

The Impact of Training and Visit System on Professionalization of Extension Agents in Oyo State Agricultural Development Programme

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KEYWORDS Visit schedule; fortnight training (FNT); subject matter specialist (SMS)

ABSTRACT The study assessed the impact of training and visit (T &V) system of extension on professionalization of extension agents in Oyo State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP). One hundred and thirty (130) extension agents were interviewed and simple percentages and product moment correlation utilized for data analysis. A positive impact of T & V system with respect to the profession skill of extension agents was observed. The calibre of manpower involved in extension activity under T&V system at the field level appears to be rising, an indication of brighter future for extension service in Nigeria. The system has remarkably improved the technical competence of the extension agents by providing a climate, under which extension agents develop favourable attitude toward their clientele through frequent interactions. The regular and continuous training of extension agents under T & V approach play a significant role on the job effectiveness of the agents. The T & V system should be retained. However, the extension practitioner particularly those at the top management level should recognize the constraints facing the T&V system and adjust accordingly to enhance sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) is a rural development approach and its first generation in Nigeria were initiated as enclave project in Funtua, Gusau and Gombe in 1975. The ADP system, is an approach through which the right technology, effective extension service, access to physical inputs, adequate market and complementary infrastructure facilities essential to improve productivity and raise the standard of living of rural dwellers are provided (Falusi, 1990).

In the past, extension services were directly under the control of Ministries of Agriculture and Natural Resources (M.A.N.R) in all states of the federation. Then, extension was being run under civil service structure. Presently in Nigeria, the T&V system of extension introduced into the World Bank-assisted ADPs had replaced the ineffective extension services of the erstwhile ministries of agriculture (Arokoyo, 1998).

The usual problems of lack of co-ordination in extension activity, inadequate service and amenities and shortage of subject matter specialists which are some of limitations of the past extension can now be tackled with the introduction of the T&V system being adopted by the ADPs in Nigeria (Patel, 1989).

The objective of T &V system was based on reforming and improving upon the effectiveness of conventional agricultural extension. The major aim of T&V is to, building up a professional extension service that is capable of assisting farmers in increasing production, raising the living standard of farmers and provide appropriate support for agricultural development (Benor and Baxter, 1984). The system had been widely adopted in many countries Nigeria inclusive.

Arun (1968), described professionalization as 'the drive to improve status and the desires to improve services'. A professional extension agent could be referred to as a conveyor of tested knowledge, in his capacity to transform quality of thinking to any practical situation. Hellen (1967) viewed professionalization to involve doing things for people but not in an egocentric or self-gratifying manner. According to him, professionalization involves commitment that is more than personal commitment but a commitment to the constructive use of knowledge to better the life of people. This is of significant relevance to extension agent- farmer relationship which address the issue involved in this study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Oyo State ADP has adopted the T&V System

as its philosophy and operational procedure for carrying out its activities since its inception. However, if the T & V approach is to continue as an important strategy in the development of agriculture in Nigeria; it requires some critical examination with a view to provide information about its subsequent validation.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The structured questionnaires were administered to 130 extension agents of the Oyo State ADP. Random sampling technique was followed to arrive at a total sample of 140 extension agents from four administrative zones of the ADP. Fifty (50) per cent of the cells in each block from all the from zones were randomly selected with an average of four (4) extension agents chosen from the 35 blocks.

Eventually, 130 questionnaires were accepted and used for the study due to some uncompleted questionnaires. The internal consistency of the instrument was measured using Pearson product moment correlation and co-efficient of 0.834 was obtained.

Professionalization of extension agents form the key dependent variables of the study. Professionalization is construed to mean ability of the extension agent to solve technical problem, their technical competence, job effectiveness through forth-night training (FNT), stressfulness of visit schedule and degree at which they enjoy working with farmers.

Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe or measure the demography characteristics of the respondents. Pearson

product moment correlation was employed to determine the existence of any association or relationship between identified professionalization variables and independent variables (i.e. educational level, previous involvement in extension service and working incentives like salary and promotion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that, majority of the respondents (61.5%) belonged to the age group of 26-35 years followed by 17.7 per cent in the age group of 36-45 years and 16:20 percent in the age group of 45 years and above, only 4.6 percent of the respondents belonged to the age group of less than 25 years 95.4% were males what 24.6% and females.

With regard to level of education, 34.6 percent of the respondents had national diploma certificate in agriculture followed by 23:1 percent with higher national diploma certificate in agriculture. Twenty-one (21) percent of the respondents possessed national certificate of education in agriculture while 80 percent had Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture. This is an indication that educational attainments of all the extension agents are of high standard.

Ninety- five (95) percent of the respondent were able to proffer solution to technical problem being encountered in the field as against 5 percent of the respondents who could not. Eighty- nine (89) percent of the respondent were mobile while 11 percent were not. This high percentage of mobility status is likely to enhance regular and effective contact with their clientele.

Table 1: Correlation coefficient between independent variables and professionalization characteristics. (n = 130)

S. No.	Independent variables	Professionalization characteristics				
		TA	EWf	TC	JE	SVS
1	Educational level	0.136NS	0.267NS	0.242**	0.144NS	0.145NS
2	Previous involvement in extension services	0.201*	0.276NS	0.142NS	0.389NS	0.107NS
3	Salary	-0.097NS	-0.110NS	0.075NS	0.057NS	0.006NS
4	Promotion	-0.447NS	-0.049NS	0.233**	-0.142NS	0.107NS

* Significant at 5% level of probability.

** Significant at 1% level of probability.

NS: Not significant

TA: Technical Ability.

EWf: Enjoy Working with Farmer.

TC: Technical competence.

JE: Job Effectiveness

SVS: Stressfulness of Visit Schedule.

Realization of job effectiveness through forth-night training (FNT) were rated by 24.6 percent of the respondents as *excellent* with 50.8 percent rated it to be *very good* while 18.5 percent and 6.2 percent of the respondents rated it as *good* and *fair* respectively.

With respect to stress associated with fixed visit schedule of T & V system, 48.5 percent of the respondents perceived fixed visit schedule as *most stressful* followed by 22.3 percent who considered it to be *stressful* and 19.2 percent perceived it to be *quite stressful*. About 8.5 percent and 1.2 percent of the respondents regarded visit schedule as *not stressful and highly stressful* respectively.

It is evident from this study that educational level had positive and non significant relationship with the ability to solve technical problem, enjoy working with the farmers, job effectiveness and stressfulness of visit schedule but positively and significantly related to technical competence of the respondents.

Previous involvement in extension service had positive and significant relationship with ability to solve technical problem while it had positive and non-significant relationship with other professionalization characteristics. This might be due to the practical experience already acquired by some of the agents who were formerly with either Ministry or the enclave ADP.

Salary and promotion were negatively and non-significantly correlated with both ability to solve technical problem and enjoy working with farmers. This suggest that, by nature of their work,

extension agents must be committed to the constructive use of knowledge to better the life of their clientele regardless of the amount of salary being received. However, salary and promotion had positive and non-significant relationship with other dependent variables. Promotion is positively and significantly related to extent of technical competence. This implies that, the greater the promotion the more the extent of technical competence.

Finally, while one appreciate the fact that there is no single method or approach to solve the problem of ineffectiveness in extension service. T & V approach appears to be a good option. It is no gainsaying to say that, T & V approach is capable of improving extension service with change agents who are technically and professionally competent.

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