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Comparative assessment of public and private extension programmes in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The Rivers State ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources is responsible for extension services to farmers in Etche Local Government Area since 1970, as well as Rivers State Agricultural Development Project which began in 1987, with shell community Development Project, a private sector extension agency. But these extension programmes in Etche, the extent to which they have assisted the farmers in improving food production through their extension services have not been studied.

The study therefore was specifically carried out to determine the effectiveness of agricultural extension programmes in Etche with a view to ensuring constant and further improvement in extension services in Etche Local Government Area of River State.

In carrying out the research, the questionnaire developed by young Cunningham (1977) and a general survey type were administered to 244 respondents, including (i) Extension administrators, (ii) Extension agents and (iii) Farmers and the agricultural science teachers.

The findings revealed that the private sector extension agency (shell) was more effective than the public sector extension agency (ADP) in the following ways: (1) The shell Community Development Project was more effective than the State ADP in dissemination of Agricultural information and had better extension human relations with the farmers; as well as had more regular contacts with the extension end user and more effective in the supply of farm inputs. (2) More farmers adopted improved farm technologies owing to the influence of shell Community development project.

The study therefore recommends the following ways for effectiveness of extension programmes in Etche Local Government Area of River State: (i) The ADP staff should be provided with adequate mobility to visit their farmers from time to time. (ii) ADP should make available to the farmers planting materials at the appropriate time, and (iii) More extension staff should be encouraged to stay on their jobs through adequate remunerations

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Introduction

The effectiveness of agricultural extension services can be judged from the successful implementation of extension programmes using various approaches in extension methods. The effects of such programme must be seen in the life of extension clientel group (farmers). Hence Leagan 1971 remarks that extension education is not only a matter of just giving farmers knowledge from research and technology to help raise their efficiency, it also helps them learn about change.

The effectiveness of extension also can be viewed not only by contacts made with farmers, the demonstration conducted to teach skills and lectures delivered to teach and inform the farmers, but it must include the ends achieved (F.A.O 1981).

Agricultural organization of the United Nations (F.A.O 1972) dequined Agricultural extension as a service that assists farmers through educational procedures in improving their farming methods and techniques, increasing production efficiency and income as well as improving their standard of living and lifting their social and educational standards. It is a means by which technical information is passed to the farmers for development of agriculture.

Agricultural Development Programmes in Nigeria were planned measure to tackle the problems of low income farmer productivity across the country, they are expected among other things:

- i. To re-organize and revitalize agricultural extension system that integrates extension workers training and farm visit.
- ii. Ensure two-way communication between farmers and researchers.
- iii. Ensure an effective farm inputs distribution system which operates through a network of farm service centers
- iv. Provide extension services using different methods in order to be able to get the farmers at the grass-root
- v. Teach them how to improve on their farming system as well as their standard of living.

In any effort to improve the living conditions of the rural populace and agricultural production, communication has a role to play. It is not merely to inform but to keep people thinking about development and educating them with a view to raising the aspiration of the people in the right direction. Many studies have revealed that the rural farmers have not been making use of the recommended farm practices to its fullest (Obinne 1992) this is attributed to the gap between information generation and the dissemination to the end users. The extension services are meant to fill this gap in communication.

Therefore there is the need for availability of a variety of tools and methods to disseminate farm information and improved technologies to farmers/ Extension workers should be trained on where and how to use extension methods. The more the variety of channels and methods used in introducing new ideas, the greater the chances of accepting new innovations by farmers (Adewoye 2003).

This work determines the effectiveness of extension programmes in Etche Local Government is of Rivers State.

Methodology:

The study was specifically carried out in Etche Local Government area of Rivers state and it focused on the assessment of Extension Programmes in Etche Local government area.

In all 200 farmers drawn from the list of farmers registered with ADP or shell extension Programmes; 20 extension agents, 20 Agricultural Science teachers and 4 extension agents were interviewed for the stuffy. Interview schedule was used to collect data from farmers while structural questionnaire was used for extension workers and Agricultural science teachers.

Data collected was analyzed using the t-ratio for paired observations of shell and ADP in the area, because the t-ratio affords easy comparison of variables that is the extension services being rendered to farmers by the two agencies.

Result and Discussion

There were no significant differences in the Agricultural extension Programmes ratings among target group, extension officers, and Agricultural science teachers regarding the following elements in Agricultural Extension Programmes.

- Agricultural extension information
- Agricultural extension human relation
- Agricultural extension methods
- Agricultural education programmes.

Findings:

The overall evaluation by farmers showed significant differences between the two extension agencies regarding the four areas of extension evaluated. From the farmers' assessment, there were significant differences. The private extension programme (shell Community Development Projects) was rated higher than the public extension programme (ADP) in various activities as shown below. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

The overall evaluation by the extension agents and administrators showed no significant difference. However, the teacher's assessment showed that there were significant differences and the null hypothesis also was rejected.

Table 1. Distribution of mean ratings of the of the four elements in the extension services by the farmers.

| ELEMENTS | | NO | PUBLIC ADP | PRIVATE SHELL | DIFF. |
|----------|---|-----|------------|---------------|-------|
| 1 | Agricultural extension information | 200 | 2.775 | 3.269 | 1.0 |
| 2 | Agricultural extension human relations | 200 | 2.795 | 2.901 | 0.6 |
| 3 | Agricultural extension methods | 200 | 3.114 | 3.210 | 0.1 |
| 4 | Agricultural extension education programmes | 200 | 2.420 | 2.634 | 0.3 |
| Total | | | 10.790 | 11.680 | 1.138 |
| Mean | | | 2.697 | 2.920 | 0.284 |

Source field survey 2000

Calculated $t = 3.80$

Hypothetical $t = 3.182$ $df = 3, p = 05$

Since the calculated $t = 3.80$ is greater than the Hypothetical $t = 3.182$, there is difference and shell Community Development Project is more effective than the Agricultural Development Project in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. Null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2. Distribution of mean ratings based on the extension officers' assessment of the four elements in the extension service

| | ELEMENTS | | NO ADP | PUBLIC ADP | PRIVATE SHELL | DIFF |
|-------|--|-----------|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Agricultural information | extension | 20 | 4.000 | 3.000 | 1.0 |
| 2 | Agricultural extension human relations | | 20 | 4.200 | 3.600 | 0.6 |
| 3 | Agricultural methods | extension | 20 | 3.400 | 3.500 | 0.1 |
| 4 | Agricultural education programmes | extension | 20 | 3.300 | 3.00 | 0.3 |
| Total | | | | 14.900 | 13.100 | 1.800 |
| Mean | | | | 3.725 | 3.275 | 0.450 |

Calculated $t = 1.939$

Hypothetical $t = 3.182$

Inference: There was no difference between the two agencies.

Table 3 Distribution of mean ratings based on the Extension Administrations assessment of the four elements in the extension service.

| | ELEMENTS | | NO | ADP PUBLIC | SHELL PRIVATE | DIFF. |
|-------|---|--|-----------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Agricultural extension information | | 4 | 4.00 | 3.00 | 1.00 |
| 2 | Agricultural extension human relations | | 4 | 3.50 | 3.50 | 0.0 |
| 3 | Agricultural extension methods | | 4 | 4.50 | 4.50 | 0.0 |
| 4 | Agricultural extension education programmes | | 4 | 3.50 | 3.50 | 0.0 |
| Total | | | | 15.50 | 14.50 | 1.0 |
| Mean | | | | 3.87 | 3.627 | 0.25 |

Inference: Calculated $t = 0.77$

Hypothetical $t = 3.182$

Since the calculated $t = 0.77$ is less than the hypothetical $t = 3.182$ df: 3 $p < 0.05$. There was no difference, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4: Distribution of mean ratings based on the Extension Administrations assessment of the four elements in the extension service.

| | ELEMENT | | NO | ADP PUBLIC | SHELL PRIVTE | DIFF. |
|---|---|--|----|---------------|-----------------|-------|
| 1 | Agricultural information extension | | 20 | 2.00 | 4.50 | 2.5 |
| 2 | Agricultural extension human relations | | 20 | 2.50 | 4.10 | 1.6 |
| 3 | Agricultural extension methods | | 20 | 3.00 | 3.80 | 0.8 |
| 4 | Agricultural extension education programmes | | 20 | 2.40 | 3.60 | 1.2 |
| | Total | | | 9.90 | 15.00 | 6.10 |
| | Mean | | | 2.48 | 3.75 | 5.75 |

Calculated $t = 4.34$

4.34. P. 05 at df 3 (3.182)

There is significant difference the hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion

The inadequate funding, inequitable transport system and allowances, in appropriate technology (adaptive research by Agricultural Development Projects) and frustration amongst its staff contributed to the poor image and activities of the State Agricultural Community Development Projects (SCDP).

The public Sector extension programme represented by Agricultural Development projects planned extension services for, rather than with clientele group in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.

There was strong indication that the private sector extension service represented by the shell Community Development Projects was rated highly by the farmers for a number of reasons:

- Regular contact with the extension advisers.
- Regular supply of farm inputs and planting materials, including loans in kind rather than in cash to farmers.

The effectiveness of the shell community development projects may be due to adequate financing for properly planned activities which were based on the farmers' needs and aspirations.

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