



THE IMPERATIVENESS OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture like many other countries with good, arable and fertile soils have been a well-paying and good source of food supply. One can therefore make bold to say that there is hardly any sort of food eaten anywhere that is not a product of agriculture. In fact no matter how well-packaged, well refined and palatable any kind of food is, it is basically an agricultural produce. One disgusting aspect is that certain people relegate both the farmers and the

Introduction

It is necessary to reiterate that Nigeria is the most populace country in Africa. It can equally become the richest country in Africa and leader in development. With a population of close to 200 million people, Nigeria has the internal market to manufacture various consumable goods. Also with the array of natural resources at her disposal, as in petroleum, fertile lands, the country can become self reliant in food and other needs. Infact, it is the goal of the government to return the country to the glorious 1960s when Nigeria was a net exporter of many products. In the early 1960s, Nigeria led the world in producing 42% of groundnut exports: supplied 27% of the world's oil palm; and 18% of cocoa production. However, the country lost this urge with the gushing of oil in the 1970s. Today, Nigeria imports over 1.3 trillion naira in wheat, rice and sugar every year- 653 billion naira annually importing wheat alone -products, which Nigerians can grow at home. Thus the Nigeria Transformation Agenda has been considered a federal policy aimed at returning the country to greatness. Through an agriculture led development approach aimed at achieving a hunger-free Nigeria: creating millions of employment opportunities and making the nation once again a leader in global food markets. It is left to be seen how this lofty dreams and height could be achieved. This is really achievable with meaningful investment in Agriculture.



process to the background as if they are not important. On the other hand, certain other people feel proud enough to under price farm produce simply considering it a cheap venture while parading themselves as people who do not like to farm but love its produce. This is quite shameful. It must be stated and clearly too on the imperativeness of Agriculture and possible ways of improving on various farm and agricultural practises in Nigeria. The above statement form the gamut of this study. Data collection techniques interviews, journals, questionnaire and the internet were used. The knowledge-gap theory and theory of planned behaviour /Reasoned Action were adopted for the study, thereafter, conclusion was drawn.

KEYWORDS: Imperativeness, Agricultural Extension, Community Development, Nigeria.

DEFINITION OF TERMS/ CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

Various concepts making up the question will require explanation in order to further understanding of the work.

Such words are these:

IMPERATIVENESS.

This can simply be taken for the quality of being insistent. Imperativeness can also be taken for needful. The state of demanding notice or attention.. Something that demands urgent attention.

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION.

Agricultural extension is another name for agricultural advisory services. In practical terms, extension means giving farmers for us small holders in developing countries – knowledge of agronomic techniques and skills to improve their productivity, food , security and livelihoods.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.

Community development is a process where community members are supported by agencies to identify and take collective action on issues which are important to them. Community development empowers community members and creates strongers and more connected communities.



The United Nations defines community development as a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. It is a broad concept, applied to the practices of civic leaders, activists, involved citizens and professionals to improve various aspects of communities, typically aiming to build stronger and more resilient local communities

Community development is also understood as a professional discipline and is defined by the International Association for Community Development as a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest in urban and rural settings.

Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with skills they need to effect change within their communities. These skills are often created through the formation of social groups working for a common agenda. Community developers must understand both how to work with individuals and how to affect communities' positions within the context of larger social institutions.

It is also necessary to establish that community development approaches are recognised internationally. These methods and approaches have been acknowledged as significant for local social, economic, cultural, environmental and political development by such organizations as the UN, WHO, OECD, WORLD BANK. There are basically a number of institutions of higher education that offer community development as an area of study and research such as the University of Toronto, Leiden University, SOAS University of London etc

BENEFITS OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA.

There are basically more extension agents involved in agricultural activities than any other part of rural life. Given the importance of agriculture and the need to produce food for the farm family and for the nation as a whole, this emphasis upon agricultural extension is understandable. Some agricultural services are based upon a single crop while others adopt more of a whole farm approach. The choice is very much dependent on the local agricultural system and the national crop requirements. In regions where cash such as cotton, cocoa or sugar grow the single crop extension approach is more common.

An agricultural extension service offers technical advice on agriculture to farmers and also supplies them with the necessary inputs and services to support their agricultural



production. It provides information to farmers and passes to the farmers new ideas developed by agricultural research stations. Agricultural extension programmes covers a broad area including improved crop varieties better livestock control , improved water management and the control of weeds , pests or plant diseases. Where appropriate, agricultural extension may also help to build up local farmers' groups and organizations so that they can benefit from extension programmes. Agricultural extension therefore provides the indispensable elements that farmers need to improve their agricultural productivity. Actually, it is not a waste of material and monetary resources asv some schools of thought may say, but it is in fact it is a wise way of investing for the future.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

THE KNOWLEDGEo-GAP THEORY

The knowledge gap theory was first proposed by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien in 1970 (Severin and Tinankard,2001) The theory expresses the belief that the increase of information in society is not evenly acquired by every member of society as people with higher socio-economic status tend to have better ability to acquire information than others with lower socio-economic status. This theory assumes that attempt to improve people's life with information through invention of technologies might result in an unwanted outcome such as a further increase in the gap between a group of better-educated people who know more about most things and those with low education who know less. While the knowledge gap theory has its shortcomings among which is the assumption that knowledge automatically translates to behaviour change without much consideration for the for role played by individuals attitude, however, it provides the basis for a probe into extension workers knowledge of goals of extension in this study. This is anticipated to reveal whether access to and use of modern information and communication technologies for extension services delivery in Nigeria has any link with the extension workers background characteristics and their awareness of public affairs issues

THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR/REASONED ACTION

Ajzen and Fishbein formulated in 1980.the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Vallerend et al , 1992) The theory suggests that behavioural outcome of individuals is a function of his /her intention to perform the behaviour and that this intention is , in turn determined by his/her attitude toward the behaviour and subjective evaluation of the risks and benefits



of that outcome The assumption of TRA that behavioural achievement depends on both motivation (intention) and ability (behavioural control) informed the inclusion of variables such as job satisfaction of extension workers competencies in using ICT and effectiveness of several aspects of extension in this study

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study observed and therefore concludes that extension workers in Nigeria have poor capacity in the use of development and communication tools which are central to their work and the attainment of the national agricultural transformation agenda. An effective transformative agricultural agenda will thus require making equally transformative changes in the extension system which should begin with training of extension workers on innovative extension approach described by the world Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations(2007) as Communication for Development (C4D) . Also, these changes will include reviewing and reforming the extension curricula at college , University and field levels: and restructuring extension programmes at the state and federal levels to more effectively serve all clients at minimum cost. For example we found that virtually all ministries have similar communication needs. Therefore, setting up regional multi media and print production Centres is a cost effective way of meeting these needs and ensuring that these media centres operate in a cost recovery way/ manner. The study also showed that effective extension practice must be backed by sound science. Therefore social science approaches to extension must be reviewed and adopted including assessing extension impact. Equally, the fund disbursement must be audited and ensured it is used according to purpose.. It has been discovered over time that the fund meant for agricultural extension programmes are diverted away with impunity with little or nothing to show for it. The knowledge base of the agricultural extension staff or officers needs to be upgraded over time. Since this is considered as a continuous process, the idea of sending the officers abroad to acquire and update if not to upgrade their techniques will also be welcomed idea (the emphasis is mine)

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