

EXTENSION AS A PROFESSION IS CRITICAL IN DELIVERING EXCELLENT SERVICES

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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



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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

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