

CHAPTER 7

NEEDS BASED DEVELOPMENT

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Needs assessment entails a systematic collection of information at a particular point in time. It involves a number of techniques. For example (McCaslin and Tabezinda, 1997:39) identify four categories namely individual, group, secondary sources and rapid rural appraisal techniques. Needs assessments are carried out before programme activities begin in order to assess the situation. The practice of needs assessment has shifted from top- down approaches towards a stronger focus on a client “putting people first” philosophy (Chambers, Pacey & Thrupp, 1990). Participatory approaches have contributed to a general awareness of the key role of needs and also to a wide spread and often critical use of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and other techniques or methods (Düvel, 2002:97).

For extension to succeed in its mission of improving the quality of life of its clientele, extension professionals must understand and respond promptly to their client’s short term and long term needs and problems (Mwangi & Rutatora, 2002:30). The concept of needs has numerous interpretations. For example it includes drives, aspirations, motives, incentives, goals, objectives and problems (Düvel, 1982). McCaslin and Tabezinda (1997:39) make a distinction between needs, wants and interests. They refer to needs as something considered necessary or required to accomplish a purpose. Wants on the other hand are considered desirable or useful, but not essential. Interests indicate an individual’s concern or curiosity about something.

The nature of human behaviour and the consequent tendency to organize actions and behaviour to satisfy needs is fundamental to human existence. Based on the different interpretations indicated in the above paragraph, it is possible to confuse needs, wants and interests. Lack of needs assessments may lead to misunderstanding of clients’ needs priorities (and genuine response to technical advice) and may cause programme failure. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze views regarding issues related to

needs based development and to propose some policy guidelines or to identify the areas where such policy guidelines are required.

7.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The importance of needs assessment is widely recognized (Baker, 1987, Boyle 1981 and Goulet, 1968). Needs assessments make contributions. Witkin (1984) identifies three functions namely setting priorities, making decisions and the allocation of resources. The importance of needs is not supported by all people. Some hold the different views that needs assessments are expensive to carry out and must be avoided to save time and money (Brackhaus and Scholl, 2002). According to Mwangi and Rutatore (2002:30) the process of needs assessment is both objective, value laden and involves the collection and analysis of data from many viewpoints.

Respondents were asked to assess the importance of needs assessment in extension in a scale from 1-10 with '10' as the most favourable assessments. Figure 7.1, summarizes their viewpoints.

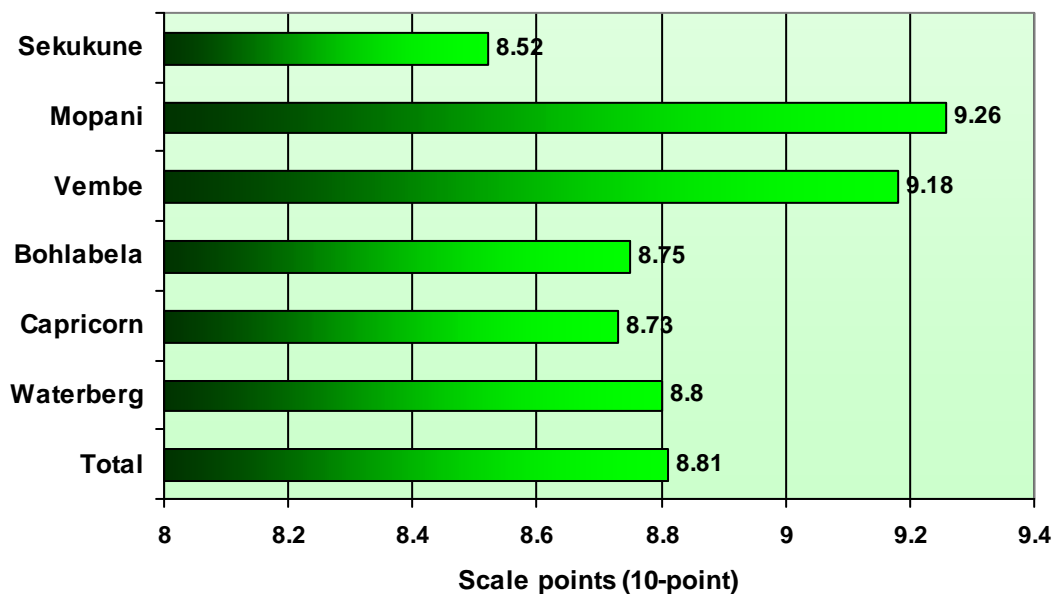


Figure 7. 1: The importance of needs assessments in extension as perceived by extensionists in the different districts based on a 10-point scale and expressed as a mean percentage

The picture that emerges from Figure 7.1 shows the importance of needs assessment in the eyes of extension staff. There are notable differences among the districts. Two districts namely Mopani and Vembe show outstanding assessments whilst Sekhukhune shows a lower performance assessment compared with the other districts. The reason for this variation in the case of Vhembe might be the influence of the BASED¹⁸ programme which encourage needs assessments through different methods or codes such as “The Road to Progress¹⁹”, the “Bus Code”, GRAAP and the “Knotty Problem”

In the case of Mopani, one can attribute the influence on community development approach implemented in the late 1980’s in the Mopani district. One hundred and forty five (145) community development projects were initiated although most of these projects have not been functioning. One would expect to see the Broadening Agricultural Services and Extension Delivery (BASED) programme to have had an influence in the other pilot district namely Capricorn. Unfortunately the finding does not reflect this. On the other hand Sekhukhune shows a performance lower than the rest. One would however not view this assessment as negative or cause for concern because the mean scale is still above 8.5 which can be viewed as most acceptable.

¹⁸ *Broadening Agricultural Services and Extension Delivery (BASED) is a project being implemented by the Department of Agriculture. It is supported by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ). It started in 1998 with two districts as pilot namely Vembe and Capricorn. BASED seeks to test and implement Participatory Extension Approaches (PEA)/Participatory Development Approaches (PDA) so that lessons could be shared with other provinces.*

Broadening Agricultural Services and Extension Delivery (BASED) does not target its clients in the traditional way. It is inclusive. Its point of entry is a village. Although it works with both interest and farmer groups but its main goal is to empower all the groups under one umbrella organization.

¹⁹ *Road to progress is one of the Participatory Extension Approach (PEA) uses needs assessment methods The method opens by asking the respondents things that they enjoy in the village and are proud of. The participants are guided to identify those things through the process of homogeneity of the groups, using symbols to present the findings. There is practical voting on the most three items and the process culminates with the development of an extension programme. The other techniques such as GRAAP, Bus Code and Knot problem reinforce self reliance in dealing with the needs once they have been identified.*

7.3 THE PURPOSE OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

There is no single purpose of needs assessment. This is evidenced by the many scholars who identified and documented some of the purposes (Düvel, 1994, Baker 1987, Van den Ban and Hawkins, 1990). Some of the purposes of needs assessment include allowing for effective behaviour intervention (Düvel, 2002:99), providing information to justify budgets, grants and increase people’s awareness of community planning and support for public funding (Baker, 1987), elimination of misperception of community needs (Kreitner, 1989), helping extension professionals to set program priorities (Kneubush, 1987), enabling extension to solve the right problems (Dunn, 1981) and the establishment of a two-way communication process (Utzingers &Williams, 1984).

Respondents were given four possible purposes of needs assessment and asked to rank the main purpose in order of importance. The findings are reflected in Figure 7.2.

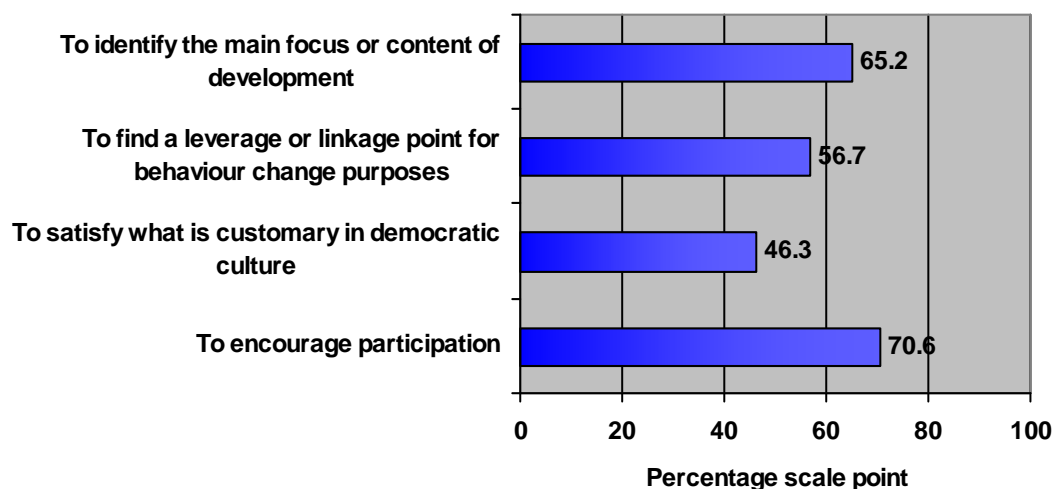


Figure 7. 2: The importance rating of different purposes of need assessments by extension staff (expressed as percentage scale points)

The general impression of the findings is that the different purposes of needs assessments are uniquely rated with some differences. Out of the four purposes, respondents “rank to encourage participation” with 70.6 percent in the first place. The reason for this ranking is not surprising because the shift of paradigm from top down

to participatory development is perceived as a positive move towards sustainability of extension programmes. One expects to see the thirdly rated purpose namely leverage or linkage(counts) being first or second because behaviour change is the key towards success in extension. Van Den Ban and Hawkins, (1990:2) emphasize the importance of technical knowledge in changing farmers behaviour from negative to positive. In other words the effectiveness of an extension programme can be assessed in terms of the manifested changes in behaviour and practices that occur among the programme’s targeted learners.

7.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS BY MEANS OF PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL (PRA) BY THE COMMUNITY

Swanson and Claar, (1984:112) agree that needs assessment is an important step in the programme planning process. One of the techniques used in their assessment of needs is termed Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and it serves as an alternative system of learning and action. According to Pretty and Vodouhe (1997:47) PRA is an approach that represents a significant departure from standard practice.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of needs assessment by the whole community using the Participatory Rural Appraisal as “ essential”, “useful” and “not essential”. The results are summarized in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: The importance of assessment of needs by means of PRA by the community

Importance of assessment of needs	Percentage
Essential	49
Useful	46
Not essential	4
Missing	1
Total	100

Strong opinion is expressed in favour of support that PRA playing an important role in assessing the needs of communities. 95 Percent of respondents perceive needs assessment by way of PRA approach as usefulness or essential. One should not overlook the fact that PRA has its disadvantages such as limited consensus, the creation of expectations that cannot be met and the tendency of some cliques and individuals to dominate the process (Düvel, 2002:100). It is noteworthy however to indicate that PRA has some advantages over the conventional systems of data gathering which include promotion of innovation, ownership by clients and its nature of interactiveness (Pretty *et al*, 1997). The reason why 5 percent of the respondents do not see the necessity of PRA in needs assessment by the community might be the lack of knowledge of how PRA works. It is proposed that Agricultural technicians should be trained in needs assessment techniques such as the PRA in order to appreciate the contributions which it brings in extension.

7.5 INTERVAL FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT BY THE COMMUNITY

Since the people’s needs, problems interests and priorities are continually changing, extension staff should make needs assessment their integral part of their daily activities and should keep proper records for future reference (Mwangi and Rutatore, 2002:36).

Respondents were asked to rank the appropriate frequency of assessments. The findings are shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7. 2: Intervals for needs assessment by the community expressed as a weighted mean percentage

Interval of needs assessment by the community	Percentage
Before the beginning of a programme	56
Continuous	19
Once a year	17
Once in 3 years	5
Not at all	3
Total	100

There appears to be a realization by the respondents that needs assessments should be done frequently. 56 Percent of respondents expressed the view that it should be done before the beginning of the programme. This makes sense because it helps to ensure that the development programme addresses the real needs of the target clients. It also serves to establish a baseline which becomes useful at a later stage of programme evaluation.

The fact that about 44 percent of the respondents seem to be indecisive could be an indication of the lack of clear understanding on the usefulness of needs assessment. In view of this knowledge gap, it is proposed that the Department of Agriculture conduct refresher courses on aspects of needs assessment.

7.6 IDENTIFYING THE PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

The identification of priority focus involves the participation of clients. According to Pretty and Vodouhe (1997: 48), participation is a continuum ranging from passive, where people are asked or dragged into operations of no interest to them or where they are involved merely by being told what is to happen, to self-mobilization, where people take initiative independent of external institutions.

As far as the use of need assessments for the purpose of identifying the priority development focus is concerned, respondents were asked as to the most appropriate way of finding the priority focus through needs assessment. They were requested to place the alternative types of needs assessments in rank order of acceptability or importance. The findings are summarized in Figure 7.3.

The general impression is that the importance of appropriate types of assessment tends to be based on what is expressed by farmers rather than any other group in the village. For example the majority of respondents, namely 61.7 percent, regarded the community's assessment of the most important agricultural need as the most appropriate way of identifying the priority focus. The assumption is that the community has an objective perception of the overall situation (which need not be the case). In determining community needs, the writer observed that it was at times very

difficult for a community to reach consensus on what should be the priority because different groups of people (for example men, women, youth and royal or tribal councils) have different priorities in the community.

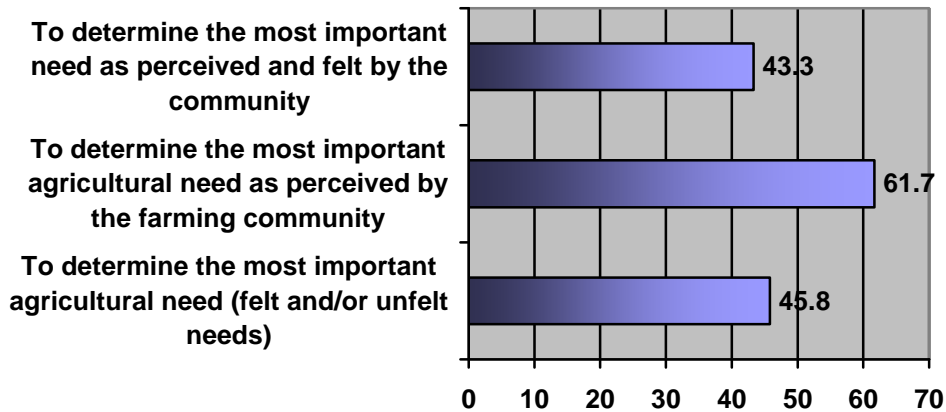


Figure 7. 3: The appropriateness of different types of need assessments in the identification of development priorities as expressed in mean weighted percentages

The respondents' second rank (with a mean weighted percentage of 45.8 percent) indicated their preference that agricultural needs be a combining assessment of felt and unfelt needs. Respondents rank third the alternative type of needs assessment which is to determine the most important need as perceived and felt by the community. The significantly lower support for this option namely 43.4 percent (for the alternative type of needs to determine the most important need as perceived and felt by the community) may be attributed to the fact that the identified needs are often of a non-agricultural nature and thus tend to detract from the main focus of agricultural development (which is the responsibility and the duty of the Department of Agriculture).

7.7 PROGRAMME CONTENT

According to Campbell and Barker (1997:67), the issue of developing appropriate content is critical to the extension process. The performance of an extension programme depends on the appropriateness of its message. Respondents were given five alternatives addressing content of programme to indicate which one's they would support most. The findings are reported in Figure 7.4.

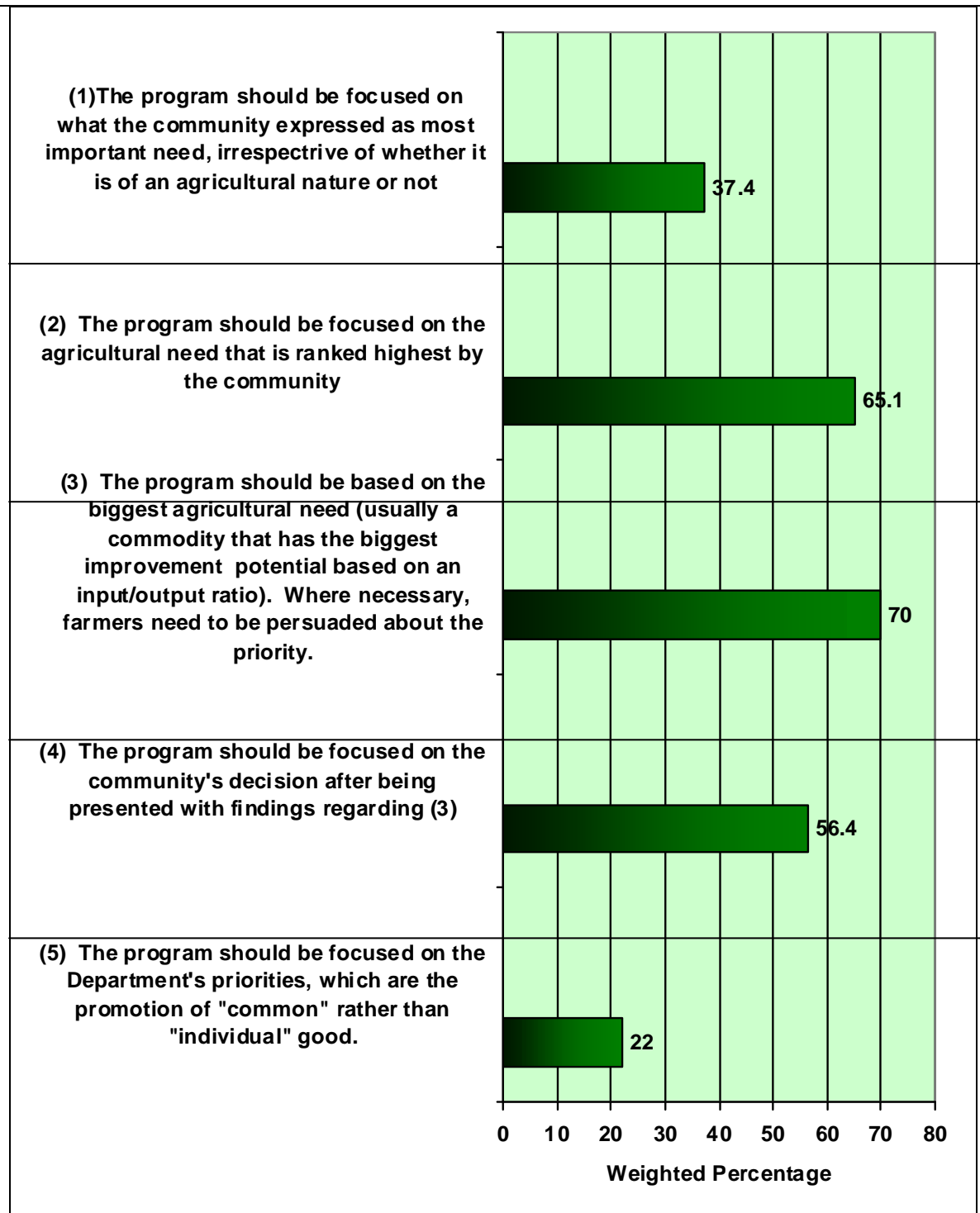


Figure 7. 4: The importance rank order (expressed as weighted percentages) of alternatives to identify the focus or content of development

The general impression is that the most favoured programme content is the one that puts the farming community at the centre. For example the majority of respondents (70 percent) indicated that the most supported programme content is the one that is

based on the biggest agricultural need (usually a commodity that has the biggest improvement potential calculated on an input/output ratio). This alternative makes sense although it is assumed that farmers will take accountability for the way in which the content will be administered for their benefit.

The second most supported programme content (65.1 percent) is the one that focuses on the agricultural need that is ranked highest by the community. This second most supported programme content is appreciated because the approach of the Department should move from the stereotype of “thinking for” to “listening to the farmers” when dealing with community’ needs.

The third most supported program content (56.4 percent) is the one that should focus on the community's decision after being presented with findings regarding the biggest agricultural need. This makes sense because it centres on the community being empowered to make a decision on issues that are important to them.

The fourth supported programme content is the one that should focus on what the community express as the most important need, irrespective of whether it is of an agricultural nature or not. This is not of great significance for the agricultural technician while it does make sense to the community.

The less supported programme content (22 percent) is the one that should focus on the Department's priorities, which basically addresses the promotion of "common" rather than "individual" good. The possible reason for this low support of the programme content is that agricultural technician’s perception is changing. They no longer view the Department as the “big brother” doing everything for the farmers. They see the farmer’s priorities as of more importance as the Department’s priority. The Department of Agriculture should strike a balance between the achievement of its objectives and those of its clients. In other words it should not spend financial resources on the achievement of its own internal objectives at the expense of its valued external clients.

7.8 CONCLUSIONS

The following statements are considered appropriate.

- The importance and purpose of needs assessments is highlighted.
- The Department of Agriculture embraces an extension and development approach that is need-based and thus relies on need assessments for the purpose of

Identifying community needs and thus identifying development priorities. This approach becomes relevant in view of budgetary constraints. However the priority focus that should be strongly supported is the one that agrees on the determination of the most important agricultural need as perceived by the farming community.

- Finding linkages for effective behaviour intervention and change are discussed.
- Methods of promoting participation and involvement of communities in the development process are analysed.

Interval of needs assessment

The assessment interval should take place at the beginning of the programme. This makes sense because it helps to benchmark the projects, the information is essential for monitoring and evaluation at a later stage.

Programme content

As far as the programme content is concerned, the most supported alternative should be based on the biggest agricultural needs as perceived by the community. The least supported option is an approach based on Departmental priorities which would not necessarily be in line with the spirit of “Batho Pele or People First” principles for service delivery as farmer’s needs would be marginalized. The next chapter deal with Institutional linkages, structures and community participation in extension.

CHAPTER 8

INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGES, STRUCTURES AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EXTENSION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The paradigm shift of the last decade or so towards more participatory approaches in extension and rural development has re-enforced the original philosophy of extension which seeks “to help people to help themselves”(Düvel, 2002:104). Different scholars (Düvel, 1991; Crompton, 1984:116; Oakley and Garforth, 1985:7; Bunch, 1990:55 and Schmidt, undated) are in agreement regarding the necessity of participation in development. Examples of such participation are the involvement of beneficiaries in extension in order to include their ideas in the programme planning process, such as the clients’ participation in the diagnosis and analysis of problems so as to promote the sustainability of extension programmes.

Very obvious differences occur regarding the purpose, the nature (or degree) of participation pursued as well as the means to achieve the programme objectives. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the views regarding these issues and to propose some policy guidelines or alternatively to identify the areas where such policy guidelines are required.

8.2 PURPOSE OF PARTICIPATION

Opinions vary regarding the importance and the purpose of participation in development. One opinion argues that there are potential risks and costs in greater people’s participation such as delaying project start-up by negotiations, increases in staff required to support participation, the possibility that the people consulted might oppose the project and over-involvement of less experienced people (Oakley, 1991:14). The alternative opinion suggests a number of reasons why governments might gain through the promotion of participation. Uphoff (1986), for example, suggests that participation helps to obtain more accurate and representative

information about the needs, priorities and capabilities of local people. This information enables the government to have a more reliable feedback on the impact of its programmes. The mobilization of local resources to augment or even to substitute central government resources becomes possible through participation.

Respondents were asked to assess different purposes of participation by indicating their importance on a 10 point scale varying from unimportant (“ 1”) to extremely important (“10”). Their assessments are summarized in Table 8.1

Table 8. 1: The importance assessment of different purposes of participation (expressed as a mean scale point) by respondents in the different districts of Limpopo Province

District	To allow for more effective extension or development	To allow for more sustainable community development	To provide for what is a value or customary in local cultures	To provide for democracy as entrenched in the country's constitution	To allow for the unfolding or implementation of the principle of help towards self-help
Sekhukhune	6.5	7.6	5.3	5.9	7.6
Mopani	8.4	9.2	7.1	7.1	8.2
Vembe	8.1	8.4	6.1	6.2	7.8
Bohlabela	7.1	8.1	5.8	6.2	7.3
Capricorn	7.3	7.6	6.2	6.8	7.9
Waterberg	7.3	7.5	5.3	4.9	8.1
Total	7.3	8.0	6.0	6.4	7.8

All the purposes of participation are regarded as important. The option addressing sustainable development is clearly regarded as the most important with a mean score of 8.0 out of a possible 10.0. This could be argued in view of the collapse of many projects in Limpopo including vegetable, poultry and rabbit production and farmers cooperatives. The negative experience led to renewed commitment by policy makers to address the issue sustainability and declaring it the theme of the 1990's. A further

reason for the perceived importance of sustainability is that donor agencies require their funded projects to be sustainable. The implementation of the principle of “help towards self-help” is ranked second (mean scale point of 7.8), followed by more effective extension or development (7.3). The latter was indicated as the second most important reason in the Mopani and Vembe Districts where a more pragmatic outlook appears to prevail. Considerations like “providing for what is a value or customary in local cultures and the provision for democracy as entrenched in the country’s constitution” are obviously less important, but should never –the less be overlooked.

Sustainability is, no doubt, a major challenge. Solutions do not rest with agricultural science and technology alone. Socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the small-scale farmers are also of decisive importance. In view of this, more research is required to understand the constraints under which poor farmers operate. Such research could further guide the formulation of appropriate strategies, which can have a favourable impact on sustainable agricultural development.

8.3 ALTERNATIVE GOALS OF PARTICIPATION

From the literature it would appear that there is never a single goal of participation. Oakley (1991:43- 55) suggests that one of the goals of participation is to empower the project participants or beneficiaries to assume greater responsibility in the affairs of the project.

Agricultural technicians were requested to place in rank order of acceptability three alternative goals of participation namely (1) participation as ultimate goal, (2) participation as a goal and as a means and (3) participation as means only. The choices of the respondents are summarized in Figure 8.1.

The picture that emerges from these findings shows that participation is held in high regard both as normative goal and as a means for improved extension. The different uses of participation are regarded as important, but participation as normative goal is clearly regarded as the most important purpose with a weighted percentage of 61.6. This is primarily because of the influence of districts of Mopani, Bohlabela and Capricorn, where participation as ultimate goal has very strong support. The likely

reason for this influence is the exposure of the respondents to the BASED programme that was introduced in the districts placing much emphasis on community participation.

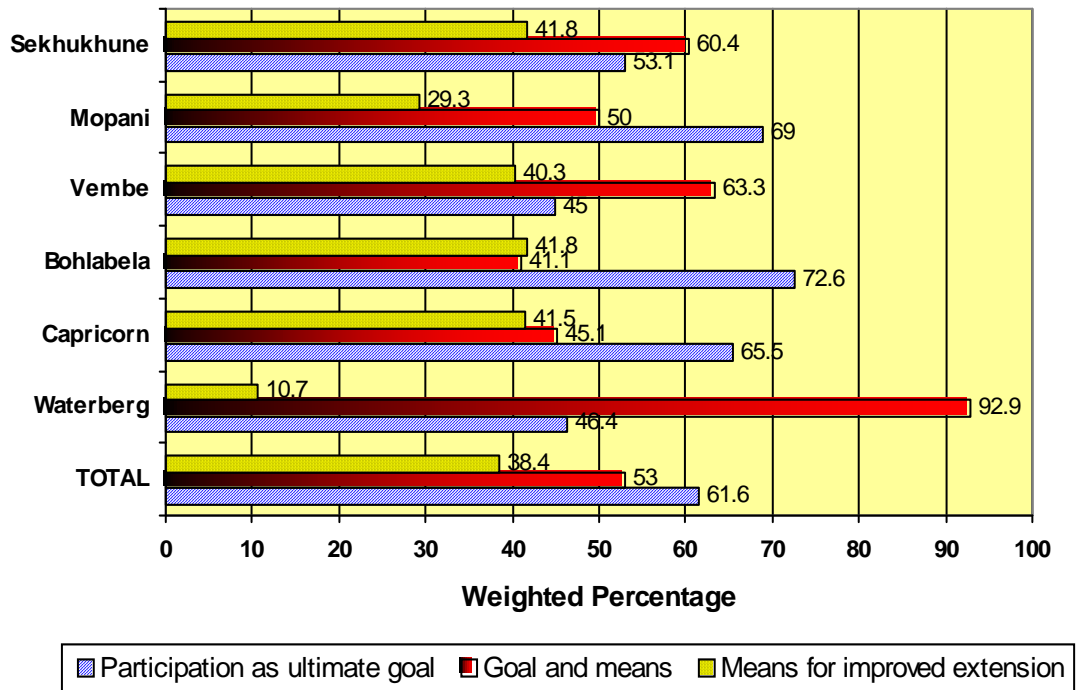


Figure 8. 1: The rank order of different uses of participation by respondents in the Districts expressed as mean weighted percentage

The purpose of participation as a means for improved extension gets the lowest rating. Based on the National Extension Study (Düvel 2002), participation as normative goal appears to be relatively more important in Limpopo than in other Provinces. A possible reason for this is the emphasis that has been placed on the BASED programme in Limpopo. However, this is somewhat contradicted by the fact that pilot districts where the BASED programme has been launched, are more reserved regarding participation as normative goal. This finding could reflect a form of disillusionment with the programme or in the way it was implemented.

The participatory motive is in a way also reflected in the ultimate goal pursued by extension namely human or agricultural development. In a national survey, Düvel

(2002) investigated extensionists' preferences regarding these alternatives. The findings are reflected in Figure 8.2.

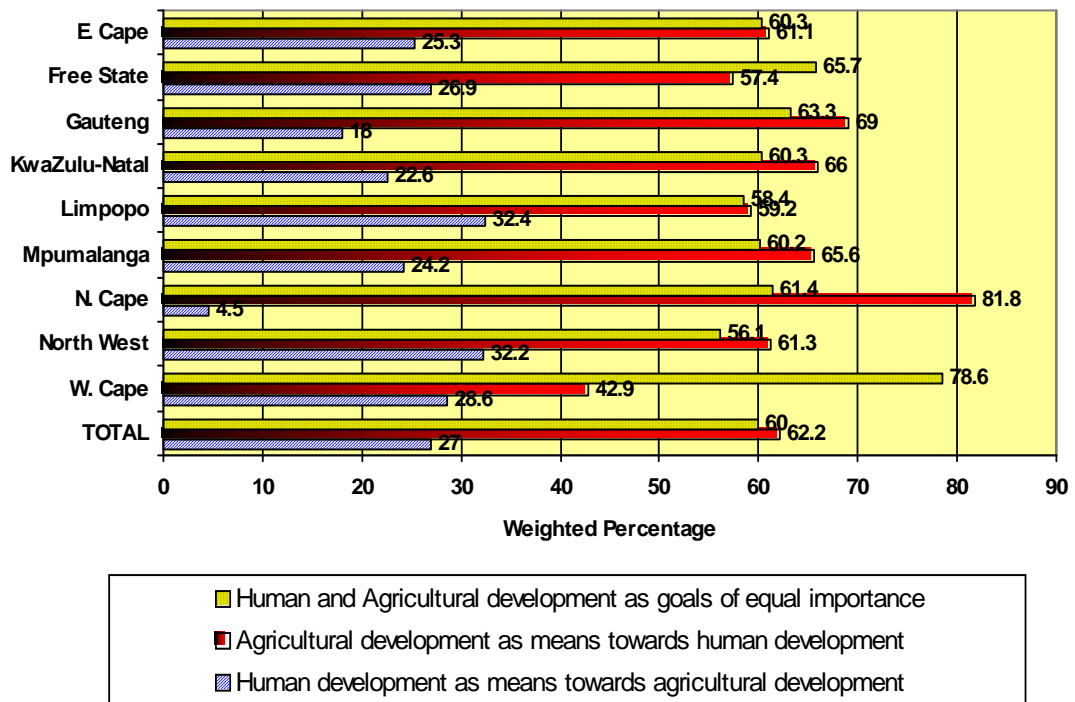


Figure 8. 2: The relative importance (expressed as a weighted percentage) of agricultural and human development as goals or as means to a goal as perceived by respondents in different provinces (Düvel, 2002)

In all cases the importance of human development is very evident although the emphasis by Provinces differs. Two Provinces namely the Northern Cape and the Western Cape show some extremes. The Northern Cape's emphasis was on agricultural development as means towards development with a weighted percentage of 81.8 whilst the Western Cape's emphasis was on human and agricultural development as goals of equal importance with a 78.6 weighted percent.

The rest of the Provinces do not show much difference between the two goals namely human and agricultural development as goal of equal importance to agricultural development, and agricultural development as goal of human development. In the case of Limpopo both goals have rated almost the same, i.e. 58.4 and 59.2 percent respectively. However, whether these preferences are realistic and practical is

questionable and it seems as if the implications of these alternatives were not appreciated.

It is doubtful whether all respondents really understood the implications of the alternatives. It can be argued that if the emphasis was on human development as the main goal, such a change in focus would require a name change to give expression to this primary objective. This could side track the agricultural focus of the Department of Agriculture. In view of the implication, a policy directive which suggests human development as a means toward agricultural development is proposed for the Limpopo Province Department of Agriculture (LPDA).

8.4 PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

Ewang and Mtshali (2000:162-164) point out that participation can be understood to vary from minimal/passive participation to full participation or self-mobilization. It is believed that rural people are more prepared to participate when they feel the need to do so (Oakley 1991:37).

To establish the degree or level of participation most acceptable to the respondents, they were confronted with a list of different alternatives and asked to place them in rank order of acceptability. The findings are summarized in Table 8.2.

The picture that emerges from Table 8.2 is that the most favoured approach is equal responsibility of development i.e. sharing of responsibility between the service provider and the community. For example the majority of respondents, namely 39.7 percent, agreed that the community in partnership with the development agent should initiate, plan, finance, coordinate and implement the development programme. This majority viewpoint is apparently supportive of development being a true partnership between the service provider and the community.

Table 8.2: The mean assessment of different alternatives of participation expressed as mean rank positions by respondents in Limpopo

Different alternatives	Rating in percentage%
The community coordinates, owns and finances the development process	5.2
The community coordinates, owns, finances, and implements the development process and in the process involves one or more development agents	17.7
The community in partnership with the development agent initiates, plans, finances, coordinates and implements the development program or project	39.7
The community is involved in needs assessments, but decisions, planning and implementation of the development processes are the responsibility of the development agent or organizations.	24.5
Development remains the responsibility of the development organization and is done in a way it deems fit and is not accountable to the clients	12.9
Total	100.0

The reason for not supporting a more community owned and dominating process can probably be attributed to doubts or a hesitancy regarding the community's capability to take the development leadership and full responsibility. This sentiment appears to have wide support which is evident from the fact that the support for bigger service provider responsibility is 37.4 as opposed to 22.9 for bigger community responsibility. The likely reason for this choice is that it empowers the community in the designing and management of the development programme.

The second most favoured approach is rated 24.5 percent. In this case the community is involved in needs assessments, but decisions, planning and implementation of the development processes are the responsibility of the development agent or organizations. This finds expression in many areas of Limpopo where development initiatives are currently "supply driven" by development agencies mainly by the department and the communities do not have much say, they are simply mobilized by extension to take advantage of the programmes.

The Department is currently implementing five types of food security programme which include a cage with 36 layers for egg production, a pregnant dairy heifer for milk production, a portable fish pond, a 200 l- drum of water fitted with irrigation pipes for backyard homestead gardens and the rehabilitation of small- holder irrigation schemes (RESIS). These epitomise in a way the supply driven nature of many current programmes. An ideal situation for participation would be to involve the communities through their representative organizations in the conceptualization stage as well as in the implementation of programmes.

It is the writer's observation that true partnership between the community and service provider tend to be difficult to achieve in practice because project participants do not always enjoy sharing of responsibilities in terms of financing and maintenance unless they are prodded and persuaded by an extension worker.

8.5 INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES AND LINKAGES

One of the purposes of a partnership between extension and farmers is to identify needs and agree on the development priorities (Düvel, 2002:110). For this and other purposes there has to be consultation or interaction for this to take place in an appropriate and representative manner. It has to be structured, which requires formal institutional structure and linkages. One of the strategies of BASED projects in Limpopo is to build or strengthen local organizations which in a way could be taken as a preparation process for partnership in development.

The respondents were asked to indicate their opinions regarding the importance of institutional structures. Table 8.3 presents the findings. There is general agreement that there is a necessity for an institutional structure. Only 2.5 percent of the respondents regard linkage structures as unnecessary, while 89.3 believe them to be useful or essential.

Appropriate institutional structures to serve the purpose of participatory development ultimately aimed at empowering the community and allowing it to take ownership of the development process is bound to vary with the situation (Düvel, 2002:111). In order to establish the number of linkages structures or the level at which they should be established, agricultural technicians were given three different alternatives to

Table 8. 3: The distribution of respondents according to their opinions regarding the necessity of institutional linkage structures for a partnership interaction between agent and community

Opinion about necessity of linkage structure	N	%
Unnecessary	8	2.5
Undecided/Neutral	29	9.2
Useful	179	56.6
Essential	100	31.7
Total	316	100.0

choose the most acceptable in their situations. The findings are summarized in Figure 8.3.

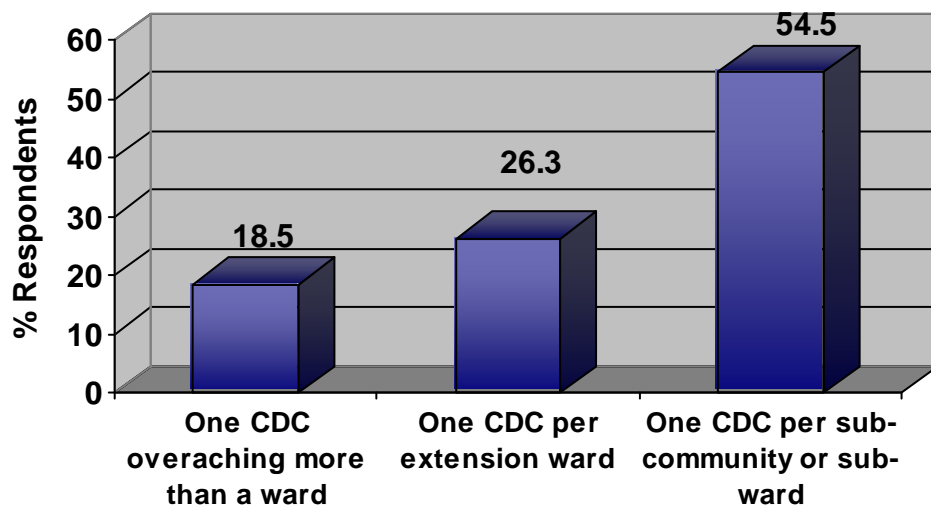


Figure 8. 3: The percentage distribution of respondents according to their support for different alternatives regarding the number or level of linkage structures (CDC's) in Limpopo

The most acceptable of linkage structure is one central development council (CDC) per sub ward or village level. The majority of respondents (54.5 percent) recommended one CDC per sub ward or village. When comparing the figures with the national survey (Düvel, 2002), as reflected in Figure 8.4, the results are somewhat

different although the tendency is the same, namely a bigger support for a linkage system at sub-community or sub-ward level.

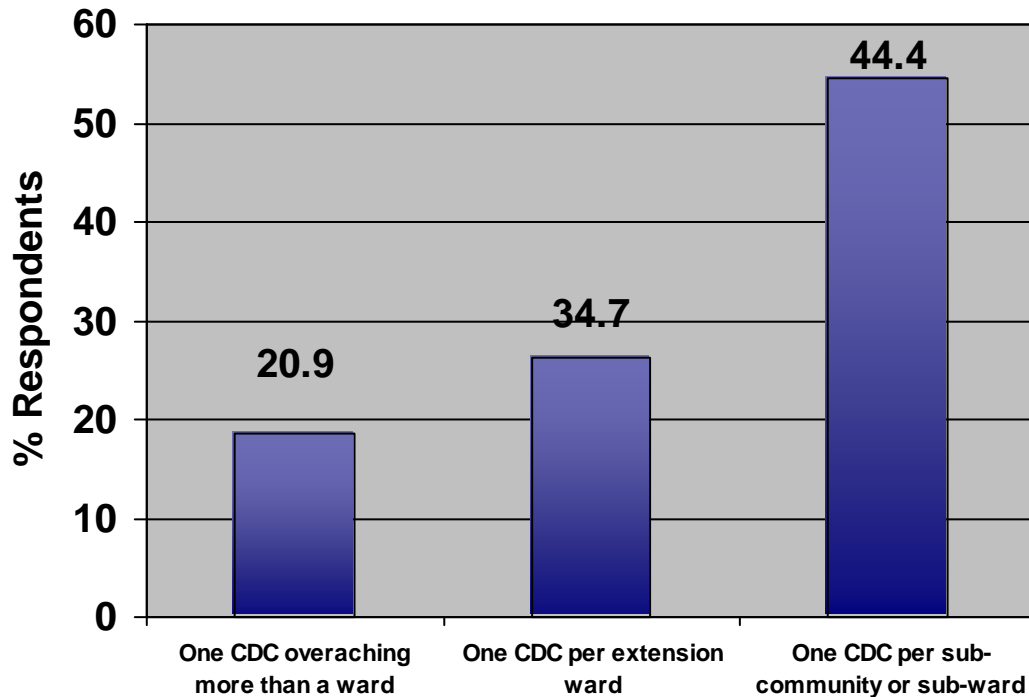


Figure 8. 4: The percentage distribution of respondents according to their support for different alternatives regarding the number or level of linkage structures (Düvel, 2002)

The difference (National V/s Limpopo) between the first alternative is insignificant (2.5 percent), while on the second alternative is less than 10 percent (8.4 %) and the difference in the third alternative is 10.1 percent. The differences can be attributed to the widely promoted BASED programme which suggests or implies linkage structures at village or sub- community level.

Another school of thought, of which Düvel (2002) is a staunch supporter suggests linkage structures at ward level. His criticism against a linkage structure only at village or sub-community level is that it does not provide for a functioning partnership between the service providers and the total community served, because it effectively implies that the extension worker will be working with and responsible to as many linkage structures as there are sub-communities or villages.

For effective interaction and partnership, a further linkage structure at ward level is therefore necessary. The introduction of local government with the lowest tier being the local municipality which usually encompasses several wards (extension service areas), increases the support for a linkage structure at a higher level (i.e above ward structure).

8.6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outstanding finding of this chapter is the widespread support for the inclusion of the human factor in development. This finds expression in the unreserved support for participation and especially its purposes and goal, namely that participation is primarily seen as an ultimate goal of development, more so than the means to an end. This is also reflected in the majority of respondents being in favour of human development as the ultimate goal of the Department of Agriculture. However, there are indications that much of this support is mere lip service, as is evident from the practical implementation recommendations, which often are in direct contradiction with the supported principles.

Using these findings as a basis of departure it is suggested as (policy guidelines) the principle of participation be fully embraced, not only as a means to improve extension delivery but also for the purposes of increased sustainability, and community empowerment, self-dependence and self-sufficiency in agreement with the principle of “ help towards self help”.

This very widely formulated and in many respects optimistic proposal should be seen as long term unfolding guidelines. It is accepted that the degree to which participation can be implemented will vary from situation to situation, and that this will largely depend on the community’s maturity and willingness to become more involved, even to the level of taking ownership of the development process. It does imply that under certain circumstances a less participatory approach could be the most appropriate.

Human development should be pursued as means towards agricultural development, which should remain the ultimate and major goal. Although the opposite, namely

agricultural development as a means to human development, is preferred by the majority of respondents, it seems that the implications of the latter alternative are not fully understood. These include a likely side-tracking of the agricultural focus, an obligatory main evaluation focus on human development issues rather than agricultural development and an overlap with other non-agricultural ministries to the degree that change of name could become appropriate.

The proposed pursuit of human development as means will not decrease its importance, but policy makers will have to decide whether it will be the only permitted means. Current indications are, for example, that directive projects promoting innovation packages are the most effective from an agricultural production point of view (Terblanché & Düvel, 2004).

Public extension services should promote, facilitate and help maintain effective linkage structures within the service areas. These should provide for one effective coordinating body per service area to serve as representative mouthpiece of the local community and taking ownership of the development process with operational project or program committees linked and responsible to the coordinating body and linkages of the coordinating body with the local municipality to ensure integrated and coordinated development

The coordinating or umbrella organizations now functional under the BASED project at sub-community or village level are a positive development, but need to be supplemented with linkage structures at higher levels. Participation (although the ultimate goal is full ownership and self-determination and responsibility) should be implemented in a situation-specific and situation appropriate manner.

This recommendation is based on the experience that many communities still lack the need and skills to take full responsibility and consequently need to be guided into a process that will ultimately lead to full participation, ownership and full responsibility.

CHAPTER 9

PURPOSEFUL OR PROGRAMMED EXTENSION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Programme planning plays a role in initiating change (Van den Ban and Hawkins, 1994:179). The failure of development projects and extension activities can frequently be attributed to a lack of systematic planning in extension. As a methodology, extension programme development has, according to Murton (1965), Gregory (1989) and Lilley (1978), often been enforced in a top-down manner and has not always been implemented in a participatory manner as suggested by Düvel (1992).

9.2 ACCEPTABILITY OF A PURPOSEFUL APPROACH

The acceptability of the purposeful approach was tested by requesting respondents to respond to a choice of alternatives having the programmed and non-programmed approaches as extreme scale continuums. The outcome is presented in Figure 9.1.

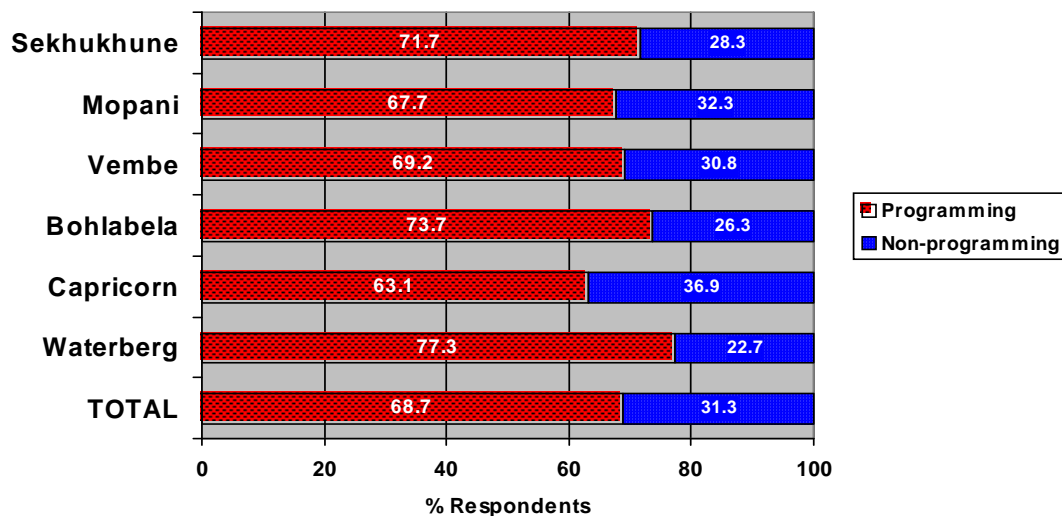


Figure 9. 1: The preferences expressed by extension staff in the different districts in Limpopo Province regarding programmed versus non-programmed extension

The picture that emerges from the findings shows that programmed extension is supported in Limpopo as illustrated in the finding that all the districts reflect a percentage above 60 in favour of programmed extension. Waterberg displays a slightly higher percentage than the rest while Capricorn shows a slightly lower estimate in support for programmed extension. The possible reason for Waterberg's higher figure could be linked to the established extension practises in that district which have concentrated on study groups and programmed extension in the past. As far as Capricorn district is concerned, the possible reason could be the reluctance of the extensionists to embrace changes in extension because of the "supply driven" nature of development projects within the Department as opposed to the "demand led approach" which was familiar to them.

9.2.1 Advantages of programmed extension

A purposeful or programmed approach is supported by some authors (Cristovao, Koehnen and Portela, 1997:56 and Düvel, 2002: 120) because of its advantages that it promotes. Some of the most important advantages are its provision for the implementation of the "help towards self-help" principle and ownership, for the improvement of the effectiveness and efficiency of extension and its inclusion of monitoring, evaluation and accountability initiatives. The viewpoints of respondents are summarised in Table 9.1.

The picture that emerges from these findings shows that programmed extension, in general, is held in high regard by all. Mopani seems to be holding strong views regarding the advantage of higher effectiveness and efficiency, while Sekhukhune seems to be least convinced about this advantage. Similar patterns emerge regarding the provision for ownership and self-determination, in the sense that Sekhukhune is least convinced as reflected in the relatively low rating of 7.08.

The least variation occurs in terms of the advantage that programmed extension has regarding monitoring and evaluation. Sekhukhune District again has the lowest rating (7.24) on the first two advantages while it is not strong on the last advantage.

Table 9. 1: The mean assessment (10-point scale with 10 as the most desirable) of some advantages of programmed or purposeful extension by extensionists in the different districts of Limpopo Province

District	Mean Assessment of Advantages of Programmed Extension		
	Higher efficiency and effectiveness	Allows ownership and self-determination	Allows monitoring, evaluation and accountability
Sekhukhune	7.00	7.08	7.24
Mopani	8.91	8.32	7.68
Vembe	7.3	8.0	8.02
Bohlabela	7.18	8.18	7.51
Capricorn	7.59	8.1	7.64
Waterberg	7.73	8.4	7.47
Total	7.51	7.95	7.59

It is surprising to see this kind of response because unlike other districts, all the extensionists of Sekhukhune are from the background of undeveloped farming with no commercial farming orientation. The possible reason for this performance of Sekhukhune would possibly can be traced from the fact that extensionists from Sekhukhune have not internalized the new approach of participatory extension (PEA) because at the time of the research Sekhukhune was not yet participating within Broadening of Agricultural Service and Extension Delivery (BASED) programme. The nature of BASED is such that it also promotes a positive mindset amongst extensionists.

Vhembe is strong on the monitoring, evaluation and accountability and average on the other advantages. The likely reason could be primarily because of the BASED programme which provides a monitoring mechanism in the form of mid-season evaluation and the provision of feedback to the entire community (where BASED operates). This might have generated a positive attitude towards the realization of the importance of these advantages in general terms.

The Bohlabela district is very strong on the second advantage after Mopani, while Capricorn, Waterberg and Sekhukhune do not have strong views. The reason why Bohlabela and Mopani perform better is because the previous extension practice of Gazankulu homeland promoted programmed extension. The influence of BASED programme is also evident (as BASED programmes are to some extent similar to programmed extension). (Participating farmers developed effective innovation programmes on crops and livestock and assume ownership in conservation measures of soil fertility and water conservation programmes).

9.3 SOME PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMMED EXTENSION

9.3.1 Programme interference

A common problem facing frontline extension workers in the implementation of extension programmes is that they cannot adhere to their program and activity plans because of frequent interference in the form of unscheduled responsibilities enforced on them at very short notice (Düvel, 2002:12).

The seriousness of this problem can be concluded from Table 9.2 in which the respondents' assessments are summarised.

Table 9. 2: The percentage distribution of extensionists in Limpopo Province according to their assessment rating of the problem of programme interference



Type of problem	Percentage
No opinion	1.3
No problem	11.1
Somewhat of a problem	21.6
Is a problem	40.8
Is a serious problem	25.2
Total	100

There is general agreement that indeed there is a problem working program interference. The perceptions differ somewhat however in terms of the seriousness of this problem. 87.6 percent of all the respondents perceived programme interference as a problem of better or greater magnitude with 25.2 percent regarding it as a serious problem. The variation between districts is mainly in terms of the seriousness of the problem. It appears that districts that are nearer to head office such as Capricorn and Sekhukhune experience the most serious programme interferences.

The attributing reason is that both are situated with 50 km of the head office (Polokwane). Extension officers are (amongst others) tasked by head office to perform functions that are not planned such as representing head office in community functions planned by head office. The interference and its implications are serious.

Against the background of the seriousness of the interference problem, some solutions were tested regarding their current application and their appropriateness as a solution. The findings are summarized in Figure 9.2.

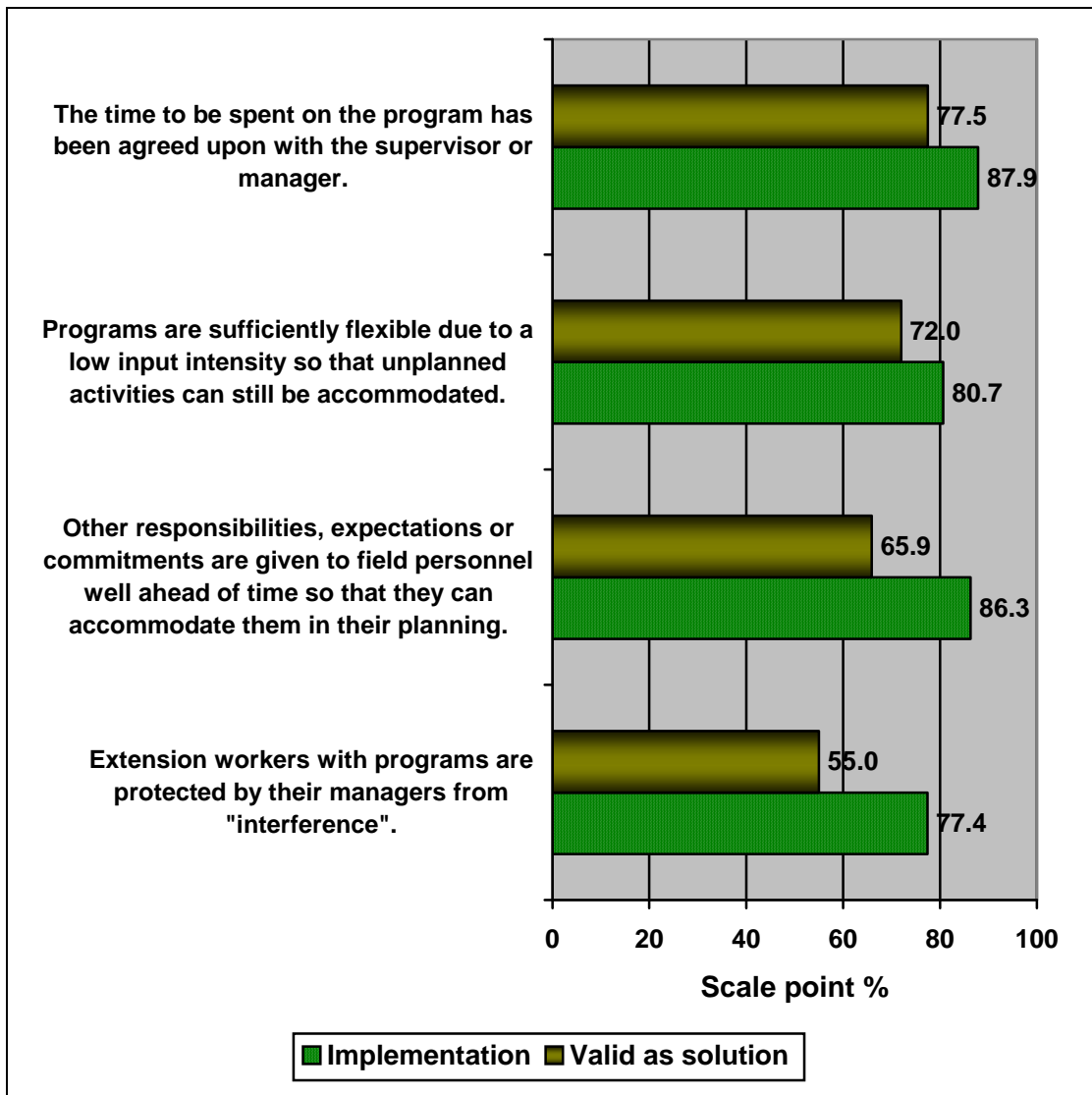


Figure 9.2: Respondents’ mean assessments of different solutions to the problem of interference in terms of the degree of their current implementation and their appropriateness as solutions

The general implementation of the various solutions is judged to be reasonably high. The suggested solution of prior agreement with the supervisor or manager regarding an appropriate time division is rated as 75.7 percent followed by a 69.5 percent rating for assigning tasks to field staff well ahead of time so that they can be accommodated in their planning. However, the fact that, in spite of these measures, the interference is still judged to be a serious problem (Table 9.1) could be an indication that the measures are not implemented effectively or that additional measures are required.

Better advanced planning and improved coordination at all levels, namely head office, district office or sub-district, could significantly contribute towards possible solutions.

9.3.2 Programme ownership

According to Cristovao, *et al*, (1997:61), experience shows that project success and long term sustainable results require people-centered approaches. This is also true in programme planning. Düvel (2002:123) observes that an acceptable principle, especially for participatory development, is for programmes to be owned or co-owned by the community. Opinions regarding the degree of ownership by the community or by the extension worker were tested by requesting respondents to place the various alternatives in rank-order of preference. The findings are shown in Figure 9.3.

The co- ownership of programmes, i.e. the equal sharing of responsibility between service providers and the community is regarded as the most favoured alternative (by 52 percent of all respondents). 39.7 percent of respondents are still in favour of complete ownership and responsibility by the service provider, namely the Department of Agriculture.

Only a small minority (8 percent) really associate themselves with the idea of the community taking over complete ownership and responsibility. This may be an indication that the latter is still seen as an impractical ideal or only a long-term goal, especially if the current levels of education and development of many of the rural communities are considered. In view of these findings it seems that community involvement and ownership should be introduced gradually and adapted to the prevailing and specific community circumstances.

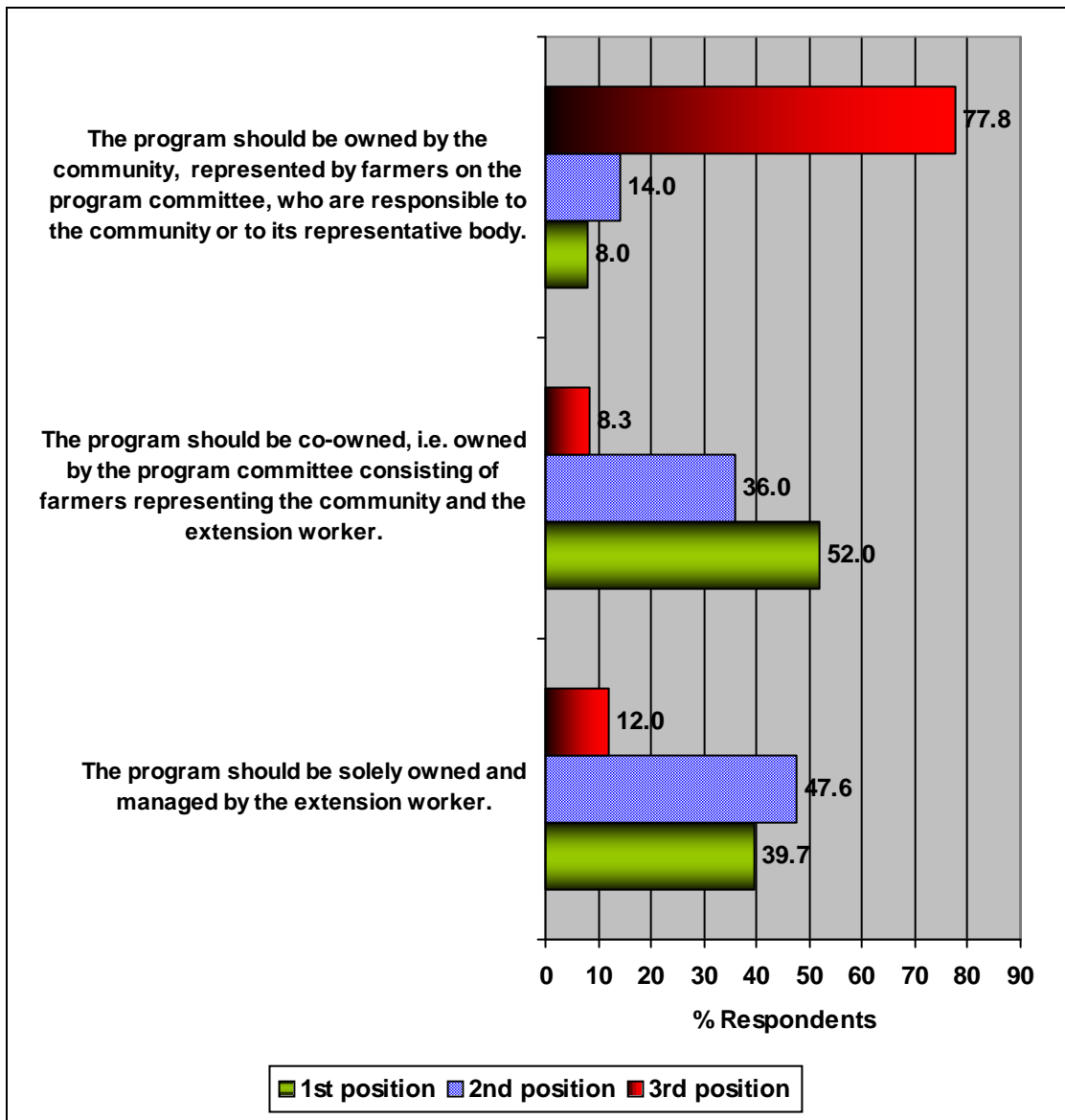


Figure 9.3: The acceptability of different alternatives of ownership expressed by rank order positions

9.3.3 Time spent on programmed extension

According to Van den Ban and Hawkins (1990:199), many extension services do not work with systematically planned extension programmes, but spend most of their time reacting to farmers’ requests. Respondents were asked to indicate the time that frontline agricultural technicians should spend on purposeful or programmed extension. The time currently spent and proposed to be spent by agricultural technicians on purposeful or programme extension is shown in Figure 9.4.

The overall picture is that an average of 2.5 days is spent on programmed extension but that this time should be extended to 3.4 days. This represents strong evidence in support of the programmed approach. The recommendation that the time spent on programmed extension be increased by a day does create the impression that the personnel have the capacity to do so. The significant increase in time spent on programmed extension could also be an indication of the general dissatisfaction with the current level of operation, which frequently implies the mere scheduling of technical tasks rather than programmed extension in the form of purposeful behavioural change as end-objective.

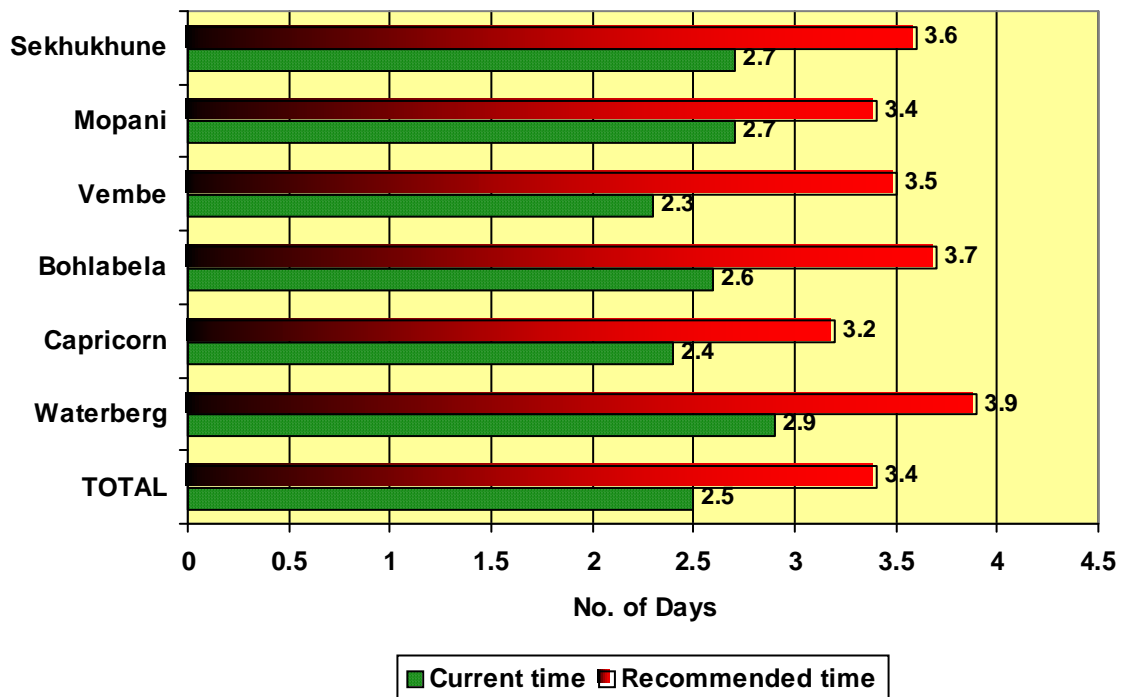


Figure 9. 4: The average current and recommended time (mean days per week) spent on programmed extension according to respondents in the district of Limpopo

There are no significant differences between the districts regarding the current time spent by agricultural technicians in purposeful activities. Time spent varies from 2.3 days (Vhembe) to 2.9 days (Waterberg) per week, which represents about half of the available time. It is noteworthy that the districts spending relatively more time on programmed extension, did not propose less but correspondingly even more time for

that purpose, which appears to support the general feeling of discontent with the current situation.

9.3.4 Accountability

The involvement of communities as members of program committees has often led to the opinion that this form of self-accountability replaces the necessity for further accountability towards the community, since the community is represented by the programme committee. In contrast to this perception is the viewpoint that the programme committee is not representative of the total community and thus cannot stand in for it regarding accountability. Accountability should rather be towards the more overarching community coordinating structures like the Local or District municipalities (Düvel, 2002:127). Opinions regarding these in a sense opposing viewpoints are reflected in Figure 9.5.

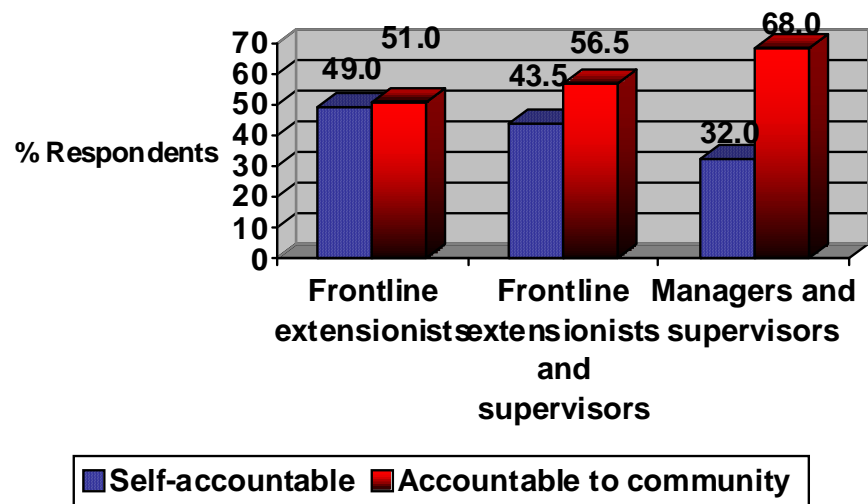


Figure 9. 5: Percentage distributions of respondents in different management categories according to their preference of program committees being self-accountable or accountable to their communities (Düvel, 2002)

The picture that emerges from the results shows that the majority of respondents are perceive self-accountability through the programme committee less favourably and that this viewpoint is progressively with less popular higher levels of management. Among frontline extension personnel there is an almost equal support for both

alternatives while the support for “wider community accountability” increases to 56.6 percent among the supervisors and to 68 percent among the managers.

9.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outstanding finding presented in this chapter is the widespread support for purposeful or programmed extension, which can be attributed to respondents’ awareness of the advantages of programmed extension, particularly those relating to increased effectiveness and efficiency and the provision of a framework for community involvement and participation allowing for the principle of helping the community to help itself. Against the background of these findings, the following policy guidelines are proposed:

- Programmed extension should, in view of its unquestionable advantages, (especially those relating to improved efficiency and effectiveness, its provision for promoting ownership and helping communities towards self-help and its precondition for proper extension evaluation and accountability) be accepted as policy by the Department of Agriculture. At least half of the frontline extension workers’ time should be spent on purposeful or programmed extension. Management should be supportive of programmed extension by emphasising its value as an aid to improved extension delivery rather than as a control mechanism.
- It should provide guidelines accepting co-responsibility regarding decisions relating to the appropriate time division between programmed and non-programmed activities by advanced planning of activities so that these can be included in the development of work calendars and not cause discontinuity or derailment, by encouraging a certain degree of flexibility within the programmes, by providing the necessary skills, through training for the effective implementation of programmed extension. Extension programmes should be owned or co-owned by the communities and implemented in a situation appropriate manner and in a way that pursues maximum participation, ownership and self-determination.

- It is proposed that the Department should encourage communities to have full ownership of programmes. This should however be done in stages, depending on the level of empowerment and the amount of money involved. Where huge sum of money is involved, there should be a gradual shift of responsibility community leadership with a full takeover once the leadership has been capacitated to run such programmes.

But where no money is involved the community should be allowed to run the programme right from the beginning. Accountability of extension programmes should be entrusted to the target community (local coordinating body), community coordinating structures (local and/or district municipalities) as well as management structures within the Department of Agriculture.

CHAPTER 10

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Extension evaluation is accepted as a tool for improving current and future extension (Van Den Ban and Hawkins, 1990:230). The survival and funding of extension, according to Düvel (2002:54) depends on proper accountability. Because of the nature of monitoring and evaluation, the process requires that information be gathered and analyzed as systematically and objectively as possible (Van Den Ban & Hawkins, 1990:230). Evaluation is defined as a continuous and systematic process of assessing value or potential value.

The process includes the development of criteria from the concerns of the relevant audience for the evaluation, the collecting of data relating to the criteria and the provision of information that adequately addresses the concerns (Seepersand & Henderson, 1984:184). Monitoring on the other hand is a specialized dynamic, semiautonomous and institutionalized management resource which helps in the implementation of programmes (Misra, 1997:150).

10.2 THE PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATION

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is either weak or conducted on an ad hoc basis in some organizations (Oakley & Garforth, 1985:13 and Misra, 1997:151). This negates the positive role which it can potentially play in improving the present and future activities such as planning, programming, decision-making and programme implementation to achieve extension policy goals more effectively. Accountability has become the major issue worldwide, according to (Düvel, 2002:154) and is the means of justifying public and other extension funding. The perception of the respondents about the importance of monitoring and evaluation is reflected in Figure 10.1.

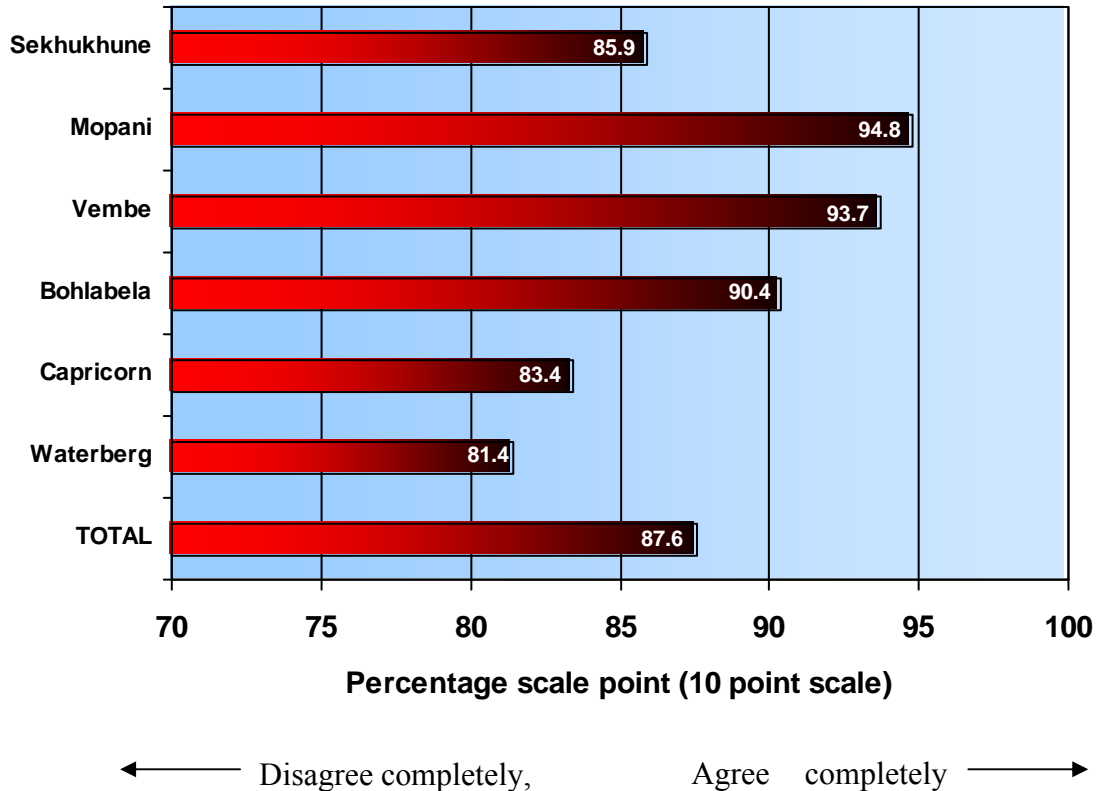


Figure 10. 1: Respondents’ level of agreement with the view that monitoring and evaluation is one of the best instruments to improve extension

The overall picture is that the extension workers of Limpopo understand the importance of M&E. All districts show an average assessment of above 80 percent. The Waterberg district reports the lowest rating as compared with the other districts. The reason for the low rating could not be established.

The Mopani district has the highest rating, namely 94.8 percent. This could be attributed to the influence of the general extension system practiced in the former homeland of Gazankulu in which M&E was well supported in all its 6 former districts of which Mopani covers three. For example all extensionists were expected to conduct an evaluation of their extension programmes before embarking on a new one and there was a subject matter specialist hired to oversee agricultural extension in that homeland.

A further indication of the perceived importance of more accountability through effective monitoring and evaluation is given by respondents’ rank order of solutions

to the improvement of the effectiveness of extension. The findings are presented in Table 10.1.

Table 10. 1: The importance assessment of different solutions to improving extension efficiency based on rank order positions and expressed as mean weighted percentages

Province	Weighted Mean (%)						
	Im- proved Mana- gement	More Account- ability	Better and more training	More Financial resources	Better Staff selection	Better Extension Approach	More Commit ment
Sekukune	74.5	73.4	76.8	71.4	51.2	77.0	51.1
Mopani	72.0	63.0	89.3	60.1	64.6	57.1	60.6
Vembe	79.1	63.3	75.4	69.3	47.3	67.5	65.8
Bohlabela	77.9	63.1	83.7	64.1	59.3	72.0	55.6
Capricorn	75.3	70.3	88.2	68.0	45.1	73.7	59.0
Waterberg	63.1	54.9	85.7	67.0	57.1	69.2	71.4
Total	75.0	67.3	83.0	67.2	52.0	71.0	58.2

The picture that emerges from Table 10.1 shows a poor support for M&E as a possible solution to improve extension. Accountability is perceived not to be particularly important to mobilise more financial resources where it is rated the fourth (with a mean of 67.3). The option of “better and more training” is ranked first with a mean of 83.0 as a solution to improving extension efficiency. These findings suggest that extensionists are not considering monitoring and evaluation as that important in their work. The attributing factor for the low rating of monitoring and accountability could be the perception held by extensionists that extension is in any event not well organized at head office and it is void of good leadership.

There are no compelling directives that are communicated to the districts emphasizing the importance and necessary implementation of evaluation as part of programmed extension. The BASED programme identified the challenge of non-implementation of

M&E in the Department and suggested that the Management Support Group (MSG²⁰) should assist with the development of a format for M&E. Unfortunately the format had not been implemented in the Department when the MSG programme terminated.

10.3 CURRENT EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Monitoring and evaluation should be conducted regularly during programme implementation (Seepersad and Henderson, 1984:184). According to Düvel, (2002:55) evaluation can vary from casual everyday assessment as a form of subjective reflection to rigorous scientific studies, from being purely ‘summatory’ in nature to evaluations that also focus on monitoring or on formative evaluations, from being focused only on input assessments to evaluations that are primarily output focused.

An impression of the current evaluation was obtained by asking respondents what they did to evaluate their extension work. They were requested to indicate their evaluation activities by identifying them on a list of alternatives that was provided. The summary of findings is presented in Figure 10.2.

The general picture presented by Figure 10.2 is not impressive when taking into account the suggestion by (Seepersad & Henderson, 1984:184) that monitoring and evaluation should be conducted regularly. All reported activities that were supposed to be done show less than 50 percent implementation. 48 Percent of respondents involved in the survey indicated that they regularly complete and return monthly or quarterly reports. If all those that did not answer the particular question are excluded, the percentage increases to about 77 percent which is highly questionable.

These figures are inaccurate and do not reflect the real situation as the extensionists in Limpopo (since 1999) no longer submit what one would call “the general statistical

²⁰ *The Management Support Group was one of the Donor funded Programmes (DFID) that was operational from 1999 to 2001. The objective of the programme was to strengthen the management ability of the Department through the identification of gaps, suggesting solutions to overcome them. One programme that resulted from this was the development of a middle management training programme.*

report²¹ “The only report submitted is an ad hoc based on the priority of the areas of the strategic plan of the district.

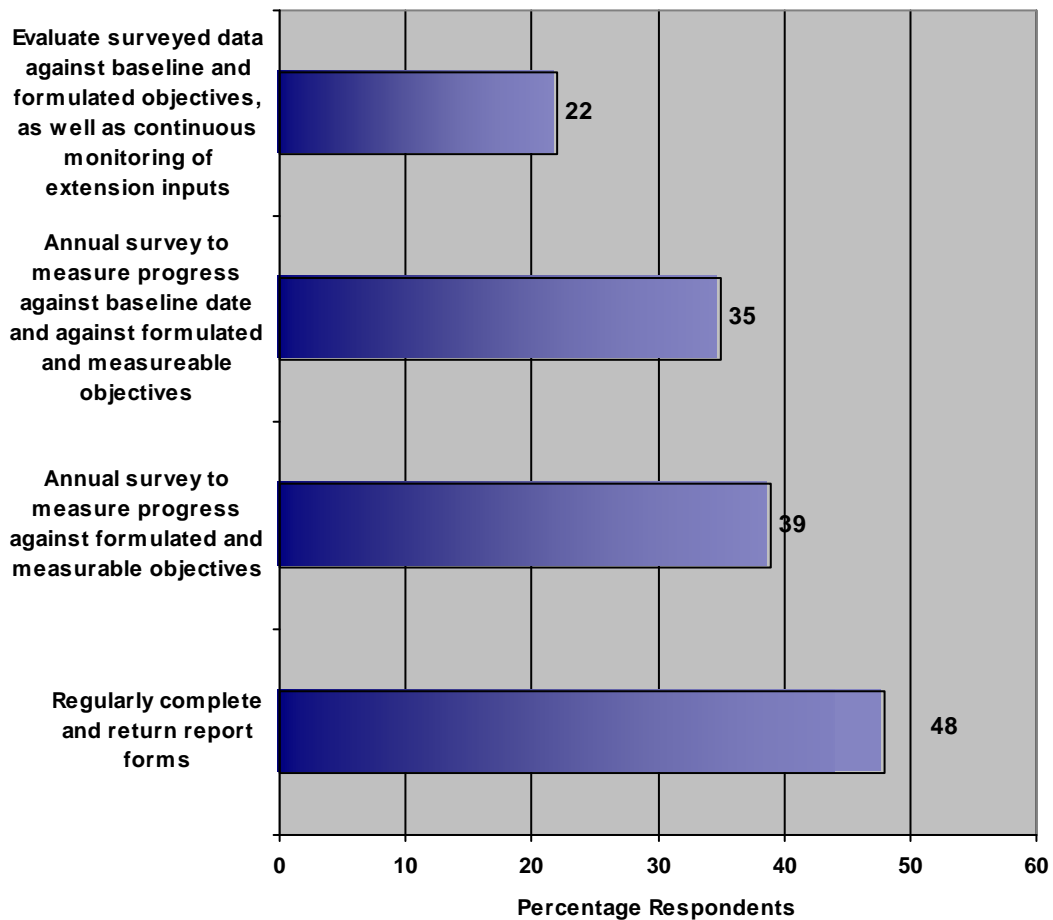


Figure 10. 2: Percentage distributions of extension workers according to their implementation of different evaluation activities

Strategic areas include micro-enterprise projects, poverty alleviation, restructuring of government assets, land reform, rural development funding, youth in agriculture, livestock and animal production and the restructuring of smallholder irrigation schemes (RESIS).

²¹ *By general statistical report , the writer refers to the formal and general agricultural statistics used to be gathered through an approved official form showed the current achievements of extension activities that were mainly input oriented rather than output based. The form used to collect (on a purely quantitative basis) the performed extension activities such as the number of lectures, meetings attended, farm visits, short courses presented, etc*

Respondents basing their evaluations on annual surveys and measurable objectives are as low as 39 percent. Even this figure appears inflated as the majority of the extensionists no longer compile the general extension statistics. Where evaluation reports are submitted they appear to relate to input or infrastructure focused projects involving a very small percentage of the total target communities. Table 10.2 offers more information on various evaluation activities. The statistics are somewhat confusing as they add up to more than 100 percent the reason being that they are in a way cumulative and need to be considered in their interpretation.

Table 10.2: The percentage respondents performing the various evaluation activities in the different districts of Limpopo Province

Evaluation activities	Sekhukhune	Mopani	Vembe	Bohlabela	Capricorn	Waterberg
Annual survey to measure progress against formulated and measurable objectives	59	33	67	64	56	40
Annual survey to measure progress against baseline data and formulated and measurable objectives	44	14	61	57	53	27
Annual survey to measure progress against baseline data and against formulated and measurable objectives and monitoring of impact of extension inputs	60	39	56	60	52	33

The overall picture shows the diversity of performance when different criteria are used. As the number of criteria grows progressively more evidence appears about extension's accomplishments. Two districts namely Mopani and Waterberg show a performance of below 50 percent (in all criteria). On the other hand however, four districts show a performance of above 50 percent with Vhembe leading in the first criteria with 67 percent. The influence of this performance is not very clear as evaluation is not done in all the districts after head office temporarily suspended extension at head office in 2000. The results may suggest that agricultural technicians believe that evaluation ought to be done.

10.4 EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

Effective monitoring and evaluation is only possible or meaningful against identified and formulated objectives and using appropriate criteria (Düvel, 2002). The question frequently asked is what should be evaluated? There are different levels and criteria that can be used such as farmers' participation, farmers' opinions, change in knowledge, behavioural changes, outcomes and consequences for society and target groups. Bennet (1982) as cited by Van den Ban and Hawkins (1990:235). Respondent's assessments are summarized in Table 10.3

Table 10.3: Respondent's assessments of the importance of different evaluation criteria expressed as mean percentages

Province	Mean Percentage						
	Input resources	Activities	Farmers' opinions	Behaviour determinants	Practice adoption	Change in efficiency	Impact
Sekukune	87.8	90.6	57.2	77.2	77.2	82.2	67.8
Mopani	86.9	85.9	51.5	76.8	67.7	79.8	61.6
Vembe	93.3	95.0	57.0	78.6	76.9	84.6	71.8
Bohlabela	91.1	96.4	63.7	78.2	84.2	86.7	74.4
Capricorn	87.4	92.3	69.0	76.4	79.4	83.0	72.9
Waterberg	88.9	100.0	44.4	60.0	71.1	86.7	71.1
Total	89.0	92.7	61.0	76.4	77.8	83.6	70.7

The picture that emerges from Table 10.3 is one of reasonable variations between the perceived importances of the different evaluation criteria. Activities (92.7 percent) and input resources (89.0 percent) are perceived in all districts as the most important criteria, followed by changes in efficiency. It is noteworthy that farmers' opinions are regarded to be the least important. This applies particularly in the Waterberg district, which is also much more reserved regarding the importance of behaviour determinants. The latter criteria, namely the behaviour determinants, are well appreciated in most districts, which do imply that monitoring, which can be based on these criteria, could be introduced without too much resistance.

In order to understand the importance of different criteria, a comparison is made with the national extension survey (Düvel, 2002:156) with regard to the efficiency and the frequency with which they are used in implementation. The responses regarding the importance and current use of the different criteria are summarized in Figure 10.3.

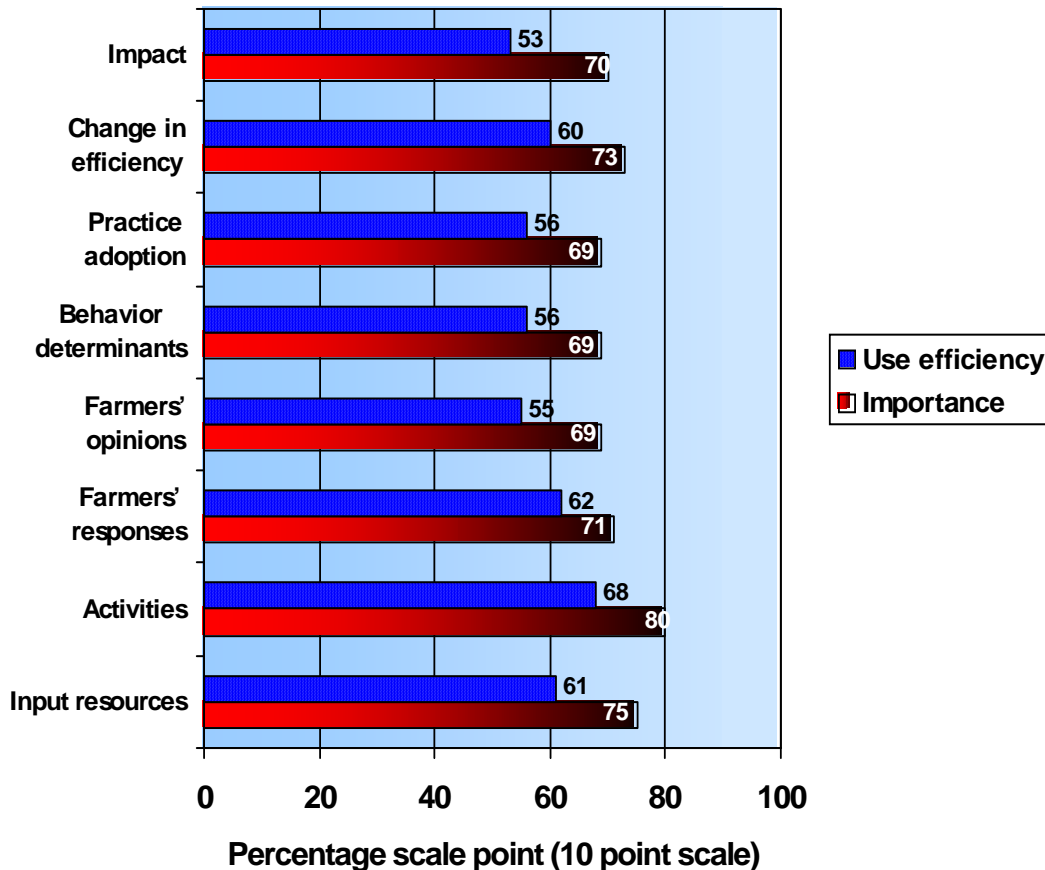


Figure 10. 3: Respondents’ mean assessment of evaluation criteria in terms of their importance, their implementation efficiency and their use frequency (Düvel, 2002)

The findings relating to the whole of South Africa are very similar to those of the Limpopo Province, particularly as far as the importance of input resources and activities as evaluation criteria are concerned. Extension personnel in Limpopo have less confidence in an evaluation by farmers (a mean importance assessment of 61 percent as opposed to the national mean of 71 percent), but in general attribute more value to most of the criteria.

Not quite independent of the choice or preference of criteria, is the number of criteria to be used. The extreme positions could be a preference for one or two criteria or a preference for a multitude or as many criteria as possible. Viewpoints differ as to what is the most appropriate. Supporters of a minimum of criteria or objectives emphasize the need for simplicity and prevention of confusion. For the other school of thought (emphasizing a maximum of criteria and objectives) the main consideration is to gather as much evidence as possible, which is dependent on the number of objectives and criteria. Respondents' choices between these alternatives are summarized in Figure 10.4.

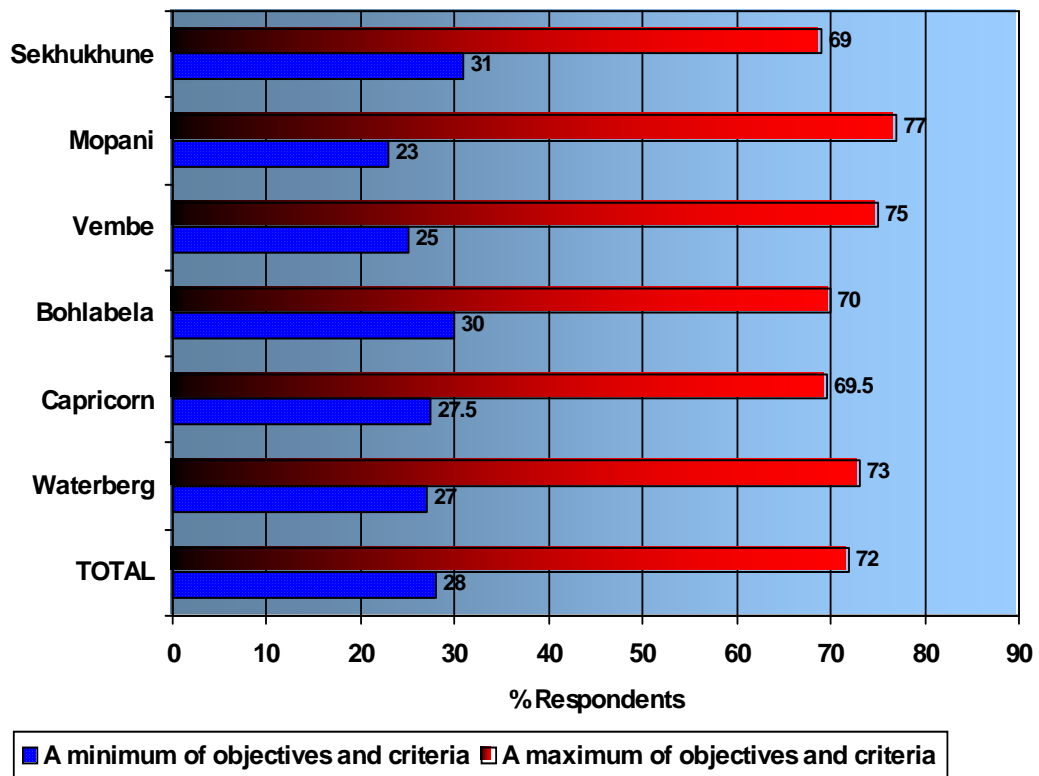


Figure 10. 4: Respondents' preference regarding a minimum or maximum of objectives in extension programmes

The findings in Figure 10.4 reflect a positive appreciation of the maximum objectives and criteria. For example the majority of extension staff, namely 72 percent, seem to understand and recommend the importance of having a multitude of objectives and evaluation criteria, so as to come up with maximum evidence regarding extension successes or achievements and thus to justify the investment in extension. Between

the districts there is little variation, except that in Mopani and Vhembe districts the support for a multitude of criteria is slightly more than for the other districts. The importance of evaluation or accountability does bring up the question as to how much time the Department of Agriculture or its officers can afford to spend on evaluation. The respondents' reaction is shown in Table 10.4.

Table 10.4: The percentage respondents supporting evaluation or progress reports to various institutions at the different time frequencies

Institutions accountable to	Monthly		Annually		On completion of project	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Program committee	222	80.7	149	69.0	164	77.4
Extension management	220	83.0	169	76.1	141	67.5
Local council	129	52.2	128	57.4	103	48.8
Local farmer forum	193	73.9	150	69.1	130	64.7
District Municipality	134	54.5	134	61.2	124	59.3
District farmer forum	119	49.0	134	59.0	119	55.9

The picture that emerges is that the preferred institutions for supporting evaluation reports are well articulated. For example 83 percent of the respondents indicated that the accountable institution should be extension management. The local council is also favoured. This makes sense because extension takes place in a geo-physical area.

There is little support for the viewpoint of regular and short term reporting to certain institutions that are more directly involved (and less frequent reporting to others).

Düvel (2002) highlight rank order as prioritized per different users of the evaluation reports in his national extension survey. The responses are summarized in Figure 10.5.

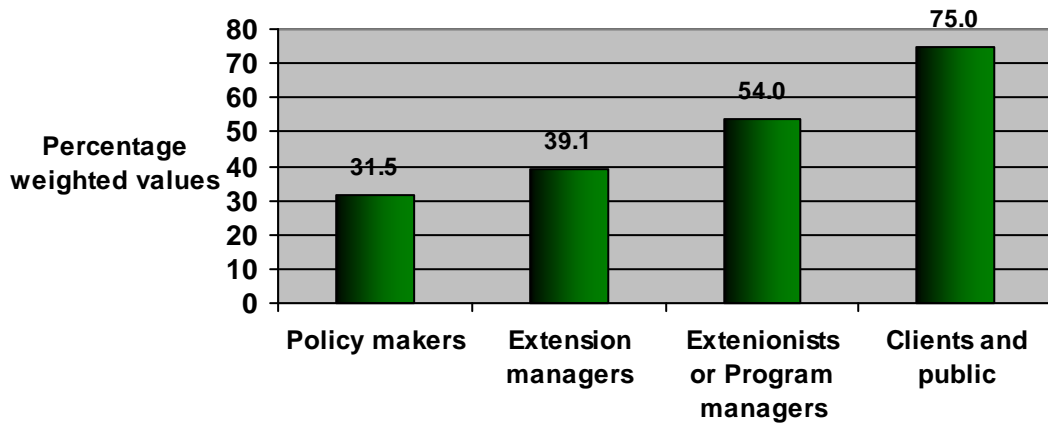


Figure 10. 5: The rank order of beneficiaries according to the recommended priority access to evaluation results (Düvel, 2002)

From the findings in Figure 10.5 a very clear differentiation emerges regarding the various beneficiaries. Evaluation is perceived to be primarily for purpose of public accountability, with a mean percentage rank order of 75.0. This is in contradiction with who are normally seen to be the most important beneficiaries of the evaluation results, namely policy makers and management (who received assessments of only 31.6 and 39.1 percent respectively).

This does not necessarily imply that evaluation results are unimportant for policy makers and managers, they are after all essential for proper policy formulation and management of extension, but merely that the use of evaluation results for public accountability and for improving the process or delivery of extension is perceived to be more important. Placing more emphasis on the use of extension results for the latter two purposes, has implications for the selection of evaluation criteria.

This means, for example, a bigger emphasis on monitoring thereby attributing more importance to behaviour determinants. In all cases it is important to ensure the submission of reliable results and for this purpose extension personnel have to be convinced about the usefulness and the necessity of reliable evaluation results.

10.5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outstanding finding of this chapter is the widespread support for the perceived importance of monitoring, evaluation and accountability in the Department. This is also reflected in the majority of respondents being in favour of monitoring and evaluation because of its potential of resolving problems and improving the efficiency of extension.

Against the background of these findings the following policy guidelines (taking note of suggestion made in the national extension survey Düvel, 2002) are proposed and should receive serious consideration namely

- Introduction of a national monitoring and evaluation programme, which should be compulsory for all sections and all extension staff members.
- As a public organization the Department of Agriculture is authorized to spend public funds and consequently must be accountable for all expenditures, not only in terms of whether and how the budget is spent (inputs), but also in terms of acceptable objectives and cost/benefits or input/output ratios. The information obtained from proper monitoring and evaluation is essential for improving current and future extension and provides essential information for policy makers, managers of extension and officials involved in the process and programs of extension.
- The number of objectives and criteria should be as many as possible in order to provide for as much evidence as possible. This is essential if extension is to survive stringent accountability processes, especially in a time that is characterized by international trends to downsize public extension. Not all criteria are equally rigorous. The higher the criteria in the hierarchy,(i.e. beyond the input criteria) the less rigorous they are and the more difficult it is to prove that their outcome is actually related to the extension input or program, but the more popular and sought after they are with the politicians.

- Programme objectives should be chosen and formulated to focus on or include the full spectrum of criteria ranging from resource and activity inputs to clients' responses and opinions, behaviour determinants, behaviour change (practice adoption), outcome or efficiency aspects and, where possible, the impact in terms of job creation, increase in living standard, etc.
- Due attention needs to be given to criteria related to behaviour change since they allow for true monitoring and are the best and most direct reflection of the extensionists' achievements. Behaviour determinants (viz. needs, perceptions and knowledge) are the actual focus of extension and their positive change is a precondition for behaviour change (practice adoption) and the consequent change in efficiency and the resulting financial and other outcomes. Behaviour determinants are the focus of every encounter and thus lend themselves to monitoring after every extension delivery. In this way extension can continuously (on a monthly basis) come up with evaluation evidence.
- There is a clear difference between the program objectives and those of the extensionist or program manager, particularly in the phase of program development, i.e. until the delivery begins. For this reason activity objectives should be formulated and form the basis of the extensionist's monthly work program or work calendar. Their evaluation, although of an input nature, can form the basis of performance management. The use of evaluation results could be for public accountability.
- Accountability should be as multi-focused as possible and should be directed to, (amongst others) the following: accountability and Senior extension managers. Here the focus is on reports or evaluation information essential for improved decision making for management and policy formulation purposes. Output and impact criteria are particularly important in this regard and relate to evaluation results at the completion or termination of programs (projects).

Program managers and supervisors

Here the emphasis is on monitoring criteria ultimately aimed at monitoring progress and improving the process of extension. Also to be considered, especially where the standard of extension is low and in need of significant guidance and control, are regular (monthly) submissions of planned and performed activities (objectives), which can also be used for performance management and assessment purposes.

Client communities

Accountability of an extension officer and his development program(s) within the community that he/she serves makes a lot of sense. However, for this to be meaningful and not biased, either in favour of or against the officer, it is important that this accountability be to the institution or organization representing the community or the one appointed by them. On a monthly basis the ward extensionist should report about the progress of the program while a copy should also be forwarded to the linkage body or central development body. Ultimately the content of these reports should be available to the district municipality where future coordination of development is to take place.

Local community institutions

Once the decentralization of local government has been fully implemented and funding is being channelled to district municipalities (for distribution or coordination) such local institutions will also have to be accountable for the funds received by them. They are, after all, not the sole stake holders. However, since the farmers as beneficiaries are not the only stakeholders of public funds, ways need to be found for them to also account for the aid received. Such a process may revolutionize development aid.