

# **EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS, VISION 20, 2020/TRANSFORMATION AGENDA**

*Dr. Leonard C. Chukwu*

## **Abstract**

This paper discusses effective management of agricultural extension education in Nigeria and its implications for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Vision 20, 2020/ the transformation agenda. The concepts, education, agricultural extension, agricultural extension education were explained. The principles of agricultural extension education were highlighted, including the basic functions of the agent. Methods of disseminating extension information were also explained including the various handicaps that impede effective performance of the extension worker. The paper maintains that repositioning the agricultural extension programme at all levels of government is a sine qua non for realizing our dreams of food self sufficiency. Such recommendations as better funding of agricultural extension education programme and better motivation of the extension agent amongst others were put forward.

Education has widely been acclaimed as the greatest instrument of positive change. It forms the most effective challenge against ignorance, disease and poverty. Education empowers individuals and transforms societies and nations (Chukwu, 2009). Realizing the prime importance of education in national transformation the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) highlights education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. Education provides people with the capacity and potential to develop themselves, thereby enhancing their individual and societal well being.

Erebor (2003), posited that agricultural extension is the process which assists farmers through educational procedures in improving farming methods and techniques. It is the process whereby the beneficial products of research are taken to the farmers and the problems of farmers taken to research institutions for solution. Agricultural extension education is a non-formal education for farmers and their families as a means of attaining higher standards of living for themselves. This enables them attain a level that will make them contribute more to national development efforts. It is an informal type of education given to farmers so that they can improve their farming operations. The National Educational Research and Development Council, (NERDC) (1999), maintained that the purpose of agricultural extension education is to spread useful and practical knowledge to farmers with a view to raising their mental and technical skills to make their contributions to economic and social development more effective. For Nigeria as a developing country with a largely illiterate rural  
*The Nigerian Journal of Research and Production Volume 21 No 1, November, 201*

population, agricultural extension education becomes strategic to the realization of our national development efforts particularly in the area of food production and national manpower development. Agricultural extension education pays more attention to the rural population because:-

1. They form the vast majority of people whose sole means of livelihood is agriculture.
2. They are outside the mainstream urban society, hence they do not benefit from most of the investments made by government.
3. Their level of living is relatively low and they suffer from illiteracy, lack modern skills and therefore could not utilize modern scientific advances to improve their lives and productive systems (NERDC, 1999).

It is important to note that most members of the rural population who are engaged in agriculture are adults. It therefore follows that extension education which is non formal in nature is directed mostly towards adults and other members of the society who probably were unable to access and harness formal education. Akinsanmi (1999) argued that any improvement in tropical agriculture must involve farmers education, which will enable them to increase their productive potential and raise their social status. He contends that knowledge will make it possible for farmers to benefit from extension programmes. Akinsanmi further asserted that:

“Education can play a part in developing a sense of responsibility and respect for hardwork which are essential qualities of a good farm manager, as he is faced with the responsibility of planning, organizing, and operating all the elements of production”. Moreover Gbodi and Obuekwe (2007) maintained that Nigeria was an agricultural country prior to the discovery of oil. Then, agriculture constituted the main stay of the Nigerian economy providing foreign exchange, employment, raw materials for industries and capital for the development of other sectors of the economy, of which the nomads (mostly adults) were the major contributors. Today, agriculture has attained a higher status, it is multidisciplinary in nature and has grown from the age old occupation of animal husbandry and crop cultivation. It now embraces veterinary practice, scientific fishery, forestry and new sciences like Biotechnology and tissue culture. Thus, nomads who are the main stay of agricultural economy need qualitative education in order to cope with new trends in agricultural information. This will:-

1. Integrate them into national life and provide them with relevant and functional basic education.
2. Provide them the requisite knowledge and survival skills to enable them improve upon their occupation.

***Effective Management of Agricultural Extension Education in Nigeria: Implications for the Millennium Development Goals, Vision 20, 2020/Transformation Agenda***

---

3. Sensitize the nomads to their human and constitutional rights as bonafide Nigerians. Nomads of the tropics are locked into a primitive unproductive system and only the infusion of new and strikingly better technologies of production (which comes from updated and modern information), will transform traditional agriculture to modern agriculture and unlock the food potentials of the tropics and Nigeria in particular. Nomads could be described as a group of people without a specific place of abode who wander from place to place in search of pasture for their livestock. Ngwu (2006) further listed nomads to include cattle herdsman, migrant fisher folks, migrant farmers and refugees.

It is imperative to point out at this juncture that effective agricultural extension education is crucial for all segments of the population including the nomads. This is because it is easier to harness the agricultural (food) potentialities of the nation when all hands are on deck. After all a hungry society cannot be taken seriously when talking about the Millennium Development Goals and vision 20, 2020. Any successful agricultural extension education programme must involve the Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Institutes which train the requisite personnel in the form of extension agents or workers. These in turn expose the local farmers to the latest techniques involved in husbandry, crop production and other areas of agriculture.

For any programme of agricultural extension education to succeed, the following basic principles must be observed:-

1. Extension education should start from the level of rural peoples' understanding. Their level of knowledge, education and understanding is therefore imperative to the educator in order to achieve stated objectives or goals.
2. The extension agent or educator must work with local leaders if he is to achieve results. The opinions of these leaders are always highly respected by the locals.
3. Agricultural extension education programmes must be directed towards satisfying the needs and interests of the beneficiaries.
4. Extension education must be a gradual process
5. It is imperative to state that almost all programmes of agricultural extension education are inspired, funded and implemented by the government. This, the government facilitates through the extension educator or agent. The success or failure of any programme of agricultural

extension education therefore depends largely on the efforts of the educator or agent.

According to Erebor (2003) and NERDC (1999), the educator or agent functions thus:

1. Through education, he helps farmers to increase their plant and livestock production.
2. He teaches women home management
3. The educator acts as a connecting link between the researchers, the research institutes and the farmers and/or farming communities.
4. Certain skills and specialization in the production of certain crops and animals are also acquired by farmers through the agent.
5. He consults and reflects on rural or agricultural development projects.
6. Certain basic information relating to the development of rural economy and implementation of certain programmes of agriculture are collected and collated by the extension agent.
7. He functions to improve the outlook of farmers towards their problems, challenges and/or difficulties in all fields of agriculture.
8. He helps to monitor and supervise the activities of beneficiaries of agricultural loans.
9. He liaises and works with other agencies that may have influence on both the rural environment and the farmers.
10. His activities help to improve the standard of living of farmers.
11. He plans and executes educational programmes for farmers including workshops, seminars and talk shows.
12. He organizes and supervises farmers groups eg cooperatives through meetings, constant dialogue, advice and direction.
13. The agent helps in eradicating obnoxious beliefs amongst rural farmers. For example, some of the farmers believe that fizzle feathered fowls occur due to witchcraft and/or wizardry. Also that tubers cultivated with fertilizers do not store well amongst other such beliefs.
14. He organizes, supervises and evaluates agricultural extension programmes and projects.
15. He gives necessary assistance to foreign experts visiting states at the invitation of the federal government in order to carry out various feasibility studies in various fields of agriculture.
16. He teaches farmers land management techniques, which increase land fertility and productivity.
17. His activities greatly improve food production, cash crops and livestock.
18. The extension educator teaches farmers improved practices in processing livestock and crops.
19. Since agricultural extension education is government facilitated, the agent helps government to collect and collate basic information used for planning agricultural programmes.

***Effective Management of Agricultural Extension Education in Nigeria: Implications for the Millennium Development Goals, Vision 20, 2020/Transformation Agenda***

---

- 20. He promotes efficient use and management of water resources to increase the production of crops and livestock.
- 21. He promotes the use of better farm implements and machinery amongst farmers eg ox-drawn carts, ploughs, harrows, ridgers, tractors, planters etc.
- 22. The extension agent promotes the adoption of improved storage facilities.
- 23. He teaches farmers improved methods of cultivation, harvesting and processing of agricultural products.

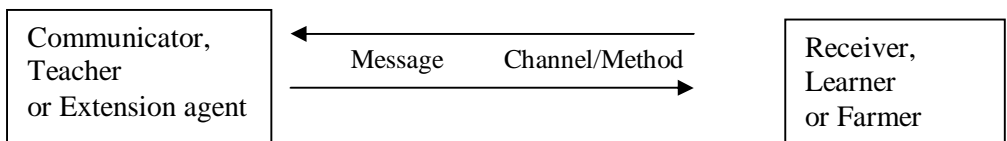
**Aims of Agricultural Extension Education**

The NERDC (1999) affirmed that the central aim of agricultural extension education is to teach farmers how to raise their skills and standard of living by their own efforts through wise and effective use of available resources. This is accomplished if people learn better systems of farming, livestock husbandry, improved sanitation and nutrition. The aim of extension education is therefore to improve both the productivity and manpower resources of a nation. In this case our country Nigeria. This becomes very imperative noting the enormous developmental challenges facing the country:- widespread illiteracy, endemic poverty and disease. It becomes even more pressing as the country strives to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and join the league of the 20 most developed economies in the world by the year 2020.

Unwavering commitment on the part of the government and all stakeholders is needed for the achievement of the aims of agricultural extension education. The extension agent who is very strategic in the implementation of the programmes of extension education also needs unflinching support.

**Extension Education as a Teaching/Learning Process**

As a teaching/learning process, extension education involves interaction between two or more people through the process of communication. This communication process is represented diagrammatically below:



**Fig. 1. Communication Process in Agricultural Extension Education**

It could be observed that as a teaching/learning process, extension education is a continuous process. The communicator or teacher/agent passes the message (new idea) which passes through a channel (medium) and then is finally received by the learner (farmer). Most often, there is a feedback from the farmer

and the teaching/learning process continues. Disseminating information is vital for the success of extension education programmes.

### **Methods of Disseminating Extension Information**

Extension education is facilitated through three major means. These include:-

1. **Mass Method:** This is used when the message is aimed to reach a large number of people at the same time. The message is thus passed through such media or channels as radio, television, mobile cinema, film shows, news letters, newspapers, handbills, pamphlet and organization of agricultural shows or farmers festivals.
2. **Group Method:** Is used when the message is meant for a relatively smaller group of people. Channels such as village meetings, cooperative societies, lectures, demonstrations and organizing field days are appropriate.
3. **Individual Method or Personal Contact:** These include home, office and farm visits, phone calls and correspondence through letters.

The place of the extension educator or agent in the success of any programme of extension education cannot be overemphasized. There are however many challenges and problems that impinge on his capacity to successfully carry out his duties.

### **Problems of the Extension Worker**

The following problems hinder the successful execution of the agents mandate:-

1. Low level of literacy amongst farmers, making it difficult for them to follow instructions on new techniques involved in agriculture.
2. Inadequate farm inputs which further get to the farmers late.
3. The government does not involve extension agents in planning extension and other agricultural programmes.
4. Inadequate supervision and training of extension workers.
5. Extension agents are not adequately motivated in terms of pay package and other incentives.
6. Extension agents are often faced with the uncooperative attitude of farmers especially the nomads.
7. There are very few extension workers working with too many farmers.
8. Poor and inadequate facilities for extension communication, thereby limiting the scope and efficiency of coverage. The mass media also do not give adequate coverage to extension programmes.
9. Poor funding of extension education (FRN 2009 and Erebor, 2003).

**Effective Management of Agricultural Extension Education, the MDGs and Vision 20, 2020/the Transformation Agenda**

Goal number one of the MDGs, (1990-2015) which deals with eradicating extreme poverty talks about:-

- i. Reducing by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day.
- ii. Reducing by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger (Akpa, 2005).

In the same vein, the transformation agenda of the federal government which also harps on food security affirms that government will ensure the optimal performance of all areas of the agricultural sector. It further maintains that agriculture contributes 42% of Nigeria's GDP and engages over 65% of the country's workforce. This percentage is mostly rural and illiterate. The sector is constrained by enormous challenges, and it is characterized by low output, inefficient and antiquated production tools and infrastructure. Approximately 66% of the country's total land mass of 92.377 million hectares is suitable for agricultural production but under half of that is currently cultivated. Poor funding has led to the total collapse of research and extension services in the sector (FRN, 2009). The above revelation has highlighted the parlous state of agriculture in Nigeria and the strategic importance of agricultural extension education to the growth of the sector. One sure step towards enhancing productivity in the agricultural sector is the effective management of the agricultural extension education sub-sector.

Igwe in Bassey and Archibong (2001) and Alabi (2001) agreed that management involves the organizing of available resources, which include human and material resources, programmes and constraints for the achievement of some predetermined objectives. In affirmation, management implies a social process involving all activities put in place to achieve the goals and objectives of an individual or an organization. It is an integration of individuals or group efforts, the designing of organizational structure or framework and strategies towards achieving a corporate goal (Oni, 2006). The success of any human endeavour without doubt therefore is largely dependent on effective management of its component variables (Alabi 2001).

The imperative of effective management of the agricultural extension education programme in Nigeria cannot therefore be overemphasized. This process which exposes the rural farmers to the modern techniques involved in agriculture will surely reduce illiteracy, within the population, reduce hunger and enhance food sufficiency. Achieving the goals of the MDGs and vision 20, 2010/The Transformation Agenda of the federal government would then be in

sight. The federal government, the states and local governments including all stakeholders in agriculture should take note.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Nigeria's oil reserve is fast dwindling including the revenue from that source. The Niger Delta crises though reduced is still posing an enormous and frightening challenge, coupled with the current global economic melt-down whose end is no where in sight. All indices of development around the world presently including Nigeria are depicting negative growth. We have more than 160million mouths to feed in Nigeria, not unmindful that the MDGs and vision 20, 2020, must be achieved with the transformation agenda as a guide. Agriculture remains our sure hope as a nation. Repositioning the agricultural extension education programme at all levels of government:- Federal, State and Local becomes more urgent than ever. Infact it is a sine qua non for realizing our dreams of food sufficiency. It is therefore imperative that:-

1. The programme of agricultural extension is better funded and managed, and corruption checked to avoid wastage;
2. Extension agents should be better motivated in the form of enhanced pay package and other allowances and incentives;
3. Intensive and well packaged agricultural science syllabus should form a very important part of the curriculum of compulsory adult and nomadic education. This should be taken to all nooks and crannies of the country including the nomadic and migrant population;
4. There should be an effective and constant monitoring, supervision and evaluation of the programme of agricultural extension education to ensure that goals are constantly attained.
5. Extension agents should be better trained including organizing regular workshops and seminars to ensure result oriented service delivery.
6. There should be an effective linkage between the research institutes and the rural farmers through the extension agents.

### **References**

- Akinsami, O. (1999). *Senior Secondary Agricultural Science*. Essex: Longman group Ltd.
- Akpa, G. O. (2005). Public and Private Sector Contributions to Access and Equity in Nigeria Education. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Administration and Planning*. NAEAP. 5(1) 213-223.
- Alabi, A. T. (2001). Effective Management Strategies for a Free and Compulsory School System in Kwara State. In N.A. Nwagwu, E.T. Ehiamentor, M.A. Ogunu & M. Nwadiani (Eds) *Current Issues in Educational Management in Nigeria*\_NAEAP, Benin City Ambik Press.



***Effective Management of Agricultural Extension Education in Nigeria: Implications for the Millennium Development Goals, Vision 20, 2020/Transformation Agenda***

---

Bassey, U. U. & Archibong, I.A. (2001). Planning and Managing Universal Basic Education (UBE) at the Primary School Level in Cross River State.

In N.A. Nwagwu, E.T. Ehiamezor, M.A. Ogunu & M. Nwadiani (Eds) *Current Issues in Educational Management in Nigeria*. NAEAP, Benin City: Ambik Press.

Chukwu, L.C. (2010). *Extent of Implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme in the South East Zone of Nigeria*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. Enugu: ESUT.

Erebor, O. (2003). *Comprehensive Agricultural Science for Senior Secondary Schools*. Lagos: A Johnson Publishers.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC Press.

Gbodi, E.B. & Obuekwe, G.M. (2007). The effect of instructional video package (IVP) on learning agricultural science among the nomads: A case study of Bosso Local Government Area, Niger State. ESUT, Enugu: *African Journal of Allied Education*. 1(1) 186-193.

Ngwu, P.N.C. (2006). *Education for self-Reliance: Adult and Non-formal Education Perspectives*. Lead Paper Presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual National Conference of the Department of Educational Foundations ESUT, Enugu: 6<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> October.

Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (1999). *Agriculture for Senior Secondary Schools*. Ibadan: University Press.

Oni, A. A. (2006). Effective management of cult related crises in Nigerian Higher education. In J.B. Babalola, A.O. Ayeni, S.O. Adedeji, A.A. Suleiman & M.O. Arikewuyo (Eds) *Educational Management: Thoughts and Practice*. Ibadan: Codat Publications.