

# Extent of Use of Performance Indicators for Appraisal of Field Officers in Enugu State Agricultural Development Programme (ENADEP)

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## Abstract

This paper investigated the extent of use of performance indicators for appraisal of field officers in Enugu State Agricultural Development Programme (ENADEP). Two structured questionnaires were used to collect data from a randomly selected sample of 51 senior staff of the establishment. Data were analyzed by use of descriptive statistics. The results showed that establishment of small plot Adoption Techniques (SPATs) and assessment in the Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) form, were the major indicators used to appraise the field officers, but the only one used during promotion is APER form. These findings suggest that the continual use of public service APER form alone in the promotion of technical staff like the field officers or Extension Agents (EAs) in ENADEP is subjective since critical success factors in the job description for these field officers are not embodied in that APER form.

**Keywords:** Performance indicators, Agricultural Development Programme, Field officers, Enugu.

## INTRODUCTION

The Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) was established in the mid-1970s by the Federal Government of Nigeria to transfer agricultural technologies to farmers. The ADP system is designed to raise the productivity, income and standard of living of small-scale farmers who provide over 90% of the gross domestic food supplies (Eboh and Okoye, 1995). The extension workers or field officers are the link between the farmers and the Research Institutes. They are responsible for transferring proven research technologies from the Research Institutes to the farmers and in turn carry the farmers' problems to the Research Institutes for appropriate solution. The performance of the extension agents (EAs) determines to a very great extent the success or failure of the ADP. The EA is the most important personnel in extension and if the EAs are not capable of transferring proven research technologies to the farmers, the effort of the Research Institutes and allied bodies are useless (Ogunbameru and Nonyelu, 1995). According to Chinaka (1995), the performance of the EA determines the productivity of the extension organization. For an EA to have performed or is said to be performing certain performance indicators are implicated. These performance indicators are the criteria used in assessing personnel especially the EAs who are the image-makers of ADP. They form the basis for rewarding or punishing employers. One of the problems has been how to ensure objectivity in the assessment of subordinates by superior officers. By objectivity is meant the quality of fairness, consistency and accuracy of the assessment of subordinates by superior officers.

In ENADEP, an EA won Programme Manager's (PMs) award and certificate of honour, and was sent for training and later promoted to Subject Matter Specialist (SMS) because he was seen in the field planting upland rice with his farmer during an unscheduled visit by the PM. Another EA whose performance gave ENADEP a very high score during the World Bank visit in 1995 was just sent for training. There were other EAs who performed like these ones and were neither rewarded nor recognized by the Management. Before 1996, EAs were paid their Local Transport and Travel (LT&T) claims per month based on number of Small Plot Adoption Techniques (SPATs) established per month for each farming season. This is no longer applicable for some years now. The haphazard use of these performance indicators by extension administrators in assessing EAs leaves one in doubt as to whether there are specified standard criteria for this assessment. In a situation where EAs whose performances have been proved and approved are rewarded differently or not rewarded at all, does not show fairness and gives room for inconsistency and incoherency and introduces problems in the promotion and punishment of the agents. Based on these facts, there is need therefore to specify the real performance indicators and their extent of use by the administrators in the assessment of field officers.

## Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to determine the extent of use of the performance indicators for the appraisal of EAs by their superiors in their performance assessment. The specific objectives were to:

1. ascertain the personnel involved in the assessment of the field officers and the purpose for which they are assessed
2. identify the performance indicators and their uses

3. determine the extent of use of each of the performance indicators by the superior officers during appraisal and draw implications for extension service.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Performance indicators are the criteria or yardstick used in measuring and evaluating the performance of personnel such as extension agents (EAs) (Ezeano,1996) They form basis for promotion, demotion redeployment, transfers, query, warning, disengagement from service, termination, retirement, award of certificate of performance and nomination for in-service courses (Okoye, 1986 and Ezeano,1996 ). It also determines the potential contribution of staff members to the extension organization.

The administration of performance indicators is the shared responsibility of administrative and supervisory personnel. The ultimate evaluation of the employee is a supervisory responsibility. The administrative staff shares in the responsibility for ensuring the success of the plan by its continued support. This support includes; administrative leadership, finance, personnel necessary to assist the supervisors, training of raters, and the essential ingredients for translating the result into action for the improvement of the personnel (Flippo, 1980). The determination of relative performance requires judgment on the part of supervisors. In agreement with this statement. Beach (1980) , recommended that an employee should be evaluated by his superior or by some other qualified persons who are familiar with his job. Usually unreliable evaluations result from lack of definite expectation of criteria upon which to judge the performance of others and irregular contact of subordinates with their supervisors

Lack of understanding or poor knowledge of the performance indicators on the part of the superior officers and their subordinates makes appraisal more difficult and encourages organizational ineffectiveness .It is important that the performance indicators of extension agents(EAs) are brought to their knowledge. The clearer the idea one has of what he is to accomplish, the greater the chances of accomplishing it, because progress can only be measured in terms of what one is trying to make progress towards. It is important therefore that supervisors should devote attention to establishment of goals in which performance is based.

To ensure objectivity, consistency, accuracy and fairness in the assessment of subordinates by their superiors, the performance appraisal should be carried out against preset performance indicators and verifiable objectives known to both subordinates and superiors. In agreement with this statement, Kontze (1980), remarked that performance indicators should be based against preset verifiable objectives.

Any performance indicator worthy of consideration should possess the following attributes: relevance, reliability, freedom from bias, practicability, observability, universality and distinguishability. The degree or extent to which these attributes are possessed by the performance indicators determine their usefulness. Kontze (1980) remarked that some supervisors focused attention on personal traits and job characteristics while assessing their subordinates. Ideally, the subject of analysis is the employee's performance and not himself or his personality. Flippo (1980) opined that traditional trait appraisal poses the problem of subjectivity, vagueness of trait criteria, non-specification of the connection between performance and possession of certain traits and disagreement between appraisers and appraisees. Staff appraisal based on personality trait can give rise to judgment based on the personal worth of subordinates. Actually, the judgment of employee's performance in his job should be based on other considerations than productivity alone.

The assessment of the EA is based on several performance indicators of varying degrees and dimensions. It should be noted that a situation where EAs are ranked on only one dimension and their job success is treated as consisting of only one general characteristics is deficient and unrealistic. This is because only little information for improvement and feedback can be generated when one dimension is evaluated.

The importance and benefits of performance indicators according to Cumming (1986) include; making salary adjustments, provides basis for decision as to transfers, promotions, demotion, lay-offs or dismissal, to stimulate interest in self-improvement and to point out shortcomings of an individual and the establishment in general.

## METHODOLOGY

The target populations for the study were the Extension Agents (EAs), Block Extension Supervisors (BES), Subject Matter Specialist (SMSs), Zonal Extension Officer (ZEOs), Zonal Managers (ZMs), and Sub-programme heads and Directors in Enugu State Agricultural Development Programme (ENADEP). Available records show that in ENADEP, there are 48 EAs, 12 SMSs, 24 BESs, 3 ZEOs, 3 ZMs and 6 sub-programme heads, 6 Directors and one Programme Manager in the targeted population as at the time of this study making a total of one hundred and three (103) personnel. A total of fifty-one (51) respondents were used. In ENADEP, there are three zones and each zone is made up of eight blocks. The following were randomly selected, one EA from each block, (24), two BESs from each zone,(6) two SMSs from each zone,(6) two sub-programme heads from the headquarter(2) and all the three(3) ZEOs, three(3) ZMs, six(6) Directors and the Programme Manager(1) were purposively selected for the study. Two different types of questionnaire were used to elicit information from the

respondents. The first questionnaire contained questions on who assesses the EAs, and for what. They were distributed to the selected EAs by the researcher during the FNT and collected back after the FNT. The second questionnaire, which contained questions on the specific, uses of each performance indicator, and the extent to which they count in the assessment of EAs and what should form basis for the assessment of EAs. They are open-ended with five-point Likert type scale used to weight the performance indicators by the assessors. Based on the responses of EAs on who assesses them, the second questionnaire were distributed to the selected BESs, SMSs, ZEOs, ZMs, during the FNT and to the sub-programme heads and the Programme Manager at other time by the researcher and collected back from them after their responses. Each performance indicator was weighted as follows:

Very great extent	5
Great extent	4
Some extent	3
Little extent	2
Very little extent	1

The highest point was 5 while the lowest point was 1.

In making decision, upper and lower limits were determined.

Any  $\bar{x} < 3.0$  =Not significant ; Any  $\bar{x} \geq 3.0$  =Significant

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Assessors of Extension Agents and the Purpose for which they are Assessed.

The personnel involved in the assessment of EAs and the specific purpose for which each personnel assesses the EAs were ascertained. The result shown in Table 1: indicated that different personnel were involved in the assessment exercise and for different purposes.

**Table 1: Assessors of the field officers and purpose of assessment(n=24)**

Assessors	purpose of Assessment
Block extension supervisors (BES)	Payment of local transport and travel (LT&T)
Subject matter specialist (SMS)	Promotion, demotion, transfer, redeployment, change of designation, query and warning.
Zonal extension officers (ZEO)	Promotion, Payment of LT&T, demotion, transfer, redeployment, change of designation, query and warnings.
Zonal managers (ZMs)	Promotion, Suspension, seizure of salary, award of certificate of honour, promotion recommendation for training / workshop.
Sub- programme heads (PMU members)	Promotion, Disengagement, termination, lay-off, undue retirement

Data in Table 1 revealed that the Block Extension Supervisors, who are the immediate supervisors of the EAs are only involved in the assessment and recommendation of EAs for payment of Local Transport and Travel (LT&T). The Subject Matter Specialists assess EAs for promotion, demotion, transfer, redeployment, change of designation, issuance of query and warning. The ZEOs appraise them for promotion, payment of LT&T, demotion, transfer, redeployment, change of designation, issuance of query and warnings. The Zonal Managers appraise the EAs for promotion, suspension, seizure of salary, award of certificate of honour, recommendation for training or workshops while the Sub Programme Heads and PMU members appraise them for promotion, disengagement, termination, lay-off and undue retirement. The implication of this finding is that contrary to the popular administrative procedure in which subordinates are assessed by their immediate superiors, subordinate in ENADEP are not really assessed by their immediate supervisors for promotion. This does not give room for objectivity and fairness.

### Awareness and Use of Performance Indicators

The awareness and use of performance indicators were ascertained from the respondents. Table 2 revealed that each performance indicator has multiple uses.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to their Awareness and Use of Performance Indicators (n=51)**

Performance indicators	Uses	Percentage %
SPAT Establishment	Payment of LT&T, issuance of query/ warning, payment of salary, suspension, termination, disengagement, undue retirement, change of designation, training, workshops, awards, transfer	100.0
Assessment in the APER form	Promotion and annual increment	100.0
No. of meaningful field visit paid to farmers per month.	Payment of LT&T, query/warning, salary payment, suspension/termination, disengagement.	56.7
No. of different adoption plots of different technologies in the circle .	Training, workshops, awards	70.6
No. of farmers/groups that have adopted different technologies	Training, workshops, awards, payment of LT&T	70.6
No. of FNT attended per month	Payment of LT&T, query, warnings, payment of salary, suspension, termination	64.7
No. of BM attended per month	Payment of LT&T, query, warnings, payment of salary, suspension, termination	64.7
Ability to diagnose and give right solutions to field problems	Change of designation	56.7
Proper knowledge of subject matter	Change of designation, awards, trainings	56.7
Participation in OFAR trials	Training, awards	54.9
Report writing skill	Awards	54.9
Residence in the circle	Change of designation, salary payment, suspension, query, transfer	52.9
Skill in the selection of contact farmers/groups, formation	Awards	49.0
Ability to use and combine properly different teaching methods	Award of certificates	43.1
Participation in MTP and out-grower projects	Training, workshops and awards	41.2
No. of times participated in the skill plot per farming season	Awards, query, warnings, trainings	39.2
No. of successful field days organized per farming season	Awards, query, warnings, trainings	39.2
Meaningful contribution during FNT and BM meetings	Change of designation	54.9
No. of meaningful fortnightly and monthly reports submitted at the appropriate time.	Award of certificates, query, warnings and suspension	37.3

\*Multiple Response

Table 2 revealed that the Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) form is the only criterion unanimously used by the assessors in the promotion of field extension officers with 100% response. This is surprising in the sense that despite the technical nature of ENADEP, that it still uses the civil service bureaucratic pattern of assessment in the appraisal of her technical staff, thereby throwing overboard the actual performance indicators for her technical staff. Data in Table 2 revealed that majority (100.0%) of the

respondents indicated that number of Small Plot Adoption Techniques (SPATs) of different technologies established by a Field officer in the farmers' farm in a farming season are used for payment of LT&T, issuance of query, warnings, payment of salaries, suspension from work for some period, termination of appointment, disengagement from service, undue retirement, change of designation, trainings, workshops, award of certificates and transfers. The implication of this finding is that this particular performance indicator or criterion has all the uses of the rest of the other performance indicators built inside it, yet it is not used for the promotion of the field officers. Also majority (70.6%) of the respondents indicated that number of adoption plots of different technologies established by a field officer in his circle in a farming season and number of farmers/ groups that have adopted different technologies in the circle for the farming season are criteria used by the superiors to recommend their subordinates for trainings, workshops, awards and payment of Local Transport and Travel (LT&T) respectively.

### Performance Indicators and their Extent of Use

The performance indicators and their extent of use were ascertained. Data in Table 3 revealed that there are about nineteen performance indicators used by management for assessment of field officers.

**Table 3: Performance Indicators And their Extent of Use (n=51)**

Performance indicators	$\bar{x}$ (mean)
1. SPAT establishment	5.0*
2. Assessment in the APER	5.0*
3. No. of meaningful field visit paid to farmers per month.	2.9
4. No. of farmers/groups that have adopted different technologies	2.9
5. No. of farmers/groups that have adopted different technologies	2.9
6. No. of FNT attended per month	2.8
7. No. of BM attended per month	2.8
8. Ability to diagnose and give right solutions to field problems	2.6
9. Proper knowledge of subject matter	2.6
10. Participation in OFAR trials	2.4
11. Report writing skill	2.6
12. Residence in the circle	2.5
13. Skill in the selection of contact farmers/groups, formation	2.1
14. Ability to use and combine properly different teaching methods	2.1
15. Participation in MTP and out-grower projects	2.1
16. No. of times participation in the skill plot per farming season	2.0
17. No. of successful field days organized per farming season	2.0
18. Meaningful contribution during FNT and BM season	2.2
19. No. of meaningful fortnightly and monthly reports submitted at the appropriate time.	1.9

Table 2 revealed that only Small Plot Adoption Techniques (SPATs) of different technologies established by a field officer in the farmers' farms (5.0) and assessment in the Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) form (5.0) are significant in the assessment of field officers in ENADEP. The implication of this finding is that these two criteria play important roles in rewarding and promotion of field officers. The rest of the seventeen performance indicators with means below 3.0 were insignificant and thus rejected. The Table further revealed that the assessment in the Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) form is the only and major instrument used in the promotion of EAs while SPAT establishment has all the other uses of the rest of the performance indicators built inside it. The implication of this finding is that despite the technical nature of ENADEP, that it still uses the civil service bureaucratic pattern of promotion for their staff thereby throwing overboard the actual performance indicators for her technical staff.

The continual use of public service Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) form alone in assessing the performance of technical staff like the EAs in Enugu State Agricultural Development Programme (ENADEP) is insufficient and does not give room for objectivity since some critical success factors in the job description of these field officers are not embodied in the form. By objectivity is meant the quality of fairness, consistency and accuracy of the assessment of subordinates by superior officers.

This is an error in assessment and therefore do not give room for fairness and objectivity.

### Conclusion

The study established that five different categories of personnel in ENADEP namely; Block extension supervisors, Subject matter specialist, Zonal extension officers, Zonal managers and Members of the programme management unit are involved in the assessment of officers for different purposes like, payment of local transport and travel (LT&T), issuance of query, warning, payment of salaries, payment of salaries, suspension, termination, disengagement, undue retirement, change of designation, training, awards and promotion from one

grade level to another. The study also revealed that among the variables used in the assessment of agents, that the use of Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) form is the only criteria used in the promotion of agents while Small Plot Adoption Techniques (SPATs) has all the uses of other indicators built inside it. Furthermore the study revealed that the following indicators were accepted as criteria for assessment of agents, SPAT establishment, use of APER form, number of meaningful field visits paid to farmers per month, number of different adoption plots of different technologies in the agents' circle, number of farmers/groups that have adopted different technologies, attendance at fortnightly training and block meetings.

### **Recommendation**

It is therefore recommended that the use of combination of Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) form and ENADEP performance indicators should be employed during appraisal for fairness and objectivity.

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### **APPENDIX I**

#### **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR FIELD OFFICERS IN ENUGU STATE ADP**

1. Number of well established Small Plot Adoption Technique (SPATs) of different technologies.
2. Number of full-time resident contact/farmer groups selected and formed
3. Number of contact/farmers groups that have adopted different technologies.
4. Number of adopted plots of different technologies in each circle.
5. Number of meaningful and timely visits paid to farmers per month.
6. Number of fortnightly training (FNT) meetings attended per month.
7. Number of block meetings (BM) attended per month.
8. Number of successful field days organized per farming season
9. Number of meaningful FNT and monthly reports submitted at the end of the month.
10. Number of times participated in the skill practice per farming season
11. Ability of the field officer to diagnose and give right and timely solutions to field problems.
12. Ability of the officers to use and combine properly different extension teaching methods.
13. Level of participation in On-Farm Adaptive Research (OFAR) trials per farming season.
14. Proper knowledge of Subject Matter
15. Residence in the circle.
16. Maintenance of proper diary records
17. Public relations
18. Commitment to the Organization (ADP)
19. Participation in the Management Training Plot (MTP) and out grower projects.

#### **Performance Indicators And Their Uses**

The performance indicators and their uses were indentified. Table 2 revealed that each performance indicator has multiple uses.

**Table 2: Performance Indicators and Their Uses (n=51)**

Performance indicators	$\bar{x}$ (mean)	Uses	Percentage %
SPAT Establishment	5.0	Payment of LT&T, issuance of query/warning, payment of salary suspension, termination, disengagement, undue retirement change of designation, training, awards	
Assessment in the APER form	3.0	Promotion and annual increment	
No. of meaningful field visit paid to farmers per month.	3.9	Payment of LT&T, query/warning salary payment, suspension/termination, disengagement.	
No. of farmers/groups that have adopted different technologies	3.6	Training, workshops, awards	
No. of farmers/groups that have adopted different technologies	3.6	Training, workshops, awards, payment of LT&T	
No. of FNT attended month	3.3	payment of LT&T, query, warnings, payment of salary, suspension, termination	
No. of BM attended per month	3.3	payment of LT&T, query, warnings, payment of salary, suspension, termination	
Ability to diagnose and give right solutions to field problems	2.9	Change of designation	
Proper knowledge of subject matter	2.9	Change of designation, awards, trainings	
Participation in OFAR trials	2.8	Training, awards	
Report writing skill	2.8	Awards	
Residence in the circle	2.7	Change of designation, salary payment, suspension, query, transfer	
Skill in the selection of contact farmers/groups, formation	2.5	Awards	
Ability to use and combine properly different teaching methods	2.2	Awards of certificates	
Participation in MTP and out-grower projects	2.1	Training, workshops and awards	
No. of times participation in the skill plot per farming season	2.0	Awards, query, warnings, trainings	
No. of successful field days organized per farming season	2.0	Awards, query, warnings, trainings	
Meaningful contribution during FNT and BM season	2.8	Change of designation	
No. of meaningful fortnightly and monthly reports submitted at the appropriate time.	1.9	Awards of certificates, query, and warnings, suspension	