UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

NATURE OF JOB AND JOB SATISFACTION OF EXTENSION OFFICERS IN DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES IN SELANGOR AND FEDERAL TERRITORY

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FBMK 1984 1

Nature of Job and Job Satisfaction of Extension Officers in Development Agencies in Selangor and Federal Territory

by

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A Thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in the
Centre for Extension and Continuing Education
Universiti Pertanian Malaysia

July 1984

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank Dr. Saidin bin Teh, supervisor for this research, for his advice, suggestions, encouragement and unfailing enthusiasm throughout the course of this study. I am particularly grateful to have the opportunity of working with Dr. Saidin, and for the many useful discussions I have had with him. I am also grateful to Dr. Hj. Mohd. Yusof Hussain who supervised me during the last few weeks before the report could be completed.

I also wish to thank Dr. Sulaiman bin Hj. Mohd. Yassin, Director, Centre for Extension and Continuing Education, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia for his kind interest, help, and assistance to meet part of the financial obligations to support this research. Special thanks is dedicated to Dr. Alang Perang Zainuddin, Dean of Graduate Studies for his untiring efforts to make this report successful.

I am also indebted to the officials of the various agricultural agencies for distributing and collecting the questionnaires to the officers involved in the research, whose names appeared in Appendix VI. Special thanks is also dedicated to Y.B. Tan Sri Datuk Dr. Hj. Arshad Ayob for his interest and cooperation in the study.

Sincere thanks are due to all those who have given me advice and assistance in the course of this research, especially Puan Khiriyah Hj. Ahmad, Cik Zuraida Kamarulzaman, Cik Fadzlon Mohd. Yusof and Cik Siti Aminah Sani of Universiti Pertanian Malaysia.

Finally, my special thanks to my admirable and supportive husband, Tuan Hj. Mohamad Sani and my three adorable children,, Intan Sabrina, Intan Natasha and Ibrahim Sani for all sacrifices made. Especially to my beloved Yem, I dedicate this special message, "Without your presence I can never complete this research".

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An abstract of the thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Pertanian Malaysia in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

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July, 1984

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The purpose of the study was to identify and analyze the nature of job, satisfaction level, attitudes and factors of motivation of extension officers from ten agricultural development agencies in the State of Selangor and Federal Territory. Data were provided by 126 respondents who were Divisions A and B officers from the Community Development Division of the Ministry of National and Rural Development (KEMAS), Department of Agriculture, Department of Fisheries, Department of Veterinary Services, Farmers' Organization Authority (FOA), Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA), Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), Rubber Research Institute of Malaysia (RRIM), Rubber Industry Small-holders Development Authority (RISDA) and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (UPM). The research was carried out from January until March, 1983.

Based on the literature review and with the assistance of the extension officers, the activities regarding the planning, implementing and evaluating an extension programme were documented in the proposed job description which hopefully can be useful to the development agencies. This seemed necessary because during the investigation, it was observed that very few of the agencies had a job description.

The findings of this research revealed the following: (1) Only officers from six agencies were considered satisfied in their jobs. The agencies were RRIM, RISDA, Veterinary Services Department, Fisheries Department, FELDA and Agricultural Department; (2) Promotion scheme was the obvious job element that the officers from all ten agencies were greatly dissatisfied; (3) The five most important factors of motivation were to get along with others, to use their skills and abilities, to get fair promotion based on performance, to know their job was important, and to get opportunities for self-development and improvements; (4) The officers regarded their organizational management tools as useful in assisting them in their jobs. The officers looked upon the organizational chart, organization objectives and job description as useful management tools; (5) Some of the officers wanted to go to another agency and in another service if they were given the chance.

Thus, from the findings, the following recommendations were suggested:

(1) Management needs to provide a job description, the agency's organizational chart and organizational objectives to the officers;

(2) Management should look into the promotion scheme of the officers and try to improve it;

(3) Extension officers can tackle common grievances regarding their job through Quality Control Circle (QCC) discussions. Resolutions made should be forwarded to management;

(4) Further research on job satisfaction of extension officer was suggested in accordance with the findings from this study.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

It is generally agreed that an agency's performance to a large extent depends on the comprehensionability of the officers on the nature of job they are supposed to do. If an officer's job is clearly defined in his job description, he can perform his job effectively and efficiently in accordance with his organizational requirements. However, the job description must be carefully planned and written because a badly formulated job description shall not be useful to the officer concerned.

Another factor that could determine an agency's performance is job satisfaction. An officer must be satisfied in his job in terms of position, salary, place of work, promotion opportunities, relationship with boss, relationship with subordinates, relationship with peers, responsibilities held, and authority given. If he is not satisfied with these elements in his job, he shall either leave the agency and find a new one to work with, or he shall continue working in his present agency, but at an undesirable pace. His performance in his work shall deteriorate

and this shall affect the overall performance of the agency in which he is working.

In agencies where the workers are dissatisfied, strikes, absentism, inefficiency and high turnover shall prevail. If the agencies resort to adopt drastic actions for example staff dismissal or punishment in terms of demotion, the agencies shall face industrial relation problems. In some cases, the agencies are being brought to industrial court and a lot of unpleasantness shall occur. It is important therefore that agencies keep their workers satisfied to avoid industrial relation problems.

In Malaysia, generally the majority of the officers working in the development agencies are satisfied with their jobs. There is very little evidence of industrial relation problems. Strikes and absentism are seldom heard to occur in the agencies. Even personnel turnover is considered to be very low, except for certain professional groups like the medical and teaching professions. In these two professions there hafe been a slight increase of personnel turnover in which the officers working in the government agencies left their jobs to work in the agencies of the private sector. One reason probably is because the salary offerred by the private sector is better and this satisfied their needs.

The agricultural sector which is a large organization has the largest number of development agencies under it compared to the other sectors of the economy. These development agencies are

divided into implementing, research, and training agencies respectively.

The implementing agencies include the Agricultural Department, Community Development Division of the Ministry of National and Rural Development (KEMAS), Farmers' Organization Authority (FOA), Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA), Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (FELCRA), Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), Fisheries Department, Malaysian Rubber Development Corporation (MARDEC), National Padi and Rice Authority (LPN), National Tobacco Board (NTB), Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (RISDA) and Veterinary Services Department.

The research agencies include the Forest Research Institute (FRI), Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI), Palm Oil Research Institute of Malaysia (PORIM), and Rubber Research Institute of Malaysia (RRIM). The two major agricultural training agencies are the Agricultural University of Malaysia (UPM), and the Institute of Agriculture located at six different states in the country including the State of Johor, Pahang, Perak, Selangor, and Terengganu.

Although the agencies stated above are assumed to implement development projects in terms of extension programmes, most of the Administrative Officers could not identify who are the extension officers in their agencies. However, the Record Division

of the Public Services Department, estimated that in 1983 out of the total 600,000 civil servants in the country, about 3,000 were extension officers in the designation grade A and B.

The role of each type of development agency differes from one another. For instance, the implementing agencies are involved in direct service to the farm workers in dissemination of knowledge and skills. The research agencies are involved in finding new technologies to help the farm workers improve their farming methods and these discoveries are channeled to the farm workers through the implementing agencies. Subsequently, the personnel involved in the dissemination of knowledge, skills and new technologies to the farm workers are generally being trained and developed by the training agencies. In some cases, however, the research and training agencies respectively carry out their own extension services to the farm workers directly and not necessarily through the implementing agencies only.

Due to the varying role of each type of development agency, it is necessary to have different types of job description for the extension officers. Generally, the agricultural development agencies do not have job description for their officers. This is unlike other kinds of service, for instance, the Civil Service in the Prime Minister's Department where each officer is given a job description on the first day he reports for work. It is important that the nature of job of an extension officer is identified and documented in a clear job description of individual agency. This shall be a useful management tool to the extension

officer.

Regarding job satisfaction of officers in the agricultural development agencies, it can be generalized that most of the extension officers are generally satisfied. However, compared to the other government sectors, for example the Civil Service, the agricultural extension officers have less job incentives. For instance, in the promotion scheme, the officers in the Civil Service get promoted faster than the extension officers in the agricultural development sector. When comparisons are made between the agricultural development agencies of the government and the development agencies of the private sector, the government agricultural extension officers receive lower salary scale and in most cases have to work in rural areas. The agricultural development officers of the private sector, for instance, the officers working in the palm oil or rubber estates of big companies such as Sime Darby or Guthrie, live in better homes and receive better salary. Therefore, there is evidence that the extension officers of the government agencies could be dissatisfied in their jobs. However, inspite of the variations in salary scheme and promotional incentives between agencies in different sectors, it can be observed that the majority of the government extension officers remain working in their current organizations. It would be interesting to investigate why these officers remain to be so.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is important for every agricultural development agency to specify the nature of job of extension officers. Every officer from the first day he reports for work in any of the agencies, must know what is expected of him in term of the type of job he has to perform including his responsibilities and authority. He must be told of the objectives of the agency, the salary he is to receive, the place he shall work, the vacation and medical benefits he is entitled to, the boss he has to report to and the subordinates he has to be responsible for. In short, he has to be provided with a job description to guide him in his job.

Although it is important that the extension officers in the development agencies know their jobs, it is equally important that these officers be satisfied with their jobs. This will keep the rate of personnel turnover of the agencies low. Dissatisfied officers usually will leave their current agencies to seek employment in otherorganizations. This causes the former agencies to look for new officers to replace the ones who have left them. The new officers need to be trained and this takes time. At the same time, the implementation of extension programmes may be affected. Being new to the job, the new officers may not be able to carry on the programmes efficiently and effectively.

Another reason why the extension officers must be satisfied with their jobs is because dissatisfied officers tend to perform badly in their jobs if they choose not to seek employment opportunities elsewhere. For example, because an officer is bonded with a scholarship contract in which he has to serve the agency for a certain number of years, the officer shall continue working in that agency, but he shall work inefficiently if he has made up his mind to leave once his contract expires. Obviously, the officer's inefficiency in his work shall affect the effectiveness and smooth running of extension programmes.

As stated in the introduction, there is very few government agencies which have job description, unlike the agencies in the private sector. In the agencies of the private sector, usually a job description is given to every new officer on the day he reports for work. The nature of job of the officer is clearly identified in thejob description given. It is not surprising therefore to notice that extension officers prefer to work in the private sector. This is particularly evident among fresh university graduates. The salary offerred by the private sector for fresh graduates is not very much higher than the government agencies. However, given the choice, generally fresh graduates prefer to work for the private sector. Probably it is due to the specified nature of job. The officer knows what is expected of him and this motivates him to work in the private sector.

With regard to the extension officers in the government agencies, it can be noticed that generally very few officers leave their jobs. This particularly so for officers who at one time are bonded by scholarship contract, remain to be in the government agencies even though their contract with the government is over. A good explanation that can be deduced is that these officers are satisfied with their jobs.

Studies on the nature of job and job satisfaction had been conducted in other countries, especially in Europe and United States. However, no study yet has been carried out regarding the nature of job and job satisfaction of officers, especially of extension officers in Malaysia. Therefore, there is an urgent need to carry out such a study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The first objective of the study was to determine the nature of job and the activities involved of extension officers. The second objective was to analyze the job satisfaction level of the extension officers.

The second objective was broken down into three sub-objectives, viz:

(i) to determine the extension officers' attitudes toward organizational management tools;

(ii) to determine the extension officers' attitudes

toward being transferred to other department; and

(iii) to determine the factors that motivate the extension officers.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted on 126 respondents who returned the questionnaires. Questionnaires were sent to 260 potential respondents in ten agricultural agencies. There was no follow-up to investigate why the rest of the 134 potential respondents did not return the questionnaires. The researcher assumed that the respondents who did not return the questionnaires did not perform any or all three phases in an extension programme as underlined by the researcher in the questionnaire.

Another limitation was on the geographical aspect of the study. The researcher chose respondents working in agencies in the State of Selangor and the Federal Territory. The findings will not necessarily depict the nature of job and the satisfaction level of all extension officers throughout the country.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The results from this study may be useful to agricultural development agencies such as the implementing agencies like Agricultural Department and research agencies like RRIM for their manpower planning.

One of the findings of this study is on the nature of job of the extension officers. The agencies can use this finding to evaluate the kind of job their officers are doing and formulate a job description for the officers concerned. If a job description has been in existence, it needs to be reviewed and amendments have to be made accordingly.

Another finding from this study is on the job satisfaction level. The management of every agency should consider as to how their officers can be motivated using the factors of motivation suggested in this research. For instance, management can encourage officers to use their initiative and skills by providing them with more responsibilities in terms of job enlargement.

Overall, the findings of this research can be useful for the agricultural development agencies to manage and develop their extension personnel.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

EXTENSION SERVICE

In reviewing the concept of extension service, its relationship to development and communication has to be considered. Development forms the main framework within which extension service operates, while communication with the farmers is the end point of the extension service.

Extension has been defined in many ways. Bradfield (1966) defines extension as an education process to bring about desirable changes. These can be in the form of increased knowledge, improved attitudes, or new skills learned. Boone *et al.*, (1971) reviews extension as a philosophy which reflects the conviction that people adjust to change most rapidly in a democratic environment in which self-expression, self-direction and self-improvement are encouraged. This development can best be accompanied through a programme of purposeful continuing education in which people identify and solve problems through their own initiative.