

**Participatory development of an extension approach and
policy for Limpopo Province, South Africa**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of part of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor in Agrarian Extension

in the

Department of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural
Development

Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

University of Pretoria

PRETORIA

July 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The changes in the Government policies that promoted people centred development such as Transforming the Public Service, has been the driving force for the writer to conduct this study hoping to contribute in the debate for developing an extension system, which will be sustainable. Undertaking a study of this nature would not have been possible without the contributions of the District officials and many individuals too many to mention by names. The guidance of my Promoter, Prof. G.H. Düvel, throughout all phases of this study is gratefully acknowledged.

A special debt of gratitude is extended to my family for putting up with many inconveniences throughout the period of study. I also thank Mrs J. Coertse for spending many hours in typing the draft and my son Clement who typed part of the final manuscript.

Abstract

The near collapse of extension services in Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA) particularly evident in its failure to respond to the needs of the majority of small-scale farmers, presents a major problem from an agricultural and rural development point of view. This calls for an urgent and holistic intervention, in terms of an appropriate extension approach and policy, and prompted this research focusing on the search and development of an appropriate extension approach and corresponding policy for the LDA.

For such a policy to be acceptable at the operational level, the emphasis has been on maximum involvement and participation of extension personnel. A total of 324 front line extension workers and managers, representing a 40 percent sample, were involved in group interviews in which their opinions were captured in semi structured questionnaires after exposure to nominal group and Delphi techniques.

From the research no particular extension model emerged, but rather a series of principles, which, depending on a specific situation, could be combined and implemented to different degrees. Respondents' opinions regarding these principles and their dimensions formed the basis of recommendations for a policy framework.

These recommendations, based on informed opinions of respondents, include a need-based but priority focused approach relying on a compromise between felt and unfelt needs rather than only the felt needs of community members. For the implementation of participatory development that will ultimately allow for community empowerment and ownership, institutional linkage structures are recommended that provide for effective coordination and integrated operational activities, and having primarily a commodity focus. A strong knowledge support system, having as target audience front-line extension workers rather than farmers, is important in view of the large percentage of under-qualified extension staff. A national (or provincial) monitoring and evaluation programme is seen as an issue of high priority, with a stronger emphasis on monitoring using behaviour determinants (forces of change) as main criteria, but covering also the full range of in- and output criteria in the evaluation



process, which if used together with a purposeful and programmed approach, can go a long way in improving current and future extension in Limpopo.



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