



Farmer's perception regarding extension activities conducted by Agricultural Extension Field Staff in Barkhan District of Balochistan before and after Decentralization

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Abstract

The administrative changes in the setup of agricultural extension department affect the working efficiency of EFS in their area of jurisdiction having both positive and negative impacts. For the present study Barkhan district of Balochistan province Pakistan was selected. Data was collected from five out of eight union councils those selected randomly and from each selected union council two villages were selected at random. From each sample village fifteen farmers were taken through simple random sampling technique, the collected data was statistically analyzed with the help of SPSS. Before devolution slightly majority (65.33%) of the respondents visited the office of Field Assistants (FAs) and less than fifty (45.34%) of the respondents paid visits to the office of the AOs. Less than fifty (47.33%) of the respondents paid visits to FAs and Most (30.00%) of the respondents paid visits to DDOs after devolution. Majority (60.00%) and (64.00%) of the respondents were of the view that FAs and DDOs never hold any meetings with farmers before devolution. Whereas, very few FAs and DDOs paid visit after devolution. Similarly, a vast majority of the respondents reported that EFS were inefficient to arrange various extension activities before devolution compare to after devolution.

Keywords: Decentralization, extension field staff, working efficiency, extension activities.

Introduction

Pakistan is predominantly an agricultural country having sufficient natural resources, suitable climatic conditions, deep soils, favorable topography, and water resources, thus the country has huge potential for crop and livestock production. Agriculture is playing an important role in generating economic growth (Mallah, 2005, Khan, 2006 and Rehman *et al.*, 2011) as it contributes 20.9% of GDP and employs 44% of the total work force. It gives a kick-start to aggregate demand for industrial goods and services as well (Govt. of Pakistan, 2011). In spite of such a great importance, the yield of our crops is generally low as

compared to other countries. There is a huge gap between the potential and actual yield of major crops. (Govt. of Pakistan, 2003). This low yield can be attributed to many factors. Amongst them the lack of technical knowledge about production technologies of the major crops could be an important one. The available technology can be transferred through an effective extension approach, because agriculture extension is one of the means available to help alleviate poverty and improve food security. It promotes the transfer and exchange of information that can be converted into functional knowledge, which is

instrumental in helping to develop enterprises that promote productivity and generate income in the present climate of exchange. Agricultural extension is a unique service, which helps to provide small farmers and the rural poor living in remote areas an access to the latest technology; while it can also provide these populations with services to increase their productivity (World Bank, 2003). Extension field personnel use a number of extension teaching methods to accomplish their task successfully like individual, group and mass contact methods. Meetings and extension activities arranged by extension field staff (EFS) are most useful tools to disseminate the modern techniques among the farmers.

For effective dissemination of agricultural technology, different extension and rural development programmes at national level have been launched by Government e.g. Village Agricultural and Industrial Development Programme (Village-AID), Basic Democracies System (BDS), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), and Training and Visit System (T & V) (Davidson *et al.*, 2001; Saima *et al.*, 2005). Unfortunately all these programmes were abolished one after the other because of their conventional, top down nature and inherited less effective technology transfer model (Röling & De Jong, 1998; Davidson *et al.*, 2001; Williamson, 2002; World Bank, 2003 and Lodhi *et al.*, 2006). Government of Pakistan introduced Decentralization of Agricultural Extension reforms with the name Devolution of Power Plan to up-lift the local people's economic status through pooling all the national sources and resources at grass root level (Luqman *et al.*, 2005). Devolution is the complete, permanent (SPDC, 2000) and advanced form of decentralization and also helps in strengthening the functions of and empowering with more authority to the elected representatives (FAO, 2001).

With the promulgation of this new system, institutional reforms have been introduced almost in all the line departments including Agricultural Extension (Luqman *et al.*, 2004). The new system of agricultural extension, works under the supervision of district Government (World Bank, 2003). After devolution plan (formation of District Government) the nomenclature of EFS in Balochistan has been changed i.e. Deputy Director of Agriculture (DDA) as Executive District Officer (EDO), Extra Assistant Director of Agriculture (EADA) as District Officer (DO) and Agriculture Officer (AO) as Deputy District Officer (DDO) while in provincial government, the nomenclature remained same.

The administrative changes in the setup of agricultural extension department affect the working efficiency of EFS in their area of jurisdiction having both positive and negative impacts (Luqman *et al.*, 2005). Keeping in views the positive and negative impacts of decentralization on the working efficiency of EFS the present study was designed to determine the working efficiency of EFS regarding meetings and extension activities, as perceived by the farmers of Barkhan district.

Materials and Methods

This study was conducted in Barkhan district of Balochistan province (Pakistan). Out of eight union councils, five were selected randomly and from each selected union council two villages were selected at random. From each sample village fifteen farmers were taken through simple random sampling technique, thus forming a sample of 150 respondents. The data were collected with the help of pre-tested interview schedule and statistically analyzed with the help of SPSS and thus drawn conclusions.

Results and Discussion

Visits of the farmers to the offices of EFS

In office calls, the farmer goes to the office of the EFS to seek some sort of help. A visit to the extension office is a statement of confidence in the extension worker and his/her advice. The data presented in **Table 1** regarding visits paid by the farmers to the offices of EFS reveals that before devolution slightly majority (65.33%) of the respondents visited the office of Field Assistants (FAs) out of them 30.00 and 21.33% of the respondents paid visits quarterly and monthly respectively while most (34.67%) of the respondents were of the view that they never visited the FAs. Moreover, less than fifty (45.34%) of the respondents paid visits to the office of the AOs, whereas, one-fifth (20.00%) and only 8.67% of the respondents visited quarterly and occasionally respectively, to AOs.

Furthermore, less than fifty (47.33%) of the respondents paid visits to FAs while about quarter (23.33%) and very few 16.67% of the respondents paid visits to the office of FAs quarterly and monthly basis respectively. Most (30.00%) of the respondents paid visits to DDOs while 17.34 and 4.0% of the respondents paid visits to the office of DDOs quarterly and half yearly basis respectively after devolution.

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to visits paid to EFS by farmers

Frequency	EFS							
	Before devolution				After devolution			
	FAs		AOs		FAs		DDOs	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Daily	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Weekly	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fortnightly	04	2.67	03	2.00	02	1.33	02	1.33
Monthly	32	21.33	07	4.67	25	16.67	04	2.67
Quarterly	45	30.00	30	20.00	35	23.33	26	17.34
Half Yearly	07	4.67	10	6.67	04	2.67	06	4.00
Yearly	01	0.66	05	3.33	01	0.66	02	1.33
Occasionally	09	6.00	13	8.67	04	2.67	05	3.33
Never	52	34.67	82	54.66	79	52.67	105	70.00
Total	150	100.00	150	100.00	150	100.00	150	100.00

The data regarding usefulness of visits paid by farmers to the offices of EFS presented in **Table 2** indicate that slight majority (60.20 to 63.27%) of the respondents were of the view that the information provided by FAs during visits paid by farmers was informative, beneficial and interesting while the information provided by AOs was beneficial, informative and interesting to them as disclosed by 44.12, 41.18 and 39.71% of the respondents respectively before devolution.

Moreover, after devolution, about fifty (47.89 to 53.52%) of the respondents reported that the information provided by FAs was informative, interesting and beneficial whereas, the information provided by DDOs was informative, interesting and beneficial as disclosed by 28.89, 26.67 and 26.67% of the respondents respectively.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to usefulness of visits paid by farmers to EFS

Usefulness	EFS							
	Before devolution				After devolution			
	FAs		AOs		FAs		DDOs	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Informative	62	63.27	28	41.18	38	53.52	13	28.89
Interesting	59	60.20	27	39.71	36	50.70	12	26.67
Beneficial	61	62.24	30	44.12	34	47.89	12	26.67

Note: As most of the respondents gave more than one response therefore, the number of responses exceeds the total number of respondents.

Meetings of EFS with farmers

Meetings are very important extension educational tool, which bring the farmers and extension worker closed and facilitate understanding of the problems and programme aimed at solving problems by mutual discussion. Therefore, more frequent such meetings, the more would be the understanding and possibilities for solutions of the problems. Therefore, the data collected in this regard show that before devolution

FAs hold meetings with farmers in their offices on monthly and quarterly basis as reported by 17.33 and 10.00% of the respondents respectively, while majority (60.00%) of the respondents were of the view that FAs never hold any meetings with farmers. Moreover, 15.33 and 9.33% of the respondents were of the view that AOs hold meetings with them occasionally and yearly basis, while most (64.00%) of the respondents argued that AOs never hold any meetings with farmers.

Furthermore, 10.67 and 6.67% of the respondents were of the view that FAs hold meetings with them monthly and quarterly basis, while 73.33% of the respondents argued that FAs never hold any meetings with farmers. Whereas, DDOs hold meetings with farmers in their offices on occasionally and yearly

basis as reported by only 9.33 and 5.33% of the respondents respectively, while majority (78.67%) of the respondents were of the view that DDOs never hold any meetings with farmers after devolution (Table 3).

Table 3: Frequency of meetings held by the EFS with farmers in their offices

Frequency	EFS							
	Before devolution				After devolution			
	FAs		AOs		FAs		DDOs	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Daily	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Weekly	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fortnightly	03	2.00	-	-	02	1.33	-	-
Monthly	26	17.33	-	-	16	10.67	-	-
Quarterly	15	10.00	10	6.67	10	6.67	06	4.00
Half Yearly	11	7.33	07	4.67	08	5.33	04	2.67
Yearly	01	0.67	14	9.33	01	0.67	08	5.33
Occasionally	04	2.67	23	15.33	03	2.00	14	9.33
Never	90	60.00	96	64.00	110	73.33	118	78.67
Total	150	100.00	150	100.00	150	100.00	150	100.00

Furthermore, 78.33, 75.00 and 71.67% of the respondents were of the view that meetings conducted by the FAs were beneficial, informative and interesting to them respectively, while 66.07, 62.50 and 58.92% of the respondents disclosed that meetings conducted by AOs were informative, beneficial and interesting respectively before devolution.

Moreover, after devolution these meetings conducted by the FAs were informative, beneficial and interesting to them as disclosed by above than fifty (60.00, 55.00 and 52.50%) of the respondents respectively, while slight majority (64.87%), and most (43.75 & 40.62%) of the respondents were of the view that the meetings conducted by DDOs were informative, beneficial and interesting (Table 4).

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents according to usefulness of meetings conducted by EFS

Usefulness	EFS							
	Before devolution				After devolution			
	FAs		AOs		FAs		DDOs	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Informative	45	75.00	37	66.07	24	60.00	15	46.87
Interesting	43	71.67	33	58.92	22	55.00	13	40.62
Beneficial	47	78.33	35	62.50	21	52.50	14	43.75

Note: As most of the respondents gave more than one response therefore, the number of responses exceeds the total number of respondents.

Extension activities

The main function of Agriculture Extension Department is to increase the production on the farms. Weed and wild animals decrease the production of crops to a great extent. The farmer's days and agricultural exhibitions play an important role in the dissemination of new techniques relating to agriculture among the farmers. Agriculture Extension Department is expected to arrange campaigns against weeds and wild animals, at farmer's days and agricultural exhibitions. In this respect the researcher was interested to know about the effectiveness of such activities. The data in this regard reflect that before devolution majority (85.33, 79.33, 64.67 and 62.66%) of the respondents reported that EFS never arranged extension activities like agricultural exhibitions,

control of wild animals, weed control and farmer's days respectively, while only 36.67, 29.33, 18.67 and 14.67% of the respondents were of the view that EFS arranged extension activities such as farmer's days, weed control, control of wild animals and agricultural exhibitions occasionally respectively.

As an contrast, after devolution, the great majority (73.33–90.67%) of the respondents were of the view that EFS never arranged extension activities such as agricultural exhibitions, control of wild animals, farmer's days and weed control. Whereas, only 24.67, 22.67, 11.33 and 9.33% of the respondents were of the view that EFS arranged activities like farmer's days, weed control, control of wild animals and agricultural exhibitions occasionally respectively (**Table 5**).

Table 5: Distribution of the respondents according to the knowledge about extension activities arranged by EFS

Extension activities	Before devolution						After devolution					
	Frequently		Occasionally		Never		Frequently		Occasionally		Never	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Weed control	09	6.00	44	29.33	97	64.67	06	4.00	34	22.67	110	73.33
Control of wild animals	03	2.00	28	18.68	119	79.33	04	2.67	17	11.33	129	86.00
Farmer's days	01	0.67	55	36.67	94	62.66	01	0.67	37	24.67	112	74.66
Agricultural exhibitions	-	-	22	14.67	128	85.33	-	-	14	9.33	136	90.67

Note: By frequently means at least once a season and by occasionally means after two or more than two years.

Furthermore, more than fifty (58.49, 54.84 and 51.79%) and less than fifty (45.45%) of the respondents were of the view that they participated in extension activities conducted by the EFS like control of weeds and wild animals, farmer's days and agricultural exhibitions. Whereas, the same table

depicts that after devolution less than fifty (42.50%), and most (39.47, 38.10 and 35.71 %) of the respondents argued that they participated in extension activities undertaken by EFS such as weed control, farmer's day, control of wild animals and agricultural exhibitions (**Table 6**).

Table 6: Distribution of the respondents according to their participation in extension activities

Extension activities	Participation											
	Before devolution						After devolution					
	Yes		No		Total		Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Weed control	31	58.49	22	41.51	53	100.0	17	42.50	23	57.50	40	100.00
Control of wild animals	17	54.84	14	45.16	31	100.0	08	38.10	13	61.90	21	100.00
Farmer's days	29	51.79	27	48.21	56	100.0	15	39.47	23	60.53	38	100.00
Agricultural exhibitions	10	45.45	12	54.55	22	100.0	05	35.71	09	64.29	14	100.00

The data in **Table 7** shows that before devolution, majority (75.00 and 72.72%) of the respondents were of the view that farmer's days and agricultural exhibitions were useful to great extent, whereas slight majority (64.15%) and more than fifty (54.84%) of the respondents who participated in weed control and wild animal killing activities were of the view that these extension activities were useful to some extent respectively.

Moreover, after devolution, slight majority (65.79 and 64.29 %) of the respondents disclosed that farmer's days and agricultural exhibitions were useful to great extent, whereas, near about fifty (52.50 and 47.62%) of the respondents who participated in weed and wild animal control activities were of the view that these extension activities were useful to some extent respectively.

Table 7: Distribution of the respondents according to the usefulness of extension activities

Extension activities	Extent															
	Before devolution								After devolution							
	Great		Some		None		Total		Great		Some		None		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Weed control	16	30.19	34	64.15	03	5.66	53	100.00	08	20.00	21	52.50	11	27.50	40	100.00
Wild animal killed	04	12.90	17	54.84	10	32.26	31	100.00	04	19.05	10	47.62	07	33.33	21	100.00
Farmer's days	42	75.00	09	16.07	05	8.93	56	100.00	25	65.79	04	10.53	09	23.68	38	100.00
Agricultural exhibitions	16	72.72	03	13.64	03	13.64	22	100.00	09	64.29	01	7.14	04	28.57	14	100.00

Conclusion

It is very clear that EFS were less efficient to work properly like holding meetings with farmers and arranging extension activities before devolution than post devolution era.

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