

Erratum: Policy issues for improving monitoring and evaluation of agricultural extension programmes in Nigeria

**Authors:**

Akinnagbe O. Matthew¹
Olaolu M. Olatunji²

Affiliations:

¹Department of Agricultural Extension and Communication Technology, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria

²Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria

Corresponding author:

Akinnagbe Matthew,
omakinnagbe@futa.edu.ng

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Policy issues for improving monitoring and evaluation of agricultural extension programmes in Nigeria



Authors:

Akinnagbe O. Matthew¹
Olaolu M. Olatunji²

Affiliations:

¹Department of Agricultural Extension and Communication Technology, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria

²Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria

Corresponding author:

Akinnagbe Oluwole,
omakinnagbe@futa.edu.ng

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Monitoring and evaluation are important, yet, frequently neglected functions in most organisations. In Nigeria, many programmes have been established over the years but only little monitoring and evaluation have been carried out because of many implementation problems and lack of realistic and/or stable policy framework. This paper was designed to X-ray policy issues for improving monitoring and evaluation of agricultural programmes in Nigeria. Inductive and deductive reasoning through a review of relevant literature was used in this philosophical paper. To improve the performance of agricultural extension programmes in Nigeria, the following policy issues must be addressed: The questions of what should be monitored or evaluated, when should monitoring and/or evaluation be carried out and who should monitor and/or evaluate; and the methodology to be adopted in any project should be included in any agricultural programmes and/or policies. Manpower and financial resources, effective communication and the issue of accountability must be properly considered. The tools for monitoring and evaluation are also very crucial. The paper concluded that planning a good agricultural programme is not a problem in Nigeria but poor implementation is, as a result of poor monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, attention should be on when, how and who should be involved in monitoring and evaluation.

Problem domain

In general, agricultural extension services are regarded as the most important services to improve agriculture because they have a direct link to the farmers who are producers of food. According to Maunder (1973), agricultural extension is a service that assists farmers, through educational procedures, in improving farming methods and increasing income, in order to better the living standards and lift their social and educational standards. The purpose is to acquire useful information necessary for improved knowledge, skills, aspiration and attitudes. It also involves the conscious use of information to help clientele have sound opinions on production activities and make better decision regarding the future. Agricultural extension services therefore involve communication, education, helping farmers form opinions, and adoption of new knowledge and technologies, which enhance agricultural productivity, and ultimately improve the standard of living of the farmers (Daneji *et al.* 2005).

According to Wapmuk and Bwala (2005), few countries have experienced sustained economic development because of the lack of growth in the agricultural sector. To achieve sustained and improved agricultural productivity and enhanced incomes, there is a need for effective agricultural extension services that are relevant to the needs of the farmers. These could be from private or public sectors. What is important is the ability to meet the need of the rural farmers by delivering new technologies that could solve the present problems in agricultural activities.

In Nigeria, the documented agricultural policy has failed to establish a systematic focus on how to purposely prioritise agricultural development based on the identified components that constitute modern agriculture since 1988 when the policy document has been in existence. As opined by Manyong *et al.* (2005), the Government of Nigeria over the years was involved in introducing policies and programmes that focus on food production through increase in the area of cultivation.

Also, the 2001 Nigerian agricultural policy addressed some new directions for agricultural development but failed to address how monitoring and evaluation could help in realising the components in the policy. Based on this scenario, this paper examined the policy issues for improving monitoring and evaluation of agricultural extension programmes in Nigeria. In an attempt to achieve the stated objectives, specifically, the paper reviews the past government policies in agriculture, examines the constraints to effectiveness of past agricultural policies and identifies policy issues for improving monitoring and evaluation of agricultural programmes in Nigeria.

Past government policies and programmes in agriculture

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture with its extension component was established in 1967 (Jibowo 2005). Since then, the Federal Government of Nigeria has introduced and adopted various agricultural development programmes with extension components to improve the lives of the rural dwellers and boosting food production, through different approaches, such as education, training, extension, research, land resource management, land policy, administration and gender issues in agriculture (Ezeano 2015).

These agricultural development programmes are:

- National Accelerated Food Production Project (1972)
- River Basin Development Authority (1973)
- Agricultural Development Project (1975)
- Operation Feed the Nation (1976)
- Green Revolution Programme (1980)
- Accelerated Development Area Project (ADAP, 1982)
- Multi-state Agricultural Development Project (1986)
- Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Scheme (1987)
- National Fadama Development Project (1992)
- National Special Programme for Food Security (2003)
- Commercial Agricultural Development Project (2006)

Brief highlights on some of these programmes are:

The agricultural development programmes established in 1975 have the main objective of increasing production of food and fibre as well as producer's income. They have unique distinguishing characteristics of ensuring that no farmer travels more than 5–15 km to purchase needed farm inputs; good feeder road network; a revitalised unified extension and a training system; joint collaborative state–federal project implementation; and a built-in project for monitoring and evaluation. According to Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe (2012), this approach revamps and revitalises extension services by integrated supply of farm inputs and infrastructural support.

The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) was established in 1986 as a combined approach to develop agricultural systems in rural areas of Nigeria. It is operated through its coordinating officers in the states and in each local government areas (Olugboyega & Kolawole 2012). DFRRI was designed for provision of water, construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of rural feeder road network. The main goal of establishing DFRRI was to promote grass-roots social mobilisation through provision of access to road and water in rural areas.

National Special Programmes for Food Security (NSPFS), funded by the World Bank programme, aims to attain food security and alleviate poverty in Nigeria (Ephraim & Arene 2015). It is designed to assist farmers in utilising their potential to increase output and productivity and, consequently, their income on a sustainable basis.

All of these programmes recorded success in one way or the other; at the same time, they have their own limitations as a result of so many reasons. The next section takes a look at the common constraints to effectiveness of these aforementioned programmes.

Constraints to effectiveness of the past agricultural policies and programmes

There are many constraints to effectiveness of agricultural policies and programmes in Nigeria. Some of these include political instability, non-involvement of relevant stakeholders in the planning and execution, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, and inadequate institutional arrangement.

Political instability: One of the major constraints to effective agricultural programmes and policies is political instability. It is common to see programmes and policies formulated by successive government regime scrapped in rapid succession. Every successive government in Nigeria tended to abandon most of their predecessor's policies and programmes with the belief that a new government could only justify its existence or make its mark by adopting entirely new policies and programmes. For example, the former president of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, introduced Green Revolution Programme in 1979 as a way of boosting agricultural production. The programme and/or policy involves breeding of new varieties of crop through cross-fertilisation (hybridisation). This policy could not see the light of the day as the regime of the former president was terminated by the military incursion in 1983.

Non-involvement of relevant stakeholders in the planning and execution: Some of the past agricultural programmes and policies failed to involve the relevant stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the programme. Such programmes or policies will fail because they lack the necessary grass-roots support and the regular mobilisation required for their success. One of the basic philosophical objectives of agricultural extension is to involve people in its programmes for democratic purpose. Any agricultural extension programme that does not involve the local people is bound to fail. When clientele are involved in a programme particularly at the planning stage, it will lead to: (1) long-term commitment of the people to the programme, (2) good rapport between the extension agents and the rural farm-families, (3) more accurate decision-making process and (4) quick legitimisation of actions. The only problem peculiar to involvement, is the problem of who among the stakeholders should be involved and participate in the programme planning.

Inadequate monitoring and evaluation: Monitoring is described as the assessment of programme to know if it is operating in conformity to its design and reaching its specified target. It is an internal programme activity which is an essential part of good management practice. It is, therefore, an integral part of

day-to-day management. It involves a continuous process of collecting and processing data. Evaluation on the other hand is the systematic review and assessment of the benefits, quality and value of a programme or activity. It can focus on programme design, implementation and/or results. Most programme implementers do not fully appreciate the primary purpose of programme monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation are supposed to be built-in as an integral part of every agricultural extension programme, but, unfortunately, many Nigerian agricultural programmes have received little or no attention in this respect. This has led to some failure in programme implementation.

Inadequate institutional arrangements: When necessary things (human and materials) necessary in implementing a particular programme were not in place as at and when due, often led to programme failure and general inefficiency in resource use among beneficiaries and implementers. According to Makinde (2005), some implementation problems, such as corruption, lack of continuity in government policies, and inadequate human and material resources, led to an implementation gap, which has been experienced in some of these agricultural programmes in Nigeria.

Policy issues for improving monitoring and evaluation of agricultural programmes

To improve monitoring and evaluation of agricultural programmes in Nigeria, the following policy issues must be addressed: The questions of what should be monitored or evaluated, when should monitoring and/or evaluation be carried out and who should monitor and/or evaluate; the methodology to be adopted in any project; and the tools for monitoring and evaluation should be included in any agricultural programmes and/or policies.

When should monitoring/evaluation be carried out?

Monitoring and evaluation should be integrated into every activity of the agricultural programmes. It is essential to develop and establish a habit of doing casual evaluation of the highest possible quality for almost all processes and products involved in the various segments of the programme. The time for monitoring and evaluation should be well budgeted and made part and parcel of the programme planning process. Systematic evaluation usually requires a greater expenditure of resources than normal, and hence it should be done when the resources are available and the use of such evaluation justifies the cost. Most agricultural programmes in Nigeria lack this important aspect. This is not well stated in most projects and/or programmes. The few that carried out monitoring activities do so when they feel like. When proper monitoring and evaluation are carried out as at when due, it helps in improving the programme.

What should be monitored or evaluated?

Agricultural programmes may be evaluated in terms of appropriateness (i.e. suitability and quality), accomplishment (i.e. level of achievement of the primary objectives) and efficiency. The entire programme or a segment of it could be evaluated on the basis of these parameters regardless of whether one is evaluating the total segments of a programme or just a segment of it. It is also important that one assesses both the processes and the products (results). A programme designed to improve the productivity of the farmers should focus primarily on productivity, and this should be measured according to the indicators stated in the policy to avoid deviation. For example, the National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) established in 1991 to eliminate the problem of access to land and reduce the cost of the land development for farmers, among others, should be monitored and evaluated to see if the pre-determined objectives have been achieved.

Who should monitor/evaluate?

In terms of who should monitor and/or evaluate a programme, normally, the person who is responsible for providing leadership in planning and implementation of a programme should be responsible for its monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, the agricultural extension administrator and his workers should evaluate their own programme because the process itself provides a useful learning experience, which improves their knowledge of the programme, helps them to accumulate useful evidences that could help in programme implementation and helps them to grow professionally.

However, there are several limitations, the most important of which is the possibility of the agricultural extension workers not being sufficiently proficient to do a good evaluation. They may not be able to articulate reasons for failure or success of the programme. Therefore, in some cases where the complexity of the problem is beyond technical competence of the agricultural extension workers, it may be necessary to engage the services of an expert. Even where evaluation is done by the external consultant, the agricultural extension workers should be involved in determining the purpose of the evaluation, designing the kind of information (data) needed, determining how the data should be collected, checking to make sure that the data collected are appropriate and planning how the data will be analysed, interpreted, reported and used. In formulating extension policy, there should be clear definitions of roles of the various extension agencies.

Tools for monitoring and evaluation

The tools used for monitoring and evaluation are very crucial in any policy programmes. For agricultural programmes in Nigeria, monitoring and evaluation should be based on simple and easily measurable indicators that can describe or measure change (both process and progress) in various activities and/or components across locations and over time.

They should provide useful relevant information about the performance of the projects and/or programmes in achieving the intended objective. Indicators used in most of these agricultural projects and/or programmes should include both qualitative and quantitative aspects, reflecting achievements of physical and financial targets and improvement in the quality of services delivered by the project interventions. The relevant information for estimating the values of indicators should be collected through specifically designed format and code sheets by qualified and well-trained field functionaries. The person should be fully acquainted with the area and has interest in spending adequate time in the field. Monitoring and evaluation should be done by combining it with different methods such as review of progress reports, on-site crosscheck, interactive discussion with implementers and the recipient group, sample household survey and participatory rural approach with special focus on participatory monitoring and evaluation.

Effective communication

Communication is very important in monitoring and evaluation. In most agricultural programmes, communication between the stakeholders was not properly addressed. In certain instances, some of the stakeholders who were supposed to participate in the programme were not adequately communicated with. In an ideal situation, there was supposed to be a plan of work and calendar of activities wherein all persons involved in the project knew beforehand about their participation and the exact roles they were expected to play. There should be adequate and accurate information for the beneficiaries and the implementers. The information should also be consistent. For programme and/or policy to achieve a desired result, all the desired stakeholders must be in touch and updated. Therefore, to improve monitoring and evaluation of agricultural projects and/or programmes in Nigeria, there should be an effective communication network among the stakeholders.

Manpower and financial resources

Manpower and financial resources are the critical issues that need to be addressed in monitoring and evaluation. When the manpower is inadequate, monitoring of agricultural extension programme could be delayed. At the same time, when the persons in charge of monitoring and evaluation are not competent, both monitoring and evaluation will suffer. It is therefore important to have sufficient and competent manpower available to do the job. Also, the financial resources for monitoring and evaluation should be well budgeted for at the planning stage of any agricultural project. Most organisations often fail to budget for monitoring and evaluation at the conception of the programme, and when this is not done, little or no monitoring and evaluation will be carried out. In addition to this, without human and financial resources, it means that organisational laws will not be enforced, services will not be provided and reasonable regulations will not be developed. This could, of

course, affect monitoring and evaluation which could lead to implementation gaps. Therefore, to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of agricultural project and/or programmes in Nigeria, efficient and effective resources (manpower and finances) should be available.

Conclusion and recommendation

Most of the agricultural projects and/or programmes in Nigeria shows that internal monitoring has remained a routine type of supervision with inherent bias of top-down administrative machinery. The issue of monitoring and evaluation must be properly addressed in all documents relating to agricultural programmes. Planning a good agricultural programme is not a problem in Nigeria but poor implementation is, as a result of poor monitoring and evaluation. Hence, to improve monitoring and evaluation of agricultural programmes in Nigeria, the following policy issues should be addressed: The questions of what should be monitored or evaluated, when should monitoring and/or evaluation be carried out and who should monitor and/or evaluate; the methodology to be adopted in any project; and also the tools for monitoring and evaluation should be included in any agricultural policy. Poorly monitored projects or programmes will only yield undesired results.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

A.O.M. was the project leader and was responsible for the problem identification and project design. A.O.M. and O.M.O. reviewed relevant literature on the topic and jointly did the write-up. A.O.M. revised the final version of the manuscript.

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