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## **AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IN NIGERIA: THE SEARCH FOR A NEW APPROACH IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examined agricultural extension approaches in general: previous extension approaches applied in Nigeria and those yet to be tested. It looked at the contradictory concerns which give several contrasting perspectives, extension's role, purposes and the different views reflected therein. The paper also tried to meet the challenge for a new extension approach for Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by proffering infrastructure, coordination, policy and management of agricultural extension as a logical *prima facie* duties for an effective impact.

**Key Words:** Agriculture, Extension, Approaches, Models and Programmes.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Agricultural extension is a complex system involving numerous and varying organizational arrangements, functions, clients, methodologies, constraints and so forth. This situation is bound to elicit numerous challenges and issues, one of which is a search for a new model for extension in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The lessons and functional aspects of agricultural extension depend on one's view of extension. That is why there are several contrasting perspectives, extension's role, purposes and these different views are reflected in contradictory concerns such as cash versus food crops, commercial versus peasant farmers, etc. These concerns have been aptly summarized by Rivera (1991) who categorized them into four questions:

- Should there be public extension services, if so how should they be paid for?
- Who should be target farming population(s) for public extension, and what should be public extension purposes?
- What extension methodology is to be preferred?
- How should public extension be managed?

In this discourse, the issue at stake may be turned into a poser: which extension approach is appropriate for Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? To answer this it is important to look at extension approaches in general especially the previous extension approaches applied in Nigeria, and then the answer would naturally emerge.

Eicher and Baker (1982) recognized that there are several ways to distinguish between extension approaches and that a major distinction is between general (national) services and those which emphasize a special commodity or interventions. In the general extension services little control is used to see that farmers follow recommended practices. An alternative and supplementary approach to the generalized extension services is the establishment of Farmer Training Centers (FTCs). Another alternative is the specialized parastatals/agencies which integrate the supply of inputs, extension advice and distribution of the product in order to promote increased production of cash crops such as cotton, cocoa, tea or coffee. Then there are private sector corporations such as the Nigeria Tobacco Company (NTC) and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) like SG2000-Nigeria project.

### **Extension Models in Nigeria**

According to Eicher and Baker (1982) two major extension approaches which have been used in Nigeria are the Lugardian Extension System which is based on commodity extension program and top-down control and the College Extension Systems (CES) which is based in the United States (US). Land-grant system gives emphasis to personal contract between farmers and extensionists and promotion of a range of recommended practices generated by national and international research institutes.

However, in the view of Aremia (1987) extension approaches in Nigeria are the Commodity System Approach, Ministry Approach, National Accelerated Food Production Program, (NAFPP), Agricultural Development Project (ADP) Approach and the Training and Visit (T&V) Extension Approach.

Laogun (1988) identified three major agricultural extension systems operating in Nigeria as: The Conventional Agricultural Extension System; the Training and Visit System and the University Based System. He also empirically identified and categorized extension services in Benue and Plateau States as:

- 1) Public Agencies: – Ministry of Agriculture, ADP, Colleges of Agriculture etc.
- 2) Private Agencies: – United Trading Company (UTC) farmers, Nigeria Tobacco Company (NTC), Agro-seeds company etc
- 3) Voluntary Agencies: – Catholic development services, Idah and Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) Development Projects, Jos.

Certainly, many agricultural extension approaches have been tried in Nigeria evoking the challenge that which extension approach is appropriate for Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Basically, these are as follows:

- i. The Commodity Approach  
The Ministry of Agriculture Extension Approach  
Farm Settlement Schemes/Institutes  
University-Based Extension Projects such as Isaya Rural Development Project of OAU, Ife; Badeku Pilot Project of University of Ibadan; Okpuju project of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and the Guided Change Project of IAR/ABU, Zaria.
- 4) Political Extension Campaign Programmes such as National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution (GR), Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Mass Mobilisation for Social Justice

- and Economic Reliance (MAMSER), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) etc.
- 5) Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs)
  - 6) Integrated Rural Development Projects such as River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), and National Agricultural Land Development Authorities (NALDAs)
  - 7) The Training and Visit (T&V) Extension (ADPs)
  - 8) The Farming Systems Research Programs of the Nigerian Agricultural Extension and Research Liason Services (NAERLS)
  - 9) Private Organisational Extension Programs (NTC, UTC, AFCOTT etc)
  - 10) Non-governmental Organisation Extension Programs (ECWA, Catholic, Sasakawa -Global 2000 etc).

Therefore, almost all major approaches have been applied in Nigeria. Perhaps, only the extension participatory farmers' extension organizations and the cost sharing approaches have not been properly put in place to say the least.

### **Participatory Approach**

There is growing evidence that when rural people organize themselves in to groups for their own benefit, much can be achieved. The participatory approach takes advantage of this principle and emphasizes significant participation by those who are to be affected by the extension system. Van den Ban and Hawkings (1996) reported that "participatory" has quite different connotations for different people, such as:

1. Cooperation of farmers in the execution of the extension programme by attending extension meetings, demonstrating new methods on their farms, asking their extension agents questions etc.
2. Organisation of the implementation of extension activities by farmers' groups, such as meetings, where an extension agents gives a lecture, organizing courses and demonstrations, publishing a farm paper in which extension agents and researchers write for farmers etc.
3. Providing information which is necessary for planning an effective extension programme.
4. Farmers or their representatives participating in organization of the extension service in decision- making on goals, target groups, messages and methods; and in evaluation of activities.
5. Farmers or their organization paying all or part of the cost of the extension services.
6. Supervision of extension agents by board members of farmers' organizations which employ these agents.

Pretty, *et al* (1994) suggested that these many interpretations of the term 'participation' could be arranged in to seven clear types (Box 1). These ranged from passive, where people are involved merely by being told what is to happen, to self mobilization, where people take initiatives independent of external institutions.

Box 1: A typology of participation: How people participate in development programmes and projects.

Typology

Characteristics of Each Type

1. Passive Participation      People participate by being told what is to happen or has happened. It is a unilateral announcement by an administration or project management without any listening to people responses. The information being shared belong only to external professionals.
2. Participation in Information Giving      People participate by canvassing questions posed by extractive researches using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings as the findings of the researches are neither shared nor checked for accuracy
3. Participation by Consultation.      People participate by being consulted and external agents listen to views. Both problems and solutions are defined or modified in the light of peoples' responses. Such consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making and professionals are under no obligation to take on board peoples' view.
4. Participation for Material Incentives.      People participate by providing incentives for example, in return for food, cash or other materials. Much on-farm research falls in this category, as farmers provide the fields but are not involved in the experimentation or the process of learning. It is very common to see this type of participation, yet people have no stake prolonging activities when the incentives end.
5. Functional Participation      People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project, which involved the development or promotion of externally initiated social organizations. Such involvement does not tend to be at early stages of project cycle or planning, but after major decisions have been made. These instructions tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitators, but may become self-dependent.

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| 6. Interactive Participation | People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. These groups take control over local decisions, and people have a stake on maintaining structures or projects. |
| 7. Self-Mobilization         | People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice. They need, but retain control over how resources are used. Such self-initiated mobilization and collective action may/ may not challenge existing inequitable distribution of wealth and power.                                 |

Source: Adapted from Pretty *et al* (1994).

At its best, participatory approach involves participation by researchers, service providers and farmers. It is referred to as "The farmer-first-and-last model". Highly participatory agricultural extension is generally concerned with a broad range of agricultural subjects, shifting its local focus from time to time as problems change or new needs arise. Outstanding examples include the small farmers' development project in Nepal and Bangladesh. The purpose is to enhance the quality of life of rural people.

#### **Advantages**

A key strength is the relevance or fit of the program. The groups decide what kinds of activities the extension staff will conduct. Mutual supportive relationship develops among the participants. It costs less because associations of local people facilitate communication. Technology adoption is high because the technologies fit their farms. It caters to the human side of the extension promise, as well as the technical side.

#### **Disadvantages**

There is a lack of control of the program for the center. This may lead to competition and confusion.

#### **The Cost-Sharing Approach**

This involves a cost-sharing arrangement between the extension providers and the clientele farmers. According to Ozor *et al* (2007), government-farmer partnership in the funding of agricultural extension service, is one of the reforms aimed at achieving sustainable funding for extension system. The authors identified that most farmers and extension agents had favourable perceptions towards it. Thus, they recommended that the stakeholders should design and formulate effective strategies and regulations for the

introduction and use of cost-sharing as an alternative approach to financing agricultural technology transfer in Nigeria.

#### **Advantages**

It increases the relevance of the program content and methods to needs and interest of clientele. This tends to result in higher adoption rates. Local influence on field personal selection contributes to their ability to communicate effectively, and to win the confidence of rural people. Another advantage is that the approach carries a lower cost to central governments, as cost are shared by lower levels of government, and often by local people.

#### **Disadvantages**

It is difficult for central governments to control either program or personnel with this approach. Also, reporting financial management and other aspects of administration tend to be complex and difficult.

#### **The Search For a New Extension Approach for Nigeria**

Considering the foregoing discussion of extension approaches in general and specific to Nigeria, it can safely be asserted that the challenge of "which extension approach is suitable for Nigeria"? does not arise. There are different agricultural extension approaches and organizations in the world today. Each approach seems to fit particular circumstances and each has its advantages and disadvantages. The different approaches have correspondingly different organizational structures, methods and techniques; program goals and kind of leadership.

One major lesson of agricultural extension world-wide is that the public and private sector extension systems can work separately or conjointly and be successful, for instance SG2000 (Rivera, 1991). Ordinarily, extension services involve multiple arrangements implying institutional pluralism or a composition of private and public extension activities. There is a role for the public, semi-public and private sectors in this domain involving different types of extension services.

Public, private and mixed delivery systems, each has advantages in particular situations. Public institutions are preferable when benefits are diffuse, public policies need changing and/or increased economic equity is a primary goal. Mixed public/private entities work best when agricultural extension services, not only require extensive, responsive and flexible management, but also need political influence to achieve program objectives. Strictly, private firms perform best when flexible management, direct and continue interaction with farmers, are needed for development of high-valued crops and relatively sophisticated levels of technology. In general, private sector extension is an important supplement to government extension systems for certain groups of producers.

Whatever the approach, extension should be responsive to the country situation and local client needs. In many cases, governments have opted for dual or combined extension systems: – one oriented towards a commodity and the other towards small-holders. It is also necessary that other important lessons of agricultural extension should be needed in order to achieve remarkable extension impact. These lessons according to Rivera, (1991) include the followings:

1. Extension services are dependent in part upon adequate physical infrastructure such as roads, markets, electricity and telecommunications, otherwise extension services operate at a disadvantage. Other externalities involving both physical and institutional infrastructure that are required for extension to operate fully include credit, inputs and research.
2. There is lack of coordination among various extension activities. This causes overlapping of resources which encourage waste.
3. Extension requires a supportive policy framework. There must be a policy commitment and planning for extension development, including the legislation on price, credit, and marketing policies favourable to agriculture and thus, supportive of production effort undertaken by extension services.
4. Good management is the main condition for successful extension and this involves organizational (strategic planning, organizing and staffing) and system management processes (clear mode of operation and single direct line of technical support and administrative control of staff, defined job description, supervision, logistical and managerial support for extension staff, training and institutional capacity building, monitoring and evaluation).

### Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, the challenge of “which extension approach is suitable for Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”? may safely be said to be over-exaggerated. The important concerns should be infrastructure, coordination, policy and management. Tackling these concerns effectively would hopefully bring a turn-around remarkable impact and make agricultural extension in Nigeria a model.

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