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Value Addition to Human Managerial Skills in the Livestock Sector in Nigeria

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Abstract

Value addition is an important concept in Nigeria's agriculture, including the livestock sub-sector. Its definition is often given with special emphasis on and with respect to agricultural products. However, the general principle in value addition is the process of transforming resources, including human, from its original state to a more valuable state. In the livestock industry, human is a critical resource and adding value to its status should be the arrow head of developing the sub-sector. Most people in the sub-sector are academically sound and technically competent in their respective fields of specialisation but gaps exist in their management skills and acumen. There is the need for value addition to the human managerial skills of Officers managing livestock activities in the country. Governments at all levels should endeavour to provide financial and institutional supports towards the achievement of this goal. This will provide impetus on fully actualising the robust agricultural transformation agenda of the country.

Keywords: Value addition, human, managerial skills, livestock

Introduction

Livestock production plays multiple roles in the livelihoods of people in developing countries. It accounts for about 30% of the Agricultural Gross Domestic Product, AGDP, in Nigeria (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2007). Value addition to agricultural products has been defined as a change in the physical state or form of the product; the production of a product in a manner that enhances its value or the physical segregation of an agricultural commodity or product in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of that commodity (USDA, 2013). Consequent upon such value addition, the customer base for the commodity or product is expanded and a higher income is derived from the marketing. This definition has been given with special emphasis on and with respect to agricultural products. However, it is important to note that the general principle in value addition is the process of changing or

transforming a product (or a resource) from its original state to another but more valuable state. In the livestock industry, just as it is in virtually all other sectors, human is a critical resource. Tailal (2008) has identified human resource as the most important and vital factors of economic development and Hansson (2009) stated that globalisation and technological changes have increased the importance of human capital in recent years. Positive transformation of or adding value to the status of the human resources should, therefore, be the arrow head of the transformation agenda of the livestock sub-sector. One way of transforming human resources in the sector is through value addition to their managerial skills and competencies. This will result in the empowerment of the unemployed and the enhancement of their prospects in the labour market. It will also improve the productivity of those already employed in the sector.

Value addition in the context of human resources

Value addition is often narrowly defined and considered only in the context of physical

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transformation of agricultural products. However, it is important to note that the general principle in value addition is the process of transforming resources, including human, from its original state to a more valuable state. In the livestock industry, human is a critical resource and adding value to its status should be the arrow head of developing the sub-sector. Many Managers have faced the challenges of successfully managing huge developmental and commercial livestock projects in Nigeria because they do not have adequate managerial skills. There is, therefore, the need to escalate the human managerial skill levels of Operators in the sector. A livestock Project Manager performs many roles. He or she is a Planner, Organizer, Coordinator, Director, Controller, team Leader, Coach, problem solver, and decision maker. There are three managerial skills, namely conceptual, human relations and technical skills needed by all managers. The quantum of each of these skills required varies and changes according to the level of management and nature of the organisation. Some strategies available for escalating human managerial skills in the livestock sector are; on-the-job methods, including understudy, job rotation, coaching, participating in special projects or serving on committees; and off-the-job methods, including special courses, distance learning and sandwich program. Value addition to the human managerial skills of Operators in the livestock sub-sector of agriculture will go a long way in fully actualising the robust agricultural transformation agenda of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Most people in the livestock sub-sector are academically sound and technically competent in their respective fields of specialisation. However, not many of them will be willing to flaunt their management skills and acumen. Even with the vaunted chains of academic qualifications and technical knowhow, many Managers and Officers have faced the challenges of successfully managing huge developmental and commercial livestock projects in Nigeria. Most of such challenges are rooted

in inadequate managerial skills required to complement academic knowledge and technical knowhow. Better human knowledge and improved managerial skills will result in more effective and efficient use of other resources. There is, therefore, the need to escalate the managerial skill levels of Operators in the sector. This, in turn, will lever up economic development in the country. This paper discusses the role of livestock Managers, the managerial skills needed by them to carry out the responsibilities and possible strategies for value addition to the managerial skills of livestock Managers.

Roles of livestock managers

Management is the process of planning, organising, directing and controlling of activities of an organizational in order to achieve defined objectives (Drucker, 1973). Planning involves selecting tasks that must be performed to attain corporate or project objectives, outlining how the tasks must be performed, and stating when they should be performed. Its activity focuses on achieving objectives. Managers outline exactly what organizations should do to achieve success either in the short or long term. Organizing is the assigning of the tasks developed in the planning stages, to different persons or groups within the organization. The goal of organising is to establish a mechanism to put plans into action. People within the organization are given work assignments that contribute to the corporate goals. Tasks are organized so that the output of each individual contributes to the success of different segments, which eventually contributes to the success of the organization. Directing can be considered as guiding the activities of staff in an organization in the right direction. The purpose of influencing is to increase productivity. Controlling is useful for ensuring that all other functions of the organization are in place and are operating successfully. It involves establishing performance standards and monitoring the output of employees to ensure that each person's performance meets those standards. Controlling often leads to the identification of situations and problems that need to be

addressed by creating new but higher performance standards (Roberts, 2014).

A livestock Project Manager performs many roles. He or she is a Planner, Organizer, Coordinator, Director, Controller, team Leader, Coach, problem solver, and decision maker, all rolled into one. In his classic book, *The Nature of Managerial Work*,

Mintzberg (1973) described a set of ten roles that a manager fills. The author grouped the roles into three categories, viz: interpersonal, informational and decisional. Table 1 shows details of each category of roles that help managers, including livestock project Managers, to carry out all their expected functions.

Table 1: Mintzberg’s set of ten roles

Category	Role	Activity
Informational	Monitor	Seek and receive information; scan periodicals and reports; maintain personal; contact with stakeholder.
	Disseminator	Forward information to organization members via memos, reports, and phone calls.
	Spokesperson	Transmit information to outsiders via reports, memos and speeches.
Interpersonal	Figurehead	Perform ceremonial and symbolic duties, such as greeting visitors and signing legal documents.
	Leader	Director and motivate subordinates; counsel and communicate with subordinates.
	Liaison	Maintain information links both inside and outside organization via mail, phone calls, and meetings.
Decisional	Entrepreneur	Initiate improvement projects; identify new ideas and delegate idea responsibility to others.
	Disturbance handler	Take corrective action during disputes or crises; resolve conflicts among subordinates; adapt to environments.
	Resource allocator	Decide who gets resources; prepare budgets; set schedules and determine priorities.
	Negotiator	Represent department during negotiations of union contracts, sales, purchases and budgets

Source: [Mintzberg Henry \(1973\)](#)

Managerial skills of livestock managers

Generally, management is a challenging job and it requires managerial skills for every manager to accomplish such a challenge. There are three managerial skills, namely conceptual, human relations and technical skills needed by all managers (Katz, 1974). However, the quantum of each of these skills required varies and changes according to the level of management and nature of the organisation.

Conceptual skill is the ability to visualise the organisation as a whole rather than its integral parts such as departments, divisions or units. This skill encompasses analytical, creative and initiative skills. In the livestock and agro-allied industry, it helps a project manager to identify the causes of problems

on the project rather than the symptoms. It also assists him or her to solve the problems taking into cognisance the interest of all appendages of the entire project. Conceptual skills are mostly required by the top-level managers because they spend more time in strategic planning, organising and problem solving. Human relations or interpersonal skill is the ability to get people to work willingly and enthusiastically. It enables livestock project managers to understand, communicate and work in a team with minimum of friction or conflict. This skill is of great importance because all managers must necessarily work and interact with other people, including colleagues and subordinates. Technical skill in livestock management is the ability to perform a given responsibility in animal husbandry and

related assignments. It helps the Animal Scientists in particular and other Project Managers in the livestock sector to use different tools, equipment, machines, ideas, information as well as various procedures and techniques to carry out their responsibilities. In addition to these three main skills identified by Katz (1974), Animal Scientists, like other Managers, also need some other complementary skills to enhance the performance of their duties. These include administrative, communication, problem solving and decision making skills.

Strategies for improving managerial skills of livestock managers

There are several strategies available for escalating the managerial skills of livestock Project Managers and Officers as well as those with similar responsibilities. However, the use of a particular method will be determined by the general management training needs and some specific aspects of managerial skills deficiency in the individual.

Some of the strategies are as follows:

On-the-job methods

This is a methods of training in which livestock Managers can learn to improve on their performance on the job by active involvement in doing it. A person works on a job and learns as well as develops expertise concomitantly. These on the job trainings are given to the farm managers while they are conducting their regular work at the same places. In this way they do not lose time while they are training or learning. This method of capacity development also covers understudy, coaching, job orientations and involvement in multidisciplinary work on livestock farm. In the course of understudy, livestock managers are trained by his or her supervisor. They are attached with his or her superior Officer. For example, a future manager might spend few months as assistant to the incumbent manager. Coaching is a more intensive method of training that involves a close working relationship between an experienced employee and the trainee while job rotation,

livestock managers are given several responsibilities in succession, to enable them to gain experience of a wide range of activities. For instance, a livestock graduate management trainees might spend periods in several different departments or sections in a typical commercial livestock farm. During the training sessions, they are expected to join project management teams which give them exposure to other parts of the business in multi-disciplinary. Some other forms of training under on-the-job- method are apprenticeship, internship or serving on special committee assignments. Generally on the job training methods are cost-effective because livestock mangers are also productive whilst undergoing training.

Off-the-job methods

This method requires livestock Managers to leave their workplace and attend special courses with specific training objectives based on training needs assessment conducted earlier. Most special courses are relatively of short duration and are aimed at impacting knowledge, skills and positive attitudes to work. This method of self improvement encompasses avid reading of relevant and current books, analysing case studies, behaviour modelling, playing management games and role-playing.

Off-the job managerial capacity building may take the form of Day release, that is, employee takes time off work to receive training at a local college or training centre. It may also be in the form of Distance learning or evening classes. Some other ways are Block release courses, that is, trainees could spend several weeks at a local college within a period of time. It may also be Sandwich courses - where the employee spends a longer period of time at college (for instance, six months) before returning to work. One of the major benefits of off-the-job methods of training is that a wide range of skills or qualifications can be obtained and trainees can learn from outside specialists or experts. This enables employees to be more confident when they get back to job.

Conclusion

There is the need for value addition to the human managerial skills of Project Managers and Officers operating in the livestock sub-sector of agriculture in Nigeria. Governments at all levels – Federal, State and Local – should endeavour to provide financial and institutional supports towards the achievement of this goal. This will go a long way in fully actualising the robust agricultural transformation agenda of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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