

Lay Leader Participation in Extension Work in the Philippines

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As in any developing nation, agricultural Extension in the Philippines is constrained by a number of factors, among them the unfavorable Extension agent-client ratio. This situation makes difficult frequent personal contact between Extension agents and their clientele. Concern for Filipino farmers' low Extension exposure exists because of its imminent consequences on the rural farm population. As observed in most of the developing countries, the rural farm population is not benefiting much from the technology that scientists have at their disposal (Admed and Coombs, 1975).

However, one strategy has been employed whereby small farmers, especially the most disadvantaged ones, could be reached by and reap the benefits from the Extension Service. What is referred to is the use of volunteer local lay leaders (LLs) as responsible representatives of the Service. It has long been strongly felt that in using LLs, the Extension Agency could be certain that there are known and respected persons in every community who serve as its ambassadors vouching for the unfamiliar and perhaps threatening teachings of the Extension agent (Brunner and Yang, 1949). By trying new techniques for themselves, the local leaders can thus demonstrate the validity of the techniques under local conditions. They can, therefore, multiply many-fold the efforts of the professional worker. Moreover, developing the leadership potential of people leads to more self-reliant and independent communities in which people can solve their own problems.

In the Philippines, very little is known about the participatory nature of lay leaders in Extension work. Questions such as how are the lay leaders involved in the development efforts of the country, what is their participation, and how much participation do they have, are given little focus, if any at all. Therefore, a study was conducted in two selected provinces in the Island of Luzan, the Philippines, in an attempt to answer some of the questions raised. Among the objectives of the study were the following:

1. To determine the LLs' perceptions of the nature and level of LL participation in planning, implementation, and evaluation of local Extension projects and activities.
2. To determine the appropriateness of LL participation in planning, implementation, and evaluation of local Extension projects and activities.

This article will draw some of the findings of the study.

PROCEDURE

The broader framework formulated by Uphoff, Cohen, and Goldsmith (1979) provided a useful basis for developing the model for systematically examining lay leader participation in Extension work in the Philippines. According to them, a development participation framework should distinguish between dimensions and contexts of participation.

The dimensions of participation on which they focus answer the questions *what*, *who*, and *how* of participation. The

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TABLE I

**LLs' Participation in Planning Activities and Appropriateness
of LL Participation in These Activities as Perceived by the LLs**

| Activities | Percent Participated ^a (N = 107) | Percent Responding Appropriate ^b (N = 107) |
|---|--|---|
| Identifying needs and problems of the barangay | 46 | 97 |
| Formulating objectives for the project/activity planned | 44 | 86 |
| Studying and analyzing the barangay situation | 33 | 81 |
| Holding community forums to solicit clientele approval of and cooperation in implementation of activity planned | 27 | 88 |
| Furnishing information about the barangay | 27 | 96 |
| Holding of community consultations and dialogues to formulate a comprehensive plan for the barangay | 25 | 89 |
| Getting priorities among project/activity objectives | 23 | 89 |
| Assessing community resources required by each project/activity objective | 21 | 70 |

^aPercentages not reported are for those with no participation.

^bPercentages not reported are for those who viewed participation in the activities as not appropriate or were undecided.

TABLE II

LLs by Planning Participation Index Scores

| | PPIS* | Percent (N = 107) | PPIS* | Percent (N = 107) | PPIS* | Percent (N = 107) |
|----|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|--------|----------------------|
| Lo | 0 | 39.3 | 8 | 4.7 | 15 | 1.9 |
| | | | 9 | 0.9 | 17 | 0.9 |
| | 1 | 1.9 | 10 | 2.8 | 18 | 0.9 |
| | 2 | 4.7 | 11 | 3.7 | 20 | 0.9 |
| | 3 | 2.8 | 12 | 1.9 | 21 | 11.0 |
| | 4 | 6.5 | 13 | 0.9 | | |
| | 5 | 3.7 | 14 | 1.9 | Mean = | 6.12 |
| | 6 | 1.9 | | | S.D. = | 7.17 |
| | 7 | 6.5 | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

*Planning Participation Index Score

what dimension has four major concerns: participation in decision making, implementation, benefits, and evaluation. To answer the *who* question, Uphoff and Associates suggest distinguishing between four types of participants in the entire rural community whose characteristics warranted specific attention. These are the local residents, local leaders, government personnel, and foreign personnel. The *how* dimension generates insights into such questions as to why participation takes place, continues, declines, or has the particular pattern it does.

The focus of the study being reported was on the *what* dimension of participation, i.e., participation in planning, implementation, and evaluation. Subjects for the study were the LLs working for the Extension Service in two selected provinces in the Island of Luzon, Philippines.

These LLs, who totalled 107, provided the basic information for this study. They were selected following nonprobabilistic sampling procedures. This was because of the difficulty in defining the population and the seeming reluctance of some Extension agents to identify their leaders.

Data were collected through personal interviews with the 107 LLs. The interviews were done with the help of two research assistants. LLs were questioned concerning their participation in various activities related to planning, implementation, and evaluation of Extension programs. In addition, they were asked to indicate their perceptions of the appropriateness of their participation in each of the activities. Level of participation was determined from an activity complexity gradient developed for the study. Activities in planning, implementation, and evaluation of Extension projects were identified and submitted to two groups of Extension agents to be rated for their complexity.

Both groups were asked: "If local leaders were to be involved in the following activities, which do you perceive as very simple (VS), simple (S), difficult (D), or very difficult (VD)?" The ranking of the activities as perceived by the two groups was determined by obtaining equivalent scores for each activity using a weighting system of four points for "VD," three for "D," two for "S," and one for "VS" rating.

The total of all equivalent scores for an activity was the one used in the ranking. The correlation of the rankings made by the two groups was established using the Spearman Rank Correlation Method. The analysis showed a correlation of r 's equal to 0.82 and N equals 8 at 0.05 probability for the planning phase. R 's equal 0.825 and N equals 16 at the 0.05 probability for the implementation phase. No correlation was done for the evaluation activities because of a small N .

Participation index scores of the LLs were obtained by computing the total weighted score by the number of activities participated in. The weights—1, 2, 3, and 4—were still assigned to "VS," "S," "D," and "VD" categories, respectively. Levels of participation were categorized into high, moderate, and low/nominal.

FINDINGS

Participation in Planning

About two-thirds of the LLs reported participation in planning activities although the proportions reporting participation in each planning activity ranged from 21 percent to 46 percent only (Table I, Col. 1). What may be of interest, because of their importance in the design of programs, is that the two activities in which there was the most participation were "identification of problems and needs of the 'barangay'" and "formulation of project/activity objectives." These activities were participated in by 46 percent and 44 percent of the LLs, respectively.

Of the remaining six planning tasks, "assessment of community resources" had the lowest number of LLs involved (21 percent) next only to "setting priorities in project/activity objectives," which was participated in by 23 percent. This low proportion of LLs involved is quite disturbing if the interest is to design programs and projects appropriate to the needs of the barangay.

Using the complexity gradient, each individual's planning participation index score was taken (Table II). This was used to determine the level of participation in planning (LOP_p). About four out of ten (39 percent) of the LLs scored at the lowest level, and fully one out of ten (11 percent)

TABLE III
LLs' Participation in Implementation Activities and Appropriateness of
LL Participation in These Activities as Perceived by the LLs

| Activities | Percent Participated (N = 107) | Percent Reporting Appropriate (N = 107) |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| Giving technical assistance | 86 | 82 |
| Attending to visitors to project | 79 | 90 |
| Communicating notices and directives to other farmers/homemakers | 77 | 79 |
| Establishing dynamic working relationships with other government/private agencies | 70 | 78 |
| Campaigning or soliciting support for the project/activity | 65 | 75 |
| Calling and presiding over meetings | 64 | 94 |
| Disciplining delinquent members of the association | 58 | 80 |
| Occasionally serving as the technician's representative | 56 | 76 |
| Mobilizing community people for community projects | 55 | 79 |
| Keeping records of activities of the group | 53 | 78 |
| Orienting officers and members of association to their duties and responsibilities | 45 | 72 |
| Organizing field trips, field days, exhibits, fairs, etc. | 39 | 78 |
| Promotion and organization of farmers/homemakers association | 37 | 72 |
| Testing of new technology | 36 | 73 |
| Training and development of farmers/homemakers/youth | 33 | 72 |
| Registering, association with the Securities and Exchange Commission | 23 | 63 |

scored at the highest level. The mean planning participation score was 6.12.

Dividing the index scores into three groups for purposes of a descriptive classification of the LLs' LOP_p , 1 to 7 points was classified as low/nominal LOP_p , 8 to 14 points, moderate LOP_p , and 15 to 21 points, high LOP_p . Using this classification, 26 percent of the LLs had nominal LOP_p , 17 percent were with moderate LOP_p , and a much smaller proportion, 16 percent, was observed to have high LOP_p . The 39 percent with zero scores still remain in the no participation category.

Appropriateness of Participation in Planning

Asked whether or not it is appropriate for LLs to participate in these planning activities, the great majority of LLs, with percentages ranging from 70 percent to 97 percent, responded "yes" to all of the eight planning activities (Table I, Col. 2). Two exceptionally favored activities for leader participation were "identification of community needs and problems" and "furnishing information about the barangay" with 97 percent and 96 percent of the LLs reporting, respectively. Quite unpopular with LLs was the task, "assuming community resources required by each project/activity objective." Participation in this activity was favored by only 70 percent of the LLs.

Participation in Implementation

The number of LLs participating in tasks related to the implementation and maintenance of projects was evidently higher than that observed for planning. The proportions participating in each of the 16 implementation tasks ranged from 23 percent to 86 percent with the majority of the LLs having participated in 10 of the 16 tasks (Table III, Col. 1). The most popular implementation task for LL participation was "giving technical assistance." Eighty-six percent of the LLs claimed they have been in various ways involved in the giving of technical assistance to some people in their barangay. The activity in which there was least participation was "registering association with the Securities and Exchange Commission."

Table IV shows the array of implementation participation index scores (LOP_i). Turning to extremes, no major differences

could be seen between the extreme low and the extreme high. What is surprising, although it may not be statistically significant, is the zero implementation participation score for two LLs.

Dividing the scores into three score ranges for a discrete categorization of the LLs LOP_i , 0 to 12 form one category and is labelled low LOP_i , 13 to 27 is the second category and is called moderate LOP_i , and 28 to 40 is for high LOP_i . With these categories, the distribution of LLs by LOP_i is almost normal. About a quarter (24 percent) exhibited high LOP_i . The other quarter falls under the opposite extreme, the low LOP_i . The remaining 50 percent of the LLs are in the middle or moderate LOP_i .

Appropriateness of Participation in Implementation

The great majority of the LLs perceived LL participation in all of the 16 implementation activities to be appropriate, especially "calling and presiding over meetings" and "attending to visitors to project" (Table III, Col. 2). Their primary reason for the perceived appropriateness of participation in implementation is their feeling that it is their duty to be involved. The task that seemed to be least favored by the LLs was "registering association with the Securities and Exchange Commission," the same task in which there was the least participation by the LLs.

Participation in Evaluation

Evaluation as a process was something a great number of the LLs did not know about. The majority of them also were not aware or simply did not know of projects in their areas that had been evaluated.

The few who were aware had some participation in evaluation activities. Of the four evaluation tasks considered, the most commonly participated in was "monitoring project activities" as reported by 17 percent of the LLs (Table V, col. 1).

Table VI presents the evaluation participation index scores (LOP_e) of the LLs. An examination of the extremes points to a great variation in the low and high scores. More than three-fourths (78 percent) of the LLs made the lowest score while less than ten percent made the highest score. This makes for a negatively

TABLE IV
LLs by Implementation Participation Index Scores

| | IPIS* | Percent (N = 107) | IPIS* | Percent (N = 107) | IPIS* | Percent (N = 107) |
|----|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|--------|----------------------|
| Lo | 0 | 1.9 | 13 | 0.9 | 28 | 1.9 |
| | 1 | 0.9 | 14 | 3.7 | 30 | 1.9 |
| | 3 | 1.9 | 15 | 0.9 | 31 | 1.9 |
| | 4 | 2.8 | 16 | 3.7 | 32 | 1.9 |
| | 5 | 0.9 | 17 | 1.9 | 33 | 3.7 |
| | 8 | 0.9 | 18 | 2.8 | 34 | 0.9 |
| | 9 | 2.8 | 19 | 1.9 | 36 | 2.8 |
| | 10 | 4.7 | 20 | 4.7 | 37 | 1.9 |
| | 11 | 5.6 | 21 | 3.7 | 38 | 1.9 |
| | 12 | 2.8 | 23 | 3.7 | 39 | 0.9 |
| | | | 24 | 3.7 | Hi 40 | 4.7 |
| | | | 25 | 7.5 | | |
| | | | 26 | 3.7 | Mean = | 21.20 |
| | | | 27 | 2.8 | S.D. = | 10.55 |

*Implementation Participation Index Score

TABLE V
**LLs' Participation in Evaluation Activities and Appropriateness of
 LL Participation in the Activities as Perceived by the LLs**

| Activities | Percent Participated (N = 107) | Percent Responding Appropriate (N = 107) |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Monitoring project activities | 17 | 96 |
| Making decisions regarding evaluation to be done | 14 | 63 |
| Final judging of worth of project | 12 | 64 |
| Formal collection of data needed for evaluation | 9 | 57 |

TABLE VI
LLs By Evaluation Participation Index Scores

| | EPIS* | Percent (N = 107) | EPIS* | Percent (N = 107) | EPIS* | Percent (N = 107) |
|----|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|--------|----------------------|
| Lo | 0 | 77.6 | 4 | 1.9 | 8 | 0.9 |
| | | | 5 | 1.9 | 9 | 0.9 |
| | 1 | 5.6 | 7 | 0.9 | Hi 10 | 7.5 |
| | 3 | 2.8 | | | | |
| | | | | | Mean = | 1.28 |
| | | | | | S.D. = | 2.90 |

*Evaluation Participation Index Score

skewed distribution.

The evaluation scores were also divided into four groups with the zero scores forming a distinct group by itself representing no participation. Scores 1 to 3 were assigned to low LOP_e. This had 8 percent of the LLs. Scores 4 to 7 were for moderate LOP_e and had 5 percent of the LLs. Scores 8 to 10 for high LOP_e had about one-tenth of the LLs.

Appropriateness of Participation in Evaluation

As noted in Table V, column 2, the majority of the LLs considered leader participation in evaluation activities as appropriate although the proportions observed were slightly lower than those for both planning and implementation. "Data collection" had the lowest number of LLs (57 percent) who considered participation as appropriate while "monitoring of project activities" was favored by the highest number (96 percent). Participation of LLs in making decisions regarding the evaluation to be done was appropriate to 63 percent of the LLs.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Observations in the study give empirical evidence to a general conclusion that lay leader participation in local Extension programs and activities in the two Luzon provinces in the Philippines is, in fact, a reality rather than mere rhetoric. All of the activities for planning, implementation, and evaluation had LLs participation. However, this very general conclusion becomes meaningful and functional for policy and decision-making purposes

only when looked at in its several dimensions.

One way to look at this participation by LLs is through the differences in the number of leaders participating in each activity for each program or project phase. They indicate that participation differs according to program phase. If averages for the proportions reporting participation in each activity for each phase were taken, the largest would be for implementation, next would be for planning, and the least would be for evaluation. Thus, while there may be participation by LLs, it is prevailing only in implementation.

A more marked difference in participation by program phase is given by levels of participation as determined by the participation index scores. The highest proportion of "moderate" to "high" participation was for implementation; the highest proportion of "low" participation was for planning; the highest proportion of "no participation" was for evaluation. Hence, not only are fewer leaders involved in planning and evaluation, but whatever involvement they have is very minimal. On the other hand, more leaders participate in implementation, and their implementation is also at a higher level.

Looking through the activities where there is a concentration of leaders participating, one point that is clear is that participation varies according to the difficulty of the tasks (difficulty being based on the complexity gradient developed for this study). Participation in planning was for the "simple" tasks; in implementation it ranged from the "very simple" to the

"very difficult"; participation in evaluation was for the "very simple" tasks.

The observation that lay leaders are participating in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of Extension programs and activities seems welcome among development planners and practitioners, policy makers, and all those interested in development. However, it is no reason yet for rejoicing, for the "participation" that is taking place could carry the potential of bane or blessing. The variations in the extent to which LLs are participating in these three program phases lead to a very basic question: Why is there more participation in the implementation phase, less in the planning stage, and least in the evaluation stage?

One way to look at the situation is to consider the nature of the Extension programs and projects implemented in the country. Most, if not all, of these projects in which the LLs were involved were "canned" or "packaged" by some high level decision makers and "shipped" to the village for "consumption." It is a case, therefore, of the villagers being planned for and targets set from above. This not only limits people's participation in policy and decision making but denies them this opportunity altogether. The less participation they will have, the less they come to controlling their own life situations. This little participation could also lead to a general feeling of dissatisfaction, passive resistance, and slow-down, especially when plans to execute have no logical relationships to the local situation.

Although use of local lay leaders in rural development is a participatory strategy, its use, *per se*, may not actually constitute participation unless the LLs gain power to voice their demands and back them up. The Extension agents looking at LLs as their "helpers, assistants, or extensions of their right hands" may lead to a misunderstanding of what participation really is. When considered as helpers or assistants, the LLs may, as noted by Bryant and White (1982), be vulnerable to co-optation. When this happens, they cease to represent the interests of the group.

It may not be farfetched to also refer to the nature of programs/projects implemented to explain the low LL participation in evaluation. Most of the pro-

grams/projects in which the LLs were involved are long-range programs with big, formal evaluations usually scheduled towards their termination. Thus, evaluation may not be in the offing for most of them.

To focus on the specific activities in which the LLs have been involved, an encouraging observation is that the two planning activities in which the LLs participated most (as reported by the LLs) were "identifying needs and problems of the barangay" and "formulation of objectives for the project/activity being planned." These activities are crucial as far as designing appropriate programs for the village and their eventual success are concerned. Having the LLs participate in these activities does not only ensure "hitting where it hurts," but could mean a serious effort on the part of the administrators and field workers to listen to the voice of these people who may have long been submerged in what Freire (1968) calls the "culture of silence."

Another dimension to this observation is the empowerment that may result from being listened to. Bryant and White (1982:16) write that this empowerment could serve as a "leverage for the poor." If administrators and field workers listen to what these village people say their problems are and what they think the objectives of development endeavors, designed with them as recipients, should be, then the people would have influence on the development agenda and would, therefore, be in control to make choices for their future.

In implementation, the activity with the most participation by LLs is giving technical assistance. This is an instance whereby the efforts of the Extension agents are multiplied many-fold. To utilize the lay leaders in this capacity illustrates the trickle down or spread effect in Extension. One concern, however, is whether or not the information disseminated is correct. Any unpleasant experiences the Extension clientele may have because of wrong information given will have its toll on the credibility of the LLs in particular and on the Extension Service in general.

Participation by a number of LLs in the evaluation phase was mainly on monitoring project activities. When the project is monitored while it is in process, there is

continual feedback to the project administration about how it is being implemented. With data feedback to them, changes and adjustments could be made where necessary. Probability of success would be great since project flaws are immediately detected and attended to. This, of course, is working on the assumption that the data feedback are made use of in decision making regarding the project and its implementation.

The LLs' high favorability to participation of leaders in all phases of the Extension programs and activities is a healthy sign for the Extension Service's use of LLs in these Philippine provinces. It appears that the motivation to be involved and to take part in influencing their future are already there. With the right motivation bobbing, there is only the need to have this sustained by having the drive for the motivation satisfied. How this could be done would, perhaps, call for a re-thinking of current policies regarding program development.

IMPLICATIONS

A finding that merits some thoughts is the differential participation of LLs in program development—more prevailing in implementation but less in planning and much less in evaluation. Planning and evaluation are no simple tasks. The greater abstraction in planning and the stringent methodological requirements in evaluation would, perhaps, be sufficient reason to deny participation by LLs who are limited by their low educational attainment or for the LLs themselves to decline participation because of this perceived limitation. In Philippine villages, the person who lacks education generally feels embarrassed when among highly educated people.

If the LLs are to have more participation in planning and evaluation, this implies a new role for them. This new role should be defined in the reality of the Extension work environment. Learning of this new role should not be left to chance. Training is imperative. Training programs to be designed specifically for this purpose should zero in on the critical on-the-job behavior for planning and evaluation. The use of the word "critical" refers to problems encountered with participation or

the reason participation is not occurring. The design of future training programs for these leaders should consider the critical areas of lay leader participation in planning, implementation, and evaluation of Extension programs.

To identify these critical areas, Tyler's (1957) framework could serve as a guide. Tyler identifies three sources of information for a wise determination of objectives of an educational activity. These sources are the learners, contemporary life, and subject matter leaders. Contemporary life would be the actual life conditions and opportunities, particularly the reality of the Extension work. The subject matter specialists are the professionals in the development scene. These would include not only those in Extension, but also those in the other relevant disciplines.

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