



CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING for YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The success of any country depends on the success of her technical vocational education and training as a giant attempt for technological development for youth empowerment for the present and future generation. This paper focuses on the challenges and prospects of technical vocational education and training in agricultural education. The paper discussed the challenges hindering agricultural education from inculcating its skills and knowledge to the receivers, students and youths for their empowerment, or self-sustenance. The paper x-rayed some of the prospects of agricultural education and explained the way forward in using agricultural education skill to empower our youth in different areas of agricultural production. Recommendations were made in line with the discussions of the paper and conclusion.

KEYWORDS: Technical Vocational Education, Agricultural Education, Youth Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the bedrock for the development and creation of wealth, health, values, attitudes, knowledge and for the prospect of an individual in the society and Nigeria in general. Therefore, the importance of education in the development of human investment for productivity in skills, basic scientific and technical knowledge call for a serious concern in the challenges and prospects in vocational technical education and training in youth empowerment in agricultural education; since, it is assumed that education to which the individuals have been exposed, is capable of enabling the individuals to acquire right knowledge, appropriate skills and desirable work attitude and behaviour that will promote the production of goods and services. (Okoro, 1993) Therefore, challenges in this contest, implies threaten situation facing technical vocational education and training in agricultural education programme which try to inhibit its normal functioning in productivities and create disabilities to its principle actions for the development of an individual's. Ogba. (2008), is of the view that, to achieve the prospects of technical vocational education and training in agricultural education is simply to overcome the challenges by identifying them and finding possible solution to them Odo (2007) is of the view that, it becomes necessary that people's view about vocational agricultural education in human development and its objective need to be extrayed. According to Olaitan (2005), vocational agricultural education is the programme which inculcates the right attitudes, values, habits, abilities, understanding competences, leadership co-

operation and citizenship needed for entry into agricultural occupation. However, the objectives of vocational agricultural education as contain in the Federal Republic of Nigeria; FRN,(2004) include the following:

1. To develop skills and have scientific knowledge and competencies required in agricultural production.
2. To develop an understanding and appreciation of career opportunities in agricultural occupation and the preparation required to progress in production agriculture, agricultural business and other careers in agriculture.
3. To develop the ability to secure satisfaction in the placement and advancement in agricultural occupation through programmes on continuing education.
4. To develop leadership qualities, attitudes, thrifts scholarship co-operations, citizenship and patriotism by participating in experiences and activities of agricultural programmes.
5. To develop competencies required by individuals engaged in agriculture.
6. To develop practical skills and competencies in agricultural research. Based on the objectives of vocational agricultural education.

Reckor (2008) and Ngwu (2006) stressed that the conceptional understanding and importance of education in relation to human investment in skill production, reveals the need for vocational agricultural education to inculcate, impact, deliver the needed practical skills, basic scientific and technical

knowledge which it supposed to educate the participant or students in order to be an employer of labour and remove whatever conditions that challenges the prosperity of vocational agricultural education. Eze (2004) is of the view that identification, explanation and reorganization will help to achieve the programme objective of technical vocational education and training in agricultural education is commendable, however, the identified challenges of vocational agricultural education are as follows:

- 1) Land as a factor of production: Crops and animal production are reared or cultivated and practiced on the land not in the air but in most of our educational institution, the administrators most atimes do not recognize to map out land for establishment of demonstration farm. Where students carry out their experimental farm in plots. Practicing skills, practical knowledge, scientific experiments, technological innovation for the students to adopt such competences to be demonstrated by their lecturers and laboratory technologist, in the case of vocational agricultural education students who are supervised and monitored one by one to correct them and find out who can do it well, who and who cannot do them for self-reliance , it is a well known fact that educational institution offering vocational agricultural education do not have enough field for practical to test competencies in skills and may fall short of the expected skills.
- 2) The curriculum relevance and innovative: The curricular of vocational agricultural education need to reflect the current challenges in agricultural occupations, it needs to be innovative in nature to tally with practical skills for production, expected of the graduates from the area of crops and animals for human consumption. Vocational agricultural education needs to inculcate the receiver, learner and participant with the basic scientific knowledge, technical skills innovation in tractor driving, planting crops, skills in harvesting, processing, preservation, storage, market distribution among others, in fishing and other related aqua-culture or livestock, the curricular need not to have outdated materials in order to teach them what they can see in their work places.
- 3) Poor funding of vocational agricultural education: Vocational agricultural education is an integral part of technical vocational education which started as a course at University of Nigeria, Nsukka in Vocational Teacher Education Department in the whole West African Universities and spread to other universities that offers technology and vocational education Department in Nigeria. Since then, vocational agricultural education has not gotten its foot on the ground in terms of finance to enable the objectives of the course to manifest in the development of the needed skills in our youth for self-reliance. According to Fafunwa (2005) who is of the view that any organization without enough funds may not achieve its objectives, holistically. Therefore, vocational agricultural education needs to be founded properly in order to overcome its challenges.
- 4) Lack of adequate machines, equipment and tools in vocational agricultural education has created a serious impact to the level of knowledge and basic technical sciences, which the students or participant in the programme supposed to achieve in the area of agricultural production rather drawing, them back in the use of spraying machines, movers, harvester, planters, ridgers, disc blade of different types, skills in fumigating machines eg Canning machines and so on. These machines are what they will meet in their world of work after graduation.
- 5) Policy in vocational agricultural education. Government policy in agricultural production supposes to reflect in the programme. Since, the products of this programmes will be for the future and present farmers in the society. The knowledge acquired in the programme need to be holistic and comprehensive enough to accommodate the provision for massive agricultural production in Nigeria.
- 6) The quality and quantity of students intake into vocational agricultural education department. Few students are nomally admitted for studies in the programme annually making only few students to study the course. The handful students admited are atimes, are those that have no other option. The mis-conception and their assumption is that the programme is for lazy students but not knowing the details about the course. Some say that because of its basic requirement for science courses at O'level that drive away students but whichever may be the expectation of parents, students and government need to give serious attention to the course since its primary function is to make individual creative as an employer of labour or employee in the field of agriculture production and boost massive food production in Nigeria. Lack of agricultural firms and agro-allied industries. Vocational agricultural education students are normally posted to areas where there are supposed not to be posted to during their industrial work experience (SIWE) because, agricultural firms are not many or few, It is assumed that such firms exposes them to practical skills learnt under classroom environment and relate them to the use of machines and tools in their industries for the actual processing, preservation, distribution and marketing all the agricultural products both on crops and animal production.
- 7) Poor laboratories and its facilities: Vocational Agricultural Education Department suffers serious neglects in most of the institution that offer them in respect to laboratories and its facilities. Attention should be given to such faculties that will be used for teaching students,

basic scientific knowledge and needed technical skills for agriculture production.

Prospects of Vocational Agricultural Production

The prospect of agricultural education cannot be over-emphasized; according to Ogba (2008) vocational agricultural education is an educational sector for those that need it, requires it and want it for their utmost survival and development of their human potential in skills, and knowledge toward agricultural occupation as employer of labour or employees. Therefore, the prospect of agricultural education can be discussed in many ways because of its importance, need and relevant to the development of skills in different areas of agricultural production in our environment.

1. The Prospect can be seen in the areas of needs and relevance in food production, food availability, food access and food sufficient in constant supply in our environment. The youth when empowered in agricultural skills will ensure constant maximum food production within our society. More hands will be on production level than consumption level their individual needs of the youth will be met from the sells of their agricultural products.
2. Vocational agricultural education with its skills establishment among Nigeria youth can change agricultural sectors of the nation when carefully planned, harnessed and government policies at all level be well implemented. The sector can effectively drive the issue of poverty and unemployment. This is surely the shortest ways of using Nigerian youth to generate economic surplus in agriculture and increase farmers source of incomes.
3. It is the route for achieving sustainable increase in food production since it has emphasis on demand driven approach. In scientific agricultural skills and technological development in food production. Such prospect in skill acquisition for youth empowerment cannot be over emphasized.
4. It develop an understanding and appreciation of career opportunities in agricultural occupation and the preparation required for progress in production agricultural business and other careers in agriculture. This implies that it has holistic approach in human development in different career opportunities bond in the broad spectrum of agricultural production. It provides even leadership qualities for those that receive the educational programme. It provides the ability to be participant and prove citizenship in participating students in experiences needed for agricultural production
5. Vocational agricultural education develop the ability to secure satisfaction in the placement and advancement in agricultural occupation through programmes on continuing education. Which implies that the receivers, or participants or

students have job satisfaction in different areas of agriculture and benefit from them and grow from them to meet up all their personal and human services needed for normal living.

6. Development of vocational skills. This is the ability to choose a trade, occupation or profession which best suit his economic gains and to work hard to succeed in the vocation while vocation is an economic activities which requires the use of skills in an occupation or profession, (Igwe 2008). This implies that the receivers or participant or students of agricultural education must have skills in the different areas of agricultural production such as planting skills, harvesting skills, distributing skills, packaging/branding skills, in crop production. In similar manner, animal production requires such skills in addition to creative skills by imitating creative ideas, thinking in their service delivery in selling agricultural products to their consumers. The ability to generate ideas, to imagine new products in agriculture and its packages is innovation in production. It requires human relation skills for students in agricultural education since human being live and work together and need some skills to encourage them to be productive and find out what behaviours, attitude that encourages people to work together.

WAY FORWARD IN EMPOWERING YOUTHS IN VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Empowerment of Youths in Vocational Agricultural Training Centre:

Agricultural education skills in budding, grafting, and layering can sustain an individual (youth). Budded citrus are required in different compound, home, churches, playground, schools, hospitals among others for planting. This give(s) a lot of money to the investor since the demand is high in the society. The skills in grafting, budding and layering in different crops required basic scientific knowledge which is required by the receiver or students or the youth in the training centre. The skills in raising ornamental flowers is not a small business in terms of self-sustenance since ornamental flowers are demanded by different people in different location on daily bases to beautify their environment. It has high estate values and gives a lot of money to the investors, check in different areas where they sell palm for palm, its cost and how much one can spend in planting them. The skills in raising them can be perfectly inculcated by the youth in agricultural education skills.

Empowerment of Youth in Poultry Production (Industrial):

Agricultural education skills in poultry production when inculcated to the youths will empower them and make them release their sources of income, solve their individual problems and become independent of themselves. Poultry supply eggs, day old chick, and

broilers (layer) cockrel, pullet, among others to the investor or producers for sell and make a lot of money.

Empowerment of Youth in Piggery Production (Industrial):

Piggery is a monogastric animal which is prolific and profit driven venture. The agricultural education skills in piggery production suppose to sustain an individual in the management, control, feeding, fattening and finishing them for marketing, distributing and processing its products and by-product for the benefit of man kind. This generate a lot of money to the investors best among the shortest ways of empowering youth through training of technical vocational education in agricultural education.

Empowerment of Youth in Fishery Production:

Agricultural education skill empowers youth in the area of fish and fish pond management. It requires little financial remuneration for its establishment. Many Nigerians requires protein in meat and fish production to meet high demand of fish production calls for youth Empowerment in the skill of production to sustain them and remove unemployment among the youth.

CONCLUSION

The urgent need to improve the quality and quantity of manpower development in our youths in technical vocational education in the area of agricultural education attracted the attention of most Nigerians. Since agricultural education has multitude of skills and knowledge in developing competencies in our youth. Therefore, this paper identified the challenges hindering agricultural education from inculcating those skills to the receivers, or students or our youths. It ex-rayed some of the prospect of vocational agricultural education. It explained way-forward for empowering our youths in agricultural education skills.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The paper recommends that agricultural education training centers/ apprenticeship centre be expanded in different locations in the rural areas with experts in different vocational area as instructors.
2. Government should give attention to agricultural education option in different institutions, universities and Colleges of Education, Polytechnic where it is offered as a course of study.

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