

Analysis of Edo State agricultural development agency characteristics and its extension workers' commitment: Implications for Nigeria's research- extension farmers- inputs- linkage- system

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Abstract: *Effective communication links among researchers, extension workers, input agencies and farmers will enable new technologies and management practices to be suitably adapted to local conditions. Thus, this study analyzed the organizational characteristics and organizational commitment of extension workers in the Edo State ADP. Specifically, the study examined the social and economic characteristics of extension workers and their commitment to Edo State ADP and described the organizational characteristics of the Edo State ADP. Data used in this study were obtained from 119 extension workers randomly selected from the various 6 units constituting the administrative structure of the Edo State ADP using structured questionnaire. Percentages, mean scores and correlation statistics were used to analyze data obtained in the course of the study. Results showed that most (84%) of the extension workers were married, indicating that the Edo State ADP extension workers were family men and women. About 60% of the respondents were holders of tertiary school certificate, occupying positions ranging from grade level 6 to 10 and some (33%) of them have been in the service of Edo State ADP between 16 and 20 years. More than half (53%) of the extension staff said that there was high intra-organizational relationship which implied that there was enhanced chain of communication among extension staff units in the Edo State ADP. Most (86%) of the extension workers in Edo State received either in-house or external training sponsored by the extension service. Majority (mean = 4.20) of the extension workers exhibited high commitment to the Edo State ADP extension service.*

Keywords: *Organizational characteristics, organizational commitment, extension workers, ADP.*

I. Introduction

Research-Extension-Farmer-Input-Linkage System (REFILS) model emphasizes the need for interaction among all stakeholders for agricultural development. Agbamu (2000) defined the concept of linkage as the communication and working relationship established between two or more organizations pursuing commonly shared objectives in order to achieve regular contact and improve productivity. The application of this definition implies that agricultural stakeholders such as researchers, extension workers, farmers and input service providers should be linked by information flow. This is achievable through various activities such as committee meetings, demonstration, workshops and mass media reports.

According to Faborode and Laogun (2008), REFILS as a concept recognized input supply as the fourth component upon which successful farming depends. It is a linkage system where the four components will individually function ineffectively but collectively produce effective linkage that can produce activities to bring about desired self-sufficiency in agricultural production (Omolehin and Olukosi, 1996; Arokoyo, 1999). Edo State Agricultural Development Programme (ESADP) is the main agency for agricultural extension delivery in Edo State. In 1986, ESADP adopted the training and visit (T&V) system of extension which strengthened and accelerated linkages among the principal actors (research, extension, farmers, input service providers) in the state agricultural development process.

The grass-root technology delivery is the responsibility of the Edo State ADP through its extension agents. It carries out this responsibility by acting as an effective link between research developing centres/institutions/organizations, input suppliers and farmers who are end users of technologies. This effective link between the different groups is accomplished through effective participation of subject matter specialists (SMSs) in Monthly Technological Review Meetings (MTRMs), Fortnightly Training (FNT) and annual national Research-Extension-Farmers-Input Linkage System (REFILS) meeting.

Despite this laudable organization of REFILS, implementation activities of REFILS are characterized with various problems and challenges. Farm collaboration activities of the extension service in the REFILS institutional arrangements are discharged at the field level through the Village Extension Agents (VEAs). The low level of involvement of VEAs and their farmers (Faborode and Laogun, 2008) in decision-making on

agricultural research policy and institutional arrangement for carrying out linkage activities has rendered research outcomes less relevant, acceptable and appropriate to farmers' needs. On the other hand, the ability of the VEAs to carry out linkage activities depends to a very large extent on the relationship between the VEAs and the extension organization. Tsui et al. (1995), in their review of employment literature, identified two major employee-organization relationships, namely; balanced and unbalanced employee-organization relationship approaches. The balanced employee-organization relationship approaches involve a relatively balanced exchange in which the obligations of each party are matched (that is, economic and social exchange is closed ended in the short term and economic and social exchange is open-ended in the long term). On the other hand, in unbalanced employee organization relationship approach, the employee performs only a well specified set of job focused activities but the employer offers open ended and broad-ranging rewards, including training and a commitment to provide the employee with career opportunities. Another form of unbalanced approach, according to Tsui et al. (1995), is over investment in which employers desire full commitment from employees by making huge investment in human capital but at the same time maintaining the flexibility to lay off employees virtually at will. It is doubtful if the prevailing employee-employer relationship approach in Edo State ADP can stimulate the learning experience of the extension staff, necessary for effective interaction with other cognate agencies like research, universities, farmers and farm input services providers in the course of implementing extension programmes.

Eze (2001), in his analysis of policy in linking the ADPs to universities in Nigeria, reported that the extension system of universities has better training facilities and personnel as well as provide better staff training incentives than ADP. The questions that newly rose are: what are the personal characteristics of the extension staff in Edo State ADP? What are the organizational characteristics of the Edo State ADP? What are the levels of extension staff organizational commitment?

1.1 Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to examine organizational characteristics of the Edo State ADP and the associated extension staff organizational commitment. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Describe the personal characteristics of the extension staff;
2. Determine the organizational characteristics of Edo State ADP;
3. Ascertain the levels of the extension staff organizational commitment and;
4. Examine the relationship between the personal characteristics of extension staff and their organizational commitment.

1.2 Hypothesis of the study

The null hypothesis was tested in the study as follows:

H1. There is no significant relationship between respondents' personal characteristics and their organizational commitment.

II. Methodology Of The Study

The study was conducted in Edo State ADP. The Edo State ADP is divided into three agricultural zones as follows: Edo Central, Edo North and Edo South zones. The Edo Central is divided into five blocks as follows: Esan Central, Esan West, Esan North-East, Esan South-East and Igueben Local Government Areas (LGA). The Edo North comprises 6 blocks, namely, Owan West, Akoko Edo, Etsako West, Etsako East, Owan East and Etsako central LGAs. The Edo South consists of seven (7) blocks, namely, Oredo, Ovia South West, Ovia North East, Ikpoba-Okha, Egor, Uhunmwode and Orhionmwon LGAs. In all, there are a total of 18 blocks or LGAs in the study area. For the purpose of this study, all the employees in Edo State ADP constituted the population of the study. A sample of 120 respondents was randomly selected from the three zones and the various six units constituting the administrative structure of ESADP. The primary data used in the study were obtained by means of structured questionnaire. A total of 119 copies of the questionnaire were correctly filled and used for the analysis. Issues measured under organizational characteristics include human resources practices in ESADP, participation in organizational decision, intra-organizational relationship, provision of mobility facilities to staff and staff attendance at training. The organizational commitment of the extension staff was measured by asking them to indicate the degree of their agreement with each of the eight organizational commitment statements on a five-point likert type scale which was developed and used by Mowday et al. (1979). The five points on the scale were weighted according to the degree of agreement: SA = 5, A = 4, UD = 2 and SD = 9. The overall level of agreement with the eight statements was computed by dividing the grand mean score by eight. Percentage, mean score and correlation statistics were used in the analysis of the data.

III. Results And Discussion

3.1. Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

The respondents' socio-economic characteristics are represented in Table 1. Data in Table 1 showed that 55.5% of the respondents were males and the remaining 44.5% were females. This implies that there are more male employees than female employees in ESADP. Majority (42.9%) of the employees was in the age category of 21 to 40 years and some (40.3%) were between 41 to 50 years of age. This indicates that majority of the respondents are young employees of ESADP. Table 1 also indicated that 53.8% of the respondents were Christians, implying that more than half (54%) of ESADP employees are of the Christian faith and most (84.0%) were married. This means that most of the respondents were family men and women. As shown in Table 1, 59.7% of the respondents had their tertiary education, 67.2% were in grade levels 6 to 10, while 67.2% of the respondents earned N 200, 000 and above per annual. These results revealed that large number of the respondents is literate, occupying managerial positions with fairly high income. Blum (1991) and Madukwe (1995) identified education of extension workers as a facilitating factor in implementing extension service delivery. Data in Table 1 also indicated that 32.8% of the extension workers have been in service between 16 and 20 years, indicating that the respondents are experienced employees.

Table 1. *Distribution of respondents according to their demographic profile (n = 119).*

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	66	55.5
Female	53	44.5
Total	119	100.0
AGE		
-	5	4.2
20 yrs	8	6.7
21-40 years	51	42.9
41-50 years	48	40.3
51-60 years	7	5.9
Total	119	100.0
RELIGION		
-	22	18.5
Christianity	64	53.8
Islam	33	27.7
Total	119	100.0
MARITAL STATUS		
-	2	1.7
Single	17	1.7
Married	100	84.0
Total	119	100.0
EDUCATION		
-		
Non-formal education	4	3.3
Primary education	4	3.4
Secondary education	40	33.4
Tertiary	71	59.7
Total	119	100.0
GRADE LEVEL		
1-5	26	21.8
6-10	80	67.2
11-15	13	10.9
Total	119	100.0
INCOME		
-	7	5.9
100,000-120,000	16	13.4
130,000-120,000	14	10.9
160,000-200,000	3	2.3
200,000 above	80	100.0

WORK EXPERIENCE		
1-5 years	11	9.2
6-10 years	17	14.3
11-15 years	19	16.0
16-20 years	39	32.8
21-35 years	14	11.8
Total	119	100.0

Source: Field survey data, 2011.

3.2 Organizational characteristics of the Edo State ADP

Data in Table 2 summarized the human resources practices and organizational characteristics of Edo State ADP. As indicated in Table 2, the human resource practices in the Edo State ADP comprised the practice of rewarding employees based on job performance (33%) and expecting staff to use complex high level skills by investing in staff training (38.2%). In most cases, employees' organizations do not adequately evaluate and reward employees as expected. This sometimes accounted for the poor performance of some employees in their organizations (Adams, 2000). The intra-organizational relationship behaviour of staff (53.2%) was high. Obibuaku (1983) defined intra-organizational relationship as patterns of staff relationship in hierarchical order of placement within extension organizations. High intra-organizational relationships in Edo State ADP could enhance chains of communication in intra-organizational relationship of extension staff and associated facilitation of extension service delivery. About 39% of extension staff indicated that they received training outside FNT while 33, 29.6 and 23.4% received either in-house or external training sponsored by Edo State ADP. However, staff training was mainly through fortnightly training (FNT) sessions. This situation implies that extension workers of Edo State ADP narrow training orientation to selected technical messages. The consequence of this orientation is that the professional competencies of the extension staff tend to be too low. About 23% of the extension staff says that there is provision for staff mobility while 70.8% of them participated in the organizational decision process in the Edo State ADP. Eze (2001) opined that staff participation in organizational decision making allows the inclusion of extension staff's views and reports in planning and execution of organizational programmes. Mobility of staff could enhance timeliness in extension service delivery.

Table 2. *Percentage distribution of extension staff according to organizational characteristics of Edo State ADP.*

Organisational characteristics	Percentage*
Field extension staff training outside FNT arrangement	38.5
Organisation rewards employees based on job performance	33.0
Intra-organisational relationship	53.2
provision of mobility facility to staff	23.4
Management staff attendance at in-house or external training	29.6
Field extension agents attendance at fortnightly training (FNT)	33.0
Participation in organizational decision-making	70.8
Block extension supervisors attendance at FNT	23.4
The organization requires staff to use a number of complex high level skills	38.3%
*multiple responses exceed 100%.	100

Source: Field Survey data, 2011.

3.3 Organizational commitment

Ajayi and Allagenyi (2001) said that organizational commitment occurs when the individual identifies with a particular organization and its goals, and wishes to maintain consistent loyalty to the organization. The extension staff agreed that they made suggestions to improve work procedure in the Edo State ADP (mean = 4.44), some expressed concern about the fate of Edo State ADP (mean = 4.20), they were able to accept any assignment necessary to keep the organization moving (mean = 4.10) and some made innovative suggestions to improve their departmental unit (mean = 3.42). Other organizational commitments revealed in Table 3 include the extension staff's extreme gladness to choose Edo State ADP to work instead of others (mean = 2.96) and seeing Edo State ADP as the best place to work in their life time. The grand mean score of 3.59 indicates that majority of the extension staff agree with the identified organizational commitment indices.

Table 3. *Organizational commitment score of extension staff.*

Organizational commitment index	Mean (m)
You make suggestion to improve work procedure	4.44
Really care about the fate of the organization	4.20
Acceptance of any duty/assignment just to keep working for the organization	4.10
Make innovation suggestion to improve department	3.42
Always taking upon organization as a great place to work	3.10
Extremely glad that you close this organization to work for over others	2.96
My organization is the best of all organizations to work for	2.89
Level of agreement with organizational indices	3.59

3.4 ESADP extension workers' personal characteristics and their organizational commitment

Results in Table 4 indicated that there is positive and significant relationships between extension staff's educational status ($r = 0.54$) and work experience ($r = 0.51$); and their organizational commitment is at 5% level of significance. This finding implies that the more educated the extension workers are, the more they could contribute positively in pursuing the goal of any extension system through multiplied commitment to the extension organization. As indicated in Table 1, some of the extension workers have been in service of the Edo State ADP between 16 and 20 years. The longer the years spent in service, the higher the learning experience of the extension workers which could be applied in implementing extension programmes particularly in interaction processes involving other cognate agencies.

Table 4. *Correlation analysis results showing relationship between extension staff's personal characteristics and their organizational commitment.*

Personal characteristics	r
Sex	0.12
Age	0.03
Marital status	0.04
Educational status	0.54*
Annual income	0.29
Work experience	0.51*
* = significant at 5% level	

Source: field survey data, 2011.

IV. Conclusion

This study examined the organizational characteristics and the organizational commitment of the extension staff of the Edo State ADP. The findings have shown that most (84%) of the extension staff were married, indicating that the Edo State ADP extension were family men and women. About 60% of them were holders of tertiary school certificate, occupying positions ranging from grade level 6 to 10 and some (33%) of them have been in the service of the Edo State ADP between 16 and 20 years. More than half (53%) of the extension staff said that there was high intra-organizational relationship which implied that there was enhanced chain of communication among extension staff units in the Edo State ADP. Most (86%) of the extension staff in the Edo State ADP received either in-house or external training sponsored by the extension service and were mainly through fortnightly training (FNT) sessions. Also, about 71% of the extension staff said they participated in the decision making process in the Edo State ADP. Majority of the extension staff exhibited high commitment to the Edo State ADP extension service. Based on the study findings and the conclusion reached, it is recommended that:

1. The more educated the extension workers are, the more they could contribute positively in pursuing the goal of any extension system. Similarly, the strength of the extension service as the link between research developing institutions, input suppliers and farmers depends on the quality and standard of education obtained by the extension workers. It therefore requires the Edo State ADP to give room for formal training for those 3.3% of them in its employment without formal education and in-service training for the 37% of them in its employment who are not educated beyond secondary level.
2. Effective implementation of linkage activities of REFILS also depends on the professional competencies of the principal actors. The narrow training orientation of the Edo State ADP in which selected technical messages are taught through fortnightly training sessions tends to limit the professional competencies of the extension workers who are the principal actors of REFILS. There is need for Edo State ADP to broaden their training

orientation by allowing their staff to acquire more knowledge through formal training in such places like universities, national and international research institutions.

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