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Perceived Effect of Privatization of Extension Services among Researchers, Extension Agents and Farmers in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examined the perceived effect of the privatization of extension services and farmers willingness to pay for extension services. Specifically the services farmers are willing to pay for were identified and how much farmers are willing to pay for such services This is based on the fact that public service extension is under pressure and the debate to privatize extension services in Nigeria is being muted due to provision of quality extension services since their advent and involvement of non-governmental organizations in the provision of extension services to farmers. A large sample size technique of $n \geq 30$ was used in selecting researcher (32), extension agents (40) from the ADPs and 60 farmers from different groups as respondents for the study. The results show that majority of the researchers are male, above 30 years of age, married, having first university degree and have been working for more than 10 years. Majority of the extension agents are also male, above 30 years of age, married, with Higher National Diploma and have been working for more than 20 years. While for farmers, majority are male, between 41-50 years of age, married, without formal education and have been farming for more than 20 years. Prominent services indicated by the researchers are Establishment of SPAT (31%), Providing information to women farm(31%), Processing loans (30%), Securing market for shows (31%). While, extension agents responded that establishment of SPAT (26%), organizing FNT (28) and food and drinks for EA at every visit (28%) should be paid for. Similarly, farmers indicated that the services that should be paid for are Providing information to women farmers (34%), identifying rural problems (38%), Training VEA (33%) and supervising women activities (43%).The mean values of amount to be paid for each of the services shows a minimum of ₦ 1800 and a maximum of ₦ 11400. A significant difference ($F = 9.45$; $p<0.05$) exists in their perception about the privatization of extension services with the extension agents having the highest mean score.

Key words: Privatization, extension services, researchers, extension agents, farmers, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural extension is undergoing several changes through the processes structural adjustment reforms aimed at reducing government funding and involvement. The poor funding situations coupled with donor fatigue in sponsoring many extension programmes as well as the demand by clients for accountable and responsive service are part of the change induced pressures. A number of participatory and facilitation approaches have been developed such that a higher level of farmers involvement in the extension processes is advocated and the need to meet diverse range of options including information on markets, rural industry and other income opportunities (Farrington *et al*., 2002).

Considering the challenge of providing an efficient agricultural extension system for farmers in developing countries privatized extension has been widely debated (Farrington, 1994; Kidd *et al*., 2000; Rivera, 2001). It is well established in the debate that private extension initiatives offer many opportunities for commercial farmers, but there are doubts about implications for resource-poor farmers. Privatized extension take many forms in different parts of the world and this offers opportunities to policy makers to choose from a range of privatized extension mechanisms in order to achieve the most equitable and efficient extension service with the resources available in their peculiar scenario.

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In theory, private extension is simply the provision of a service or advice by a private firm in exchange for a fee; the terms and conditions of the transaction are negotiated in an open market. The degree to which this can be done in practice depends on the extent to which extension services can be converted into a private good. Agricultural information is commonly seen as a public good because of its low excludability and low subtractability (Umali and Schwartz, 1993). Alex *et al.* (2002) illustrated the distinction between public and private goods as presented in Table 1. Agricultural information can spread through farmer-to-farmer communication and retains its value despite wide access and thus considered a public good. Agricultural information with private good characteristics is specialized often associated with particular input, field or individual farmer. Agricultural information provided as a private good does not necessarily require the existence of a highly commercial agricultural system.

Kidd *et al.* (2000) reported different versions of cost-recovery strategies that can provide income to public services and improve efficiency namely: Free public extension service, cost-recovery by government agents, subsidies to private extension, extension contracts, voucher schemes and private enterprise. In the UK, ADAS was privatized in, 1997 but paved the way for fee-charging and set a target of 50% cost recovery from charges to farmers over a period of five years. The government also retained the option of subsidizing consulting company to offer the service for farmers (Garforth, 2002). The state of Thuringia is one example that has attempted to introduce private extension in order to reduce pubic expenditure (Currle *et al.*, 2002). In Chile privatized extension service took off in, 1978 and the focus is about improving the quality and efficiency of the service than simple cost recovery or privatization (Berdegue and Marchant, 2002). In Uganda under the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) farmer forums at the local level are constituted to use funds provided through local government to identify and contract private extension providers. The debate to privatize extension services in Nigeria is being muted due to wide spread corruption and inefficiencies in public corporations. The privatization ahs yielded desired results in the telecommunication and banking sectors. Also the advent of non-governmental organizations in the provision of quality extension services to framers when compared with public extension services is another major reason for the consideration of the privatization of extension services. It is against this back ground that privatization may be extended to agricultural extension services.

Table 1: Public and Private Characteristics of agricultural information

Excludability	
Low	High
Public Goods	Toll Goods
• Mass media informationW	•Time-sensitive production,
• Time-insensitive production Marketing and Management Information of wide applicability	marketing, or management information
Common Pool goods	**Private Goods**
• Information embodied in locally a Available resources or inputs	•Information embodied in commercially available
• Information on organizational Development	inputs Client-specific information or advice

Source: Alex *et al.* (2002)

The main objective of this study is to determine the perceived effect of the privatization of extension services and farmers willingness to pay for extension services. Specifically the services farmers are willing to pay for were identified and how much farmers are willing to pay for such services.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Oyo State. It covers 27,107.93 km^2 and is bordered in the west by the Benin Republic, in the north and east by Kwara and Osun states respectively and in the south by Ogun state of Nigeria. The state covers an area ranging from swamp forests to western uplands. In between are rain forests and deciduous forest/savanna mosaic. The rainfall pattern is bimodal with the peaks in June early July and September, while November to February is characterized by harmattan brought about by the effect of the northeasterly trade winds from Sahara region.

Agricultural sector forms the base of the overall development thrusts of the state, with farming as the main occupation of the people in the area. Crops usually grown include maize, yam, cassava, cocoyam, melon, cowpea and vegetables under mixed cropping practices. Oyo state has a distribution of agricultural research institutions namely: Institute of Agricultural Research Training, Ibadan (IAR and T), National Institute for Horticultural Research, Ibadan (NIHORT), Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria, Ibadan (CRIN), Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria, Ibadan (FRIN) and Agricultural Development Programme (ADP).

The target population of this study consists of researchers in agricultural research institutes, extension personnel in extension agencies and farmers. This population is distributed within the research institutes; IAR and T, NIHORT, CRIN, NCRI and FRIN. Also included is the ADP office. A large sample size technique

of n≥30 was used in selecting respondents for the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select researcher (32), extension agents (40) from the ADPs and 60 farmers from different groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the researchers, extension agents and farmers. Majority of the researchers are male, above 30 years of age, married, having first university degree and have been working for more than 10 years. Majority of the extension agents are also male, above 30 years of age, married, with Higher National Diploma and have been working for more than 20 years. With respect to farmers, majority are male, between 41-50 years of age, married, without formal education and have been farming for more than 20 years.

Table 3 presents the results of the proportion of researchers, extension agents and farmers indicating that extension services to be paid for and the mean score of the amount to be paid. Prominent services indicated by the researchers are Establishment of SPAT (31%), Providing information to women farm (31%), Processing

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of Researchers, extension agents and farmers

Variables	Researchers n = 32	Extension Agent n = 40	Farmers n = 60
Gender			
Male	23(71.5)	24(59.5)	48(81.2)
Female	9(28.4)	16(30.4)	22(18.8)
Age			
Less than 30	4(11.3)	8 (21.7)	-
31-40	13(39.7)	13(32.1)	10(16.6)
41-50	11(32.9)	11(28.7)	35(59.4)
51-60	5(15.9)	8(21.7)	15(22.9)
Marital status			
Single	9(27.2)	8(20.8)	-
Married	23(72.6)	32 (79)	47(78.6)
Divorced	-	-	13(20.7)
Educational level			
Not educated	-	-	16(27.9)
Non –formal	-	-	23(37.5)
OND	-	11(27.8)	21(34.6)
HND	-	13(31.3)	-
B.Sc	15(43.1)	7(24.2)	-
M.Sc	9(28.4)	10(24.2)	-
PhD	7(16.9)	-	-
Studying for higher degree			
Yes	14(23.8)	14(34.7)	-
No	18(59)	26(65.3)	-
Job tenure			**Farming experience**
Less than 10 years	4(11.3)	5(13)	8(13.7)
11-20 years	6(23.8)	7(17.3)	24(39.9)
21-30 years	11(32.9)	18(44.3)	18(30.6)
31-40 years	11(32.9)	10(25.2)	10(15.8)

Table 3:Percentage distribution of respondents based on extension services to be paid for and amount

Extension services	Researchers n = 32	Extension Agent n = 40	Farmers n = 60	Mean Amount* (₦)
Establishment of SPAT	31	26	23	6900
Forming women groups	16	17	25	7500
Providing information to women farm	31	18	34	10200
Identifying rural problems	17	15	38	11400
Involvement in non-farming activities	23	18	25	7500
Training VEA	10	23	33	9900
Organizing FNT	8	28	21	6300
Supervising women activities	3	13	43	12900
Liaison with institute	20	16	18	5400
Arrange input supply	6	23	36	10800
Preparing schedule of activities	18	13	20	6000
Processing loans	30	18	32	9600
Recovering loans	16	8	24	7200
Initiating and promoting leadership	25	9	13	3900
Securing market for shows	31	17	18	5400
Organizing shows	9	19	10	3000
Organizing group meeting	20	18	38	11400
Organizing Adult literacy classes	29	13	18	5400
Communication of recommended practices	22	16	18	5400
Feeding back farmers problem to research	16	14	13	2400
Learning new ideas in Agric.	28	18	8	3900
Keeping record of extension activity	20	18	28	8400
Giving advice on agric problems	13	18	33	9900
Home and farm visits	13	13	28	8400
Teaching home management children and nutrition	23	16	29	8700
Food and drinks for EA at every visit	26	28	6	1800
Village accommodation for EA	8	11	8	2400
Motorbikes for EA	18	8	23	6900
Contribute to the cost of farm demonstrations	20	0	13	3900
Contribute to the cost of result and method demonstrations	21	6	12	3600
Honorarium for Subject Matter Specialist	16	14	17	5100
Cost of Handbills, posters,leaflets for extension services	31	3	15	4500
Cost of organizing farmers' seminars, group discussions	17	8	26	7800
Providing specialized information for production	23	17	16	4800
Liaison with marketing opportunity	24	18	25	8400
Liaison with farm machinery	26	15	34	9900

*N118 = 1$

loans (30%), Securing market for shows (31%), Organizing Adult literacy classes(29%), Food and drinks for EA at every visit (26%), Cost of Handbills, posters, leaflets for extension services(31%) and Liaison with farm machinery (26%). While extension agents responded that establishment of SPAT (26%), Organizing FNT (28) and Food and drinks for EA at every visit (28%) should be paid for. Similarly, farmers indicated that the services that should be paid for are Providing information to women farmers (34%), Identifying rural problems (38%), Training VEA (33%), Supervising women activities (43%), Arrange input supply (36%), Processing loans (32%), Organizing group meetings (38%), Giving advice on agric problems (33%), Teaching home management children and nutrition (29%), Cost of organizing farmers' seminars, group discussions (26%) and Liaison with farm machinery (34%). The mean values of amount to be paid for each of the services shows a minimum of ₦1800 for food and drinks for extension agents at every visit to 11400 for organizing group meetings.

In Table 4, the varying degrees of the perceived effect of privatization of extension services on its performance among researchers, extension agents and majority of the items were highly rated by the extension farmers are presented. There is a mixed reaction from the researchers for all the 26 items covered in Table 4, while agents. Farmers generally rated all the items low, which is an indication that they are not too sure of what the effect of the privatization would have as outcomes. This is similar to the findings of Ogunlade *et al.* (2007) on the beneficiary funding of extension services in Kwara state of Nigeria.

In Table 5, the perceived effect of the privatization of extension services was subjected to One-way analysis of variance to show differences among Researchers, Extension Agents and Farmers. The F value shows that a significant difference exist in their perception about the privatization of extension servces with the extension agents having the highest mean score.

Table 4: Percentage distribution of respondents based on perceived effect of privatization of extension services*

Perception statements	Researc hers n = 32	Extension agent n = 40	Farmers n = 60
Extension services will improve	23	34	13
Efficiency of extension services will improve	10	38	16
Funding of extension services will be sustainable	8	25	23
Extension agency operations will be more effective	3	33	13
Extension agency operations will be more specialized	20	21	18
Farmers will not be able to afford payments for extension services	6	43	8
Farmers will not use extension messages	18	18	9
Rate of adoption of farm technologies will reduce	30	36	17
Performance of EA will be enhanced	16	20	19
Part of EA job-related problems will be reduced	25	32	18
Quality of extension services will improve	23	24	13
Commitment of EA will improve	29	13	16
Timeliness of extension messages will improve	20	18	14
EA will be provided all necessary facilities for service	29	10	18
Improvement in EA discipline for service delivery	22	38	18
Specialized training will improve for EA	16	18	18
Specialized training will improve for farmers	28	18	13
Adoption of farm technologies will improve	20	13	16
Improvement in the scale of operation among farmers	13	8	28
Farmers will monitor EA better	13	28	11
Poor Job Security among EA	23	33	8
Better reward for EA performance	26	28	0
Better development at grassroots	8	29	6
Reduction of bootlicking and lobbying in extension agency	18	6	14
Affect employment pattern in Extension organization	20	8	3
Increase production among farmers	21	23	8

*Positive perceived effect

Table 5: One -way analysis of variance showing differences in the perception of privatization of extension services among researchers, extension agents and farmers

						Duncan multiple range test		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f-value	p-value	Groups	N	Mean
Between groups	1270.231	2	635.115	9.449	0.00	Farmers	60	13.76[a]
						Researchers	32	18.76[b]
Within groups	5041.115	75		67.215		Extension agent	40	23.65[c]
Total	6311.346	77						

CONCLUSION

The study has clearly shown that there is a general awareness about the privatization of extension services in the study area and that the main actors in the research-extension-farmers linkage system indicated that some extension services could be privatized. Also the amount expected to be paid were stated and the mean values were stated in the paper. It is therefore important the a workable fashion for the implementation of the policy is designed for the expected impact of improving extension services and farmers' productivity.

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