

Employment Prospects of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Graduates in the Broadcasting Industry of Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study was designed to investigate the employment prospects of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development (AERD) graduates in the broadcasting industry. Media practitioners (N = 96) representing 19 broadcasting stations across three states recorded their perceptions of the prospects of AERD graduates in the broadcasting industry. Findings revealed that AERD graduates are very few (4.2%) in the industry and vacant slots exist to be filled. However, these vacancies are mostly for independent broadcasts (89.5%) in the evening (81.6%) with the most probable limiting problem being adverts /sponsorship sourcing (75.9%). Further analyses showed that media practitioners are mostly neutral (63.5%) in their perception of the employment prospects of AERD graduates in the broadcasting industry. There exist a significant difference in the perceptions of media practitioners from public and private broadcasting houses ($F=6.95$, $p<0.05$) on the employment prospects of AERD graduates in the broadcasting industry. There is also a significant difference in the perceptions of agricultural broadcasters, management staff and non-agricultural broadcasters ($F=20.52$, $p<0.05$), on the employment prospects of AERD graduates in the broadcasting industry, while there is no significant difference in the perceptions of the media practitioners across the three states on the employment prospects of AERD graduates in the broadcasting industry ($F=0.56$, $p>0.05$). AERD departments in universities nationwide should enhance their curricula to include the rudiments of broadcasting so they can produce graduates who can package good agricultural and rural development programs which are attractive enough for sponsorship and advert- placements on both radio and television.

Key words: AERD, practitioners, broad casters, industry, radio, television, agricultural extension

INTRODUCTION

The use of the mass media to reach large farm audiences have for long been an essential component of agricultural communication in Nigeria. This is particularly more important in these times of declining number of village extension agents whom were mostly employed by the government.

Government owned extension agencies are not replacing retired extension agents with new ones whereas, the advert/sponsor-driven nature of the broadcasting industry is opening a window of opportunity to all who have an idea to project.

Therefore, Agricultural Extension and Rural Development graduates (AERD) are expected to fill in the gap by exploiting the opportunity provided by the broadcast media in order to improve agricultural extension delivery through broadcasting.

Theoretical framework: Trends in Nigeria agricultural development scene show that the mass media have a

pivotal role play (Olowu, 1993; Yahaya, 2001 and Yahaya and Badiru, 2002). Trends in the media development scene however, suggest that the media are open to all comers who have an idea to express as long as such an idea is backed up with advert placement/sponsorship since the media have been commercialized (Folarin, 1998).

Yahaya (2002) found that conventional journalists have poor attitude towards rural development and agricultural news while Hoban (2002), hinted that journalists tend to focus more on sensational news stories. Thus, Yahaya (2003) advocated the taking up of employment in the media by graduates of other fields (Agricultural extension inclusive). This is particularly important since journalists not only report but shape the news that pass through them as "gatekeepers".

Considering the above with the unemployment situation in Nigeria especially in the agricultural extension sector, one needs to inquire into the possibility of providing jobs for the numerous AERD graduates within the field of broadcasting considering its importance in agricultural extension and rural development.

The main purpose was to investigate the employment prospects of AERD graduates in the broadcasting industry of southwest Nigeria. The specific objectives were to;

- Examine the management policies of broadcasting stations as they relate to agricultural broadcasts.
- Determine the broadcasters' perceptions of the employment prospects of AERD graduates in the broadcasting industry.
- Identify the most probable limiting problem of agricultural broadcasts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in (3) states of the southwest geo-political zone of Nigeria. The area is made up of Lagos, Oyo and Ogun states constituting 50% sample of the zone while the zone is arguably the most developed in terms of media activities in the country, (2) of the states were purposively selected because they guaranteed the inclusion of typical characteristics necessary for the successful study of the variables required (i.e. public and private owned stations). The third state (Ogun) was selected using the simple random sampling technique from the remaining (4) states in the zone.

In each state, 50% public and 50% private radio and television stations were selected using the simple random sampling technique. The stations are; Premier FM, BCOS radio AM, Paramount FM, OGBC radio AM, Metro FM, LSBC radio AM, Ray power, Star FM and Brila FM. Others are; BCOS television, Galaxy television Ibadan, NTA Abeokuta, OGTV, NTA 10, LTV, AIT, MITV, Galaxy television Lagos and Channels TV.

From each station, (2) management staff members, (2) agricultural broadcasters and (2) non-agricultural broadcasters were randomly selected to make a total of six 960 respondents per station. As a result, a total of 114 respondents were selected from 19 stations. Ninety six out of 114 respondents however returned the administered questionnaires constituting 84.21% return rate.

Thirty eight management staff were specifically asked questions on employment policies, program scheduling and other questions on management policies which only members of staff in the management cadre can give answers correctly to.

All the 96 broadcasters (including the management staff) were however, asked 20 perception questions on the employment prospects of AERD graduates in the broadcasting industry using a 5-point Likert scale which were scored from 1 to 5. The most favorable perception

score was 100 while the least favorable score was 20. The broadcasters were also asked questions on the most probable limiting problem of agricultural broadcasts.

RESULTS

Table1 showed that majority of the media practitioners (98.96%) are in the active age category of 26-45 years. This implies that they still have more years to spend in the broadcasting industry and that their perception would continue for sometime to come.

It was also found that most of the broadcasters are male (62.5%) which suggests that the male /female ratio is not too lopsided, confirming a general belief that the broadcasting industry is female friendly.

The Table also revealed that all the respondents (100%) have post secondary school qualification, suggesting an elitist industry.

Findings also showed that AERD graduates are a minority (4.2%) which also shows an under-representation of agricultural extension personnel.

Majority of the respondents are married (70.83%) while most of them (63.54%) use advertising to supplement their income from broadcasting.

Table 1: Media Practitioners' social and personal characteristics N=96

Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	(%)
Age	<26 years	18	18.75
	26-35	46	47.92
	36-45	31	32.29
	46-55	1	1.04
	Total	96	100
Sex	Male	60	62.5
	Female	36	37.5
Total		96	100
Highest Educational attainment	ND	10	10.4
	NCE	2	2.1
	HND	19	19.0
	Degree	65	67.7
Total		96	100
Discipline	Mass comm.	42	43.8
	Languages	15	15.6
	Education	2	2.1
	Soc. Sciences	28	29.1
	Agric extension	4	4.2
	Agric science	5	5.2
Total		96	100
Marital status	Single	26	27.0
	Married	68	70.9
	Widowed	2	2.1
Total		96	100
Other income generating activities	Farming	2	2.08
	Trading	10	10.42
	Advertising	61	63.54
	Politics	4	4.16
	Civil service	19	19.8
Total		96	100

Table 2 showed that management policies are generally unfriendly to agriculture and rural development graduates. Although, most of the stations advertise vacant positions publicly (97.4%), majority of them (84.2%) do not consider AERD graduates for salaried job placement.

In spite of a fair presence (50.0%) of agricultural and rural development slots on the stations' programs; only a few (7.9%) of these slots attract salary payment which implies that they are not top priority programs.

It was also revealed that only a few (5.3%) stations have ever received applications for job placement from AERD graduates and only a few stations (2.6%) have ever employed such graduates. The future chances of employing agricultural extension and rural development graduates for salaried jobs in the industry is bleak as many of the managers (65.8%) are not willing to employ them in the future.

However, the prospects of being self-employed are bright as most of the managers (89.5%) are willing to allow AERD graduates buy air-time to broadcast in the evening period when such broadcasts would be relevant to farmers. This corroborates the view of Folarin, (1998) that the profit motive of the broadcasting houses puts them at the disposal of those who have money to advertise and sponsor programs.

Meanwhile, the possibility of enjoying subsidies and free slots are virtually non-existent as majority of the managers (94.7 and 92.1%, respectively) are not favorably disposed to the idea. This supposed unfriendly broadcasting management policies may suggest a lack of knowledge of the relevance of AERD to the broadcast media or vice versa amongst the media managers.

Table 2: Management policies of Broadcasting Stations n=38

Policies	Response	Frequency	%
Advertise vacant positions publicly	Yes	37	97.4
	No	1	2.6
Consider AERD graduates for salaried job	Yes	6	15.8
	No	32	84.2
Have slots for agric and rural dev.	Yes	19	50
	No	19	50
Received applications from AERD graduates	Yes	2	5.3
	No	35	92.1
	No response	1	2.6
Employed applicants with AERD background	Yes	1	2.6
	No	37	97.4
Would likely employ AERD grads in the future	Yes	9	23.7
	No	25	65.8
	No response	4	10.5
Ready to sell air-time to AERD grads	Yes	34	89.5
	No	3	7.9
	No response	1	2.6
Schedule agric broadcasts for evenings	Yes	34	89.5
	No	3	7.9
	No response	1	2.6
Have subsidies for agric broadcasts	Yes	2	5.3
	No	36	94.7
Have free slots for agric	Yes	2	5.3
	No	35	92.1
	No response	1	2.6

Table 3: Perceptions of broadcasters on the employment prospects of AERD graduates in the Broadcasting Industry. N=96

	Perception	Frequency	%
Employment prospects (in general)	Favorable	35	36.5
	Neutral	61	63.5
	Unfavorable	0	0
Analyses of variance and duncan grouping			
(a) Public and private stations' perception of employment prospects of AERD graduates			
Statistics	Value	Prob.	
ANOVA	6.95	0.01	
Duncan grouping	Mean	N	Stations
A	79.262	62	public
B	74.486	34	private
(b) Perceptions of agric, non-agric broadcasters and management staff.			
Statistics	Value	Prob	
ANOVA	20.52	0.00	
Duncan grouping	Mean	N	Practitioners
A	91.700	20	Agric
B	76.208	38	Non-Agric
B	75.447	38	Mgt. staff
(c) Perceptions of media practitioners across the states			
Statistics	Value	Prob	
ANOVA	0.56	0.58	
Duncan grouping	Mean	N	States
A	79.217	22	Oyo
A	77.045	24	Ogun
A	76.961	50	Lagos

Table 3 showed that majority of broadcasters (63.5%) have a neutral perception of the employment prospects of AERD graduates in the broadcasting industry and no single respondent has a clear unfavorable disposition to their employment prospects. This suggests that AERD graduates are barred from operating in the broadcasting industry.

Analyses of variance showed that public and private stations broadcasters have a significant difference in their perceptions of AERD graduates' employment prospects in the industry (F=6.95, p<0.05). the same is true of the perceptions of agricultural broadcasters, management staffers and non-agricultural broadcasters (F=20.52, p<0.05).

However, there is no significant difference in the perceptions of all the media practitioners across the three states on the employment prospects of AERD graduates in the broadcasting industry (F=0.56, p>0.05). This may suggest that agricultural broadcasters are more favorably disposed to the employment prospects of AERD in the broadcasting industry than broadcasters from other media related disciplines.

Table 4 showed that the most probable limiting problem of agricultural broadcasts is how to get sponsorship and advert to sustain the programs. Inability of this may be responsible for the scanty

Table 4: Problems of broadcasts N=58

Problem	Response	Frequency	%
Packaging of broadcast contents	Yes	14	24.1
	No	44	76.9
Getting sponsors	Yes	44	76.9
	No	14	24.1
Inconvenient time of broadcast	Yes	2	3.4
	No	56	96.6

presence of agricultural and rural development broadcasters in the broadcasting industry.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study was designed to investigate the employment prospects of AERD graduates in the broadcasting industry of Southwest, Nigeria.

Findings revealed that AERD graduates have a good prospect particularly as self employed, independent broadcasters as long as they could get enough adverts and sponsorship to sustain their programs on air.

Considering the above, departments of AERD in universities nationwide are advised to improve their curricular to enhance the capabilities of their graduates in the area of broadcasting and advert sourcing to make them less dependent on salaried jobs.

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