Role Expectations, Role Perceptions and Role Performance of Extension Personnel

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Abstract: Role is an important term in the context of organizations. A role is a set of connected behavior, rights, obligations, beliefs and norms as conceptualized by actors in a social situation. Extension personnel are engaged in the activities necessary for the agricultural and rural development. Every position of the extension personnel has some ascribed or desired roles which are considered necessary by its counter position or clients or self. Role expectations, role perceptions and role performance are the components of role analysis, which further have various dimensions. Major segments of these for various extension personnel are like subject matter competency, programme planning and execution, trainings, services, demonstrations etc. In a suggested model all the essential elements are the basis of role expectations, perceptions and performance. All of these are interlinked and influencing each other. A personnel having high perception would perform high and vice versa. In same fashion expectations leads to perceptions and perceptions lead to expectations. For improving the role performance organizations has to concentrate on the elements of role, where as high role performance will lead to high perception and expectation too.

Key words: Role, Expectations, Perceptions, Performance, Segments, Model

I. Introduction

Organizations are social units, or human groupings, deliberately constructed to seek specific goals. Organizational tasks are distributed among various positions as roles. Each member in an organization occupies a specific position which is directly or indirectly associated to other positions in the hierarchy of organizational chart. This constitutes his role set and it usually includes his superiors, subordinates, peers and outsiders with whom he has got related relationship. In the organization every person is expected to behave in a particular manner while performing a specific role. (Prasad, 2000). A role is a set of connected behaviours, rights, obligations, beliefs, and norms as conceptualized by actors in a social situation.(Anonymous, 2013a) As it is clear that every person have to play a set role related with a position in an organization and so is the case with extension personnel. Extension personnel are engaged in the activities necessary for the successful implementation of the development programmes in the field of agricultural, rural development, poverty alleviation etc. Every position of the extension personnel may have some ascribed or desired roles which are considered to be necessary by its counter positions or clients. These are the role expectations of the extension personnel to which we will deal, while starting with some basics of the concept.

II. Role Expectations

Role expectation has been defined in terms of prescription and proscription held by the members of the counter positions of the role set. It is the expected behaviour of the role incumbent. (Sanghi, 2011) This is a cognitive concept the content of which consists of beliefs, expectancies, and subjective probabilities. For some positions the role expectations may be uniform from one person to another or from one group to another where as for other positions role expectations may vary from one segment of the population to another. Role expectations are comprised of the rights and privileges, the duties and obligations, of any occupant of a social position in relation to persons occupying other positions in the social structure. The conduct expected of the occupant of the position, the exercise of rights and privileges and fulfilment of duties and obligations applies to the person who at any time is assigned that role.

A. Dimensions of Role Expectations:

Role expectations vary several dimensions; some of the most important dimensions are as follows:

1. Degree of generality or specificity. – At one end, role expectations for some positions, such as those in bureaucracies and in military, specify precisely the required behaviour, how and where the behaviour should be executed and the exact penalty for non-adherence to the role expectations. At the other end some role expectations consist only of broad outlines, giving the occupant of the position the opportunity to enact the role in the particular way he prefers within a wide range of acceptable behaviour.
2. Scope or extensiveness – For some positions role expectations are restricted in scope, having relevance to a narrowly circumscribed area of persons’ life. Other role expectations like those of age and gender roles are applicable to a large proportion of a persons’ daily behaviour.

3. Relation to formal or informal social positions: Role expectations occur in the context of both the informal social role system and the formal role system. Thereabout the role exist widespread public knowledge about certain positions in our society, which produces a fair degree of agreement or consensus about the role expectations associated with them. Thus role expectations for many formal roles in the macro social system are well known to most people, and some are formally codified through an official listing of rights and duties of the incumbent. In micro social system for example in small friendship groups, roles are not formal and role expectations are not officially listed.

4. Degree of consensus among other persons concerning role expectations

5. Degree of Clarity or uncertainty (Lindzey and Aronson, 1968)

Gross et al (1966) gave the following two dimensions of a single expectation:

1. Direction: One question that may be asked about an expectation, then, is about direction. Every expectation can be reduced to a statement for or against something. Whether a particular expectation is a prescription or a prohibition is an operational rather than a theoretical problem. The empirical reference of the expectation must be introduced before its direction can be specified.

2. Intensity: Any expectation can be placed somewhere on a continuum which ranges from the completely permissive, through the preferential, to the mandatory. e.g a University Board might hold the expectation that its teacher must attend monthly progress meeting, that he preferably should attend the meetings of local teacher’ association, and that he may or may not attend the meetings of state teachers’ association.

B. Effect of Role expectations

1. Conformity to Role expectations

The occupant of a position ought to do particular things in specified ways and ought to hold certain beliefs instead of others. In role enactment an individual is expected to behave in particular ways in the sense that the behaviour is predictable. The ought aspect of role expectations implies that approval or disapproval by other people is contingent on the nature and quality of ones’ role enactment. Role expectation can be said to define the limits or range of tolerated behaviour. In short role expectations are specifications for adherence to group norms.

2. Clarity of Role expectations

Clarity of Role expectation can be defined as the difference between the optimal amount of information needed about role expectations and the amount actually available to a person. Different types of un-clarity in the role expectations are:

a) Uncertainty and vagueness of expectations- role expectations held by specific other person for a certain position can be uncertain, vague or indefinite

b) Lack of agreement among occupants of complementary roles- role expectations held by one subgroup of persons may be clear, but contradict the clear expectations held by other subgroup. A variant of this condition occurs when one group defines role expectations for a position differently from occasion to occasion, or when one set of role expectations is conveyed verbally and a different set behaviourally.

c) Incongruity between the role performers’ own expectations for his role and role expectations held by those comprising his audience. This may be resulted due to role expectations held by other person may be clear, but the role performer himself may distort the expectations received from others, or may misunderstand them in some way. (Lindzey and Aronson,1968)

III. Role Perception

The second major aspect of the role concept is role perception. While getting into the role perception of the extension personnel we would have some insight of this concept. Role perception is the direction in which person channelize their efforts (Sanghi, 2011). Role perception means what the actor himself thinks is required of him in the office. The actor is placed in some institutional setting in which he occupies a particular position. He is therefore, exposed to two related influences: one emanating from the position he occupies and the other from the institutional setup he belongs to. What he expects from his own position and what he can actually do while performing his role are influenced, to a considerable extent, by the norms the institution he belongs to has developed over the years. It is, therefore, necessary to look closely at what the actor believes to be his role and, at the same time, what norms he believes to be salient for his role performance. (Agnihotri and Sharma, 2011)

A. Dimensions of Role Perceptions

Four distinct types ofrole perception have received attention in past research: perceived role breadth, perceived instrumentality, perceived role efficacy, and perceived role discretion.

1. Perceived role breadth: The dimension most studied is perceived role breadth, which refers to whether one regards behaviors associated with a particular role as part of one’s job. Perceived OCB (organization citizen behaviour) role breadth is greater when behaviors from a particular OCB category are considered in-role rather than extra role.
2. Perceived instrumentality: The second role perception, perceived instrumentality, refers to whether one perceives a relationship between performance of a role and outcomes such as rewards and punishment. Evidence suggests that instrumentality perceptions predict OCB, although ambiguity remains because instrumentality perceptions have typically been combined with role breadth perceptions.

3. Perceived role efficacy: Third role-related perception — role efficacy — which refers to an individual’s perception of his or her competence in performing a given type of role. In past research, scholars found self-efficacy to be associated with a number of OCB-related behaviors such as issue selling and proactive behavior that supports work unit functioning.

4. Perceived role discretion: The fourth role perception, role discretion, refers to the extent to which an individual perceives choice with respect to performing a particular role. (McAllister et al. 2007)

Role Performance

Levinson (1959) explained role performance in terms of overt behavior of an individual. It is more or less a characteristic way in which the individual acts as occupant of a position.

B. Dimensions of role performance:

1. Number of roles: It is obvious that the more roles in an actors’ range, the better prepared he is to meet the exigencies of the position. In principle, the problem of counting the number of roles presents no insurmountable difficulties. Representativeness and generality could be obtained by an observers’ keeping a constant surveillance on a particular actor and noting all his behaviors, particularly with reference to the occupants of complementary positions. (Lindzey and Aronson, 1968)

2. Organismic involvement dimension:

Any role may be performed with different degrees of organismic involvement. This is essentially an intensity dimension, the intensity of enactment being manifest in the number of organic systems involved. Behaviour would be inefficient indeed if all roles were enacted with maximal intensity. The organismic dimension can be understood as applying to all organized actions. There are eight levels of performance according to organismic involvement dimension:

1. Level zero: Non-involvement. The lowest degree of involvement is characterized by the performance of such roles as lapsed membership in a farmers’ club. Merely occupying a position is a static kind of affair; there are no expectations for action.

2. Level I: Casual role enactment. This includes the roles with minimum involvement. E.g. workers during rest period, customer farmer in a super market or big fair.

3. Level II: Ritual acting (dramatic role, mechanical acting): at this level the reference is that of dramatic actor who performs the motions necessary for the portrayal of the role assigned to him. In mechanical acting, the actor does not become involved; the self is relatively autonomous from the role. He must maintain a certain degree of consistency in the various response systems which calls for more effort and precludes the degree of autonomy of the casual role. This degree of involvement is seen in many everyday interactions. E.g. the waitress/receptionist who put big smile for the customer, the employee who puts up a front of busyness to impress his employer.

4. Level III: Engrossed acting (dramatic role, heated acting). This level of involvement is noted in the stage actor who takes the role literally. He throws himself into the action, temporarily separating himself from his own identity and taking on the identity of character. Commonly called living the role, the actor behaves as if he is the character in the drama. The successful actor who engages in engrossed acting does not surrender his entire identity to the part.

5. Level IV: Classical hypnotic role taking: The role of the hypnotic subject serves as a reference role for a moderate degree of organismic involvement. The classical behaviors of the hypnotic subject illustrate more cogently the operation of the as if mechanism. In performing the role of the hypnotized subject as perceived against a background of generalized and specific expectations, a person demonstrates that more of the organism is responding than in play acting.

6. Level V: Histrionic neurosis (hysterical fugue, role of the amnestic): here role is performed with relatively high degree of organismic involvement which is less self-limiting and more prolonged than the enactment of the classical hypnotic role.

7. Level VI: Ecstasy: at this level of involvement there is usually suspension of voluntary action. Role performance of this intensity is not ordinarily encountered in everyday transactions. Such states cannot be prolonged over time without damage to functioning of the body.

8. Level V: Bewitchment (role of the moribund person, object of sorcery and witchcraft). The ultimate limit of the intensity dimension is an extension of previous range. The effects of the sympathethico-adrenal system which is excessively activated in such role performance sequences may become irreversible under certain stimulus conditions. The end result of such a performance is death. (Lindzey and Aronson, 1968 and Sarbin, 1966)

3. Pre-emptiveness of roles
A third dimension of role performance is simply the amount of time a person spends in one role relative to the amount of time he spends in other roles. The variability in time spent is applicable primarily to the roles that have an achieved aspect. A person can move into and out of position of, let us say demonstrator. He may spend 14 hours a day in the enactment of the role of demonstrator. Choice of amount spent is not applicable to the roles that have a large ascribed components e.g. being in the position of male, adult, mother etc usually means being in the role all the time. (Lindsey and Aronson, 1968)

III. Key Elements for Role Expectations/Perception/Performance of Extension Personnel


(anonymous, 2013c)

IV. An Empirical Analysis of Role Expectations, Role Perception and Role Performance of Extension Personnel

A. Role Expectations

Role expectation studies started during 1975 in Punjab when a study was conducted which revealed that the role senders of District Extension Specialists (DESs) in Punjab had high role expectation in the field of keeping close contact with other technical departments, appreciating and utilizing the role of village level workers in transformation and feedback from the field to higher level, drawing up of a plan for evaluation of the programme, giving radio talks, carrying out experiment on his own initiation in the field, attending district/block level and other meetings, understanding and application of psychological principles in maintaining good relations, be knowledgeable about statistical tests and helping farmers in getting different kinds of loans. (Dhillon, 1975). Another study observed, expectations of members of Mukhya Sevikas role set were high in role segments of subject matter competency, programme planning, execution and evaluation, administrative responsibilities, record keeping and reporting, services and supplies, communication and feed back. However the role segment of general activities, most of the members of role set expected that Mukhya Sevikas must not take interest in the problems of others, must not attend religious functions, must not arrange gatherings for political meetings and must not collect relief funds. (Kaur, 1986). Role expectations and perception of the SMS (Deputy Directors, Agriculture) were studied in Karnataka and it was observed that most important linking roles in the four broad functions were; finding out new information, the specialist must have package of practices as early as possible in advance, corresponding with the research workers of the state as well as outside the state to get the research results and helping in devising syllabus and curriculum. (Dudhani and Jalihal, 1987). Extension specialists believed that the first priority of extension should be to increase the participation of stakeholders in the development of GM crops. Based on the perception of the respondents, 46 per cent of the variance in the perception of extension specialists about the production of GM crops could be explained by two variables of informing about the research activities and improving the linkages between public and private sector. (Seyed et al 2006). It was further found that, individual was not clear about the various expectations that people had from NGOs workers’ role and members face role ambiguity. Reasons for role ambiguity in NGOs were unclear structure, no job analysis, improper placement and lack of competency mapping which in turn leads to inhibition, lack of initiative and appreciation dependence as unclear expectations leads to affects the task he is doing. It was reported that improper command by different superiors leads to ruining of the confidence level and creating lack of adaptability for the individual. Reasons for role expectation conflict in NGOs were unclear structure, inadequate communication, and overlapping role expectations, which lead to lack of confidence, inhibition, lack of adaptability as there exist significant co relationship between stability and postpartum depression (Shah and Pethe, 2008). A study on the role expectations of filed veterinarians revealed that the animal owner expected him to be a good and accessible clinician who has got competence in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and control of diseases in their animals, committed and keep his promises to them too. The superior officers expected him to be an able administrator and extension worker who performs the tasks in time and in accordance with rules. The members of outside organizations especially the authorities of local bodies expected him to be a good clinician, an active administrator and extension worker who make them participate in decision making in the administrative and extension work. The colleagues expected him to be cooperative and to stick on to the professional ethics. The subordinates were found expecting him to be an efficient manager, cordial to them, guide them, control them, advise them, help them in crises and encourage them by appreciating and recognizing their abilities. (Jiji and Kaul 2008)

While going through the researches in the field of role expectations of extension personnel we can see that despite some common role expectations of different extension personnel, there are some differences too. All extension personal regardless of their department have expected role in the fields of subject matter authority, programme planning and execution, reporting, communication and feedback, management etc., but the extent of
Role perception is what the actor himself thinks is required of him in the office. A study revealed that DESs in Punjab had high role perception in the field of keeping close contact with other technical departments, appreciating and utilizing the role of VLWs and other village level change agents in transformation and feedback from the field to higher level, helping extension organizations in fixing the objectives, organizing workshops, carrying out experiment on his own initiative, attending district/block level and other meetings, understanding and application of psychological principles in maintaining good relations, establishing new bench mark and helping farmers in marketing the produce. (Dhillon 1975) In this way, all the Mukhya Sevikas felt that they must possess the knowledge about home, agriculture and allied fields with deep insight into the areas of foods and nutrition, home management, child care and health and hygiene. They also felt that they should develop the professional contacts with the experts, help the Gram Sevikas to develop the contacts and attend the professional meetings, seminars, workshops and training courses. (Kaur, 1986) Job perception scores of the Extension Guides in different job areas were highest in the area of planning of the extension programme followed by maintenance of reports, educating clientele group and coordination. (Siddaramaiah and Gowda, 1987) Role perception of Anganawadi workers was measured in five components namely, planning, teaching, organization, guidance and evaluation. Apart from descriptive statistics, Results revealed that Anganawadi workers from Kollegal taluka had highest total role perception, planning, teaching, guidance and evaluation. Anganawadi workers from Chamaranagdar taluk had least scores in planning, guidance and evaluation components of role perception including total role perception scores. (Mahadevaswamy & Gopalaraju 2010). Majority of the Gram Panchayat Members (GPMs) and Gram Sabha Members (GPMs) in all the five dimensions perceived medium role perception. As regards overall role perception of GPMs and GMSs majority of the respondents had medium to low perception. Dimension-wise role perception results pointed that most of the Block Development and Panchayat Officer’s (BDPOs’) perception of roles was medium about agriculture related and judicial role of GPMs. Half of the BDPOs’ perception of roles was medium about administrative roles and equal percentage of BDPOs’ (25%) perceived low and medium about the dimensions of social, educational and family welfare works and financial roles. (Singh, 2002). reported that Extension specialists believed that the first priority of extension should be to increase the participation of stakeholders in the development of GM crops. Based on the perception of the respondents, 46% of the variance in the perception of extension specialists about the production of GM crops could be explained by two variables of informing about the research activities and improving the linkages between public and private sector. (Saeed et. al. 2006). Majority of the teachers in Anand Agricultural University had high to medium role perception in general. In case of research and extension work, slightly more than half and high level of perception, whereas in case of teaching, communication and administration, about half of them had medium level of perception. (Patel et al, 2007) A study assessed the level of role perception and job satisfaction among extension workers of Nasarawa Agricultural Development Programme (NADP). The findings of the which indicated that the extension workers considered their role as important. Knowing the technology and communication of the technology to the farmers were perceived as the most important role of the extension workers. (Ibrahim et.al 2008) There was incongruence in the role perception and role performance of extension agents. Most of the role activities perceived by the extension agents were not performed by them, while many of the roles not perceived were performed by the agents. Incongruence between role perception and role performance of extension agents could result in inefficiency on the part of extension agents. However, for optimum performance of extension agents, adequate role perception should be accompanied by other factors such as resource availability, transportation, training, promotional opportunities and other incentives for increasing the impact of extension agents. (Ajieh, 2009) Most of trainers in KVKs had medium level of overall perception about their roles in the dimensions of planning, organization, motivation, training material, training, reporting, evaluation and supporting activities. The role perception of trainers in KVKs were found to be positively and significantly correlated with age, academic qualification, experience, communication ability, communication quality and expertise in preparation and use of training material. (Singh and Kumar, 2012)
C. Role Performance

It is a way in which the individual acts as occupant of a position. In a study Mukhya Sevikas rated their performance higher for almost all the role items listed under different role items. However some of the role items which were never performed by them according to a substantial number (15-65%) of the members of role set were keeping the professional contacts with the experts of different subjects, arranging workshops and training courses for her field staff, developing the proforma for conducting rural surveys, preparing popular technical literature, attending meetings of voluntary organizations/associations etc. (Kaur, 1986). The overall job performance of two - third of DESs was of moderate level. Dimension wise job performance shows that about half of the respondents had high level of job performance In ‘training imparting’ activity, medium level in ‘research trials’ and ‘field days’ and low level in ‘demonstration’ and ‘campaign’ activity. Financial help, more technical and physical facilities, modern AV aids with computer facilities, freedom of working, accountability of good work were some of the measures to improve their performance besides the element of management in the system. (Jain et al, 2005). Wankahade et al (2007) in their study on role performance of agricultural assistants (AA) revealed that the AA themselves and their supervisors expressed medium level of role performance. The area wise role performance indicated low level of performance with regard to technical and input supply and quality control roles. Role performance of assistant veterinary officers indicated that majority (71%) of the respondents fall in the high level of performance, while 20 per cent fall in medium and only 9 per cent fall in low level of role performance category. (Nagayach et al, 2011) The organizational climate impact level on the specialist's job performance effectiveness was average; the specialist's job performance effectiveness level was average; there is a direct statistical significant relation between the job performance effectiveness and the organizational climate axis, as well as between the total degree of both performance and climate and there is an opposite statistical significant relation between the obstacles that hinder the effectiveness of job performance and both the organizational climate and job performance effectiveness. (Ahmed and Razek, 2011). A study revealed that the fisheries officials had spent about 14.5% of their time on conducting training/demonstration programmes, 28% on implementation of Departmental schemes, 22% on administrative work and 35.5% on other applicable activities viz., supply of inputs, infrastructure facilities, research, etc. For implementation of technology transfer programmes, their perceptions on role expectations and role performance were recorded on ten roles/activities. The preliminary analysis with the available data revealed that the Role Expectation Index (in terms of importance) was 88.5% and Role Performance Index was 83.3%. (anonymous, 2012) A study was conducted to investigate the linkages between organizational commitment, organizational culture and in-role performance and intention to quit. Results suggested that Indian managers would do well to recognize and appreciate pro-social behaviour exhibited by team members, as these could lead to improved in-role performance and reduce chances of employee turnover. (Biswas and Varma, 2012).

Hence from the above citations we find that role performance of extension personnel is judged by role senders, clientele group and the role incumbent themselves. Role performance varies department wise, role segment wise and judging person wise. Some very important roles have seldom performed as in the case of Mukhya sewikas which were never performed by them like arranging workshops and training courses for her field staff, developing the proforma for conducting rural surveys, preparing popular technical literature, attending meetings of voluntary organizations/associations etc.

IV. Major role expectation/ perception/ performance segments of extension personnel

In the formal organizations the roles are defined and their performance is carried out within same organization or social system. The case of extension personnel is different. They take the directives within the employing organization, but these directives assign him tasks to be carried out in another social system. Thus they are members of two social systems. Accordingly they have to perform roles according to the expectations of two social systems (Shaffer, 1968). Hence extension personnel have to play a number of challenging roles as compared to the employees of general organizations. On the basis of critical analysis of the research studies in this field the following role expectation/perception/performance segments of extension personnel were: Subject matter competency, Programme planning and execution, Evaluation, Conducting trainings, Coordination and supervisory, Administrative responsibilities, Record keeping and reporting, Services and supplies, Implementing govt schemes, Communication and feed back, Demonstrations, First hand research or primary research, On farm testing, Close contact with other technical departments, Commitment and keeping promises, Timely delivery of the innovation and services, Decision making in the administrative and extension work, Cooperation, Organizing, Consultancy, Professional ethics, Social welfare works, and Counselling.

V. Model of role expectations, role perception and role performance for extension personnel

Based on the mentioned theoretical orientation and empirical analysis, a working model for understanding the role expectations, perceptions and performance of extension personnel is suggested (fig.1). In this model all essential elements such as communication, teamwork, liaison and networking, decision making processes, planning and organising, initiative and problem solving, analysis and research, work environment, support, knowledge and experience are included. These elements directly affect the role expectations, perceptions and performance which can be comprehended in terms of its various dimensions e.g. if knowledge and experience is...
more, naturally the role performance which would be judged by number of roles, organismic involvement and preemptiveness in particular role will be more. Further role expectations, perceptions and performance all are interlinked and influencing each other e.g if a person has a high perception of a role, the performance will certainly be on higher side and vice versa. Similarly role expectation and role performance is interlinked. One interesting point is that role perception and role expectation are also affecting each other. These are the expectations of role senders and self which leads to the role perception. On the other side if a person has clear cut perception of the role only then he can have expectations from that very role. In this way role expectations, perceptions and performance are related which are directly influenced by their basic elements. So in order to improve the role performance which is ultimate aim of any organization in general and extension organization in particular, one has to concentrate on the elements of role analysis. However it should be kept in mind that high role performance is also leading to high role expectations and high perception. So it is a cyclic, never ending process.

VI. Conclusion

Role concept has various dimensions from which role expectations, role perception and role performance are the most important. Extension personnel who belonged to different departments of agriculture and allied fields have varied role expectations, role perception and role performances. However the basic segments of the role remain almost same except few exceptions as the nature of extension work remain same throughout the departments. Extension personnel have to perform roles according to the expectations of two social systems. They play a number of challenging roles as compared to the employees of general organizations most common to play are Subject matter specialist, programme planner, evaluator, trainee, teacher, administrator, coordinator, communicator, leader etc. The research reveals that there are many important areas in which their performance is negligible. Therefore to improve the performance role clarity is very much important which can be achieved by the role analysis. Role analysis brings forward the role expectations and existing performances on the basis of which role performance of extension personnel can be improved marvellously.

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**Fig.1 Model of role expectations, role perception and role performance for extension personnel**