

Competency Improvement Needs of Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) Supervisors in Leadership Development for Effective Delivery of Extension Services in South East Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was carried out to determine the competency improvement needs of Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) Supervisors in leadership development for effective delivery of agricultural extension services South-East, Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study. The study adopted a survey research design. The study was specifically carried out in five states of the South east Nigeria. The population for the study was 97 ADP project supervisors from the five states. There was no sampling as the population was manageable. A 48 item structured questionnaire developed from the literature reviewed for the study was used to collect data from the respondents. Each questionnaire item had two major columns of required and performance. Each item was assigned a four point response scale of: Highly needed, Averagely Needed, Slightly needed, and Not needed. Three experts face validated the questionnaire items. Split-half technique and Pearson product correlation co-efficient were used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire, which yielded a co-efficient of 0.84. The instruments for data collection was distributed and collected by the researcher and five assistants. Weighted mean and t-test were used to analyze the data. The result of the study showed that ADP project supervisors have leadership deficiency in 42 out of 48 competency items identified by the study. It was then recommended that the identified competencies be packaged into a re-training programme for these supervisors to equip them with the art of leadership so that they can effectively deliver agricultural extension services to the farmers in Southeast, Nigeria.

Keywords: Competency, Improvement Needs, Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) Extension Services

Introduction

In south east Nigeria, many Agricultural Development Programme Supervisors are trained by Agricultural institutions to prepare them adequately for effective delivery of agricultural related services to farmers. Agricultural Development Projects (ADP) formerly known as Integrated Agricultural Development Projects (IADP) was earlier established in 1974 in the North East (Funtua), North west (Gusau) and North Central (Gombe) states as pilot schemes. Over the years, several agricultural programmes have been introduced to

reduce abject poverty among rural dwellers, mostly farmers, in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Some of these programmes include: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Agricultural Development Programmes (ADP), Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), and National Economic Empowerment and Development Scheme (NEEDS), The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DIFRRI), National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), Green Revolution (GR), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), etc. The main objective of Agricultural Development Project according to Akpabio (2000) is to increase food production and farm incomes for the majority of the rural households in the defined project regions, thus improving the standard of living and welfare of the farming population, with the hope of reducing abject poverty. In the contributions of Adams (2003), Agricultural Development Programmes are meant for raising the standard of living of the rural farming communities through increased income from higher agricultural productivity. The author posited that making agriculture attractive enough to the youths in order to make them accept agricultural engagements in the rural areas thereby providing more job opportunities in the agricultural sector throughout the State should be of primary concern of the Programme. In the view of Akpabio (2000) the objectives of the programme are to bring about solution to the decrease found in agricultural productivity by sustaining domestic food supply, through massive infusion of worldbank funds, the ADPs were established to provide extension services, technical input support and rural infrastructure. The provision of these agricultural services according to Obetta and Okide (2011) is the sole responsibility of the agricultural extension project supervisors.

Agricultural extension project supervisors are individuals who have possessed a minimum bachelor's degree from an accredited colleges or university in an area such as agricultural forestry, environmental science, natural resource management or a similar field. In the view of Asiabaka (2002) agricultural extension supervisors play a crucial role in promoting agricultural productivity, increasing food security, improving rural livelihoods and promoting agriculture as an engine of economic growth. The author further stated that these supervisors are responsible for advising, instructing and assisting individuals and families engaged in agriculture or agricultural-related processes. In the opinion of Akpobo (2007) the main duties of agricultural extension supervisors are to schedule and make periodic visits to farmers, demonstrate feeding techniques, fertilizer application, monitoring farming calendar, instruct on proper health maintenance of livestock, demonstrate and teach proper growing and harvesting practices to these farmers including agricultural cooperative groups.

However, for these supervisors to perform their functions in a more professional manner to achieve these stated objectives, they must possess some leadership qualities. Leadership according to Bass (1990) is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. The author stated that leaders carry out this process by applying their leadership attributes, such as beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge, and skills. In the opinion of Astin (1996) leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perception and

expectations of the members. Leaders are agents of change – persons whose acts affect other people more than other people's acts affect them. In the view of Yammarino and Bass in Ugwoke (2010) leadership is the ability to handle men so as to achieve the most with the least friction and the greatest cooperation. The author also maintained that good leadership is the principal dynamic force that motivates and coordinates the organization in the accomplishment of its objectives. Leadership in the view of Hoffmann and Jones (2005) is a process of social influence which maximizes the efforts of others towards the achievement of a greater good. The author states that leaders possess certain traits for effective leadership. These traits include but not limited to developing, communicating and aligning others around a vision and strategy for the future, creating plans and initiatives that ensure the understanding and commitment of others to achieve a vision. In the observation Goleman (2000), effective leadership is characterized by creating an environment of trust and integrity, ability to act in a decisive, urgent and committed way to achieve results, demonstration of willingness to move forward despite ambiguity, taking thoughtful risks, sharing knowledge and responsibility. Others include establishing high standards of performance, accountability for results, managing change, developing relationships with the led and developing self and others. Also, in the submission of Gate (2014) leaders are characterized by several personality traits including: cognitive achievement orientation; strong tendencies to be creative, innovative, visionary, and inspirational; high levels of work involvement, energy, and enthusiasm; a strong propensity to take risks; self-confidence; a high need for social influence coupled with a strong concern for the moral and non-exploitive use of power in a socially desirable manner; willingness to exercise influence but not to be dominant, tough, forceful, aggressive, or critical; strong inclinations to be confident in, and encouraging toward, followers and to show a developmental orientation towards followers; and tendencies to be nurturant, socially sensitive, and sensitive to and considerate of follower needs. In the context of this study, leadership competence entails the acquisition of knowledge, skills, traits and personal characteristics in leadership for ADP Supervisors to ensure outstanding performance in the delivery of extension services effectively.

Effectiveness according to Olaitan, Nwachukwu, Igbo, Onyemachi and Ekong (1999), is an indication of the impact of a group of activities performed on the achievement of intended learning outcomes. The authors added that effectiveness is a measure of accomplishment of set goals and objectives if a programme is involved. Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) Supervisors thus, need to be very effective in knowledge and skills in leadership to deliver qualitative extension services to a target population to ensure that the Programme goals and objectives are achieved. However, for ADP Supervisors to be proficient in discharging unique leadership propositions in carrying out their duties of delivery of extension services, they require some competencies.

Competency in the view of Ellah (2007) referred to as the state of being functionally adequate in the performance of one's duty. Competence, in the submission of Gove (2009), is the quality or state of being functionally adequate or having knowledge, skill or strength for a

particular duty or respect. In the opinion of Olaitan (2003) to be competent implies that an individual has acquired the knowledge, skills, attitude and judgement which is required in order to perform successfully at a specified proficiency level in a given work. In this study, competency is the ability of supervisors to possess sufficient knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgement required for effective leadership qualities in delivery of extension services. The key competency areas of interest of this study are in the areas of leadership development, supervision and administration, public relations and rural affairs, and personnel and research development. In practical terms, if the ADP supervisor cannot satisfactorily demonstrate knowledge and skills in these identified areas of leadership, there is a gap. The gap here is the difference between the competencies the teacher actually possessed and what he is expected to possess towards the effective leadership tendencies. However, in order to bridge the gap, ADP supervisors require capacity building.

Capacity building in this context, refers to efforts towards improving knowledge, skills and attitudes possessed by ADP supervisors in South east Nigeria for effective leadership delivery of extension services to farmers. In order to determine the capacity building needs of ADP supervisors, they must be assessed to obtain information on the competencies they already possess and the gap that exists towards expectation, that is, what they need to possess.

In the study area, the supervisors of agricultural development projects have been observed to have lacked the leadership competencies required for effective delivery of their functions to the stakeholders especially the farmers. The researcher in an agricultural exhibition organized by FADAMA 111 (World bank funded agricultural development Programme) in South east Nigeria held in Abia state observed that some Agricultural Development Project Supervisors of the states of this region invited to share experience with farmers pay more attention to knowledge of their extension services and neglect the leadership support to these farmers to ensure the achievement of the overall objectives of the programme. Most of the farmers' cooperative groups are having one form of leadership tussle and another given the non-leadership awareness they experience. Some of these supervisors claimed they did not receive any leadership education while in training and had blamed it on the government whose responsibility is to give them all round training on the job to enable them deliver their services effectively. It is not certain therefore as to whether these supervisors lack the needed competencies in leadership; but since the ADP supervisors have the responsibility of equipping the farmers with knowledge and skills involved in their overall farming practice to enable them perform profitably and use the skills in their operations, the supervisors require improvement in carrying out their responsibilities. This assertion is in consonance with FADAMA 11 report (2009) which observed that facilitators and supervisors of Agricultural programmes should be trained on not only the knowledge of practical agriculture, but also on life skills, agri-business and leadership development in order to prepare a total farmer for the business of agriculture. Supervisors of Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) cannot be exonerated from this findings of the report above,

therefore, improvement of these Supervisors in areas of leadership for effective service delivery becomes very compelling.

Improvement in the view of Dimelu (2010) is the process of making something better. Sinclair in Ellah (2007) stated that if something or situation improves, that thing or situation becomes better. With reference to this study, improvement is the process of helping ADP Supervisors become knowledgeable in leadership so as to demonstrate the qualities in the course of delivering their extension services.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study therefore is to determine competency improvement needs of agricultural development programme (ADP) Supervisors in leadership for effective delivery of extension services in South East, Nigeria.

Specifically the study sought to determine:

1. leadership development competencies of ADP project supervisors for effective delivery of agricultural extension services .
2. administrative competencies of ADP project supervisors for effective delivery of agricultural extension services.
3. the public relations competencies of ADP project supervisors for effective delivery of agricultural extension services.
4. personnel development and research competencies of ADP project supervisors for effective delivery of agricultural extension services.

Methodology

This study adopted survey research design. The study was carried out in South East, Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study while four null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study was carried out in South east, Nigeria. The population for the study was 97 supervisors from the study area. There was no sampling as the population was manageable. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire with 48 items. The questionnaire was divided into two categories of needed and performance. The needed category has a 4-point response scale of Highly Needed, Averagely Needed, Slightly Needed, and Not Needed; while the performance category also has 4-point scale of High performance, Average performance, Low performance and No performance with a corresponding nominal value of 4, 3, 2, and 1, for the two groups of scales respectively. The instrument was face validated by three experts from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. Split half method was adopted to determine the internal consistency of the competency questionnaire item with a reliability coefficient of 0.83. The research assistants were hired, one from each of the agricultural zones of Abia state and trained on how to distribute and collect the instruments to the respondents. Forty copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents but 41

were retrieved and analyzed. The data collected were analyzed using weighted mean and Improvement needed index (INI) were used in analyzing data from the professional competency questionnaire items in order to answer the research questions. The improvement needs was determined as follows:

Competency improvement needs of the ADP Supervisors were determined thus:

- a. The weighted mean (X_n) of the needed item was determined for each item.
- b. The weighted mean (X_n) of the performance item was determined for each item.
- c. The Performance Gap (PG) was determined by finding the difference between the values of (X_n) and (X_p). That is, $X_n - X_p = PG$.

Decisions from the calculations were as follows:

- (a) Where the performance gap (PG) equals zero (0) for each item, the lecturers needed no capacity building because the level at which the skill item was needed was equal to the level at which lecturers could perform the knowledge.
- (b) Where the difference (PG) was negative (-) for each item, the lecturers needed no capacity building because the level at which the item was needed was lower than the level at which lecturers could perform the item.
- (c) Where the difference (PG) was positive (+) for each item, the lecturers needed capacity building because the level at which the item was needed was higher than the level at which the lecturers could perform the item.

Results

The results for the study were obtained from the research questions answered through data collected and analysed.

Research Question 1

What are the leadership development competencies required by ADP Supervisors for effective delivery of agricultural extension services?

The data for answering research question 1 are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Performance Gap Analysis (PGA) of the Mean ratings of ADP Supervisors on Leadership Development competencies for effective delivery of extension services (N=416).

S/N	Competency items	\bar{X}_n	\bar{X}_p	$\bar{X}_n - \bar{X}_p$ (PG)	Remark
1	Identify and utilize the power structure in a community	3.52	2.10	1.42	IN
2	Determine leadership pattern for dissemination of information	3.76	2.06	1.70	IN
3	Involve program committee members in the community when recruiting leaders	3.69	1.59	2.10	IN
4	Develop job descriptions for leadership positions	3.70	2.00	1.70	IN
5	Apply basic principles of group dynamics during leadership training	3.65	2.03	1.62	IN
6	Obtain commitment from leaders regarding resources that	3.80	2.00	1.80	IN

	they can contribute				
7	Identify training needs of leaders	3.57	3.24	0.33	IN
8	Plan and conduct leadership training courses	3.35	3.11	0.24	IN
9	Assign program responsibilities to leaders	3.58	3.18	0.40	IN
10	Provide continuous support and guidance to leaders	3.25	2.15	1.10	IN
11	Provide appropriate recognition to leaders	3.45	3.28	0.17	IN
12	Evaluate performance of leaders continuously	3.31	3.10	0.21	IN

Key: \bar{X}_n = Mean of needed; \bar{X}_p = Mean of performance; IN = Improvement needed,

The data in Table 1 revealed that the performance gap values of twelve (12) professional competencies ranged from 0.17 to 2.10 and were positive; this indicated that the ADP Supervisors need improvement in Leadership development for effective delivery of extension services in the study area.

Research Question 2

What are the supervision and administrative competencies required by ADP Supervisors for effective delivery of agricultural services to farmers?

The data for answering research question 2 are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Performance Gap Analysis (PGA) of the Mean ratings of ADP Supervisors on administrative competencies for effective delivery of extension services.

S/n	Competency items	\bar{X}_n	\bar{X}_p	$\bar{X}_n - \bar{X}_p$ (PG)	Remark
1	Organize works of staff	3.56	2.00	1.56	IN
2	Explain responsibilities to staff	3.44	2.31	1.13	IN
3	Coordinate works of staff	3.85	2.71	1.14	IN
4	Evaluate performance of staff	2.87	2.52	0.35	IN
5	Communicate effectively with staff and others in the office	3.36	2.24	1.12	IN
6	Provide recognition or criticism to staff when it is due	3.20	3.05	0.15	IN
7	Identify abilities of staff	3.62	3.02	0.60	IN
8	Make effective use of secretary and other office helps	3.48	3.12	0.36	IN
9	Keep and maintain necessary departmental records	3.94	3.31	0.63	IN
10	Prepare and get approval for budget	3.65	3.00	0.56	IN
12	Make efficient use of time for delivery of tasks	3.84	3.28	0.26	IN
13	Resolve conflict tactfully	3.18	2.00	0.48	IN
14	Build effective team spirit among staff	3.54	2.11	1.43	IN
15	Develop openness to constructive criticism from staff	2.36	1.34	1.04	IN
17	Respect staff views and freedom of expression	3.33	2.12	1.21	IN
18	Provide insightful corrections to mistakes of staff	3.24	3.00	0.24	IN

Key: \bar{X}_n = Mean of needed; \bar{X}_p = Mean of performance; IN = Improvement needed,

The data in Table 2 revealed that the performance gap values of all the eighteen (18) professional competencies ranged from 0.24 to 1.56 and were positive; this indicated that the ADP Supervisors need improvement in the eighteen competencies in supervision and administration for effective delivery of extension services.

Research Question 3

What are the public relations and rural affairs competencies required by ADP Supervisors for effective delivery of agricultural services to farmers?

The data for answering research question 3 are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Performance Gap Analysis (PGA) of the Mean ratings of ADP Supervisors on Public relations and Rural affairs competencies for effective delivery of extension services.

S/N	Competency items	\bar{X}_n	\bar{X}_p	$\bar{X}_n - \bar{X}_p$ (PG)	Remark
1	Identify individuals whose supports are important	3.64	2.32	1.32	IN
2	Participate in meetings of relevant groups	3.55	2.13	1.42	IN
3	Develop and maintain working relationships with key individuals in community	3.56	2.24	1.32	IN
4	Develop and maintain working relationship with the mass media	3.54	2.12	1.42	IN
5	Write publicity articles	3.66	3.10	0.56	IN
6	Assemble and update addresses for dissemination of information	3.41	2.20	1.21	IN
7	Inform community regularly about their extension programs	3.35	3.15	0.20	IN
8	Keep abreast with relevant developments	3.22	2.01	1.21	IN
9	Use knowledge of rural culture when dealing with rural public	3.24	3.20	0.04	IN

Key: X_n = Mean of needed; X_p = Mean of performance; IN = Improvement needed,

The data in Table 3 revealed that the performance gap values of all the nine (9) competencies ranged from 0.04 to 1.42 and were positive; this indicated that the ADP Supervisors need improvement in the 9 skills items in public relations and rural affairs for effective delivery of extension services.

Research Question 4

What are the personnel development and research competencies required by ADP Supervisors for Effective delivery of agricultural services to farmers?

The data for answering research question 4 are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Performance Gap Analysis (PGA) of the Mean ratings of ADP Supervisors on Personnel development and Research competencies for effective delivery of extension services.

S/N	Personnel development and research competencies	\bar{X}_n	\bar{X}_p	$\bar{X}_n - \bar{X}_p$ (PG)	Remark
1	Evaluate personal strengths	3.42	3.21	0.21	IN
2	Develop long-range plan for self-professional growth	3.67	3.35	0.32	IN
3	Read relevant periodicals to keep abreast with current research	3.42	3.12	0.30	IN
4	Participate in training conferences, workshops etc.	3.38	3.22	0.16	IN
5	Participate in professional organization and their meetings	3.51	3.11	0.40	IN
6	Identify problem areas that need research in community	3.68	2.65	1.03	IN
7	Use simple methods of data analysis	3.11	3.03	0.08	IN
8	Develop and use simple survey devices (questionnaire, interview schedule)	3.38	3.15	0.23	IN
9	Interpret and report research findings	3.47	3.24	0.23	IN

Key: X_n = Mean of needed; X_p = Mean of performance; IN = Improvement needed,

The data in Table 4 revealed that the performance gap values of all the nine (9) professional competencies ranged from 0.08 to 1.03 and were positive; this indicated that the ADP supervisors needed improvement in the 9 competency items in personnel development and research competencies for effective delivery of extension services in the study area.

Discussion of Findings

The findings in table 1-4 above reveals that the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) Supervisors needed improvements in 12 areas in leadership Development (LD), 17 line areas in administration of resources, 9 professional competencies in public relations and rural affairs and 9 areas in personnel and research affairs for effective delivery of extension services in the study area.

The findings above are in agreement results were in agreement with the findings of Dimelu (2010) on a study carried out on “Competency Improvement Needs of Teachers of Home Economics in the Use of ICT for Effective Teaching in Colleges of Education in South-Eastern Nigeria” where it was found out that teachers of Home Economics in Colleges

of Education needed improvement in 16 competency items in word processing; 13 competency items in internet usage and 15 competency items in presentation (power points).

The findings of the study are also in consonance with the findings of Amusa (2009) in a study on “Competency improvement needs of Farmers in Cocoyam production in Ekiti State Nigeria” where it was found out that farmers require improvement in competencies in planning , planting, post planting, processing, preservation and storage operations of cocoyam, The findings of the authors cited above help to validate the findings of this study.

Conclusion/Recommendations

In the area of study, observation and interaction of the researcher with ADP Supervisors revealed that most of them that have been in the extension service lack the requisite competencies for effective leadership. These Officers are rather interested in activities focused mainly on information and education of farmers, mobilization of farmers’ cooperatives, agricultural credit disbursement with little or no emphasis to the leadership management/operational system in ADP.

The government in the states of the south east Nigeria could be implicated as one of the factors that is mostly responsible for lack of in-service leadership training. The study tried to determine competency improvement needs of ADP supervisors in leadership for effective delivery of extension services. It was found out by the study that ADP supervisors need improvement in all the 42 competency items identified by the study.

It was therefore recommended that the findings of this study be utilized by Ministry of Training and Establishment under the Office of the Head of Service in the five states of the south east to organise leadership training programmes in form of workshops, seminars or short duration courses for ADP Supervisors in South east, Nigeria.

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