to manage competencies needed by the extension professionals.
- Extension practitioners need to be encouraged to conduct extension research.
- A code of ethics should be made known to all members.
- The Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) should facilitate capacity building through seminars, and other relevant approaches in order to instil a sense of accountability to the professionals.



# THANK YOU

For more information contact Dr. Zwane at [zwanefrank@gmail.com](mailto:zwanefrank@gmail.com)