

The Role of Private Extension Agencies in Agricultural Development of Kaduna State, Nigeria: A Case Study of Leventis Foundation Agricultural Training School

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Abstract

The study was conducted to study the contributions of Leventis Foundation Agricultural Training School (LFATS) Dogon Dawa to the advancement of agricultural development in Kaduna State of Nigeria. Participants and non-participants of the school were selected using multistage sampling technique. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to analyze data. Farming in the study area was found to be gender specific. However, the participants were more educated, with less farming experience than the non participants. Livestock production and bee keeping; crop production and agro-forestry; and farm product processing and utilization were ranked as areas in which the participants have been adequately trained. T-test results revealed that there was a significant difference between the yields of the participants and that of the non-participants. These results helped to establish that being trained by LFATS could help farmers in ensuring that higher yields are obtained from their agricultural enterprises. Thus, this study concludes that LFATS is playing an important role in agricultural advancement and youth empowerment in Kaduna state through the skills acquired in its training programmes and recommends that other governmental and non governmental agencies could embark on such.

Keywords: Private Extension, Agricultural Development, Leventis Foundation

Introduction

Agriculture has played a great role in Nigeria's independence since the colonial era. However, with the advent of crude oil in the 1970s the petroleum industry was given priority at the expense of agricultural development. Available records show that appreciable amount of resources have been committed by the state governments in Nigeria towards the transformation of the rural sectors (Ubong, 1993). However, the rural resource-poor clientele is dissatisfied with the governments' efforts and therefore yearn for more attention. This situation has encouraged good spirited individuals and organizations to come together to form Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)/ Private Commercial Extension Agents in attempt to changing the lifestyle of the rural dwellers for the better. Yahaya (2005) identified the formation of Agric-related NGOs as an approach towards agricultural and rural transformation in general. These organizations are seen as essential mechanism, which the rural dwellers can participate in, while mobilizing internal resources to improve their standards of living. Over the years, several studies have identified ways through which NGOs have been of assistance to the government and the entire population of the country in the area of agricultural and rural development. Majority of the NGOs were founded primarily for agricultural and technology dissemination with other activities related to credit, training, social services and culture. (Farinde and Adisa, 2005).

The Leventis Foundation Nigeria (LFN) is an NGO involved in agricultural development in Nigeria. For over 70 years, LFN has engaged in various business operations and established many personal ties in West Africa. LFN (1999) stated that as a gesture of goodwill, the late chief Anastiosis George Leventis (1902-1978) set up a foundation to assist educational, cultural and other charitable causes, specifying West Africa and Nigeria in particular as a major beneficiary. The foundation is active in two main areas: (a) Agricultural schools and (b) scholarship and assistance programmes.

The agricultural school programme was started in 1987 with the inauguration of two (2) schools, one each at Ilesa in Osun state and Dogon Dawa in Kaduna state. A third school was opened in 1998 at Panda in Kano state and the fourth established at Agenebode in Edo state in 1999. These schools are at rural places targeting the small-scale farmers. The training programme of the foundation is aimed at improving rural development by teaching young farmers (aged 20-30 years), the rudiments involved in the planning and management of a technically sound and economically viable farm enterprise. (LFN, 1999).

The aim of this study was therefore to assess the role of private extension agencies in agricultural development using Leventis Foundation Agricultural Training School (LFATS), Dogon Dawa, as a case study to Agricultural Development in Kaduna state.

The specific objectives are to: describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents; identify the training skills imparted to the LFAT participants by the Foundation; determine the perception of the skills imparted by Foundation on the participants; and highlight the effects of such training on the yield of the participants.

Hypothesis

Ho: there is no significant difference in farm yield of LFAT participants and non-participants.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The State is one of the largest states in north central Nigeria. It lies between latitudes 09° and 02°N.11° and longitudes 06°15' and 08°50' and occupies an area of about 48,473 square kilometers (Hallee-Meena, 2000). The climate is that of Northern Guinea Savannah with rainfall ranging between 700-1000mm per annum (Omolehin et al., 2007). The climate can be described as being characterized by alternating dry and wet seasons. The duration of the dry season is between 5-7 months, which normally starts from October to March while the rainfall season is between April-October. These make the state as both an agrarian and commercial entity during on and off raining seasons respectfully.

The state is made up of twenty-three Local Government Areas (LGAs), out of which four LGAs, where participants of Leventis Foundation Agricultural Training Schools (LAFTS) are found, were purposively selected for the study. These include Zaria, Birnin Gwari, Giwa and Soba LGAs. Fifteen participants (ex-students) of LAFTS, who graduated at least five years before the study, were purposively selected to give 60 participants from the areas. The non-participants were also selected at random to give 60 respondents, making sure the participants and non-participants are from within the same localities. This gave a sample size of 120 respondents. Data were collected from respondents through personal interview and the use of structured questionnaire. It was analyzed using descriptive statistical measures such as means, percentages and likert type scale rating. Inferential statistics statistical tool (difference of means using t-test) was used for testing of the null hypothesis and was obtained on the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0.

Results and discussion

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents (Participants and non participants of LFATS)

The socio-economic characteristics of both sets of respondents considered included gender, marital status, age, level of education and farming experience. The results are shown in table 1. Farming in the study area is gender-specific for both the LFATS participants and non-participants. Both categories had men dominating with 73.33% and 76.67% respectively. This could be attributed to the cultural and religious values of the study area where women's movement

are restricted and they are sometimes not allowed to own farms. The age of the farmer is important in determining productivity and the rate of adoption (Omolola, 2005). Majority of the participants (60%) were found within the age bracket of 31 - 40 years, this could be because LFATS has a targeted age bracket of 20-30 years. Onubougu and Nnadozie (2005) noted the age bracket of 31 - 40 years as an active age bracket in agriculture. While for the non-participants, age groups were more evenly distributed, with the greater percentage (27%) aged 51- 60 years. This implies that with regards to age, the participants have a better chance of increasing productivity, through the adoption of improved practices than the non-participants. Majority of both sets of respondents are married, 60% of the participants and 83% of the non-participants. The marital status of respondents may become an important factor in agricultural production especially as observed by Umar (2001), when farm labour is in short supply. In the study area, literacy level was higher among the participants, majority (93.33%) have LFAT as their highest qualification. This means they must have completed secondary school or at least junior secondary before being admitted to LFATS, while for the non-participants, (46.67%) are primary school leavers. Majority (57%) of the participants had less than 10 years' experience. This may perhaps be attributed to the fact that the school admits youth between the ages of 20 – 30 years. This implies that many of them are new in the business. While for the non-participants, 43% have over 20 years farming experience indicating that the non-participants have more experience than the participants.

Types of Training Imparted to the Participants by LFATS

The various skills acquired by the participants are shown in table 2. All (100%) of the respondents agreed that they have received training in the following areas:

- Crop Production and Agro-Forestry;
- Livestock Production and Bee Keeping;
- Agricultural Engineering;
- Farm Management; and
- Farm Product Processing and Utilization.

The aforementioned form the major course curriculum of the school. The respondents agreed that they had received adequate training in three out of five areas. These areas are livestock production and bee keeping, crop production and agro-forestry, farm product processing and utilization. This shows that Leventis Foundation Agricultural Training School have trained the participants adequately in the various areas to eventually enable them do well in their own private farms.

The Effects of the Training on the Yield of Participants.

The effect of the training received at LFATS on yield was examined by comparing the mean per hectare yields of participants and non-participants in the study area. To achieve this, two common crops grown in the study area were used. This is shown in table 3. While participants had mean yields of 1615kg per hectare for sorghum, non-participants had 1048kg per hectare. For maize, the participants had 2571.67 kg per hectare while the non-participants had 1475kg per hectare. This was obtained by multiplying 100kg bags by 100 to get the total harvest per hectare (100kg bags are used for measurement in the study area). There was a statistical difference in the yields of participants and non- participants for both crops at 5% level of significance. This gives credence to the importance of the training received at LFAT Dogon Dawa.

Conclusion and recommendations

The recognition of the role played by NGOs is fundamental to agricultural development. Most importantly is the identification of specific ones such as the Leventis Foundation and the influence that such have on agricultural development especially among youths. LFATS Dogon Dawa has been able to contribute in empowering the youths of Kaduna state through skills acquired and credit facilities made available to the participants. The programme had enhanced agricultural production, at the same time encouraged the retention of skills in the rural areas. This will go a

long way in curtailing rural – urban migration. In addition, it can encourage the use of semi-mechanized system of agriculture and help enhance the development of small-scale industries engaged in agriculture and food processing. LFATS has been able to make the participants who are mainly youths of the study area to be involved in farming. They should be encouraged to continue farming.

This study has shown that LFATS is useful to the agricultural development of Kaduna State, albeit, with areas that can be improved upon to make it more effective. Based on findings, the following recommendations are, therefore, suggested.

- Adequate credit facilities should be made available to the participants at the appropriate time, bearing in mind the nature of agricultural business. If LFATS cannot meet up with the amount, it can liaise with the Local Government Areas or State Government. An agricultural fund can be established to grant credit to the participants to embark on medium/ large scale farming, since they have the technical knowledge and at the same time, they will be employers of labour.
- Findings from the study shows that the participants do not have adequate access to inputs and when they get them, the prices are usually high. Therefore, other NGOs such as PFAN, CaRE and Research Action can collaborate with LFATS to make a ready supply of these inputs at subsidized prices to the farmers. Moreover, the government can evolve measures to this effect taking into cognizance that accessibility to adequate quantity and quality of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides and improved seeds/seedlings go to a large extent in determining the level of production.
- Wealthy individuals of the state should be encouraged to come together and invest in ventures such as establishing a school like LFATS for the youths in their communities. At the same time, those endowed intellectually can create a body of trained teachers and instructors to contribute from their vast knowledge to such schools.

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Table1: Distribution of respondents according to their socio-economic characteristics

Characteristics	LFATS participants		Non- participants	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender				
Male	44	73.33	46	76.67
Female	16	26.67	14	23.33
Age (years)				
21 – 30	22	36.67	12	20.00
31 – 40	36	60.00	7	11.66
41 -50	2	3.33	13	21.67
51 -60	-	-	16	26.67
> 60	-	-	12	20.00
Marital status				
Married	36	60	50	83.30
Single	24	40	10	16.70
Level of education				
Non-formal	-	-	6	10.00
Primary	-	-	28	46.70
Secondary	-	-	18	30.00
LFAT	56	93.33	-	-
Others	4	6.67	8	13.30
Farming experience (years)				
Less than 10	34	56.67	12	20.00
11 -20	20	33.33	22	36.67
Above 20	6	10.00	26	43.33

Source: Field survey

Table 2: Types and Perception of the Quality of Training Acquired

Type of skill	1	2	3	4	Mean
Livestock production and bee-keeping	17	28	15	0	3.0*
Crop production	14	28	18	0	2.9*
Farm product processing and utilization	1	33	26	0	2.6*
Farm management	0	25	34	1	2.4**
Agricultural engineering	0	13	39	8	2.1**

Field survey

¹Very adequate, ²Adequate, ³Inadequate, ⁴Very inadequate

*Adequate, **Inadequate

Table 3: Results of Independent T- Test Comparison of Sorghum and Maize Yields per Hectare for Participants and Non-Participants.

Variables	Participants	Non-Participants	T. Statistic	Level of sig
Mean yield/ha (sorghum)	1615.00**	1048.28	3.24	0.003
Standard deviation	891.55	1001.62		
Mean yield/ ha (maize)	2571.67**	1475.86	5.3	0.000
Standard deviation	1062.47	1150.18		
Observation (N)	60	56		

** Significant at 5 % level.