ATTITUDE OF EXTENSION PERSONNEL TO TRAINING AND VISIT EXTENSION SYSTEM IN BENUE AND PLATEAU STATES, NIGERIA.

ISAAC E. ILEVBAOJE

ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to find out the attitudes of extension workers to the training and visit (T&V) extension system as a complimentary step to specify if this extension approach is on course in Nigeria. Results obtained indicate that about 10.8, 65.8 and 23.3% of the extension personnel in Benue and Plateau states hold poor, moderately favourable and high favourable attitudes to T&V system respectively. Although the mean attitude scores for the various levels of extension staff were not found to be significantly different at 5 percent level of probability, the mean score for the project headquarters staff (106.25) was highest while that of the zonal extension officers (79.0) was lowest. In order to make the attitudes of extension workers more affirmative, the paper recommended, inter alia, staff motivation, minimizing political and administrative interference in staff work and a reasonable reduction in the work load of extension staff.

Key words: attitude, extension personnel, training and visit

INTRODUCTION

Attitude, as a psychological construct, has acquired diverse meanings. Traditional definition of attitude contains a slightly conception of its meaning. Definitions such as Eagly and Himmelfard (1978) and Fishhein and Ajzen (1975) view attitude as a mental and neutral state of readiness, organized through the experience exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related. According to Kerlinger (1973), attitude is an organized predisposition, to think, feel, perceive and behave forward a referent and cognitive object. Conceptualized as the degrees of positive and negative affect associated with

a particular psychological object (Triandis, 1971), attitude is viewed as obstacle to change thereby becoming legitimate target of change efforts.

According to Uwakah (1981) the relationship between attitudes and social action has been a major area of interest and the focus of a considerable amount of research by scholars in various disciplines. It is generally agreed that the direction and outcome of social action is determined more than anything else by the actor's set of beliefs and disbeliefs (Reeder, 1972) and Rogers, 1971). Based on this theory, an agency will succeed in achieving its declared objectives only to the extent its personnel behave in accordance with the norms, goals and set policies of the agency and when the members have developed in themselves democratic philosophy (attitudes, values and beliefs) which reflect a concern for the development of the people. Specifically, it can be stated that the relative success of an extension service can be determined by assessing, in part, the attitude, which the extension personnel hold toward their work.

Agricultural extension in Nigeria received boost in 1986 when the Training and Visit (T&V) system was introduced through the use of loans secured from the World Bank. The purpose of the introduction of this extension model was to remedy the weaknesses inherent in the previous approaches by rendering research relevant to the small farmers and by formulating the results so that they are perceived to be relevant and can readily be put into practice.

Unfortunately, it would appear that the elegy on T&V system is being song around the world. Both the fastidious and the compassionate evaluators have been vehement in their denunciation of this extension approach (Jaiswal, 1983; Moris 1983, Singh, 1983; Howell 1984; Moor, 1984; Gentil, 1989; Belloncle 1989; and Roberts, 1989). Oakley (1991) posited that with the advent of T&V system, efforts at promoting participation in extension have taken a major set backward and that T&V system is conspicuous for its lack of meaningful farmer participation.

Several studies carried out in India reveal staff differential attitudinal disposition to T&V system. Perumal and Menon (1986) reported that village

extension workers were satisfied with the introduction of T&V in Madurai district as they hold favourable attitude to this extension approach. According to Hardhan and Reddy (1986), agricultural extension workers hold medium or less favourable attitude toward T&V system. Rao and Reddy (1986) reported that majority of extension personnel hold moderately favourable attitude toward T&V system. Working in Sriramsagar Command Area Development Project where the intensified agricultural extension project (T&V) has been in operation since 1974, Rao and Reddy (986) found that majority (80%) of village extension officers hold favourable to highly favourable attitude to T&V system with 18% and 21% holding unfavourable and neutral attitude, respectively.

In Nigeria, Uwakah (1981) reported that extension staff had a moderately favourable attitude toward their vocation with 90% of the respondents indicating that extension was an interesting and challenging job, which offered them the opportunity to use their knowledge and skills. Asiabiaka (1991) studied women extension agents attitude towards their job and found that they strongly disagreed with the statement that women extension agents should be confined to home economics.

This investigation was specifically undertaken to assess the attitude of extension personnel to the training and visit extension system. Workers attitude to work is of great concern to policy makers in Nigeria, as it may help to point at problem areas that affect job performance.

METHODOLOGY

Forty attitudinal statements about T&V system were prepared and edited in accordance with the informal criteria suggested by Edward (1957). Half of the statements were stated positively and the other half, negatively. The arrangement of the statements was done randomly in order to minimize possible response set.

Two methods were adopted in pretesting this instrument. Firstly, five judges were requested to scrutinize each statement and indicate if agreement implies a positive or negative attitude towards T&V. It was decided that any

statement with less than 80 percent concordance with regards to its direction will be rejected. From this initial procedure, ten items were discarded. Secondly, forty farmers were asked to respond to each statement on a five-point Likert type scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). Scores of 5, 4, 3,2 and 1 were assigned to the five positions for positive statements while the scores were reversed for negative statements. The critical ratios of each of the thirty-two statements were calculated. Critical ratio measures the extent to which a given statement differentiates between high and low groups of the respondents. Twenty-five percent of the respondents with the highest scores and twenty-five percent of the respondents with the lowest scores comprised the high and low groups. Applying this second procedure, five statements whose t-values (ratios) were less than 1.75 were again rejected while twenty-five statements were retained. This implies that respondents will have attitude scores ranging from 25 (minimum score) to 125 maximum score for the 25 items involved.

In the final administration of this instrument a total of 141 extension personnel were selected using stratified sampling technique. The strata are in conformity with the operational delineation of the project area into project Headquarters, Zones, Areas, Blocks, and Circles. From each of these strata, 8 headquarter staff, 21 zonal officers (14 zonal extension officers and 7 zonal subject matter specialists), 7 area extension officers, 21 block extension officers and 84 village extension agents were randomly taken. After scrutinizing the instruments returned only 120 were found to be useable giving a response ratio of 85.11 percent.

The data were machine edited and analysed using SAS software. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in the study. Descriptive statistics were mainly frequency counts and percentages while analysis of variance (ANOVA) was the inferential statistics adopted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the responses of farmers to the specific items in the attitude scale. Generally, extension personnel tend to agree with a number of both the positive and the negative statements. With a mean score of 4.6 extension staff strongly agree with the statement that it is absolutely desirable to visit farmers on fortnightly schedule. They also agreed that it is appalling that village extension agents do not have offices (mean =2.5). The extension staff, however, disagreed with the statement that extension provides no future for most of its staff (mean = 3.6) as well as the statement which specifies that there isn't much one can be proud of in extension (mean =3.5). Extension staff tended to have maintained a position of neutrality on the statements which specified that supervisory staff expect too much from their subordinates (mean =3.1) and visits by non-ADP agencies are helpful in resolving field problems (mean =3.1).

It is interesting to note that there is agreement among extension personnel that there is poor coordination between extension and input supply agencies (mean =2.1). These findings may suggest, a priori, that extension personnel have favourable attitude to extension T&V system. The findings also point to the fact that certain aspects of the T&V system would have to be seriously re-examined for greater impact. The issues of non-availability of offices for frontline extension agents, poor coordination between extension and input agencies, political-cum-administrative interference with selection of contact farmers as well as cell and block headquarters which is probably why there is neutrality with the statement that most contact farmers are easy to work with (mean =3.4). Also to be critically re-examined is the workload of extension staff as extension agreed with the statement that with T&V, their workload has increased (mean =4.0). There is agreement among extension workers that hard work by staff is not recognized as a parameter for promotion and advancement. This position may serve as a discentive to hardworking staff and is capable of weakening an extension service. Hardworking staff should therefore be appropriately rewarded.

The data presented in Table 2 indicate that taking the states together, about 10.8, 65.8 and 23.3% of the respondents hold unfavourable/poor, moderately favourable and high favourable attitudes to T&V system. Disaggregated majority (81.3%) of extension staff in Benue State hold moderately favourable attitudes to T&V system while about 6.3 and 12.5% have poor and high favourable attitude to this extension model, respectively. In the case of Plateau State, about 13.9, 55.6 and 30.6% of extension workers hold poor, moderately favourable and high favourable attitude, respectively. On comparative basis, a much higher proportion of staff cluster in the high favourable attitude in Plateau State (30.6%) than in Benue State (12.5%). This differential attitudinal disposition could be explained by the fact that T&V was first pilot tested in Plateau State before it spread to Benue State in subsequent years.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) carried out to compare a mean attitude scores of the various categories of staff gave an F-ratio of 1.61 which was not significant at 0.05 level of probability (Table 3). Nevertheless, the mean score for the project headquarters staff (106.25) was highest while that of zonal extension officers (79.00) was the lowest. The block extension supervisors, village extension agents, area extension officers and subject matter specialists had mean scores of 92.50, 85.88, 83.86 and 82.17, respectively. While it is impressive that these mean scores are higher than the overall mean (75.0), it is worrisome that zonal extension officers who have the overall leadership and responsibility for the effective implementation and coordination of extension at all levels in the zones should have the lowest attitude score. The same is true for the subject matter specialists who are expected to play crucial role in the T&V system by training field level staff on production recommendations on fortnightly basis. If this unwholesome problem is not quickly put under control, the situation could well mar and frustrate effective implementation of the T&V system in these states.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Majority of extension personnel hold moderately favourable attitude to T&V system. On a comparative basis, high proportion of extension staff cluster in the high favourable attitude in Plateau than in Benue state. Although, not primarily an evaluative study, to the extent that extension personnel agreed with the statement that training of extension workers is now of better quality than under the previous extension systems, local appropriateness of production recommendations has greatly improved under T&V system, each day of field work is full of excitement and new challenges but disagreed with the statement that field supervision has not in any way improved, it can be deduced with relative tentativeness that T&V is truly on course in Nigeria. However, several aspects need explicit attention, not only to make the attitudes of the extension personnel more affirmative to T&V system, but also to improve effectiveness and impact of this extension approach. These include:

(1) sufficient motivation of all cadres of extension staff, notably, the zonal extension officers and the subject matter specialists;
(2) better and improved coordination between extension and input supply agencies;
(3) minimizing political and administrative interference in the selection of contact farmers as well as the siting of circle and block headquarters;
(4) providing manageable office accommodation for the field level workers;
(5) effecting a reasonable reduction in the work load of staff to stem frustration;
(6) recognition of and, appropriate reward for hard work; and
(7) encouragement and support by supervisory staff and agencies in resolving field problems faced by staff in the lower rung of extension's organisational ladder.

REFERENCES

As. Jaka, C.C. (1991). Women Extension Agents' Attitude Towards Their Job. Nigerian Journal of Rural Extension and Development. Vol. 1, No.1, pp. 47-53.

Belloncle, G. (1989). Proposals for a New Approach to Extension in Africa. In Roberts, N. (ed.) Agricultural Extension in Africa. Washington D.C. A World Bank symposium, pp. 37-44.

Eagly, A.H. and Himmelfard, S. (1978). Attitudes and Opinions In Rosenzweign, M.R. and Porter, L.W. (ed.) annual Reviewing Psychology, Vol. 29, Palo-Alto Annual Reviews Inc.

Edwards, A.L. (1957). Techniques of Attitude Scale Construction. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 13-16, 153-157.

Fishbein, M. and Ajzen, I. (1975). Belief, Attitude, Intention And Behaviour: An Introduction to Theory and Research, Reading Mass: Addison – Wesley.

Gentil, D.A. (1989). Few Questions on the Training and Visit Method. In Roberts, N. (ed.) Agricultural Extension in Africa. Washington D.C. A World Bank Symposium, pp. 25-29.

Hardhan, G. and Reddy, V.S. (1986). Attitude of Farmers And Agricultural Extension Workers towards Intensive Agricultural Extension System (T&V) in West Bengal. In Desai, G.R. and Reddy, M.R. (ed.) Studies on Training and Visit Extension in India. Faculty of Extension and Transfer Technology, NIRD vol. II, pp. 64-65.

Howel, J. (1984). Conditions for the Design and Management Of Agricultural Extension, Agricultural Administration Network Discussion Paper 13, London: Overseas Development Institute.

Jaiswal, N.K. (1981) Transfer of Technology under T&V –Problem Identification. Background Papers. Workshop on Management of Transfer of Farm Technology under the Training and Visit Extension System, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad.

Kerlinger, F.N. (1973). Foundations of Behavioural Research. Holt, Renihart and Wiston, Inc. London. 719p.

Moore, M. (1984). Institutional Development: The World Bank and India's New Agricultural Extension Programme. The Journal of Development Studies, 20 (4): 303-317.

Moris, J. (1983). Reforming Agricultural Extension and Research Services in Africa. Agricultural Administration Network Discussion Paper II, London: Overseas Development Institute.

Oakley, P. (1991) Projects with People: The Practice of Participation in Rural Development, Geneva: ILO 284p.

Perumal, G. and Menon, K.R. (1986). Opinion of Village Extension Workers on the Introduction of Training and Visit System in Madurai District in Desai, G. R. and Reddy, M.R. (ed.). Studies on Training and Visit Extension in India, Faculty of Extension and Transfer of Technology, NIRD Vol. II, pp.57.

Rao, V.K. and Reddy, V.S. (1986). An Evaluative Study on the Impact of Intensive Agricultural Extension Programme, (T&V system) in Andhira Pradesh. In Desai, G.R. and Reddy, M.R. (ed.). Studies on Training and Visit Extension in India, Faculty of Extension and Transfer of Technology, NIRD Vol.II, pp.65-68.

Rao, S.B.V. and Reddy, V.S. (1986). Effectiveness of Intensive Agricultural Extension Programme, (T&V system_ - A Comparative Study with Normal Agricultural Extension System. In Desai, G.R. and Reddy, M.R. (ed). Studies on Training and Visit Extension in India, Faculty of Extension and Transfer of Technology, NIRD Vol. II, pp.85-90.

Reeder, W.W. (1972). Beliefs, Disbeliefs and Social Action: A Theoretical Behaviour. Department of Rural Soc. Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

Roberts, N. (1989). The World Bank and the Training and Visit System in East Africa. In Roberts, N. (ed.). Agricultural Extension System in Africa. Washington D.C.: A World Bank Symposium, pp. 19-24.

Rogers, E.M. (1971). Social Structure and Social Change. Amer. Behav. Soi. 14(4): 767-782.

Singh, R.N. (1983). T&V in Chambal Command Area (Kota District: Some Observations. In Backgroiund Papers. Workshop on Management of Transfer of Farm Technology Under Training and Visit System. Hyderabad: National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD).

Triandis, H.C., Social Psychology (1971). In Leagans, J.P. and Loomis, C.A. (ed.) Behavioural Change in Agriculture; Concepts and Strategies from Influencing Transition. Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London pp. 331-365.

Uwakah, C.T. (1980). Attitude to Extension Work: A Survey of Field Staff in Imo and Anambra States of Nigeria. The Nigerian Journal of Agricultural Extension.

Table 1: Percentage response of Extension Personnel to Attitudinal Statements Concerning T&V System

RESPONSES		
STATE		Mean Score
It is absolutely necessary to visit farmers groups on fortnightly schedule	**Benue** **Plateau**	4.6 4.6
It is appalling that VEAs have no offices	**Benue** **Plateau**	2.5 2.5
Training of extension workers is now of better quality than under the previous extension system.	**Benue** **Plateau**	4.4 4.3
The frequency of the fortnightly training sessions should be reduced	**Benue** **Plateau**	3.3 3.8
The local appropriateness of production recommendations has greatly improved under the T&V system	**Benue** **Plateau**	4.5 4.2
Field supervision by extension workers has not in any way improved	**Benue** **Plateau**	4.3 3.9
With T&V system my work load has increased.	**Benue** **Plateau**	3.8 4.2
There is political interference with my job-selection of contact farmers, choice of village/block HQ.	**Benue** **Plateau**	3.4 3.7
The best way to do extension is to provide farmers with production recommendations.	**Benue** **Plateau**	3.4 3.8
There is poor coordination between extension and input supply agencies	**Benue** **Plateau**	1.7 2.5
I consider my visit schedule too rigid and therefore unachievable.	**Benue** **Plateau**	3.8 3.5
Each day of field work is full of excitement and	**Benue**	3.4

new challenges	**Plateau**	3.7
Compared with other jobs, extension gives no prestige.	**Benue** **Plateau**	2.7 3.0
If I had to do it again I would still choose extension as a career.	**Benue** **Plateau**	3.7 4.0
There isn't much one can be proud of in extension.	**Benue** **Plateau**	3.7 3.3
Extension gives one a chance to use his skills and knowledge.	**Benue** **Plateau**	4.4 4.5
Extension provides no future for most of its staff.	**Benue** **Plateau**	3.5 3.6
Extension component of the ADP is doing everything it can to encourage its staff.	**Benue** **Plateau**	2.9 3.2
Hard work by field extension staff is of no help in getting promotion in the ADP.	**Benue** **Plateau**	2.9 3.1
Most contact farmers are easy to work with.	**Benue** **Plateau**	2.9 3.8
Most supervisory staff are difficult to work with	**Benue** **Plateau**	3.2 3.3
Supervisory staff expect too much from their subordinates.	**Benue** **Plateau**	3.1 3.1
Visits by non-ADP agencies are extremely helpful resolving field problems.	**Benue** **Plateau**	2.8 3.5
I do not have enough time for my family because of the pressure imposed by the T&V system.	**Benue** **Plateau**	2.8 2.6
There is no room for indolent workers in the T&V system.	**Benue** **Plateau**	4.5 4.3

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Extension Personnel On the Attitudes Toward T&V System

DIRECTION OF ATTITUDE	STATES		TOTAL
	BENUE	PLATEAU	
Poor Unfavourable (a)	6.3	13.9	10.8
Moderately favourable (b)	81.3	55.6	65.8
High favourable ©	12.5	30.6	23.3

Legend:
a=<59 attitude score; b=59-92 attitude score; c=>92

Table 3: Analysis of Variance of Attitude Scores Among Different Categories of Extension Personnel in Benue and Plateau States

Source	DF	Sums of Square	Mean Square	F-value	Prob >F
Mode	5	4197.51	839.50	1.61 (NS)	0.1642
Error	114	59612.08	522.91		
Corrected Total	119	63809.59			

NS = Not significant at .5 percent.