

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

The theory and practice of agricultural extension in Nigerian context, is observed to be confronted with myriads of problems, constraints and inadequacies. Since independence in 1960, successive governments have attempted to make one contribution or the other toward effecting positive change and progress but to no avail. Similarly, international organizations, agencies, corporate bodies, voluntary organizations, research institutes/centers and companies have exerted various efforts in ameliorating research and extension handicaps but with little results. In fact, the results have been less than anticipated by the people yearning so much for development and possible transformation/revolution in agriculture. This paper looks at the problems and prospects of extension practice in Nigeria, and proffers some remedies for consideration.

DEFINITIONS

Some definitions of essential subject to be examined in this discuss need to be made.

Agricultural Extension

Extension, in a broad sense, may be defined as:” The extending or a service or system which extends, the educational advantages of an institution to persons. Extension, in all its ramifications, takes education and information to the people. Agricultural extension therefore has been defined as :”A service or system which assists farm people, through educational procedures, in improving farming methods and techniques, increasing production, efficiency and income, bettering their levels of living, lifting the social and educational standards of rural life” (Maunder, 1973). The basic concept on the broader function of extension work is to help people to solve their own problems through the instrumentality of scientific knowledge.

Organization

Organization, in general language, involves the existence of a system of harmonious and effective working relationships between people who engage in common endeavour vis-à-vis other individuals and groups engaged in related activities. It is the function of extension service organizations to establish both a harmonious internal relationships and complimentary relationships with all other institutions, services and organizations contributing to progress on rural community (Maunder, 1973).

Administration

This refers to Management. Administration is a twin word, or better put, two sides of the same coin. According to Peace Corps (1983), management is the “art of putting it all together”. This involves the coordination, planning, execution and evaluation of plans and programme. It has been well asserted that the share bulk of management factors to be considered by the people today demands that management be given full attention by the extension workers at every level (Maunder, 1973).

Some approaches to extension

There have been various approaches and strategies employed in the practice of extension world-wide. Albrecht *et al.*, (1990) identified the following as the classical approaches to extension:

- Production technology approach in Madagaskar
- The “Ladder of Progress” approach in Malawi
- Socio-economic development approach of India and francophone Africa.
- Action research and education “Comilla Approach” in Bangladesh.
- Decentralized and participatory development work in Bolivia

- The “CFSME” extension system in Rwanda.
- The Training and Visit (T&V) System of the World Bank
- Farming Systems Research approach.

It is note-worthy to stress that each of the above-listed approaches to extension has been recommended, adapted and tested in regions or locations which provided suitable grounds-well of opportunity for its application. Hence, geographic, human, economic, political and material factors are used to influence the organization and administration of extension in such places or regions. However, their shortcomings and inadequacies have been studied and well documented. Nigeria has had some approaches to agricultural extension system as we shall discuss here-under.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE TO AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA

Historically, the theory and practice of agricultural extension services in Nigeria is as old as the country Nigeria. The establishment of School of Agriculture at Moor Plantation in 1921 marked the formal beginning of extension work. Its main objectives include, carrying out experiment on the production of export crops, improve soil fertility, market agricultural produces and offer rudimentary extension services (Williams, 1979).

Colonial period

The colonial authorities were firmly in control as far as supervision of organized extension services was concerned. The extension work than was characterized by authoritarian components and the influential export and cash crop producers dominated and exploited the extension services. Extension training was grossly inadequate (Atala, 1984). A major progress in the development and practice of agricultural extension took place in 1930s when a School of Agriculture was established in the North at Samaru-Zaria in 1931 (Williams 1978). Like the earlier mentioned – the- then ten year –old Moor Plantation, its basic objective was the same – to train sub-professional staff (i.e. field level extension workers) in modern agriculture.

In the then Northern province, unlike the Southern counterpart, extension was mainly the responsibility of the Native Authority who were more concerned in persuading farmers to cultivate export crops in their farming systems. Consequently, Department of agriculture were established in Southern (1910) and Northern (1921) Nigeria respectively and a Federal Department of Agriculture was set up in 1921.

In the 1930s, specialized extension work through government supervised cooperative societies were becoming more pronounced, recognized and financed. However, the impact was a pyrrhic victory as it was impaired by poor management problems. In 1940s and 1950s, another phase of specialized extension began under the programme for rapid development of settlement schemes in Mokwa, Shendam and Wawa. The major target of the schemes was to increase agricultural production (Atala, 1984).

It should be emphasized that 1950s was a period of substantial progress on the development and organization of agriculture and extension in Nigeria. Through constitutional changes, there was creation of Regional Ministries of Agriculture. Hence, an extension or Field Service Division was created in each of the regional ministries of agriculture – thus setting a pace in modern organization of agricultural extension.

The organization structure of extension on each of the defunct regions comprised of the Region, Provinces, Divisions, Districts or county councils (as was the case in Eastern Region). There was a transition from British model to American style in delivery of extension services i.e. teaching the farmer and his family through demonstration and personal contacts by using research-based recommended practices.

Added to the foregoing, extension in 1950s included the establishment of certain agricultural parastatals e.g. credit corporations, marketing boards and direct production agencies.

After Independence (1960 -70)

Nigeria attained independence status in 1960. In order to boost its foreign exchange earnings, special agricultural extension units were set up e.g. the Cocoa Development Unit, Rubber Production Division, Palm Produce Division, Groundnuts Division, and Cotton Division. These Divisions were very useful in improving on the export crops.

In 1960's the unemployment rate of school leavers especially in the southern part of the country gave rise to the setting up of the school leavers' farm projects in the East, West and Mid-West. In addition to generation of employment, and controlling rural-urban population drift, these projects served as models and spring boards for extension work. Their contributions was however short-lived as they were beset with overwhelming problems.

By 1970s the nation was already recovering from the effect of three year old civil war and was faced with attendant food insufficiency. The apparent realization of the nation for more research saw the establishment of about ten agricultural and related research institutes, some with extension components.

1975 to date

In 1976, the Federal Government set up Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) with the aim of solving national food crisis but to no avail. It all turned out to be virtual a political gimmick. In 1975, the Federal Government and State Governments had gone into a collaborative extension approach/delivery venture with the World Bank through establishment of Agricultural Development Projects (ADPS).

The ADP model (with T & V style) which took off in Funtua in 1975 – began to spread to Gusau, Gombe, and virtually almost all States of the federation by 1985. The ADPs system of extension is based on the premise that a combination of factors comprising the right technology, visits of extension agents (EAs) to farmers, access to physical inputs; adequate market and other infrastructural facilities are essential to get agriculture moving and to improve productivity of the farmers in order to raise their living standards, and by extension, that of the rural dwellers. A major feature of the ADP strategy is its reliance on the small-scale farmer as the vehicle for increasing food production (Alabi, 1988)

The National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP) was set up (in 1978) after realizing that research findings was not getting to the farmers or it got to them too late. It later turned to another abandoned project as it was faced with infrastructural, financial and managerial ineptitudeness. The Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) set up during General Olusegun Obasanjo's military Government in 1979 was replaced by the "Green Revolution" programme of 1980s by President Shehu Shagari's civilian Government, and it produced no agricultural revolution. It was more of political campaign and bait for the teeming hungry populace.

In 1986, after the return of the Military Government led by General Ibrahim B. Babangida, the Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) was launched as an integrated approach to food production and provide important social infrastructures to the rural people. It eventually became money-sucking venture as it lacked proper coordination, execution, and evaluation.

The 1990s brought some impetus into the re-organization of national research institutes into sectoral compartmentalization. Today, there are 18 agricultural –based research institutes in Nigeria and each with its extension and research components or mandate. The National Agricultural Extension Research and Liaison Services (NAERLS) in Zaria, established in 1978 has the primary mandate to disseminate research findings in a form adoptable and applicable by extension staff and also by the small-holder farmer. Added to this, there are four specialized Federal Universities of Agriculture in the country today.

In sum, the contemporary Nigerian agricultural setting is a rather confused house beset with various organization and institutes claiming to have extension service for the teeming helpless farmers.

ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IN NIGERIA

Shaib *et al* (1997) did an elaborate work on Nigerian agricultural system and practice – both from historical and analytical perspectives. According to them, between 1970-1990s , various national agricultural research institutes (NARIs), agricultural universities, faculties of agriculture affiliated to universities and international agricultural research centres – were put in place in Nigeria with diverse mandates for research and extension delivery. However, Department of Agriculture existing in all the states of the federation eventually took up the role in extension delivery. Hence, over the years, a number of approaches have been pursued and introduced in an attempt to get extension services to their intended users, namely;

(1) Village Adoption approach: This was used by some universities and NARIs through the instrumentality of targeting specific villages for extension purposes and technology transfer. In the end, this approach was not sustained due to some operational and financial handicaps.

(2) The Agricultural Development Project (ADP) approach: This was largely financed and supported by the World Bank. It started in five states as pilot projects but it became a promising one and was eventually introduced in all the states of the federation. The approach provides extension services to farmers through the methods of demonstrations and visits. The ADPs were used as the extension delivery agents of the States Ministries of Agriculture and so, the Training and Visit (T & V) system of extension gradually became the order of the day. It was used initially for crops but later was adopted for other sub-sectors like live-stock, fisheries and forestry. The general feature, however, of T & V system of extension include; training of extension staff, visits by extension agents to farmers on regular basis with relevant messages, providing feed-back to scientists on farmers' problems, continuous supervision, monitoring and evaluation of their activities.

(3) Institutional Linkage approach: Shaib *et al* (1997) further looked at the operation of extension delivery in Nigeria citing the institutional framework. On institutional basis, there are four principal organizations/institutions that play active role in the extension delivery in Nigeria, namely; (1) National Agricultural and Extension Research Liaison Services (NAERLS) of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (2) Federal Agricultural Coordinating Unit (FACU) (3) National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs) and universities, and (4) Five Zonal Coordinating Research Institutes (namely, IAR, Samaru-Zaria, IAR &T, Ibadan, NCR, Badeggi, NRCRI, Umudike and LCRI, Maiduguri). The above-listed institutions were charged (directly or indirectly) with the conduct of extension and research e.g. On-farm Research (OFR), Monthly (Quarterly) Technology Review Meetings (MTRMS/QTRMs), Small Plot Adoption Technique (SPAT) and Zonal OFAR Extension Workshop(s). Between 1990-2000, the World Bank assisted National Agricultural Research Project (NARP) was introduced to foster cooperation among all the institutional set-up and research focus. Unfortunately, it died a natural death as it was riddled with financial mismanagement and operational quagmire even before the project was concluded.

With these set-ups, the delivery of extension services to farmers gradually became complex, and operation-wise, financially cumbersome. Even though some notable progress were made, as some studies would indicate later, it was moribund and faced with intractable difficulties.

Omotayo and Arokoyo (1994)'s findings revealed that majority of both contact and non-contact farmers were illiterates. However, contact farmers had higher mean farm income than non-contact farmers. Furthermore, the major farm enterprise of the majority of both groups of farmers is crop production. Hence, the study further found out, that visits to both group of farmers were irregular as most of the contact farmers were not paid the mandatory visit of twice a month by the extension agents (EAs).

Results of a study by Adegbehin *et al.*, (2001) show that T&V system of extension had some salutary impacts on agricultural production in Nigeria. For example, the levels of technology adoption for crops were remarkable for maize and cassava. However, according to them, the system had the following shortcomings; (1) It was difficult to measure with accuracy the farmer's yield/productivity effects vis-à-vis extension efforts exerted (2) The T & V system was practiced haphazardly in various states of the federation (3) There was too much concentration on crop sub-sector at the expense of live-stock, fisheries, forestry and natural resources management sub-sectors (4) Contact farmers' approach was not effective in extension delivery to farmers, and (5) Adoption level of live-stock sub-sector was glaringly low.

According to Siyanbola and Alao (1995), because of the apparent ineptitudeness in the existing system of extension delivery (by large domination and control of Federal and State Governments) it was strongly advocated that the Local Government authorities be given full power – being the closest to the people and farmers - to participate actively in agricultural practices and extension delivery in order to realize the effective agricultural production and development.

Findings by Ajayi (1999) indicated that the following deficiencies were noted in the T & V System of extension despite some modifications introduced in Anambra State; (1) Lack of transportation (2) Increase in cost of transportation (3) Failure of farmers to make themselves available for contact with EAs (4) Failure of farmers to attend meeting (5) Lack of cooperation among cooperative members (6) Local politicking, and (7) Lack of farm inputs.

Similarly, a study by Fadiji (2000) had also confirmed the foregoing findings on the problems faced by farmers in sourcing and utilization of extension messages (information). Some of the highlighted problems identified were; (1) No contact with extension agents (2) Inadequate supply of farm inputs (3) Lack of capital, fund and credit facilities (4) Lack of means of mobility/transportation (5) Lack of electricity supply (6) Lack of labour (manpower resources), and (7) High cost of radio and television sets, etc

In another dimension Unamma and Uwosu (1999) attributed the problem of Unified Agricultural Extension Services (UAES) in Nigeria to broadly a number of political, economic, financial and institution factors. However, on a positive note, they posited that a number of internal and external variables could influence its potential sustainability. Therefore, in view of the foregoing, the extension delivery mechanism in Nigeria, as it is currently, needs an overhauling and urgent revisit.

According to Maunder (1973), deficiencies in the organization of agricultural extension service stem primarily from six sources, namely:

- Lack of general understanding and appreciation of the role of extension education in rural development.
- Failure to establish a national policy as to the scope of extension service responsibility and program.
- Lack of continuity of extension program due to political instability and attendant changes on agricultural policy, personnel and priorities in economic development.
- Weaknesses in the organization structure of government which inhibit the development of cooperation between agricultural extension and other government services and institutions.
- Failure to provide an effective balance in the allocation of limited resources among the necessary elements of rural development such as extension education, agricultural research, credit, agrarian reform and other elements of agricultural modernization.
- Failure to provide a proper balance between technical and educational competence in the staffing of the extension service.

It can safely be observed, from the foregoing that all of the above are applicable to Nigerian situation. Similarly, Atala (1984) identified six major problems of extension in Nigeria which is abridged as follows:

- I. There is little attention and lack of commitment of the part of authorities in the development and improvement of general extension work.
- II. There has been differential access to extension services in Nigeria by geographical locations, infrastructural and institutional conditions of communities and farmer's classifications.
- III. Lack of preparedness and provision for expansion and take-over from expatriates by the local collaborators, government and extension staff i.e. lack of built-in "withdrawal stabilizer".
- IV. Lack of adequate resources, infrastructural facilities in rural areas has made it difficult for extension worker to reach their contact farmers.
- V. Lack of coordination between general extension and the specialized extension components of agricultural projects and programmes seem to have kept general extension out of focus.
- VI. Extension packages appear to have been too-complicated for small scale, traditional and illiterate farmers who use only simple farming implements.

The World Bank (1985)'s review of T & V system of extension in Nigeria and nine other countries identified the following constraints:

- lack of clarity in the country's objectives for agriculture and in the priorities among them;
- .limited input by the country on the design of research and extension components and projects, along with unclear links between research and extension activities supported by the Bank and other development activities in the sector;
- limited sector-wide or economy-wide work on issues affecting research and extension;
- .institutional separation of research and extension; and
- .lack of clarity in, or agreement on, the definition of various stages in the process of technology development and transfer.

Furthermore, according to the World Bank (1985), in her assessment, the T & V system of extension was faced among others, with the following intractable problems:

- 1). The apparent lack of clear national objective for extension and a defined commitment to achieve that objective by policy makers and planners. Development plans lack details in the objectives and priorities specified.
- Extension organization in Nigeria is traditionally by orientation and practice and design a top-down institution.
- The persistence of weaknesses in national research and extension systems allowed a demand for technology to grow unsatisfied. In some cases, some so-called extension services are obtained from outside of national system or independent of national system.
- There have been repeated changes in the organization of research and extension which are indications of the policymakers that their systems had not been adequately responsive to national needs.
- There was the problem of assigning an agency to oversee rural development like ADPs (on the one hand) and sub-division of research, and (on the other hand) extension, to serve the needs of food crops, livestock, forestry, horticulture, rain fed and irrigated agriculture, commercial and subsistence agriculture, and privately supported, publicly supported, and parastatal agriculture. This is the problem of duplicity of roles and responsibilities.
- Imposition of some form of organization for research and extension on the country. Consultants who prepared research and extension components and projects, it is argued, tended to concentrate more on finding out only ideas popular or “in vogue” than studying the local situation and discussing with local people how best to address their problems. Hence, the kind of organization they eventually evolve will often center on how to adapt local environment to their pre-conceived model rather than devising a methodology and organization that would suit local conditions.
- There is apparent confusion in the use of words for research and extension purposes e.g. applied, adaptive, trial, verification, demonstrative, and on-farm research. From the point of view of administrative responsibility, organization and management, or operational management, adaptive research is the weakest system of research.
- The foregoing is readily applicable to Nigerian situation.

The ADP’s organization model is tailored towards expatriate ideology and its implementation were beset with problems ranging from financial, human, organizational and management, to conceptual framework, its irrelevancy to Nigerian situation, inflationary tendencies and lack of defined scope. In addition, establishment of River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) in 1977 side by side with ADPs brought conflicting roles and orientation problems. There were lots of duplication and conflict of aims and interests with the two organization/programmes. Thus, the World Bank has realize its apparent inadequacies and decided to discontinue funding of ADPs, and today it is almost turning to an abandoned national project.

In addition to the foregoing, the current civilian Government of President Olusegun Obasanjo has again introduced what it calls “Presidential Initiatives” targeted at boosting specific crop production e.g. Presidential Initiatives on Cassava, Rice and Vegetable Oil Production. These initiatives are however at their onset and therefore their impact on the nation’s agricultural development in yet to be ascertained. Also, the Government has introduced (in 2000) National Special Programme for Food Security (NSPFS) and had set up project sites in 36 senatorial districts across the nation - with the aim of boosting agricultural production and achieving food security in Nigeria.

Today, however, research and extension in Nigeria has been widened in scope and organizational involvement. Some international research centres and networks have made their presence known and supportive in Nigeria in the area of research and extension delivery. Some of them have established collaborative efforts with the NARIs and other relevant agencies. Some of the international research centres are; International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, Nigeria, International Fertilizer Development Centre (IFDC), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and United National Development Programme (UNDP). Others include; Centro Internacional De Mejoramiento De Maiz Y Trigo, Int (CIMMYT), Mexico, West and Central Africa Maize network (WECAMAN), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Semi-Arid Food Grains Research and development Agency SAFGRAD).

It is however pertinent to note that, in as much as these international agencies/centres strive to contribute to the development of agriculture in Nigeria, their terms of reference and mode of operation are, some times, at cross-

roads with the national interests and NARIs mandates and methods. For example, some of the technologies packages (hybrid crops and varieties) being introduced to Nigerian farmers requires costly and scarcely available inputs like fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.

There are some private enterprises, agencies and non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) playing supportive role in research and extension delivery in Nigeria. Some of the notable ones are; SASSAKAWA Global 2000 and Women in Agriculture (WIA), Practicing Farmers Association of Nigeria (PFAN), Farmers Agricultural Development Union (FADU), Farmers Agricultural Supply Company (FASCOM) and Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA). The National Seed Service (NSS) is charged with the general supply of certified seeds to farmers but there are private seed companies that compliment its role and take care of her shortcomings. Such companies include; Premier Seed Nigeria Limited, UAC Seed Company, Alheri Seed Limited, Pioneer Seed Company, Sun Seed Company, CANDEL, etc. with their enterprising network of sales and marketing gimmicks to catch the farmers' attention with their range of seeds.

PROSPECTS FOR ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION

In spite of many odds outlined above, there are many opportunities which lie ahead of Nigeria to foster or realize and improve on organization and administration of its agricultural extension.

The administration and organization of every extension service and program, to be effective, has to be in-keeping with the accepted principles and practices of public administration and policy (Maunder, 1973). The following are elements we consider conducive to the development of extension services in Nigeria:

Development of policy embodied in legislation stressing the educational role of the extension service and in relation to other elements of agricultural and rural development.

Development and encouragement of educational institutes (colleges, and tertiary institutions) that can turn out personnel to be absorbed into extension services. There is dearth need of extension personnel to serve the 60% of the Nigeria rural populace of farmers. Literacy of the farmers should be intensified through adult literacy education.

Development and management of available infrastructural and communication facilities and ICTs for the purpose of extension service e.g. radio, television, roads, newspapers, GSM, telephone etc.

There should be an effective use of available structures and machinery for the coordination and provision of ancillary services such as farm supply, credit, transportation, marketing and veterinary units, storage facilities and processing equipment.

The employment and investment of the Nigeria resources (in the range of 5 – 10% of annual budget) to agricultural sector of the economy. No doubt, Nigeria is earning much foreign exchange through petroleum sector which if judiciously plowed back to agricultural sector, could launch the country forward into an agrarian revolution.

Political stability, continuity of government, peaceful atmosphere, and crisis-free period gives a promise of prospect for Nigerian agricultural extension development, organization and administration.

Emergence of right-thinking, selfless, nationalist leaders, policy planners, elite extension workers in Nigeria who are dedicated to the cause of good governance and development of agricultural sector. Such potential calibers of people exist in Nigeria, and they should be identified and given opportunity to perform.

Liberalization of land tenure system, investment in agriculture, diversification and incentives to high productivity-minded farmers stand a chance of bringing a progress to organization and administration of agricultural extension in Nigeria.

Formulation of a long term national plan/programme like the "Vision 2010" (being revised) specifically focused on agriculture and rural development.

Development of optimum land use strategy and policies with the aim of discouraging over-dependence on rain fed agriculture and irrigation projects.

CONCLUSION

The administration and organization of the extension in Nigeria calls for certain specific considerations and adjustments because there is a great difference between it and other public service. Extension work is directed toward rural people, through educational processes, a unique framework within which it should thrive. Consequently, it is imperative that all officials concerned with extension programmes and rural development have a clear understanding of the nature, scope and methods of operation of extension service. The end-users or recipients of such service should also be mobilized and given conducive atmosphere to receive such services.

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