SUCCESSFULLY GALVANIZING MEANINGFUL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH IN NIGERIA

My student, Osayanmon Wellington Osawe (PhD candidate at University of Ibadan, Nigeria) was fascinated with the competitive selection process to be a beneficiary of the scholarship program to MSU. I guess the process must have prompted the successful applicants to display their potential and that it was preparatory for the short but thorough training at MSU.

Osawe started expressing his surprises and satisfaction with his experiences at MSU before I came over to join him. He appraised the teaching methodologies at MSU as impactful. They transferred knowledge through time consuming independent work and challenging assignments. As such he had no spare time to be homesick.

He took two courses; Advanced Agricultural Development Economics (AFRE 961) by Songqing Jin and Empirical Methods for Field research in Developing Countries (AFRE 874) by Andrew Dillon. He expressed his gratitude for the rare benefits received so far in terms of research methodology, sampling, land measurement issues and impact evaluation techniques. He now better appreciates that sampling techniques are an important research tool that not only informs the findings of studies, but also the reliability of the consequent policy recommendations. He really impressed me when he told me that he understands better and can now easily teach a number of impact estimation techniques such as propensity score matching, Difference-in-Difference (Double Difference), regression discontinuity among others. He also commended the frequent seminars delivered by professors in the department and those invited from other universities. He remarked that he became more exposed through the discussions that took place during the seminar sessions.

REFLECTING ON A DISCUSSION ON MULTI-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH TEAMS

His experience was enriched by the special schedules with several faculty members. For instance; he worked directly with Saweda Liverpool-Tasie on Consumption smoothing studies and Oyinkan Tasie on building the Policy Project blog. He is also involved with the on-going Kebbi State Agricultural Development Proposal using GIS mapping information. His interaction with Steve Longabaugh who supports the Kebbi State project in the GIS analysis and mapping was educating. He also mentioned that his experience in project activities while working with faculty members gave him a balanced perspective of developmental orientations. Osawe's experience is further complemented by the exclusive interaction with the other two scholars on the program from University of Nigeria, Nsukka and University of Agriculture, Makurdi. In all, I can see that his presence in the MSU environment has widened his thoughts, perceptions and approaches making him 'new research material' for Nigeria and the entire globe.

A LIVELY R TRAINING SESSION WITH DR. OLABISI AT MSU.

I realised that he wanted the experience gained, shared with his peers in Nigeria. He promised to work with Wale Ogunleye (an earlier scholar) to share the lessons learnt so far, especially from the R training for statistical analysis and Research Design Methodology.

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