

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES PERCEIVED AS EVIDENT AMONG EXTENSION AGENTS OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

AKINSOROTAN A.O., OLADELE O.I

Abstract

This study determined the organizational values perceived as evident among personnel in Oyo and Ogun States' Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) in Nigeria. Simple random sampling was used to select 93 extension agents (70% of the population) from the two states' ADPs. The study investigated the organizational values according to the levels of perceived "extremely evident" and "extremely valued". About 40% of the respondents were above 50 years. There were more male than female extension agents. Most of the respondents (89.1%) were married, 90 percent had working experience of not less than 6 years, 51% had higher diploma and university degrees in agriculture. The top five values perceived as "extremely evident" were: research extension linkage (64.1%), their role in bringing about change in people's lives (54.3%), loyalty to the organization (47.3%), and extension programmes that help solve problems (46.3%), and honesty/integrity in their work (45.7%). Multiple regression analysis shows that there was relationship between personal characteristics of the extension agents and their perception of organizational values, while age of the respondents is the most important predictor of organizational values perceived as evident. The findings provided direction for Oyo and Ogun States' ADPs to develop strong organizational values and target values not being expressed in their work environment.

Key words: perceived organizational values, agricultural development programme, extremely valued, extremely evident

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) is to help farmers increase food production and farm income through the dissemination of information on the use of improved technology. The ADP system is based on the premise that a combination of factors, comprising the right technology, effective extension, access to physical inputs, adequate market and complementary infrastructural facilities are essential to get agriculture moving and to improve productivity in order to raise the living standards of rural dwellers. The projects were designed around systems for developing technology and transferring them to farmers, distributing modern inputs and land development including small scale irrigation of fadama area and land clearing (Akinsorotan, 1995). For the ADPs to achieve this mission there is a need for the extension agents to know and understand the core values of the extension organization such as helping people to help themselves, rapid response to clientele needs, research-extension linkage, extension programmes based on needs identified at local level, loyalty to the organization, and direct clientele involvement in programme planning. This is because organizational values serve as a guide for the organization to accomplish their mission.

Organizational value is defined as any concept or idea that is held in high esteem by the members of an organization that shapes the organization's philosophy, processes and goals. The values held by the members of an organization determine the organizational culture, which according to Simmerly (1987) is the most

powerful internal force affecting any organization. He also stated that organizational culture defines expectations about behaviors, how work is done, how decisions are made, how social interactions are structured and how people communicate. Management and leadership has an important role to play in value clarification which according to Vaill (1990) is how management and leadership in organizational contexts may be viewed as a process of ongoing value clarification. Barker (1994) concluded that a thorough knowledge of the value held by an extension service will facilitate the building of a foundation which will then enhance the organization as a whole. Although each of worker may have unique personal value system, workers function best within organizations and professions where we share values with our colleagues. These values communicate what organizations stand for and what is important to them. At the same time, there is a need for dedication and loyalty of the extension agents to the extension organization. Employees are assets with valuable skills, pride, and dedication and needs that require satisfaction in work place (Haas and Tamarkin, 1982). Personal satisfaction appears when there is congruency between professional beliefs and the values evident within the work environment. According to Hitt (1988), harmonies between guiding organizational belief and daily actions of organizational members have a significant impact on the total performance of an organization.

Recently there is a decline in the quality of the extension services rendered by extension agents. This was as a result of the fact that the new hires in the ADPs do not know and understand fully the values that

guide the extension organization. It is necessary to compare “what is valued” and “the evidence of these values” in order to keep an organization operating at the highest standard. Jimmerson (1989) suggested that meeting the challenges of the information age will require attention to the values and beliefs that guide extension organization to provide their clients with information and help them solve production problems. Safrit (1990) indicated that before any organization begin to plan strategically for change within the organization; the organizational values held by its members must be identified, clarified and validated. Therefore it is necessary to compare what is valued and the evident of these values in order to keep the organization operating at the highest standard and to plan strategically for a change within the organization to provide the best extension service that will cope with the rapid increase in population and its subsequent high food demands.

The general objective of the study was to determine the organizational values perceived as evident among the extension agents of Oyo and Ogun States ADPs. Specifically, the study was designed to determine the extension agents’ awareness of the organizational values of ADP, values that are perceived as evident by extension agents and investigate possible relationships between organizational values of the ADPs and personal characteristics of extension agents.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The population for this study comprised the Extension Agents in Oyo and Ogun States ADPs. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 93 extension agents from the entire population. Two zones each were randomly selected from each of the four zones in the two states. Fifty-four out of the 77 extension agents were randomly selected in the two zones of Ogun state and 39 out of the 55 from Oyo state were also randomly selected. This represents 70% of the entire population as shown in Table 1. Questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents with sections on personal information about the respondents, while the second section contained a two-point Likert type scale for determining the extension agents’ awareness of the organizational values. This was measured using a two-point Likert scale of aware = 1 and not aware = 0. Fifty statements on organizational values were given to the

extension agents to indicate the values they are aware of and organizational values. Also, four-point Likert type scale for ranking the extension agents’ perception about the organizational values and then to rank the degree to which these organizational values are evident in the organization. This was measured with a four-point Likert scale of not valued, slightly valued, valued and extremely valued, indicating 0, 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Fifty statements on organizational values were given to the extension agents to rank their perception about the organizational values. The organizational values perceived as evident among extension agents was operationalized through a four-point Likert scale type of not evident, slightly evident, evident and extremely evident, indicating 0, 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The measuring instrument was validated using content validity method, while test retest method was used to determine the instrument reliability ($r = 0.78$). The instrument was face-validated by experts to ensure its validity. Data were collected during their Fortnightly Training (FNT) meetings.

SPSS Version 13 was used for the analysis and descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distribution and percentages were used to analyze the demographic characteristics of respondents, while Chi-Square analysis was used to determine the relationship between extension agents’ awareness of organizational values and organizational values perceived as evident among the extension agents. Multiple regression analysis was used to establish the relationship between selected personal characteristics and organizational values perceived as evident by extension agents. T-test analysis was used to know the difference between the perceptions of organizational values by extension agents in the two states and t-test analysis was also used to know the difference between the organizational values perceived as evident by extension agent in the two states.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Awareness of organizational values by respondents were given in Table 2. Extension programmes help to solve farmers’ problem (98.9%), extension programmes are based on needs identified at local area (98.8%) and their role in bringing about change in people’s life (97.7%) are the top three values. This may be due to the fact that these are the main values which are emphasized during the

Tab. 1: Sampling procedure for the study

States	Zones	Population	Sample selected
Ogun	Abeokuta	38	27
	Ijebu ode	39	27
Oyo	Ibadan	27	20
	Tede	28	19
Total		132	93

Tab. 2: Awareness of organizational values by respondents

Organisational values	Awareness rank	Awareness %
Extension programs that help solve problems	1	98.9
Extension programs based on needs identified at local level	2	98.8
Our role in bringing about a better future	3	97.7
Faith in ability to bring about a better future	4	96.7
Quick response to clientele concerns/request	5	95.7
A clearly defined organizational mission	6	95.6
Useful/practical programmes	7	95.5
Teamwork among co-workers	8	94.6
Loyalty to the organization	9	93.5
Unbiased delivery of information	10	92.4
Research based programmes	11	92.0
Helping people to help themselves	12	91.3
Innovative/creativity in programmes	13	91.2
A well-marked organizational image	14	91.1
High standard of excellence in education programming	15	91.3
Research-based programmes	16	90.2
Targeting clientele from rural area	17	90.1
Honesty/integrity in work	18	90
Networking/coalition building with other agencies/organization	19	88.0
The use of emerging technologies in daily operation	20	85.9
People-centered programme	20	85.9
The recognition that our employees are our organisation's greatest resource	20	85.9
Recognition of excellence in performance	20	84.5
Credibility with clientele	20	84.5
Effective flow of communication through all the organizational levels	20	84.5
Anticipated problems and develop solution in advance foresight	21	81.5
Diversity among employee	21	81.5
Recruitment and screening of prospective employees resulting in hiring qualified people	22	80.4
Opportunities for professional development	23	79.3
Administrators who demonstrate sensitivity to personal and family responsibility of employees	24	77.2
Preserving a rural way of life	24	77.2
Flexibility/adaptability in programming	25	76.1
Extension financial support from the state level	26	73.9
The distribution of resources among programme areas based on numbers of potential clientele	27	72.8
Equal opportunity for male and female employees	28	71.7
Share organizational leadership among administrators, staff and clientele	29	69.6
Interdisciplinary programming effort	29	69.6
Equal distribution of resource among programme areas	30	68.5
Balance between rural and urban programme	31	67.4
Diversity among clientele	32	65.2
Freedom/independence in programming	33	63.0
Good fringe benefits to employees	34	62.0
The federal, state and local extension partnership	34	62.0
The involvement of volunteers to multiply our educational outreach	35	53.3
A general awareness of global issues	36	52.2
Targeting clientele form urban areas	37	51.1
Direct clientele involvement in programme planning	38	48.9
Extension financial support from the federal level	39	44.8
Employees participation in an educational programme in a foreign country	40	23.9

Tab. 3: Ranking of organizational values perceived as extremely valued

Organizational values	Extremely valued (rank)	Extremely valued (%)
Research extension linkage	1	64.1
Our role in bringing about change in people's lives	2	54.3
Credibility with clientele	3	49.2
Loyalty to the organisation	4	47.8
Extension programs that help solve problems	5	46.7
Honesty/integrity in work	6	45.7
A clearly defined organizational mission	6	45.7
Targeting clientele from rural areas	7	44.6
Teamwork among co-workers	8	42.8
Faith in ability to bringing about a better future	9	39.1
A well mark organizational image	10	35.9
Research based programmes	10	35.9
Unbiased delivery of information	11	33.7
Extension programmes based on needs identified at local level	12	33.2
The recognition that our employees are our organizations greatest resource	13	32.6
The use of emerging technologies in daily operation	14	29.3
Anticipated problems and develop solution in advance foresight	14	29.3
Useful/practical programmes	15	28.3
Preserving a rural way of life	16	27.2
Innovative/creativity in programmes	17	26.1
Effective flow of communication through all the organizational levels	17	26.1
Recruitment and screening of prospective employees resulting in hiring qualified people	17	26.1
Networking/coalition building with other agencies/organization	18	25.0
Helping people to help themselves	19	23.9
High standard of excellence in education programming	19	23.9
People-entered programme	19	23.9
Extension financial support from the state level	19	23.9
Quick response to clientele concerns/request	20	23.3
Opportunities for professional development	21	22.8
Equal opportunity for male and female employees	22	20.7
Interdisciplinary programme effort	22	20.7
The equitable distribution of resource among programme areas	23	19.6
Good fringe benefits to employees	23	19.6
Recognition of excellence in performance	24	18.5
Administrators who demonstrate sensitivity to personal and family responsibility of employees	25	15.2
Diversity among clientele	24	15.2
The federal, state and local extension partnership	24	15.2
The involvement of volunteers to multiply our educational outreach	25	15.2
Direct clientele involvement in programme planning	26	14.1
Diversity among employee	27	12.0
The distribution of resources among programme areas based on numbers of potential clientele	28	10.9
Targeting clientele form rural area	29	9.8
Flexibility/adaptability in programming	29	9.8
Share organizational leadership among administrators, staff and clientele	29	9.8
Employees participation in an educational programme in a foreign country	30	8.7
Freedom/independence in programming	31	7.6
A general awareness of global issues	32	7.6
Balance between rural and urban programme	33	6.5

training of the extension agents both in school and orientation training. However, direct clientele involvement in programme planning (48.9%), extension financial support from the federal level (44.8%) and employees participation in education in an education programme in foreign country (23.9%) are the least three organizational values that the extension agents are aware of. This is due to the fact that the ADPs are controlled and financed by the state governments, hence most of their programmes are controlled by the ministry of agriculture that are chaired by commissioners who are political and will always like to be involved in programmes for political reasons, rather than educational programmes that meet the needs of the people.

Table 3 showed the ranking of values perceived as “extremely value”. Research extension linkage (64.1%), extension agents’ role in bringing about change in peoples’ life (54.3%) and credibility with clientele (49.2%) are the top three. This implied that the ADPs collaborate and co-operate with research institutions for development of appropriate modern technologies for farmers’ adoption which will in consequence bring about change in standard of living of the farmers. In fact, establishment of link between research, extension and farmer is one of the primary objectives of ADPs. However, freedom/independence in programme (7.6%), general awareness of global issues (7.6%) and balance between rural and urban programme (6.5%) are the least values perceived as “extremely valued”. This is due to the fact that the highest policy maker of the extension organization is Agricultural Steering Committee (ASCOM) otherwise known as Project Board. The incumbent state commissioner for Agriculture chairman the board and since the commissioner is appointed on political level, most of the programmes executed by the ADPs are to protect the manifesto of the ruling political party of the state. Therefore, there will be no freedom or independence in programmes by the ADPs. At the same time, there is little effect in the awareness of global issues since the ADPs are concerned mainly with their states.

Organizational values perceived as extremely evident

Value statements were ranked according to the percentage of respondents that rated the statement as “extremely evident”. The results showed that the percentage of organization value perceived as “extremely evident” ranges from 41.3% (Unbiased delivery of information) to 2.2 % (Targeting clientele from urban areas). The top three values range from unbiased delivery of information (41.3%), research extension linkage (41.3%) and extension programme that help solve problem (37.0%). The findings are similar to those of Safrit et al (2001) in a research work among Ohio State University extension personnel, where unbiased delivery of information (50.4%) was

rated as the highest organizational value ranked as “extremely evident”. This implies that the extension method of re-organizing training and visit used by the ADPs in Nigeria to provide the agricultural extension service is the main reason for unbiased delivery of information, that is, the extension agents teach the farmers as they are being taught at Monthly Training Review Meetings (MTRMs) or Fortnightly Training (FNT) meeting. At the same time, the ADPs do not have research laboratories. Hence, they depend on research institutions for development of modern technologies for farmers’ adoption. That is why research – extension linkage was second highest value perceived as “extremely evident”. Research – extension linkage was also rated as the highest value perceived as “extremely valued”. This implies that there is a congruency between professional beliefs and the values evident within the work environment. Therefore there will be personal satisfaction among the extension agents. On the other side, general awareness of global issues (6.55%), employees participation in education programme in foreign country (5.4%) and targeting clientele from urban areas (2.2%) were the least three values perceived as “Extremely evident”. These imply that the ADPs lay more emphasis on farmers’ problems that are majorly rural dwellers. The general awareness of global issues was second least value perceived as “extremely valued” (6.5) and it is also the third least values perceived as “extremely evident” (Table 4). Only 5.4% of the respondents perceived employee participation in educational programme in a foreign country as “extremely evident”. This implies that most extension educational programmes are usually based on the needs identified in the local areas. This is similar to the findings among the extension personnel of Ohio State University which showed that employee participation in educational programme in a foreign country is the least value they perceived as “extremely evident”.

The relationship between extension agents’ awareness of organizational values and organizational values perceived as evident among the extension agents was tested using Chi-square statistics. The result showed that the relationship was significant ($p = 0.000$) Table 5.

This implies that the more the extension agents are aware of the organizational values, the more they are able to perceive the evidence of the values in the organization.

Perceptions of organizational values by extension agents from Oyo and Ogun States ADPs

t-test analysis was used for the comparison of Oyo and Ogun extension agents in terms of perceptions of organizational values by extension agents. The result was not significant (Oyo mean = 147.53, Ogun mean = 140.35, $df = 73$, $P > 0.05$). This implies that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of organizational values by extension agents in the two

states. This is probably because the personal characteristics of the respondents in the two states are very similar. Also the comparison of Oyo and Ogun extension agents in terms of organizational values

perceived as evident by extension agents was not significant (Oyo mean = 143.78, Ogun mean = 135.41, $df = 89$, $P > 0.05$). This implies that there is no significant difference between organizational values

Tab. 4: Ranking organisational values perceived as extremely evident

	Extremely valued (rank)	Extremely valued (%)
Unbiased delivery of information	1	41.3
Research extension linkage	1	41.3
Extension programmes that help solve problems	2	37.0
Helping people help themselves	2	37.0
A clearly defined organizational mission	3	35.9
People-centred programme	4	34.8
Loyalty to the organization	5	33.7
Research-based programmes	5	33.7
Honesty/integrity in work	6	32.6
Our role in bringing about change in people's lives	7	31.5
Quick response to clientele concerns/request	8	30.4
Targeting clientele from rural area	9	29.3
A well-marked organizational image	10	28.3
Extension programmes based on needs identified at local level	11	26.1
Anticipated problems and develop solution in advance foresight	11	26.1
Effective flow of communication through all the organizational levels	11	26.1
Extension financial support form the state level	12	25.0
Recognition of excellence in performance	13	23.9
Credibility with clientele	13	23.9
Useful/practical programmes	13	23.9
Faith in ability to bringing about a better future	14	21.7
Preserving a rural way of life	14	21.7
The recognition that our employees are our organization's greatest resource	15	18.5
Innovative/creativity in programmes	16	19.6
Recruitment and screening of prospective employees resulting in hiring qualified people	16	19.6
Balance between rural and urban programme	16	19.6
High standard of excellence in education programming	17	18.5
Interdisciplinary programming effort	17	18.5
Flexibility/adaptability in programming	17	18.5
Freedom/independence in programming	17	18.5
Opportunities for professional development	18	17.4
The use of emerging technologies in daily operation	19	16.3
Networking/coalition building with other agencies/organization	19	16.3
Equal opportunity for male and female employees	19	16.3
Diversity among clientele	20	14.1
Good fringe benefits to employees	21	13.0
The distribution of resources among programme areas based on numbers of potential clientele	21	13.0
The equitable distribution of resource among programme areas	22	12.0
Diversity among employee	22	12.0
Administrators who demonstrate sensitivity to personal and family responsibility of employees	23	8.7
Direct clientele involvement in programme planning	23	8.7
Share organizational leadership among administrators, staff and clientele	23	8.7
The federal, state and local extension partnership	24	7.6
The involvement of volunteers to multiply our educational outreach	24	7.6
A general awareness of global issues	25	6.5
Employees participation in an educational programme in a foreign country	26	5.4
Targeting clientele from urban areas	27	2.2

Tab. 5: Chi-square analysis of the relationship between awareness of organizational values and organizational values perceived as evident

Variable	X ²	Df	P	Decision
Organisational value	28.55	1	0.000	significant

Tab. 6: Multiple Regression Analysis showing the relationship between the personal characteristics of the extension agents and the organizational values perceived as evident

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Probability level of significance
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
	97.440	13.346		7.301	0.000
Age	409	0.176	0.249	2.328	0.022
Sex	-13.692	7.579	-0.180	-1.807	0.074
Religion	6.271	4.940	0.126	1.269	0.208
Educational Level	3.666	2.593	0.153	1.414	0.161
Marital Status	5.831	4.433	0.130	1.315	0.192
Years of Working Experience	0.588	0.330	0.184	1.778	0.079

perceived as evident by extension agents in the two states. This is probably due to the fact that the two state ADPs use the same operational principles to carry out their extension assignments, methods of re-organized training and visiting systems. The organizational structures are also similar.

Relationship between selected personal characteristics and organizational values perceived as evident by extension agents in Oyo and Ogun States ADPs

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between the agents selected personal characteristics and the organizational values perceived as evident by the Oyo and Ogun States ADP extension agents. The result showed that age and years of working experience of the respondents are the most important predictors of organizational values perceived as evident among the selected personal characteristics of the respondents, while sex is the least predictor of organizational values perceived as evident among the selected personal characteristics (Table 6).

This result implies that age is the most important predictor of organizational values perceived as evident among the selected personal characteristics of the extension agents. This is due to the fact that age has to do with years of experience and the more an extension agent is experienced, the more he understands the organizational values. Sex is the least predictor of the organizational values perceived as evident among the selected personal characteristics of the extension agents. This is because sex has nothing to do with organizational values.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that there is very little similarities between

organizational values that are “extremely valued” and “extremely evident”. The evidence of values in organization plays an intricate role in the overall formation and function of individuals within the structure of an organization. As an organization thrives on the current personnel structure, it is necessary to advance individuals to further increase the similarity between “extremely valued” to “extremely evident” values. It is important to compare the respondents’ perceived evidence of values to actual organizational values possessed by the extension agents.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made: The administrative leadership of Oyo and Ogun ADPs should teach extension values, not only to its employees, but its clients and stakeholders as well. Comparing the findings of this value assessment to goals and objectives of Oyo and Ogun ADPs, the discrepancies found between “values” and the “perceived evident values” should each be addressed separately and reviewed to develop strategies for closing the gap in the discrepancies. The administrative leadership of Oyo and Ogun ADPs should identify what steps and processes are necessary for values in Oyo and Ogun ADPs to reach desired level of “extremely evident” values. The administrative leadership of the ADPs should incorporate values assessments processes into all future strategic planning efforts. Results of this study can be used by the ADPs to address differences between values and behaviour of the extension agents, through staff development, policy review and procedure changes.

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Corresponding author:

A.O. Akinsorotan
University of Ibadan
Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development
Nigeria
e-mail: akinakinsorotan@yahoo.com