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## EFFECT OF TRAINING AND VISIT SYSTEM ON PROFESSIONALIZATION OF EXTENSION AGENTS IN OSUN STATE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME OF NIGERIA

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### Abstract

The study was carried out to examine the effect of training and visit system on professionalization of extension agents in Osun State Agricultural Development Programme of Nigeria. Seventy-five data were collected by interviewing extension agents constituted the sample size and were interviewed through the aid of using a well-structured questionnaire and information obtained were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and person correlation coefficient was used for testing the research hypothesis. The findings revealed that 80% of the respondents were between the age group of 30 -50 years, spent between 10 – 30 years in service (84%) and are married (98.7%). A large proportion (56%) of the respondents holds higher national diploma in general agriculture, exhibited favorable attitude towards the farmers (93.3%), specials in general agriculture (34.7%) and required training in one or more areas of agriculture (69.3%). Analysis performed shows that all the characteristics had positive relationship with effect of training and visit on professionalization of extension agents except years of service, which had a negative relationship though all characters were statistically insignificant. Hence, the more the numbers of years spent on the job the more experience you would be. Which indicated that personal characteristics of the respondent influenced the professionalization of the extension agents through training and visit system?

**Keywords:** Training, Visit, Professionalization, Extension, Nigeria

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### Introduction

Agricultural extension refers to the sets of activities of communication, information, demonstration and technical training geared towards transforming and disseminating to farmers new or improved technologies (IFAD, 2001). In addition, it is a means of increasing agricultural productivity. It deals directly with improvement of agriculture. Its prime objective is to help farmers develop and increase production by persuading them to adopt improved technical practices, develop skills, knowledge and attitude favorable to change in the farmers and their families. It enables them to benefit from research and technology and its ultimate aim is to raise their existence through improved living standard (Ogunfeditimi and Ewuola, 1995). Extension agents are the people

charged with the responsibilities of bringing about changes within a target system. They assist farmers by increasing their awareness of improved agricultural technology as well as improving their decision-making capabilities.

The training and visit (T&V) system is an extension management system that as developed for the World Bank and it was aimed at upgrading the technical content of field extension activities while making agents activities more predictable and thus more accessible to farmers. The idea was to increase the effectiveness of agricultural extension service through comprehensively structured training, delivery and administrative system. During the post independence era, agricultural extension agents were saddled with both educational and non-educational duties such as supply of input.

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Many of these systems were built with insufficient attention to skill development of field agents. Most of the extension agents were inadequately trained and had low morale because of poor career prospect, poor mobility, delay in claims and settlement and low level of education (Birkhaeuser *et al.*, 1991).

Training and visit system provides an organization structure and detailed mode of operation that is well informed. Extension agents visit farmers regularly and transmit message relevant to production needs and problems faced by the farmers are quickly, feedback to research scientist for relevant and immediate solution (Ogunfeditimi and Ewuola, 1995). The success of Training and Visit System is premised on the following underlying principles;

- Fully trained professional staff
- A single line of command
- Regular farm visit, time bound work and training programme
- Orientation towards working with farmers on their fields
- Regular and continuous training of all staff members to continuously upgrading their skills and
- Effective flow of information among research, extension and farmers (Gapson, 1990).

Moreover, Training and Visit System provide for relevant extension staff, regular training to upgrade their professional competence and serve the technological needs of the farmers, which involve the systematic application of well-known management principles with a view to professionalizing the extension service (Ogunfeditimi and Ewuola, 1995). Professionalization is the transformation of many occupations into profession. It is the capacity of extension staff to identify production problems in the field, recommend appropriate measures to solve them and train farmers on how to use the measures on their farms. Similarly, professionalization in agricultural extension can be defined as throwing of ideas from journalism, audio-visual, communication and advertising as well as from political and religious propaganda (Sappo, 1993). The idea behind professionalization is to increase the status of the extension agents' employee to extension professionals. In many agricultural sectors where professionalization is, implemented extension agents are also given opportunities to be collaborates with institutions outside the farms especially universities. This partnerships help extension agents foster a sense of contribution to dissemination of information and educational efforts beyond the local areas. Professionalization adds greater integrity, flexibility and authority to extension agents (IFAD, 2001).

This study was conducted to ascertain the effect of training and visit extension system on the professionalization of extension agents in Osun State Agricultural Development Programmes with the aim of identifying the personal characteristics of the extension agents as well as ascertaining the training needs of extension agents under the T & V System. It was also hypothesized that no significant relationship exists between the respondents' personal characteristics and the effect of T & V System on the professionalization of extension agents.

## Methodology

The study was conducted in Osun State Agricultural Development Programme (OSSADEP). Osun State occupied a land mass of approximately 8,02 km<sup>2</sup> and it is bounded in the west by Oyo State, Ondo and Ekiti State in the east, Kwara State in the north and Ogun State in the south. There are 30 local government areas in the study area all of which falls under 3 zones of ADP for administrative purpose and the zones are Iwo, Ife-Ijesa and Osogbo.

The state observed 2 seasons namely dry and rainy seasons and it is covered by secondary forest savanna hence farming is the traditional occupation of the people in the study area through other income generating activities can be found on the area. The main cash crops in the area are cocoa and palm produce while food crops such as yam, rice, cassava, millet, plantain etc are grown in the area. Apart from being rich in agricultural produce, it is also endowed with a number of mineral resources such as gold, clay limestone and granite. The state also has great potentials for growth in economic activities.

The population of the study consist of all extension agents currently in the services of Osun State Agricultural Development Programme i.e. OSSADEP. The study area consist of three ADP zones namely Iwo, Ife-Ijesa and Osogbo. A multistage sampling technique was employed in the course of the study. Iwo agricultural zone consist of two extension blocks while both Ife-Ijesa and Osogbo zone respectively consist of six extension blocks. Firstly the 2 blocks in Iwo ADP was purposively selected which consist of 16 cells while 3 blocks each from both Osogbo and Ife-Ijesa ADP zone was selected through simple random sampling hence giving a total of 8 extension blocks i.e. 32 cells x 2=64 cell. Each blocks consist of 8 extension cells thus given a total of 80 extension cells and all the extension agents in the 80 cells constitute the sample size but in the course of the administration of the instruments, only 75 questionnaires was found properly filled by the respondents.

Well-structured questionnaire was administered on the respondents and both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing the data. Descriptive statistics used include frequency counts, percentages and cumulative percentage, while inferential statistic used to test for relationship was Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC).

## Results and Discussion

It could be observed on table 1 that majority of the respondents (80%) were below the ages of 50 years while 18.7% were the ages of 50 years and

above and only 1.3% of the sampled respondents were less than 30 years of age. This implies that majority of the respondents are young and active thus were able to face and cope with the rigours of extension works. The table further shows that majority of the respondents (84%) have spent between 10-30 years in the services of Osun State Agricultural Development Programme while 14.7% accounted for those respondents that have spent between 31-40 years and the remaining 1.3% represent the respondent that have spent less than 10 years as an extension agent.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to their socioeconomic characteristics

Socioeconomic characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age (years)</b>		
Below 30	1	1.3
30 – 39	25	33.3
40 – 49	35	46.7
50 and above	14	18.7
<b>Years of service</b>		
Less than 10	1	1.3
10 – 20	46	61.3
21 – 30	17	22.7
31 – 40	11	14.7
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	1	1.3
Married	74	98.7
<b>Educational attainment</b>		
N.C.E	1	1.3
N.D (or OND)	21	28.0
H.N.D	42	56.0
B.Sc.	11	14.7
<b>Areas of specialization</b>		
General agriculture	26	34.7
Crop production	22	29.3
Fishery	4	5.3
Livestock production	5	6.7
Agricultural mechanism	5	6.7
Horticulture	6	8.0
Soil science	4	5.3
Agricultural extension	3	4.0
<b>Attitude toward farmers</b>		
Unfavourable	5	6.7
Favourable	70	93.3
<b>Training needs</b>		
Drug administration	6	8.0
Livestock production	15	20.0
Agroforestry	4	5.4
Crop production	2	2.7
Agricultural business/marketing	4	5.4
Agricultural mechanism	11	14.6
Fishery	7	9.3
Plant protection	26	34.6

Source: Field survey, 2009

This implies that the extension agents become more experienced and skillful based on the distribution of the numbers of years they have spent in service (i.e. the more the number of years in service, the more experienced the respondent) hence would be more familiar with the technicalities of T & V system of extension service.

Similarly, it was observed that majority (98.7%) of the respondents were married while the remaining 1.3% of the respondents were single. This implies that majority of the respondents are responsible, have some dependants and capable of concentrating on their jobs hence increasing their professional skills leading to effective discharge of their duties and responsibilities. In addition, it was observed that 56% of the sampled respondents are Higher National Diploma (HND) holders, 28% of them are Ordinary National Diploma (OND) holders while 14.7% represent those respondents who are Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree holders and only 1.3% accounted for the respondent who have National Certificate of Education (NCE). This implies that all the respondents in the service of OSSADEP are educated hence may have been exposed to different kinds of training in their various training institution that may enhance skill development.

The table further revealed that 34.7% of the respondents specialize in general agriculture while 29.3% are specialist in crop production and only 2.7% of the respondents have more than one area of specialization. In addition, 10.6% specialize in fish production and soil science respectively while livestock production and agriculture mechanization accounted for 13.4% of the total respondents. Only 4% specialize in agricultural extension services. This implies that all the respondents have different areas of specialization though may have knowledge in areas outside their discipline. Similarly, it was observed that majority of the respondents (93.3%) have positive attitude towards the farmers while only 6.7% of the respondents accounted for those with negative attitude towards the farmers. This implies that there is mutual understanding and cooperation between the extension agents and the

farmers, which enable them to discharge their duties efficiently and effectively.

Further analysis shows that majority of the respondents (69.3%) required training in different areas of agriculture like drug administration, livestock production, Agro-forestry, crop production, fishery, agricultural mechanization etc while 6.7% of them required training in all the areas of agriculture and 9.3% required training in two or more areas. The remaining 14.7% of the respondents accounted for those who gave no responses to the question asked. This implies that majority (85.3%) of the sampled respondents still require improved training in one or more areas of agriculture for adequate professionalization in their field of discipline for effective performance in carrying out their duties. This finding is corroborated by Olatidoye (1999), when he opined that appropriate training enables an agent to develop into a competent professional and to live up to this role, he is expected to be in close touch with relevant scientific developments and latest research information on all the sub-sector of agriculture is his immediate environment hence he must possess the ability to identify production constraints and suggest appropriate remedial measures which creates credibility not only for himself but also for the institution he represent.

### Hypothesis testing

Data presented on table 2 shows that there was no significant relationship between respondents' personal characteristics and the effect of T & V on the professionalization of the extension agent. From the correlation test with the following correlation values: age ( $r = 0.08$ ), educational level ( $r = 0.019$ ), marital status ( $r = 0.0059$ ), religion ( $r = 0.013$ ), years in service ( $r = 0.020$ ) and area of specialization ( $r = 0.155$ ); all the values are insignificant. This implies that the personal characteristics of the respondents does not in any way influence the professionalization of the extension agents through training and visit hence the initial hypothesis is hereby accepted.

Table 2. Relationship between respondents' personal characteristics and effect of training of visit system on professionalization of extension agents

Personal characteristics	Correlation value	Remark
Age	0.058	NS
Years in service	-0.020	NS
Marital status	0.059	NS
Educational attainment	0.019	NS
Area of specialization	0.155	NS
Religion	0.013	NS

At 5% significant level

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## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. There should be regular training of extension agents through fortnightly training by efficient subject matter specialists.
2. All the essential infrastructural facilities that will aid in proper training of the extension agents should be put in place at all the three tiers of government.
3. The constraint associated with training, visit system of extension should be adequately addressed, and the authorities concerned should proffer appropriate solution.

## Conclusions

This study examines the effect of training and visit system of extension on the professionalization of extension agents in the services of Osun State Agricultural Development Programme. The following conclusions were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Majority of the respondents were adults between the ages of 30-50 years, have spent between 10-30 years in service, married and were all educated.
2. A large proportion of the respondents specialized in general agriculture, exhibit positive and favorable attitude towards the farmers and need training in different areas of agriculture.

3. There was no significant relationship between the personal characteristics of the respondents' effect of training and visit system on professionalization of extension agents because all the correlation values obtained were insignificant.

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