



Attitude of Undergraduate to Career Direction in Agricultural Extension Education (AEE)

Paul Orowole

Department of Agricultural Extension and Management, Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu, Nigeria
Email: orowolepaul@gmail.com

Received 6 November 2014; revised 11 December 2014; accepted 28 December 2014

Copyright © 2014 by author and OALib.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

This paper reviews the attitude of undergraduate to extension education and possible job opportunities influencing career direction in agricultural extension. It examined awareness level of undergraduates as well as social factors that influence prospective undergraduates in the field. Stratified random sampling techniques was used to drawn one hundred (100) students of Agricultural Extension (AE) and Agricultural Related (AR) courses in School of Agriculture, Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu to measure relevant variables using nominal and ordinal scales. The study revealed that 29.1% undergraduates that undertook AE courses at Higher National Diploma level chose the course as an opportunity for advancement. 72.7% undergraduates of Agricultural Technology at National Diploma level were oblivion about jobs opportunities available in AEE. Poor and low awareness of the importance of AEE was a key challenge to the course and as well to national development. The study however, suggested guidance and counseling about prospect of AEE to secondary school students and review of teaching curriculum as a means of creating awareness to prospective student of AEE as recommendation.

Keywords

Attitude, Undergraduates, Career-Direction, Agricultural Extension Education

Subject Areas: Agricultural Science, Education

1. Introduction

Extension education and training is a tool for rural development. Literatures revealed that, rural development must therefore be considered with particular reference to agriculture, since agriculture is the basis of livelihood of most rural families. Extension is essentially the means by which new knowledge and idea are introduced into

rural areas in order to bring about change and improve the lives of farmers and their families. Thus, the work of extension is critically important, because without it, farmers would lack access to supportive and improved services required for their productive activities. The role of agricultural extension according to [1] involves dissemination of information; building capacity of farmers through the use of a variety of communication methods and helping farmers make informed decisions. Also, Agricultural Extension has often been conceptualized as an education process, which promotes learning [2].

However the image of agriculture among Nigerian youths seemed to have been bartered perhaps because of the high level of poverty in the rural areas compared to urban areas. Therefore, an improved image focusing on better farming practices and research and development in agriculture would serve to increase the profile of agriculture, along with careers available in agriculture and related areas, thus helping improve students enrolment” [3]. Extension education and training undertaken in some specialized institutions are therefore critical for national development as agriculture has always been identified as the engine of every economic growth and development. Enrolling in an undergraduate or graduate degree program in extension education is a common way agents prepare themselves for employment [4], and other socio-economics variables that are relevant for career direction and growth. Agricultural Extension therefore, is expected to foster a sustainable and dynamic approach to agricultural development and which has remained of great concern to the government and priority for discourse in policy arena [5].

Agriculture remains unattractive to the youth leading to their movement to other sectors of the economy to grab better life [6]. In recent times, migration of young graduates to cities in search of greener pastures can not be quantified. Hence, there is need to assess their perception about career direction in AEE. However, attitude was exposed as the degree of positive or negative effect associated with psychological objects [7].

The perception of AEE in Nigeria by undergraduates needs to be reviewed in order to enhance enrolment and the development of the rural areas and farming activities in the country. It is worthy of note, that the number of students/graduates of Agricultural Extension has increased in the past two decades but this is not responsive to development of farm families and food production in the country [8]. It will therefore enhance agricultural productivity for more students to be attracted to study agriculture. If student possesses a negative image of agriculture as a profession, it is important that improving the image of agriculture would be one step towards improving the number of student enrolments in agriculture and related areas.

Moreover, there is need to design programmes that would provide for wide or better use of extension agents in terms of performance. Thus, no programmes or plan of rural development either by government or any other agency can be of success if it lacks extension agents who are committed and hardworking. Professional competency of extension agents lies on the level of education and training acquired. For extension agents to be committed and hardworking, he must have attained a level of professional competency, which covers attitude, skill and understanding or knowledge needed to perform their job efficiently and effectively [8].

Thus, this paper is tailored toward career prospect available to students’ undertaken courses in extension education.

2. Purpose of Study

The essence of this study was to review the possible challenges faced by undergraduates of agricultural extension. It therefore, investigates the perception of undergraduates in respect of AEE and the available jobs opportunities. Specifically:

1. To determine the level of undergraduate students’ knowledge about jobs available in AEE.
2. To analyze the factors undergraduate students considered important when choosing career in AE/AR courses.
3. And to find out, if awareness of undergraduates students about AEE can stimulate decision to pursue career in the field.

3. Methodology

Sample of students of School of Agriculture in Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu was surveyed to estimate population characteristics. Since it was impossible to take a complete and comprehensive study of the population because of the nature (time), and pattern of distribution and dispersion of the elements of the population. A data collection schedule, that is, questionnaire was designed to measure several variables following the approach of [9]. The questionnaire was administered to sample size of one hundred (100) students. The questionnaire was

administered as follows; National Diploma (ND) students (33), Higher National Diploma (HND) (55) and other students undertaken AR courses (12).

Sample size was chosen using the stratified random sampling method. Accessibility of respondents was determined through personal contact with some students' Leaders and Lecturers in the school to give a "Pathway" for easy administration. All the scales were fully administered in less than four days with management of some "pocket" shortcomings ranging from misplacement of questionnaire by some respondents and delay in responding to the scales by the students. A total of thirty (30) items were logically worded in the scale. These focused on four different sections as shown in the table below (Table 1).

Series of questions used on the scale were developed from review of related studies. Questions in "Part A" were measured using nominal scale while other questions were measured using ordinal scale. Frequencies, percentages and chi square tests were used to analyze the variables on SPSS version 10.0.

4. Results

4.1. Challenges to Agricultural Extension Education

A significantly ($p < 0.01$; $n = 100$) greater percentage of 27.0% of sample respondents considered poor awareness of extension education as a problem to AEE. This view was confirmed by students of extension program at HND level (36.4%) at ($p < 0.02$; $n = 55$). While, 15.2% at ($p < 0.01$; $n = 33$) supported the view. But a greater percentage of (21.2%) of students of Agricultural Technology at ND level considered lack of teaching equipment as a major challenge to AEE. 54.5% further affirmed that access to teaching materials will spur understanding of AEE. At $p < 0.01$; ($\chi^2 = 15.680$; $DF = 5$; $\chi_{tab} = 15.09$), low awareness of AEE was a challenge to the field as highlighted in the table below (Table 2).

4.2. Consideration of Career Direction in AEE by Prospective Undergraduates

72.0% of respondents revealed in the survey that, they have background on extension education. All the respondents learn about extension both at secondary and post secondary school equally. 34.0% of the students and 20.0% students at HND strongly agreed and agreed that guidance and counseling about prospect of AEE to secondary school students can help create awareness about extension activities. (At $p < 0.01$; $DF = 2$; $\chi_{cal} = 11.09$; $\chi_{tab} = 10.60$); it was revealed that guidance and counseling about prospect of AEE can create awareness about the programme. This view was further confirmed by the fact that 45.5% of the students at ND level strongly agreed and 48.5% of students agreed to impact of guidance and counseling about prospect of extension education.

4.3. Knowledge about Jobs Available in Agricultural Extension Education

Of the students surveyed, 52.0% stated that, they did not have knowledge of any possible careers in AE as revealed in Table 3.

Table 1. Outline of numbers of items in the scale of the study.

Part A	Part B	Part C	Part D	Total
06	10	12	02	30

Part A: Personal Data; Part B: Challenges to Extension Education and Training; Part C: Consideration of career in Agricultural Extension; Part D: Factors influencing career in Agricultural Extension.

Table 2. Percentage schedule of awareness of agricultural students to extension education.

Class	Sample population (n)	Percentage (%)
ND	33	15.2
HND	55	36.4
Others	12	33.3
Total	100	27.0

Source: Field survey, 2013.

Table 3. Respondents knowledge of possible careers in agricultural extension education.

Responses	Observed (n)	Expected (n)	Residual
Yes	48	50.0	-2.0
No	52	50.0	2.0
Total	100		

Source: Field survey, 2013.

Out of four jobs listed, which are available to someone with degree in AE, 52.0% of respondents rate their interests very high in farming activities. This view was supported as 34.0% and 33.0% would like to start farming while in school and after NYSC respectively. 33.0% and 31.0% (n = 100) rate their interest in teaching rural farmers high and very high. This opens students to pick-up teaching jobs at any level of institutions and a career as extension agent to rural farm-families. 52.0% of the respondents strongly agreed and 36.0% agreed that consultancy is one of the jobs available in AEE. This view was further ascertained as 45.0% and 20.0% would like to start consultancy services while in school and after NYSC. Also, 72.0% of respondents prefer a career as an extension officer in Civil Service Commission as Extension or Agricultural Officers.

4.4. Factors Influencing Career in Agricultural Extension

At significant level less than 2% ($p < 0.02$), there is relationship between students studying Agricultural Technology at ND level and factors influencing career in AEE ($\chi^2 = 12.303$, $DF = 4$; $\chi_{tab} = 11.67$). 42.4% of respondents with ND level education (n = 33) stated that community influence their decision about career in their present field. Likewise, 52.7% of students studying agricultural extension and related courses at HND level affirmed that, community aids their decision about career in their present field. While 47.0% and 27.0% took decision about career in Agricultural extension due to community and school influence respectively.

4.5. Awareness and Perception Aid Decision to Pursue Career in Agricultural Extension Education

Perception and awareness was a pointer to undergraduates' decision to pursue a career in AEE. This was supported as 43.0% of sample respondents (n = 100) perceived extension education as means of improving rural farm families and 43.0% as well perceived AE as means of obtaining formal education, means to secure jobs and means to improve rural farm families as shown in **Table 4**. These variables are relevant to motivate students to pursue a career in AE. Also, 50.9% and 43.6% of the sample respondents (n = 55) at HND level strongly agreed and agreed respectively that review of teaching curriculum to cater for temporary employment for undergraduate and create jobs for graduate could improve interest in pursuing career in AEE.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Out of 37.0% of agricultural students surveyed at ND level, 21.2% attributed lack of teaching equipment as a major challenge to extension education while 15.2% agreed that awareness of extension education was considerably low. These challenges could be traced to the perception of students' enrolment to agricultural studies. Most students in higher institution are resident of urban cities as 52.0% of respondents visit rural areas occasionally. **Table 5** has more details about visitation to rural areas.

12.0% of sample respondents (n = 100), who were not directly agricultural students attributed inadequate skilled personnel to problem of extension education. 58.3% of this sample rates the level of skilled personnel to extension education averagely. Hence, there is need to improve the awareness of extension education even from secondary school education to orientate prospective undergraduates on possible prospect of extension education. 61.8% of students surveyed at HND level strongly agreed that guidance and counseling about prospect of extension education to secondary school students can help create awareness about extension activities; likewise, 45.8% of the ND students surveyed strongly agreed to this view. Following the above challenges and possible way of alleviation, there is need for strict implementation of agricultural extension training right from secondary school. Extension education could serve as a means of motivations to agricultural education. Prospect of jobs highlighted in this study should be echoed to students even from secondary schools. This will give them considerable knowledge about extension education.

Table 4. Respondents perception of agricultural extension education (n = 100).

Responses	Observed (n)	Expected (n)	Residual
Means of improving rural farm family	43	25.0	18.0
Means to obtain formal education	9	25.0	-16.0
Means to secure job	5	25.0	-20.0
All of the above	43	25.0	18.0
Total	100		

Table 5. Frequency of respondents at ND and HND visit to rural areas.

Options	Frequency (n = 100)	Frequency (n = 33)
Very Regular	03	00
Regular	28	10
Occasionally	52	18
Never	17	05

Source: Field survey, 2010.

There is interest of undergraduates in consulting services as one of the jobs in agricultural extension education. Almost 88% of the respondents in general (n = 100) and 29% of the respondents in particular—ND students (n = 33) of respondents showed interest in consultancy. Thus, this service industry will cater to the need of both small and medium scale farmers that reside in farm settlement of urban cities and some neighboring rural farm families in Lagos State. Over 75.0% of total sample respondents (n = 100) would like to start consulting services as soon as possible. Consequently, if ethics of consultancy service is noted, it will also improve farming activities and meet the major concern of extension education as a means of introducing new knowledge to rural farm-families.

Teaching, which is perceived as one of the crude career in past decades is seen as a lucrative career recently. Over 60.0% of respondents (n = 100) rated their interest high in teaching rural farmers. Therefore, if curriculum is reviewed to cater for employment for both undergraduates and graduates, it will allow students to see the need to aid rural farm-families with innovation that are germane to their productive function.

Image of Agricultural extension and agricultural related education could be traced to sources of information about possible careers in agriculture. This study suggests that parents, friends, teachers and mass media to some extent are responsible for how undergraduates view agricultural extension training. About 47.0% of the total sample was influenced about agricultural extension education through the community/environment. Most of them, through personal investigation felt that, they could meet their social status/ego of being a graduate to take care of themselves, while some, really have passion for nation building through provision of food for the nation.

The consequence of impact of extension education in agricultural sector is prominent to the view of sample surveyed, which showed 4.0% of respondents choosing career in extension education as a means of helping rural dwellers. If, rural farm-families are not developed with current trends in farming, the concern of providing food for the nation will be void. Thus, there is a great concern to address the essence of extension education to introduce new idea to rural farm families.

This paper, to large extent, suggests guidance and counseling about prospect of agricultural extension education to secondary school students and review of teaching curriculum as a means of creating awareness to prospective student of agricultural extension education.

The following are suggestions from this paper:

1. There should be an awareness campaign or re-orientation exercise for secondary school students and stakeholders in educational sector to address the concern of agricultural extension education, which are rural farm-families oriented.
2. There should be a compulsory course in teaching curriculum of undergraduate that will allow them to practice extension service to rural farm-families and this will allow regular visit to rural areas and also, spur their interest in the field.

3. An enforcement of optional practical training (OPT); that is, temporary employment that is directly related to students' major area of study.
4. Orientation and career counseling on prospective careers available to agricultural extension graduates, like; agro-consultancy, agro-journalism, extension broker, seedling producer and marketer, farming, teaching, civil service work, etc. should be emphasized at the entry point of students.

References

- [1] Abanigbe, S., Orowole, P. and Ishola, J. (2012) Perception of Undergraduates toward Agricultural Extension Education and Agricultural Development Linkage in Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Science*, **3**, 186-194.
- [2] Ibrahim, H., Muhammed, D., Yahaya, H. and Luka, E. (2008) Role Perception and Job Satisfaction among Extension Workers in Nassarawa Agricultural Development Programme (NADP) of Nassarawa State, Nigeria. *PAT* 2008, **4**, 62-70.
- [3] Matthews, B. and Falvey, L. (1999) Perception of Agricultural Careers. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, **6**, 55-65.
- [4] Harder, A., Mashburn, D. and Bengel, M. (2009) An Assessment of Extension Education Curriculum at Land Grant Universities. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, **50**, 22-32. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5032/jae.2009.03022>
- [5] Ayansina, S.O. (2011) Farmers' Perception of Public and Private Extension Service in South Western Nigeria. A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy of University of Ilorin.
- [6] Ayanda, I., Olooto, F., Motunrayo, A., Abolaji, G., Yusuf, O. and Subair, S. (2012) Perception of Kwara State University Agricultural Students on farming as Means of Future Livelihood. *International Journal of AgriScience*, **2**, 1053-1061.
- [7] Ayoade, A.R. (2012) Attitude of Women Farmers toward Agricultural Extension Services in Ifelodun Local Government Area, Osun State. *American Journal of Social & Management Sciences*.
- [8] Issa, F.O. (2008) Evaluation of Job Performance of Village Extension Agents in Lagos State. *Journal of Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria*, **11**, 29-30.
- [9] Asika, N. (1991) *Research Methodology in the Behavioral Sciences*, Longman Publisher Ibadan, Nigeria. 39-40.