Research Article

Comparative Assessment of Extension Administrators Effectiveness in Administering Extension Services in Imo State Agricultural Development Programme

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ABSTRACT

The failure of extension workers in improving farmer's knowledge, skills, behavior and livelihood has been attributed to ineffective management of extension personnel. Hence, this study was inspired to assess comparatively extension administrator's effectiveness in administering extension services in Imo State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) as perceived by extension agents and extension administrators. Specifically, the study assessed the tasks and responsibilities of the extension personnel, evaluated the performance of the extension administrators as perceived by extension agents and administrators. Data were collected using structured questionnaire from 120 respondents (20 extension administrators and 100 extension agents) selected through multi – stage sampling technique. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools such as mean, frequency scores, percentage and t – test were used to analyze the data. Results showed that the extension personnel engaged more (85.0%) in facilitating input supply to farmers. The extension administrators were ineffective ($x= 1.9$) in administering extension services in Imo State ADP. Result further showed that extension administrators and agents did not differ in their perception that extension administrators in Imo State ADP were ineffective in their performance. The study recommended that adequate logistic support be provided among other ways of overcoming the challenges facing the performance of extension administrators.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of bringing together materials and human resources and channeling them towards meeting set organizational goals cannot be overstressed. This conscientious effort directed towards organizing and controlling human activities in order to achieve agreed goals constitutes administration (Madukwe, 2011). Administration in extension is concerned mainly with human beings for the purpose of executing extension functions directed to improve food production and living standard of farmers (Iwueke, 2000). Ekpere (2006) posited that agricultural extension administration involves conscientious planning, provision of leadership, controlling some individuals and guiding their effort in the use of available resources to achieve the objectives of agricultural extension organization. ADP is primarily responsible for general administration, coordination and implementation of extension activities. The programme manager is the chief of extension administrator. The

director of extension services is directly responsible for management of day to day extension activities and is assisted by the deputy director of extension. They are stationed at the headquarters level and essentially constitute the top administrative staff in extension service system (Akubuilo, 2008).

The failure of several developmental efforts to stimulate agricultural growth through extension services is largely attributed to the persisting weakness of extension administration (Duru, 2015). They key reason for the growing concern on performance of extension administrators is the inability of extension to achieve its statutory aims of effectively educating and facilitating learning among farmers. Hence, Madukwe (2011) posited that those who administer should have adequate training in extension administration. According to Agbamu (2011), the effectiveness of extension towards achieving its organizational objectives often derives from the failure of extension administrators to perform their administrative roles.

According to Bruce and Carter (2007), the administrators perception on their performance helps in achieving a more accurate and representative view about their performance result. By comparatively analyzing their self-appraisal and that of extension agents (EAs), a more balanced result/outcome is established. Also Gaby (2004) opined that to effectively carry out the performance assessment of the extension administrators, the average perception between the self-appraisal of administrators and that of their supervisees is needful. The assessment is necessary following the failure of extension field workers to carry out extension service delivery effectively, thereby raising doubt about the effectiveness of extension administrators who make policies that field workers implement.

It is against this background that this study: (i) determined the tasks and responsibilities of the administrators; (ii) evaluated the performance of extension administrators as perceived by both the extension agents and the administrators themselves.

The study postulated a hypothesis which states that "extension administrators and agents do not differ in their perception on the performance of extension administrators in Imo State ADP extension services.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Imo State, which is located in the South Eastern zone of Nigeria and covers an area of about 5,067.20km with a population of 3,934,899 (NPC, 2006 and NBS, 2007). The State has three agricultural zones of Orlu, Owerri and Okigwe with an average annual temperature of 28%, average annual relative humidity of 80%, and average annual rainfall of 1800–2500mm and altitude of about 100m above sea level (Imo ADP, 2004, Microsoft Cooperation, 2009). Extension activities in the state are undertaken by Imo ADP demarcated into 39blocks and 326 circles for effective extension activity.

A multistage sampling technique was used in selecting the population for the study. In the first stage, extension personnel in Imo ADP were stratified into state headquarters, zones, blocks and circles based on their location of service. Based on the result of reconnaissance survey, the second stage involved the purposive selection of all the personnel (5) at the headquarters due to their small distribution and desirable attributes. In the third stage, 15 administrators at the zones and block levels were purposively selected to cover all the cadre of administrators in each location. Finally, the fourth stage involved the proportionate sampling of EAs in the 3 zones in the ratio of 3:1:1. In all, a sample size of 120 respondents (20 administrators and 100 EAs) were used for the study.

Data collected were through primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained using two sets of structured questionnaire and analyzed using percentage, rank order and mean score. The mean computation was achieved using the formula:

$$\overline{X} = \frac{\varepsilon x}{N}$$

Where:

X = the value by which the performance of extension administrator in Imo ADP is to be judged.
εX = sum of the various indices of performance efficiency.
N= sample size.

The hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the performance of extension administrations in Imo State ADP as perceived by extension administrators themselves and extension agents was investigated using pooled variance method of t- test implicitly represented as:

$$t = \frac{\underline{x_1 - x_2}}{\frac{\sqrt{(n_1-1)\,S_1 + (n_2-2)\,S_2^2)}}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}} \quad \left\{ \frac{1}{n1} + \frac{1}{n2} \right\}$$

Where:
t = the value by which the statistical mean difference in the performance of extension administrators as perceived by extension agents and administrators was judged.
X_1= mean score of the extension agents
X_2= mean score of the extension administrator.
S_1= standard deviation of the extension agents
S_2= standard deviation of the extension administrators
n_1= Number of extension agents
n_2= Number of extension administrators

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results in Table 1 showed that facilitation of input supply to farmers was the most (1st; 85.0%) common tasks and responsibility carried out by the extension personnel. Extension activities coordination was generally ranked 2nd (76.7%) amongst the extension responsibilities performed by all cadre of personnel. Training farmer's was3rd on the list, while extension agents training was the least performed tasks by the extension personnel. The first and second results strongly agreed with the extension guide of Imo ADP (2015) which included input supply facilitation and extension programme coordination. The least result however, highlighted the dominance of extension agents in the sample. The essence of this investigation was to ascertain the level to which the extension personnel had undertaken tasks statutorily meant to be accomplished by extension. According to Madukwe (2011), extension functions are complex in which some people perform administrative function; some back local workers, supervised programme, provide technical help and advice in subject matters and extension methodology, while others maintain direct contact with local farmers. It could be seen from the result that the statutory functions as broadly classified by Madukwe (2011) were ranked higher, while majority of the least ranked functions were likely subjective tasks.

Results in Table 2 showed that an average extension agent perceived the performance of extension administrators ineffective. Specifically, results revealed that the extension agents perceived the administrators as performing effectively in 9 out of 17 performance index used in the study. They included: being accessible to the famers ($.x = 2.0$), planning extension programme ($.x =$

Table 1: Distribution of Extension Personnel by Tasks and Responsibilities

S/N	Tasks/Responsibilities	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1.	Train farmers	80	66.7	3rd
2.	Train extension agents	2	1.7	18th
3.	Manage extension personnel	33	27.5	6th
4.	Manage experimental farm plots	24	20.4	8th
5.	Facilitate input supply to farmers	102	85.0	1st
6.	Supervise extension field agents	22	18.3	9th
7.	Production of audio-visual materials	15	12.5	13th
8.	Plan extension programme	18	15.0	10th
9.	Organize field meetings	43	35.8	5th
10.	Monitor unit personnel	17	14.2	11th
11.	Coordinate extension activities	92	76.7	2nd
12.	Make financial plans	17	14.2	11th
13.	Organize cinema/TV shows	72	60.0	4th
14.	Coordinate REFILS	12	10.0	14th
15.	Facilitate/conduct training/workshops	8	6.7	17th
16.	Hire extension personnel	12	10.0	14th
17.	Carry out budgeting of extension programmes/activities	26	21.7	7th
18.	Coordinate/maintain linkage with research organizations	1	10.0	14th

Source: Field Survey Data, 2015; *multiple response; N=120

Table 2: Distribution of extension administrators' level of effectiveness as perceived by extension agents

Performance index	Highly effective	Effective	Not effective	Mean score	Remark
Raport with extension personnel	28	36	46	1.7	Ineffective
Reporting Imo ADP extension programmes	12	43	65	1.6	Ineffective
Supervising field staff	23	37	60	1.8	Ineffective
Accessibility	34	32	54	2.0	Effective
Trustworthiness	21	38	61	1.8	Ineffective
Planning extension programmes	43	32	45	2.1	Effective
Managing organizational resources	39	34	47	2.1	Effective
Managing organizational communication	36	43	43	2.2	Effective
Motivating personnel	21	43	56	1.9	Ineffective
Introducing topical issues	29	34	47	1.7	Ineffective
Presentation skills	35	43	42	2.1	Effective
Disposition to Hard work	21	35	54	1.7	Ineffective
Regularity to work	35	42	43	2.1	Effective
Personnel needs assessment	45	43	32	2.3	Effective
Producing/using literature	21	37	62	1.8	Ineffective
Number of farmers reached, out of the target number	22	53	45	2.0	Effective
Average perception				2.0	Effective

Source: Field Survey Data, 2015; n=100; $x \geq 2.0$(Effective); $x<2.0$ (Ineffective)

Table 3: Distribution of extension administrator's level of effectiveness as perceived by extension administrators

Performance index	Highly effective	Effective	Not effective	Mean score	Remark
Raport with extension personnel	8	9	3	2.3	Effective
Reporting Imo ADP extension programmes	7	8	5	2.1	Effective
Supervising field staff	3	7	10	1.7	Ineffective
Accessibility	14	2	4	2.0	Effective
Trustworthiness	5	8	7	1.9	Ineffective
Planning extension programmes	9	6	5	2.3	Effective
Managing organizational resources	9	7	4	2.3	Effective
Managing organizational communication	6	3	11	1.8	Effective
Motivating personnel	5	6	9	1.8	Ineffective
Introducing topical issues	9	4	7	2.1	Effective
Presentation of skills	5	4	11	1.7	Ineffective
Disposition to Hard work	11	5	4	2.4	Ineffective
Regularity to work	5	4	11	1.7	ineffective
Personnel needs assessment	5	9	6	2.0	Effective
Producing/using literature	4	7	9	1.8	Ineffective
Number of farmers reached, out of the target number	5	3	12	1.7	Ineffective
Organizing training workshops	3	4	13	1.5	ineffective
Average Perception				1.9	Ineffective

Source: Field Survey Data, 2015; n = 20; $x \geq 2.0$(Effective); $x<2.0$ (Ineffective)

Table 4: **t**-test of significant difference in the performance of extension administrators in Imo ADP as perceived by extension agents and extension administrators

Variables	N	Mean	Standard deviation	DF	t-cal.	t-tab	Decision
Administrators	20	37.56	4.85	118	1.22	1.96	The
Extension agents	100	35.89	8.27				Null hypothesis is accepted

Source: Field Survey Data, 2015

2.1), Managing organizational resources (.x = 2.1), managing organizational communication (.x = 2.2), presentation of skills (.x = 2.1), regularity to work (.x = 2.1), personnel needs assessment (.x = 2.3), Number of farmers reached, out of the target number (.x = 2.0), organizing training workshops (.x = 2.2). However, it could be inferred from the results that the administrators lack proper training in human relations and technical reporting, hence their failure to effectively rapport with the personnel as well as report extension programme. The findings underscore the importance of needs assessment for extension personnel prior to actual training. According to Akinbile and Ndaghu (2005), training is done with prior needs assessment, the training is likely to be organized for the wrong reason as well as not provide specific capacity for greater performance.

Results as shown in Table 3 revealed that on the average, extension administrators perceived themselves fairly effective in administering extension services in Imo State ADP. Precisely they perceived themselves as performing effectively in 8 out of 17 performance index used for the study. According to Gaby (2004), the employees' perception in their performance appraisal is useful in achieving a bias free scientific assessment as well as a practical understanding of the appraised performance. Hence, based on the perception of the administrators relative to that of the extension agents it could be concluded that the extension administrators of Imo ADP are ineffective in the management of the organization's resources towards achieving the set objectives.

Result in Table 4 showed that mean of the perceived extension administrators' performance between administrators and extension agents were 37.56 (S.D = 4.85) and 35.89 (S.D = 8.27), respectively. The test produced a t-value of 1.22 which was not significant when compared with the critical t-value of 1.96 at 5% probability level of significance for a two tailed test. Since t-calculated (t-cal = 1.22) was less than t-tabulated (t-tab = 1.96), the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in perception of extension administrators and extension agents on the performance of extension administrators in Imo ADP was therefore accepted. This result aligns with the findings of Table 2 and 3 in which the extension agents and the extension administrators jointly perceived the administrators ineffective as well as supports the submission of Nwachukwu (2013), that ineffective performance of extension administrators is the bane of quality extension service delivery.

Conclusion

Majority of the extension personnel engaged more in facilitating input supply to farmers. The extension administrators are found to be ineffective in administering extension services in Imo State ADP. Hence, the study recommends adequate provision of logistic support among other ways to overcome various challenges facing the performance of extension administrators in administering extension service delivery.

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